

# **The Man Without a Face Study Guide**

**The Man Without a Face by Isabelle Holland**

(c)2015 BookRags, Inc. All rights reserved.



# Contents

<a href="#">The Man Without a Face Study Guide.....</a>	<a href="#">1</a>
<a href="#">Contents.....</a>	<a href="#">2</a>
<a href="#">Plot Summary.....</a>	<a href="#">3</a>
<a href="#">Chapter 1.....</a>	<a href="#">5</a>
<a href="#">Chapter 2.....</a>	<a href="#">7</a>
<a href="#">Chapter 3.....</a>	<a href="#">9</a>
<a href="#">Chapter 4.....</a>	<a href="#">10</a>
<a href="#">Chapter 5.....</a>	<a href="#">12</a>
<a href="#">Chapter 6.....</a>	<a href="#">13</a>
<a href="#">Chapter 7.....</a>	<a href="#">15</a>
<a href="#">Chapter 8.....</a>	<a href="#">17</a>
<a href="#">Chapter 9.....</a>	<a href="#">19</a>
<a href="#">Chapter 10.....</a>	<a href="#">20</a>
<a href="#">Chapter 11.....</a>	<a href="#">21</a>
<a href="#">Chapter 12.....</a>	<a href="#">23</a>
<a href="#">Characters.....</a>	<a href="#">24</a>
<a href="#">Objects/Places.....</a>	<a href="#">27</a>
<a href="#">Themes.....</a>	<a href="#">29</a>
<a href="#">Style.....</a>	<a href="#">31</a>
<a href="#">Quotes.....</a>	<a href="#">34</a>
<a href="#">Topics for Discussion.....</a>	<a href="#">36</a>



# Plot Summary

"The Man Without A Face," by Isabelle Holland, is the story of fourteen-year-old Charles Norstadt who lives with his family in an apartment in New York City. During summer break from school, the family moves temporarily to their summer home on a peninsula on the Atlantic Coast. Charles is not a happy youngster. His mother is always "on his case." She's critical of his behavior, his activities, his poor performance at school, and his father, her second ex-husband. His mother considers marrying his father the "biggest mistake" she ever made.

Charles' mother is a middle-aged woman who is described as beautiful and youthful for her age. She has four ex-husbands and is working on a fifth marriage. Gloria, Charles' elder sister, follows her mother's lead and treats Charles with as much disdain or even more than her mother. Gloria is seventeen and resembles her mother. Her mother favors Gloria because she is the symbol of her own beauty and youth which are both slipping away.

When Charles learns that Gloria's plans to go away to school have changed and that she will be at home in their New York apartment that fall, Charles decides he must act. He cannot envision spending another four years with his mother and Gloria. Charles' younger sister, Meg, is fat and not as attractive as Gloria. Charles and Meg both feel like outcasts and often share their feelings about dealing with their mother and Gloria.

Charles wants to attend St. Matthews boarding school but he flunked the entry exam. He learns from the school that he will have one more chance to qualify. If he passes his second attempt at an entry exam, he will be accepted by the school. Charles is mature and savvy enough to know that he won't be able to do that without help. Meg proposes that he ask the "man without a face," a reclusive man who is terribly disfigured as a teacher, to tutor him.

Initially, Charles dismisses his sister's idea but eventually he determines that tutoring with the mysterious man may be a good idea. He doesn't want to let his mother or Gloria know what he's doing and sabotage his plans. By being tutored by this man, Justin McLeod, who does not talk to anyone, he should be able to keep his efforts a secret.

McLeod is at first against tutoring Charles but he ultimately agrees to help him, sensing that the young boy is trying to strike out, improve his life, and follow his dream. McLeod is not used to being around other people and at first is remote, distant, and all business. But Charles and McLeod eventually begin to understand and appreciate each other and a bond is formed. Charles sees his missing father in McLeod and McLeod sees Charles as his chance to redeem himself for his actions that resulted in the death of a young boy some years before.

The tutoring is successful and Charles is accepted at St. Matthews. Charles feels compelled to see McLeod again because their last time together was confusing and



complicated. Charles wants to make their relationship right again but discovers that McLeod died just a month before. McLeod left his entire estate to Charles except his dog and horse which were given to a man who, like McLeod, has a talent to take damaged creatures and fix them. Looking back, Charles feels that he was damaged goods himself and was rescued by McLeod.



# Chapter 1

## Chapter 1 Summary

Charles Norstadt is fourteen when he came to know The Man Without a Face. No one knows how he lost his face. Many think that it may have been from a car accident. Charles and his mother run into him at the grocery store. She later says that he should consider plastic surgery. He does not speak to anyone and is called the Grouch behind his back. Charles' sister, Gloria, thinks that he is "gruesome." Charles is disappointed because Gloria, seventeen, will not be going away to school in the fall after all. Life will be more bearable without her. Charles has flunked the entrance exams for St. Matthews but is still determined to somehow get there in the fall.

Charles' mother is pretty. Gloria and Charles' younger sister look like her. Charles looks like his father with blond hair and green eyes. Charles' last step-father would point out that Charles has a stupid expression on his face. His mother reminds him that his step-father is liked by everyone on campus and blames Charles for not getting along with him. While some women take up art or charity work for hobbies, Charles mother's hobby is marrying. Thus far, she has racked up four. She refers to Eric, Charles' father, as her one big mistake. Eric is an engineer which, for some unknown reason, his mother finds reprehensible.

Charles' mother first married Gloria's father, a professor. After that marriage failed, she married Eric. Next she married Bob, a publisher and Meg's father. After he realized that she didn't read the books that he had published, he grew disenchanted however and that was it. Next came the professor who she met at campus protests. Charles has been a thorn in his mother's last love interest from the beginning. He goes back to Berkeley and asks for a divorce. He has tried to help Charles with his studies, but Charles refuses. He isn't interested in school. He decides that he is going to join the Air Force at seventeen. He wants to be a pilot - something else that drove his mother up the wall.

Life at home with his mother and just his younger sister, Meg, is bearable however. His mother is a great story teller and Charles enjoys Meg's menagerie of animals, ranging from turtles to parrots and a canary. Charles, anxious to get out of the house because Gloria is staying there, learns from the headmaster at St. Matthews that he will be allowed to re-take the exam. The letter arrives the same day that they run into the man without a face. Actually, one side of his face is gruesome. The other side is normal.

