

One of Those Hideous Books Where the Mother Dies Study Guide

**One of Those Hideous Books Where the Mother Dies
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Plot Summary

Fifteen-year-old Ruby Miliken has just lost her mother to cancer and is flying from Boston, Massachusetts, to Hollywood, California to meet her movie star father, Whip Logan, for the first time. Ruby is leaving behind her best friend, Lizzie, and boyfriend, Ray, to live with a man she has never met. She is also leaving behind her mother's sister, Aunt Duffy. Aunt Duffy has taken Ruby to the movies to see her father's films every year since she turned little. Ruby's mother never spoke to Ruby about her father. Everything she knows about him she learned from Aunt Duffy.

Ruby is angry at her father for abandoning her mother before Ruby was born. She resents having to leave her home and live with him. She also feels out of place in the perfect world that her father inhabits. Ruby must learn to make friends and to let go of her old life. She also must learn to make peace with her father. Ruby attends Lakewood high school, where she meets Colette, Wyatt and her dream interpretation teacher Feather. Ruby looks forward to Thanksgiving when her boyfriend, Ray, will come to visit. Ruby meets her father's live-in assistant, Max, and forms a tight relationship with him.

It takes Ruby a while to settle into her new life, come to terms with her mother's death, admit she is depressed, make friends and forgive her father. After being betrayed by her friends back home and experiencing a natural disaster, Ruby and Whip come to understand each other. They have an honest conversation about the past and form a strong bond on which to build the future.



Poems 1 - 50 and Letters 1 - 4 plus 3 E-mails from Lizzie:

Poems 1 - 50 and Letters 1 - 4 plus 3 E-mails from Lizzie: Summary

Fifteen-year-old Ruby Miliken's mother has just passed away and she is on a plane headed to meet the father she has never known. Her father and mother divorced before she was born. Ruby is not happy about being sent to be with her father. She had to leave her aunt Duffy, boyfriend Ray Johnston and best friend Lizzie Brody behind in Boston to move to Hollywood. Ruby wants to stay with her aunt, but her aunt doesn't have room for her and is too nice to say "no." So now she is on a plane to her father's house and she doesn't know what to expect from him. If it wasn't for her aunt she wouldn't even know who her father is. As the plane takes off, Ruby thinks about how her mother died and how she hated flying. The flight attendant reminds her of her mother.

On Ruby's fourth birthday Duffy took her to see her father. She made Ruby swear she would never tell her mother and then took her to the movie theater. Ruby wore her new sparkle shoes because she thought her father was going to meet them there. Her father was at the movies - on the movie screen. He is Whip Logan, a famous movie star. Ruby was devastated and Duffy was upset that she was so upset. It became a tradition every December for them to see a Whip Logan movie in the theaters for Ruby's birthday. Ruby never told her mother.

Ruby's flight hits some turbulence and she thinks it would serve her father right if she died in a plane crash. She has to use the restroom, but the large man next to her is asleep and she can't get around him. She wonders if the stewardess can find a forklift to move him. The bright spot in her flight . . . the man behind her is no longer picking his boogers. A movie plays and Ruby is relieved it isn't a Whip Logan movie. She even jokes with herself that it is a plane crash movie, but it isn't. It is a confusing spy film. Chicken is served for lunch and Ruby is not happy with it.

Ruby uses a barf bag to write a letter to Lizzie. She makes a joke that she can't barf now or she won't be able to send the letter. She tells Lizzie not to forget her and to tell Ray to stay away from Amber, whom she calls a disgusting skank.

Ruby begins to think about Ray and the way he made her feel. She is very attracted to him and likes that he makes her feel special. She has a dream they are kissing, but is suddenly awakened by the flight attendant who asks if Ruby wants honey roasted peanuts. The plane flies over the Grand Canyon and then prepares for landing. Ruby thinks about all the people in first class and makes some jokes about their pampered treatment. She gets off of the plane and sees her father waiting.



Whip is too busy signing autographs to notice her at first. She stands there for a moment watching him smile and chat with people. Finally he notices her and comes to greet her. Whip puts his arm around her and gets teary eyed, but Ruby isn't having it. She ducks down to tie her shoe and he moves his arm. The two of them run past photographers and enter Whip's limo. Ruby has only been in one other limo and that was at her mother's funeral. He tells her she looks like her mother and that he is glad she is there. Ruby doesn't want to hear it. Ruby has never seen the ocean so they stop by the beach and go to the water. There are dolphins in the waves.

They arrive at Whip's estate and Ruby is horrified, or maybe she is impressed. She doesn't want to like anything Whip has to offer. The house is enormous, the foyer alone is twice the size of her mother's home. Whip has his picture everywhere. There are also sculptures, paintings and other Whip memorabilia all over the house. Whip seems to be his own decorating theme. He takes Ruby to her room and she is in awe. It is the room of her dreams and almost mirrors the one she wrote about in an essay once. However, she doesn't tell Whip she likes it and wishes it was the room of her dreams somewhere other than in his house. Ruby calls her aunt, best friend and boyfriend but no one is home. It is sad to her that she has can't share her new home with anyone she cares about. She goes to dinner and Whip makes her his famous macadamia nut pancakes. The door rings and it is Cameron Diaz, she is a neighbor and needs to borrow vanilla extract. Ruby thinks about her mother and the home they had together. How her mother knew how to listen and what to say.

Ruby has a nightmare that her dead mother is trying to drag her into a coffin. When she wakes up she can't figure out how to work the shower, so she sponges off and meets Whip for shopping. He has five cars and the two of them take a cherry red 1952 Corvette to the stores. Ruby loves classic cars; Whip loves classic cars. Their similarity upsets Ruby. Ruby returns home to find emails from Lizzie and Ray.

Letters 2 - 4, Lizzie's emails:

Ruby writes to Ray and tells him she can't wait to see him at Thanksgiving. She tells him she wants him to come out now and that she has a really big bed. She also writes to Lizzie about school getting ready to begin. She will be going to a school called Lakewood which Whip said he had to pull strings to get her into. Ruby asked him if he had to autograph the Dean's butt, Whip said he did. Ruby isn't sure what to make of his humor. Lizzie writes that she misses Ruby and can't believe school is starting. She says she has seen Ray and he looks miserable without Ruby.

Poems 1 - 50 and Letters 1 - 4 plus 3 E-mails from Lizzie: Analysis

Ruby is fighting fear and depression after the death of her mother. She doesn't know what her father is like and is a little afraid he may turn out to be a drug addict or abusive. She resents that she is in this position and thinks she doesn't want to end up like one of the girls in the books she reads. A girl whose mother dies and her father is a



drugged out abuser. Although Ruby doesn't say it, it seems likely her mother died of cancer.

Ruby has a sarcastic voice and she is a funny girl. Her poems are filled with sarcastic humor. She understands what is going on around her and seems to find some sense of security in the absurd. Like thinking the stewardess will need a forklift for the guy next to her and thinking about the man picking his boogers.

