

# **One-Eyed Cat Study Guide**

## **One-Eyed Cat by Paula Fox**

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# Plot Summary

The beautiful Hudson River Valley provides the backdrop for Paula Fox's book *One Eyed-Cat*.

This is the story of Ned Wallis, a pastor's son living in a small town fifteen miles from Tyler, New York. Ned is an only child and his mother, Martha, suffers from rheumatoid arthritis. Ned remembers a time when his lovely mother was lively and energetic. The family lives in an old farmhouse that was constructed in 1846. When the novel opens, it is the autumn of 1936 and the country is still in the throes of the Great Depression. Ned Wallis is a normal boy who enjoys exploring the woods and marveling at the seasons as they change. In a few days, Ned Wallis will turn eleven years old.

Although Ned has never been away from home, he still has a great sense of adventure. Ned collects stamps from other countries and loves to read *National Geographic*. Ned's Uncle Hilary is a world-traveler who sees to it that Ned receives an interesting souvenir from each country he has visited. In his collection, Ned has a bronze goat from Mexico and a piece of jade from China. Ned's closest friends are Janet Hoffman, Evelyn (Evie) Kimball and Billy Gaskell. As the story progresses, Ned and his friends undergo changes in their lives which are sometimes difficult to understand.

After school each day, Ned visits his neighbor, Mr. David Scully. Mr. Scully pays Ned a little money in exchange for help around the house. Mr. Scully lives in a small house by himself. He bakes his own bread and makes his own applesauce. All in all, Ned Wallis' life is simple and happy. Ned often visits his father's parishioners as part of his father's job.

Once, when Ned is with his father at an asylum, Ned sees someone watching him from an upstairs window. This feeling of being watched returns to Ned one evening just before his birthday.

As a surprise, Uncle Hilary gives Ned a Daisy air rifle for his birthday. Ned is thrilled with the gift, but Reverend James Wallis believes Ned is too young to handle a gun. After Ned's father puts the rifle in the attic, Ned decides that he cannot wait until he is fourteen to shoot the gun. He sneaks the rifle out into the woods and fires it at a figure in the shadows. Later, when Ned and Mr. Scully see a gray cat with one eye, Ned is convinced that he is responsible for the cat's injury.

Life and the seasons change and Ned comes to know himself and those around him in the most unexpected ways. Ned learns lessons about trust, friendship, family and telling the truth as he watches autumn turn to winter and then to spring in this delightful story of the simple life.



# Chapters I and II

## Chapters I and II Summary

One-Eyed Cat by Paula Fox is the story of Ned Wallis, a young boy living in a small New York town. Ned's father James is a pastor at a small country church. His mother Martha, once beautiful and active, has been stricken with rheumatoid arthritis. During a surprise visit from his uncle Hilary, Ned Wallis receives a Daisy air rifle for his eleventh birthday, and things begin to change for him.

### Chapter I: Sunday (Pages 1 - 23)

Ned Wallis and his parents live in a farmhouse, built in 1846. Ned has just finished reading the *Man Without a Country* by Philip Nolan. Ned was born in September, 1924. It is now 1935 and Ned is about to turn eleven. When Ned first learned to walk, his favorite place to practice his new skill was the church cemetery.

Mrs. Scallop is the third housekeeper the Wallis family has had. Ned feels safe knowing that Mrs. Scallop is there to help when his father must be out of the house for long periods of time. At the same time, though, Ned is often confused by Mrs. Scallop. She is a very talkative woman most of the time. But Mrs. Scallop also has periods of sullen silence. Sometimes, Ned notices, Mrs. Scallop seems to seethe with anger. Mrs. Scallop reminds Ned of a well-known cartoon character named Powerful Katinka (p. 12).

Ned remembers what life was like before Mama became so ill. When Mama got sick, Ned was just five years old. To Ned, it seemed as though they were always happy then - laughing, dancing or skipping stones on the river. They were such a happy, carefree family before Mama took sick.

Ned and his father eat supper with Mrs. Brewster and her daughter on the Sunday before Ned's birthday. For supper, the Brewsters serve lumpy mashed potatoes, a little meat and very dry lemon cake for dessert. The Brewsters are very poor and James Wallis instructs Ned not to ask for second helpings. Ned does not especially like dining with the people in his father's congregation. It makes him feel "homeless", like a child in an orphanage.

Many of the homes close to the Wallis land are abandoned. A great number of people lost their homes during the Great Depression.

Ned's Uncle Hilary comes for a visit. Mama is pleased to see Uncle Hilary, as are James and Ned. Uncle Hilary lives in New York City and is visiting Ned and his parents overnight. Ned feels as though his mother and Uncle Hilary know "a special thing" (p. 23). Ned feels a little jealous of Mama's close relationship with her brother. After awhile, though, Ned's anger subsides and he eases into the surprise and wonder of his favorite



uncle's visit. Uncle Hilary is always lively and his world travel stories provide Ned with hours of enjoyment.

#### Chapter II: The Gun (Pages 24 - 46)

Ned's mother has been ill for the past six years. Ned thinks about how much things around their house have changed since Mama became ill. He wishes he could visit his mother's room whenever he liked. Ned talks to his mother about life before she took ill. Mama had been lively and energetic. She had once owned a horse named Cosmo and she loved to go for long rides: "She had been like a tree, he thought, and then was cut down" (p. 32). Ned was only five when Mama became sick, so he does not remember the beginning of her illness very well. These days, Ned visits Mama in her bedroom when she is feeling well enough to spend time with him.