Charles is having a difficult time at their summer home on the peninsula studying for the exam. Gloria senses that he needs tutoring but he is too proud to ask for her help. Charles hasn't cried since he was seven. His mother had been nice to him when he cried as a youngster but then she thought she owned him and considered him weak afterwards. Meg sees that he was lagging behind on his studies and suggests that he ask the Grouch to coach him. The Grouch's real name is Justin McLeod. Apparently he



was a teacher before his disfiguring accident. At first Charles dismisses the idea, but then he keeps thinking about it.

## Chapter 1 Analysis

Charles is the outcast in his family. He feels insecure because his mother favors his sisters. He feels hurt from having been abandoned by his father and by not having had the benefit of a father figure. When Meg suggests that Charles get tutoring from the strange man without a face, he at first dismisses the idea. However, perhaps he feels a strange connection to the man since they are both outcasts although in different ways. There's a natural curiosity that Charles has about the mysterious man who no one really knows.

Charles has a rebellious nature. His mother married several professors and her own father was a professor. So, she obviously has an affinity for higher learning and for careers in education. Charles plans to skip college and become a pilot, something she thinks is for hicks. Charles and his mother already are at odds when he is fourteen. As he matures, that conflict will become deeper and wider. Charles has been told all his life that he isn't very smart, which is reflected in his poor performance at school. But he's really not dumb. He's just living up to the low expectations that everyone has for him.



# Chapter 2

## Chapter 2 Summary

The next day, Charles was still thinking about the Grouch. His mother scolded him for having his cat, Moxie, in his room the night before. His mother was allergic to cat hair. Gloria chimed in and sided with their mother. One way Charles could always get to Gloria was to remind her about the latest boyfriend who dumped her. Charles went to the harbor and roamed around for a few hours. He got to thinking about living another four years in the family's five-bedroom apartment in New York and decided to try to look Justin McLeod up. As he walked up the hill to Justin's house, he recalled all the theories about him. He lived with a carnivorous dog that could devour children. He received parcels and letters from a publishing house in New York which gave rise to the rumor that he was a writer. There was also speculation that he wrote pornography under a pseudonym.

McLeod's house was on top of a hill several miles from the harbor. When he neared the house, the "Beware of Dog" sign made him pause. Right then the Grouch was driving up in his vintage car. He asked Charles what he wanted. Charles had a big speech planned but all he could blurt out was to ask him if he'd coach him for his entry exam. The Grouch said "certainly not" and drove off.

Charles lamented about his dire situation and sat down by the gate. He stayed until dark when the Grouch drove back up. He asked why Charles was still there. The Grouch told him to get in the car, opened the gate to his property and drove in. Charles was afraid of Mickey, the Grouch's dog, but he assured Charles that the dog wouldn't hurt him as long as he was with him. The Grouch saw that Charles was cold and wet from sitting outside so long. He had him take a hot bath and put on dry clothes. The Grouch told him to drink the hot tea he had poured out for him.

McLeod told him he would drive him home. He should leave the clothes at the grocery store for him. Charles was persistent about McLeod coaching him. He offered to pay him but McLeod wasn't interested. Charles told him he was trying to get into St. Matthews to escape living with three women. Ultimately, McLeod changed his mind and agreed to tutor him but Charles would have to comply with his routine and study hard. He'd teach him three hours a day and give him three hours of additional study and homework.

Charles' mother asked where he'd been and why he had the strange clothes on. He lied and said he fell in the water and his friend Barney Lansing loaned him his brother Pete's dry clothes. He decided not to tell his mother or Gloria that McLeod would be coaching him. That night he thought about Gloria and his mother. One time his mother tried to explain that Gloria's hostility toward him stemmed from her jealousy at the time of his birth. She was only three and wanted all of her mother's attention and the new baby was getting more than she was. He sensed that his mother was sorry she had always



disparaged his father so much and that Gloria learned to put him down, too, from her mother's example.

## Chapter 2 Analysis

Inexplicably drawn to a stranger with no face and a reputation that most fourteen-year-old boys would avoid, Charles seeks McLeod out which illustrates Charles' independent nature. He's a risk taker and a young man who follows some basic instincts that he himself doesn't fully understand. Although it was ostensibly his need for a coach to pass entry exams, Charles was driven by an equal measure of curiosity fueled by his innate tendency to march to the beat of a different drummer. The mystique that surrounds the man without a face is undoubtedly part of his allure for Charles. Like many lonely people, the Grouch is not opposed to contact with another human when the opportunity presents himself.

There is some insight in this chapter about Charles' tense relationship with his mother and older sister. The reader already learned that Charles was the focus of his mother's wrath, blaming him for her last failed marriage. A vulnerability is seen in his mother who has been beset with guilt over her treatment of her son. She tries to explain that Gloria's insecurity has led to her hostility for her younger half-brother. But her explanation falls short and sounds weak and the mother probably doesn't really understand how things got so out of hand. Beating up on Charles has become a family tradition and something she is incapable of stopping.





# Chapter 3

## Chapter 3 Summary

Charles arrived early the next morning at McLeod's to find him riding atop a golden bay. Next to airplanes, Charles loved horses the most. Charles had carried with him shopping bags full of his books. It hadn't been necessary, McLeod told him. He had plenty. In the daylight, Charles got a better look at McLeod. He had an athletic build and salt and pepper gray hair. Charles guessed him to be in his early forties.

Once inside the house, Justin directed him to the den. Several walls were lined with bookshelves and there was a large desk and a table where McLeod told Charles to deposit his books. When Charles insisted that he didn't need to write the 300 word composition that McLeod instructed him to write, he was told to pick up his books and leave. McLeod had meant what he said. He would tutor his way or not at all. McLeod was so adamant about the arrangement that he was almost making Gloria look good. In the end, Charles vowed to be compliant with McLeod's teaching methods.

Charles recalled a composition that he had borrowed from Jake Rodman and used successfully on several occasions. McLeod read the composition and commented on Charles' poor spelling and grammar. For whatever reason, McLeod knew immediately that the composition was not his original work. All other teachers he had tried it on had failed to realize it. McLeod asked if he'd ever written an original composition. He had written one about airplanes that his teacher said was ungradable specifically because he didn't like planes. McLeod gave Charles an overview of what they would be covering all summer and a hefty homework assignment. Charles felt doomed to having a horrible summer at home with Gloria and there with the Grouch.

## Chapter 3 Analysis

McLeod shows his sensitivity when he recognizes that the composition that he requires Charles to write was not his original work. Charles is a savvy, street-wise type of youngster who is used to fooling his elders but it seems as though he may have met his match. Charles also learns that unlike other adults he has known, McLeod says what he means and means what he says. Twist and turn as he may, Charles will not be able to shake McLeod from the way he will tutor him. Charles is having second thoughts about being tutored by McLeod. The only thing that propels him on is that life with Gloria for the next four years would be worse. At this point, he feels that he is choosing between two evils.



