

Olive's Ocean Study Guide

Olive's Ocean by Kevin Henkes

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Contents

Olive's Ocean Study Guide.....	1
Contents.....	2
Plot Summary.....	3
Chapters 1 through 13.....	4
Chapters 14 through 30.....	8
Chapters 31 through 49.....	12
Chapters 50 through.....	16
Characters.....	20
Objects/Places.....	23
Themes.....	25
Style.....	27
Quotes.....	29
Topics for Discussion.....	30



Plot Summary

Martha Boyle is out of school for summer vacation and she and her family are preparing for their annual trip to the ocean. One day there's a knock on the door and Martha answers to discover a woman standing there. The woman introduces herself as Olive Barstow's mother. Olive was in Martha's class at school but had been hit by a car while riding her bicycle and died only a few months earlier. Olive's mother tells Martha that she'd found a page in Olive's journal that she thought Martha should have. She hands Martha the page, says "thank you" to Martha, then leaves. Martha reads the journal entry and discovers that Olive hoped to be a writer, that she wanted to visit the ocean, and that he hoped above all else that she and Martha would become friends. Olive writes that Martha is the "nicest girl" in the entire class, a fact that catches Martha by surprise.

Martha says nothing to the others in the family about the strange visit from Olive's mother as they scramble to get ready to leave, but she thinks about it. She goes to the scene of Olive's accident without really considering what she'd expected to find, and finds nothing to mark the spot. The family then packs up to leave and soon arrives at the home of Martha's father. The bond between Martha and her grandmother, who she calls "Godbee," is strong. When Martha and Godbee begin a daily ritual of sharing information about themselves, Martha finds herself ready to confide her desire to be a writer. She also learns things about her grandmother, and comes to worry about Godbee's health. She becomes friends with a boy in the neighborhood but discovers that he's not what she expected, but she finds a true friend in another boy. While Martha is making these discoveries, she watches as her parents come to a new understanding that will change Martha's life.

Meanwhile, Martha is enjoying her time on the beach. One day she goes walking with her little sister, Lucy. Martha takes a clean baby food bottle along. As she scoops up a bottle of ocean water, the ground caves in and she spends a minute fighting for her life. She recovers and makes it out of the water but realizes that she could have died, just as Olive died and just as her grandmother will someday die.

Martha takes the bottle of ocean water home with her and goes to Olive's house only to find that Olive's mother has left. Not knowing what else to do with the water, she takes a seat on the porch and begins writing Olive's name with an old paintbrush. As she writes, the water evaporates, so that Martha writes it over and over again, until the water is gone.



Chapters 1 through 13

Chapters 1 through 13 Summary

In Chapter One, "A Beginning," Martha Boyle answers her front door to find a woman standing there. The woman introduces herself as Olive Barstow's mother, a fact that makes Martha "gasp." The woman says that she doesn't know if Martha really knew Olive well, but that Olive had left a journal. The woman then gives Martha a page of the journal, saying that she'd wanted her to have it. Martha pushes open the screen door and the woman hands her a folded sheet of pink paper. She then says "thank you, Martha Boyle," and steps off the front stoop, turning to walk away. The woman then got on a bicycle that was obviously very old and rode away. Martha stands still for a moment, watching Olive's mother leave, and thought before she could open the sheet of paper.

In Chapter Two, "An End," Martha recounts Olive's death. Olive had been riding her bicycle on Monroe Street several weeks earlier when she was struck by a vehicle. Martha had known Olive because they attended school together. Martha recalls Olive as a quiet girl, "a loner" who had tended to stay out of the mainstream of students. As she thinks about Olive, then comes up with the image of the little girl flying through the air after being hit by the car.

In Chapter Three, "Hopes," Martha reads the journal page. It's written in Olive's handwriting and Martha imagines Olive's "thin" voice reading it to her. The journal entry is written on June 7 and indicates that Olive's dream is to become a writer. She says that she'd like to write novels that evoke emotion, as books other writers have done for her. She then presents the first sentence of the novel she imagines she'd like to write: "The orphan's secret wish was that her bones were hollow like a bird's and that she could just take off and fly away." Olive then outlines other wishes she has, including that she could visit the ocean and that she would have the chance to live in a cliff overlooking the ocean "when I'm eighteen." The final part of that entry is Olive's wish that she and Martha could become friends. Olive ends the entry with the idea that Martha is "the nicest person in my whole class."

Martha feels "eerie" and admits that it's mostly because she's holding the journal of a girl who died and that they have some dreams in common. Martha wants to be a writer but hasn't yet told anyone. She loves her visits to her grandmother who lives near the beach of the Atlantic Ocean. She says that it also feels strange that Olive thought she was nice though Martha can't figure out what she'd done to make Olive think so.

In Chapter Four, "Martha's Father," Martha goes inside where her dad, Dennis Boyle, asks who was at the door. Martha says it was "no one" and doesn't share the information about the journal. Dennis says that Martha's little sister, Lucy, is napping, and asks that Martha keep an eye on her until her mom gets home. Martha agrees. The



family is preparing for their annual trip to Martha's grandmother's house. Martha calls her grandmother "Godbee."

In Chapter Five, "Lucy," Martha continues to think about Olive as she watches her little sister sleep. Martha then decides to wake Lucy and does so, saying that Lucy is "the most beautiful baby in the world," which prompts Lucy to object, saying that she's two. Martha changes Lucy's diaper and then says they're going for a walk.

In Chapter Six, "The Corner of Knickerbocker and Monroe," Martha puts Lucy in her stroller and they set out. Martha watches the cars from the sidewalk near the place where Olive was killed, and isn't sure why she'd thought she'd some sign of the tragedy. Martha gets sidewalk chalk from the storage place on Lucy's stroller. She removes her bracelet and shapes it into an "O" on the sidewalk, then writes the rest of Olive's name there. Lucy grows impatient and they head for home.

In Chapter Seven, "Phone Conversation in Mid-July," Martha recounts the day she and her best friend Holly had talked about Olive Barstow's death when it happened that July. Holly says that she'd heard Olive's head was knocked off but Martha says that wasn't true. Martha says she wishes they'd been nice to Olive and Holly counters, saying that they weren't "not nice." Martha says she doesn't think Olive had friends, and that being lonely in that way would be awful.

In Chapter Eight, "Ms. Hubbard," Martha recalls that Olive had first attended her school in February and had died in July. The night after receiving Olive's journal, Martha's mother, Alice, comes home from work. Alice Hubbard works for Wisconsin Public Radio. Martha was proud of that when she was younger but was embarrassed later in life, and secretly referred to her mother as "Ms. Hubbard."

In Chapter Nine, "Vince," Martha's brother returns home from a friend's house. Vince is exactly one year older than Martha and the two had shared a bedroom for several years until Vince declared he hated girls and moved out. Vince now stops by Martha's room almost every night to visit.