Mrs. Scallop often refers to herself in the third person. Ned thinks this is kind of strange.

Uncle Hilary offers to take Ned to a place called Nag's Head over the Christmas vacation. Ned is excited about traveling with Uncle Hilary, as he has never been away from home before. Ned has souvenirs from all of his uncle's travels, including a bronze goat from Greece and a butterfly enclosed in glass from Mexico.

Uncle Hilary gives Ned a Daisy air rifle as a birthday gift. Papa becomes slightly upset with Uncle Hilary because Papa thinks Ned is too young for such a present. Ned expresses his disappointment over his father's decision to put the gun away until Ned is fourteen years old. After Ned goes into the study, he hears Papa taking the gun up into the attic.

After Mama, Papa and Uncle Hilary have gone to bed, Ned sneaks up to the attic and finds the Daisy air rifle. He creeps down the stairs and out of the house into the moonlit night. Passing the old barn where his mother once kept her horse, Ned takes the gun into the woods, just beyond the old farmhouse. Through the trees, Ned thinks he sees something moving. He takes aim and shoots at the shadowy figure. After firing the gun once, Ned suddenly loses interest in the rifle altogether. On his way back into the house, Ned imagines that someone is watching him from one of the windows in the attic.

Years before, Ned's father visited one of the parishioners in an asylum and Ned went along. While his father was visiting, Ned played outside. Ned knew he was being watched that day, too. Once he returns to his bedroom, Ned knows that Papa will be upset with him if he finds out that Ned has taken the Daisy air rifle from the attic.

## Chapters I and II Analysis

The three main protagonists are introduced in these first two chapters. The cycle of the seasons underlies the entire narrative. As the seasons change, Ned Wallis changes as well. The novel begins in 1935. This is significant because the world fell into a significant depression when the stock market crashed in October of 1929. At the time, people lost



their jobs and homes. The Wallis family is more fortunate than many others who live in the same area, like Mrs. Brewster and her daughter and Evelyn Kimball's family. The Great Depression, as it is called, lasted until the late 1930s or early 1940s.

It is clear that Ned, an only child, is very close to both of his parents. A major source of stress in Ned's life is his mother's illness. Ned still remembers things the way they were when his mother was vibrant and felt well all the time. And although he does not recall the time around his mother becoming sick, Ned nonetheless has memories associated with his mother's old self. Ned's life is relatively uncomplicated and peaceful. Living in the beautiful Hudson River Valley, Ned has an acute appreciation for the natural world. This is evidenced by the way the character views his surroundings. Throughout the novel, Ned and the other characters in the story take notice of the weather and the plants and flowers of each season. Ned's mother has passed her knowledge on to her young son and Ned knows that the world outside the farmhouse is a huge playground.

Uncle Hilary is introduced in the first chapter as well. Uncle Hilary and Mama share a special bond that Ned is somewhat jealous of. Mama and Hilary both have an adventurous spirit. Uncle Hilary has been all over the world and he enjoys sharing stories and souvenirs from his travels with his sister and her family. Uncle Hilary's souvenirs decorate Ned's room and the boy looks at them and wonders about the far-off places his uncle has been. The love and curiosity that Uncle Hilary has for the world outside New York is reflected in Ned's interest in collecting stamps from different countries and his love of the magazine *National Geographic*. This love of the world and its exotic locations plays well into the Wallis family's small-town everyday life. Interestingly, though, Ned's home life is just as fascinating to him as traveling the world is to Uncle Hilary.

With his mother's condition worsening over time, Ned experiences some changes of his own. Turning eleven does not seem any more significant than turning ten until Ned receives the air rifle from Uncle Hilary. Ned's disappointment over his father's decision not to allow Ned to have the gun right away stands in contrast with the positive feelings Ned has toward his father before Uncle Hilary arrives. This is the first instance in which Ned consciously disobeys his father. Taking the gun out of the attic when the adults are asleep is a result of Ned wanting what he wants more than wanting to please and obey his father. In another way, sneaking out of the house to shoot the rifle is also a sign of how immature Ned still is. Although his parents may treat Ned as though he is a "big boy", it is clear that Ned is still very much a child.

Once Ned actually fires the Daisy air rifle, he loses interest in it. This could be because Ned knows that sneaking the rifle out of the house while Mama and Papa are asleep is definitely wrong. Having done something that stands in opposition to his father's instructions is what causes Ned to lose interest. In fact, it is not the act of firing the rifle that is so exciting for Ned. Ned is more excited at the prospect of having gotten away with going against his father's wishes. The uncomfortable feeling that Ned has after sneaking back into the house is a foreshadowing of the guilt that Ned eventually feels when he comes to believe that he injured the gray cat, putting out its eye.



Mrs. Scallop may be the most complex character in the novel. Nothing is revealed about her past before coming to work at the Wallis home, but the reader can assume that Mrs. Scallop has no other family. What makes Mrs. Scallop so complicated is her changeable nature. One moment, Mrs. Scallop is happy and smiling, calling Ned by the nickname of "Neddy" and baking cookies. In the very next moment, Mrs. Scallop becomes sullen and angry. Ned never understands what is bothering Mrs. Scallop and Mrs. Scallop never gives any indication of what is really on her mind. The fact that Ned and his parents do not especially like Mrs. Scallop is an indication that Ned's parents (or at least Reverend Wallis) are concerned about hurting other people's feelings. The narrative never explains why the Wallises have had three housekeepers. Powerful Katrinka (Ned calls her "Katinka" on page 12) was a real cartoon character, popular during the first half of the twentieth century.