Ruby's writing to Lizzie reveals her fear that her friend and boyfriend will forget her now that she is gone.

When Ruby finally sees and meets Whip, she compares all of his movements and words to different movie roles he has played. There is a feeling that Ruby doesn't think his tears and hug for her are genuine. She is scared about her future and very angry with the man she calls the "sperm donor."

While in the limo Ruby notes the differences between her life and her fathers. His expensive Nike's and her Payless sandals for instance. However, she doesn't want to think about their similarities when he echoes her thoughts about loving the ocean. When they arrive at Whip's home Ruby is again struck by the differences in their lives. She is also a little upset that he seems so eager to please her. She thinks about her mother and about the things that made her mother special.

Ruby loves the pancakes her father makes, but refuses to tell him. She doesn't know how to feel about their shared love of classic cars and she has a hard time accepting the stuff he buys her while shopping. Ruby really wants the things he buys her, but resents that he is the one buying her all of her favorite things. She can't help but think he is trying to buy his way into her life. Whip seems genuinely happy to have Ruby with him and seems to want her high regard very badly.

Ruby and her friends are upset to be apart. Ruby has been gone for 24 hours when she receives Lizzie's emails. Ruby writes an email to her mother's email account. In it she tells her mother how much she misses her and how much she hates remembering her the way she looked in her coffin.



Poems 51 - 79, Letters 5 - 9:

Poems 51 - 79, Letters 5 - 9: Summary

Ruby is about to log off her computer when a picture flashes up of her and Whip which reads "Whip's Wild Child." The idea that there are pictures of her on the internet is weird to Ruby. Ruby doesn't want Whip to take her to school on the first day, but he insists. She really didn't want anyone to know who her father is. His license plate reads, "Rubyzdad." Everyone at school falls all over Whip trying to make him happy. They thank him for his donation and for volunteering at the school. They ignore Ruby. Ruby is shocked by the classes offered (Steven Spielberg films and Aromatherapy class), and she is shocked by the students and what they wear. Describing it as being on MTV and saying only skanks wear those outfits where she is from.

Whip leaves and Ruby is introduced by Dean Moriarity to Colette. Colette is in Ruby's dream interpretation class. She has tattoos and magenta eyes. Colette tells Ruby that her mother is also famous and that she hates for people to know because they treat her differently. Ruby tells her that happened after her mother died when everyone back home found out she was Whip's daughter. Ruby wants to ask who Colette's mother is but she doesn't want to be a hypocrite. Colette tells her most of the people at Lakewood have famous parents. Colette's mother is Marissa Shawn. Colette takes Ruby on a tour of the campus. She shows her where to smoke, where pot is grown, where the coke dealer hangs out and introduces her to Lolita, a girl who sells term papers.

Ruby is introduced to visualization during her Dream Interpretation class by her teacher, Feather. They hold hands, burn incense and watch a film on Gestalt Therapy. Ruby starts by thinking the whole thing is lame, but ends up enjoying the experience. It gives her a break from hating her father. Ruby imagines Ray is there to pick her up after school, but Whip arrives instead. He asks her about her day and she tells him it was "fine." Whip makes a joke out of her answers and wonders why the school is called Lakewood. There isn't a lake and there are no woods. This makes Ruby crazy because she wondered the exact same thing at the beginning of the day.

Aunt Duffy calls to check on Ruby. Ruby is sad to hear Duffy's voice because it sounds so much like her mother's voice. She and her aunt miss each other. Duffy asks questions about Whip and Ruby. Ruby does her best to reassure her aunt that things are fine, she leaves out many of the negative feelings she has about her father and LA. Duffy tells Ruby she will be out of reach for six months because she is going on an archeological dig with her boyfriend. Ray email and tells Ruby that he misses her. He thinks of her green eyes and freckles everyday and he can't sleep because of it. She calls him but he isn't home.

Letters 5 - 8:



Ruby emails Ray and tells him that she misses his freckles too, all three of them. She receives an email from Lizzie. Lizzie tells her Amber made a move on Ray but Ray ignored her. She also says that Ray passed her a note saying he missed Ruby. Ruby emails back that she is depressed. She emails her mother's account again and tells her that the last email came back with a message saying the account had a "fatal error." Ruby says that death is a fatal error.

Poems 72 - 79:

Ruby has a dream about the zoo. She is two years old and holding the hand of a tall man who's hand is dry and warm. They are looking at monkeys and the monkeys begin to howl and make noise. The man picks her up and takes her away, then leans in to tell her she is safe. Ruby decides to apply Gestalt Therapy to her own dream. She pretends to be the banana the monkey is eating. As she relates to the banana she realizes that bananas are eaten and become shit. Therefore, her life must be turning to shit.

Whip takes Ruby to school because he has missed out on doing it for years. Ruby could care less what he has missed out on. He introduces her to his entourage and their entourage. Ruby can't believe the amount of people it takes to arrange Whip's life. She likes his assistant, Max, a large bearded man with a deep voice. Ruby is convinced Max is gay. Ruby remembers that her mother said she could smell gay people and is embarrassed to admit her mother was prejudiced against gays. She asks Max some questions to determine if he is gay. He knows what she is asking and doesn't give her an answer. Ruby is convinced Whip doesn't know Max is gay and swears to keep it a secret.

Letter 9:

Ruby writes to her mother again and tells her she likes Whip's assistant, but it isn't a love thing so not to worry.

Poems 51 - 79, Letters 5 - 9: Analysis

Ruby is intimidated by the other kids at school, describing them as perfect hair, perfect teeth and perfect tans. She is also weirded out by the classes offered. It is a stark contrast from her former life in Boston. Ruby doesn't appreciate that Whip is fallen all over while she is ignored; not because she wants to be paid attention too, but because she resents that Whip is so respected. Ruby doesn't feel her father deserves all the attention and respect.

Ruby doesn't want to be impressed by Colette's famous mother, but she is. She feels that she can really bond with Colette and is surprised and pleased that they have similar circumstances and personalities.

Whip is really trying to make a connection with Ruby, but she is not ready to allow him into her life. However, it is getting harder for her to deny that they are remarkably similar.



Ruby feels like she has to protect her aunt's emotions and isn't truthful with Duffy when she calls. She also feels abandoned by Duffy and betrayed that Duffy will be leaving and unable to be reached for six months. Ruby misses Ray and calls his house, but he isn't home. It seems that life in Boston is going on without Ruby.

Ruby seems to hear from Lizzie more than she hears from Ray. She misses her mother and sends another email. In this one she wonders about the afterlife.

For the first time Ruby is willing to say there is something about her mother she wasn't proud of, that her mother had a prejudice. She thinks that most of Whip's entourage is fake and likes Max because he doesn't treat Whip like he is breakable. Max tells it to Whip like it is, something Ruby respects.