In Chapter Ten, "Airplane," Martha plans to write on the plane. She is careful that no one can read over her shoulder. When she arrives, she's written only the words "Olive Barstow."

In Chapter Eleven, "Glittery Feeling," Martha describes the feeling of anticipation she gets when she's this near her grandmother's house. Then her mother bumps into her and urges her to "move," which Martha says puts an end to the "glittery feeling."

In Chapter Twelve, "Godbee," the family arrives at the home of Dorothy Boyle, Martha's grandmother. Everyone calls her "Godbee." Martha had been the first to come up with the nickname because she was unable to say "Grandma B.," which had been short for "Grandma Boyle." The name was intended to distinguish her from Alice's mother, "Grandma Hubbard." As soon as the family arrives, Vince is running off to see his friends, the Manning boys, who live nearby. Godbee urges that Martha not run off too quickly, a suggestion that Martha is happy to obey. Lucy and Alice are walking along the



beach, exploring. Martha asks where Dennis has gone and Godbee says that he's likely snooping around in her possessions, looking for medication and other items to indicate how she's doing. Godbee says it's annoying, but understands that it's the "duty of a good son." Godbee then says that she wants to know something about Martha and suggests that each day they share a piece of information about themselves. Godbee says that could be the last summer together.

In Chapter Thirteen, "Just Fine," Martha asks her father if Godbee is going to die which prompts Dennis to confront Godbee about scaring Martha. Dennis says that Martha, at age twelve, would naturally take Godbee's words to mean that Godbee was dying. Godbee tells Martha later that she isn't ill and hadn't meant to worry Martha. That evening, Dennis becomes angry at Lucy's demands for banana baby food. He yells and leaves the house, and is gone for hours.

Chapters 1 through 13 Analysis

Olive Barstow's mother tells Martha "thank you" after she's given Martha the page from Olive's journal. Olive's mom obviously knows that Olive wasn't popular with other children and that she hadn't been surrounded by friends. She doesn't know Martha and so apparently realizes that Martha and Olive weren't close. Despite this knowledge, Olive's journal indicates that Martha had done something to gain Olive's admiration. Martha says at the time that she doesn't know what it could have been and it's obvious that Olive's mother doesn't know why Olive felt that way either. The important thing to Olive's mother is that Martha had done something that Olive saw as "nice." With the knowledge that Olive had no real friends, it seems that Olive's mom is happy to know that Martha had done something to brighten Olive's life.

Martha says that her father looks for almost any reason to get away from the house. The entire situation is not immediately revealed to the reader. Martha's mom, Alice, works outside the home while Martha's dad, Dennis, is a stay-at-home dad. Dennis is apparently working on a book and has been for a long time, though he has nothing to show for it. The fact that her father is a writer doesn't seem to have played a role in Martha's decision to be a writer though she admits that she doesn't want to tell her plans to anyone because she doesn't want them to think that she's doing it to be like Dennis. Dennis, meanwhile, is apparently not very good at it and is no longer happy with the situation. Martha says that Dennis is looking forward to the fall when school starts back so that the kids are out of the house. He will later admit to being unhappy with the situation and decide that he's going to return to the workforce, a decision that immediately makes him happier.

While Lucy and Martha are at the corner where Olive was killed, Martha turns her back to the traffic and puts one foot onto the surface of the road. She seems to be trying to feel what Olive felt just before her death. Martha seems to feel a need for a greater connection with Olive, probably because she's only realized that she touched Olive's life without meaning to or realizing it.



Godbee points out that Dennis is "snooping" around in her possessions, looking for her medications as an indication of how she's doing. Godbee notes that she isn't happy about it but that she understands his concern. Soon after this conversation, Godbee says to Martha that they have to enjoy their time together because it could be their last summer vacation. It's not clear what prompts this from Godbee but it could be that she's seeing Vince run off with his friends as soon as he arrives and realizes that the children won't always want to visit their grandmother. It could also be that she's sensing her own mortality and knows that she isn't guaranteed another summer. There's no indication that Godbee is ill but the result is that Martha's afraid for her grandmother.



Chapters 14 through 30

Chapters 14 through 30 Summary

In Chapter Fourteen, "Parcheesi," Godbee brings out the Parcheesi game board, a tradition of every visit. Vince goes off again with the Mannings and Martha notes that she feels his absence. Martha tries to look as though she's interested in the game but has trouble concentrating, at least partly because Dennis hasn't returned. Lucy grows tired and Alice goes to lie down with her, and Martha knows that Alice probably fell asleep as well.

Godbee realizes that Martha's mind isn't on the game and suggests that they talk instead. Godbee reminds Martha that they'd agreed to share something about themselves and asks Martha to begin. Martha is upset that Vince refused to stay and play Parcheesi and that her father left the house angry. Martha tells Godbee that she hates her family. Martha immediately realizes that her father is Godbee's son and she fears that her statement would have hurt Godbee's feelings. Instead, Godbee says she understands. Martha knows she's going to cry and so reminds Godbee that she's also supposed to share something about herself. Godbee says she hates her hands. She holds them out, points out that they resembled "pink, crippled crabs," and Martha realizes that she'd never before paid attention. Just about this time, headlights shine on the windows of the house and Dennis comes inside, carrying a lot of banana baby food. He says there's "enough for everyone," and that he's come to an important decision.

In Chapter Fifteen, "Father's Decision," Dennis says that he's decided he's going to give up on the idea of writing a book and return to work. Dennis says it will mean more income for the family and that he'll be happier. Martha quickly assesses the situation and knows that it will mean little change for her except that she is now free to be the only writer in the family.

In Chapter Sixteen, "Kissing," Martha wakes the next morning and remembers how excited she always is on the first morning at Godbee's. She goes downstairs to find Lucy already awake. Lucy always insists that they have a good morning kiss and she keeps trying until she feels it's a "good one." On this particular morning, Lucy says the first kiss was a "good one," and when Martha counters that it was a "great one," Lucy gets angry until Martha agrees that it was a "good one." Godbee imitates Lucy, holding Martha's face between her hands and giving Martha a kiss as well, then saying "good one." Martha notes that her parents are kissing which means everything is well between them. Lucy already has on a bathing suit but Martha says she plans to stay with Godbee to have breakfast and help with the dirty dishes.

In Chapter Seventeen, "A Writer," Martha outlines all the things that are missing from her grandmother's house that seem vital at her own, including a dishwasher and email. However, she doesn't really miss any of those things while she's visiting Godbee. After breakfast and the dishes, Martha gets dresses and goes outside with Godbee. Martha



tells Godbee that she wants to tell something else about herself. She tells Godbee that she wants to be a writer, but that it's a secret. Godbee agrees to keep it a secret but says she hasn't yet written anything. Martha says she plans to write a book "about a girl named Olive."