Ned's feeling of being watched when he sneaks back into the house foreshadows what happens in Chapter VIII when he and Mama sit on the veranda of the Makepeace mansion.



# Chapters III and IV

## Chapters III and IV Summary

Chapter III: The Old Man (Pages 47 - 80)

For his birthday, Mama gives Ned a gold pocket watch which had once belonged to Ned's grandfather.

When Mama mentions the gun, Ned becomes embarrassed. He does not tell Mama that he sneaked out and shot the rifle.

Miss Jefferson, Ned's teacher, brings in homemade cookies and a basket of Jonathan apples for everyone. She and the whole class sing "Happy Birthday" to Ned at school that day. Miss Jefferson also read a chapter from a book titled *The Call of the Wild* by Jack London in Ned's honor.

Later that day, Mama, Papa, Mrs. Scallop and Ned all have cake and lemonade in Mama's room. Mrs. Scallop tells Ned that if he does not make a wish when blowing out the candles, "a strange fate" would befall him. Mrs. Scallop gives Ned a handmade rug for his bedroom. Mrs. Scallop makes a lot of rugs. Ned thinks the rug is horrible, but he thanks Mrs. Scallop just the same.

Ned takes his presents to his bedroom and remembers shooting the Daisy air rifle the night before. Ned starts to worry about being seen shooting the gun. Papa had told Ned to take his mind away from the gun but Ned could not. He knew Papa would not give spank him (like Billy Gaskell's father often did), but Papa would be extremely disappointed in Ned and he could not stand the thought of his father's disappointment. Ned had never disobeyed Papa like this before.

A few days later, Ned visits with Mama. He lies about having to write a poem about autumn. Ned begins to feel increasingly guilty about firing the air rifle. It is on his mind constantly now.

Ned has been walking home with Evelyn Kimball, Janet Hoffman, and Billy Gaskell for quite some time now. They are his closest friends. Evie Kimball comes from a very poor family. Her father is a carpenter. Papa cannot understand how Mr. Kimball can afford to feed such a large family. Mrs. Kimball is a practical nurse.

Each day, Ned takes the daily mail and the newspaper directly to his neighbor Mr. Scully. Mr. Scully has a daughter named Doris who lives out West. Mr. Scully never uses the electricity that Doris had connected. He prefers to use a kerosene lamp. Mr. Scully does not use sheets on his bed, only blankets. Ned thinks Mr. Scully is old-fashioned but Ned enjoys the old man's company just the same.





Ned does chores at Mr. Scully's house after school. Mr. Scully is about eighty years old and he makes his own applesauce and bread. Ned chops firewood and helps Mr. Scully clear the boxes out of the attic. Ned also washes the dishes and they talk about a great many things.

Mr. Scully gives Ned a piece of soapstone carved with Chinese characters for his birthday. It is October.

Ned figures Mr. Scully is lonely and just wants company; someone to listen to his stories and complaints. Ned does not mind, though, because he finds Mr. Scully to be a likable person. From the window, Ned and Mr. Scully watch a feral cat in the yard. One of the cat's eyes is missing. Ned feels guilty all over again.

Ned takes a small bowl of bread and milk out for the one-eyed gray cat and sets it on the porch. Afterward, Ned goes home and spends a little time with his mother. Ned enjoys visiting with Mama when she is feeling well.

Sometime later that evening, there is a severe storm. Even though Reverend Wallis has recently installed lightning rods, the family nonetheless gathers together downstairs to wait out the storm.

#### Chapter IV: The Cat (Pages 81 - 118)

On the way to school, Ned and his friends talk about wild cats. Evelyn Kimball tells Ned that she saw the one-eyed cat. When Ned presses the girl for answers, Evelyn becomes flustered. Later, at Mr. Scully's house, Ned sees the one-eyed cat again. Mr. Scully tells Ned that the one-eyed cat comes into his yard on a regular basis.

Mr. Scully's daughter, Doris, sends her father a postcard about once a month. Ned notices that the last three postcards all have the same picture. Ned feels sad that Mr. Scully is not very close to Doris.

Papa tells Ned that Uncle Hilary would like to take Ned to Charleston, South Carolina for Christmas vacation. Ned is not sure if he likes this idea or not.

Mrs. Scallop tells Ned that his birth was what brought on Mama's rheumatism. This upsets Ned and he asks Mama about it. Mama tells Ned that this is not true. She tells him that when Ned was a small child, she was happy, healthy, and strong.

Finally, Ned decides that he does not want to go to Charleston for Christmas with Uncle Hilary because he is worried about the one-eyed cat.

The next morning, Ned rushes out of the house and goes by Mr. Scully's home before going to school. Ned does not see the one-eyed cat anywhere.

After school that day, Ned and Mr. Scully talk about the gray cat with one eye. Mr. Scully tells Ned that he feeds the cat regularly now and Ned is pleased to hear it.



Ned is also concerned about Mr. Scully. He does not understand what it is like to grow old. Ned is also concerned because he did not receive a very good report card and he knows that Papa will be disappointed in him. However, Ned hopes that the poor grades will make Papa change his mind about Charleston.

Ned, Mama, and Papa have Thanksgiving dinner together. Ned lies and tells his parents that he is saving his turkey scraps for Evelyn Kimball's dog, Sport. The turkey scraps are really for the one-eyed gray cat.