Letter 9:

Ruby's emails to her mother's account help her to feel connected to her mother. They are a way of telling her mother what is happening in her life. Ruby doesn't believe in God or an afterlife.



Poems 80 - 106, Letters 10 - 12:

Poems 80 - 106, Letters 10 - 12: Summary

Lizzie calls and Ruby is thrilled to hear from her friend. She misses Lizzie and tells her all about Colette, school, Whip and her emails to her mother. Lizzie tells her about school, Amber and Ray. Then her step-mother calls and she has to get off the phone. Ruby hangs up and calls Ray. They tell each other they miss each other and talk about the time they kissed in the rain. Ruby implies she wishes they could do more than kiss and tells Ray she can't wait to see him at Thanksgiving. Ruby goes to the kitchen for ice cream and finds Max there in his pajamas. She is happy to find out he lives at the house too.

Feather gives each student a dream journal. They are to write their dreams down each morning and bring them to class. Ruby wants to do the assignment, but can't remember her dreams. After two weeks Feather is getting annoyed by Ruby's lack of dream journal writing. Colette and her friends have asked Ruby to hang out after school a few times but Ruby turned them down because Whip picks her up. Colette has stopped asking her to hang out and sometimes ignores her in the halls. Colette's friends, Crystal, Bette, and Madison, have tried to strike up friendships with Ruby. Ruby has not returned their overtures. Most days Ruby goes home and tries to entertain herself by reading or going to the pool.

Lizzie emails again about Amber and Ray. She also encourages Ruby to email her mother if it helps her work through her grief. Ruby emails back that Whip insists on taking her to school and picking her up. That she misses her friends and hates her life.

Ruby asks Max to help her convince Whip to allow her to walk to school. Ruby hears Whip and Max talking about it. Whip says he would worry because there are bad people out there. Max tells her that Ruby isn't a baby and to get over it. Whip tells Max he is fired and Max ignores him. Whip agrees to allow Ruby to walk to school. Ruby thanks Max for helping and tells him he has a big heart and reminds her of her aunt. She begins calling him Aunt Max.

Ruby walks to school and gets a ticket for jaywalking which makes her late for class. She decides not to use the campus sidewalk, like everyone else, and sprints across the lawn. Too late she realizes they were on the sidewalk because the sprinklers were coming on. Colette notices Ruby is soaked and loans her a jacket before anyone can tell she isn't wearing a bra. Colette sits by Ruby at lunch and Ruby tells her thank you. Colette tries to make conversation but is shut down by Ruby's comment about her mother's death. Things are awkward and Colette leaves. After school Ruby realizes she can hang out with Colette and go to Poquito Mas, but no one asked her.

Ruby walks home and begins to miss her old home. It is fall, but it doesn't feel like fall in LA because the weather never changes and neither do the leaves. She especially



misses the trees and fallen leaves where she and her mother used to read. She arrives home to find Whip worried about her. Ruby finally tells him that she can't understand why he worries about her now when he never did before. He tells her he wants to talk about that, but she doesn't want to hear it from him. Ruby goes to her room and finds a package of leaves from Lizzie. However, the leaves have been pressed between wax paper and Ruby can't smell them.

Letter 12:

Ruby's letter to Lizzie shows her insecurities. She wonders if she is wonderful.

Poems 80 - 106, Letters 10 - 12: Analysis

Ruby is busy trying to hang on to her past and is not as interested in forming her future. She can't let go of her mother or the life she had in Boston. Her fear and anger is getting in the way of her new life. She enjoys Max's friendship and is glad he is in the house with her. Ruby seems to be forming a relationship with Max that Whip would like to have with her.

People have tried to befriend Ruby, but she hasn't made herself open to their friendships. However, Ruby doesn't seem to understand this and feels that she is ignored and is alone. Ruby goes home and spends time alone or with Max. She refuses to be polite to Whip and often hurts his feelings. Ruby thinks about apologizing to him, but isn't ready to forgive him.

Ruby writes how Whip thinks she doesn't want him to take her to school because it is an inconvenience. She also writes that she tells Whip she likes to walk. What Ruby and Whip are not doing is communicating with each other honestly. They have yet to discuss their feelings with each other or the past.

It is very possible there is more to Whip and Max's relationship than meets the eye. It is also possible that this is why Ruby's mother had the prejudices she did. Ruby is grateful for Colette's help and is beginning to realize she has alienated herself.

The seasons are changing and it is now October. Ruby is still angry with Whip, but isn't ready to let him explain himself.

Ruby may be beginning to rethink her recent behavior.



Poems 107 - 125, Letter 13 - 15:

Poems 107 - 125, Letter 13 - 15: Summary

Whip comes to Ruby's room and asks if he can explain to her what happened with her mother. She slams the bedroom door in his face and feels pretty good about it. She looks out her bedroom window and sees Whip looking through a giant scrap book. Max comes to sit with him and they look at the book together. Whip begins to cry and Max gives him a tissue. Ruby is suspicious and thinks Whip sat under her window on purpose. She thinks about how her mother swore off men after Whip and was upset when she began dating Ray. Max comes to see if Ruby wants to talk and convinces her to have dinner with he and Whip. They go to the gazebo and no one talks at first. Eventually Whip and Ruby apologize to each other. Max apologizes for fun and to lighten the moment. They all laugh, but when Whip takes Ruby's hand she stops. This isn't a movie and she isn't sure she wants to know what he is sorry for.

Ruby stops by a store on the way to school the next day and is asked to autograph a tabloid with her face on it. Then she is given free gum and asked to give a script to her father. She can't help but identify with the teen from *A Catcher in the Rye* and wonders how everyone can be so fake. Ruby finally has a dream to write about. She dreams that she and Ray lived in Ruby's Slipper and had tons of babies together. When she wakes she writes of the dream in her journal. Now she has something to share with the class. However, when she gets up in the morning she realizes she only dreamed about writing in her journal. She tells the whole incident to the class the next day and everyone thinks it is funny. Even Feather, who hugs her.

Letter 13:

Ruby asks Whip if Ray can visit for Thanksgiving in seven weeks. Whip says yes, but she could tell he didn't want too. However, she asked in front of Max. Max gave Whip the evil eye so that Whip would say yes.

Poems 121 - 124:

Ruby is paired up with Wyatt Moody, a Brad Pitt wannabe, in dream interpretation. They are to do an improv skit. Wyatt reaches into his pocket for a prop and puts an open condom in Ruby's hand. She freaks and everyone laughs at her. Then she uses the condom, and her anger, to perform a great improv performance. She understands what it must be like for her father to act. Wyatt asks her to sit by him at lunch and flirts with her; Ruby flirts back then feels unfaithful to Ray. She thinks about how she and Ray are in different time zones and aren't even eating breakfast at the same time.