In Chapter Eighteen, "Faraway," Godbee says Martha has "a faraway look in her eyes" and suggests that Martha spend some time writing. Later, Martha realizes that she hadn't asked Godbee to share anything about herself but says she'll remind her later. Martha begins writing, making Olive the main character of her story and beginning with Olive's arrival at the ocean side. Martha trashes that and begins again, this time making Olive an orphan and having her arrive at the home of her grandmother. Martha comes to a dead end and takes a nap instead.

In Chapter Nineteen, "Jimmy Manning," Martha becomes reacquainted with the Manning boys - Jimmy, Tate, Todd, Luke and Leo. They call out to Martha and she learns that Jimmy is making a video. Jimmy asks Martha if she'd like to come over and watch the video with him, adding in a whisper that they can leave the others behind.

In Chapter Twenty, "The World Is Not What You Think it Is," Martha watches the video but is very conscious of Jimmy's presence beside her on the couch. The video was titled, "The World Is Not What You Think it Is," and Jimmy had captured scenes aimed at depicting family life. The scenes include an argument between his parents and another between his brothers.

In Chapter Twenty-One, "Private Moments," Jimmy says he still has to work on the "family part" of the video before getting on to the subjects of death and love. Martha compliments him on the work then says she has to go because Godbee might be worried about her. Jimmy promises to call. Outside she encounters Tate who compliments her on the color of her towel.

In Chapter Twenty-Two, "Taste and Smell," Martha reminds Godbee that she hasn't yet shared anything about herself. Godbee says that she no longer has much sense of taste or smell.

In Chapter Twenty-Three, "Writing and Waiting," Martha returns to her writing and works on the story about Olive while hoping that Jimmy Manning will call.

In Chapter Twenty-Four, "Fog," Martha wakes the following day to discover a heavy fog. She wonders what will happen that day.

In Chapter Twenty-Five, "Bottle," Vince remains with the family only a short time until running off again to play with the Mannings. Godbee tells Martha that she'd once written a short story about a girl who moved far from the ocean and took a bottle of ocean water with her. Godbee says she couldn't figure out how to end the story and had written that the girl knocked the bottle from a table, breaking it. Martha says that's a perfect ending to the story. When it's Martha's turn to tell something about herself, she tells Godbee that she likes Jimmy Manning.



In Chapter Twenty-Six, "Lucky," Godbee says that Jimmy Manning is lucky. In Chapter Twenty-Seven, "Kyle Gilbert," Martha recalls having told a friend that she liked a boy in her class at Susan B. Anthony Middle School, Kyle Gilbert, and that Kyle was listening, which embarrassed Martha.

In Chapter Twenty-Eight, "Initials," Martha writes Kyle Gilbert's initials in the sand that afternoon. That evening, Vince calls and tells Martha that he wants to spend the night at the Manning house and that Martha's invited for dinner.

In Chapter Twenty-Nine, "Lobsters," Martha is greeted at the Manning's door by Tate and discovers that Jimmy is filming the boiling of the lobsters they'll be eating for dinner. He plans to use it as part of his "death" section in his movie.

In Chapter Thirty, "Blue," Martha and Jimmy find themselves alone on the beach.

Chapters 14 through 30 Analysis

Martha notes that she's begun wearing bright orange t-shirts and has several that are all very similar in color and appearance. She says that the purpose is to detract from the bright red of her hair but that she isn't always sure that it's working. She then says that she doubts many of her decisions but, without something to indicate that she should do differently, just keeps on wearing the orange shirts.

Martha had liked Tate Manning during previous visits and hadn't given a lot of thought to Jimmy, who is older, until she encountered him on the beach. Now Martha is suddenly enamored with Jimmy and gives little thought to Tate though it's obvious that Tate also likes her.

In class on the day after Martha had embarrassed herself by saying she liked Kyle, the teacher makes an assignment. The students are supposed to write about their most embarrassing moments. Martha speaks up, saying that the assignment isn't fair. She points out that people are sharing information about an incredibly personal moment and that there's no real reason for them to be asked to share that kind of personal information. Martha has already seen the looks on the faces of her classmates, and knows that they're all aware that she'd embarrassed herself with Kyle. About this time, Martha looks over and catches the eye of Olive Barstow. The look on Olive's face indicates that she knows about Martha's embarrassment. Martha thinks that Olive is aware of the situation and that she's horrified about Martha's action. In truth, Olive could be aware but she's probably feeling sorry for Martha. It also seems possible that Olive isn't aware of Martha's embarrassment at all but doesn't want to have to share her own most embarrassing moment. Martha doesn't put much significance into this situation because she is so caught up in her own emotions and embarrassment but it seems that this could be at least part of what makes Olive think that Martha is the "nicest girl" in the class.

Martha's story about Olive is interesting in that she seems intent on using many things she'd recently begun to think about in her story. She mentions Olive's arrival at the



home of her grandmother, and describes her grandmother's hands, obviously because Martha and Godbee had recently talked about Godbee's hands. Martha is spending a great deal of time now thinking about life and how things impact others. She has come to realize that Godbee is older and will someday die. This makes her realize that she needs to make the most of their time together. It's Godbee's story about the girl who took a bottle of ocean water when she was forced to move away from the beach that will prompt Martha's decision to take a bottle of ocean water home with her. All these thoughts indicate Martha's emerging maturity. She is not caught up solely in her own thoughts and in having fun, but is focusing on the lives of others.



Chapters 31 through 49

Chapters 31 through 49 Summary

In Chapter Thirty-One, "The Benton Place," Martha and Jimmy go for a walk down the beach and Jimmy suggests they go to a home owned by the Benton family who lived in Chicago and seldom visit the beach. Martha says she's never seen the family during her visits to Godbee. Jimmy and Martha go to the stables where it's clear there has been little maintenance. Jimmy is talking about his film and says he believes the "death" section is still too weak. He asks Martha what she believes happens after death. Martha is suddenly caught up in her thoughts of Olive. Jimmy begins filming.

In Chapter Thirty-Two, "Recording," Jimmy urges Martha to talk louder as she tells everything she knows about Olive, beginning with Olive's mother bringing Martha the journal entry. She says that Olive was twelve, and that "twelve is too young to die." While she's talking, she suddenly realizes that Olive's death is a sign that anyone - even Martha - could die at any time.

In Chapter Thirty-Three, "Holding Hands," Martha wants to be where there are lots of people. She and Jimmy head back down the beach and Jimmy reaches out, taking her hand and holding it as they walk. They pass a group of adults and someone makes a comment about young love. Jimmy and Martha realize the comment is "condescending" and it makes both of them angry. Jimmy shares his dreams of being a famous filmmaker someday. Martha pulls her hand away as she sees Dennis coming down the beach toward them. He says he'd come to walk her home. They leave Jimmy and walk toward Godbee's house.

In Chapter Thirty-Four, "Impossible," Martha has trouble sleeping and wakes many times during the night. In chapter thirty-five, "Sparkler," Martha works on the story about Olive. She introduces a new character named James and describes an evening James and Olive spend together on the beach with a bonfire and sparklers.