# Chapter 4

## Chapter 4 Summary

The same routine ensued throughout the next days. Charles' mother didn't know where Charles was going every morning but was usually satisfied with his answer that he was just going "around" or had been at the "boathouse" or "harbor." She was suspicious sometimes because he had books with him. She should be happy he's studying, he'd respond. At one point, her suspicions led to her ponder his possible drug abuse. She told him how worried she was that he'd get into drugs like so many other boys.

Meg was the only family member who knew what he was really doing. She was curious about McLeod who, her brother told her, was gruesome. Charles would either pass the entry exam or be nuts or dead by the end of the summer. His friends asked him where he was spending his time and he told them "around," and when they pressed him he told them he was spending time on the mainland.

Charles jumped in a dinghy one day at the harbor and invited his friends to go skinny-dipping in the cove. It was a dangerous place because of an undertow which had caused several drownings. One morning Meg came to him and woke him very early. He was angry at being awakened and called her fat which made her cry. After he apologized, she told him that she heard that the kids were telling everyone that he was going to the mainland to smoke pot and that their mother thought he was studying under the trees. They discussed their Mother and Gloria. Meg felt that her mother was partial to Gloria because she pictured herself as Gloria, still young and beautiful. They both hoped that their mother wouldn't marry her latest boyfriend who they called Barry Rumble Seat.

When Charles arrived at McLeod's he saw that Richard the horse was not in his stall. Figuring that McLeod was on a morning ride, Charles explored around in the barn and eventually drifted off in the hay. He was awakened by McLeod a while later. They went inside to resume Charles' lessons. McLeod caught Charles staring at him. He told him if his face bothered him, he should move by the window. Charles was embarrassed. He realized he had been staring at him. Later, he blurted out that McLeod's face didn't bother him. What he wanted to tell him, but couldn't say, was that he liked him.

McLeod told Charles that he shouldn't use the word "crap." If he continued to, he'd have to look up ten equivalent words in Latin. Charles promised he'd not use the term again. McLeod remembered that Charles like airplanes. He pulled down a book and read him a poem about flying which really struck home with Charles.

## Chapter 4 Analysis

Mention of the cove and its dangerous undertow that was responsible for several drownings may be an ominous foreshadowing of things to come. It is obvious that Meg



and Charles feel they are on one side of the family and that their mother and Gloria are on the other side. Even though Meg is quite young, she is sophisticated enough to sense that part of their mother's problem - which includes multiple marriages - is due to her loss of youth. Meg thinks her mother favors Gloria because she represents her own youth and beauty.

Charles is beginning to bond with McLeod. When he was "staring" at him, McLeod naturally assumed that he was staring at his disfigurement. But Charles has more depth than McLeod gave him credit for. As he was looking at McLeod he was thinking about how he could tell him that he liked him. McLeod is sensitive to Charles' want and needs which is evidenced when he read him a poem about aviation - "High Flight" by John Gillespie Magee, Jr.



# Chapter 5

## Chapter 5 Summary

Gloria introduced Percy, her new Princeton boyfriend, to Charles. Gloria picked up one of Charles' books and, fearing that it was McLeod's book and his name might be inside, thought quick and spilled milk all over before she could open the book. Percy looked at Gloria in a new way. She had her sweet act on but the real Gloria was unleashed when she hurled vicious invectives at her younger brother.

Up in his room, Charles opened the book that Gloria had almost opened. It did have McLeod's name in it and to his surprise it also had the notation: "St. Matthews School, 1958." Since 1958 was only thirteen years before, he must have been a teacher there. He re-read "High Flight" and enjoyed it even more.

Meg told Charles that Gloria was asking a lot of questions about Charles' books and whether he was studying with someone. Meg told him to ask McLeod if he could stay the three extra hours and study there. He didn't want to because McLeod might figure out that his mother didn't know he was going there every day.

Charles returned some books to McLeod and asked him about studying there. After McLeod questioned him about why he didn't want to study at home, Charles confessed that his mother didn't know. And if she found out, she would make him quit because she didn't want him to go away to school. McLeod asked why his mother was against his going to St. Matthews. His last step-father thought that any boy who went to St. Matthews would become gay if he wasn't gay already. McLeod refuted that claim. McLeod was very interested when Charles told him that his mother's current boyfriend was Barry (Rumble Seat) Rumbolt. He asked how well he knew Rumbolt. Charles responded that he had known him for several years and that Rumbolt didn't know that he was coaching Charles. McLeod agreed to let Charles stay there and study after their lessons.

## Chapter 5 Analysis

The spiteful Gloria suspects that Charles is being tutored by someone. Charles does not want Gloria to find out because she'll convince her mother to stop his lessons. Gloria doesn't especially want Charles to be at home with them, but she would love to ruin his plans. But Charles has a measure of revenge by helping to expose the "real Gloria" to her Princeton boyfriend.

It is obvious that McLeod has a mysterious past—but what is it? Apparently, Charles' mother's current boyfriend, Barry Rumbolt, knew him in the past. The reader can be assured that more will be revealed about McLeod in the coming chapters and that Barry knows about his past.



# Chapter 6

## Chapter 6 Summary

Charles began staying and having lunch with McLeod. He'd ask him questions about what he had been studying and McLeod didn't seem to think he was taking advantage of him. Charles' interest in history and math grew. Honing his math skills was important for getting into the Air Force Academy. Charles became so comfortable with McLeod that he slipped and asked him if it was true that he wrote porn under a pseudonym. McLeod laughed then laughed even harder when Charles told him how the townspeople had lined up at the bookstore trying to try to figure it out.

McLeod had written a series of novels under the pseudonym, "Terence Blake." The novels were a mixture of mythology and science. Charles knew of the series and was quite impressed. Charles had read some of them. McLeod offered to lend Charles copies of his books that he hadn't read. But Charles wouldn't take them. The other kids would steal them. When the books came out in paperback, he'd buy them and send them to McLeod to autograph.

McLeod had an uncanny ability to know what Charles needed. He told him he'd been spending his life resisting things and people. It was time he reached out for what he wanted out of life. From McLeod's interest in the poem, "High Flight," Charles began to wonder if McLeod had been a pilot in World War II and had been burned in a crash. Charles got up the nerve to ask him. He hadn't been a pilot. He was burned in a car accident. He hardly felt a thing at the time because he was so drunk. The tragedy was worse than Charles could have imagined. There was a boy with McLeod in the accident who was about the same age as Charles. The boy was burned to death.