Letter 14 - 15:



Ruby writes to Lizzie and asks about Ray and Amber. She hasn't heard from Ray in three weeks and is worried about their relationship. Lizzie tells Ruby not to be negative and not to worry about Ray and Amber.

Poems 107 - 125, Letter 13 - 15: Analysis

Poems 107 - 120:

Ruby doesn't trust Whip and thinks he is looking at a scrap book of himself in better days. She also feels he is sitting under her window in an effort to manipulate her. Ruby has more memories of her mother which are not that pleasant. Her mother didn't like Ray and asked Ruby some questions which revealed her own hurt feelings. They were also fairly unkind questions which made Ruby feel bad. Ruby accepts Max's offer to talk when he comes to her room and mentions that her mother used to not accept apologies. Then she feels badly for speaking poorly of her mother. Ruby accepts Whip's apology, but is a little afraid he might not be sorry for all of the things she wishes he would be sorry for.

Feather's hug reminds Ruby of what it felt like to hug her mother. It is a feeling she doesn't want to end.

Ruby wants Ray to come visit and can't wait to have a more physical relationship with him. She also uses the relationship between Whip and Max to manipulate Whip into saying yes to Ray's visit.

After Ruby channels her anger into her improvisation she is impressed with her acting skills. She is proud to be compared to her father, but she is also upset by the comparison. She feels guilty for flirting with another boy and tries to convince herself she only wants Ray.

Ruby and Ray's relationship may not be able to take the distance between them.



Poems 125 - 138, Letter 16 - 22:

Poems 125 - 138, Letter 16 - 22: Summary

There is an earthquake drill. Colette pulls Ruby aside after class and asks her if she is still a virgin. Ruby says yes, that Ray wanted to have sex but she wasn't ready. Colette tells her that most people in LA have sex by 15 and she lost her virginity to a famous movie star's son. Ruby makes a joke and they laugh.

Ruby writes to her mother. She hasn't heard from Lizzie in four days and wonders if her friend has forgotten her. She tells her mother she is angry at her for dying and for ruining her life.

Every weekend Whip comes up with something different for them to do. They take what he calls "bonding trips" to see different things in the area. They have been to Legoland, Las Vegas and Catalina Island to name just a few. However, Ruby is not happy with any of the trips. She doesn't want more time with Whip so he can ask questions about her life and tell her about his. Max tells her that Whip is trying to get to know her, but Ruby doesn't want to bond with Whip. Ruby misses Lizzie and finally receives an email after five days of not hearing from her friend. Ruby was at a party where she bounced with Ray in the moon bounce. She and Ray agreed the night would be better if Ruby was there. Ruby has one good weekend when Whip has to leave to reshoot the ending of a film. She hangs out with Max and they eat Chinese take out, pizza and listen to Eminem. Ruby calls Lizzie but hangs up after realizing she woke Lizzie up at one in the morning. After school, she sees a guy selling maps to the stars' homes. She stops and buys them all before realizing she lives down the street from Kevin Spacey.

Ruby receives an email from Lizzie and Ray. They are working on a math project together which involves creating a large replica of a Tic Tac box. Lizzie types the email while Ray dictates. Lizzie complains to Ruby that she won't be able to go to the Halloween dance if they don't finish the project. Ruby writes back not to mention anything about Amber around Ray. She doesn't want him to know how insecure she is. She tells Lizzie she saw Queen Latifah skateboarding. Lizzie writes back that the project would be easier without Ray because he doesn't understand the math involved. She says she is frustrated to have him as a partner, but asked him to partner with her so that Amber couldn't ask him. Then she tells Ruby she saw Bernie Glipman on a bench.

The day before Halloween is the day everyone at Lakewood dresses up in great costumes. Most of the costumes are borrowed from major film studios. Colette is in the dress worn in the movie Chicago. Wyatt is wearing a Frodo costume from Lord of the Rings. Ruby has no idea this is the tradition and isn't wearing a costume. Wyatt asks her to go to the Halloween dance with him, but Ruby says she can't. Whip is throwing a party and she won't be able to get out of it. Wyatt tells her they will go out some other time then.



While floating in the pool with Max, Ruby asks him why she flirts with Wyatt if she is in love with Ray. Max tells her that sometimes the body and heart want two different things. She asks Max if he is in love and he tells her that he is in love with a man named Ripley. Ruby asks if her father knows Max is gay; Max tells Ruby that everyone knows he is gay. Ruby is surprised by that. Ruby asks if her father is dating Cameron Diaz and Max tells her that is something she should ask Whip. Ruby watches as Whip's people set the lawn up for an ornate Halloween party. His hair and make up people show up at her bedroom door and transform her into Cinderella.

Ruby writes to Lizzie and tells her about Whip's party. She talks about all of the famous people there and tells Lizzie it boggled her mind. She mentions that Steve Martin told her she had grown into a fine young woman. She also grills Lizzie about the Halloween dance she went too and asks if Ray was with Amber and what all of their costumes were. Ruby then writes Ray and asks if he went to the dance and if he finished his Tic Tac project. Then she tells him she can't wait to see him in 25 days.

Whip begins to get excited about Ray's visit. He asks Ruby what Ray is into and takes her to buy architecture books and a set of blocks for Ray's guestroom. Ruby arranges the books in his room, lies on the bed and imagines what will happen in the room when Ray arrives.

Ruby writes Lizzie. She hasn't heard from either Lizzie or Ray since the day before the dance, that was six days ago.

Poems 125 - 138, Letter 16 - 22: Analysis

Ruby wants her first time having sex to be special. She didn't have sex with Ray because she didn't love him that much, but now she thinks maybe she should have sex with him when he comes out for Thanksgiving. Her mother always told her to wait for marriage, but Ruby doesn't think that worked out so well for her mother.

Ruby finally begins to express some of her anger toward her mother. She is angry at her mother for dying, for leaving her and for the ways her life has changed.

Ruby is still not ready to begin living her new life and her moods are tied to receiving emails and calls from Boston. She is still not ready to get to know Whip, but enjoys his assistant, Max. Ruby feels that even though Max is paid to hang out with her he never makes her feel like it. He always seems to enjoy her company. After Ruby buys the star maps from the guy on the street she thinks about how strange it is that she is a rich person now. She always thought rich people were snobby.

Ruby is very worried that her boyfriend will forget about her now that she moved. Her insecurities cause her to ask Lizzie to constantly feed her information about Ray and Amber.



Ruby is surprised when Wyatt asks her to the dance, and she is disappointed in herself that she told him she couldn't because Whip was having a party. What she should have told him was that she had a boyfriend back east.