In Chapter Thirty-Six, "Asking and Telling," Martha gets up late after her sleepless night. She discovers that Jimmy had called for her and that Alice had invited him for dinner. Alice asks if Jimmy is nice. When Martha is agitated by the question, Alice says she was "just asking," which prompts Martha to respond that Jimmy is nice, and that she's "just telling" her mother what Alice had wanted to know.

In Chapter Thirty-Seven, "Free," Jimmy arrives and answers questions posed by Alice until Godbee, Dennis and Lucy return from a trip to the cemetery to visit the grave of Godbee's husband. Jimmy says that he's fourteen and that his parents are "okay." After lunch, Godbee tells Martha and Jimmy they can leave.

In Chapter Thirty-Eight, "The Best Day," Martha and Jimmy run down the beach and Martha begins building a sand castle. Jimmy is reluctant but finally agrees to help. After



they finish, Jimmy suggests they "crash" the castle, saying someone else will wreck it if they don't. Martha agrees but her heart isn't in the destruction.

In Chapter Thirty-Nine, "A Question," Jimmy stops at his house to pick up his camera and equipment, and then they head back to the Benton Place. Jimmy talks about all kinds of things then asks Martha many questions. Just as they catch the first sight of the Benton Place, he asks if Martha's ever been kissed. She is caught off guard and coughs several times, finally managing to get out the words that she hadn't.

In Chapter Forty, "Dream," Jimmy sets up his camera on the tripod while Martha wanders around. She says that, unlike the previous night, the stable isn't at all scary in the daylight. Jimmy summons her to a spot in front of the camera then kisses her.

In Chapter Forty-One, "A Bet," Jimmy smiles at Martha and says that he has captured the kiss on film, "and I won the bet." Martha questions him about it and he finally admits that he'd bet Vince and the other Manning boys that he could kiss Martha and that he could get it on film before the others returned from a day of sailing. Martha is hurt and runs away, stopping when she's overwhelmed by tears.

In Chapter Forty-Two, "Solidarity," Martha decides that she'll never tell anyone about the horrible scene but knows that Jimmy has it on film and that he will certainly tell. In chapter forty-three, "Great," Martha tries to cover her emotions by being cheerful, which prompts Dennis to ask if she's alright.

In Chapter Forty-Four, "Hate," Vince returns to Godbee's house. Martha wants to know if he's seen the tape and tries to find out without outright asking. Finally, she says that she "knows you know," and Vince admits that he'd seen the tape. Vince says that he'd tried not to talk about it because he thought that would be best for Martha.

In Chapter Forty-Five, "Every Particle of a Thought," the family is preparing to go out for dinner. Alice knows that Vince and Martha have been arguing. Alice says that she doesn't care what the problem is but warns Martha that the two of them cannot argue during dinner. Alice says that someday she and Dennis will "be gone," and that when that day comes, "your brother and sister will be your family." Martha has heard the admonition before. They go to the Woods Hole, which is Martha's favorite restaurant. Martha is quiet, thinking, and her father notices. Dennis asks if Martha is so quiet because she's thinking about Jimmy. Vince steps into the conversation and says that Jimmy Manning isn't a nice person, though he uses a rude word to describe Jimmy. Vince is reprimanded for his use of that word but Martha suddenly feels better and wants Vince to know that she appreciates his effort to stand up for her. She says that she "almost smiles" at Vince and that he "almost smiles back."

In Chapter Forty-Six, "Tate," the family arrives at Godbee's to find Tate Manning on the porch. Tate apologizes for Jimmy's action and says he didn't know what to do to make the situation better. Martha realizes that her decision to spend time with Jimmy had been prompted at least partly by the fact that she felt she was needed for something other than watching Lucy or doing chores around the house. She knows that Tate is



uncomfortable and as he turns to walk away, Martha says that perhaps the next time a situation like that arises, he'll have discovered what he should do. As Tate walked away, Martha whispered the words, "thank you," even though he is out of hearing. It's obvious that his desire to do something had made her feel better.

In Chapter Forty-Seven, "Whirlwind in the Kitchen," Martha asks Godbee to play Parcheesi and Godbee accepts. Godbee has been washing all the baby food jars emptied by Lucy. As Martha prepares to set up the game, Vince bursts into the kitchen and asks to play. Alice arrives and says she'll watch. Lucy soon comes into the room and insists that she be included. Vince goes to get potato chips for a snack. Alice whispers to Martha that she's available if there's anything Martha wants to talk about, but Martha declines.

In Chapter Forty-Eight, "Later," Martha tries to write but finds she can't. She makes a note for a later addition to the story indicating that Olive will discover that James has "a brain the size of a microbe."

In Chapter Forty-Nine, "Later Still," Martha wakes during the night and makes her way to the kitchen. She sees that there's a light on before she opens the kitchen door. Godbee is at the sink and Martha notes that her grandmother looks like a ghost, all dressed in white. Godbee hangs up the dishtowel and Martha cries out, fearing that something had happened to Godbee's hands. Godbee reassures her that it's only food coloring stains on her hands. Godbee then shows Martha all the baby food jars she'd saved over the course of the visit. Godbee has filled the jars with water tinted with food coloring and has put the jars on the window sills. She says that later, when the sun is shining through the windows, the sunlight through the jars will create colored patches in the room. Godbee says it might be silly, but that she believes it will be pretty.

Godbee tells Martha that her idea about the colored jars of water came from a dream. She says that she has the dream often. In the dream, Godbee is very young and is not wearing any clothes. She says that in the dream, she is on top of the water, "almost floating," and the waves are changing colors. She says that a combination of the dream and her story of the girl who took the bottle of ocean water with her when she moved away from the shore combined to give her the idea of the bottles of colored water. Godbee notes that it's after midnight and that they missed their time of sharing about themselves the previous day. Martha asks that they not do it anymore and Godbee agrees, saying that she hadn't intended that it be something difficult for Martha. Martha then asks Godbee for advice about what to do when she's feeling sad. What Martha really wants to know is what to do about the horrible feeling of dread she's feeling because of Jimmy's tape, but she doesn't say it. Godbee says that she always tries to think of someone in a worse situation, and that thinking of that person makes her less sad. Martha is suddenly struck with an idea and asks Godbee for one of the baby food jars she hadn't used for her colored water.



Chapters 31 through 49 Analysis

As Dennis meets Martha on the evening she'd eaten lobster with Jimmy Manning, she immediately pulls her hand from Jimmy's grasp so that her dad won't see. While holding hands with Jimmy, Martha seems to feel older. But she seems to be holding onto her mood of earlier, when she'd been telling Jimmy about Olive. When Dennis and Martha begin walking toward home, Martha is obviously tired. Dennis says that when Martha was younger and had been tired, he'd simply pick her up, put her to his shoulder, and carry her. In doing so, Martha would be able to fall asleep on the way home. But Dennis points out that Martha is too big now to be carried, though he sometimes wishes he could return to the time when she was little enough to be picked up. Martha says that she wishes so too. While Martha is happy to have spent time with Jimmy and obviously wants to be seen as older, she is also realizing that she is losing her childhood and that it won't ever be returned. With that realization, she admits that she wishes she could return to a happier, less complicated time when she was small enough to be carried home.