Charles felt bad for the boy who had been killed but he also felt great sympathy for McLeod and the guilt he must have carried around with him ever since the accident. Meg told him the kids were asking a lot of questions about where he was all the time and what he was doing. The next day, Charles told McLeod that the accident wasn't his fault. But McLeod disagreed and said it was completely his fault. Charles grabbed his arm. After a few moments, McLeod jerked his hand away and left the room.

## Chapter 6 Analysis

Charles and McLeod are growing closer. McLeod encourages Charles not to live his life avoiding people and things. He should reach out on his own for what he wants. McLeod didn't realize how quickly Charles would take his advice. Charles' growing curiosity about McLeod compelled him to finally ask him about his disfigurement. The tragedy was more than Charles had imagined. A boy was killed in the car accident and McLeod was drunk at the wheel. It is obvious that McLeod had been living with a lot of guilt since the accident. The guilt of causing the death of a young boy was probably the main



reason McLeod had withdrawn from the world more than from his disfigurement. Who the boy was is still a mystery. Was it McLeod's own son? Is McLeod's interest in helping Charles a way of making up for causing the death of the other boy?



# Chapter 7

## Chapter 7 Summary

Charles was angry and his feelings were hurt. When McLeod didn't return, Charles cut out early. He went to the harbor and took a dinghy to the cove. When he turned into the cove he was greeted by a bunch of the local boys. The smell of pot was heavy in the air. Pete Minton asked him how his studying was going and Tommy Klein asked how the guy without a face was doing. They all knew! They had spotted him and followed him a couple of times. Charles didn't want to smoke any pot but the other boys pushed him to. After smoking more of the pot than he planned to, he told the other boys about McLeod's accident - that he'd been drunk and that a boy had been burned to death. Charles figured he must have passed out after that.

Charles had a bizarre dream in which he merged the image of his father with that of McLeod. The dream ended when the other boys were dunking his face in the water trying to make him come to. The other boys made him swear he wouldn't mention the pot. In turn, he warned them not to tell anyone about McLeod's accident.

The next morning, Charles' mother confronted him about the day before. Was he smoking marijuana? She and Meg had tried to rouse him from his sleep but he wouldn't budge. He was spending his time with the other boys and studying. She told him that even if he passed the entry exam for St. Matthews that she might not let him go. He warned her that he'd run away from home if she didn't let him go away. Barry came in the room and announced that he and Charles' mother were going to get married.

Barry felt that St. Matthews was a good school and had improved its curriculum over the last few years. Gloria was less than thrilled about the prospect of her mother and Barry marrying but Meg seemed to be all for it. Charles wanted to get into St. Matthews more than ever. This desire made him forget that he had been angry with McLeod. He told his mother he was off to study in a peaceful place he'd found over the cove. As Charles walked toward McLeod's he worried that he had told the other boys about the accident and that it might eventually get back to McLeod.

## Chapter 7 Analysis

Charles' anger and hurt at what he perceived to be rejection from McLeod led him to getting high and telling the other boys about McLeod's accident and the death of the boy. When he sobered up, he realized that telling the boys about the accident could ruin or end his relationship with McLeod. When Charles reached out to McLeod, the man was moved by Charles' show of emotion. But he had withdrawn for so many years, that it was difficult for him to handle someone getting close to him.

There are signs that perhaps Barry could be a positive addition to the family. He sees through Gloria and is supportive of both Meg and Charles. While Charles' mother

threatens to not allow him to go to St. Matthews, Barry feels that it's a good school. Charles regrets having told his friends about McLeod's accident and must deal with guilt and worry that it will get back to McLeod.





# Chapter 8

## Chapter 8 Summary

McLeod apologized to Charles for being so rude. He had closed himself off from the world. He had just told Charles not to run away from people and things and here he had done the same thing. Charles felt embarrassed and wanted to press on with his lessons. At home, Charles' mother was caught up in wedding plans. She and Barry were courting Gloria, trying to get her on board with the marriage. Meg stopped her early morning visits. She was into the wedding and the prospect of having a father. Charles started to think that Barry was smarter than he thought he was.

Charles still wanted to have a friendship with McLeod but he got conflicting signals from him. Sometimes he seemed open to building a relationship at other times the door was slammed shut. One day, McLeod decided that Charles wasn't getting enough exercise. They drove to the top of a high cliff that overlooked the ocean. They hiked down a rocky path to the shore below. McLeod had worn trunks under his jeans and brought along a pair of trunks for Charles.

They swam out quite a distance where Charles got a little frisky. He'd swim underneath and butt McLeod and then swim off, with McLeod right behind him. Charles forgot that McLeod was an adult and his teacher and that he was forty-seven. The feeling of liberation that Charles felt while they were swimming and playing in the water, left as soon as they walked ashore. McLeod sensed that something was bothering him. He grabbed his arm just as Charles had grabbed his. He asked him to tell him what was bothering him.

Charles was honest and told McLeod that he had been hurt and angry with him and told his friends about the accident and the boy. McLeod said it was his fault for the way he reacted. They were still friends, McLeod told him. Charles told him about his bad trip on pot and the dream about his father and him. He guessed his dream meant he wished McLeod was his father. McLeod said he wished so, too. He reached over and put his arm around McLeod. Later, he asked McLeod if he thought he was queer. No, he responded, everyone needs affection.

## Chapter 8 Analysis

McLeod sees his own shortcomings and is not too proud to apologize and take blame for hurting Charles. Barry is proving to be a positive force in the family. Keeping in mind that Barry and McLeod were somehow associated in the past may prove to be an important part of the plot as it evolves. Charles has taken McLeod's advice and reaches out to him. He takes the emotional risk of revealing to him that he had told his friends about McLeod's accident. He also interprets his own dream and concludes that he wishes McLeod was his father. McLeod's response that he wishes that Charles was his



son, indicates the close relationship that has developed between the two. But their time together will just be brief. Charles will be there just for the summer and then will be off to St. Matthews. How will the two cope with their relationship basically ending after summer?



