

The Maze Study Guide

The Maze by Will Hobbs

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Plot Summary

In the Maze, Rick Walker is mired in the foster care system, and his life seems like a maze he can't escape. While running away from a youth detention center, Rick ends up in Canyonlands National Forest, where he meets Lon, a biologist working to re-release endangered condors into the wild, and discovers two illegal gun-runners. Rick learns about condors, exposes the gun runners, and finds a way to let go of his anger.

As the novel begins, Rick Walker is in court for throwing rocks at a stop sign. He doesn't know why he did it. He was just full of anger. He is sentenced to six months in a youth detention center, where he reads at the library, works out, and keeps his head down. Still, Rick gets into trouble when he tells his social worker about corruption among the guards, and he becomes the target of planned beatings. Fearing for his life, Rick runs away. He hitchhikes, and then hides in a truck. He finds himself in the middle of nowhere, in Canyonlands National Forest.

Rick meets Lon Peregrino, another former foster child who is a biologist working on a program to re-release condors into the wild. Lon lets Rick stay with him, and while he is there, Rick learns about the condors. He also learns that two men who periodically camp in the park are doing something illegal, and Lon is in their way. Lon suspects the men are stealing pots from Native American sites.

Lon shows Rick how he hang-glides, sometimes with his pet eagle. Rick, who has had flying dreams all his life, is fascinated. Rick and Lon also talk about their lives. Lon was a foster child who ended up with a veterinarian, where he learned about birds. Rick's grandmother died when he was ten, and since then, he's been shuffled from foster home to foster home. He is filled with anger. Lon says he needs to let go of his anger to move on with his life.

Rick discovers that the two men are smuggling illegal weapons, which they have stashed in a canyon in the Maze, a series of interlocking canyons. One day when Lon is trying to recapture one of the condors who has flown too far, he stumbles on the men's second cache of weapons. The men shoot at Lon and force him to jump into a crevasse that he can't get out of. They expect the coming rain storm to drown him.

The men have stolen Lon's communication equipment and extra gas, so Rick can't get help. Rick flies Lon's hang glider over the Maze to locate Lon, then he makes a hazardous landing and rescues Lon as the storm begins to rage. Afterward, Lon arranges a court hearing for Rick. With the testimony of Lon and others, and with Rick's own statements of how he's changed, Rick's remaining sentence is converted to a summer working with Lon's condor rehabilitation program. Rick has let go of his anger and is ready to move on.



Chapters 1 and 2

Chapters 1 and 2 Summary

In *The Maze*, Rick Walker is mired in the foster care system, and his life seems like a maze he can't escape. While running away from a youth detention center, Rick ends up in Canyonlands National Forest, where he meets Lon, a biologist working to re-release endangered condors into the wild, and discovers two illegal gun-runners. Rick learns about condors, exposes the gun runners, and finds a way to let go of his anger.

In Chapter 1, Rick Walker is brought before Nevada judge Samuel L. Bendix for throwing rocks at a stop sign. Rick doesn't know why he threw the rocks. When he tells the judge that he doesn't know, the judge thinks he is conscienceless and compares him to a murderer. Rick's probation officer, Mike Brown, comes in, and his social worker Janice Baker whispers to Rick to apologize. Rick, his pride hurt, does not.

Rick's social worker tells the judge about Rick's history. He was raised by his grandmother, who died when he was ten. In the following four years, he was in foster homes in four California cities, and now lives in a group home in Reno. Mike Brown tells the judge that he doesn't know the boy well. He's only visited the group home three times in the six weeks Rick has been there. The judge asks Rick who he is, and Rick doesn't know. He only knows that he is angry. Rick is sentenced to six months in Blue Canyon Youth Detention Center, a serious prison. The judge wants to send him there because there is a better school program than in the less harsh detention center.

In Chapter 2, Rick has served four and a half months of his sentence. Rick is worried because he had told his Blue Canyon social worker that he had seen a guard take cash from a maintenance man. The social worker has been fired. Now Rick is worried. He plans to hide out in the gym and the library, where he can stay away from trouble. He gets his breakfast and sits across a table from Killian, who eats books and talks only with himself. Mr. B., the librarian, has told Rick that Killian's parents treated him like a dog, chained in the yard and eating from a dog dish.

Rick works out in the gym then goes to the library. Before Rick starts to read, he thinks about the librarian's project: a garden grown by the students. In late August, the maintenance men had ripped out the garden, claiming the kids had lost interest, though it had been a refuge for Rick and a source of fresh produce for the detention center. Rick goes back to reading his story "Escape from the Maze," the story of Daedalus and Icarus. Rick recalls hearing the story before, and relates it to the freedom of flying in his dreams. Rick feels his life is like the maze in which Daedalus is trapped. Mr. B tries to encourage Rick, but Rick thinks about the corrupt maintenance men who steal the air conditioners and pay off the guards.



Chapters 1 and 2 Analysis

In the family court hearing at the beginning of the story, Rick is sullen and unable to express himself. He knows that he is angry, but he doesn't understand his anger. His anger rules him. Rick doesn't remember throwing so many rocks at the stop sign. He had been lost in his anger. Although the judge's ruling and judgment of Rick is unfair, Rick is also culpable. He doesn't understand himself and feels he has no control of his life, so he acts defensively and harms himself. The court hearing at the beginning of the novel will be repeated at the end, but with a different outcome. This creates a circular story structure: the novel ends where it begins. It also highlights how Rick changes during the story.

At Blue Canyon, Rick just tries to get by, an echo of what he had told the judge about who he is. His goal is to keep his head down, and he does this by reading and working out. Rick does learn and grow at Blue Canyon, though. He meets Killian, and hearing the story of the "Boy Who Eats Glass," he realizes that others are in much worse positions than he is. His essentially good nature also comes out when he tells his social worker about a guard taking a bribe from a maintenance worker.

The Greek myth of Daedalus and Icarus is important to the story. The father and son are trapped in a maze, and this idea resonates with Rick, who feels trapped by life in his own maze. Daedalus and Icarus escape by flying, and Rick will also. His flying dreams are an indication of his desire to fly away from everything, but Icarus is a warning. Rick must grow up enough to learn both how to fly and how to come back to the world.



Chapters 3 and 4

Chapters 3 and 4 Summary

In Chapter 3, at dinner, Killian whispers to Rick that guards have given cigarettes to some of the tougher kids to beat him up. Rick is afraid for his life. He steals a fork and spoon to make hooks to pull himself over the sixteen-foot barbed-wire fence. He sits in the TV room, afraid to even go to the bathroom, and waits for evening. At 12:30 that night, Rick slips through an unfastened grate over where one of the stolen air conditioners should be. He climbs the fence with the aid of the bent fork and spoon, and covers the barbed wire with his jacket to get over. It's time to run, but where?

In Chapter 4, Rick is picked up hitchhiking by a car from Utah and crosses the state line. Rick is picked up by a car with Colorado plates, and tells the driver his bag had been stolen and he needs a ride to Denver, where his mother is. When a story about an escaped youth offender comes on the radio, the driver drops Rick off at a gas station, not taking any chances. Rick sees a Humvee parked there, and when Rick goes to look, a pit bull lunges at him. At the last minute, the gas station attendant calls the dog off and sends it back under the car.