As Martha is walking back to Godbee's house after learning that Jimmy videotaped the kiss, her thoughts turn unexpectedly to Olive. Martha finds herself wondering what Olive would have done, if she'd been faced with this situation. In Martha's mind, Olive had gone quietly through life without letting much of anything bother her. This outward appearance projected by Olive was probably something Olive had worked hard to create. In truth, it seems likely that Olive was more like Martha than Martha realizes. Martha comes to several decisions, including that she's going to get past this by blocking it out. She's going to pretend that it doesn't exist and isn't important, and by doing so, she believes she'll be able to simply move on without allowing the situation to hurt.

When Martha learns for sure that Jimmy has shown the tape to Vince and the others, she's very angry. She'd known it would happen but had held out the hope that it might not. She pledges to ignore the situation but finds she can't. She insists that Vince tell her and he admits that he'd seen the tape. Martha is so angry she says that she hates Vince. Vince responds that he doesn't know why she should hate him because he hadn't been the one to kiss someone. Martha then wishes she could find a way to hurt Vince as she'd been hurt. The emotions of this section are confused in Martha's mind as she struggles to deal with the situation, but she's simply looking for someone to take the blame.



Chapters 50 through

Chapters 50 through Summary

In Chapter Fifty, "Confirmed," Martha reads Olive's journal page again, focusing on the statement about wanting to go to "a real ocean." This confirms Martha's plan and she feels better for having something to focus on. In chapter fifty-one, "Lellow," Martha goes downstairs and finds Lucy already there. Lucy is enthralled with the glass jars filled with colored water and says "lellow is best." Martha tries to get the little girl to say "yellow," but is unsuccessful. Godbee says the light shining through the colored water isn't as pretty as she'd hoped, but that it's "nice."

In Chapter Fifty-Two, "Bulge," Dennis says he and Vince are going to walk over to the old Benton Place and asks Martha if she wants to go. Martha knows that if she remains at Godbee's she'll probably get saddled with the job of watching after Lucy but remains anyway, knowing that she will probably never go back to the Benton Place. Lucy declines the walk as well and, as expected, Dennis asks Martha if she'll watch Lucy while he and Vince are gone. Martha doesn't object and Dennis says that Alice, who is on the phone making work calls, will probably be free soon. Lucy wants to remain inside to play with the jars of colored water but Martha convinces her to go for a walk. Martha is wearing old jeans and a baggy orange t-shirt that covers a bulge in the front pocket of the jeans. In that pocket, she carries an empty jar.

In Chapter Fifty-Three, "Buried," Martha wants to be alone as she "carries out the first part of her plan." Martha is going to capture a bottle of ocean water to take to Olive's mother. She convinces Lucy play in the sand and then buries Lucy, leaving only her head sticking out. Martha creates a story about a princess awaiting a magic spell and Lucy buys into the game. Martha rushes toward the water, leaving Lucy buried in the sand. Martha scoops up the water and puts the lid back on the jar. As she does so, she imagines giving the water to Olive's mother, saying that it's for Olive who wanted to see an ocean but never got to. Martha is so caught up in the plan that she forgets about Lucy for a couple of minutes. When she remembers her sister, she puts the water back into the pocket of her jeans and rushes toward the spot on the beach where Lucy is buried. Just then she sees Jimmy Manning walking down the beach in her direction. He is carrying his video camera and holding the hand of a girl. Martha wants to hide but doesn't know where to go to accomplish that. She steps back toward the water, hoping she can remain still for a few minutes and that Jimmy will simply pass by without seeing her. Suddenly, the sand beneath her feet gives way and Martha collapses into the water.

In Chapter Fifty-Four, "Sea Creature," Martha struggles and realizes that she might drown. She relaxes and soon rises back to the surface. When she reaches the shore, she's happy to be alive though she coughs for some time. In chapter fifty-five, "Change," Martha realizes that her near-drowning experience has changed her though other people in the world are simple continuing as they were. Martha finds Lucy still buried and happily playing and knows that Jimmy Manning and the girl passed by without



seeing her. Martha returns to Lucy and Lucy points out that Martha's cheek is bleeding. Martha realizes then that she scratched herself while she was struggling. Martha, continuing the game, wrings out her wet hair on the mound of dirt covering Lucy, telling the little girl that she's now "free." Lucy jumps up but then realizes that she had sand inside her shirt and even in her diaper, and she begins to scream. Martha carries Lucy and the bottle of water back to Godbee's house.

In Chapter Fifty-Six, "A Note," Martha arrives at Godbee's with Lucy still screaming. Alice comes outside to see what's wrong with Lucy. Alice asks why Martha is wet and Martha says she fell in the water trying to make Lucy laugh. Alice undresses Lucy to get the sand out of her clothing and tells Martha that she should go change into dry clothes. Then Alice surprises Martha by saying that she's very patient with Lucy, which is a sign that Martha will make a good mother herself when she's older. Martha doesn't say anything but is pleased by the remark. About that time she notices a piece of paper on the porch, sticking out from the edge of the doormat. Martha picks it up and finds her name written on the outside. She opens the note and discovers that it's from Tate. The message is brief and says only that "I think I know what to do," ending with a promise that Martha would soon see for herself.

In Chapter Fifty-Seven, Martha takes a long shower and feels of the scratch on her cheek. She knows it's not overly serious.

In Chapter Fifty-Eight, Martha waits, hoping to hear from Tate and wondering what plan he's come up with. She decides that the story about Olive isn't very good and isn't "worthy" of Olive, and comes to the conclusion that she'll give it up. She knows, however, that she will become a writer and the desire is even stronger to succeed. Despite this, she decides that she'll wait a little while before starting another story and turns to poetry instead. She writes a series of random thoughts about all the things that are important to her, including the question of whether it's possible to "put the sea in a bottle" and why one person dies and another dies.

In Chapter Fifty-Nine, "Formless Days," Martha and her family will be returning to Wisconsin in two days, so she knows Tate will have to act before that time. Vince spends more time with Martha and the family. When Martha asks about it, he says that Jimmy spends too much time with his video camera and that it's "boring." The family goes together one day to a place called "The Knob." Martha imagines that Tate is with her and that they share their impressions of the place.

In Chapter Sixty, "A Telephone Call," Martha is sad on her last full day at Godbee's and says that it's the same feeling she experiences on each visit. Tate calls to ask what time they'll be leaving and Martha says they won't go too early, but will leave in the morning.