# Chapter 9

## Chapter 9 Summary

Charles' mother and Barry spent the rest of the summer in New York looking for a new apartment. Gloria's father took her to Mexico on a vacation with his new wife. Meg went to camp for a couple of weeks. Charles enjoyed himself alone at home, letting Moxie have the run of the house. Charles and McLeod went swimming most every day. One day they discussed being free. McLeod pointed out that the word "free" by itself was nothing. One had to be free from something or free to do something. Charles was happy to be free from his family. They discussed love of family but "love" was a word that Charles didn't like to use. Just at that point, Charles felt the undertow pull him down. He drifted out quite far but McLeod was right there to tow him in.

Sensing that Charles was building him up in his mind too much, McLeod warned him not to think of him as a hero and that he had feet of clay. McLeod told Charles that if he wanted to be in the Air Force and maybe even an astronaut, he needed to be adept at mathematics. Charles asked McLeod why he chose to live on the hill in such a remote area. He had lost a job and wasn't likely to get another one. His firing was associated with the accident. He was in prison for two years following the tragedy. It wasn't a bad experience. He learned a lot about life and about himself. It was in prison where he first began to write. He had taught at St. Matthews when the accident happened. McLeod said they'd be friends as long as Charles wanted to be. Charles thought of McLeod as a friend and father.

## Chapter 9 Analysis

When Charles and McLeod are in the middle of talking about love, the undertow in the cove takes Charles down. It is symbolic of how overwhelmed and lost Charles feels about emotions, especially love. McLeod, who is a father figure to Charles, is there to pull him from the abyss. The trust that McLeod has learned to have in Charles is revealed when he tells Charles that he served two years in prison. Charles has the comfort of knowing that McLeod will always be there for him - unlike his father and multiple step-fathers.



# Chapter 10

## Chapter 10 Summary

One day it was all over. It was a Sunday but Charles had lost track of what day it was. He had been spending his Saturdays with McLeod, not working but swimming and hiking. Richard got used to him and allowed Charles to ride him a few times. When Charles came in the house, he found McLeod dressed in a suit and tie. It was Sunday, he told Charles, and he was going to church. On a sudden impulse, Charles asked to go with him. Mickey would not allow McLeod to drive off until he got in the car, too. McLeod said he had found Mickey on the side of the road. Someone had discarded him with two broken legs. He was a puppy, about three months old. How could anyone do that, Charles wondered.

During the church service, Charles got inexplicably dizzy and had to rush outside. During the time that he felt faint, he pictured McLeod without a face. Outside, he touched McLeod's face and told him that he had thought it was his father's face. Later, after they swam and laid on the beach, they talked about church. Although Charles claimed he'd never been to church, he had such a reaction to it that perhaps he had been to church at one time and something had happened there that he blocked out.

Charles stayed for dinner and wanted to stay all night but McLeod thought it best that he return to the Lansings where he was staying most nights. McLeod dropped him off there but no one was home. He walked the rest of the way home to the summer cottage.

## Chapter 10 Analysis

The reader learns immediately that "it was all over." Since the focus of the story is the relationship between Charles and McLeod, the assumption can be made that their relationship will be ending. Charles' strange experience in church indicates that perhaps some bad experience lies deeply in his forgotten memories. As he is almost passing out, he once again confuses McLeod's face with that of his father.

Mickey, McLeod's dog, was a stray that he found as a puppy. It had two broken legs and had been abandoned for dead on the side of the road. Charles wonders how any one could have done that. Charles obviously relates to the young pup who had been damaged and abandoned. He really wonders how his father could have abandoned him.



# Chapter 11

## Chapter 11 Summary

Charles called for Moxie when he got home. He didn't run to him when he called him as he usually did. Charles looked for him and found him bleeding and unable to move his back legs. Charles called several vets and finally found one who said to bring the cat over. He called McLeod but there was no answer. There were only a few neighbors who had cars at their summer places. He couldn't locate anyone with a car. He looked in all the rooms for his mother's telephone book that contained more numbers for him to try. Then he heard a noise coming from his room. He pushed open the door to find Gloria in bed with Percy.

Charles spotted Percy's boot that was caked with blood. He was in a rage. You nearly killed my cat, he screamed at Percy. He picked up a bat and started swinging at Percy. He got in a few blows but the bigger, stronger Percy was able to subdue him as Gloria got the bat away. As Percy was leaving, he told Charles that he had let the cat run wild and it was his fault that he kicked him. Moxie died an hour later. Charles buried him under a big sycamore tree up the hill.

When Charles got back inside, he found a note from Gloria attached to a bunch of clippings. His father had been a graduate engineer from MIT and a Navy pilot. He had won the Distinguished Flying Cross and the Navy Cross both of which Charles had in his room in New York. Charles already knew those things about his father but what he didn't know was that he had died a drunk in skid row in Sydney, Australia several years before. The news triggered his memory. He recalled being at church with his father when two men had come in, arrested him and dragged him out.

Charles took the clippings and started off for McLeod's. On the way, images of the church, his father, McLeod and Moxie all blurred together. He blurted everything out about what had happened - Moxie and the news clippings and the memory of his father. He became so upset that McLeod took him to the bedroom and lay down with him to calm him. Charles woke later alone in the bed and realized that he and McLeod had had a sexual encounter. McLeod wanted to talk about it. He had known what he was for quite a while. Charles thought back to all the times he touched McLeod. It was he who had unknowingly been the pursuer.

A car door slammed. Charles looked out and saw that it was Barry. Gloria found out where Charles had been going and called her mother and Barry to tell them about the incident with Moxie. Charles had run off and she suspected he had gone to McLeod's - Percy had found out from his younger brother where Charles had been going all summer. Barry said St. Matthews had sent a letter. He was to report in two days. Charles said goodbye to McLeod who told him "vaya con Dios" or go with God.



## Chapter 11 Analysis

As it turns out, it was the beginning of the end of the relationship between Charles and McLeod. The slaying of Moxie led to a sequence of events. Gloria, vindictive to the end, left a pile of clippings for Charles about his father. He had been a drunk and died on skid row. McLeod's allure for Charles could have been that McLeod had the same addictive nature that his father had and that perhaps Charles himself had inherited.

Some could interpret McLeod's molestation of Charles as a way to comfort him in his grief, which is what McLeod alluded to after the fact. For this reader, that is a stretch. For a forty-seven-year-old man to have sex with a fourteen-year-old boy who has passed out does not pass the lowest bar for a compassionate act. And as anyone who reads the newspaper or listen to the news knows, the disparity between teacher and student creates a dangerous power imbalance between the two. That Charles could be anything but devastated and feeling abandoned once again by a father figure is beyond any rational thinking. The incident always calls the question to mind about the fourteen-year-old who was killed in the accident that McLeod had. Was he involved in a sexual way with that boy? The attempt by the author to portray McLeod's actions as noble does not succeed.



