

# **The Neverending Story Study Guide**

## **The Neverending Story by Michael Ende**

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## Overview

The *Neverending Story* is a wonderfully imaginative story, with incredible settings, astonishing characters, and a series of cliffhanger episodes. Ende's book describes what landscape and life might be in a different world. The novel begins with the hero, Bastian Balthazar Bux, a fat ten-to-twelve-year-old boy, stealing a book and hiding in the school attic to read it. He does not want to go to class; he wants to escape his unhappy life. He is immediately caught up in the story, which begins with a will-o'-the-wisp meeting a rock chewer, a nighthob, and a tiny in the Howling Forest; he learns that all of them are going to see the Childlike Empress. They want to report to her that the Nothing is overtaking Fantastica. Atreyu, the hero of the first half of the novel, his friend Falkor, the luckdragon, and other marvelous characters search for a way to stop the Nothing's steady advance, but they are unable to find any. Only a human can do so by believing in Fantastica and giving it new life through renaming the Childlike Empress. Bastian becomes the human hero who does so; Bastian's story and Fantastica's story merge in the middle of the novel. Bastian becomes a character in the book he is reading, and he creates this book through his wishes in the second half of the novel. After doing so, he discovers his wishes are often foolish, mean, or egotistical. He finally separates himself from the world he has created and returns to the human world, to his father and to the bookseller whose book he stole.

The novel contains more than surprising settings, characters, and actions.

Like other good fantasies, it serves as a metaphor for human life. It tells the story of a physical and spiritual quest, of Bastian's growth in creativity, compassion, and confidence. In the telling, it raises questions about friendship, the function of literature and imagination, the problems of growing up, and the relationship of wishes and reality. Many people have recognized these deeper levels of the novel. The *Neverending Story* has been translated into about twenty-five languages, has been a best seller throughout the world, and has won literary awards in Germany, Italy, and Poland.

## About the Author

Michael Ende was born on November 12, 1929, in Garmisch-Partenkirchen, Bavaria, in what is now West Germany. His family moved to Munich in 1931. His father, surrealist painter Edgar Ende, settled the family in the artists' quarter of Schwabing, where Ende was surrounded by the avant-garde. He went to school at Maximilians Gymnasium until 1943, when the Munich schools were evacuated due to allied bombing and he returned to Garmisch. After World War II, unable to afford a university education, Ende accepted a scholarship to study acting at the Otto-Falckenberg-Schauspielschule in Munich. He acted briefly with a regional theater troop in Stuttgart before returning to Munich, in 1948, where he struggled as a freelance writer. Ende married actress Ingeborg Hoffman in 1964.

Ende published his first book, *Jim Knopf und Lukas der Lokomotivfuhrer*, in 1961 and a sequel, *Jim Button and the Wild 13*, in 1962. His first novel won the German Youth Book Prize in 1961 and was nominated for the Hans Christian Andersen Prize in 1962. He wrote *The Grey Gentleman* in 1974 (published in English in 1986), which won the German Youth Book Prize that year. Ende achieved international recognition shortly after *Unendliche geschichte* was published in 1979. Ralph Manheim translated this best seller into English, and it was published as *The Neverending Story* in 1983.



# Plot Summary

Rich with symbolism, *The Neverending Story* is a classic children's tale designed to teach young people to come of age emotionally. The lessons are painless for they are couched in fantastical imagery and wild tales of adventure. Written originally in German by a German author, the story is an important contribution to literature because it addresses the dangers of tyranny. While Adolf Hitler and his Nazis are not directly mentioned in the story, the tale nonetheless reveals an understanding of the emotionally stunted mindset that leads dictators to hunger for power. Through the character of young Bastian Balthazar Bux, the reader gains an intuitive understanding of how life's tragedies can lead one to commit atrocious acts. The author, through Bastian, is reaching out to the youth of the world, telling them that the journey from pain to joy is achievable. The author shows that men like Hitler are little boys who never grew up; he tries to teach children to complete the emotional journey to adulthood so that they will not misuse their power in later years.

Bastian's character is drawn with compassion. Bastian loses his mother at a young age. Emotionally numbed by her loss, his father is unable to show love for Bastian. Bastian is deeply hurt by his surviving parent's neglect and lacks the social skills to interact well with his peers at school. Any child who has suffered the torments of childhood bullies can identify with Bastian. Bastian turns to books for solace, and develops a wonderful skill for making up stories. One day Bastian finds and steals a magic book called *The Neverending Story*. He literally loses himself in the fantastical tale. Bastian runs away from home and enters the mythical land of Fantastica, a land contained in the magic book. Bastian's ability to tell stories saves the inhabitants of Fantastica and for the first time in his young life, Bastian learns how it feels to be admired.

The Empress of Fantastica, Moon Child, presents Bastian with a magical amulet, which causes all of Bastian's wishes to come true. At first all of Bastian's wishes center on being powerful, admired, and feared by others. Having been ignored, left out, and teased for years, Bastian hungers to be worshipped by the Fantasticans. He befriends a boy his age called Atreyu. Atreyu represents Bastian's best qualities, but as Bastian falls further under the spell of greed and power, Bastian becomes paranoid and thinks that Atreyu is out to get him. Noble Atreyu must fight to save Bastian from himself when Bastian misuses his magical powers and tries to crown himself Emperor of Fantastica. Bastian seeks revenge against Atreyu, but his greedy wishes all backfire on him and leave him alone and friendless in Fantastica.

Bastian begins to realize that his desire to be better than everyone is causing his isolation. He gradually learns to wish to be accepted for who he truly is. Bastian realizes that the only reason he needs to feel superior is because in his heart he feels inferior. Bastian has one wish left, and he uses it wisely. He wishes to learn how to love both himself and others. This wish sets him on a new path. He journeys deep into Yor's Minroud and finds a picture to guide him. It is a picture of his father, encased in ice. Yor explains that this picture is a fragment from Bastian's own mind. Bastian realizes the man in the picture is crying out to Bastian, begging him not to leave, telling him he



doesn't know how to get out of the ice. This picture touches Bastian's heart and he realizes he does not want to spend his life in a fantasyland; he wants to go home. Bastian gives his magic medallion to Atreyu; this decision allows Bastian to drink from the Water of Life. These powerful waters open Bastian's heart to love and allow him to take that love back home, where his newfound ability to love opens the door to his father's frozen heart.



# Prologue

## Prologue Summary

In this classic children's book, translated from the original German by Ralph Manheim, young Bastian Balthazar Bux comes of age through a series of adventures in the make-believe land of Fantastica. As the tale begins, young Bastian takes refuge from the torments of his classmates in an Old Books store belonging to Carl Conrad Coreander. Bastian, a fat little boy, ten or twelve years old, is greeted by the irritable Mr. Coreander. When Mr. Coreander asks him why the other children tease him, Bastian admits it is because he likes to make up stories. Often, Bastian tells these stories aloud to himself because no one else would be interested in hearing them. When the ringing telephone distracts Mr. Coreander for a few moments, Bastian sneaks a peek at the book Mr. Coreander has just left off reading. It is bound with copper silk; on the cover, two snakes form an oval by biting each other's tails. The title of the book, "The Neverending Story," causes Bastian's heart to lift. Bastian loves books and is always sad to come to the end of a story. Unable to stop himself, he steals the book and races off to school.

Arriving at school, Bastian realizes he cannot return to his former life. He is a thief now and his father will never forgive him. He must run away forever. He wonders if his father will even notice he has run away. Since Bastian's mother died some years ago, his father has been a shell of his former self. He rarely seems to notice Bastian at all. Unsure of what the future holds, Bastian holes up for the moment in the attic of the schoolhouse and begins to read.

## Prologue Analysis

In the Prologue, the author establishes Bastian's ordinary world. He is unpopular and feels unloved at home. Bastian's only consolation is in books. Unable to face his ordinary world any longer, Bastian decides to escape into "The Neverending Story." As the story progresses, Bastian will be drawn further and further into the story until he is literally part of the plot. The author draws the reader in much the same way. By introducing Bastian's character as the reader of the story, the actual reader can identify with his reactions. Bastian's suspension of disbelief thus encourages the reader's as well.





# Chapters 1 - 5

## Chapters 1 - 5 Summary

*Chapter 1:* During a midnight storm in the Howling Forest, four messengers meet up by chance. All are creatures of Fantastica, although they come from different parts of the land. The first messenger is a will-o'-the-wisp named Blubb; he comes upon the other three messengers sharing a campfire. All are strange and wondrous creatures. The rock chewer, named Pyornkrachzark, is a giant the color of stone. He and his people are called rock chewers because they eat rocks; these giants live in a mountain range far from the Howling Forest and they use rocks not only for food but for all their necessities. The rock chewer rides an over-sized stone bicycle. The tiny named Gluckuk is so tiny it is barely visible. Tinies live in vast cities built in trees; this one rides a snail. The final messenger is a night-hob named Vooshvazool. He looks like a black, furry caterpillar with small, pink hands. Vooshvazool's mount is a winged bat.

When Blubb approaches the group, they are not surprised to see another messenger. They inform Blubb that they have already seen several other messengers pass by, all headed to see the Childlike Empress, and all presumably bearing the same message. Reluctantly, Blubb agrees to share the contents of his message with them. His fellow will-o'-the-wisps have sent Blubb to inform the Childlike Empress of a great danger that threatens the will-o'-the-wisp land. A great Nothingness has begun to spread, swallowing up lakes and towns and even whole families. Those who touch the Nothing with their hands or stick their heads in to look around lose their hands and heads. The loss is painless, apparently; the victims claim to feel nothing. Yet when anyone ventures too close to the Nothing, it somehow lures them in, prompting them to throw themselves into Nothingness and vanish completely.

The other messengers look grave. They are all on their way to the Childlike Empress to report the very same phenomenon. They ask the will-o'-the-wisp to lead them and light their way, but Blubb refuses to wait around for them, especially because the tiny is riding a snail. The tiny insists his snail is a racing snail, but Blubb has already left.

Bastian is drawn out of the story as the school clock strikes nine a.m. He pictures his classmates in science class and is glad he is not with them.

A week later, Vooshvazool the night-hob arrives at the Ivory Tower where the Childlike Empress resides. The Ivory Tower is surrounded by a beautiful garden Labyrinth, filled with flowers. The Labyrinth exists for amusement, not protection, for no one in all of Fantastica would ever dream of threatening the Childlike Empress. The night-hob hurries straight to the Ivory Tower, which is the size of an entire city. Carved completely from ivory, the city is shaped like a giant snail shell, and curves up to the sky. At the apex of the Ivory Tower is a pavilion shaped like a magnolia blossom; on certain moonlit nights, the magnolia petals open to reveal the Childlike Empress sitting on the ivory flower. The night-hob flies his bat to one of the lower terraces of the Ivory Tower where



the stables are located. Here imperial grooms wait to attend his mount; they greet the night-hob by sharing ceremonial sips from a welcome cup.

Gluckuk, the tiny, greets the night-hob. The tiny arrived the previous day thanks to his swift racing snail. He informs the night-hob that messengers from all over Fantastica have arrived with the same news about the Nothingness. The tiny has asked for an appointment with the Childlike Empress, but he doesn't expect to see her anytime soon because she is deathly ill. The messengers discuss the possibility that her illness is linked to the threat facing Fantastica. Two days later, the will-o'-the-wisp arrives and is given the news by his friends. The rock chewer shows up three days after that, having eaten his stone bicycle. As the four messengers wait and wait to see the Empress, they become good friends. "But that's another story and shall be told another time" (p. 25).

*Chapter 2:* A few floors below the Magnolia Pavilion, four hundred and ninety-nine doctors have assembled from all over Fantastica. Each one has examined the Childlike Empress, but none has found a cure for her condition. The five-hundredth and final doctor is presently in with the Empress and the other doctors await his diagnosis. All of the doctors hope fervently that she can be saved, for the Childlike Empress is dear to the heart of every Fantastican. She rules by respect, not force. She considers every creature in Fantastica to be equal, and every creature in Fantastica owes its existence to her. Her death would mean the end of Fantastica.

Bastian remembers the hours spent waiting with his father in the hospital corridor while the doctors operated on his mother. She had not survived the operation, and after that everything changed for Bastian. He has all the material needs he could want, but his father no longer cares about anything, including Bastian. There seems to be an invisible wall around Bastian's father, and Bastian feels invisible when he is with him. Bastian knows his father is sad, for Bastian, too, misses his mother desperately. But Bastian's grief has eased and he realizes he is still alive. Why doesn't his father feel the same way?

Silence falls over the doctors as Cairon, the five-hundredth doctor, returns from examining the Empress. Cairon is a black centaur with the body of a horse and the upper torso of a human. Cairon wears AURYN, also known as the "Gem" or the "Glory." AURYN is a gold medallion bearing two snakes, biting each other's tails. Everyone in Fantastica knows that anyone wearing AURYN is acting on the orders of the Childlike Empress; AURYN is said to give the bearer mysterious powers.

Bastian realizes the book in his hands is imprinted with the Empress' snake emblem.

Cairon informs the crowd he will only be wearing AURYN for a short while. The Empress has asked him to find Atreyu and give him the Gem. Atreyu is a great hero who must embark on the Great Quest to find a cure for the Childlike Empress. Cairon leaves; the other doctors shake their heads. No one has heard of Atreyu.

The clock strikes ten; Bastian knows his classmates are in history class now. The teacher, Mr. Drone, loves to make fun of Bastian when he gets an answer wrong.



Cairon travels to the Grassy Ocean behind the Silver Mountains. The Grassy Ocean is a prairie of grass so long and flat it resembles an ocean, especially when the wind sends waves through the tall grass. The people of this land are known as Greenskins; they all have long, blue-black hair, worn in ponytails. The Greenskins are hunters. They lead hard, frugal lives and raise their children to value courage and generosity. They live off the purple buffaloes that inhabit the plains. Greenskin hunters use only bows and arrows to hunt the dangerous beasts, for they admire the purple buffaloes and believe in chivalrous combat.