## Chapters III and IV Analysis

The watch that Mama gives Ned for his eleventh birthday symbolizes the passage of time. Ned does not fully realize it at the time, but life and the change of seasons are mirrors of one another. Seasons change and people do as well.

Ned's interest in classical literature once again becomes apparent when Miss Jefferson reads a chapter from *The Call of the Wild*. Along with Philip Nolan's *Man Without a Country*, *Treasure Island* (by Robert Louis Stevenson) was a popular book for boys during this time. They are all stories of adventure and personal growth.

Mrs. Scallop's statement about "a strange fate" befalling Ned foreshadows Ned's discovery of the one-eyed cat. The strange fate, however, extends beyond the one-eyed cat. The strange fate refers to Ned's life in general. The statement also foreshadows Mr. Scully's eventual death. When Ned returns to his bedroom that evening, his guilt over firing the Daisy air rifle begins to take on a life of its own. Also, the revelation that Billy Gaskell's father beats him regularly tells the reader that things on the surface are not always what they seem.

Ned lies to his mother for the first time in Chapter III. This habit of lying becomes easier for Ned as the story progresses. When Ned lies to Mama, he is aware that it is wrong. This does not stop him, though.

Mr. Scully is introduced in Chapter III. Ned's friendship with the elderly man sets in motion the "strange fate" that Mrs. Scallop refers to earlier in the chapter. Mr. Scully is a lonely person. It is unclear whether at this point Ned understands this. Ned and Mr. Scully's relationship is much like Ned's relationship with his Uncle Hilary. Mr. Scully's relationship with his daughter Doris is somewhat puzzling to Ned, given that Ned is so close to his own parents. Mr. Scully's request that Ned help him clear away the boxes indicates that Mr. Scully knows he will not be alive much longer. Mr. Scully lives a rather unusual life. The gift that Mr. Scully gives Ned for his birthday mirrors the souvenirs that Ned receives from Uncle Hilary. It is interesting that Ned does not ask Mr. Scully how he came to be in possession of the carved soapstone. The carved soapstone is also an indication that Mr. Scully led an adventurous life when he was younger.

When Ned and Mr. Scully first see the one-eyed gray cat, Ned's guilt becomes stronger. There is never any solid proof that the cat lost its eye as a result of Ned shooting it with an air rifle. This becomes important later in the narrative. In the end, it matters little how



the cat lost its eye. What is more important is how Ned feels about it and how he eventually accepts responsibility for his actions. A feral cat is a cat that lives in the wild. Feral cats are often suspicious of human beings and they live by their wits.

A lightning rod is a metal rod that is attached to a building. The lightning rod is connected to a ground by a wire, which protects the building in the event of a lightning storm. At the time the story takes place, lightning rods were widely used.

Ned's realization that Doris Scully sends her father the same postcard on more than one occasion foreshadows Ned's impression of Doris after her father dies. Sending her father the same postcard multiple times is an indication that Doris does not really care much for her father.

Uncle Hilary's invitation to take Ned to Charleston over the Christmas holidays signifies Uncle Hilary's wish to introduce Ned to the adventurous way of life. Ned has never been away from home, but his hesitation is a result of his guilt over the gray cat, not a result of the boy's fear of leaving his parents.

When Mrs. Scallop tells Ned that Mama's rheumatism is his fault, Ned goes directly to the source. This proves that Ned is growing up. Rather than allowing Mrs. Scallop to scare him, Ned's decision to ask Mama about it tells the reader that Ned trusts his mother more than he trusts Mrs. Scallop. This also proves that Ned could tell Mama about the rifle and that she would probably not be upset with him.

Ned's guilt subsides a little when Mr. Scully tells him that he has been feeding the cat. Since Mr. Scully is feeding the one-eyed cat, Ned can put off telling his parents the truth about the situation for a short while longer. When Ned's grades suffer as a result of his worry and guilt feelings, he sees his poor grades as a better reason not to travel with Uncle Hilary. This does not work out the way Ned desires, though, as Papa still intends to allow Ned to go to Charleston.

Ned continues to lie when he makes up a story about feeding the Thanksgiving turkey scraps to Evelyn Kimball's dog. Ned could have chosen to tell his parents the truth at this point in the novel, but he does not. Lying becomes much easier for Ned as the story continues. Fate gives Ned another chance to tell the truth. These opportunities continue to present themselves. At this point, Ned does not understand how powerful making the right choices can be. Also, Ned's lying simply adds to his feelings of guilt. The character does not realize that as time goes on, things will only become worse. The more he lies, the greater chance Ned has of being caught in a lie and the greater chance for Papa and Mama's disappointment to increase.



# Chapters V and VI

## Chapters V and VI Summary

Chapter V: The Strength of Life (Pages 119 - 144)

On the first of December, a very heavy snow falls. Ned stops by Mr. Scully's house before going to school and sees the gray cat lying on a quilt on top of an old icebox in the shed. Ned notices Mr. Scully's footprints in the snow leading up to the shed, but Ned does not approach the cat.

On the way home from school that day, Ned helps Janet by picking up some schoolbooks after she drops them in the snow. Billy Gaskell calls Ned a mean name and the two boys get into a fistfight. Soon, Ned and Billy end up laughing at themselves and the boys soon make up. They talk excitedly about the possibility of playing hockey with the bigger boys this winter.