# Chapter 12

## Chapter 12 Summary

Charles passes the second exam and is accepted at St. Matthews. His mother and Barry get married while apartment hunting in New York. Initially Charles is engulfed in school work and does not give McLeod much thought. But as the semester wears on, thoughts of McLeod come rushing back to him. He has to see him and apologizes for the way that they parted. He hitches a ride back and to his astonishment, McLeod is gone. He goes inside and finds out that the electricity had been shut off. He opens one of the Terence Blake books and finds a note to him from McLeod.

McLeod writes that he is grateful for the friendship and love that they share. He tells Charles to forgive his father because he has done his best. Most of all, he tells him, forgive yourself. He tells Charles that Barry is his friend. He has come to McLeod's support whenever he needed it. He suggests that Charles should ask Barry about his stint as an Army pilot, which is something he didn't boast about.

Charles sleeps in McLeod's bed that night and is awakened by Barry. Charles learns from Barry that McLeod died about a month before in Scotland of a heart attack. Barry serves as the executor of McLeod's will. McLeod has left everything to Charles. Mickey and Richard were given away to a guy who has the same talent as McLeod. "Writing?" Charles asks. "No, salvaging flawed and fallen creatures," Barry tells him. "Like me," Charles thinks to himself.

## Chapter 12 Analysis

Charles is still seeking resolution about his father and McLeod. In the note that McLeod left for Charles, he thanks him for his friendship and asks him to forgive his father. By asking Charles to forgive his father, he is also asking Charles to forgive him - since McLeod was well aware that he had been a father figure for Charles. Charles goes against McLeod's previous advise to not make him into a hero. At the conclusion of the story, he equates McLeod with a person who can fixed damaged and forgotten creatures. What Charles doesn't see is that although he was a "damaged creature" that McLeod had taken in, McLeod had damaged him further.



# Characters

## Charles Norstadt

Charles Norstadt is the fourteen-year-old protagonist of "The Man Without A Face" by Isabelle Holland. Charles lives with his mother, seventeen-year-old sister, Gloria, and younger sister, Meg. Charles' mother has been married and divorced four times and is working on marriage number five. The family's permanent residence is in an apartment in New York City. As the story unfolds, the family has moved temporarily to their summer home on a peninsula off the Atlantic Coast.

Charles is not a happy youngster. His mother and sister, Gloria, are always upset with him. He can do nothing right and is criticized at every turn. The two women also criticize his father, his mothers' second ex-husband, in an attempt to tear down any positive image that Charles has struggled to build about his absent father. When he realizes that Gloria has changed her mind about going away to school in the fall and will remain in New York with the family, Charles knows he must act.

Charles has already muffed his entry exam for the St. Matthews boarding school which would take him away from home. When he learns that he will have a second chance at the exam, he is practical and honest enough to know that he will need help. It is his sister Meg, also a family outcast in her own way, who suggests that he ask the disfigured man in the village to tutor him. No one knows much about him except that he used to be a teacher.

Charles decides that having this man, Justin McLeod, tutor him would be ideal. The man, who was horribly disfigured in an accident, does not talk or associate with anyone in the community. To succeed, Charles must keep his plans from his mother and Gloria so they can't sabotage them. McLeod senses that the boy is trying to escape a bad situation and agrees to tutor him. Charles and McLeod eventually form a bond and McLeod becomes the only adult Charles has been able to trust in his young life. The tutoring is successful. Charles passes the entry exam and is accepted at St. Matthews. McLeod has tutored him well but also taught him about love, honesty, and independence.

## Justin McLeod

Justin McLeod is a reclusive and mysterious figure who lives in the resort town where Charles Norstadt and his family have a summer home. He is known as "The Man Without A Face" because half of his face is terribly disfigured. He lives alone up on a hill and doesn't associate with anyone. He is also known as the "Grouch" because he's so unfriendly and abrupt with everyone.

Charles seeks McLeod out to be his tutor. Rumor has it that McLeod had been a teacher. Since Charles doesn't want his mother and Gloria to find out that he's studying





for his entry exam into a boarding school, he figures that being coached by McLeod will keep his secret safe since the man has no contact with anyone in the community.

McLeod takes Charles on as a student but on his terms. Charles must be serious about his studies and follow all of McLeod's stringent rules and his schedule. Although remote at first, McLeod begins to take to the youngster. Charles, whose father had abandoned him, sees McLeod as a father figure. McLeod reveals the details of the accident that caused his disfigurement. He was burned in a car accident. He was drunk and at the wheel. A boy around Charles' age was in the car and was burned to death. McLeod lost his teaching position at St. Matthews and ultimately served two years in prison.

McLeod teaches Charles to reach out for what he wants in life and not just react to the negativity of people like his mother and sister. He also teaches him that liberty is nothing without a dream of what that liberty will gain for you. McLeod is successful in preparing Charles for his exams which he passes and gains acceptance to the school. McLeod dies of a heart attack during Charles' first semester at his new school.

## **Charles' Mother**

Charles' mother, whose name is never revealed, has been married and divorced four times. She is working on marriage number five as this story unfolds. She is a middle-aged woman who longs for the youth and beauty that she enjoyed in the past.

## **Gloria**

Gloria is Charles' seventeen-year-old sister. She is an A student and is beautiful and alluring. However, her sour personality trumps the many good assets that she has.

## **Meg**

Meg is Charles' younger sister. She is a little chubby and feels like an outcast like her brother. She and Charles share the same views about their mother and older sister.

## **Barry**

Barry becomes Charles' mother's fifth husband. He is an attorney and surprises Charles with his ability to see through Gloria and handle his mother. Barry knew McLeod during his ordeal and was apparently one of the few people to offer him support.



## **Moxie**

Moxie is Charles' pet cat. His mother doesn't allow the cat indoors because of her allergies. But when she's away, he lets the cat in. When it soils Gloria's bed, her boyfriend kicks the cat and kills him.

## **Percy**

Percy is Gloria's boyfriend. He is a student at Princeton and has an elitist attitude. However, he shows his lack of class when he kicks Charles' cat to death.

## **Richard**

Richard is McLeod's golden bay horse. Charles loves horses and, although Richard is spooked by everyone other than McLeod, Charles eventually wins his trust and is able to ride him.

## **Mickey**

Mickey is McLeod's dog. He found Mickey on the side of the road. He had been injured and abandoned by someone. Mickey was very protective of McLeod and had a reputation of "eating children."