In Chapter Sixty-One, "Bad Dream," Martha has a dream in which she's surrounded by huge blocks of a substance she believes to be ice. Then she discovers that there are people within the blocks, including her parents, Vince, Godbee, Lucy and the Mannings. Each person is struggling to get out and when Martha gets near enough to see Godbee, she notes the fear in Godbee's eyes. Martha tries to help her grandmother escape and



discovers a zipper that, when pulled, released Godbee. Martha is relieved but turns to find Godbee has vanished. When Martha wakes, she remains uneasy from the dream for a while then remembers that she's expecting to hear from Tate.

In Chapter Sixty-Two, "Brave," the morning passes as Dennis begins to gather the family's possessions for the trip. Martha remains that morning in the yellow bedroom where she always sleeps while visiting Godbee. Alice says Martha should eat something but she refuses, saying that she's not hungry. After a while, Godbee comes into the room and Martha confides that she'd had a bad dream. Godbee invites her to tell about the dream but Martha says that it's "creepy," and that she believes the message from the dream is simply that she doesn't want to leave. Godbee shows Martha a letter that Martha had written when she was about six-years-old. The letter begins with "I like to be at your house best of all," and goes on to say that "I am a brave girl," ending by telling about a favorite game played on the rocks in the bay. Godbee says that she'd always wanted to be brave, but that she hasn't ever been. Godbee says that holding onto Martha's letter could help her be brave. Godbee says that good-byes are always difficult and they hug.

In Chapter Sixty-Three, "Leaving," the family packs up after Martha has delayed as long as she possibly can. As they are pulling out of the drive, Tate Manning rushes up.

In Chapter Sixty-Four, "This Time," Tate gives Martha a bag that contains the video tape. Dennis is obviously confused and says to Alice that Tate isn't the Manning that Martha likes. Alice suggests to Dennis that Tate might be "the messenger." Vince responds that his parents are "way behind" in understanding the situation. Martha waits until they get to the airport so she can open the bag in a bathroom stall, alone, then discovers that there's a note inside. Tate says that he knows Jimmy will "kill me" when he discovers the tape is missing. He adds a P.S., "I was the one who really liked you."

In Chapter Sixty-Five, Martha returns home to discover that things are the same though she has changed. In Chapter Sixty-Six, she tells her father that she wants to be a writer and he says it's a great idea.

In Chapter Sixty-Seven, she takes the jar of water to 4525 Nelson Street, the house where Olive's mother had lived but discovers that Olive's mother has moved. John Waverly, man who lives nearby, says he doesn't know where she's moved. He says that he's "haunted" by Olive who was always alone and always carried a notebook.

In Chapter Sixty-Eight, "Home," Martha finds a paintbrush among the items waiting for the trash pickup. She sits on the step of the house Olive had lived in and opens the jar of ocean water. She writes Olive's name using the paintbrush and water, watching as the water quickly evaporates in the heat, then writing it over again, until the water is all gone. As she paints, Martha knows that she'd be Olive's friend, given another opportunity to do so. She returns home and yells out, "I'm home," as much to hear her own voice as to alert everyone that she's returned.



Chapters 50 through Analysis

Martha doesn't want to go to the Benton Place but she also doesn't want to be left out of any plans. This conflict in Martha's life is seen repeatedly throughout the story. Martha recognizes the conflicts but doesn't really know what to do about it. When Dennis and Vince leave the house headed for the Benton Place, Martha makes the conscious decision to remain behind. She doesn't want to go to the Benton Place for fear of the reminders she'll find there. It seems that Martha is wishing that her life could return to the uncomplicated situation of years past.

After Martha almost drowns, she returns to Lucy and continues the game with the little girl. When Lucy says that Martha is bleeding, Martha realizes for the first time that she'd scratched her cheek as she was struggling to reach the surface. Martha continues with the game, telling Lucy that she'd battled a horrible sea monster in order to save the princess - Lucy. The sea monster could be a symbol in Martha's mind for the near-drowning experience. Another important aspect of this scene is that Martha tells Lucy to "live your life, safe from harm." While it is part of the game, Martha's words likely indicate a realization that Lucy is also mortal and therefore not safe from the possibility of death.

Martha and Godbee share a few minutes alone in Martha's room just before the family leaves. Godbee confides that she's always wished she could be brave and that she hasn't ever managed to be. Martha is amazed at the confession and says that she has always thought of Godbee as being brave. Martha admits that she is saddened by Godbee's confession. Her mind turns again to the possibility that Godbee could die and Martha says that she knows this could be the final summer visit with Godbee.

Martha comes up with a plan to return to Godbee's house for Christmas. She says that she will have the opportunity to keep an eye on Godbee for that time and that she'll have time for one-on-one time with Godbee. It seems that Martha's realization that Godbee could die has brought a great deal of worry.

Martha's final moments on Olive's steps while she's painting Olive's name with the ocean water is symbolic of Martha telling Olive good-bye. Martha paints the letters but the heat dries the water in a matter of seconds so that the word disappears. That seems to be symbolic of Olive's death.



Characters

Martha Boyle

Grant realized the importance of the common soldier and made sure that he took care of his men, as much as was possible, during his command. At one point, Grant is facing many tasks but sets up a supply line to ensure that the men have the food and ammunition they need. At another point, Grant describes the trenches built by the men. Knowing that the battle would be drawn out and that the men would be forced to remain entrenched for days, the trenches were dug deeply with the dirt thrown over timbers piled to the front. The dirt and timber fronts provided additional cover so that the men were able to stand upright in the trench without fear of being shot.

On several occasions, Grant made a point of saying that the men should be given time to rest before being forced to march again. When Grant needed Sherman's forces to move, Grant took into account the fact that the roads were nearly impassable making the trek difficult for the men. Grant said he wouldn't have ordered Sherman to make that march but that Sherman took it upon himself to move the men. Grant realized that Lee's troops were equally dependent on supplies and made every effort to cut off those supplies in order to press an advantage. Grant's interest in the well-being of the common soldier extended to those in need of attention. When many wounded lay on a battlefield besieged by the Confederate troops, Grant contacted Lee, asking that they call a truce in order to make time to remove the wounded from the field.

Godbee

The name Martha Boyle uses for her grandmother. Godbee is the mother of Dennis Boyle, Martha's father. She lives near the ocean and shares a special bond with Martha that is apparently greater than the bond with her other grandchildren. Godbee is a strong character and is content living alone. She suggests to Martha that they tell each other something about themselves each day of Martha's visit. Her goal is obviously to get to know Martha better and to strengthen the bond they have. Martha loves Godbee at least partly because her grandmother understands Martha's feelings. When Martha spends some time with a boy she likes, Godbee realizes that the youngsters don't want to be cooped up with the adults all evening and tells them they can go. She's the first of the adults to issue that permission which endears her even more to Martha. Martha confides in Godbee her desire to be a writer before she tells anyone else because she knows Godbee will understand. When Godbee hears the news, she asks to read something Martha has written but understands when Martha says she wants to wait until later.