When Cairon arrives he is exhausted, only the power of AURYN has allowed him to travel so far so fast. He demands to see Atreyu, who is off on an important hunt. Atreyu returns to find Cairon collapsed from exhaustion. Atreyu is angry to have been summoned, for had he completed his hunt successfully, he would have officially become a hunter amongst his people. Cairon is horrified to see that Atreyu is a ten-year-old boy. He momentarily doubts the Empress' wisdom. Cairon gives him AURYN and explains that the boy must embark on the Great Quest to find a cure for the Childlike Empress. Cairon admits he does not know why the Empress has chosen a little boy for such a dangerous undertaking, and he cannot advise him where to go or how to complete his mission. Atreyu accepts the quest. Cairon tells him to say goodbye to his family, but learns Atreyu is an orphan.

Bastian, having lost his own mother, sympathizes with Atreyu and is glad to have something in common with this heroic boy.

Cairon tells Atreyu to leave immediately; he promises to explain Atreyu's quest to the other Greenskins. Atreyu mounts his faithful horse, Artax. Artax is surprised that Atreyu would venture off without weapons. Atreyu explains that he must go unarmed because he bears the Gem. Artax gallops off with Atreyu in a random direction, and they travel far and fast. Meanwhile, farther away, a great, black shaggy beast catches their scent. With a triumphant howl, it sets off in pursuit.

The clock strikes eleven and Bastian stands to stretch his legs. He takes his sandwich and an apple from his satchel, but then he realizes he should ration his food. Sadly, he puts the food back in his satchel and recommences reading.

*Chapter 3:* Cairon explains Atreyu's absence to the others. The Greenskins nurse the centaur back to health. Meanwhile, Atreyu makes camp at the foot of the Silver Mountains. In the morning he eats some food he has brought in his saddlebags.

"'Exactly!' said Bastian. 'A man has to eat now and then'" (p. 45). Bastian eats half of his sandwich as he listens to his schoolmates return from recess. It is time for geography class now. Happily, Bastian resumes reading.

Atreyu has a dream about purple buffaloes. In his dream, he is unable to get close enough to them to kill one. The second day, Atreyu passes through Singing Tree Country. He spurs Artax onward, afraid of being delayed by the enchanting trees. That night he dreams again of purple buffaloes, which are again out of range of his bow. The



third day he meets some unusual creatures made of glass that provide him with food and drink. He asks them if they know of a cure for the Empress, but they do not. Again he dreams of purple buffaloes; this time one approaches him and offers itself as a target. Yet Atreyu is unable to shoot it. This dream recurs for several nights and he always fails to kill the buffalo.

One day Atreyu finds himself in the Howling Forest, where he is approached by three bark trolls, all missing parts of their bodies. They warn him that he must not proceed any further in this direction because he will run into the Nothing and be lost. The trolls offer to show him the Nothing. At their behest, Atreyu climbs a tree of such height that he loses sight of the ground below him. From the top of the tree, Atreyu sees a spreading grayness that dissolves into a stretch of absolute nothing. The sight horrifies him; he quickly climbs down the tree only to find that the bark trolls have disappeared. He pushes Artax to his limit, reawakened to the urgency of his quest.

When Atreyu finally stops to rest that night, he has another buffalo dream. This time, the buffalo speaks to him. Because Atreyu spared the buffalo's life by abandoning the hunt, the buffalo offers to help. He tells Atreyu to find Morla the Aged One; she lives on Tortoise Shell Mountain in the middle of the Swamps of Sadness, far to the north.

The clock strikes twelve and Bastian's classmates head to the gym for their final class. He thinks of how they tease him in gym, especially due to his inability to climb the rope. Mr. Menge, the gym teacher, makes fun of him the most. Bastian wishes he could climb like Atreyu so he could make his tormentors eat their words.

Atreyu rides northward for days, no longer stopping to ask questions of the people he encounters. Artax is horrified when he sees the Swamps of Sadness, but Atreyu insists they must enter. The further they go into the swamps, the slower Artax moves, and he hangs his head low. Artax tells Atreyu their quest is hopeless and they should turn back. Atreyu is shocked to hear his brave horse speak this way. Artax tells him that the Swamps of Sadness have caused him to lose hope, and he says the only reason Atreyu is unaffected is because he wears AURYN. A few steps later, Artax becomes hopeless mired in the swamp. He sinks as Atreyu watches helplessly. Atreyu offers him AURYN but the horse refuses. Artax' final wish is for Atreyu to leave so he will not witness Artax' death.

In the attic of the schoolhouse, Bastian sobs over the death of Artax.

Atreyu wades through the swamps for hours. Finally he finds a mountain made of tortoise shell. As he climbs it, the mountain trembles and Atreyu realizes the mountain itself is Morla the Aged One. Morla recognizes AURYN but claims it doesn't matter to her one way or the other if the Empress is sick. Morla has lived long, too long, and says she does not care if Fantastica and all its creatures, including her, shall die. Atreyu argues that if it really does not matter to her one way or the other, she may as well tell him how to save the Empress. Amused by his cleverness, Morla relents. She tells Atreyu that the Childlike Empress needs a new name. Her former names have all been forgotten; without a new one she will die. However, adds Morla, no inhabitant of



Fantastica can give her a new name. Morla directs Atreyu to Uyulala in the Southern Oracle. Uyulala may know who can give the Empress a new name. But Morla tells him the journey to the Southern Oracle is so long that Atreyu will be an old man before he arrives, and the Empress will surely die in the meantime.

As Atreyu speaks to Morla, the shadowy beast that earlier picked up his scent now makes its way to the Swamps of Sadness.

Bastian muses that no one in Fantastica can give the Empress a new name. Bastian is excellent at making up stories and knows he could easily name her.

*Chapter 4:* Since leaving the Swamps of Sadness, Atreyu has wandered a vast rocky wilderness without food or water, with the last of his supplies having disappeared with Artax. He recognizes his surroundings as the Land of the Dead Mountains, a place that is featured in the songs and lore of his people. He recalls one ominous song which says it is better to die in the swamps than enter the Dead Mountains, for in the mountains there is a deep chasm which houses the horrible Ygramul the Many. Atreyu, however, can neither turn back nor give up. The life of the Empress is at stake.

The clock strikes one, indicating that school is over for the day. Bastian is cold and hungry. For a moment, he considers the idea of giving up and going home; his father won't suspect anything yet. He could own up to playing hooky and to stealing the book. But Bastian stops himself. He decides that, like Atreyu, he has come too far to turn back now. He is proud of himself for being a little bit like Atreyu after all.

Atreyu arrives at the Deep Chasm in the Dead Mountains. He drops a stone in and waits, but never hears the answering echo of the stone hitting the bottom. He skirts along the edge of the chasm, unaware that the creature, which has pursued him from the start, is nearly upon him. Atreyu is stopped short by the sight of a huge spider web, which is threaded across the chasm. Trapped in the web is a beautiful white luckdragon. Luckdragons do not resemble regular dragons; covered in pearlescent white scales, they are creatures of joy, so light that they float through the sky without wings. They have shaggy manes like lions. Their voices sound like bells, "and when they speak softly the bell seems to be ringing in the distance" (p. 64). Their flight across the night sky looks like slow flashes of lightning when seen from the ground.

This luckdragon bleeds from many wounds as it struggles with a monstrous spider. The spider changes shape constantly as it attacks, and Atreyu realizes the spider is actually made of many smaller spiders, all acting with one will. She is Ygramul the Many. Atreyu, holding up AURYN, screams for Ygramul to stop. She turns to Atreyu.

In the attic, Bastian cries out in fear.

In Fantastica, Atreyu and Ygramul hear a fearful cry.

Bastian thinks for a moment they heard him cry out, but realizes that is impossible.



Ygramul tells Atreyu she is grateful to have two tasty morsels to eat after many years of hunger. Atreyu shows her AURYN; Ygramul is displeased not to be able to eat Atreyu. Atreyu explains his quest and asks for the luckdragon, saying he needs a steed since his horse has died. Ygramul tells him the journey to the Southern Oracle will take too long, even on a luckdragon. She refuses to give up her captive. Ygramul informs Atreyu that the luckdragon will die within the hour anyway as it has Ygramul's poison in its veins. Ygramul offers Atreyu another way to get to the Southern Oracle after first making him promise not to ever reveal the secret she is about to tell him. Her poison kills within the hour, but it also empowers anyone who has been bitten by Ygramul to wish himself into any part of Fantastica he chooses, instantly. If Atreyu tells this secret, all of Ygramul's victims would know how to escape her. Atreyu agrees to let her bite him so that he can wish himself to the Southern Oracle. When the wolf pursuing Atreyu arrives at the web a few moments later, he finds no one there.

*Chapter 5:* Atreyu wakes to find himself in a different range of mountains. He sees an archway, a hundred feet high, and wonders if it might be the entrance to the oracle. Hearing his name, he turns to see the bleeding luckdragon smiling merrily. His name is Falkor and he thanks Atreyu for trying to save him, Falkor had overheard Ygramul's secret and wished himself to the Southern Oracle, too. Glumly, Atreyu reminds him they both only have an hour to live. The luckdragon tells him that every poison has an antidote. Even if he doesn't know how, Falkor feels sure they will survive because he is a luckdragon. From now on Atreyu will share in the dragon's good luck. Falkor offers himself as a mount to replace Atreyu's horse, and Atreyu gladly agrees. The poison takes over and Atreyu faints to the ground.

He opens his eyes to find a female face, wrinkled like a baked apple, bending over him. She gives him some medicine and tells him to sleep. She assures him both he and the luckdragon will survive.

The clock strikes two. Bastian is in dire need of a bathroom. He thinks the school may be safely deserted by now and sneaks out of the attic to the boy's room. In the bathroom, he wonders why storybook heroes never face such embarrassing dilemmas. A janitor enters but thankfully does not see him. Bastian tiptoes back up to the attic quick as can be.

Atreyu wakes feeling rested and healthy. Falkor sleeps beside him under the starry sky. Both the boy and Falkor have had their wounds dressed with herb and plant fibers. A few steps from where they lie on the mountain is a small, lit cave. Atreyu bends and peers into the tiny entrance. The inside looks like a miniature alchemist's loft. A little old man smokes a pipe and reads in an armchair by the fire; he has the same wrinkly face as the woman who gave Atreyu the medicine. They are gnomes, Urgl and Engywook. Urgl and her husband bicker over which of them will be of most help to the boy until they notice him peering into their home. Engywook introduces them as the Gnomics and is offended that Atreyu has not heard of him, for he is well known in scientific circles. Engywook has dedicated his life to researching the Southern Oracle and is eager to help Atreyu. Through his tiny telescope, he shows Atreyu the archway the boy saw earlier. On either side sit two sphinxes.



## Chapters 1 - 5 Analysis

In these early chapters, Bastian begins to invest himself emotionally in the story of Fantastica. The Childlike Empress' deathly illness reminds him of his mother's death. Bastian considers this a coincidence, but the author has made the Empress' illness the crux of the story for very good reason. Bastian reads to escape the loneliness he has felt since his mother's death, and neither he nor his father has yet come to terms with their loss. By couching the theme of loss in an adventure story, Bastian is gently being led by the author towards dealing with his suppressed feelings of pain and loss. Atreyu's character provides Bastian with a role model to further draw him into the story. Atreyu is a boy Bastian's age, and also an orphan, like Bastian. Yet Atreyu is psychologically well developed and thus his character provides hope for Bastian that one day he too may be whole and healthy once more. The reason Bastian is being drawn into the story has not yet been explained to Bastian or the reader, but Bastian's growing emotional investment will become critical to the healing of Fantastica, and to his own healing as well.

The symbolism in these early chapters mimics the stages of grief. The Swamps of Sadness in which Atreyu and Artax must traverse symbolize the utter hopelessness of depression. When Artax gives into the hopelessness and dies, Bastian cries bitterly. Morla the Aged One symbolizes the next stage of grief. Morla is tired of life and no longer cares about anything. Yet the hero Atreyu calls her bluff; he makes her realize that her lack of caring is feigned. Morla merely pretends not to care and acts cynical because she is lonely. In this way she, too, represents an aspect of Bastian. Atreyu's Great Quest to find a cure for the Empress is also, in symbolic terms, a journey towards healing for Bastian.



# Chapters 6 - 10

## Chapters 6 - 10 Summary

*Chapter 6:* Urgl nourishes Atreyu with food. In the attic, Bastian gives in and eats the rest of his food. When he realizes it is his last meal, he is frightened and returns to his book to put the thought out of his mind. Urgl tends to Falkor while Engywook shares his knowledge of the Southern Oracle with Atreyu. He explains that there are three gates one must pass through to reach Uyulala. Only the first gate is visible from outside, and it is guarded by two sphinxes. The sphinxes decide who shall and shall not pass, and their decisions are based on no discernible logic. Those unlucky travelers who are not allowed to pass are forever trapped at the point where the two sphinxes' gazes meet.

The clock strikes three. Guiltily, Bastian wonders if his father has noticed his absence. He finds a mirror in the attic and stares at his chubby, pale reflection. Bastian does not like what he sees. In the fading light, he returns to his book.

Engywook tells Atreyu about the second gate, the Magic Mirror. In this mirror, travelers see their true selves. This sight is quite frightening for some, less so for others, but in any case requires an inner struggle to pass through the gate. The third gate is the No-Key Gate; the only way to enter is to lose all desire to do so. Atreyu asks what Uyulala is, but the gnome does not know. Engywook begs Atreyu to return and tell him so that he may at last complete his life's work. Atreyu cannot promise until he sees Uyulala, but does promise that he will share his experience with Engywook if there is no compelling reason for him not to do so. Engywook calls him ungrateful and Urgl wishes him luck.

Alone, Atreyu approaches the sphinx gate. Fear grips him to the core, but Atreyu moves on, past his fear, and is allowed to access the gate. Having conquered his fear, he knows that he will never be afraid again. Atreyu approaches the Magic Mirror: inside he sees a pale, fat little boy, sitting in an attic reading a book.

Bastian is shocked to have read his own description in the book. He hopes it is true, but tells himself not to be silly. He reads on.

Atreyu passes through the mirror but in the process, he forgets who he is. He sees the No-Key Gate, but has no idea what it is and no desire to pass through it. Curiously, he stares at the pretty, coppery material of the gate. As he does so it opens for him and he steps through.

In the attic, the clock strikes four. In the gathering darkness, Bastian begins to panic. Suddenly he remembers seeing a rusty candelabrum. Striking a match, he lights all seven candle stubs and gratefully returns to his book.