Rick goes to the rest room and cleans the cut on his face, from when he jumped the fence. When he comes out, he hides in the camper of a truck with Arizona plates. During the long ride, he remembers a boy from his unit at the detention center who had gotten out and gone to Phoenix to work for his aunt at her cafe. They are basically strangers, though, so why should they help him? He thinks about his best foster family, who had moved to Southern California, but they couldn't adopt him because they had eight children already. They wouldn't hide him from the law. Meanwhile, the truck is driving into an incredible landscape, with no civilization nearby. Hungry, Rick looks in the coolers and finds only dead calves on ice. There is also a grocery bag full of hot dogs.

The truck finally stops, and the driver starts talking to a man. Rick steals a pack of hot dogs and sneaks out of the truck. He sees a large encampment but nothing else, and hides behind a rock formation.

Chapters 3 and 4 Analysis

When Rick is in danger, he doesn't see any way out except to run. He doesn't know where he's going, because he doesn't have a place in the world. Ever since his grandmother's death, he has been without a home, both physically and emotionally. When he is in trouble, he has nowhere to go to. He can only run away, not toward anything. This is analogous to the story of Icarus, who flies away, higher and higher. Because Icarus has no destination and flies only farther and farther away, he ultimately dooms himself. This is the true danger for Rick. He can't simply run farther and farther away. He needs to find a home.



When Rick escapes, he doesn't have a destination. He lets the world, and chance, take him to an unknown destination. In the same way, the foster care system has shuffled Rick around since he turned ten. He has had no home, only one destination after another, and none of them have been determined by Rick. Rick feels that he has no real control over what happens to him or where he goes, and this lack of control feeds into Rick's desire just to get by and his lack of goals and lack of any attempt to move toward something concrete. Rick has learned to be helpless.

Rick is alarmed when he finds himself in the back of a truck carrying dead calves. He is frightened of the men and their camp in the middle of nowhere. Rick feels he has reached a dead end in the maze, and he only wants to find his way out, to run away again.



Chapters 5 and 6

Chapters 5 and 6 Summary

In Chapter 5, Rick spends the night in the freezing desert, and he finally has the flying dream he remembers from his childhood. Instead of hovering over the lighthouse where his grandmother worked, as he had as a child, he hovers over Blue Canyon and a guard, Northcut, tries to wave him down. The teachers and kids all come out as he flies above, out of reach. When Rick wakes, he thinks about his grandmother, who died at only forty-seven. He sees the supply truck drive off and wonders how to get out of there.

Rick finds the keys in the ignition of the second truck and steals it. He eats the stolen pack of hot dogs. The road, though, dead-ends in five miles. He runs five minutes and finds himself at a huge canyon. With no choice, he turns back and drives past the camp. As he drives up the mountainous climb, he finds a road block. The angry, bearded man from the camp is waiting for him.

In Chapter 6, the man orders Rick out and into the passenger side of the truck. The man clears the road block and heads back down to the camp, where he makes coffee. When the man finally asks Rick what happened, Rick says his stuff had been stolen on the highway. Rick says he's worried about the wound on his face, and the man lets him use his first-aid kit.

Rick learns he is in Utah still, at the Canyonlands National Park, in a place called the Maze, a thirty-square-mile series of canyons. The man at the camp won't be leaving for two or three months, and the supply truck driver won't be back for two weeks. The man suggests that Rick could walk the sixty miles to Hanksville. Since it's October, Rick wouldn't die of heatstroke. The man tells Rick not to bother making up a lie about why he's there. He introduces himself as Lon Peregrino, and Rick tells Lon his real name.

Chapters 5 and 6 Analysis

When Rick steals the truck and drives away, he is still in his maze. He is fleeing in fear. Fear is one of the things that Rick will need to overcome, as well as anger. He will need to find the ability to trust, to open up to others, and to relate to people. Running away is a way of isolating himself. In Rick's dreams, people always try to call him to Earth, but he drifts away into isolation. When he drives away in the truck, he finds another dead end of his maze. When he turns around to drive the other way, the road block traps him: another dead end. Rick feels he can't escape. This trap is not what Rick imagines, though. Rick will be trapped with Lon, but like the birds that Lon temporarily cages, Rick will ultimately gain, instead of lose, from the situation.

The Maze stands as a representation of how Rick feels about his life. He feels that he is trapped in a maze from which he can't escape. The canyon Maze is attractive to Rick because of this. When he talks to Lon, Rick isn't forced to lie. This is a first step in

building trust between the two. Lon knows that Rick isn't ready to tell the truth, so he doesn't ask for it.



Chapters 7 and 8

Chapters 7 and 8 Summary

As Chapter 7 begins, Lon offers Rick some food and then goes about his routine, watching something with binoculars. Rick watches and eventually discovers Lon is tracking large, dark birds, using a radio and a telescope. Suddenly Lon jumps up and drives off without explanation. Rick looks around camp and finds a plastic shower bag, a portable toilet, and a spring. On his way back to camp, he encounters a restrained bald eagle. He also finds a mountain bike and considers stealing it. Even when he gets out, he won't know where to go, though.

Rick looks in Lon's tent and finds two motorcycle helmets, a typewriter, Lon's wallet with cash but no credit cards or photos, and a newspaper article showing Lon as a boy. He's with an eagle, and the article says his name is Kenny McDermott. Rick hears a car, the Humvee from the gas station, with the gas station attendant, named Nuke, and a stranger in a cowboy hat. Rick hides. From the men's conversation, he learns Lon has been hired by the government to watch endangered vultures, and his presence is interfering with the men's illegal activities.

In Chapter 8, Rick packs up some food, in case he needs to run off. He finds the spectacular edge of one of the Maze's canyons. He hides his food under a tree and thinks how the Maze is like the maze of his life. Lon returns, and ignoring Rick, eats cold, plain hot dogs and salad. Rick cooks some hot dogs for himself and asks Lon about his work. Lon says he is reintroducing six condors into the wild. Lon talks to Rick about the last Ice Age; condors have been around for that long, though few remain. Only nine adult condors are still alive, and they're in captivity for a breeding program. One of the young condors being released flies overhead, M4.

Rick begins to trust Lon and asks if Lon has radioed to the sheriff or someone about Rick. Lon hasn't, and he vaguely says it's because of a man, Ernie, he used to know. Rick tells Lon that he wants to stay at the camp, then he tells about the two men who had come. Lon recognizes the gas station attendant as Nuke Carlile, and the other man is named Gunderson. Lon guesses that the men steal artifacts from Native American sites. Lon says he's going to make a call, but Rick can stay for a few days. He warns Rick that he's better with birds than with people.

Chapters 7 and 8 Analysis

Lon doesn't tell Rick who he is or what he's doing in the desert, just as Rick doesn't tell Lon who he is. Lon is in many ways the opposite of the judge who demands to know who Rick is, a question that Rick is not prepared to answer. He doesn't demand that Rick explain who he is. He lets Rick simply exist, and the process of finding out who Rick is will be a slow one. Rick also must go through a process to find out who Lon is.



Rick learns about Lon through experience instead of through being told who Lon is, and experience is the best way to learn. Rick investigates the camp and Lon's tent, and these experiences will ultimately mean Rick will know Lon better than if Lon had simply told who he is and what he does.

Lon is able to talk to Rick about the Ice Age, something that Rick had never truly understood from school. Because the subject is related to real life through the condors Lon is working with, the Ice Age becomes more real to Rick. It is easier to understand. Rick shows himself to be intelligent, making connections between what Lon says and things he already knows.