Ruby is confused about her feelings for Ray and feels she is being disloyal to him by flirting with Wyatt. She is surprised that Max is open about his sexuality and even more surprised that her father knows. Max said he didn't tell her he had a boyfriend because Whip thought she wouldn't approve. Ruby is very curious about Max's boyfriend, but doesn't want to be nosy. Ruby watches the set up for the party with a heavy heart. Every skeleton and grave stone reminds her of her mother's funeral. However, after she is made up for the party she feels like she could enjoy herself.

Ruby is beginning to have some fun in her new life. She wonders about her father's relationship with Cameron while emailing Lizzie. She is also eager to share details of her new life with her friend. Steve Martin's comment to Ruby at the party is an interesting one. It implies he has seen her, or met her before.

Whip's enthusiasm and support of Ray's visit causes Ruby to think again about him. She admits to herself that it is sometimes hard to dislike her father. It seems that Ruby is planning to have sex with Ray when he visits.

Ruby is in a panic that Ray and Amber hooked up at the Halloween dance and that Lizzie can't bear to break the bad news to her.



Poems 140 - 165, Letter 23 & 24:

Poems 140 - 165, Letter 23 & 24: Summary

Ruby tries out for the school play, Pygmalion, even though she didn't think she would and is surprised that she did. When she arrives home she has a message from Ray. He misses her and wants her to call him as soon as she can. He needs to talk to her about Thanksgiving. Ruby is thrilled to hear from him and can't believe he will be there in a week. She calls him back, but the line is busy. The phone rings. Ruby expects it to be Ray, but it is Lizzie. Lizzie is crying. Ruby immediately thinks she is going to tell her that Ray and Amber are together. However, Lizzie tells her it is she who is now with Ray. Ruby is shattered and hangs up the phone. Ray calls again and Ruby lets it go to the machine. He tells her he is sorry and wishes she would hate him. It begins to rain, but Ruby can't take any joy in it. The rain now reminds her of kissing Ray. She would normally call Lizzie in a crisis, but realizes she can't do that this time.

When Ruby doesn't come to dinner, Whip comes up to find her. He wants to comfort her, but she doesn't want him to touch her. Ruby rejects his tries to talk to her and yells at him to leave her alone and get out. Whip leaves. Ruby hasn't cried since her mother died and still doesn't cry, although she feels like she might. She dreams about Lizzie and Ray and begins to feel that she is one of the howler monkeys in her reoccurring dream. Then the man from the dream takes her hand. His hand is dry and warm and comforting. She begins to fall, then wakes up.

Max brings Ruby dinner and she collapses against him for comfort. The next day the sun is shining and she can see the mountains for the first time since she arrived. Ruby can't enjoy the blue sky because it reminds her of home and of the betrayal she just endured. Ruby thinks about the night she met Ray. How he told her a story about being stuck in an elevator. Then he stopped, losing track of his story and staring her like she was the most beautiful girl in the world.

Ruby writes to her mother about the betrayal. She tells her mom she was right about Ray and calls Lizzie a mega-skank. Then tells her mother she hopes they chock on their giant Tic Tacs and think of her as they die.

The Weather Channel is reporting on a blizzard that has hit Boston. The news makes Ruby feel even worse as she looks out the window and sees the warm sunny weather of LA. She feels even more disconnected from her old life. Ruby spends the day thinking about what Lizzie and Ray are doing while she is eating breakfast. Where they are sitting at lunch and how they are making out in his car. She admits that she is depressed and angry and realizes she needs to learn how to put a happy face on sometimes. She tries to write a list of things she is thankful for, but can't think of anything.



Ruby lights a letter from Lizzie and Ray's house design on fire in the bathtub. The smoke alarm goes off and Whip and Max rush in. They watch the fire go out and Whip orders Ruby to come downstairs. She turns to Max for help, but he is stoic. They get in the car and take the books and blocks for Ray to a shelter for kids. Then they buy turkeys and all the trimmings and take them to a shelter. The three spend the day at the shelter giving out food and being with the residents. Ruby is amazed how much Whip enjoys giving.

The dean interrupts Dream Interpretation class to tell students about the death of Devon, a fellow student. He was in a car accident over the holiday. School is shut down for the day. Ruby follows the others to the Tree of Death, the site of the accident. She doesn't cry and worries Wyatt and Colette will think she is heartless. On the way home she sees a broken beer bottle and begins to reflect on it. This causes her to start having an emotional breakdown. When she gets home she sets off the alarm and can't remember how to turn it off.

Two security officers arrive at the house and don't believe Ruby is Whip's daughter. She calls Whip and he tears into the officers. They leave and she is in the house alone for the first time. Ruby decides to pack a bag and leave before Whip can come home. She wants to go to Boston, but realizes she has no one when she gets there.

Ruby's email to her mother reveals that she has been thinking about her mother's death and funeral constantly. She doesn't want to deal with Whip coming home and she doesn't want to deal with her mother's death either. Again she makes a joke about her mother being dead, asking her how things are going in Decomposingville.

Whip comes home and asks if Devon's death has brought out any feelings Ruby wants to talk about. She acts like he is crazy for asking. Whip tells her he has to go back to the studio and he is taking her with him. Then he comments on how creepy the house is when it is empty. His words again echo Ruby's exact thoughts. She arrives at the set to find Max and Eminem, her father's new co-star. Max tells her Whip took the film because she likes Eminem so much. Ruby smiles at her father.

Ruby can't stop thinking about Devon at two in the morning. The phone rings and it is her mother. Her mother seems to think it is ok to be dead and talk on the phone. She asks about Whip and then screams for Ruby to get out of the house. Ruby gets out of bed and gets dressed. She walks from the house in a trance and heads to the Tree of Death. Her eyes take in all of the notes, candles and pictures left at the scene. Then she sees a copy of *Great Expectations*, a book her mother helped her write a report on before she became ill. Suddenly Whip is there. He holds her and she lets him, then Ruby begins to cry. Whip cries too.

The ground begins to shake from an earthquake. The two hang on to the Tree of Death as they ride out the tremor. Whip wraps himself around Ruby to shield her from anything that might fall on them. Then he tells her that he will keep her safe. Ruby notices his hands are warm and dry - just like the man in her reoccurring dream. When it is over they return home to find Max wild eyed and worried. He sees them and runs to them,



hugging them and crying. Ruby's bed has been demolished by a heavy bookcase. She sight of the smashed bed causes Whip to hug her again in fear. Ruby remembers her mother screaming at her to leave the house in her dream and almost faints.

Whip takes Ruby outside to the gazebo incase there are aftershocks. He tells her that her aunt Duffy arranged for him to meet Ruby when she was little. When she was two they meet at the Franklin Park Zoo - in front of the monkey cage. He tells her he always wanted to be with her and that he loved her mother. He only stayed away because Ruby's mother asked him too. She thought it would be too hard to see him because she loved him too much. Whip is sorry that her mother wouldn't accept alimony or child support, he is sorry they married young and he is sorry he realized too late that he is gay.