*Chapter 7:* Atreyu enters a hallway of columns, open to the night sky. With his memory still gone, he feels light and free. He hears a voice singing a mournful song. The voice bids him to speak in rhymes. Using rhymes, Atreyu asks with whom he speaks. The





voice is Uyulala, the voice of silence. Uyulala has no corporeal body, only voice. Atreyu asks why Uyulala sounds so sad, and the singing voice responds that it knows it will die along with Fantastica when the Childlike Empress dies. Atreyu asks who can name the Empress and make her live. The voice tells him that the creatures of Fantastica are figures in a book, incapable of changing or adding anything to their story. But human beings can name things and add to the story, if only they would remember Fantastica. Humans have forgotten the way to the magic land, and Fantastics cannot leave their world to visit humans. Uyulala ends its song by telling Atreyu that the Nothing draws near and Atreyu will be the last to hear Uyulala's voice. Atreyu falls fast asleep. When he wakes, it is dawn and his memory has returned.

In the attic, Bastian wishes he could help the Childlike Empress. He knows he could make up a wonderful name for her. Bastian speaks under his breath to Atreyu; he tells Atreyu to tell him if there is any way Bastian can enter Fantastica.

Atreyu realizes the columns have vanished. Uyulala's home is now an empty plain. In the middle of the plain lurks a patch of Nothing. Atreyu runs from the Nothing. At length, he discovers the remains of the stone gate. The sphinxes are gone, as is the archway over the gate. Fortunately, he finds Falkor and the gnomes. Falkor tells Atreyu he was gone not for one night, but for an entire week. Urgl feeds him one last time. Engywook explains that the Gnomics must abandon their home to escape the Nothing. Atreyu tells the eager gnome everything that occurred during his visit with Uyulala. Engywook is devastated to learn Uyulala is gone for good, which means his life's work has been for nothing. Atreyu and Falkor say goodbye to the gnomes then head off to find the borders of Fantastica in hopes of reaching the human world. In the attic, Bastian imagines saving Fantastica.

*Chapter 8:* For days, Atreyu and Falkor fly non-stop, but they cannot reach the end of Fantastica. Finally Falkor asks Atreyu if they shouldn't turn back. He reminds the boy that the Great Quest only involved discovering the cause of the Empress' illness and finding out what would cure it. That Atreyu has already done. Falkor suggests Atreyu go to the Ivory Tower, return AURYN to the Empress, and give her the information he's acquired. Atreyu is loath to return without the cure in hand. He wants to bring the human savior with him when he sees the Empress. Atreyu begs Falkor to continue flying for just one more hour.

Unfortunately, during that hour they discover the four Wind Giants and are caught in the crossfire as the giants hurl storms at each other. Bravely, Atreyu holds up AURYN and speaks to the Wind Giants, asking them where the borders of Fantastica lie. The Wind Giants tell him Fantastica is endless -- there are no borders. The giants resume their fighting and Atreyu falls from Falkor's back. Atreyu washes up on a white sand beach. He vaguely recalls being rescued by sea nymphs and water sprites. He screams for Falkor, but to his horror, both Falkor and AURYN are gone.

Atreyu walks inland and finds a road to follow. He hears the sound of a parade and hides behind a bush to watch. A procession of spooks, ghosts, vampires and witches passes by. Without AURYN to protect him, he doesn't dare approach them. As long as



he had AURYN, he always felt guided on his quest, but now Atreyu is lost. He trails along after the procession, which heads towards the Nothing. The witches, vampires and ghosts leap into the Nothing. Atreyu feels the compulsive pull of the Nothingness and uses all his will power to break free of its spell. He runs in the opposite direction until he finds a town.

Bastian grows cold in the attic. He wishes his father would come save him, but Bastian will not go home on his own accord.

*Chapter 9:* Falkor circles the sea and calls for his friend. Although it seems hopeless, the luckdragon will not give up his search. Meanwhile, Atreyu wanders through the ghost town. All its inhabitants are gone. Having lost hope, he feels right at home in this desolate environment. Atreyu is so hungry he eats some rotten food in one of the houses.

Bastian, too, is very hungry. He thinks of Anna, his father's housekeeper. Anna is a cheery woman and an excellent cook. Bastian's father does not take any notice of her, but Bastian finds his home more cheerful when Anna is around. Anna's daughter, Christa, is a few years younger than Bastian. Christa admires him and Bastian likes to entertain her with the stories he has made up. Last year, Anna sent Christa to boarding school and since then Bastian has been even lonelier.

In the streets of the ghost town, Atreyu finds a starving werewolf chained in a deserted backyard. The wolf, Gmork, tells Atreyu to let him die in peace. Atreyu wishes to save him, but the wolf insists he will have to eat Atreyu if he comes any nearer. This seems like a waste to the wolf, for his chain is a magical chain and Atreyu would not be able to free him anyway. Only the person who chained him has the power to free him. Atreyu learns that the culprit is Gaya, the Dark Princess. The werewolf explains that he is not from Fantastica. Werewolves are able to go in and out of many different worlds, including the human world. Atreyu begs to know how he might enter the human world. Gmork tells him once the Nothing takes over, Atreyu will be in the human world. However, Fantasticans in the human world are called lies. "In that world, you Fantasticans won't be anything like yourselves. You will bring delusion and madness into the human world" (p. 132).

Gmork continues: "That's why humans hate Fantastica and everything that comes from here. They want to destroy it. And they don't realize that by trying to destroy it they multiply the lies that keep flooding the human world. For these lies are nothing other than creatures of Fantastica who have ceased to be themselves and survive only as living corpses, poisoning the souls of men with their fetid smell. But humans don't know it. Isn't that a good joke?" (p. 132). Gmork further explains that Atreyu, once the Nothing has consumed him, will become one of the lies in the human world. He will be used to control the minds of men. Atreyu realizes that the human world is sick like Fantastica.

Bastian, too, realizes the implications of Gmork's words. Humans do not believe in Fantastica any more: the less they believe, the more the power of Fantastica is converted to lies. Bastian has never believed these lies. He knows life is mysterious and



magical, despite what he has been so often told. "With horror and shame Bastian thought of his own lies. He didn't count the stories he made up. That was something entirely different. But now and then he had told deliberate lies - sometimes out of fear, sometimes as a way of getting something he wanted, sometimes just to puff himself up" (p. 134). He must find a way to save Fantastica and his own world. The clock strikes eight.

The werewolf asks Atreyu if he still wants to go to the human world. Atreyu does not want to turn into a lie. The werewolf tells Atreyu that before he was chained, he was on a mission to destroy a great hero named Atreyu, and thus to destroy Fantastica. When the Dark Princess learned of his mission, she chained the werewolf and left him behind while she and all the inhabitants of Spook Town jumped into the Nothing. Now the wolf is trapped, and the Nothing has closed around Spook Town. Gleefully, the wolf tells Atreyu he can no longer escape. Atreyu tells the wolf he is the hero the wolf sought to kill. Laughing, the wolf dies. In death, his jaws close on Atreyu's leg, holding him fast.

*Chapter 10:* Falkor searches in vain for Atreyu. Suddenly, he sees a great beam of light pointed directly at him. He follows the light even into the ocean, although water is the enemy of luckdragons. Under the sea, he finds the source of the light, AURYN. He places it around his neck, and with its help, makes is safely out of the water. AURYN guides him directly to Atreyu, who is trapped in a small island surrounded by Nothing. Atreyu feels compelled to leap into the Nothing, but luckily the dead werewolf's jaws keep him from doing so. Falkor bravely dives down to scoop Atreyu away from the Nothing. They escape but their brush with the Nothing saps the color from their skin and now Falkor is nearly translucent. They fly through a seemingly endless night and at dawn they glimpse the Ivory Tower.

The geography of Fantastica changes in accordance to the traveler's state of mind. Whether something is near or far, north or south depends entirely on the desire or fear of the person traveling. The closer they get to the tower, the more frightened Atreyu becomes. He lacks the courage to tell the Childlike Empress that he has not brought her savior. Falkor, who has met the Empress once before, advises him to address her as the Golden-eyed Commander of Wishes. He tells Atreyu the Empress cannot be fooled. Atreyu asks about the Empress' power. She rules without exerting any power, yet she has command over all the inhabitants of Fantastica, as does her symbol, AURYN, which Falkor still wears. Falkor insists her power is a secret that can never be revealed, and that no one can see the Empress more than once in a lifetime.

Falkor makes an emergency landing near the palace, ignoring usual protocol. He returns AURYN, and the moment the medallion leaves Falkor's neck, he collapses. Atreyu hobbles on his wounded leg toward the Magnolia Pavilion. The Pavilion cannot be breached by force and no stairs lead to it; those who reach the Pavilion never know precisely how they managed. Atreyu finds himself suddenly inside, face to face with the Empress. Her wan face shows the exhaustion of her illness, but her eyes are serene and her beauty remains. She looks like a ten-year-old girl, but her hair is white.



Bastian is thoroughly startled. He has actually seen the Empress: not in his mind's eye, but in reality. When she looked at Atreyu, she saw Bastian, and Bastian saw her. He now knows her name; it is Moon Child. The look she gave him remains in his heart. As the clock strikes ten, Bastian continues to read.

## Chapters 6 - 10 Analysis

As with Atreyu's journeys to the Southern Oracle to gain the knowledge he needs to cure the Empress, he must now face his fears in order to succeed. The knowledge provided by the werewolf, Gmork, places the story in a greater context. It is not only Fantastica and Bastian who need healing, but the human world as well. The author implies through Gmork's character that human beings have lost important truths by refusing to believe in fictional wonders such as those that Fantastica offers. Given the wider context of the author's desire to prevent the rise of totalitarian societies, Gmork's statements are critically important. In totalitarian societies, literature and imagination are usually squelched. Dictators suppress the free exchange of ideas and imaginative innovation in order to keep the population completely dependent on the tyrannical leader. Gmork's implication that Fantasticans become lies in the human world is a reference to how literature, movies, newspapers and television can be used to propagate lies and further the agenda of the power elite by manipulating the masses. In this section, thanks to the oracle and to Gmork, Atreyu learns what he needs to know to heal the Empress. Bastian, too, learns what he needs to know to heal himself, although he has yet to realize it.



# Chapters 11 - 15

## Chapters 11 - 15 Summary

*Chapter 11:* Atreyu falls to his knees before the Empress, crushed by his grief. Sobbing, he admits his quest was a failure. She laughs and assures him he has brought the human savior with him. The Empress has seen the savior and the savior has seen her. Somehow, Atreyu succeeded in bringing him. The Empress admits to Atreyu that she knew, even before sending Atreyu on the quest, that she needed a new name to survive; she also knew she required a human to provide it. Atreyu is angered that she would send him on a dangerous quest to obtain knowledge she already possessed. The Empress assures Atreyu that his quest was necessary, for through his brave deeds, Atreyu called the savior to Fantastica. Now the savior need only say her new name aloud and he will appear in Fantastica. The Empress and Atreyu wait expectantly.

In the attic, Bastian is too afraid to speak. He doubts Moon Child is the right name and he doesn't want her to see what he looks like. He is sure he will be a disappointment.

The Empress is upset that the savior will not keep his promise to Fantastica. She announces the savior has left her no other choice than to visit the Old Man of Wandering Mountain. Atreyu has heard of the Old Man; it is said he keeps a book containing the story of every deed ever performed in Fantastica. The Empress explains the Old Man is her opposite, and that she has never met him before but intends to find him now. She causes Atreyu to fall asleep, and then she leaves in a litter carried by four invisible servants. She orders her servants to take her in any direction, where does not matter; she will find the Old Man simply because she is looking for him. Atreyu wakes to find himself in a cave with Falkor. They are given a drink from a flowing fountain encircled by two snakes, biting each other's tails. He falls back asleep.

*Chapter 12:* The Childlike Empress arrives at the snow-capped Mountain of Destiny, which is where the Old Man makes his home. A glittering blue egg the size of the Ivory Tower sits atop the mountain. Despite her illness, the Empress insists on meeting the Old Man alone. She walks barefoot from her litter through the snow. A ladder drops down from the egg, its rungs made of words. The words tell her to stay away, warning her of the danger posed by a meeting between her and her opposite. She perseveres and climbs the ladder to the top. Inside the egg-shaped room, an old man bends over a copper-colored book. It bears the same snake emblem as AURYN, and its title is "The Neverending Story."

Bastian stares at his book. How could it exist inside of itself?

The Empress approaches the book and reads it. The book says the Empress approaches the book and reads it. She asks the Old Man if everything is recorded in the book, and he responds that the book is everything. It is like the reflection of a mirror in a mirror. He tells her now that she is here; she is trapped inside the egg with him forever.



Only a human being can make a new start to the book. She asks him to read the book from the beginning. Horrified, he explains that if the entire story is contained within the book then it will form an endless circle, trapping them all. The Empress tells him only the human savior can change things now. Stunned at her ruthless approach, the Old Man nevertheless begins. The story begins with Bastian entering the bookshop. When Bastian hears these words, he realizes that he, too, will be trapped in the book unless he agrees to enter Fantastica and change the story. As the clock strikes twelve, he calls out Moon Child's name. On Destiny Mountain, the giant egg bursts open.

*Chapter 13:* Bastian finds himself in the dark, hovering in mid-air. Moon Child's voice speaks to him, thanking him for saving her and Fantastica. She asks Bastian to make a wish and tells him that his wishes will recreate Fantastica. Bastian wishes to see her. She hands him a grain of sand. In his hand, it becomes a seed and sprouts luminous plants with phosphorescent flowers. The luminous jungle grows as Moon Child and Bastian watch in awe. Bastian names it Perilin, the Night Forest. He stares into Moon Child's eyes and sees that she is well again. She asks why he kept her waiting so long. Bastian admits he was afraid she wouldn't like the way he looked. Moon Child shows Bastian how he looks through her eyes: He is handsome, slender, and noble. He wears a blue silk turban, an embroidered tunic, and tall red-leather boots, and a silver mantle covers him, reaching down to the ground. Suddenly Bastian realizes he has become Moon Child's image of him. But Moon Child is gone.

Bastian sees that she has left him AURYN. He turns the medallion over and reads the inscription. It says, "Do What You Wish" (p. 186). Alone in Perilin, Bastian amuses himself for an endless time. He begins to take his good looks for granted, and forgets that he ever looked any other way. Bastian wishes to be strong and it is so; he tests his strength against the forest of Perilin. As Atreyu had before him, Bastian climbs the tallest tree, managing the feat easily. But if Perilin continues to grow, soon the colorful night forest will be too large. Already it is choking on itself.