M4 flies further and faster than the other condors in the group being released. He is a parallel to Rick, always flying away. He is talented, as well as being in danger, like Rick. Both Rick and M4 have potential, and both are in danger.

Carlile and Gunderson are introduced as the antagonists in the story. The two men dislike Lon, his mission to reintroduce condors to the wild, the national park, and the government. They set themselves in opposition to the world, instead of wanting to work with others and with the environment to make the world a better place. These two men represent what can happen when anger and isolation overtake someone.



Chapters 9 and 10

Chapters 9 and 10 Summary

In Chapter 9, Rick asks about the eagle he saw. Her name is Sky, and she can't live in the wild because her left wing had been amputated after she was shot. People also needlessly shoot condors and poison the squirrels they eat. Lon says M4 has roosted north, out of sight, which is a concern because the birds are supposed to form a flock. Lon also points out a pen camouflaged on the slope, where the birds had been acclimatized before their release. Over breakfast, Lon says he radioed a park ranger about the possible looters, but he doubts they've been caught.

Lon gets one of the calves, a stillborn dairy calf. He asks Rick to drive the steep 800 feet up to a flat where they will leave the "bird feed." Then, they take a look around. Two condors are tentatively watching an eagle feed on a carcass. The eagle hisses as the condors approach, scaring them backwards. When the eagle leaves, the condors feed. Rick and Lon plant the new carcass, and watch as ravens come. M4 flies overhead. He hasn't eaten yet, and Lon hopes for him to descend. He doesn't, but four other condors do. Lon has Rick practice driving back.

Chapter 10 begins with Rick dreaming of flying again, this time over the canyons with a condor. Then he finds himself alone, over water, and unsure. Rick wakes to Lon's singing. Lon has Rick wear a heavy glove and hold the eagle on his arm as they drive up the mountain, where he unpacks a hang glider. He tells Rick his job will be to drive out to get him after he glides off the cliff. Lon points out the landmarks, including a group of buttes called Standing Rocks. He tells Rick where to pick him up and explains that Sky will fly with Lon.

Rick tells Lon about his flying dream, and Lon has had similar dreams. Now he dreams of hang gliding. Rick asks what the dreams mean, and Lon personally thinks it's simple: the desire to fly. Lon gets ready to take off, and explains to Rick how to contact him by radio if necessary. Lon runs to the edge of the cliff and flies down, with Sky on his back.

Chapters 9 and 10 Analysis

In Chapter 9, Rick learns more about Lon and what he does in the desert. Rick is becoming involved in Lon's work with birds. Having something concrete to do, something that is real and accomplishes something in the world, helps Rick. It gives him a way to focus his energies, to learn, and to grow.

M4 isolates himself, roosting away from the rest of the flock. Lon knows that this endangers M4's survival. Rick, like M4, needs to join the human race, to find a place, a home, and a family. Unlike most young people, Rick doesn't start out with a family. He needs to find somewhere that he belongs with little help. In order to ultimately belong

somewhere, Rick is going to need to open himself up, and he is on his way to opening up to Lon.

Rick's flying dreams become focused in reality in Chapter 10. He finds a way that he can fly in the real world, and bring his dreams to life. At the same time, he needs to stay grounded. In his dream, he ends up alone and struggling over an ocean. He is isolated, and isolation is what Rick needs to pull himself out of. His problem is not so much that he is a foster child, or even that he had been sentenced to a youth detention center. His problem is that he is isolated, without a community of support to help him grow up. Like the condors, he has no mother and father to teach him.



Chapters 11 and 12

Chapters 11 and 12 Summary

In Chapter 11, Rick is in the landing zone, and Lon is packing up his glider, when a park ranger arrives. Rick is nervous, and Lon says not to talk unless he must. The ranger, Joe Phipps, shakes hands with Lon. After some small talk, Lon asks about his message. The ranger tells him that Nuke Carlile is an old friend of the sheriff's, so he hasn't been stopped. Joe also says he's being transferred to Crater Lake, Oregon. Joe is worried about leaving. If the sheriff has mentioned Lon's name to Nuke, Lon might be in trouble. Nuke is strongly anti-government, and considers Canyonlands National Park to be government land, not public land for all the people.

Nuke used to be a cattle rancher, and his grazing permit for the Maze had been taken away when the land became a national park. He's bitter and wouldn't even take the other permit the government offered him on better land. There was only one canyon into which he couldn't get cattle, Jasper Canyon, and Rick supposes the pit bull Jasper is named after it. The canyon is now closed to everyone, an untouched natural area for scientific study. Joe speculates that Nuke might have caused the fire that burned down the ranger station the previous spring.

Finally, Joe asks about Rick, and Lon introduces him as his nephew. After Joe leaves, they head back to camp and eat, and again Lon has cold, plain hot dogs. When Rick asks if he can hike in the Maze sometime, Lon snaps that he's not Rick's parent. Rick leaves Lon alone with his condors and takes a nap. He wakes to a storm. Lon is watching M4 fly too far: out past Chimney Rock, one of the farthest Standing Rocks. Lon calls M4 Maverick, a nickname at which he had snapped and dismissed when Rick had suggested it earlier.

In Chapter 12, Lon and Rick drive past the Standing Rocks. Lon tracks M4 with his radio, toward the Maze. Lon is worried that without the winds of the cliffs, M4 won't be able to lift off. They find M4 in the landing zone and watch him in the rainstorm. As dark falls, M4 still hasn't taken off. They leave him for the night, and Lon suggests cooking steaks, which he usually does by holding them over the fire with his hands. Rick decides he'll cook the steaks in a frying pan and suggests inviting Sky to join them, too.

Chapters 11 and 12 Analysis

Just as government systems haven't worked very well for Rick, an essentially good kid who has wound up in worse and worse situations because of a lack of support, the government doesn't work very well when Lon calls in a tip about the illegal activities of Carlile and Gunderson. Carlile is friends with the sheriff, so he is let go without question. However, this isn't entirely the failing of the government and its systems, in both cases. Rick is sullen and short with the judge at his hearing, and he is too proud to apologize

for what he's done. In the case of Carlile, Lon doesn't tell the whole story to the police. He doesn't want to involve Rick because of Rick's troubles with the law.

The systems don't function well when the human beings involved don't participate well, and that doesn't only apply to Lon and Rick. The sheriff is not participating well when he ignores the possibility that his friend is guilty, and the judge is not participating well when he makes a snap judgment that Rick is conscienceless. However, these authority figures are just fallible human beings, and they cannot always make the best decisions, especially without full knowledge, which is something both Rick and Lon hold back.

Lon feels a special fondness for M4, whom Rick nicknames Maverick. M4 flies off before he is ready. He wants to go far and go fast. Although Lon warns against considering the birds to be like human beings, recognizing that they are fundamentally different than people, with their own talents and bird perspectives, he feels a deep kinship for the birds. He wants to help M4, just as he wants to help Rick. When Lon starts calling M4 "Maverick," it shows his deep affection for the bird.