# Objects/Places

## New York City

Charles Norstadt, his mother, and his two sisters live in an apartment in New York City. It is the family's permanent home.

## Summer Vacation Home

The story takes place at the family's summer cottage, which is located in a small community on a peninsula on the Atlantic coast.

## St. Matthews

Charles flunked the entry exam for St. Matthews Boarding School. He is determined to attend the school and learns that he will be accepted if he passes a second try at the exam.

## Justin McLeod's House

Charles is tutored by Justin McLeod in preparation for his entry exam. McLeod lives high atop a hill that overlooks the cove.

## McLeod's Barn

McLeod's estate includes a barn. McLeod keeps his horse, Richard, stabled in the barn.

## The Harbor

The Harbor of the small community is the local hangout for the kids of the families that are staying on the peninsula on summer break from school.

## The Cove

The cove is a favorite swimming spot of the older boys on the island. It is a dangerous place to swim due to the strong undertow that runs through its waters.



## Charles' Room

Charles has his own room at the summer cottage. He opens the window to let his cat, Moxie, in at night. He also sometimes crawls out the window and lies on the roof to sun himself.

## Church

Charles attends church with McLeod one Sunday. He becomes faint and almost passes out because he recalls a bad experience from long ago when he had attended church services with his father.

## High Flight

"High Flight" is a poem by John Magee about aviation. McLeod reads it aloud to Charles because he knows that Charles loves airplanes and wants to become a pilot.



# Themes

## Abandonment

Charles Norstadt is only fourteen years old but has already endured a life-time of abandonment. Eric, Charles' father, was his mother's second husband. His mother subsequently divorced Eric and went on to marry at least three more times. Not only did Charles suffer through the loss of his own father but the passage of several more father figures in the form of two step-fathers who she eventually divorced. Charles has no contact with his father but has built up an idealized image of him in an attempt to grasp onto some measure of self-esteem and self-worth. However, his mother and his older sister, Gloria, do everything possible to destroy Charles fragile identity by putting down Charles and Eric at every opportunity.

Charles was abandoned by his father and step-fathers at very young ages. However, his mother proved to be a constant source of abandonment. Each time she told him that his father was her biggest mistake ever and then compared Charles to him, she abandoned her position as his mother. She cast aside her parental responsibilities and nurturing in favor of some sort of self-justification that her own ego hungered for. But to a child like Charles who has no father, a mother who treats him with disdain leaves him orphaned and abandoned. Not only did she mistreat her son and abuse him both mentally and emotionally, she vicariously taught her daughter to treat him the same way. By allowing Gloria to mistreat her younger brother, she was sanctioning her abuse of him.

Charles was resilient in that he realized he wasn't as bad as his mother and sister would have him believe. He had a plan to get out as soon as he could. He had hopes and dreams that were above and beyond the destructive dynamic that permeated his home. Unfortunately, many children do not have the strength, maturity and wisdom to flee from such a situation; instead, they buckle under it.

## Low Expectations

Charles Norstadt is a bright fourteen-year-old boy. However, he really doesn't think he's very smart. There are reasons for him to believe that he's lacking in intelligent. One of the main reasons for his lack of self-esteem is that he has apparently been told most of his life that he's stupid. His mother infers as much and his older sister, Gloria, proclaims it openly. Gloria, who is an A-student, never misses an opportunity to rub it in and put him down. She loves to contrast her success in scholastics with her younger brother's failures.

The insults to Charles' intelligence does not stop with just him. They convince him that it's in his genes. His mother and sister put his father down with as much vigor. Charles' mother likes to say that marrying Eric, Charles' father, was the biggest mistake of her



life. Although Eric was an engineer, Charles' mother seemed to think that it was a profession for hillbillies. Her father and her other three husbands were all in academia, which she held in much higher regard.

Not surprisingly, Charles has lived up to the low expectations that his mother and sister have etched out for him. Through his thoughts, the reader learns that Charles consistently questions his intelligence and often thinks how "he's not that smart" when he is trying to figure something out. Children start out not knowing who they are. It is up to the parent to help guide them in finding that identity. When a parent teaches a child that he is not intelligent, he will believe it and behave accordingly. And, it will place barriers that will take much time and effort to break through.

## Communication

When there are problems in any relationship, a key factor of that dysfunction is the inability to communicate or to communicate effectively. Fourteen-year-old Charles, the story's protagonist, feels uncomfortable and unwanted in his family. His oft-married mother criticizes him non-stop and refers to his father, one of her ex-husbands, as the biggest mistake of her life.

Charles already feels the emptiness of not having a father and has developed an idealized image of him. By destroying that fragile ideal of the boy's father, she is sabotaging her own child's efforts to develop self-esteem and self-identity. In the case of Charles' mother, it is not a lack of communication that is the problem; rather, it is the very negative and demoralizing words she uses with her son that destroys her own relationship with him.

Charles detests his older sister who has taken the lead from her mother and also uses Charles as a verbal punching bag. At one point, Charles' mother acknowledges that her treatment of Charles and that of Gloria has been unfair. But disparaging Charles and his father has become such a part of the family dynamic that his mother is at a loss as to how to stop it. As a result, it continues and the mean words and cruel inferences continue to hurt Charles and drive him away.

Considering his home situation, it is no wonder that Charles has not developed good communication skills. When he winds up with the least likeliest of supporters in a man who is shunned by the community, he begins to learn to face his demons and strike out for what he really wants through their positive and honest heart-to-heart conversations.



# Style

## Point of View

"The Man Without A Face" by Isabelle Holland is a fictional work and is written in the first-person narrative from the point of view of the protagonist, fourteen-year-old Charles Norstadt. The reader is therefore privy to the thoughts and motivations of the main character as he makes his way through summer vacation at the family's vacation home on the Atlantic coast. The story is one of self-discovery and self-forgiveness within an extremely dysfunctional family. The protagonist feels overwhelmingly compelled to escape his family in order to survive and salvage what's left of his dignity and self-esteem.

Isabelle Holland is the author of a number of other books for both children and adults. The story hints at a budding emotional relationship between Charles and his tutor, Justin McLeod. The author treats the eventual sexual incident between the two males - one a child and the other nearly fifty - as somehow noble for the latter and self-awakening for the former. This rather unusual view of such a relationship is apparently one that is held by the author. The message it sends is a conflicted one. While the older man taught some worthy life lessons to Charles, his sexual encounter with a child should not be portrayed as anything other than what it was: a molestation that was illegal and, if past is prologue, would ultimately prove to be damaging to the youngster.