*Chapter 14:* From the treetop, Bastian sees that Perilin has stopped growing. Dawn appears over the Night Forest. Perilin, with its abundant fruits, is too easy a landscape for a hero. Bastian imagines himself bravely exploring a vast desert, and as he thinks this, Perilin begins to crumble away. Quickly he slides down the trunk of the tree. Before he hits the ground it becomes a dried out husk. Perilin vanishes and the colors of the Night Forest bleed into the ground and become sand. Each dune in this vast desert is a different color. Bastian names it Goab, the Desert of Colors. Bastian explores the desert for hours, ignoring the perilous heat and his dreadful thirst. He recalls how quickly he used to give up when things got difficult; Bastian had been afraid of pain, illness, and starvation, so afraid that he would simply give up anytime he encountered obstacles. But no more: Bastian has changed. He is proud of crossing Goab. He writes his initials in the sand to mark his passage, and then sits down to rest.

By now, Bastian has forgotten he was ever anything but brave. He desires a true adventure, something that requires greater courage than just enduring hardship. If he could only meet a dangerous creature . . . A loud roar interrupts his thoughts. Approaching him at high speed is a huge, red lion, covered in dancing flames. Bastian



introduces himself to the lion named Grograman, known also as the Many-Colored Death. The lion changes colors as it moves over the multi-colored sand towards Bastian. Grograman kneels at his feet. Bastian asks the lion to take him out of the desert, but the lion explains that he carries the desert with him wherever he goes. In fact, if Bastian weren't wearing AURYN, he would already have been burned to ashes by Grograman's presence. Bastian is the first creature the lion has ever been able to speak with and he is grateful. Grograman asks Bastian to tell him the secret of his existence. Bastian promises to do so if the lion will provide him with food and drink.

By evening they arrive at Grograman's castle, which is a mountain of black rock. Bastian is the first guest ever to enter this rock palace. Grograman escorts Bastian into a room already prepared for him, and tells Bastian the room has been waiting for him since the beginning of time. The lion warns Bastian not to take off AURYN and tells him not to be scared if he hears noises during the night. Grograman reposes on a black pedestal, and Bastian enters the room. Bastian eats the spicy, delicious food that is laid out for him, and then bathes in a pool filled with golden liquid and colorful fire. As he dries off, he hears a horrid cracking sound. Bastian runs to Grograman and finds that the lion has turned to stone. Bastian runs outside to find help for the lion and sees that the desert has turned into Perilin, the Night Forest. Bastian realizes Grograman's transformation is connected with the transformation of the landscape. Bastian goes inside and weeps for his stone friend. He spends the night curled up between the lion's stone paws.

*Chapter 15:* In the morning, Grograman is touched that Bastian cried for him and spent the night at his side. The lion explains that he does not know why but he dies every night but wakes again each day. Bastian explains that he dies so that Perilin, the Night Forest, can grow. Grograman is fascinated by the description of the colorful, luminous forest. Bastian tells him that if it were not for Grograman, the Night Forest would grow and grow until it swallowed up all of Fantastica. When day comes and Grograman brings the desert back, Perilin dies so that Fantastica can live. Grograman is grateful to understand, at last, the meaning of his existence. In return, he gives Bastian a magic sword. It looks rusty, but once Bastian names it Sikanda, the sword leaps into his hand and shines brightly. The lion tells him the sword is his destiny; it can cut through any substance found in Fantastica. However, Bastian may only use the sword if it leaps into his hand. To draw it of his own will would bring bad luck to him and all of Fantastica.

Grograman and Bastian spend many days enjoying their new friendship. Both are supremely strong and they enjoy wrestling on the sand. Bastian rides Grograman each day as the lion restores his vast desert territory. Each day the sands are different colors and Grograman now realizes this is because Perilin grows differently each night. Bastian asks Grograman how he could have been here since the beginning of time if Bastian only created him recently. Grograman explains that in stories, a storyteller can create the past; therefore, a story can be both old and new. Grograman reminds Bastian that he has but named the creations, and it is the Empress who has given him everything.



One day, Grograman tells Bastian he must leave and live out his own story. Bastian does not wish to leave. Grograman explains that rather than wishing himself away from something, Bastian must find a new wish to move himself toward. Grograman tells him of the Temple of a Thousand Doors. This temple can appear anywhere in Fantastica when the time is right. A traveler can pass through the temple and find himself exactly where he wishes to be. However, cautions the lion, if one's wish is not clear, one can get lost forever in the Temple. Bastian realizes he wants to be admired for his new skills, and that he wishes for fame. One night, when the time is right, the Temple of a Thousand Doors appears to Bastian. He says goodbye to his friend and enters the temple.

## Chapters 11 - 15 Analysis

Atreyu's conversation with the Childlike Empress reveals at last the purpose of the first half of the book. Atreyu's Great Quest had been designed by the Empress to entice Bastian to come to Fantastica. Thus, Bastian is revealed to be the protagonist of this story within a story as well as of the overall plotline. Bastian's refusal to enter the world of Fantastica sparks the Empress' visit to the Old Man. These characters, who are opposite in every way, meet quite symbolically in a large egg. The Old Man's book, which contains every individual's life story, is evocative of DNA, which contains all the information required to produce a human being. The union of these two opposite characters causes new life to burst from the egg, and Bastian enters Fantastica.

Bastian's first teacher in Fantastica is Grograman the lion. The Empress has given Bastian a mandate to do what he wishes, but Bastian does not know how to go about this. Grograman explains to him that it will not suffice for Bastian to simply wish himself away from his present environment. Bastian must think of a new wish to in order to move toward. This is the author's gentle way of imparting psychological wisdom. Bastian has, up until now, simply wished the negative circumstances in his life would go away, but he has not envisioned any positive dreams or goals to take their place. Thus, through Grograman, the author explains the inadvisability of making decisions purely in reaction to one's environment, as opposed to proactively attempting to achieve one's dreams.





# Chapters 16 - 20

## Chapters 16 - 20 Summary

*Chapter 16:* Bastian chooses door after door in the temple, but always finds another door waiting for him. Stuck, he realizes his wish is undefined. He thinks of Atreyu and wishes to meet him and become his friend. With this wish, he leaves the temple and finds himself in a grassy clearing. Here he meets four knights and a princess. The knights, Hynreck, Hykrion, Hysbald, and Hydorn, are on their way to a tournament in the Silver City of Amarganth. Querquobad, the ruler of Amarganth, is holding a tournament to find three brave heroes for a quest. The winners will accompany Atreyu and Falkor on their search for the human hero who has saved Moon Child's life. The human has not been seen in Fantastica and Atreyu fears he may be lost and in need of help. Atreyu must lead the quest for he is the only one who knows what the hero looks like, having seen him in a mirror at the Southern Oracle. Hynreck desperately wants to win the tournament because the princess, Oglamar, insists on marrying the best knight in the land. Bastian refuses to reveal his identity to his new friends, but accompanies them to Amarganth.

Amarganth is a city of silver boats moored together in a lake which is so acid that it destroys all substances but silver. Bastian watches the tournament, keeping a surreptitious eye on Atreyu and Falkor, who judge the tournament. Hero Hynreck defeats every other challenger. Just before he is crowned the winner, Bastian challenges him. Bastian impresses the crowd with his daring feats; his magic sword, Sikanda, destroys Hynreck's beautiful suit of armor, leaving him unharmed but humiliated. Atreyu declares Bastian the winner and announces there will be no quest after all, for despite Bastian's new appearance, Atreyu has recognized him as the savior of Fantastica.

*Chapter 17:* Querquobad, the aged ruler of Amarganth, dozes on the balcony of his palace. Alone but for Querquobad, Bastian and Atreyu listen to the awe-inspiring song of Falkor, who flies over the city, singing his joy. The two boys have no need for words; their friendship is sealed by their mutual appreciation of the luckdragon's song. After Querquobad goes to bed, the boys talk and get to know each other. Atreyu promises that Bastian can ride the luckdragon sometime, but he is jealous that Bastian now wears AURYN. Bastian offers him AURYN, but Atreyu refuses, despite his jealousy. Bastian asks Atreyu what he meant when he said Bastian looks different now than he looked in the mirror. Atreyu is surprised that Bastian does not remember that he used to be pale and fat. Later that night, as Bastian lies awake, he feels disappointed because Atreyu does not act impressed with his heroic feats. Remembering that Fantastics cannot make up stories, Bastian desires to impress his friend with his story-telling abilities.

The very next day, Bastian's new wish is granted. Querquobad announces a story-telling contest. The people of Amarganth are, by tradition, storytellers. However they only know a hundred stories and are forced to retell these same stories over and over.



Querquobad asks Bastian to favor them with a new story. Since every story Bastian tells comes true in Fantastica, he cleverly tells a story designed to give the city a whole library full of stories. He tells of the Acharis, a race of creatures so ugly that they cry all day. Long ago their tears formed the Lake of Tears upon which Amarganth lies today. Moreover, the Acharis dedicate their lives to making beautiful silver buildings to make up for the ugliness of their existence. The Acharis have created every building in Amarganth, including the public library, which contains all the stories Bastian made up for his housekeeper's daughter, Christa.

The Amarganthians are grateful to Bastian, for he has provided them with an understanding of their history. They lead him to the public library, a building that has always existed in the city but which no one has ever entered for it has always been locked. A clear stone is set above the library door: when Bastian names the stone Al Tsahir, it leaps into his hand, glowing, and the door opens. The Amarganthians file reverently into their library, which contains the collected works of Bastian Balthazar Bux. When Bastian and Atreyu leave the library, Hysbald, Hykrion, and Hydorn ask if they can accompany Bastian on his travels. He welcomes them, but when he asks after Hynreck, he learns that Hynreck is broken-hearted. Bastian's embarrassing defeat of Hynreck has caused Princess Oglamar to leave Hynreck. To help Hynreck win Oglamar's heart, Bastian makes up a story about an evil dragon with three heads that has kidnapped the Princess. As he speaks, the dragon appears in the sky with the screaming Princess in his jaws. Hynreck sets out to rescue his fair damsel while Bastian hopes the dragon he created will not hurt Hynreck.

Bastian, accompanied by the three heroes, the luckdragon, and Atreyu, leaves Amarganth. Rather than riding the luckdragon, Bastian loyally rides a faithful mule named Yikka, who enjoys the honor of carrying the savior. Atreyu insists Bastian must go back to the human world to make it well again. Bastian can think of no reason to stay, and so he agrees to journey towards his homeland.

*Chapter 18:* Nobody, not even Bastian, realizes that he has no desire to find his way home. Since "the geography of Fantastica is determined by wishes," (p. 256) the party is actually traveling toward the Ivory Tower, although they do not know it yet. As they journey they see evidence of the destruction created by the dragon Bastian made up for Hero Hynreck. Bastian regrets creating a monster, as what he really wants is to be known throughout Fantastica as a doer of good deeds, a benefactor. Atreyu notices that Bastian no longer remembers facts about his life at home that he previously shared with Atreyu. Atreyu suggests that AURYN works differently for humans; with every wish Bastian makes, he loses a portion of his memory. Atreyu and Falkor are concerned about Bastian. Atreyu asks if they are really headed for Bastian's home and Bastian assures him they are.

That night, the party is woken by a mournful sound. Bastian pulls out the gem, Al Tsahir, which casts light on the scene. They see a group of ugly, deformed worms building a silver tower. These are the Acharis, the animals that Bastian made up; they hate their ugliness and hate themselves for existing. To cheer them up, Bastian transforms them into lighthearted butterflies. Instantly, the worms turn into butterfly-clowns. Now named



Shlamoofts, they behave in a buffoonish manner. At first their antics are amusing, but soon become irritating for they refuse to take anything seriously. They callously tear down the silver tower they had been building. They also make fun of Bastian. Bastian insists he is their benefactor and they should show gratitude, but they just fly away.

*Chapter 19:* Bastian had wanted so desperately to be revered for doing good deeds, but now he is disappointed because his good deed with the Acharis has backfired. To cheer him up, Atreyu asks Falkor to give Bastian a ride. Falkor asks Bastian to tell him more about the children back in the human world that used to make fun of him. Bastian has no idea what Falkor is talking about. Atreyu and Falkor warn Bastian that his wishes are causing him to lose more of his memory. If he loses his memory entirely, he will never find his way home. Bastian admits he doesn't want to go home. Atreyu is horrified because if Bastian doesn't return to the human world and make it well, humans will not want to visit Fantastica and Fantastica will die. Bastian spitefully accuses Atreyu of wanting to get rid of him. Afterwards, he apologizes and promises to head for home. Yet after traveling all day, the party finds they have gone in a circle. Atreyu and Falkor exchange worried glances.

As they continue to travel in circles, the wise mule Yikka tells Bastian that they are getting nowhere because Bastian has stopped making wishes. When Yikka explains they had previously been heading toward the Ivory Tower, Bastian realizes his real wish is to see Moon Child again. Atreyu apologizes for telling Bastian not to make wishes; he, too, has realized that they are making no headway because Bastian has stopped wishing. Bastian announces his wish to see Moon Child again. Falkor tells him this is impossible, that no one can see Moon Child more than once. Bastian ignores him and insists they head for the Ivory Tower. As they travel, many strange Fantastican creatures join them. All the new arrivals express their admiration of Bastian and insist they need his help with some problem or another. Bastian agrees to help them all, but only after they visit Moon Child. Atreyu and Falkor are now very worried about Bastian. Falkor suggests they trust luck, but for once, the luckdragon seems to have lost faith in his luck.

*Chapter 20:* The party continues to grow, with one of the strangest new arrivals being a blue djinn named Ilwan. Bastian rides alone, refusing to speak to anyone. He sulks because he feels Atreyu and Falkor are treating him like a child. He wishes they would realize he does not need anyone's protection. Bastian wishes to be dangerous and feared. As he wishes this, the terrain becomes more dangerous. The party enters a field of carnivorous orchids. The blue djinn tells Bastian that the orchids belong to Xayide, the wickedest witch in Fantastica. Everyone wants to go the long way around and avoid the orchids, but Bastian insists they maintain their course. Presently they approach Horok Castle, Xayide's home. Atreyu asks his friend if he has made a new wish, but Bastian is not interested in discussing the wish with Atreyu. Atreyu offers to wear AURYN, and asks Bastian to trust Atreyu to guide him. Bastian refuses. Atreyu tells him he has changed, but Bastian suggests the change is for the better. Bastian reminds everyone of the brave things he's done and says Atreyu is just jealous. He threatens Atreyu, and Falkor becomes so depressed it is hard for him to fly.