Chapters 13 and 14

Chapters 13 and 14 Summary

In Chapter 13, Lon and Rick find that Maverick has flown, but away from the flock. Lon is concerned. If he goes further east, he'll be lost. Lon begins typing up his field notes from the previous day, which will go on the Condor Project's website. Afterwards, they drive back out to the Doll House formation where Maverick is, and Lon decides to try to catch him with the large net he has. Lon moves slowly along the ground until the bird spots him. Then Lon runs, but the bird takes off and flies away, headed north. Lon plans to come back in the dark, with a shovel, a saw, plastic buckets, a lantern, and bird feed.

Chapter 14 begins half an hour before dawn, when Lon and Rick take their positions. As Rick watches the bird in the early hours, he imagines flying. Ravens fly to the carcass they've left. The condor looks on, but doesn't fly. Meanwhile, Lon waits in a pit they've prepared and hidden. Just after 2:00, the bird lifts off. He watches the ravens and then scares them off. Tentatively, he begins to feed on the calf. He pauses to scare off the ravens that have approached again, and then looks around, suspiciously. Suddenly Lon reaches up from his hiding place and grabs the condor's legs.

Rick runs up and slowly moves away the carcass and the camouflage. Then he helps Lon out of the pit. They wrap Maverick in a jacket to make him less nervous. Lon's arms are cramped, and he says Rick will have to take the bird. Rick is nervous, but Lon tells him to get in the truck and gives him instructions how to take the condor. As they drive away, Rick is concerned at the speed of Maverick's heartbeat. Lon reassures him that the high heart rate is one of the things that helps the condor fly. Lon drives up to the holding pen, and they release Maverick into the cage.

When Rick calls the cage a jail, Lon protests that it's a home to help Maverick get back on track. Rick is sure of ending up in jail himself, and Lon says they need to talk. Rick tells Lon about escaping from Blue Canyon Youth Detention Center, about his six-month sentence for throwing rocks at a stop sign, and how he previously had stolen some CDs. Lon promises Rick can stay there at least until Josh comes back with a delivery.

Chapters 13 and 14 Analysis

In Chapter 13, Maverick is in danger. He is like Icarus, going far afield of his own flock. The goal is for Maverick to join with the flock and become part of society, instead of moving out on his own too far and too fast. One of the problems with Maverick's behavior is that he is still a young condor, too young to handle the long flights on his own, just as Rick is still too young to be on his own. Icarus is also young, in the story. He is Daedalus's son, too young to handle flying up into the sky.

In Chapter 14, Lon and Rick recapture the condor. Rick is learning through his experiences with Lon and the condors. He is acquiring the patience needed to sit and



watch the birds for hours. He is also learning the skills and responsibilities of an adult. He cooks for himself, and he drives Lon's truck. Because Lon lets him take on more responsibility, Rick is able to grow. Even holding Maverick as they drive him back to the cage is a responsibility that is helping Rick to change and grow up.

Rick's calling the cage a jail, just like where he will end up, shows how he sees his life. He doesn't think there is any exit to the maze in which he's found himself. Still, he has changed. He has opened up enough to tell Lon about himself, and he has learned to trust Lon.



Chapters 15 and 16

Chapters 15 and 16 Summary

In Chapter 15, Rick asks Lon if you could hang-glide in the clouds. Lon says there is too much rough wind. Hang gliders use thermals, warm rising air, to lift them, as high as sixteen thousand feet. Then, they leave the warmer air and glide down, looking for a new thermal. As they prepare to watch the coming storm, Lon reveals that he, too, had been foster child. One of his foster fathers, Ernie Wilson, was a vet working with eagles and hawks. Lon's original name was Kenny McDermott, and his teenage mother had abandoned him as a baby.

Rick tells Lon about his fifteen-year-old mother running off and about being raised by his grandmother. Lon had been adopted as a baby, but his adopted mother left. His father beat him, and he ended up in foster care. After three foster homes, he ended up with Ernie. As it rains and hails, Lon tells Rick about saving an eagle from a bobcat trap. He released it 43 days later and has been into birds ever since. Rick explains about his grandmother's death. The rain stops suddenly, and they run to the Maze to see the waterfalls caused by the downpour. Lon cautions Rick that he needs to find his way past his hardships, forgive, and make a life for himself. Too much anger will hurt him. Lon explains that he renamed himself after the peregrine falcons that had made him realize he could study birds in college and make that his living.

In Chapter 16, Rick and Lon release Maverick. He flies up and up on a thermal, then returns and eats with the others. As they watch the feeding, two rival eagles come to the carcass. They fight in midair. That afternoon, Rick goes to the Maze. He leaves markers at each turn to find his way back. As he is about to return, he finds strange paintings on the rock. When he comes back to camp, Lon is excited. Maverick has joined the flock.

That afternoon Carlile's Humvee heads to the camp, just as Maverick has an encounter with an eagle. Maverick heads toward the camp, low to the ground, as Carlile, Gunderson, and the dog Jasper get out of the truck. Lon warns Carlile to get the dog back in the truck. The birds fall to the ground close to camp, locked together. The dog runs toward them as Rick gets the net. The dog leaps in the air and attacks Maverick, and Lon leaps on the dog. As the dog turns to attack Lon, Rick captures it with the net. The condor is dead. Rick is filled with sorrow and anger. Lon gives him a feather. The bird will be autopsied. After Carlile and Gunderson leave, Lon says there's only one way he can cope with the loss. He asks Rick to come hang-glide with him.

Chapters 15 and 16 Analysis

Hang gliding is an important element of both the story's plot and themes. Lon loves to fly. It makes him more like the birds that he loves. It gives him the feeling of freedom that he needs, after his troubles as an abused youth and a foster child. Sky also loves to



fly. It helps Sky experience her natural element, even though she cannot use her wing anymore. She, like Lon, is injured, and needs to heal emotionally as well as physically. Hang gliding helps both of them with their emotional healing.

Rick also is fascinated with hang gliding. His dreams of flying show his need to feel that he can rise above his situation, that there is a way out of the maze of his life. Rick and Lon have a lot in common, and their conversation on hang gliding leads naturally into a conversation about their lives. Both had been abandoned by young mothers, and both ended up in the foster care system, though for different reasons. Lon is essentially a grown-up version of Rick; in him, Rick can see the possibilities for his own future. Lon cautions Rick against carrying anger with him. He knows that the world is unfair, but he also knows that being mired in anger does not help you find a different life.

Maverick's death brings to the forefront Carlile and Gunderson as villains. The death of Maverick is useless and unnecessary, and the only reason for it is the two antagonists' hatred, fear, and anger. Carlile essentially uses his dog as a murder weapon. Maverick's death also highlights the dangers to Rick. Rick is a parallel to Maverick. He has the potential to grow up and live a happy, productive life. He also could self-destruct. If Maverick had not been such a good flier, he might not have ended up in a fight with an eagle, and been in the position to be killed by Carlile's dog.



Chapters 17 and 18

Chapters 17 and 18 Summary

In Chapter 17, Rick is nervous as he and Lon wait to take off in the hang glider, but he says they should try for a thermal. Lon tells Rick to point his thumb down if he needs to land. Only Lon has a parachute, but one will do for both of them. Besides, Lon has never had to use one. Finally, they take off, and Rick has to stop himself from grabbing the control bar, which Lon had warned him not to touch. Once Rick positions himself, though, he finally feels what it's like to fly.