Whip is sorry he couldn't figure out a way to be with her. Sorry he wasn't a better father and sorry he felt a little happy when her mother died. He was happy because it meant he could finally be with her. Ruby tells him he has no reason to be sorry and the two cry together. Max hands them the scrapbook that Whip was looking at in the gazebo that night. There are pictures of him holding her in the hospital at birth, copies of school pictures, report cards and of the essay where she wrote about her dream room. All courtesy of Aunt Duffy. Max joins them and explains a picture of Whip and Ruby laughing, she is in a polka dot dress. Max tells her it is the day she named her father. He chose the stage name Rip Logan, but Ruby called him Whip instead. That is how Whip got his name. Then Max reveals her father's real name is Ripley Loogan. Ruby realizes her father is the man Max is in love with. Whip isn't sure how she will react and she surprises him by hugging them both.

Ruby returns to school two days later. Wyatt touches her during dream interpretation class and it sets off electricity in Ruby. They find out they both have the lead roles in the play they tried out for, Henry Higgins and Eliza Doolittle. Wyatt hugs Ruby and her body grows warm.

Ruby writes one last letter to her mother. She tells her she believes in heaven after what happened the other night and thanks her for saving her life.

Ruby sends the email to her mother. She is about to sign off when an email comes in from Lizzie

Lizzie writes that Ray dumped her for Amber. She doesn't expect Ruby to forgive her, but wants her to know she is sorry. She doesn't know how it happened. She and Ray were at the dance and he was telling her a story, all of a sudden he stopped the story and stared at her like she was the most beautiful girl in the world.

Ruby calls Lizzie and tells her that all is forgiven. As she lies on her back in her father's yard she can't seem to remember ever hating palm trees, or California or why she hated them to begin with.



Poems 140 - 165, Letter 23 & 24: Analysis

Ruby is devastated. She didn't see this coming. Her trust in her best friend is shattered. She never truly trusted Ray, as evidenced by the way she thought he would dump her for Amber, but it never occurred to her that Lizzie would betray her. Ruby realizes she has no one to talk to about what happened.

Ruby regrets sending Whip away when he tries to comfort her. She wants to crawl in his lap and cry the way she used to when she was with her mother. She has also identified herself with the howling monkeys in her reoccurring dream using the Gestalt Theory she learned about in dream interpretation class.

Max tells Ruby that it hurts the worst the first time. They have a real bond; Max seems to be able to connect with Ruby where Whip can't. The skies clearing after the rain seem to be a metaphor for Ruby awakening to her new circumstances in life.

Ruby's emails to her mother seem to be the only time she gives herself permission to express her inner anger to another person. She knows her words are harsh toward Lizzie and Ray, but she feels comfortable expressing them in the email to her mother.

The more time Ruby spends thinking about her old life, the more miserable she is about her new one. Lizzie and Ray have moved on together, her aunt has moved on with a boyfriend, but Ruby has yet to let go and move on also.

Ruby feels good that Whip and Max want to give away the books they bought for Ray. She is impressed at the heartfelt joy Whip gets from helping others. She thinks that she would like him if she didn't hate him so much. It is obvious there are layers to her father which Ruby refuses to acknowledge.

Ruby is still numb from her mother's death and is unable to show tears or sadness when she learns about Devon's death. She expects herself to cry, even though she didn't know the boy. The sight of the broken bottle in the street is too much for Ruby. She wonders if she would have liked Devon and if his death has somehow altered her life, much like the death of her mother did.

Ruby tells Whip about school being cancelled and he becomes concerned. He tells her he is coming right home. She is alone in the house for the first time and only wants to escape. It isn't until she is packing her bag that she realizes she has no one to escape too.

Ruby wants all of the changes around her to stop. She doesn't want to deal with the realities of her relationship with Whip, or why he left them. She also doesn't want to deal with her mother's death. Losing her mother has not gotten easier with time, it has gotten worse. Speaking to her father about the death of Devon will only lead to feeling she would rather escape from.

Poems 166 - 184:



Ruby is surprised to find that Whip accepted a movie role because of her. It is getting harder to dislike him. She rereads Lizzie's emails and realizes she missed the signs that there was something between Lizzie and Ray.

Ruby imagines what it was like at the moment of Devon's death. She is confused when her mother shows such concern for Whip when she calls in the dream. Staring at the Tree of Death and thinking about Devon finally allows Ruby to break down about her mother's death. The breakdown is actually a moment of breakthrough for her relationship with Whip. When he arrives and takes her in his arms she allows him to hold and comfort her. The barrier between them has finally come down.

The earthquake changes something in Ruby. She realizes that her mother is still with her, even if it was only in a dream. Her mother is watching out for her. She also begins to understand that Whip represents safety and security for her.

She now understands the reoccurring dream she has been having. And she is beginning to understand the relationship between her parents. Ruby is shocked to find that her father is gay.

Ruby can't believe how much of her life her father has lived through the scrapbook. She doesn't know how her aunt managed to get so many pictures to him, but it touches her deeply that he has kept the book of her life. She has forgiven him for everything and she is happy that he and Max are together.

Now that her relationship with Ray is over and her relationship with her father has healed, Ruby is ready to embark on her new life. That life begins in dream interpretation class when Wyatt touches her. Her excitement about being in the play shows she is willing to become part of Lakewood life and to embrace her father's profession. By acting, she is showing how similar they really are.

Ruby is ready to let go of her mother and move forward. She no longer needs the security the emails provide. She also has someone to talk to now, her father and Max, when she is upset. She no longer has to email them to a person who is no longer there.

The book's final subplot is resolved when Lizzie apologizes to Ruby for betraying their friendship. Lizzie's guilt led to her relationship with Ray ending. She reveals that Ray used the same pick-up lines on her that he used on Ruby when they first met. It is all the apology Ruby needs.



Characters

Ruby Miliken.

Ruby is a fifteen-year-old high school student with a sharp mind and sarcastic sense of humor. Ruby's mother has passed away and she is going to live with her father. Ruby is angry at her mother for dying, at her father for abandoning her and at her aunt for sending her away. The story is conveyed through Ruby's poems and emails.

Lizzie Brody.

Lizzie Brody has been Ruby's best friend since she was a little girl. Lizzie emails Ruby and tries to comfort her when her mother dies and she has to move away. Lizzie keeps an eye on Ruby's boyfriend for her and eventually begins dating him behind Ruby's back.

Aunt Duffy.

Aunt Duffy is Ruby's mother's sister. Aunt Duffy secretly helped Whip be involved in his daughter's life. She also told Ruby who her father was and took her to see his movies every year on Ruby's birthday. Once Ruby arrives in California, Aunt Duffy leaves for a six-month archeological dig with her new boyfriend.

Ray Johnston.