Fifty giant suits of armor, animated by Xayide's will, attack the party and kidnap Hykrion, Hysbald, and Hydorn. One of the metallic giants gives Bastian a message from Xayide: Xayide says she will kill the three kidnapped heroes unless Bastian agrees to become her slave. Bastian tells his followers he will rescue the three heroes. He sends everyone but Falkor and Atreyu away so that Xayide will think they have run off. Atreyu puts on Bastian's silver mantle and distracts the guards while Bastian sneaks into the castle. He finds the heroes chained in the dungeon, dangling over a bottomless pit. He frees them from their chains and then battles countless metal giants. Instead of escaping the castle, Bastian seeks out Xayide to confront her. Xayide stares at him with her mesmerizing green and red eyes, and then lowers her head. She begs his forgiveness and swears to be his humble slave if he will spare her life. Bastian is moved by her flattery and insists she join his party. Falkor refuses to carry Xayide out of the castle, but Atreyu convinces him. However, Atreyu warns Bastian that Xayide is conning him. Bastian is so angry with Atreyu that he orders him and the luckdragon to leave.

## Chapters 16 - 20 Analysis

Bastian is portrayed as an empty vessel in this section. So far, all of his wishes have been superficial. He has gained no depth of character and wishes none; all Bastian wants is power, luxury, and admiration. It does not occur to him that admiration might be earned by being himself to the best of his ability. When Bastian fails to gain Atreyu's admiration after showing off repeatedly, he decides to intimidate Atreyu into liking him. Bastian wishes to be feared, and in response to his wish, Xayide the witch appears. Xayide uses flattery to manipulate Bastian. Since Bastian lacks character and integrity, he cannot tell the difference between the noble Atreyu and the manipulative witch. Bastian elevates Xayide to a position of prominence in his company and succumbs to her flattering attentions. Xayide's ability to manipulate Bastian with her lies embodies the scenario that the werewolf Gmork alluded to earlier in the novel. Through this early foreshadowing, the reader can now see that Bastian will soon become the enemy, not the savior, of Fantastica.



# Chapters 21 - 25

## Chapters 21 - 25 Summary

*Chapter 21:* By now Bastian's army is more than a thousand strong. Each night when they camp, Bastian sleeps in a luxurious tent in the center of camp, guarded by the blue djinn. Atreyu and Falkor remain in the party, but they bring up the rear, no longer welcome in Bastian's sight. Falkor is too heavy with sadness to fly, so he walks by Atreyu's side. Bastian waits expectantly for his former friends to apologize and humble themselves before him, believing that if they do so, he will magnanimously forgive them. Bastian spends most of his time in Xayide's litter as she always flatters him and humbles herself before him. Xayide does not ask annoying questions about Bastian's former life. He asks how she controls her metallic giants and she explains that her will is capable of controlling any empty vessel. She stares meaningfully at Bastian before humbly lowering her lashes.

Xayide tells Bastian he is too great and noble to ride a humble mule like Yikka. Bastian protests that it gives Yikka pleasure to carry him, but Xayide convinces him that his humility gives a bad impression to the troops. Bastian sends Yikka away. She is distraught. To make it up to her, Bastian makes true her impossible wish; mules cannot have children, to Yikka's sorrow, but Bastian creates a winged stallion for her to sire her children. Yikka leaves to find her mate and Bastian now rides in Xayide's litter all the time. Xayide presents him with a gift: a belt that makes the wearer invisible. Then she tells Bastian that Atreyu and Falkor are plotting against him, saying that they plan to steal AURYN. Bastian cannot believe it, but Xayide knows the belt will convince him. Bastian wishes for wisdom to deal with this problem.

That night, messenger owls arrive from the Star Cloister, where the Monks of Knowledge live. The Monks of Knowledge are an ancient Fantastic order; only the wisest Fantastics can join. They seek Bastian's wisdom to help them solve a problem. Bastian takes Atreyu and Xayide with him to the Star Cloister, where the Superiors of the order ask him to define Fantastica. Bastian tells them that Fantastica is the Neverending story, located in a copper-colored book, which itself is located in a schoolhouse attic. The Superiors ask to be shown the attic. Bastian takes them outside and tells them to watch the night sky. He causes his stone, Al Tsahir, to blaze "with the light of a hundred years" (p. 312). The stone uses up all its light in one moment and then vanishes forever, but its fierce light is enough to illuminate the attic of the schoolhouse. The Superiors each see something different in the light. Bastian knows that the attic contains all the things they have seen, so he tells them they are all correct. However, because he does not explain how they can have seen different things and yet all be correct, their subsequent confusion leads to the breakup of the Monks of Knowledge. Bastian's wish for wisdom causes him to lose his memory of the attic when he returns from the Star Cloister.



*Chapter 22:* Scouts inform Bastian that he is within three days march of the Ivory Tower. As they draw nearer, Bastian frequently contradicts his own orders. He urges the troops to hurry one moment, and then calls for a rest stop the next. Atreyu and the others are baffled. Only Bastian knows why he is ambivalent. Although he wants to see Moon Child, he is afraid she will take AURYN away from him. Nonetheless, his party soon enough arrives at the Ivory Tower. Since Bastian saved Moon Child, the tower has been restored to its former glory. The Nothing has vanished from Fantastica. But Bastian learns that Moon Child is missing and that no one has seen her for a long time. Bastian is disappointed and hurt that she is not waiting for him, but also relieved because he gets to keep AURYN.

Remembering Falkor's warning that no one can meet Moon Child more than once, Bastian desires his old friends' opinions about this turn of events. However, he does not want to face them, so he puts on his invisibility belt and eavesdrops on their conversation. He hears Atreyu tell Falkor that he plans to steal AURYN. Bastian is wounded by his friend's betrayal. He warns the blue djinn that a thief will approach Bastian's tent this night. Bastian is disappointed when Atreyu goes through with his plan. The blue djinn captures him and both Atreyu and Falkor are brought before Bastian. Bastian tells Atreyu that he will spare his life out of respect for their former friendship, but he banishes Atreyu and the luckdragon from his company. Afterwards, Xayide congratulates Bastian. She tells him the true sign of greatness is the ability to not care about anything or anyone, and that emotional attachments merely distract great men from their glorious destinies.

When they arrive at the Ivory Tower, Xayide convinces Bastian that Moon Child's absence means she has abdicated her throne to Bastian. Moon Child has given him AURYN and left her palace for his pleasure. Xayide talks him into crowning himself the Childlike Emperor. Unable to enter the Magnolia Pavilion, Bastian orders workmen to build an entrance for him. He then sends messengers to every part of Fantastica announcing his coronation. The coronation ceremony is to take place in seventy-seven days, by Bastian's decree. The workmen are unable to carve an entrance into the magical Magnolia Pavilion, but Bastian keeps them working on the problem. The others in his vast army have no work and grow restless while awaiting the coronation.

The day of the coronation is cloudy and gray. The city around the Ivory Tower is festooned with limp banners, and huge portraits of Bastian's face can be seen everywhere. Bastian has representatives from each nation in Fantastica line up to kiss his foot and swear their allegiance. The ceremony is interrupted by the arrival of Atreyu, with an army of rebels. Although outnumbered, Atreyu's warriors fight bravely, and the coronation ceremony ends in bloodshed. Atreyu corners Bastian on the Great Wall of the Ivory Tower. He puts his sword to Bastian's chest and demands Bastian hand over AURYN. Bastian refuses. Atreyu tells Bastian he is forcing him to fight him in order to save him. Atreyu hesitates, unwilling to harm Bastian with his sword. Bastian unsheathes his magic sword, Sikanda, and wounds Atreyu in the chest. As Atreyu falls from the wall, Falkor swoops low to catch Atreyu. Sikanda's light goes out and Bastian remembers, too late, his promise never to use the sword unless the sword leaped into his hand. With Atreyu dispatched, the rebellion dies. Bastian jumps onto one of Xayide's



metal horses and commands his people to follow him. Bastian takes off after Atreyu, intent on revenge.

*Chapter 23:* Bastian races into the night. Back at the Ivory Tower, his exhausted followers do their best to follow. Bastian has allowed them no time to rest or recuperate after the battle with Atreyu's rebels, and now Bastian's army limps slowly in his wake, knowing they lack the strength to catch their leader. Even Xayide's metal horse which Bastian rides falters; it continues to obey Bastian's will but makes groaning, squeaking noises as it moves. Riding alone through the dark night, Bastian relives the moment when Atreyu hesitated, and he again sees the bloody wound he gave Atreyu. By dawn, the metallic horse gives out and it falls to pieces. Bastian continues on foot. He arrives at a town, built haphazardly, with each building constructed at crazy angles. The townspeople wander around in a daze. Bastian tries to speak to them, but they lack the brainpower to respond.

A monkey advises Bastian that the townspeople are called Know-Nothings and cannot answer him. The monkey introduces itself as Argax, and he is not surprised when he learns Bastian's name. Argax informs Bastian that he is in the City of the Old Emperors. All of the Know-Nothings at one time or another tried to crown themselves Emperor of Fantastica. Argax welcomes Bastian to his future residence. He explains that if Bastian misuses his final wishes, he, too, will wind up here. Argax knows that every time Bastian makes a wish, he loses more of his memory. If Bastian forgets completely who he is he will become trapped with the other Know-Nothings forever. Bastian learns that if he had succeeded in crowning himself Emperor, he would have instantly become a Know-Nothing. Now Bastian realizes that Atreyu truly saved him.

The monkey tells him his only hope of getting home now is to cross the Sea of Mist, which will cost him a wish. If Bastian is lucky, he will find Yor's Minroud, which may help him get home. Determined to get home, Bastian flees the city. He buries Sikanda deep in the earth, vowing never again to take up arms against a friend. Bastian needs to use his last few remaining wishes to get himself home before he is completely lost, yet he has no conscious control over his wishes. For days he wanders alone. Eventually he begins to wish to belong to society again, not as a ruler, but simply to be accepted in some humble role. After making this wish, he arrives at the Sea of Mist. The city on its border is called Yskal; the Yskalnari think communally, always using the pronoun "we," never "I." They have boats capable of sailing on mist. The boats are powered by concentrated thought. The Yskalnari accept Bastian, and he helps them propel a boat across the sea. However, when one of their crew is lost, the Yskalnari do not mourn their friend because all people are the same to them. Bastian now wishes to be accepted by society as an individual; he wants to be loved for who he is. He leaves the Yskalnari once the boat has reached the other side of the Sea of Mist.

*Chapter 24:* Around the time Bastian arrived at Yskal, Xayide and her metal giants reach the outskirts of the City of Old Emperors, where Bastian's metal horse had collapsed. Seeing his broken horse and realizing Bastian had visited the Know-Nothings, Xayide realizes that Bastian is lost to her. The sight of the Know-Nothings would surely have caused Bastian to lose all desire for power. When Xayide realizes



this, her own metal giants trample her to death. Fantasticans know that her will controls the giants, thus she must have willed herself to be trampled by them. Hysbald, Hydorn, and Hykrion arrive to find Xayide and her giants all destroyed. The three heroes disperse the remainder of Bastian's army, realizing the campaign is at an end. However, because they three have sworn loyalty to Bastian, they feel compelled to find him. They set out in three different directions. They never do find Bastian, but have many adventures.

Meanwhile Bastian has arrived at the House of Change. It is a jolly-looking house and he is greeted by a woman's voice. Her song tells Bastian she has been waiting for him especially and invites him inside. Bastian enters and meets a motherly woman named Dame Eyola. She gives him fruit to eat from her luscious fruit hat. The fruit tastes wonderful and she lets him eat all he wants. Dame Eyola tells him his story; to his surprise, she knows every detail of his adventures in Fantastica. She ends the story by telling him the boy hero arrives at the House of Change, which helps the boy to change. She explains, ". . . he had always wanted to be someone other than he was, but he didn't want to change." (p. 359). Bastian learns that Dame Eyola is not wearing a hat, but that the fruit grows out of her own body. She explains that she has more fruit than she can eat, and he fulfills her by eating her excess. Also, she is incapable of having a child and always wished for one, thus by providing him the motherly love he so craves she, too, is fulfilled.

The House of Change likes Bastian, and it frequently changes shape to amuse him. He lives there for months, eating the fruit and enjoying Dame Eyola's love. He confesses all his mistakes to her and she forgives him, telling him that the path of wishes is never straight. She assures him it does not matter how roundabout a path he has taken to find himself, every person's path is unique and every path is valid. She assures him he can get where he is going. She tells him that in order to get home he must find the Water of Life, and that only his final wish can take him there. Bastian's transformation is slow and gentle within the House of Change. Over time, he loses his intense craving for Dame Eyola's fruit. One day, he is ready to strike out on his own and he knows his last wish: it is to discover the power to love within himself. He thanks Dame Eyola and leaves the house.

*Chapter 25:* Bastian's wish leads him to Yor, a blind miner who mines pictures from the Minroud Mine. Yor explains the pictures he mines are to help those like Bastian to find the Water of Life. By this point, all Bastian remembers about himself is his name. Yor instructs him to examine the pictures he has mined and try to find one that belongs to him. Yor explains that the pictures are forgotten dreams from the human world; even if the dreamer forgets his dream, the dream picture still exists, buried deep in Yor's Minroud. Yor explains that Bastian's desire to love can only be met by the Water of Life so long as Bastian knows who it is he wants to love. Bastian must find a picture that will remind him of someone he can love. Bastian enters the mine with Yor and, after a long search, he finds a picture that moves him. It is a picture of a man wearing a white smock, encased in a wall of ice.