Now that the snow had started, Ned guesses Papa will begin picking up Mr. Scully's groceries since Mr. Scully's old car might not make it all the way to town and back. Ned stops back by Mr. Scully's house to do his after-school chores and sees the cat still lying on the quilt. Ned sees Mr. Scully standing at the kitchen window, looking at the one-eyed cat. Once inside, Mr. Scully tells Ned that he set some food out in the shed for the cat, but that the cat did not seem interested in eating. Ned is so worried he cannot speak. Mr. Scully tells Ned that the one-eyed cat may be ill.

Mr. Scully makes hot tea and Ned brings a leather satchel down from Mr. Scully's attic. The satchel contains clothes and mementos from Doris Scully's childhood. Mr. Scully finds some baby clothes, a silver spoon and a party dress. Mr. Scully instructs Ned to throw the old things out. Later, when Ned returns home, he is still worried about the gray cat.

Ned receives a letter from Uncle Hilary. It is the first time that Uncle Hilary has sent a letter directly to Ned. In the letter, Uncle Hilary tells Ned that while they are on vacation, they might take a ferry boat to a small island where wild ponies live in the forest. Uncle Hilary promises to let Ned know when their vacation arrangements have been made. Ned continues to wish that he could stay home for Christmas.

This day, Ned's mother is feeling ill so he is unable to visit with her. In the kitchen, Ned snaps at Mrs. Scallop and Mrs. Scallop begins to cry. He half apologizes to Mrs. Scallop. After supper, Ned is happy to retreat to his room. He worries about Mama and the one-eyed cat.

A few days later, Ned talks with Mama. Ned does not answer Mama when she asks him if he is happy to be going to Charleston with Uncle Hilary.



When he next goes to Mr. Scully to do his chores, the old man tells Ned that the one-eyed grey cat has recovered. Mr. Scully promises to continue feeding the cat. This news lifts Ned's spirits considerably and his mood lightens.

Mama tells Ned that Papa has found a new job for Mrs. Scallop in a nursing home for the elderly. Mama goes on to say that Mrs. Kimball (Evelyn's mother) will look after Mama for awhile.

#### Chapter VI: Christmas (Pages 145 - 164)

Ned finds Mr. Scully lying face down in an upstairs hall. He runs to the Kimball house and finds Evelyn's mother. Mrs. Kimball tells Ned to run home and call an ambulance to come in from Waterville. Papa calls for an ambulance and Mr. Scully is transported to the hospital. Mrs. Kimball tells Ned that Mr. Scully has most likely suffered a stroke.

Ned continues to feed the one-eyed grey cat. He knows that Mr. Scully will not be returning to the little house.

Mrs. Scallop leaves the Wallis home for her job at the nursing home in Waterville. Mama, Papa and Ned are all glad to see Mrs. Scallop go.

One day, while Ned is at Mr. Scully's house feeding the cat, he meets Doris, Mr. Scully's only daughter. Doris asks Ned what he is doing in the shed and Ned explains how he has been helping Mr. Scully after school. Ned also tells Doris about the cat.

Doris says that Ned may continue to feed the one-eyed cat, but Mr. Scully's house will soon be put up for sale. She tells Ned that Mr. Scully is unable to care for himself and that he will not be coming back. Doris thinks her father's house is a shack. Doris promises to tell her father that Ned is taking care of the gray cat.

Shortly thereafter, Ned tells his mother that he does not want to go to Charleston with Uncle Hilary but he does not tell Mama why he wants to stay home for Christmas.

While he and Papa trim the small Christmas tree, Papa notices that Ned is flushed. Ned's teeth begin to chatter and Papa puts him to bed right away. Ned develops a fever and spends the next few days sick in bed. Ned dreams of the cat while his fever rages. He is consumed with guilt. He knows that the cat was injured when he shot into the woods.

## Chapters V and VI Analysis

The seasons continue to change, and Ned continues to change as well. The fight Ned has with Billy Gaskell is more than just a fight. Part of the reason Ned hits Billy in the first place is his frustration about the condition of the one-eyed cat. Ned does not understand this at the time. To both the boys' credit, Ned and Billy make up quickly. The message here is that people can disagree and still be friends. It is interesting that Ned chooses not to call Billy a name in return. When Ned and Billy talk about the possibility



of playing hockey with the older boys this winter, it brings home the truth that Ned and Billy may feel powerful when they are together, but that there is always someone bigger and stronger to contend with.

When Ned and Mr. Scully watch the one-eyed gray cat through the window, neither one of them realizes that the cat is actually pregnant. Therefore, this episode foreshadows Ned's sighting of the cat and her kittens when he sits on the porch of the Makepeace mansion in Chapter VIII.

In the episode in which Ned discovers the leather satchel, Mr. Scully chooses to throw out Doris's baby things. This proves Mr. Scully's desire to put the past to rest. Although he does feel some nostalgia when he looks at the various articles in the satchel, Mr. Scully nonetheless decides to let go of Doris's childhood. The episode also tells the reader that Mr. Scully was once a young man and that he lived in Poughkeepsie. This fact adds texture to the character of Mr. Scully. Again, it reinforces the fact that everyone's life has a beginning, middle and end. Mr. Scully has not always been an old man and Ned Wallis will not always be an eleven-year-old boy. Mr. Scully is in the winter of human life. Things slow down during the winter and life becomes quieter. This episode also foreshadows Mr. Scully's death and Doris's reaction to her father's passing away. Mr. Scully treats the things in the satchel as disposable. In turn, Doris Scully sees her father's home and possessions as disposable as well.