Ray Johnston is Ruby's unfaithful boyfriend in Boston. Ray tells Ruby he will come to see her at Thanksgiving, but doesn't do much to keep up their relationship. Ray rarely calls Ruby and only emails her erratically. Ray is somewhat of a player, first dating Lizzie and then dumping her for Amber. Each time, Ray uses the same pick up lines.

Whip Logan.

Whip Logan is Ruby's famous movie star father. Everyone loves Whip, except for Ruby. Whip tries hard to form a relationship with his daughter. He was pushed out of her life by her mother before Ruby was born. Whip loves his daughter very much and is excited to finally become a part of her life. Whip is gay and lives with his boyfriend Max.



Max.

Max is Whip's live-in assistant and personal trainer. He is also Whip's long time boyfriend. Max is a caring person who tries hard to form a positive relationship with Ruby and to help her and Whip get to know each other.

Colette.

Colette is the first person Ruby meets at her new school. She is also the child of a famous star. Colette has crazy hair colors, tattoos and multicolored contact lenses. She is a kind person and she tries hard to include Ruby in her social group. However, Ruby isn't ready to begin a friendship with Colette until the end of the book.

Wyatt Moody.

Wyatt Moody is the school's Brad Pitt look-alike. He is a handsome guy and a charmer. He is in Ruby's dream interpretation class. Wyatt is attracted to Ruby and flirts with her often. He asks her to a school dance and Ruby is tempted to say yes, but she doesn't want to betray her boyfriend Ray back in Boston. Wyatt and Ruby begin dating at the end of the book.

Feather.

Feather is Ruby's Dream Interpretation teacher. She is an ex-hippy who teaches the kids about Gestalt Therapy.

Amber.

Amber is a girl in Boston who is anxious to move in on Roy now that Ruby has moved. Ruby does not like Amber and wants her friend Lizzie to watch out to make sure Amber doesn't steal Roy away from her.

Devon McKraken.

Devon McKraken is a student at Lakewood, Ruby's new school. Devon dies in a car accident. He is mourned at school and especially by Ruby. Devon's death causes Ruby to finally deal with her mother's death.



Ruby's Mother.

Ruby's mother died of cancer before the book opens. Ruby has great memories of her mother. However, as the book moves forward Ruby's mother's prejudices are uncovered.



Objects/Places

Boston.

Ruby Miliken was raised in Boston with her mother and her mother's sister Ruby. In the beginning of the book Ruby is on a plane moving from Boston to Los Angeles, California. Ruby's best friend, Lizzie, and boyfriend, Roy, both live in Boston.

Los Angeles.

Ruby is moving to Los Angeles, California as the book opens. She doesn't like it in LA at first or at her father's home in Hollywood. Los Angeles is where Ruby's new high is located and where Whip's home is in Hollywood.

Lakewood High School.

Lakewood High School is Ruby's new school in California. Ruby meets Colette at Lakewood and takes Dream Interpretation class at the school. Ruby also tries out for and makes the school play.

Dream Interpretation Class.

Ruby takes Dream Interpretation class at Lakewood high school. The class is taught by a teacher named Feather. Ruby learns about Gestalt Theory in Dream Interpretation class.

Ruby's Slipper.

Ruby's Slipper is an architectural home design created by Ruby's boyfriend, Roy. Roy created the drawing for Ruby. It is Ruby's dream home.

Email.

Ruby and her friends communicate via email. Many of the letters in the book are email transcripts.

Colette's Jacket.

Colette's black jacket is a symbol of Colette and Ruby's new friendship. After Ruby gets sprayed by the school's sprinkler system, Colette gives her a jacket to wear to cover her see through t-shirt.



The Tree of Death.

The Tree of Death is the tree Devin McCracken crashed his car into. It is also the site of Ruby's breakdown and where she is when the earthquake happens.

The Scrapbook.

Whip Logan has been keeping a scrapbook of Ruby since the day she was born. Ruby's aunt made sure Whip was able to have copies of Ruby's pictures, report cards and school work over the years. Whip proudly shows off the book. The book is instrumental in helping Ruby and Whip bond.

The Halloween Dance.

Lizzie and Roy both attend the Halloween Dance at Ruby's old school in Boston. The pair begin dating at the dance, causing Roy and Ruby to break up and causing Lizzie and Ruby's friendship to end.

Pygmalion.

The name of the play Ruby and Wyatt try out for at Lakewood high school. Ruby wins the part of Eliza Dolittle and Wyatt wins the part of Henry Higgins.



Themes

Death.

Death is one of the most obvious themes in Ruby's story. Ruby is dealing with her mother's death as the book opens. Not only must she come to terms with the loss of her mother, but also with the ways her mother's death has affected Ruby's life.

Whip must also deal with the death of Ruby's mother. However, Whip's feelings are different from Ruby's. Whip is sad Ruby's mother had died, but is also excited because it means he will finally get to be a part of Ruby's life. Whip's feelings are complicated for himself, Ruby and the reader to understand and come to terms with.

Devin McCracken's death is a catalyst for Ruby and Whip's relationship. Ruby has never met Devin, but his death allows her to experience the feelings she refused to deal with when her mother died. Ruby's emotional breakdown over Devon's, and her mother's, deaths finally allows Whip to be there for his daughter in a way she would not allow him to be before. It helps them to have a breakthrough in their relationship.

Abandonment.

Abandonment is a main theme in Ruby Miliken's story. Ruby feels abandoned by both her mother and father. Ruby's mother felt abandoned by her father. Ruby feels abandoned by Lizzie and Roby. Ruby was literally abandoned by her aunt Duffy when she goes on vacation with her boyfriend.

Ruby's mother's abandonment was not intentional. Ruby's mother's death from cancer caused Ruby to have to leave her familiar home in Boston for the unfamiliar one in LA. Ruby doesn't want to live with her father and is angry with her mother. It takes until the end of the book for Ruby to come to terms with her mother's death and her feelings of abandonment.

Ruby's father's abandonment was more a matter of circumstances than an intentional abandonment. Ruby's mother would not allow Whip to visit or have a relationship with Whip. She also refused alimony and child support from him. Whip could have tried harder to form a relationship with Ruby, but his fear and career got in the way.

Ruby's mother felt emotionally abandoned by Whip when he admitted he was gay and they divorced. She ended up bitter over their relationship and prejudiced against homosexuals.

Ruby feels abandoned when Lizzie and Roy start a relationship behind her back. Lizzie and Ruby have been friends since they were children. Lizzie's willingness to betray Ruby and steal her boyfriend causes Ruby to feel abandoned by her friend. Her only real connection to her past life in Boston.



Ruby feels abandoned when her Aunt Duffy decides to leave for six months with her new boyfriend. She will be out of reach during this time. Ruby needs her aunt and is upset that Duffy chooses this time to be out of communication.

Change.

Ruby's story is one of change. The events covered in the book are the results of many life changes taking place at one time.