A surge of emotion causes Bastian to forget his own name as he stares at the picture. Bastian's heart somehow knows what the man in the picture is saying to him: "Please help me! Don't leave me! I can't get out of this ice alone. Help me! Only you can help me!" (p. 377). Yor warns Bastian not to destroy the fragile picture for it is all Bastian has left of himself now that he has forgotten his name. Bastian takes the picture and leaves Yor, certain he is headed toward the Water of Life. Unfortunately, along the way Bastian is accosted by the butterfly-clowns he created, the Shlamooofs. The Shlamooofs berate him for turning them into ridiculous clowns. They tell him that when they were ugly Acharis, at least they had purpose and meaning in their life. Now they are directionless and demand that Bastian lead them and give them some aim to follow. Bastian feels sorry for them, but does not want to sacrifice his last wish to help them. He tries to escape them, yet in the struggle, his picture is destroyed. Bastian, crying and hopeless, lies on the ground as the Shlamooofs attack him. Suddenly, he is saved from their attack by the arrival of Falkor and Atreyu.

## Chapters 21 - 25 Analysis

Bastian's megalomania causes him to believe he is the savior of Fantastica even as his warlike behavior spills innocent Fantastican blood. The huge portraits of Bastian displayed on the day of his coronation evoke images of recent historical dictators. In this way, the author finally completes his analogous comparison of vicious tyrants and emotionally stunted children. In this modern era of school shooters, this allegorical story about a victimized boy turning to violence to victimize others seems even more chilling.

Fortunately, the author provides another way out for Bastian and other child victims besides becoming a victimizer. Bastian's quest now leads him inward. He feeds his need for love and emotional nourishment, and when he feels strong enough to do so, he delves into the depths of his subconscious. The picture he emerges with is of his father. Thanks to Dame Eyola's nurturing, Bastian is now able to see his father through compassionate and loving eyes. Bastian realizes his father is not withholding affection to be intentionally cruel, but that rather his father has been unable to come out from behind the wall of his grief. Bastian now senses the kinship between him and his father and this connection is what, at last, gives him the will to forgive.



# Chapter 26

## Chapter 26 Summary

*Chapter 26:* Bastian takes off AURYN and gives it to Atreyu. With this act, AURYN flares to life and magically transports the three friends to the Water of Life. They find themselves in a building built of blocks of light. In the center is a dazzling fountain. Guarding the fountain are two tremendous snakes, one black, one white. They bite each other's tails, forming a protective circle around the fountain. Bastian realizes the snakes are so huge if they ever let each other go they would destroy civilization. Falkor translates the song of the Water of Life for the boys. The fountain asks for their names. Atreyu tells the fountain Bastian's name since Bastian has forgotten, but the Water says Bastian must speak for himself. The Water asks how Atreyu was wounded; Atreyu tells the Water that he and Bastian were both right and both wrong. When Atreyu tells the Water that Bastian gave up AURYN of his own free will, the snakes rise up into an arch and allow Bastian to pass.

As Bastian nears the fountain, everything he has gained in Fantastica is stripped away. By the time he enters the water, he is naked and looks like his old self, pale and fat. As Bastian drinks, he realizes that he, as himself, is the very person he has always wanted to be. All Bastian was lacking was the power to love, and the fountain restores that power. He calls for Atreyu and Falkor to drink of the Water, but they tell him they have already been in the fountain, they just hadn't realized it at the time. Bastian wants to take the Water home to his father. The Water tells him he must complete all the stories he began in Fantastica before he can leave. Atreyu volunteers to take on this task so that Bastian will be free to return home. Gratefully, Bastian accepts Atreyu's offer. He takes some Water in his cupped hands and throws himself through the new gateway, which the snakes have opened up for him. Crying out to his father, Bastian remembers his name.

Still calling his father, Bastian finds himself in the schoolhouse attic. It is daylight and the school is deserted. Bastian wonders if he's been gone months or years; he fears his father has long since become old and died. Yet his shoes are still wet from the rain. The copper-colored book is gone. Bastian realizes he will simply have to take the consequences for his theft. Trapped in the attic, the chubby boy bravely climbs down some construction scaffolding erected alongside the school's wall. He runs all the way home and greets his father with outstretched arms. His father's relief and joy at seeing Bastian is immense. Bastian's father tells him he's been gone since yesterday, and that he and the police had been searching for him all night. Bastian sits his father down and tells him every detail of his adventures in Fantastica. When he gets to the part about the Water of Life, Bastian sees tears in his father's eyes. Having never seen his father cry before, Bastian realizes that he has succeeded in bringing his father the Water after all.

Bastian's father hugs his son for a very long time. His father's joyful smile brings an answering joy from Bastian's heart. His father promises Bastian that everything will be



different between them from now on. The next morning, his father tells Bastian to take a day off from school so they can celebrate their new beginning. Bastian tells his father that before they have their holiday together, he must go see Mr. Coreander and own up to what he's done. Bastian's father is surprised, as in the past Bastian would have wanted his father to talk to Mr. Coreander for him.

Proudly, Bastian's father waits across the street while Bastian tells Mr. Coreander everything. Bastian is stunned to learn that Mr. Coreander has been to Fantastica. Mr. Coreander suggests Bastian come back to visit him again so they can share their experiences. Mr. Coreander also lets Bastian in on a secret: it is possible to see the Childlike Empress over and over, but only if she is given a new name each time. Books are not the only way to get to Fantastica. The Neverending story is different for everyone, and people like Bastian can take other humans there and help them bring back the Water of Life. Joyfully, Bastian runs out of the shop and rejoins his father.

## Chapter 26 Analysis

This final chapter is set apart from the rest of the story for it completes Bastian's journey through Fantastica and brings him home to the human world at last. The Water of Life is revealed as the destination Bastian has sought all along. Water typically symbolizes emotion, and by drinking from the fountain, Bastian recovers his ability to love. This is in sharp contrast with the advice he was earlier given by Xayide, who told Bastian that strong leaders must train themselves to be devoid of all emotion. Bastian's attempts to lead without emotion caused him to make cold, inhuman decisions. Bastian realizes in the end that love is the key to unlocking his heart. Love may be painful, but without the capacity to love, Bastian's life had lost its meaning and joy. Now he has recovered his joy, and the love he extends to his grieving father breaks the ice between them as well. By facing up to the theft of the book, Bastian demonstrates his new strength of character. Between this newfound integrity and his renewed ability to care about others, it seems likely that Bastian will soon find that his relationships with his peers improve as well.



# Characters

## Bastian Balthazar Bux

Any young reader undergoing growing pains is likely to identify with Bastian. Bastian is an unhappy little boy, misunderstood at home and teased by his peers. For solace, he turns to books and food. Thus, although his mind and imagination are well developed, he is pale and overweight. Having lost his mother and having been tormented by his schoolmates, Bastian has become very timid and very angry. He retreats from the world around him and spends his time imagining he is strong and handsome so he could show his mean schoolmates a thing or two. Much of Bastian's anger and fear stems from his tendency to be extremely hard on himself. He is so hyper critical that when he commits the crime of stealing a book from a book shop, Bastian decides he must run away forever for he sees no possibility of ever atoning for such a ghastly mistake.

Bastian secludes himself in the attic of the schoolhouse and begins to read the book. He quickly becomes fascinated by the book's hero, Atreyu, who embodies all the qualities Bastian would himself like to have. Bastian is jealous of Atreyu's qualities and wishes to be stronger, braver, handsomer, more admired, and more powerful. Bastian is surprised when the fulfillment of these wishes fails to win him Atreyu's undying admiration; in fact, Bastian's greed for domination and need to avenge himself against the world loses him Atreyu's friendship. Alone and friendless again, Bastian realizes that his desire to be better than everyone else has again made him an outcast. Finally, Bastian is ready to begin the long journey toward changing himself. Along the way, he learns to forgive himself for his previous, immature wishes when Dame Eyola explains that such wishes were a necessary part of his path to maturity. In the end, Bastian learns to love himself for who he is, and in so doing, makes it possible for others to love him as well.

## Moon Child

Moon Child is the name Bastian gives to the Childlike Empress of Fantastica. The Empress represents the powers of good in the magical land. She is a figure of beauty and mystery. Bastian and the Fantasticans make frequent conjectures about her fundamental nature. It is often said that no one can meet Moon Child more than once. She is a benevolent ruler who believes all her subjects are equal and makes no distinctions between good and evil. She never attempts to compel the free will of her subjects. Moon Child commands the loyalty of all Fantasticans, yet she does this without ever using her power to force obedience. Fantasticans do not fully understand how she does this, but they intuit that without the Childlike Empress, Fantastica would not exist. This intuition turns out to be the truth when the Empress falls ill. Fantastica is gradually swallowed up by Nothingness, and only the restoration of the Empress' health can save Fantastica from the void.



The young hero, Atreyu, discovers that The Childlike Empress must be given a new name in order to survive. The Empress' old name has long since been forgotten, and without a name both she and Fantastica will perish. Fantasticans, however, are creatures in a story and have no power to make up names or stories themselves. Thus the Empress calls a human, Bastian, into Fantastica to provide her with a name. When Bastian names Moon Child, she gives him a magic medallion, AURYN, which allows his wishes to come true. When wearing AURYN, all Bastian's made-up stories become real within the confines of Fantastica. The mission Moon Child gives him is to wish and create, and through these acts, to discover his true desires. Her end goal for Bastian is that he heals himself so that he can return home and heal the human world with his newfound inner knowledge.

Moon Child's wisdom is often mysterious; she does not explain her actions but her subjects have come to trust her because her actions always, somehow, work to the betterment of Fantastica. Clues to her fundamental nature are revealed when she meets the Old Man of Wandering Mountain. Moon Child describes the Old Man as her opposite in every way. At the very end of the novel, Mr. Coreander tells Bastian a secret: It is possible to meet Moon Child more than once, but only if she is given a new name each time.

## Atreyu

Atreyu is Bastian's fictional alter ego. Where Bastian is weak and fat, Atreyu is strong and muscular. Bastian worries constantly about deprivation, but Atreyu is willing to suffer it when necessary, always trusting that the provisions he needs will be provided. Bastian dislikes others and wants to be better than them, but Atreyu treats everyone with respect and is respected in turn. Atreyu knows who he is, where he comes from, and where he is going. Bastian has very little self-understanding and no discernible goals. Atreyu has a noble heart; this is a quality the two boys share, but Bastian does not know it yet. However, because Atreyu seems to be everything Bastian is not, Bastian enjoys reading the story of Atreyu's Great Quest. Some part of Bastian sees himself in Atreyu, but Bastian has so little belief in himself he does not truly credit the likeness.

When Bastian arrives in Fantastica, he desires more than anything to be Atreyu's friend. This goal is realized, but Bastian's concept of friendship is lacking. He believes he needs to impress and dominate Atreyu in order to sustain their friendship. Atreyu, however, likes Bastian for who he really is and when Bastian starts to change, Atreyu is a good enough friend to point out that it is a change for the worse. Unable to face the mirror Atreyu holds up to him, Bastian banishes Atreyu from his company. Atreyu makes the courageous decision to fight Bastian in order to stop him from destroying himself. After the battle, the two friends part ways and Bastian sets out alone. Along the way, Bastian begins to discover in himself the qualities he admired in Atreyu. In the end, Atreyu also discovers that he possesses Bastian's gift for telling stories. As the story comes full circle, the two boys part, but their newly acknowledged similarities will keep them friends for life.



## Falkor

Falkor is a luckdragon. Unlike other types of dragons, luckdragons are kind and gentle. Falkor has pearly white scales and a big, shaggy mane like a lion. He needs no wings, as luckdragons are so buoyed by optimism that they simply float through the air. Luckdragons inevitably have good luck, as do their friends. Thus Falkor is a tremendous asset on Atreyu's quest. Not only is he able to speedily fly Atreyu through the air, but also his good luck benefits their quest at every turn. However, even the optimistic luckdragon begins to lose faith when Bastian's greed for power causes him to turn his followers into an attacking army. The sadder Falkor gets, the less able he is to fly, and finally, weighed down by despair, he is forced to walk alongside Atreyu. However, in the end, Falkor's luck holds and everything turns out well.

## Artax

Artax is Atreyu's noble steed. A talking horse, Artax is wonderful company for Atreyu on the Great Quest. Artax has a brave and optimistic heart, yet his courage and optimism both fail him in the Swamps of Sadness. Artax becomes mired in the swamps and, lacking the courage or will to extricate himself, simply gives up and dies. Artax' death provides an important emotional connection between Bastian and the inhabitants of Fantastica.

## Uyulala

Uyulala is the Southern Oracle. Uyulala has no corporeal body, but exists in voice only. Thus Uyulala must constantly sing or hum to survive. Uyulala thrives on providing answers and, upon meeting Atreyu, begs him to ask questions. Uyulala speaks only in rhymes and does not understand any spoken words that do not rhyme. It is the wise Uyulala who provides Atreyu with the knowledge he needs to cure the Childlike Empress. After doing so, Uyulala is silenced by the Nothing. Presumably, once Bastian has saved Fantastica, Uyulala's voice is once again heard on the southern plains.

## The Old Man of Wandering Mountain

Described as Moon Child's opposite, the Old Man is the keeper of all records. He writes the Neverending Story as it occurs. Every event that has ever occurred is written in his book. He lives inside a giant blue egg and that egg contains the record of all creation.

## Ygramul the Many

Ygramul the Many is first introduced through a folkloric song of the Greenskins. The Greenskin people, known as brave hunters, are nonetheless terrified of Ygramul. Their song indicates that it is better to die in the Swamps of Sadness than survive to be killed



by Ygramul in the Dead Mountains. Atreyu encounters Ygramul's home in a cave alongside a huge chasm in the mountains. Ygramul turns out to be a giant spider. It spins its web across the chasm and, in the story, a hapless luckdragon becomes caught in the web. In trying to save the luckdragon, Atreyu realizes that Ygramul is called the Many because it is not a single spider. Ygramul is actually one body composed of hundreds of spiders, all acting under a single will. Thus Ygramul's body can transform at will, first taking the shape of a spider, then that of a scorpion, through the different formations created by the many spiders. Ygramul agrees to help Atreyu save Fantastica by revealing its secret. Ygramul's poison is deadly, but anyone infected with the poison can will themselves to any part of Fantastica. Thus both Atreyu and the luckdragon escape Ygramul and wish themselves to the Southern Oracle, where they are cured of the poison.