The letter that Ned receives from Uncle Hilary is a sign that Uncle Hilary now thinks of Ned as more mature. A personal letter from someone Ned admires gives Ned confidence and deepens the relationship between uncle and nephew. At this point, as well, Ned begins to realize that he and Uncle Hilary also share something special. Ned no longer has reason to be jealous of his mother's relationship with Uncle Hilary. The letter from Uncle Hilary is also a signal that if Ned chooses to, he could write directly to his uncle, telling Hilary about his misgivings about going out of town and the reason for those misgivings.

In keeping with seasons and life changes, Ned's mother cycles out of a very painful time. Ned's sharp tone with Mrs. Scallop is an indication that Ned is beginning to do things that even he does not understand. Ned knows and admits that the way he speaks to Mrs. Scallop is hurtful. Ned also becomes embarrassed when Mrs. Scallop begins to cry. This tells the reader that Mrs. Scallop is human, too, and not just a cartoon character like Powerful Katinka.

Ned is shocked and saddened when he discovers an unconscious Mr. Scully lying on the floor. This drastic change in Ned's life brings into focus the fact that everyone dies sometime. It also reinforces Doris Scully's lack of care for her father. It is clear from Doris's reaction to seeing Ned that her father either has never told Doris about Ned or that Doris simply ignored this information. Doris's attitude toward her elderly father is made plain when she calls her father's house a "hovel" (p. 159). A hovel is a shack. Doris does not know anything about her father or his life.



Ned's fever dream signifies that his guilt has increased to the point of anger toward the one-eyed cat. If the cat were to die, Ned would not have to feel guilty any longer. In addition, if the cat died, Ned would not have to admit to Papa and Mama that he has been lying to them since September.



# Chapters VII and VIII

## Chapters VII and VIII Summary

Chapter VII: Disappearances (Pages 165 - 205)

Ned recovers and time passes. By February, Ned is spending a great deal of time sitting on the veranda of the old Makepeace mansion. He goes to the old mansion when he wants to be alone with his thoughts. Ned finds comfort sitting on the veranda, looking out into the countryside.

Ned goes to Mr. Scully's house and notices that the "FOR SALE" sign is gone. He looks for the one-eyed gray cat but the cat is nowhere to be found. Mr. Scully's old car has been removed and the outhouse had been taken down, the lumber stacked at the back door of the house. Soon, he does not think about the cat much at all.

Ned asks Mrs. Kimball about the history of the Makepeace mansion. Mrs. Kimball says that the house once belonged to a very wealthy family. Evelyn Kimball says the mansion is haunted. Mama tells Ned that the house is just abandoned.

One afternoon while talking to Mama, Ned learns that Mrs. Scallop is happy to be working at the home for the elderly and that Mr. Scully is recovering but the old man can no longer speak. When Ned visits Mr. Scully in the nursing home, he realizes how fragile Mr. Scully really is.

Ned visits with Mr. Scully a few more times until one Saturday he notices that Mr. Scully has become much weaker.

Ned finally admits to Mr. Scully that it was he who shot the cat and put out its eye. Mr. Scully does not speak, but Ned can tell that Mr. Scully understands and forgives him. It occurs to Ned that Mr. Scully is the only other person who knows what happened when Ned took the Daisy air rifle out into the woods

A short time later, Ned and Papa return home to find that Mama is also very ill.

The Wallis family receives another exciting letter from Uncle Hilary. Papa tells Ned that Uncle Hilary is going to visit the leper colony on the Hawaiian island of Molokai. Uncle Hilary also says that after he visits the leper colony, he will find a junk and sail for Hong Kong.

Mama tells Ned about a new treatment for her arthritis. She and Papa are both very hopeful about the new treatments.

The following week, Mama begins her new therapy for rheumatoid arthritis. Her happiness scares Ned a little until Mama reminds Ned to accept the good and not to be afraid of it.





Ned tells Papa that he wants to visit Mr. Scully again, even if it is only for a few minutes. Papa agrees and takes Ned to the Waterville Nursing Home a few days later. When Ned arrives, Nurse Clay tells Ned that Mr. Scully died in his sleep two days earlier.

Ned leaves the nursing home, thinking about the day he told Mr. Scully about shooting the gray cat.

In the early spring of 1936, things begin to change. Billy Gaskell tells Ned and the girls that his family will be moving to Albany in May. Evelyn Kimball's father now works a steady job at the garage in town and Evelyn got new shoes. Ned also notices that Evelyn also has a new grown-up attitude. Mama's treatments are working well and Ned can feel himself changing as well.

#### Chapter VIII: Cat's Moon (Pages 206 - 216)

Ned goes out for a walk on a moonlit night. He cannot sleep and he makes his way to the veranda at the Makepeace mansion.

After a few minutes, someone approaches Ned. It is Mama. They sit together and talk beneath the bright moon. Suddenly they see two kittens playing together. Then, Ned and Mama see the one-eyed grey cat. The cat looks at Ned as if it recognizes him before disappearing back into the woods.

At this point, Ned finally opens up and tells Mama about shooting at something in the woods. Ned tells her that he is responsible for shooting out the cat's eye. Mama then tells Ned that it was she who watched him returning to the house that night. Mama was the person Ned saw standing in the attic window the night he took the Daisy air rifle out into the woods.