The fliers finally find a thermal over Lizard Rock, one of the Standing Rocks. They rush upwards. Rick can see the whole Maze. At fourteen thousand feet, they come out, drop down, and find another thermal. Finally they land. That night, Lon tells Josh on the radio about M4's death, leaving out that Carlile ordered the dog to attack. He doesn't want Carlile to overhear that on the open broadcast. He also asks Josh to take over for him for a couple of weeks. He's planning on driving Rick to Reno to talk to the judge who sentenced him. When Lon asks if anyone else might help, Rick mentions Mr. B, the librarian.

As Chapter 18 begins, Rick thinks of flying as he falls asleep, and dreams of hang gliding. The next day, Lon says he'll teach Rick to fly by himself. As they're ready to leave, Lon can't find his radio's antenna. As they leave, they pass Carlile's camp. Rick asks if something Lon had mentioned referred to Icarus. Lon has a theory: The story of Icarus was real, and the "wings" were hang gliders. Icarus got caught in an updraft. As they're talking, Lon suddenly realizes his radio is missing. Carlile must have stolen it, and the antenna.

Lon and Rick arrive at the dunes where Rick will practice. As they put together the glider, Lon explains how it works. Rick focuses intently. Finally, they are ready. Rick runs to lift off, but he crashes. They try unsuccessfully all morning. Finally, on their last try before giving up, he flies. He lands badly, but he is elated. Lon promises they'll try again tomorrow.

Chapters 17 and 18 Analysis

Lon takes Rick for a ride in his hang glider. This is another step in Rick's process of learning to be independent. It is something for him to focus on, besides anger and sorrow at Maverick's death, and consequently it gives him something positive on which to focus, besides anger and sorrow at his grandmother's death and his life in the foster care system. Rick is stepping from his dreams into the real world, where he finds that he can fly, if he approaches it the right way. As a mentor, Lon can guide Rick into the world, first by doing things with him, and then by teaching him to do them on his own. Because Rick is interested in hang gliding, he is a more effective learner. He pays close attention



to Lon during his lessons, and he is willing to keep trying, even though the task is difficult. Because of Rick's attention and persistence, he is quickly successful.

Lon plans to mentor Rick through the next stage in his life: facing the judge who sentenced him to the detention center. Lon plans to stand by Rick as he moves forward into the next stage of his life, though the process frightens Rick, who is sure he will end up in jail.



Chapters 19 and 20

Chapters 19 and 20 Summary

In Chapter 19, as Lon and Rick return, Carlile's camp is empty. Lon observes the condors then heads out to feed and watch them. When Lon is gone, Rick gets an idea. He takes the spotting telescope and goes out to Lizard Rock on the mountain bike to spy on Carlile. Rick becomes convinced Carlile's stolen artifacts are in Jasper Canyon, where they would be secure since the canyon is closed to the public. He slips into the Maze and finds a ridge where he can spy into Jasper Canyon. As he's about to give up, he spies Gunderson filling a box with small metal cylinders. He thinks they're pipe bombs, and he sees military rifles and other weaponry. Gunderson is in a cave only accessible by a plank temporarily set across a gap.

Rick gets lost coming back, as the storm is about to break. He ends up near Chimney Rock, far from his bike. The pit bull and Humvee appear behind him, and he runs toward Lon's camp. He runs into a canyon and finds a jump he can make but the dog can't. He keeps running, but the canyon dead-ends. Trapped, he hides the scope and calls up to Carlile for help, but Carlile refuses. The rain has started. Rick finally finds rocks and makes a platform to climb out. The Humvee is gone. Rick makes his way back to camp and tells Lon all that's happened.

In Chapter 20, Rick practices hang gliding again. As they head home, Carlile and Gunderson are packing up camp. On Rick's third day hang gliding, he tackles the highest dune and begins working on turns. He goes up almost 300 feet. That afternoon, he feels ready to go see the maturing condors. The next day, Day Four, Rick works on landings, and in the afternoon they watch the condors again. In the evening, they listen to a radio broadcast and learn that a Pacific hurricane, Pandora, is heading to the coast.

On Day Five, Rick catches two thermals. Lon calls him Icarus, then Maverick, and tells him to come down. Rick rises almost 400 feet before making a smooth landing. Rick jokingly asks about trying the cliff, and Lon says perhaps he'll be ready the day before they leave. That night, the Humvee is back, though. The next day is almost too windy, but they hang-glide anyway, Rick rising 412 feet. That afternoon, M1 flies out to Chimney Rock, near Carlile's camp. Packing the radios, they head out after it.

Chapters 19 and 20 Analysis

Rick is intelligent and active. He has the same attitudes as Maverick. Though he is young, he takes off on his own. When Lon leaves, Rick uses his initiative to spy on Carlile, and he finds out that instead of Native American relics, the men are stashing illegal weapons. Just like Maverick, Rick's intelligence and aptitude gets him into danger. Rick finds himself trapped in the canyons and at the mercy of the villains he is chasing. They leave him to possibly die in the canyon. This scene is foreshadowed by



the earlier rainstorm and the torrential waterfalls that they create in the Maze. The scene also foreshadows the ending of the novel, when Lon becomes trapped in a similar situation, with an even worse storm approaching.

Rick is able to use his intelligence to get out of danger. He continues working on his hang gliding, and Lon calls him Icarus, strengthening the parallel between Rick's story and the Greek myth. Lon uses the names Icarus and Maverick as warnings to Rick not to take too many chances and do too much. After all, Rick is still a youth. For the reader, these warnings build trepidation. What will happen to Rick? Icarus fell to his death. Maverick was caught by Jasper. Is a similar fate waiting for Rick, who also flies too high and too fast?



Chapters 21 and 22

Chapters 21 and 22 Summary

As Lon and Rick run off at the beginning of Chapter 21, they hear a rifle. When they get to Carlile's camp, he claims he had been target shooting. Lon sends Rick back to camp as he goes to track the condor. He says if he's not back an hour after dark, to drive to a phone and call Josh, who works on another condor re-release program. When Rick gets back to camp and tries to fill up the trunk's gas tank, he realizes Carlile has stolen their gas. As Rick waits for Lon to return, he's ready to run and hide in the Maze at any sign of trouble. Hours later, he hears distant gunshots.

Rick heads out toward Carlile's camp. When he arrives, he hears the two men arguing. He learns they had followed Lon as he came close to their second cache and shot to scare him away. They think Lon's left trapped in the canyon, where the coming storm will kill him. They're concerned a search party might stumble on their stash, or that Rick might have seen something. Rick sneaks back to camp and spends the night in an opening in the rocks, where he can keep watch. No one comes. On the radio, Rick learns the storm is approaching. He is frightened, but he begins to form a plan.

In Chapter 22, Rick goes to the cliffs and prepares to hang-glide over the Maze to find Lon and hopefully establish radio contact. As he prepares, he sees the Humvee leaving. Rick brings a climbing rope, and Maverick's feather for luck. The storm is coming in, and as Rick is almost ready, he sees the Humvee returning. The two men and dog come toward Rick. Carlile commands his dog to attack, and Rick runs for the cliff edge. He takes off, but he soon sees the pit bull, latched onto his harness bag. He tries to stabilize, and suddenly the weight is gone. The dog has lost its grip and fallen.