## Grograman the Many-Colored Death

Grograman is Bastian's first friend in Fantastica. He is a huge lion encased in flames; chameleon like, his colors change with his surroundings. Since the desert where he lives is multi-colored, Grograman's colors are constantly shifting to match his desert environment. Grograman's purpose is to create the desert anew each day, and as he brings the desert wherever he goes, he can therefore never leave it behind. He is called the Many-Colored Death because his presence turns everything into ash and desert sand. The death he brings to the Night Forest of Perilin is a necessary part of the natural life cycle in Fantastica. Without his ability to choke off the rampant growth of Perilin, the Night Forest would keep growing eternally and overtake all of Fantastica. Grograman brings death so that new life may spring up from the ashes.

Bastian is able to survive in Grograman's presence because he wears the magic amulet, AURYN. Thus he is the first living creature with whom the lonely lion has ever spoken. Grograman invites Bastian back to his home where Bastian eats and drinks fire and bathes in Grograman's fiery waters. That night, Bastian discovers that Grograman turns to stone each night; the lion must die each night so that Perilin can grow anew. Grograman comes to terms with this painful process when Bastian tells him about the Night Forest, which Grograman has never seen. Realizing the meaning and purpose of his existence, Grograman is now content to die each night and bring the desert each day.

## Xayide

Xayide is the wickedest witch in all of Fantastica. Bastian first meets her when he desires to challenge himself by taking on a fearsome opponent. The superhuman powers Bastian has granted himself with the magical amulet allow him to rescue his friends from Xayide's castle. Xayide professes to be sorry for challenging Bastian and assures him that from here on out she will be his slave. Bastian demonstrates his immaturity by falling for her flattery. He never thinks to wonder why such a powerful woman would so gladly become his slave. Bastian succumbs to Xayide's charms and



her mesmerizing will. He does not realize that Xayide is only manipulating him in her quest to gain his power. Through her connivance, he becomes convinced that his friend Atreyu is actually his enemy. Bastian prefers to listen to Xayide because she tells him how wonderful he is and she insists his selfishness is absolutely appropriate. Bastian lacks the maturity, at first, to realize that Atreyu is actually the better friend because Atreyu points out Bastian's weaknesses in an effort to help his friend avoid tragedy.





# Objects/Places

## AURYN

AURYN, also called the "Gem" or the "Glory," is a totem of the Childlike Empress. It is a medallion carved on one side with two interlocking snakes, and on the other side with the words "Do What You Wish." Whoever wears AURYN is recognized to be carrying out the will of the Childlike Empress. AURYN gives the bearer access to the Empress' power and guidance. It is possible to misuse the power of AURYN, as Bastian realizes, because the Empress will not interfere with anyone's free will. In the end, Bastian is forgiven his misuse of power because he gives up AURYN of his own free will.

## The Grassy Ocean

The Grassy Ocean is a vast area of grassland that resembles an ocean, particularly when the wind blows waves through the grass. It is the home of Atreyu's people, the Greenskins. When the Childlike Empress gives Cairon the Gem, he must travel to the Grassy Ocean to deliver the Gem to Atreyu and send the boy off on the Great Quest.

## The Swamps of Sadness

Located far to the north in Fantastica, the Swamps of Sadness suck the hope out of all who enter. During the Great Quest, Atreyu's faithful horse, Artax, becomes mired in the swamps. He drowns in the wet abyss. Atreyu is protected from the swamps because he wears AURYN.

## Perilin, the Night Forest

Perilin is the first thing Bastian creates with his wishes when Moon Child gives him AURYN. His desire to see Moon Child causes the luminous forest to grow up around them. Later, Bastian and Grogaman discuss whether Bastian actually created the forest, or whether his wishes simply allowed something that already existed to flourish.

## Goab, the Desert of Colors

When Bastian desires to challenge himself by enduring hardship, Perilin melts away and its place rises Goab, the Desert of Colors. The sands in Goab are so colorful because they are made from the remains of the many-colored Night Forest. Here Bastian learns the timeless quality of stories, for although he has just created Goab, his creation comes complete with a long history. From Grogaman's perspective, Goab has existed since the beginning of time, and indeed it has.



## The City of Old Emperors

The Know-Nothings live in the City of Old Emperors. They are so named because they have completely forgotten who they are and have lost their purpose. This happened to them because each Know-Nothing, at one time or another, tried to crown him or herself Emperor of Fantastica, just as Bastian did. His visit to the city is a warning to find himself before he becomes as lost as the Know-Nothings.

## Sikanda

Sikanda is Bastian's magic sword, given to him by Grograman the Many-Colored Death. Bastian brings bad luck on himself and Fantastica by defying Grograman's warning never to use the sword unless it leaps into his hand of its own volition.

## Ghemmal

Ghemmal is the name of the invisibility belt that Xayide gives to Bastian. Ilwan, the blue djinn, gives up his life to stop the rebels from getting their hands on Bastian's belt. The next day, Bastian loses the belt and never gives it another thought. Thus the djinn sacrificed his life for nothing.

## Yor's Minroud

Yor is a miner who works deep underground in the Minroud Mine. The name is a play on words, meaning *Your Mind's Road*. Yor mines not for gems or silver, but for pictures that represent lost fragments of human dreams. The underground mine symbolizes the unconscious mind; in the story, Bastian must go into the mine to figure out how to love. He finds a picture of one of his forgotten dreams here which reminds him of his love for his father.

## The Picture

The picture that Bastian finds in Yor's Minroud Mine is a dream fragment in which he pictured his father surrounded by a block of ice. The ice symbolizes his father's emotional numbness. The picture allows Bastian to understand his father at last, and to forgive his father for being emotionally unable to show love. Bastian's forgiveness heals the relationship between him and his father and his love unlocks his father's frozen heart.

## The Water of Life

Guarded by giant snakes representing the duality of life, the Water of Life is a fountain that restores love to the hearts of all who drink from it. Its magical powers allow Bastian



to love both himself and his father just they way they are. In the end, Mr. Coreander tells Bastian that humans can find the Water of Life in magical, made up stories, but they must bring the love they gain from the Water of Life back into the real world of human beings to heal the hearts of others.

## Setting

The Neverending Story occurs in the school attic, where Bastian reads the book he has stolen, and in Fantastica, the land where the action occurs and where Bastian goes after he enters the book. Bastian is outside of the school only at the beginning and at the end of the novel. At the beginning he is on his way to school when he stops in the bookstore and steals the book; at the end he goes home to his father and returns to the bookstore for a final meeting with Mr. Coreander.

As its name implies, Fantastica is a fantasy land, a fantastic place that "rests on a foundation of forgotten dreams" of all humankind. The characters of fantasy stories live in it, and the settings of fantasy stories form its terrain, making Fantastica a constantly changing landscape inhabited by characters who are at times bizarre, touching, or ominous. Because people in the real world have lost interest in fantasy, the Nothing is eroding Fantastica, and Bastian enters the land to rescue fantasy and to add to it.



## Social Sensitivity

Some of the characters in *The Neverending Story* are evil. A few are conventional monsters, such as the werewolf who tracks Atreyu and the witch who manipulates Bastian, but most of the evil characters are original, interesting, and unique. Although they are potentially harmful, they are not frightening.

When Atreyu confronts Ygramul The Many, he discovers that "the monster was not a single, solid body, but was made up of innumerable small steelblue insects which buzzed like angry hornets."

Death is a possibility and a threat in *Fantastica*, but important characters do not die. Ygramul stings Atreyu and Falkor, the luckdragon, who then escape through luck and trickery to continue their quest. Violence also exists in *Fantastica*, but Ende never dwells on it, and he always places it in a clear moral context. Sometimes violence is necessary to right wrongs, but gratuitous violence is never acceptable. The *Neverending Story* is thought-provoking, but never offensive.

# Literary Qualities

Michael Ende wrote *The Neverending Story* in German, and Ralph Manheim translated the novel into English. His translation is accurate, graceful, and readable; Manheim has succeeded in making the English version seem as if Ende had written the novel in English.

The English translation retains the visual attractiveness of the German original. It is printed in two-color type, with red for Bastian's story, the "real" story of the book, and green for the fantasy story Bastian reads and enters.

The novel is a sophisticated alphabet book; the first sentence in each of its twenty-six chapters begins with a successive letter of the alphabet. Illustrator Roswitha Quadflieg provides ornate versions of these letters, along with illustrations of scenes, characters, and objects.

The ornate letters and the illustrations give the book the look of a medieval manuscript and emphasize the fact that the book is a fantasy.

The action in *The Neverending Story* is loosely structured. Events do not follow as logical or inevitable a sequence as they would if the novel were based more fully on character development or on action. Ende compensates for this structural looseness by regularly introducing unique settings and characters and by creating variations on what has come before.

The larger structure of *The Neverending Story* follows the usual pattern of epic fantasy in which heroes undertake a great quest. While on this quest the hero grows in stature and understanding.



# Themes

## Coming of Age

*The Neverending Story* is Bastian Balthazar Bux' coming of age tale. At the beginning of the novel, Bastian is a friendless, loveless little boy who dislikes himself and others. He withdraws into the fantastical world of Fantastica, which exists only in a storybook. In this fictional land, Bastian can safely explore and actually live out his fantasies. Through a succession of wishes, he first becomes handsome, then strong, then admired by the masses. Bastian begins to forget that he was ever a weak little boy. In forgetting, he suffers from arrogance and begins to believe he deserves all the power and glory in the world. Even his desire to perform good deeds in Fantastica is self-indulgent, as it stems ultimately from his desire to be admired as a great benefactor. The more Bastian transforms himself, the more he forgets his roots. As a result, he is in danger of losing his true self completely.

When power and glory leave him defeated and friendless, Bastian at last begins to wish not for dominance, but merely for acceptance. This wish leads him to further desire to be accepted for his own unique qualities, and to accept others for theirs. These mature wishes bring him to the House of Change. Dame Eyola, who resides in this house, teaches Bastian the futility of wishing that the world would change while refusing to change oneself. He receives nurturing love and encouragement from Dame Eyola, and eventually feels strong enough to meet his future. Bastian goes deep within himself and finds the power to forgive his father. This forgiveness opens Bastian's heart and allows him to love at last. With love in his heart, Bastian is ready to return to the real world and begin to participate in his life. The love he feels changes the way he looks at his life, and he begins to realize that his previous dissatisfaction stemmed from his inability to appreciate the wonderful gifts that he always possessed.

## Duality

The duality of life is a key theme in *The Neverending Story*, symbolized by the two snakes that make up the Childlike Empress' emblem. The snakes on her magic medallion, AURYN, hold each other's tails in their mouths, thus forming a circle. Bastian does not understand this concept until he sees the two giant snakes guarding the Water of Life. These snakes, one black and one white, represent good and evil as well as all other opposing concepts. The snakes surrounding the Water of Life are so huge that Bastian realizes if they did not hold each other in check, either snake, individually, would destroy all of Fantastica. This realization summarizes the concept of harmonious duality that the author seeks to impart.

Each extreme must be balanced by an opposite extreme in order to maintain a healthy dynamic in life. Male and female balance each other, and are symbolized in the story by the Childlike Empress and the Old Man. Life and death balance each other, for without



death life would run out of room to grow. In the story, Perilin the Night Forest symbolizes life, and Grogaman the Many-Colored Death destroys Perilin each night so that it will not wipe out Fantastica with its rampant growth.

Similarly, Bastian and Atreyu represent harmonious opposites. Where Bastian is fearful, Atreyu is brave. Bastian is weak and given to self-indulgence, while Atreyu is strong and given to sacrificing himself for the greater good. Bastian uses his wishes to become more like Atreyu, but his changes are surface changes only; there is no magic power that allows him to be as noble as Atreyu. Bastian's personal journey does, however, eventually show him that he is capable of being like Atreyu if he is willing to make the necessary changes in himself. Bastian also learns that he has qualities from which Atreyu can benefit. The ultimate the resolution of their conflict shows that opposites truly have much in common and much to offer each other.

## Hubris

The author of *The Neverending Story* seeks to teach that the roots of arrogance lie in emotional immaturity. *The Neverending Story* is a morality tale that relies heavily on modern psychological wisdom to explain mankind's tendency to abuse power. The misuse of power, according to the story, stems from an immature, childish sense of entitlement coupled with low self-esteem. What better audience to teach than children since it is natural and normal for children to be immature. Through Bastian's arduous quest, the author shows how maturity and self-esteem can be gained, and warns of the perils of abandoning the quest before these goals are reached. When the immature Bastian is granted the awesome power of the AURYN medallion, his first inclination is to make himself superior to others in strengths, looks, and power. Bastian then demonstrates classic hubris by wishing for occasions to show off his superior qualities.

Bastian receives his comeuppance when the person he is trying to impress, Atreyu, is instead put off by his hubris. Bastian's arrogance is not so easily tamed, however. Since he cannot win the respect of others, he decides to crown himself Emperor of Fantastica and force everyone to obey him. The link between arrogance and the misuse of power reaches its inevitable conclusion in the City of Old Emperors. Here Bastian meets the Know-Nothings. These imbecilic, broken-down human beings represent what Bastian's future self will become if he continues to abuse his power to indulge his whims. Frightened by this vision of the future, Bastian realigns his priorities and realizes his true wish is simply to be accepted and welcomed by society for his own individual talents. He realizes it is possible to be special and needed without being better than everyone else. By learning to treat others with respect, Bastian regains his own self-respect in the end.



## Themes/Characters

The Neverending Story examines how stories benefit people by giving them histories and futures, by helping them imaginatively explore possibilities, and by helping them learn who they are. By highlighting the importance of stories in the lives of Bastian and the inhabitants of Fantastica, the book raises questions about the relationships between narrative and the real world, the writer, the reader, and other stories. Although Ende raises these questions, he never answers them, preferring the rich indeterminacy of ambiguity. The only idea he promotes is fantasy's importance.

Ende left West Germany for Rome years before *The Neverending Story* was published to escape the political atmosphere. However, members of the West German peace movement adopted the book as their text because of its emphasis on imagination.

*The Neverending Story* is unique among quest stories because it emphasizes the importance of stories and the imagination so directly. Its other themes, however, are fairly standard among quest stories. These center on Bastian's growth, and they include his losing and regaining personal identity, his growing toward such good characteristics as self-confidence and generosity, and his learning that goodness is generally rewarded and that wickedness is generally punished. In the end he is brought to understand that human nature and life itself are mixtures of bitterness and happiness and that forgiveness, compassion, and generosity are necessary to make life worthwhile.