## Setting

Charles Norstadt and his family's permanent residence is in New York City. As the story of "A Man Without A Face" unfolds, the family has moved temporarily to their summer cottage on a peninsula on the Atlantic Coast. It is a cozy resort community that is comprised of small shops, a harbor, and a boathouse. The young kids of the visiting families hang out around the harbor most days. Some of the boys take dinghies to the cove. They swim there and play in the water. However, there is a dangerous undertow that runs through the cove and has taken the lives of several swimmers.

The family cottage is roomy with apparently separate bedrooms for Charles' mother and each of the three children. Charles' room is upstairs where he sometimes crawls out the window and suns himself on the roof. His cat, Moxie, is not allowed in the house but sneaks into Charles' room through the window.

Charles is being tutored by Justin McLeod who lives on a hill high atop the small community. His estate is gated and is remote and isolated from the rest of the town. Charles and McLeod spend most of their time in the den which has a large table where Charles studies. The room is lined with bookshelves crammed with books, some of which were written by McLeod. McLeod has a large piece of property, which contains a



barn where he keeps his horse, Richard. On occasion, Charles and McLeod hike down a rocky path from high above the cove to the shore below.

## Language and Meaning

Since "The Man Without A Face" is written from the perspective of a fourteen-year-old, the thoughts and feelings expressed in the book are typical of that age group. However, the writing is sophisticated and crisp indicating that Charles, the protagonist, is smarter than he has always been told he was. The reader is privy to Charles' angst over his dealings with his mother and older sister, Gloria. Although ostensibly Charles is planning on passing the entry exam because he wants to attend St. Matthews boarding school, the reader is aware, through Charles' thoughts, that he wants to pass the entries so he can get away from home.

Charles, is in fact, quite bright as evidenced by his well-thought out plans to have Justin McLeod tutor him. He thinks quickly of excuses for his whereabouts and the rather off-routine schedule that he establishes in the summer. His summer tutoring sessions are kept secret from his family, other than younger sister, Meg. He doesn't want anyone - namely his mother and Gloria - to sabotage his plans. The readers now how important it is for Charles to NOT live with his mother and Gloria for then next four years.

The confused and complicated relationship that Charles has with McLeod are also expressed in the uncertainty and doubt he feels about his tutor. There is a schizophrenia about his approach to his teacher and his teacher to him. At times they appear to want to build a friendship and at other times, those doors are slammed tightly. The reader is also made aware of the identity crisis that Charles faces, one that is not totally answered in this story. But Charles is only fourteen and at fourteen everything about one's self has not yet been decided.

## Structure

"The Man Without A Face," by Isabelle Holland, is separated into twelve chapters of generally medium length. The story is presented in a chronological order other than for a few references or flashbacks to prior times. The time span of the story begins in the summer when fourteen-year-old Charles has traveled with his family from his permanent residence in New York City to their summer home on the Atlantic coast. The story ends when summer does and Charles goes on to his boarding school.

Charles Norstadt is the protagonist of the story which is about a boy who feels abandoned by his family and wants to be accepted at a boarding school so that he can escape his unhappy home. Charles' character arc shows quite a dramatic transformation from the young man who is unsure of himself and is living in the shadow of an absent father who is disparaged by his mother and his elder sister to an independent youngster who strikes out on his own. Charles shows his independence when he devises his own plan for his future. His main goal is not to be a brilliant student nor to become particularly knowledgeable. His goal is to get away from his mother and





sister and work toward his ultimate dream of becoming an Air Force pilot. To that end, Charles makes a deal to be tutored by the mysterious man without a face.

Through his association with this man who is shunned by the community-at-large, Charles learns to live not by avoiding people and situations but by facing them head-on. In the end he learns that "freedom" is nothing by itself. A person must want to be free to do something.



## Quotes

"[Aunt Tandy] had her face lifted so often that they used a zipper instead of stitches" (Chapter 1, p. 7).

"If you're Jewish with a ho-hum IQ, man, you're in real trouble. The family looks on it as a disgrace second only to convenient to Christianity." (Chapter 2, p. 25).

"I'm not going to explain my teaching. I'm not interested in your good opinion. I don't care whether you like me or or hate me. But you're going to pass that exam, and if at moment I think you're not, because you're not doing what I tell you, then we stop" (Chapter 3, p. 46).

"I'd never before tried to tell anyone - least of all a grown-up - that I liked him. The words were piling up in the back of my throat until I could almost feel my eyes bulge. But nothing came out" (Chapter 4, p. 67).

"Are you quite sure you can't get your mother to listen? Maybe you've talked yourself into that so you don't have to confront her." (Chapter 5, p. 79).

"Just don't expect to be free from the consequence of what you do, while you're doing what you want" (Chapter 6, p. 87).

"I stopped because I suddenly realized I now could see Father's face very well. It had a red scar on one side, but it was getting smaller and smaller...All of a sudden it was McLeod" (Chapter 7, p. 99).

"I forgot he was an adult and a teacher and forty-seven years old. I even forgot what I had done to him. I forgot everything but the water and being in it and chasing and being chased, far from the shore with nothing around or moving except us. It was like flying" (Chapter 8, p. 117).

"One day you'll find I have feet of clay—and knees and legs. If you've built me up as a hero you'll never forgive me for breaking that image" (Chapter 9, p. 126).

"The sun was hot. I was still on my side, one arm under my head. Just as I was dropping off I put the other across his chest, feeling the skin and hair under my hand. A sort of an electric feeling went through me" (Chapter 10, p. 139).

"The only thing you can't be free from is the consequences of what you do" (Chapter 11, p. 150).

"You gave me something I hadn't ever again expected to have; companionship,

friendship, love - yours and mine. I know you don't care for that word. But try to learn not to be afraid of it" (Chapter 12, p. 154).



## Topics for Discussion

Why did Charles' mother consider Charles' father as her "one big mistake?" How did this attitude impact Charles?

Why was Gloria so relentlessly cruel to Charles? According to Charles' mother, why was Gloria so hostile toward him?

Why did Charles' mother marry so often? How did it impact her children?

Was McLeod hiding more from his past or from his disfigurement? Why?

Why did the reclusive McLeod agree to tutor Charles? How was McLeod different than Charles thought he would be?

Although it's not fully explained, what relationship might McLeod have had with the boy who burned in the car accident? What emotional connection did McLeod possibly make between Charles and the dead boy?

How does the author portray the intimacy that occurred between McLeod and Charles? What is your opinion of the incident? Why can it be dangerous for an older person to be in a powerful position over a younger person?