On the way home, Mama tells Ned that when Ned was three years old, she "ran away from home" (p. 214). Mama went to Maine and lived in a cabin by herself for three months. When Ned asks her why, Mama says she left because she was afraid of Papa's goodness. Ned does not quite understand this, but tells himself that one day it will all make sense.

Ned and Mama return home and sit on the steps talking more about the one-eyed gray cat.

Ned tells his mother that he is not exactly sure what he saw in the woods the night he took the rifle from the attic. Ned still believes it was the gray cat.

Just then, the front door opens and Papa tells Ned and Mama that he was wondering where they were. Then he says he figured they must have gone for a walk in the beautiful moonlit night.



## Chapters VII and VIII Analysis

It is February at the beginning of Chapter VII. Winter is still in full swing. This also means that spring is on its way. Spring is the time of new things, changes in the natural world and the lives of people as well. By this time, Ned has been visiting the Makepeace mansion by himself. He visits the mansion so he can be alone with his thoughts. Spending more time at Makepeace mansion means that the boundaries of Ned's personal world have begun to expand. Ned is venturing out into the world around him and it pleases him to discover a new place to explore. The Makepeace mansion is pre-Revolutionary. This means that the house was built before the American Revolutionary War (1772 - 1776). The coming change of seasons also brings a lessening in Ned's concern for the one-eyed cat. Ned does not feel as guilty as he did before Mr. Scully had a stroke. Ned is gaining a new perspective. He is realizing that the one-eyed cat can care for itself. This also means that Ned's guilt has changed shape in a way. It also means, though, that Ned has still not told Papa and Mama the truth about the air rifle or about Charleston.

When Ned admits to Mr. Scully that he shot the gray cat, he does not get the reaction he expected. Mr. Scully clutches Ned's hand. This tells Ned that Mr. Scully understands what he is saying and that Mr. Scully is neither surprised nor angry at what Ned tells him. Mr. Scully's reaction to Ned's news foreshadows Mama's reaction in the next chapter. In this instance, Ned trusts Mr. Scully more than he trusts his parents with the truth. Sometimes, children feel more comfortable telling someone outside their family things that their family might not like. Perhaps the situation would have played out differently if Mr. Scully had been able to speak to Ned.

Once again, Mama becomes ill and her cycle of illness continues to shift and change. The world outside once again inserts itself into the story with the arrival of Uncle Hilary's letter. His news that he wished to visit a leper colony on the island of Molokai mirrors the work that Reverend Wallis does when he visits parishioners who are ill or lonely. Uncle Hilary's announcement that he will sail for Hong Kong means that Ned can expect to receive more souvenirs. This is the last time that Uncle Hilary makes an appearance in the novel.

Mama's life changes again when she learns about the new therapy for her arthritis. Ned's fear at Mama's happiness indicates his fear of change. After all, Ned has become accustomed to Mama being ill off and on. If Mama gets well, Ned is unsure of how his life will change. Ned is afraid that the treatment will not work and he is afraid that Mama's period of feeling healthy may not last. When Mama encourages Ned to accept the good, she is encouraging him to accept the good in the moment. Mama understands that good things can come to an end, but when good things are happening, it is perfectly acceptable to appreciate them for as long as good things last. Ned's fear is an indication of his immaturity. Even though Ned turned eleven months ago, he is still very much a child in his thoughts and feelings.



When Mr. Scully dies, it is Ned's first experience with the death of a close friend. Ned handles Mr. Scully's death well. He is sad, but he is able to remember the fun he had with Mr. Scully and it is clear that Mr. Scully added a great deal to Ned's life.

The narrative comes full circle when Ned notices that things in his life are changing and that the people around him are changing also. The spring brings a series of changes that Ned must think about and consider in the larger picture of life. Billy Gaskell's family is moving to Albany and his brother will be able to receive much-needed medical treatments. Ned was unaware that Billy even had a brother and finds it interesting that Billy is just mentioning it now. Still, Ned sees Billy and Evelyn Kimball doing what Mama instructed him to do: they are both accepting the good and not questioning how long it will last. Evelyn Kimball's prissy attitude and the fact of the new shoes means that the girl's life is changing in more than one way. Evelyn's father is working and making enough money to support his family. At the same time, Evelyn is coming to understand that she is no longer a little girl, but a bigger girl with big girl concerns.

In the final chapter, it seems as though Ned has made peace with a great many things. Mr. Scully has passed away and Ned has an understanding of death as a necessary part of life. Ned no longer worries about the fate of the one-eyed cat even before he sees the cat in the moonlight. The cat recognizes Ned. More importantly, the cat obviously forgives Ned for shooting it — if that is really what happened. The kittens prove that the cat was pregnant and not ill when Ned and Mr. Scully saw it sleeping on the quilt in Mr. Scully's shed. Life ends and new life begins. Winter fades into spring and the seasons go round and round.

Also in Chapter VIII, Mama returns to her former self. She is not completely cured, but she can now do the things she once enjoyed doing. When Mama tells Ned about the time she ran away to Maine, Mama is really telling Ned that she trusts him now that he has gotten older. Mama's reason for leaving Ned and Papa is still somewhat hard for Ned to understand. Ned does know, though, that someday he will understand. This means that Ned is maturing because he has the knowledge that things become clearer when a person grows up. Ned is accepting the good. He is not worrying about Mama or the cat any longer. This still leaves the matter of the lies unresolved, though.