Ruby's entire life is changing when she leaves her home in Boston to move to LA. Her life changes when she goes from living with her mother to living with her father. Her perceptions of her father change while she is living with him. Ruby's understanding of her parents' marriage also changes during the course of the book.

Ruby herself changes from the beginning to the end of the book. Ruby begins to grieve for her mother. She also begins to admit she is depressed. She learns to let go of the past and to embrace the future.

Ruby's friendships and understanding of her school life also change. Ruby dares to try out for the school play, and makes it. She breaks up with one boyfriend and meets another. Her friendship with Lizzie changes and she forms a new friendship with Colette.

Style

Point of View

"One of Those Hideous Books Where the Mother Dies" is recounted from the first-person point of view. The story is told in blank prose by Ruby Miliken, the fifteen-year-old heroine of the book. Occasionally, Ruby's poems are supplemented by emails she exchanges with Lizzie and Roy. Each of Ruby's poems is about a page in length and has a descriptive title which doubles as the first line of the poem. Ruby's poems related her daily interactions, her personal feelings, and her dreams. Ruby has a very readable voice and is identifiable as a typical fifteen-year-old girl. Ruby's experiences, thoughts, and feelings are chronicled in her narrative. However, the thoughts and feelings of those around her are unknown unless they are expressed directly by the character.

Setting

Ruby Miliken's story takes place in Los Angeles, Hollywood, California. Most of the story takes place in her new home and at her high school. Ruby's diary, in which she records her poems, is almost a setting within itself. Although the diary is never specifically mentioned, the poems are recollections of events, which occur in Ruby's life as they happen. Ruby's adventure begins while on an airplane flying across the country and continues when she arrives at the airport in California. From there, the setting changes to Whip Logan's mega rich mansion in Hollywood; the majority of the story taking place in Ruby's bedroom. Ruby attends Lakewood high school. A few scenes take place in the school's cafeteria and in Ruby's Dream Interpretation class. While two of the characters, Lizzie and Roy, live in Boston, their parts of the story are conveyed through phone calls and emails that Ruby receives in California.

Language and Meaning

Ruby has an entertaining voice and writing style. Her prose aren't structured grammatically, but are arranged to be read one line after the other. Ruby's words, thoughts and writings are those of a typical teenage girl. She uses slang and text language en vogue with today's youth. Ruby's poems and writing style are extremely fluid and readable. Her lack of punctuation and capitalization often add to her voice and help to bring her character to life.

Ruby uses typical teen language to describe her surroundings and the people around her. Each description is a seamless part of the narrative and does not take up more than a line or two of poetry. Ruby relates all conversations to the reader and therefore the text does not have any dialogue.

Structure

The book is arranged into 165 short poems and 24 emails or letters. Each poem doubles as the title and the first line of the poem. Titles are in bold print and are the only times when consistent capitalization is used. The longest poem is a page and a half, with the average poem a page long. The shortest poem is a blank page with a title. The emails and letters sent to and from Ruby are interspersed between blocks of poems. While the poems are Ruby's chance to tell her story, the emails and letters are the reader's chance to experience the words and feelings of other characters.



Quotes

"I didn't know how much I depended on being depended on by her" (My Mother Hated Flying, p. 4).

"I wish I felt like racing over to him and throwing my arms around his neck" (So I Don't Do Anything, p. 26).

"Not after mom did all the hard work of teaching me to be a descent human being" ("Welcome to California!" p. 31).

"I feel like I've just stumbled through the looking glass into the Whip Logan museum" (In the Living Room, p. 42).

"I'm burning up with missing her, as if I'm getting ready to break apart, to just disintegrate - like the space shuttle did over Texas" (Home, p. 49).

"Because after that I'm never really sure if it's me they like or just the fact that she's my mother" (You're Whip Logan's Kid, Right?" p. 75).

"Jesus. What is my problem? Why did I have to say that" (I'm Sitting By Myself in the Cafeteria Reading a Book (Like I Do Every Day at Lunch), p. 135).

"When I was introduced to Steve Martin, he pinched my cheek and told me I'd grown into a fine young woman" (Dear Lizterene, p. 196).

"His hand flies up to his mouth, and he takes a step toward me, like he's thinking about hugging me" (Whip Calls Me Down to Dinner, p. 210).

"Then the tears rush into my eyes, for the first time in centuries, they come gushing out of me, like a Coke can that's been shaken" (And Right Away I'm Thinking About Mom, p. 246).



Topics for Discussion

In the beginning of the book, Ruby writes about her mother and her mother's death. Use passages from the text to support your answers.

- 1) What does Ruby say about her mother's death?
- 2) How has it affected her emotionally?
- 3) How do you think Ruby's mother died?

Ruby believes that Whip is a typical self-absorbed movie star. When she first meets Whip, and sees his home, her beliefs about him are confirmed. How does Whip unknowingly reinforce Ruby's feelings about him when they first meet? What is it about Whip's home that confirms Ruby's belief that he is self-absorbed? Do you think that Whip seems self-absorbed? Why or why not? Is Ruby being fair to Whip when she assumes things about his personality and life style? Why or why not?

Max is Whip's assistant and personal trainer. He lives with Whip and Ruby and seems to be the mediator in their relationship.

- 1) Why does Ruby like Max so much?
- 2) Do you think Ruby's relationship with Max helps or hurts her relationship with her father? Why do you feel the way you do?
- 3) Why does Ruby assume Max is gay? Why does she assume Whip doesn't know?

Explain what happened between Whip and Ruby's mother. How did the dissolution of their relationship affect her mother? What opinions did she hold because of the break up? How might Ruby's mother's prejudices hurt Ruby when she was growing up? Use the text to support your answer.

In the beginning of the book Ruby is devastated by the loss of her mother. She remembers the good times they had and the comfort her mother always gave her. Ruby also reminisces about how much her friends liked her mother. However, as the book progresses Ruby begins to talk about memories that show her mother in a less than flattering light. Her prejudice against homosexuals, her need to berate Ruby about her relationship with Ray and her refusal to allow Whip to see his daughter are some of these memories.

- 1) How do Ruby's descriptions of her mother affect the reader's opinion of Whip?
- 2) Is Ruby's mother a good person? Why or why not?
- 3) How did Ruby's mother contribute to the situation Ruby is in now?



Use the text to support your answer.

Whip was able to keep track of Ruby through the years because of Aunt Duffy. What did Duffy do to help Whip get to know his daughter? Why might she have done these things? Do you think what she did was right? Why or why not?

Ruby's reoccurring dream is mentioned throughout the book. What is her dream? How is the dream an example of foreshadowing?

How does Devon McCracken's death help Ruby finally grieve for her mother? How did his death help to bring Ruby and Whip closer together?

Throughout the book, Ruby notices things that she and Whip have in common. What are some of the interests and/or opinions they share? How does Ruby feel about these shared interests/opinions? Does she like that they have things in common? Why or why not? Use examples from the text to support your answers.