Olive Barstow

A girl in Martha's class at school, she is very shy and has few friends. Olive is killed when a car hits her while she's riding her bicycle. She leaves behind a journal and one page of that is given to Martha. That page indicates that Olive wanted to be a writer, wanted to visit the ocean, and wanted to become friends with Martha.

Vince Boyle

Martha's older brother, there is exactly one year's difference in their ages. Martha says that she and Vince were close when they were young but had grown apart over the years. Despite this, they still share a bond and Vince feels for Martha when a boy takes advantage of her. Vince is somewhat rough and tumble, as is to be expected, but his affection for his family is evident.

Dennis Boyle

Martha's father. Dennis is a writer who has yet to have anything published. He stays home with Lucy while his wife works. Dennis seems stressed and is often angry until he announces to the family that he is going to give up the idea of writing to return to work as an attorney. Dennis seems happier just by making the decision.

Alice Hubbard

Martha's wife, she is a radio personality. She is somewhat demanding of her children though she also realizes their need for independence. She seems supportive and when Dennis announces that he wants to return to work, she agrees that it's a good idea, apparently because she knows that it will make him happy.

Lucy Boyle

Martha's little sister, Lucy is only two the summer after Olive Barstow dies. Lucy is demanding and Martha sometimes grows tired of being forced to help watch after her, but Lucy is generally so loving that Martha is happy to be with her anyway.

Jimmy Manning

The oldest of the five Manning brothers, he lives near Godbee's house. Jimmy is older than Martha and she really hasn't thought about him much until they encounter each other on the beach and Jimmy invites Martha to watch his video. Jimmy is making a film and kisses Martha to create what he refers to as the "love" portion of his video. Martha later learns that he kissed her on a dare and that he showed the video to others.



Tate Manning

Jimmy's younger brother, Tate seems to like Martha. After Jimmy shows everyone the video of Jimmy and Martha kissing, Tate promises Martha that he'll take care of the problem. He shows up just as Martha and her family are leaving Godbee's to return home and gives her the video.

Holly

Martha's best friend, Holly and Martha talk about Olive's death soon after it happens. Olive repeats a rumor about Olive's death, saying she'd heard that Olive's head was knocked off in the accident. Martha says that she wishes they'd been nicer to Olive and Holly responds that they "weren't not nice" to Olive.



Objects/Places

The Boyle House

Where Martha is when Olive's mother brings her the page from Olive's journal.

Olive's Journal

A diary kept by Olive, the journal includes a page that outlines Olive's dreams and her hope that she and Martha would become friends.

Monroe Street

Where Olive is killed by a motorist while she was riding her bicycle.

Wisconsin Public Radio

Where Alice Hubbard works.

Atlantic Ocean

Where Godbee lives.

Godbee's House

Located near the beach, it's where Martha spends her summer vacation with her family.

Susan B. Anthony Middle School

Where Martha attends.

Where Jimmy kisses Martha.

Where Jimmy kisses Martha.

Woods Hole

Martha's favorite restaurant located near Godbee's house.



4525 Nelson Street

Where Olive's mother lived and where Martha wrote Olive's name on the steps using the ocean water.



Themes

Coming of Age

In many cases, this is the typical coming of age story. Martha is an intelligent girl but death has not personally touched her life until the summer Olive dies. Even then, Martha is able to keep some distance because she and Olive are little more than acquaintances. But as Martha learns about Olive's life and her hopes and dreams, she comes to realize that the two girls have a great deal in common. With that knowledge comes the understanding that Martha, like Olive, is mortal and could die. This realization prompts an emerging maturity that might otherwise have been delayed. As Martha moves into this understanding, she also comes to realize that her grandmother is also mortal. Martha knows that any of her visits with her grandmother could be the last. With this realization, she decides that she's going to spend Christmas with Godbee as well, though it's not something that her family does and she knows she'll have to sell her parents on the idea. Her decision that she's going to visit Godbee is another sign of her emerging maturity in that she doesn't plan to ask her parents for permission but has made up her mind and intends to convince them that they have to allow it.

Mortality

Martha, at twelve, knows that people die but comes to a greater understanding over the course of the book about mortality. This knowledge seems to come as a culmination of several experiences beginning with receiving Olive's journal. Martha had been aware of Olive's death at the time it happened and had realized that it was final, but the situation doesn't really impact her until after Olive's mother shares Olive's thoughts. It's only then that Martha thinks about Olive as something other than a quiet girl with too few friends. Soon after Martha arrives at her grandmother's house for their summer vacation, she realizes that her grandmother is also mortal, and that she could die at any time. Despite this understanding, Martha doesn't realize until later that this is true of everyone. When Martha falls into the water on the beach and almost drowns, she's faced with her own mortality. While she's in the water, she fights to get back to the surface. As she's battling the pull of the water, she suddenly realizes that she might drown. That understanding brings her to a better grasp of mortality. With this understanding comes a sense of responsibility. Martha wants to spend as much time as possible with her grandmother because she realizes that it really could be their final summer together. She also makes plans to return for a visit at Christmas and plans to "keep an eye" on Godbee for that time.

The Importance of Family

Martha is very close to her grandmother and her little sister but her relationship with her older brothers and her parents are sometimes strained. Despite this strain, she



understands the importance of those family connections. Her mother reminds her of that when it's obvious that Martha and Vince have been arguing. Alice tells Martha that someday, Vince and Lucy "will be your family," indicating that Martha will depend on them when their parents are gone. Martha and Vince share a strong bond though that bond is being tested as they grow older. When Martha is wronged by Jimmy Manning, Vince tries to avoid telling her what he knows. When Martha won't let him, Vince admits that he knows about the bet and the kiss. But later, when someone mentions Jimmy's name, Vince makes a rude comment about Jimmy. It's obvious that Vince is referring to how Jimmy treated Martha. Later, Vince spends more time with the family and when her parents haven't figured out that there was a problem with Jimmy, Vince comments that they are behind on their information. This is more evidence of the bond between Vince and Martha. Martha's bond with Lucy is also strong and Martha seems unaware that her actions toward her little sister are important until Alice points it out, saying that Martha is very kind to Lucy. The most important of the bonds is Martha's relationship with her grandmother. She feels such a strong connection that she's upset when she comes to realize that her grandmother will someday die.