Chapters 21 and 22 Analysis

M1's foray into the far rocks is a repeat of M4's behavior. After the tragedy of M4's death, Lon's concern for the condors is heightened. M1 is not only taking the natural risks of a flight. Unknown to the bird, Carlile and Gunderson form the greatest danger. This echoes the situation of endangered animals in general. Human encroachment, hunting, pollution, and needless killing often are what endanger animals, not the normal dangers of the wild.

Carlile and Gunderson are also a clear danger to Rick and Lon. Their communications are disabled, and their gas is gone. Lon becomes trapped, in a similar situation to the one in which Rick found himself recently. Rick is left with few options, with a storm coming. During the novel's climax, Rick is called upon to put to use the lessons that he's learned during the novel. He must make a dangerous, potentially deadly flight, one that tests his adulthood and capabilities. If Rick has learned enough, he can survive and help Lon. Just like Maverick, Rick is attacked by Jasper at Carlile's command, as he



takes off from the ground. Maverick became a victim, but Rick has progressed enough in his knowledge to succeed. Instead, Jasper becomes a victim, falling from the hang glider.

In many ways, Jasper is an innocent victim. He has been trained by Carlile to be an attack dog. The dog only follows its master. Unlike Lon, Carlile corrupts nature. He twists it to his own ill-imagined ends, and Jasper ultimately suffers for it.



Chapters 23 and 24

Chapters 23 and 24 Summary

As Chapter 23 begins, Rick is climbing in his hang glider, and he sees the Humvee heading off toward town. He also sees M1 heading back toward home. He's at 7,560 feet. Calming himself, he flies on, rocked by turbulent air. At 11,000 feet, he starts feeling cold. He tries to break out of the thermal, but can't. At 16,000 feet, he's finding it hard to breathe. Soon he would be in the clouds, and then he would tumble. He fights and struggles, and finally begins losing altitude. Then he is dropping fast, and suddenly he is more stable, out of the thermal.

Rick flies over the canyons, looking for Lon and calling on the radio. He flies lower to see. Finally, he sees the red of Lon's jacket and hears Lon on the radio. The storm's about to break, and Lon wants Rick to leave. Rick flies over and circles back, followed by lightning. Rick makes a harrowing canyon landing in the rising rain. His left arm is broken. Rick heads toward Lon, calling out in the rain. He slips and falls on his arm, causing horrible pain. He keeps going, calling out Lon's name until he hears a reply. Rick ties his rope to a boulder so Lon can climb out. Together, they head out of the canyons. As they make the last hundred-foot climb, Lon ties them together with the rope. Back at camp, they see five excited condors leaping about in the rain. Around midnight, Josh finally arrives.

In Chapter 24, Rick is in court again. Janice Baker, the social worker, is there. So are Lon and Mr. B. The judge reads Rick's file. As Rick nervously thinks that the judge won't take the letters in the file seriously, he tries to push away negative thoughts. Suddenly the judge, in his black robe with his bald red head, reminds him of a condor. The judge finishes reading the request to suspend the remaining six weeks of Rick's sentence. The judge asks how Rick broke his arm, and Rick answers that it was a fall. The judge asks again who he is, and Rick asks to stand.

Rick says that since his grandmother's death he's been like a rat in a maze, but he's changed and ready to make something of himself. When the judge asks, Rick says he knows helping the U.S. attorney's investigation of illegal weapons won't help him in this court. The judge, though, says the court is grateful for his help in catching Carlile and his partner. The judge also recognizes that there is corruption at Blue Canyon, though he is displeased with Rick's escape. The judge transfers Rick to a group home in Page, Arizona, on probation, with twelve weeks work for Condor Project instead of his remaining sentence. As Rick and Lon drive away past Blue Canyon, he wonders if Killian's parents should be forgiven, and then he realizes he's forgiven his own. He'd moved on.



Chapters 23 and 24 Analysis

Rick is able to successfully find Lon and save him from the onslaught of rain in Chapter 23. Unlike Maverick and Icarus, Rick is grown-up enough to escape danger and be successful in his flight. Rick is flying not only to fly, though. It is important to realize that Rick is not merely trying to escape, as he had been when he fled the youth detention center at the beginning of the novel. Rick is flying toward something. He has a clear goal, and that goal is intertwined with his connection to humanity. He is trying to save Lon, his mentor, not merely striking out recklessly into the universe or isolating himself from the world. Rick has changed.

The change in Rick is highlighted in Chapter 24, at his hearing. In many ways, it is a repeat of the hearing at the beginning of the novel, giving the story its circular structure. The judge asks Rick the same question: who are you? Rick has grown enough to have an answer to that question. He expresses in his own words the character arc he has gone through, as the novel's protagonist.

Characters

Rick Walker

Rick Walker is a fourteen-year-old foster child, living in a group home in Reno at the start of the story. He is filled with anger about the problems in his life, beginning with his mother abandoning him and accelerated by his grandmother's early death from cancer. Rick has been in the foster care system for four years, and his anger leads him to mindlessly throw rocks at a stop sign. He's not even aware of how many he's throwing. Rick finds himself in front of a judge and unable to explain his actions or express his emotional problems. He is sentenced to six months in a youth detention center.

Rick is essentially a good kid. He sees the corruption at the youth detention center, and he tells his social worker about a payoff from the maintenance workers to the guards. However, in the corrupt system of which he's a part, he finds only trouble. Discovering that he's a target of beatings, he runs away. Rick is fleeing throughout the beginning of the novel, but he doesn't know where. He mindlessly wants to get away from the maze in which he is mired, but he doesn't know what he needs to do to escape. He has nowhere to escape, no home, and no family. He is isolated from the world.

When Rick finds himself in Canyonlands National Park with a biologist working to reintroduce condors to the wild, he finds a home. He makes a connection with Lon, and he relates to the condors. He has a context in which he can learn and grow. Ultimately, Rick is able to grow enough to overcome adversity, help Lon out of trouble, and explain how he has changed to the judge in charge of his case. Rick finds his way safely out of the maze that is his life.

Lon Peregrino

Lon Peregrino is a former foster child, born Kenny McDermott, who renamed himself after one of the large birds that he loves, the peregrine falcon. Lon feels that he is not good with people, and he is very reserved with Rick when he first meets him. Lon's reticence serves to put Rick at ease, and the two form a bond. Lon understands Rick because they come from similar backgrounds.

Lon lives a solitary life, but he is able to help Rick overcome his anger and fear. Lon is actually very good with Rick. He gives Rick space when he needs it, and he gives Rick trust and responsibilities that help Rick grow up. By bringing Rick with him and teaching Rick about what he does, Lon teaches Rick patience and gives him an interest outside of himself. Lon is able to talk to Rick about his anger and tell Rick how important it is to let go of anger and not let it eat you up inside.

Lon has a great respect for nature. He loves his birds, and he is devastated by Maverick's death. Because of Maverick's death, he is especially concerned about M1 when she flies out toward Carlile's camp. Lon is a caretaker. He takes care of Rick, and



he also takes care of the condors. He is doing for them what Ernie did for him. Lon's care is repaid by Rick when he takes great chances to rescue his mentor.

Nuke Carlile

Nuke Carlile is a former cattle rancher. He had a contract with the government allowing him to graze cattle in the Maze, until it was turned into a national park. Carlile is bitter about losing his grazing land. He has bought a gas station in a nearby town, and he is using Jasper Canyon, the most inaccessible canyon in the Maze, to hide illegal weapons that he is smuggling with a partner. Carlile is upset that Lon's camp is interfering with his plans, and he doesn't understand or appreciate Lon's work.