The main characters in *Fantastica* are the Childlike Empress, Atreyu, and Falkor. The Childlike Empress, or Moon Child as Bastian renames her, is the center of *Fantastica*, the creative impulse who regularly needs renaming by humans. She never evaluates any creature in *Fantastica* but gives all creatures in *Fantastica* and the land itself the power to be. The Nothing consumes *Fantastica* in the first part of the novel because no human has given the Childlike Empress the creative energy she needs. Atreyu is the hero of the first half of the book and functions as Bastian's conscience, guide, and helper when Bastian becomes entwined in the story. Bastian resists Atreyu's suggestions at times, so Atreyu also becomes Bastian's adversary. Falkor is the luckdragon who helps Atreyu and Bastian.

# Style

## Point of View

The overarching point of view throughout the novel is always Bastian's, although the points of view of a few other key characters are presented. An omniscient narrator who occasionally acts as a historical narrator as well presents all points of view in the third person. The focus of the novel is the gradual change in Bastian's point of view as he matures and heals on an emotional level. Initially Bastian resents the world around him, and the reader can sympathize with his feelings, as his life situation is unenviable. Bastian has suffered the loss of his mother and the subsequent emotional loss of his father. His unhappiness has contributed to his inability to form satisfying peer relationships and Bastian often finds himself victimized by the children at school. Bastian retreats into a fantasy adventure book called "The Neverending Story."

At this juncture, Bastian's point of view begins to shift. Bastian identifies traits in the story's hero, Atreyu, which he would like to see in himself. Atreyu's point of view guides the action for the first half of the book, with Bastian's reflections on Atreyu providing context. After Bastian gets drawn into the story and literally becomes a part of it, his point of view takes over and Atreyu's is no longer shown. In fact, Atreyu's point of view becomes more and more inscrutable as Bastian looks to his friend to provide support for his questionable decisions. Bastian begins to project his own doubts about his choices onto Atreyu, and in time, Atreyu does begin to express those doubts as Bastian's choices become progressively worse. By the end of the novel, Bastian's point of view has vastly matured and he is finally able to recognize that Atreyu, though his strongest critic, has truly been his most loyal ally.

## Setting

The settings in *The Neverending Story* are many, creative, and varied. Each fantastical setting, in addition to its entertainment value, adds to the psychological development of the main character, Bastian. The attic setting where Bastian hides out symbolizes Bastian's retreat into his own mind. The land of Fantastica, found in the book Bastian steals from Mr. Coreander, represents the combined psyche of human development. This universal unconscious mind, as represented by Fantastica, has several traits indicative of psychological themes. For example, distance in Fantastica is not gauged by physical proximity, but by how far or near one believes themselves to be from their goal. Specific destinations highlight specific psychological states of mind.

When Bastian is reading about Atreyu's adventures, he reads about the Swamps of Sadness, where Artax becomes mired down and lost, a place that symbolizes sinking of the psyche into depression. When Bastian first arrives in Fantastica, he learns the importance of the life cycle of birth, death, and rebirth when he creates the opposing settings of Perilin the Night Forest and Goab, the Desert of Colors which destroys the



forest each day. Later, he comes across the Temple of a Thousand Doors. This temple transports those who have a desire to move forward to any destination of their choosing; however, if the seeker does not have a firm destination in mind, he or she may become lost for eternity in the temple. When Bastian begins to desire to change himself, he encounters the House of Change. But by far the most important setting in the novel is the final place Bastian reaches in Fantastica, the Water of Life. This fountain renews and restores Bastian's heart to its original loving state.

## Language and Meaning

Translator Ralph Manheim acquits himself brilliantly with this English-language translation of *The Neverending Story*, originally written in German. So many of the character and place names are descriptive, and the fact that Manheim maintains the descriptive feel of names and titles in his translated version is remarkable. Some of the names have hidden meanings in the form of puns or plays on words. An example of one such pun is Yor's Minroud Mine. The mine contains images that are buried fragments of human dreams. Buried deep in the ground, the images symbolize unconscious or repressed thoughts. As Bastian begins to lose his memory, Dame Eyola advises him that his only hope of recovering it and finding his way home is to find Yor's Minroud. This is a play on words indicating he must follow Your Mind's Road. Another clever play on words is introduced with the married gnome couple; the husband is a scientist, and his last name is Gnomic. Thus he introduces himself and his wife as the Gnomics.

Other names are frankly descriptive with no attempt to hide the intended meaning. When Bastian is ready to seek inner change, he stumbles across the House of Change. The house is actually capable of changing shape, yet its name is more descriptive of the change it is intended to produce in Bastian. Another wonderfully descriptive name is Falkor the Luckdragon. Luckdragon precisely sums up the type of creature Falkor is, for throughout the story, Falkor brings luck to every situation. There are many other names that are colorful and fantastical but do not appear to carry any specific meaning. Possibly an investigation into the names' Germanic origin or other language of origin might yield meaning to such names as Xayide, Grograman, and Amarganth. Readers with an interest in language derivation may enjoy researching the root meanings of the colorful names given to Fantastican creatures and places.

## Structure

*The Neverending Story* is divided into twenty-six chapters and prefaced by a Prologue. The Prologue and Chapter 26 stand apart from the rest of the novel for they deal primarily with Bastian's life in the real world. The Prologue introduces his unhappy existence, from which he seeks refuge in the storybook world of Fantastica. Chapters 1 through 12 document the young hero Atreyu's quest to save the life of Fantastica's Childlike Empress. Atreyu's Great Quest is just the sort of story that interests young Bastian. As he reads the story, Bastian comes to care for the creatures and future of Fantastica. Chapter 12 ends this portion of the story by revealing that the only person



who can save the Empress is Bastian himself. Chapter 13 marks Bastian's entry into the land of Fantastica. He immediately saves the Empress, and here the story takes a different turn. The remaining chapters are devoted to Bastian's journey through Fantastica and his coming of age. Chapter 26 is set apart from the preceding chapters, for it is in this chapter that Bastian returns home and begins to transform his previously unhappy life.

The structure and even the appearance of the book are cleverly designed to mimic the book Bastian reads, also called *The Neverending Story*. The actual book appears nearly identical to the book Bastian is reading, with its copper cover containing the Empress' symbol of two snakes biting each other's tails, and the book having been printed in two colors. The story within the story is printed in green ink, and whenever the author returns to Bastian's real, human world, the type is purple instead. Illustrated beautifully by Roswitha Quadflieg, the book appears magical indeed, just like the magic book Bastian finds. In this way, the author seeks to amplify the illusion that *The Neverending Story* is an enchanted book, and under the right circumstances, the young reader might find him or herself becoming a part of the story, just like Bastian. Thus the book's structure is designed to appeal to the imagination.



## Quotes

"If you have never wept bitter tears because a wonderful story has come to an end and you must take your leave of the characters with whom you have shared so many adventures, whom you have loved and admired, for whom you have hoped and feared, and without whose company life seems empty and meaningless -

If such things have not been part of your own experience, you probably won't understand what Bastian did next." Prologue, p. 7

"'Humph!' snorted the horse. 'And where are we going?'

'Wherever you like, Artax,' said Atreyu. 'From this moment on we shall be on the Great Quest.'" Chapter 2, p. 40

" 'Everything will turn out all right. You'll see.'

'I can't imagine how,' said Atreyu.

'Neither can I,' said the luckdragon. 'But that's the wonderful part of it. From now on you'll succeed in everything you attempt. Because I'm a luckdragon. Even when I was caught in the web, I didn't give up hope. And as you see, I was right.'" Chapter 5, p. 72

"At last he knew what was to be done. Only a human, a child of man, someone from the world beyond the borders of Fantastica, could give the Childlike Empress a new name. He would just have to find a human and bring him to her." Chapter 7, p. 103

"'When it comes to controlling human beings there is no better instrument than lies. Because, you see, humans live by beliefs. And beliefs can be manipulated. The power to manipulate beliefs is the only thing that counts.'" Chapter 9, p. 133

"'Oh, the world is full of things you don't see. You can believe me. He isn't in our world yet. But our worlds have come close enough together for us to see each other. For a twinkling the thin wall between us became transparent. He will be with us soon and then he will call me by the new name that he alone can give me. Then I shall be well, and so will Fantastica.'" Chapter 11, p. 156

"'You must go from wish to wish. What you don't wish for will always be beyond your reach. That is what the words "far" and "near" mean in Fantastica. And wishing to leave a place is not enough. You must wish to go somewhere else and let your wishes guide you.'" Chapter 15, p. 212

"And so it was with Bastian and Atreyu, who were sitting side by side on the broad balcony of Querquobad's palace. Neither had ever heard the song of a luckdragon before. Hand in hand, they listened in silent delight. Each knew that the other shared his feeling, a feeling of joy at having found a friend. And they took care not to spoil it with idle words." Chapter 17, p. 237



"But you're not to blame for your ugliness,' said Bastian.

'Oh, there are different ways of being to blame,' the Acharis replied. 'In what you do. In what you think...We're to blame for just living.'" Chapter 18, p. 262

"'Traitor!' cried Bastian. 'You are my creature! I created the whole lot of you! Including you! So how can you rebel against me? Kneel down and beg forgiveness.'" Chapter 22, p. 331

"He no longer wanted to be the greatest, strongest, or cleverest. He had left all that far behind. He longed to be loved just as he was, good or bad, handsome or ugly, clever or stupid, with all his faults - or possibly because of them.

But what was he actually like?" Chapter 23, p. 352

"'Not so fast, great benefactor!' cried the butterfly-clowns. 'You can't get away from us. You think you can sneak away from Fantastica, don't you? You'd like that, wouldn't you?'

'But I'm at the end of my rope,' the boy protested.

'What about us?' the chorus replied." Chapter 25, pp. 379-380

# Adaptations

Academy Award nominee Wolfgang Petersen directed the 1984 movie adaptation of *The Neverending Story*, which was distributed by Warner Brothers.

The film was commercially successful, but Ehde disliked the film version and had his name dropped from the credits.



## Topics for Discussion

1. What is Bastian's attitude toward school? Does he dislike learning, the way he is asked to learn, or both?
2. Ende uses many unusual names in the novel. Do you think that names such as "cheesiewheezie" add or detract from the story.
3. Silver Sage Querquobad tells Bastian that his stories have given them their history? What does he mean by that? Do people know their own histories and the histories of their societies through stories?
4. While reading, Bastian had the desire to warn characters in the story about danger. Did you want to warn or in some way communicate with any of the characters in *The Neverending Story* while reading it? If so, which characters and when? Have you felt this way about characters in other books?
5. Why do the Childlike Empress and the Old Man agree that a human must start the story again? How are the characters in *Fantastica* different from humans?
6. Did Bastian have the right to create Smerg, to transform the Acharis into the Schlamoofs, and in other ways to change *Fantastica*?
7. Moon Child does not evaluate the creatures in *Fantastica*. How do you feel about this attitude? Should she evaluate the creatures?
8. Why is it so important for the Childlike Empress to have a new name?
9. Bastian is a fat, pale, lonely boy, about ten or twelve years old, who is not good at sports and who does not do well in school. Yet he loves to read. Would Bastian be equally convincing if he were outgoing, athletic, and a good student?  
  
Does Ende stereotype Bastian by making him a social misfit? Is there truth in the stereotype?
10. What does Bastian learn about friendship from Atreyu and Falkor?
11. How does Bastian change during the novel?
12. Why is the novel titled *The Neverending Story*?





## Essay Topics

What connection does the name of the City of Amarganth have with the fact that everything in the city is made of pure silver? Research the origins of the word Amarganth and determine its language of origin.

What does the Water of Life symbolize in the book? What change(s) does it inspire in Bastian?

When Bastian sees his father weep for the first time, what makes Bastian think he has succeeded in bringing his father the Water of Life?

How are Atreyu and Bastian similar? In what ways are they different from one another?

In what ways are the Childlike Empress and the Old Man of Wandering Mountain opposites?

If you had been in Bastian's position, what would you have done to help the Acharis?

How does the picture Bastian finds in Yor's Minroud Mine represent his father? What does the picture say about his father and why does it move Bastian so deeply?



# Ideas for Reports and Papers

1. View the movie version of *The Neverending Story*. Ende disliked the film and demanded that his name be removed from the credits. What do you think were his reasons?

2. Roswitha Quadflieg's illustrations appear on the cover and begin each chapter. Do you like them? How would you have illustrated the cover and one of the chapters?

3. Some critics have compared *The Neverending Story* to *Watership Down* by Richard Adams. Others have compared the book to works by Ursula Le Guin, C. S. Lewis, and J. R. R. Tolkien. Read a novel by one of these writers and compare it to *The Neverending Story*.

4. Atreyu, Bastian, and Falkor visit the fountain containing the Water of Life.

Where else does Ende use water to represent life? Have you seen other authors use water in the same way? If so, which authors, and in which books?

5. "Engywook became very famous; in fact, he became the most famous gnome in the world, but not because of his scientific investigations. That, however, is another story and shall be told another time." Tell this story or any of the other untold stories in the book.

6. The Nothing steadily consumes *Fantastica* at the beginning of the book; at the end Xayide's armored giants and their horses are empty. The nothingness has shifted from outside to inside. What other ideas and situations are repeated, sometimes in altered form, in the book?

What is the effect of this repetition?

7. Many fantasy works create entire worlds, complete with their own geographies, customs, cultures, genealogies, and ecology. Compare *Fantastica* with C. S. Lewis's *Narnia*, Lloyd Alexander's *Prydain*, Ursula Le Guin's *Earthsea*, or another fantasy world.

## Further Study

Macguire, Gregory. "Outlook Tower."

Horn Book 60 (April 1984): 228. Macguire acknowledges *The Neverending Story*'s popularity and good qualities, but thinks Ende should have shortened the book.

Marsh, Pamela. Review of *The Neverending Story* by Michael Ende. *Christian Science Monitor* (November 9, 1983): 26. Marsh gives her reasons for not liking *The Neverending Story* in this witty and highly readable review.

Nickerson, Susan L. *Library Journal* (October 15, 1983): 1975. A short, enthusiastic, and thought-provoking review of the novel.

Stille, Alexander. *Newsweek* (November 14, 1983): 112. This review sets *The Neverending Story* in a historical and social context by pointing out the book's popularity with the peace movement in West Germany.



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