Style

Point of View

The story is written in third person from a limited perspective. The story is presented entirely from Martha's point of view. This limitation is not a real problem for the reader because the focus of the story is Martha and her emerging maturity. The reader is given information as Martha gets it or as it occurs to her. For example, Olive has already died when the story begins but there's a chapter that details the reactions of Martha and her best friend, Holly, upon learning of Olive's death. Another important aspect of the perspective is seen when Jimmy Manning kisses Martha. She believes that Jimmy cares about her and the kiss catches her somewhat by surprise. Immediately following the kiss, Martha learns that Jimmy's motivation in kissing Martha had been a bet made between Jimmy and his brothers. Vince also knew about the bet ahead of time. The fact that Jimmy, Vince and the other boys knew about the bet prior to the kiss is not revealed to the reader until after the kiss. This presentation of information is appropriate. The reader feels sympathy for Martha's having fallen into the trap and knowing about the bet ahead of time would have lessened the effect on the reader. The third-person perspective and the limitations are appropriate and acceptable to the story.

Setting

The story has several distinct settings. The most important are Godbee's house, a house known as the Benton Place, and the nearby beach. Each is described in some detail. For example, Martha stays in a particular room each time she visits with Godbee. That room is painted yellow. Details such as this help make the settings more real to the reader. Another interesting description of the setting is seen when Godbee fills all the baby food jars with colored water. The filling of the jars, the placement on the windows, and the effects created by the jars of colored water are described in some detail. Another specific setting is the Benton Place. Martha and Jimmy Manning go to the stables at the Benton Place which is used only seldom. It's in this setting that Martha and Jimmy kiss. Two other important settings are the site of Olive's accident and the front porch of the house where Olive had lived. Martha expects there to be something significant about the site of the accident to mark the tragedy that had occurred there. When she goes to Olive's house and finds that Olive's mother has left, Martha sits down on the porch and paints Olive's name using an old paint brush and the water she'd brought back from the ocean. The final setting of major importance to the story is the beach. Not only does Martha have a great deal of fun there, it's also where she was standing when she slipped and fell into the water. The near-drowning is important because it gives Martha the sudden knowledge that her life is not guaranteed and that she could die, just as Olive did.



Language and Meaning

The story line is fairly straightforward but the writing is flowery and sometimes difficult to follow. The structure of the book also impacts the language and meaning in some instances. The writer does not adhere to general rules of writing such as sentence length. For example, chapter 54 is titled "Sea Creature" and is just more than a page long. The entire chapter is two paragraphs, one very lengthy that takes up the entire first page of the chapter. This paragraph is a single sentence that's a page in length. In that paragraph Martha outlined her intention to get out of sight while Jimmy Manning passed by. She says that she'd been "wanting to disappear, but then she actually did disappear." The remainder of that sentence/paragraph is devoted to Martha's panicked struggle to survive. The author describes the "tentacles" of her ponytail spreading out after she was submerged "like a sea creature jerking about wildly." The description of this situation is extensive and conveys to the reader Martha's feelings which become one of acceptance rather than fear. The overall theme is one of hope. The overall theme is one of hope though Martha goes through periods of hurt, anger and doubt to find that sense of hope.

Structure

The story is divided into sixty-eight chapters. The chapters vary in length with the shortest being less than a page. The longest are not much more than five to six pages in length. For example, chapter fifty is titled "Confirmed" and this chapter is a total of two paragraphs, each only one or two sentences in length. The first paragraph is a single sentence in which Martha re-reads an entry from Olive's journal. The second is two sentences indicating that Martha has "confirmed" her plan and that she feels better for having done so. Chapter forty-nine, by contrast, is six full pages. The action in this chapter covers a short period of time in which Lucy and Godbee meet up in the kitchen in the middle of the night. The chapters are numbered and titled. Most of the titles are only one or two words though there are exceptions. The titles reference something that's happening in that chapter. For example, chapter fifty-one is titled "Lellow," which is how Lucy pronounces "yellow." In that chapter, Lucy points out the baby food bottles filled with yellow food coloring as being her favorites. The story flows in chronological order with a single exception. After Olive's mother gives Martha the page from Olive's journal, Marta recounts a conversation with Holly when the girls had learned of Olive's death.



Quotes

"I hope that I get to know Martha Boyle next year (or this summer). I hope that we can be friends." Olive's Journal, Chapter 3, Page 5

"Martha couldn't shake Olive Barstow from her thoughts. She felt a stab of loneliness, the source of which she couldn't name." Chapter 5, Page 11

"Who knows, this might be our last summer together." Godbee, Chapter 12, Page 36

"She heard laughter from below. She sniffed once more, stretched like a cat, then went downstairs thinking, happily, I'm going to be a writer." Chapter 16, Page 51

"The scene with Mr. and Mrs. Manning had given her the chills, and yet she realized that any family, even the very best ones, had their moments. Awful, private moments." Martha referring to Jimmy's video, Chapter 21, Page 70

"I can't smell the ocean or run along the beach anymore either, but I remember what those things were like, too. Strange, I remember certain feelings and sensations more clearly the further away from them I become." Godbee, Chapter 26, Page 81

"Her entire life had come down to this awful moment, dwindled to nothing but this. Her life was a measly mess that could be contained in a closed fist." Chapter 41, Page 130

"Maybe, thought Martha, just maybe, the kiss will never be mentioned and the tape never shown. Her mind circled back to this thought repeatedly, although deep down inside her, she knew the likelihood of this was next to impossible." Chapter 42, Page 133

"Remember, when your father and I are dead and gone, your brother and sister will be your family.' Blah, blah, blah, blah, blah." Chapter 45, Page 138

"Everything took on a gloomy significance: the Last Lunch, the Last Dinner, the Last Sunset. The sadness was the familiar going-home-lump-in-the-throat feeling." Chapter 60, Page 182

"It would be perfect - a week or ten days to be alone with Godbee, to keep a watchful eye on her, to take care of her; and time to be with Tate." Chapter 65, Page 203

"She watched intently - the concrete turned dark and then light again as the water evaporated. Olive's name was there one moment, then gone the next, like a flicker in the great scheme of things." Chapter 68, Page 216



Topics for Discussion

When Olive's mother arrives at Martha's house, she gives Martha the page from Olive's journal and says, "thank you." Why does Olive's mother say "thank you" to Martha? Why do you believe this is important to the story? What is Martha's reaction to Olive's mother?

Who is Olive Barstow? How does she die? What impact does her death have on Martha? What was the relationship between Martha and Olive prior to Olive's death? How do Martha's feelings about Olive change after Olive's death?

What happens to Martha to make her really realize that she could die? What is the impact of this realization on Martha? How does it change her? Is this change for the better? Support your answers with specific examples from the story.

What happens to Martha to make her really realize that she could die? What is the impact of this realization on Martha? How does it change her? Is this change for the better? Support your answers with specific examples from the story.

Who is Martha's grandmother? What is the relationship between Martha and her grandmother? What pieces of information does her grandmother share during Martha's visit? What is Martha's reaction to these pieces of information?

Who is Vince? Lucy? Alice? Dennis? Godbee? Jimmy Manning? Tate Manning? How is each connected to Martha?

What do you believe is the most important theme of this story? Give at least two examples of the theme in the story. Why do you believe this to be the most important theme?

List at least two instances of symbolism in the story. What is the importance of each?