Samuel L. Bendix

Judge Bendix is the family court judge who sentences Rick to six months in a youth detention center and presides over the two hearings at the beginning and end of the story.

Mike Brown

Mike Brown is Rick's probation officer, who has had little time to spend with Rick.

Janice Baker

Janice Baker is Rick's social worker, who also has little time to spend with Rick.

Killian/The Boy Who Eats Glass

Killian is a disturbed boy in the Blue Canyon Youth Detention Center, whose parents kept him chained in the back yard and made him eat from a dog dish. Killian warns Rick that he is the potential target of beatings.

Mr. B.

Mr. B. is the librarian at Blue Canyon Youth Detention Center, who encourages Rick in his reading and who begins the youth gardening program that is later dismantled by the maintenance staff.

Northcut

Northcut is the guard for Rick's unit at the Blue Canyon Youth Detention Center.



Josh

Josh is a biologist who works at another condor reintroduction site. Josh delivers food and supplies to Lon's camp, and Rick hitches a ride by hiding in the back of Josh's truck.

Gunderson

Gunderson is Nuke Carlile's partner in smuggling weapons, but Carlile is clearly the leader.

Joe Phipps

Joe Phipps is a park ranger, who is a friend of Lon's. Lon leaves a message for Joe that he suspects Nuke Carlile of stealing artifacts. Joe is being transferred to Crater Lake, Oregon.

Ernie Wilson

Ernie Wilson was Lon's foster father, a veterinarian who encouraged Lon's interest in birds.



Objects/Places

Canyonlands National Park

Canyonlands National Park is a national park in Utah where Lon is working to reintroduce condors to the natural environment. It is the location of the Maze, and the place where Lon has his camp. At Canyonlands National Park, Rick learns to let go of his anger and take the first steps into adulthood.

The Maze

The Maze is an interlocking system of canyons running over a large area in Canyonlands National Park.

Jasper Canyon

Jasper Canyon is the most difficult canyon to access in the Maze. This is where Carlile and his partner hide their cache of illegal weapons.

Maverick/M4

Maverick, also known as M4, is one of the condors Lon is introducing to the wild. A precocious flier, the young condor is ultimately killed by Carlile's dog Jasper.

Hanksville

Hanksville is the small town near Canyonlands National Park where Carlile owns a gas station.

Jasper

Jasper is Carlile's pit bull. Carlile has trained Jasper as an attack dog and uses him to attack first Maverick and later Rick.

The Humvee

Carlile drives a military-looking Humvee.



Standing Rocks

The Standing Rocks are a series of buttes that rise up in the desert in Canyonlands National Park, creating interesting rock formations.

Chimney Rock

Chimney Rock is one of the farthest of the Standing Rocks, near where Carlile's camp is.

The Cliffs

The cliffs are where the condors roost, and where Lon takes off on his hang gliding trips.

Thermals

Thermals are currents of warm air that a hang glider can use to ride upwards into the air.

Blue Canyon Youth Detention Center

Blue Canyon Youth Detention Center is where youths who commit serious crimes in and around Reno, Nevada are sent. Rick is sentenced to Blue Canyon after he throws rocks at a stop sign because the judge thinks that Rick will benefit from the better school at Blue Canyon.

Sky

Sky is an eagle that Lon keeps. Sky cannot be released into the wild because her wing is permanently damaged.

Maverick's Feather

After Maverick's death, Lon gives Rick one of his feathers. Rick brings the feather with him for luck when he takes his solo hang-glide to try to save Lon.



Themes

Coming of Age

The Maze is a coming of age story, the tale of a boy on the cusp of manhood, a pivotal stage in his life where he could go down one of two paths. Rick Walker needs to find out who he is. That is the question the judge asks him at both of his hearings: Who is Rick Walker? Rick needs an answer to that question, and in the beginning of the novel, he doesn't have a place to begin or anyone to help him. He is filled with anger and confusion. He is lost in a maze, and if he does not grow up and reach maturity, he won't be able to find his way out.

Rick could remain lost in his anger. He could end up back in Blue Canyon, for a longer sentence, and he could never truly mature. Maturing means learning lessons, not only about the world, but about himself. Rick needs to come to terms with his past in order to move forward into adulthood. The problem is that in order to grow up, Rick needs teachers. He has few teachers in his life, since his grandmother is gone. His social worker and probation officer have full case loads. Mr. B. acts as a teacher, trying to help Rick expand his mind through reading and through working in the garden, but in Blue Canyon, there are many forces working against Rick. Mr. B. can't counter them all.

In Lon, Rick finds a teacher who can truly help him. Rick and Lon are similar in many ways, so they can develop a deep understanding. Through Lon, Rick is able to gain real experiences in the real world. He drives a truck. He works with the condors. He learns to fly the hang glider. He also talks to Lon about his past and about his feelings. He learns about the world, and he learns about himself. Because of this, he can move forward and begin to grow up.

Anger

Anger is a central problem for Rick. Rick is angry about his situation in the world, and that is what causes him to throw rocks at the stop sign. He is not truly aware of where his anger is directed. It is a general anger, a dangerous anger at the whole world instead of at a single person or situation. Rick's anger causes him to act out, and he carries it around with him. It causes him to act defensively. He needs to understand his own anger and overcome it.

Through most of the story, Rick doesn't act angry, but his anger exists below the surface. He is angry at his mother for abandoning him and at his grandmother's death. He is angry at the foster care system that has set him into a maze that he can't seem to get out of, where every path seems to lead to a dead end. Lon talks to Rick about anger and how carrying anger with him will hurt him. Rick's anger isn't accomplishing anything for him, and it isn't changing the world. It is only keeping Rick from moving forward.



Carlile serves as an example of what anger can do, if left unchecked. When Lon and his ranger friend talk, they reveal that Carlile is bitter about losing his grazing land in the canyons. Carlile is angry at the government and at the world. He feels like what is rightfully his has been taken away from him. Carlile turns his back on law, order, and society. He smuggles illegal weapons and is ready to kill Rick and Lon, or at least leave them to their deaths. Carlile represents what Rick is in danger of becoming, while Lon represents what Rick can become if he lets go of anger.

Isolation

At the beginning of the novel, Rick is isolated. There are people all around him, but Rick's isolation begins in his mind. He cannot reach out to other people, and he cannot express himself. He appears to the judge as a sardonic, sullen youth, muttering an apathetic "I don't know." In truth, there is much more to Rick, but it is trapped inside. He does not reach out. He continues his isolation in Blue Canyon, where the environment encourages him to remain inside himself. He hides from the other, more dangerous, boys by spending time at the gym and at the library. Even though these places build his mind and body, they do not address an important part of him. His emotional self is isolated and solitary. He is floating away from the world, as he floats away from people in his dreams.

Ironically, it is in the barren desert where Rick overcomes his emotional isolation. Making an emotional connection isn't about being surrounded by people. Overcoming Rick's isolation requires making a deep connection with one person, someone in whom he can confide and trust, and someone who will understand him and listen to him. Lon is that person for Rick, just as Ernie had been that person for Lon in his youth. As Rick opens up to Lon, he becomes less and less isolated. Ultimately, this allows him to also express himself to the judge at the end of the story. The relationship he forges with Lon opens up the possibilities of relationships with others, throughout his life.



Style

Point of View

The novel is told from a third person limited narrative viewpoint, from the point of view of Rick Walker. The reader sees Rick's thoughts and feelings, so even when he can't express himself, the reader understands his motivations. In the beginning of the novel, at Rick's hearing, the judge condemns him for being conscienceless and probably on the road to more significant crimes. The reader understands Rick's confusion and conflicted feelings and realizes that Rick is not a bad kid or a conscienceless one. The judge, however, only sees what Rick can show publicly.

As Rick runs away, the reader sees the world through Rick's point of view. On the trip out to Lon's camp, the reader only knows what Rick knows. When Rick discovers the dead calves that the camper is carrying, the reader is left to wonder along with Rick where he is headed and why anyone needs dead calves. The same is true when Rick arrives. Just as Rick distrusts Lon at first and only begins to trust him over time, the reader learns to know Lon over time.

This limited point of view maintains suspense as Rick uncovers the truth about Nuke Carlile and his friend. Carlile and Gunderson's visit to Lon's camp is suspenseful because, like Rick, the reader is eavesdropping on their conversation. Because the reader is following Rick's thoughts, the reader sympathizes with Rick and cares about what happens to him, as well as experiencing everything that happens to him throughout the novel.

Setting

The novel's main setting is Canyonlands National Park, Utah. The national park is spectacular, and Rick appreciates the glory of the rock formations and the highly colored layers of rock and soil. Canyonlands takes Rick out of the everyday world and puts him in a new world, one where he has opportunities that he would not have anywhere else. He is outside of the populated world, in a place where he can connect with himself, nature, and other people.

An important aspect of Canyonlands is the Maze. The Maze is a physical manifestation of how Rick feels about his own life. It is an interlocking web of canyons, both beautiful and dangerous. Hazards are hidden in it, and it is easy to get lost, swept away, and drowned. Through the story, Rick learns to navigate the Maze, just as he learns to navigate his life. In the end of the story, when he rescues Lon, Rick conquers the worst the Maze has to offer and comes out victorious.

Blue Canyon Youth Detention Center is a far more desolate setting, ironically, than the desert. The desert is full of promise, including the introduction of new life in the form of the young condors. Blue Canyon, on the other hand, is stifling to promise. Rick feels he



must isolate himself to protect himself. In an environment full of people, Rick is far more isolated than in the empty desert.

Language and Meaning

The language of *The Maze* is easy to follow. The writer uses easy-to-understand sentence structures and language geared toward a middle-school audience. The book is organized in short, easy-to-absorb chapters. However, that doesn't mean that the language is simplistic. The book is filled with words that will expand the vocabulary of most middle-school students. The contexts for the book's language are familiar, interesting, and easy to understand, and Rick is easy to relate to. This can help readers understand new and unfamiliar words.

The sentence structure in the novel echoes natural speech and thought. The sentences aren't always complete sentences. The author uses fragments, such as: "He couldn't, not now. Not when he was being forced to." This reflects Rick's thoughts, just as the dialogue does.

In the beginning of the novel, Rick has difficulty expressing himself in language. His motives for throwing rocks at the stop sign are confused and complex, and the most he can express is "I don't know," and "It wasn't for any specific reason." By the end of the novel, Rick is better able to express himself, in part because he understands himself better. To express an idea, it is important to understand it first.

Structure

The novel *The Maze* is linear, beginning with Rick's hearing for throwing stones at a stop sign and ending with a second hearing, to decide Rick's fate after he runs away from Blue Canyon. Though the novel is linear, telling a chronological story in order, it also has a circular structure. The novel begins in a family court hearing and it ends in a family court hearing. Rick goes on a journey, and in the end he comes back to the beginning. The fact that Rick is in the same situation, and even asked the same question by the judge, highlights the changes in Rick. The situation has not changed very much, but Rick has changed.

The novel moves through several stages in the course of Rick's journey. The first stage is the hearing at the beginning, the instigating incident that sets Rick off on his journey. The second stage is at Blue Canyon, culminating in Rick's escape. Blue Canyon sets up the world in which Rick lives at the beginning of the novel, in contrast to the one he arrives at later. Once Rick escapes, he travels into the main stage of the story, when he arrives at Lon's camp in Canyonlands.

In Canyonlands, Rick goes through a process of changes, beginning with opening up a bond of trust with Lon, then expanding his knowledge through learning about the condors and hang-gliding. This is a period of growth. Then, the conflict with Carlile and Gunderson accelerates. The climax of the story comes when Rick must use his new-

found adult skills and abilities, emotional, mental, and physical, to rescue Lon. The final scene at Rick's second hearing shows how Rick has changed through his experiences.



Quotes

"That was why he couldn't say he was sorry. It's impossible to say you're sorry, and mean it, when you're angry. He didn't deserve all that had happened to him." —Chapter 1, pages 10-11

"Your name is on the cigarettes. Everybody knew what that meant. One of the guards was offering two or three kids—seventeen-year-olds, probably—a pack of cigarettes each to beat him within an inch of his life." —Chapter 3, page 17

"It made him feel both happy and sad to be out of reach, out of everybody's reach." —Chapter 5, page 28

"Dead ends every direction he turned." —Chapter 7, page 39

"The cliff walls looked like a cross section of a ten-layer cake. Underneath the thick white frosting at the top came alternating layers of pink, buff, and raspberry. The thick swath of red halfway down was the most eye-catching of all." —Chapter 8, page 44

"Rick couldn't help it, he'd started to care about the condors himself. Maybe because they were outcasts and the odds were all against them." —Chapter 11, page 70

"The standing formations surrounding them were fantastic beyond imagining. It was a broken country of slickrock domes and terraces, cactus flats, and stone arches. Monumental sandstone fins stood in perfectly parallel rows with slots of flat, shady ground in between." —Chapter 13, page 78

"Lon really did want to know, Rick realized. Once he began talking he was surprised to find that the words came easily." —Chapter 15, page 86

"He was afraid in every nerve but his adrenaline was pumping and he was full of resolve. He knew exactly why he wanted to do this. It might be for Maverick, but it was also for him." —Chapter 17, page 99

"Without a word being spoken, Rick knew the biologist too was seeing the death of his magnificent Maverick over and over in his head." —Chapter 19, page 111

"His stomach went queasy. They were stranded. No possibility of calling in help, no way to escape." —Chapter 21, page 128

"He was looking hard up and down the drainage for a tiny patch of red, desperate to spot Lon's rain suit. So many side canyons! So many places Lon could be!" —Chapter 23, page 139

"'Who is Rick Walker?' the judge asked suddenly. Rick was off-balance again. The judge didn't remember having asked him this the first time, or did he?" —Chapter 24, page 147



Topics for Discussion

How is Rick similar to and different from both Icarus and Maverick?

Is Rick's sentence at the beginning of the story right or wrong? Who is responsible for Rick being given this sentence?

How does Rick change over the course of the story? What causes him to change?

What qualities does Lon have that help Rick trust and learn from Lon?

How are Carlile's actions driven by anger and other issues with which Rick grapples?

Why does the judge want Rick to explain who he is at the end of the novel? What does Rick's answer tell the reader about him?

How would you answer the question, who is Rick Walker?

What role does Killian play in Rick coming to terms with his own past?

How does the story of Icarus relate to Rick's story?