When Ned finally tells Mama about what happened on the night he sneaked into the woods to shoot the rifle, Mama's reaction is in keeping with her character. She is not disappointed or angry. Instead, Mama asks questions in order to be able to understand what Ned has been going through for months. Mama is sympathetic and kind. The information Ned shares with her does not change her in the least. Mama's reaction is a good indicator of what Papa's reaction will be as well.

The episode at Makepeace mansion with his mother mirrors Ned's experience of being out in the world with Papa. Ned now has distinct relationships with both of his parents.



# Characters

## Ned Wallis

Ned Wallis is eleven years old when the novel begins. He was born in September, 1924. Ned is the only child of James and Martha Wallis. Ned loves to read and he is naturally curious. He enjoys reading National Geographic magazine because it shows him what the world outside Tyler, New York is like. Ned does chores after school for Mr. Scully, an elderly neighbor, and he considers Mr. Scully a friend. Ned is the only person who visits Mr. Scully in the nursing home after Mr. Scully suffers a stroke. He is sensitive to his environment and he cares greatly about the people in his life. He has a close relationship with both his parents, but he is especially close to his mother. Ned does not understand his mother's illness, but he accepts it as a part of life because his mother does not complain. During the course of the novel, Ned learns that every action has its consequences. He is a reasonably good student. Ned often accompanies his father when Reverend Wallis visits his parishioners. After he sneaks to the attic and takes the Daisy air rifle into the woods, Ned learns how to lie. He knows it is wrong to lie, but he cannot help himself. Toward the end of the novel, Ned learns that sometimes people do things that others do not understand right away. Ned also learns that telling the truth is the best course of action. Ned greatly admires his mother's brother Hilary. He sees Uncle Hilary as an adventurer and Ned values his collection of souvenirs from Uncle Hilary's travels.

## Reverend James Wallis

Reverend James Wallis is Ned's father and Martha's husband. Reverend Wallis is the pastor of the Congregational Church in Tyler, New York. Reverend Wallis is a charitable man with a good sense of humor. Reverend Wallis thinks the best of people until they give him a reason to believe otherwise. Reverend Wallis and his family live in a farmhouse built in 1846. Because the land has been in his family for so long, Reverend Wallis chooses to live there rather than in the parsonage in Tyler, which is fifteen miles away. Reverend Wallis loves his family very much, but sometimes he seems distracted. James Wallis drives an old Packard automobile. Ned notices that Reverend Wallis has a public face and an at-home, private face. Although his wife is very ill with rheumatoid arthritis, Reverend Wallis cares tirelessly for her and for his son. James Wallis is usually an easy-going person. When Uncle Hilary gives Ned the Daisy air rifle, though, James puts his foot down. James Wallis does not like guns and he feels that guns are only good for killing people. It is unclear whether or not James Wallis ever learns about Ned shooting the gray cat. James Wallis is also an excellent cook.



## Martha Wallis

Martha Wallis is married to Reverend James Wallis. She is Ned's mother and Hilary's sister. Martha Wallis is a beautiful, lively woman and a devoted mother. When Ned is just five years old, Martha develops crippling, painful rheumatoid arthritis and for many years is bound to a wheelchair. Martha once enjoyed life more fully, taking long walks and going for horseback rides. Martha is strong-willed and has a sharp sense of humor. She does not see herself as a very good person, but Ned and James would both disagree. Martha usually wears flowered dresses. Martha is especially close to her son Ned. At one point, when Ned was around three years old, Martha Wallis left home and lived in a cabin in Maine for a short time. Martha tells Ned that she left because she was afraid of her husband's goodness.

Eventually, Martha's rheumatoid arthritis is alleviated by injections containing gold. And although no one knows how long the injections will continue to work, Martha takes it in stride and decides to accept and enjoy the good in life no matter what her physical limitations may be.

## Mrs. Scallop

Mrs. Scallop is the Wallis' third housekeeper. Mrs. Scallop is a stout, short woman who is given to silent rages and superstition. Mrs. Scallop often refers to herself in the third person. Martha Wallis calls Mrs. Scallop "Mrs. Snort-and-Bellow" behind her back. Mrs. Scallop is a complex woman and not much is known about her. She takes a job at the Waterville Nursing Home for the elderly after she leaves the Wallis' employ. Mrs. Scallop is known to be sugary-sweet one moment and quietly seething the next. Mrs. Scallop thinks of herself as a very good cook, although the Wallis family might disagree with her high opinion of herself. Mrs. Scallop has beady blue eyes.

## Mr. Scully

David Scully is an elderly man who lives not far from Ned Wallis and his family. Mr. Scully has a daughter named Doris who lives somewhere in the western United States. Mr. Scully pays Ned Wallis to do chores around his house. Scully goes about clearing away things he no longer needs with Ned's help. In reality, Mr. Scully is quite lonely and he likes having Ned around for company. Scully is the only person Ned tells about shooting the gray cat in the woods. Mr. Scully understands how Ned could do such a thing and he forgives Ned for this transgression. Mr. Scully lives in a small house, bakes his own bread and makes his own applesauce. Scully heats his house with a wood stove and uses kerosene lamps for light, even though his daughter had electricity turned on. Mr. Scully eventually dies following a severe stroke. Ned is the only person to visit Mr. Scully at the nursing home.



## Uncle Hilary

Uncle Hilary is Martha Wallis' brother and Ned's uncle. Uncle Hilary lives in New York City and is a world-traveler. Hilary gives Ned a Daisy air rifle for Ned's eleventh birthday, which upsets James Wallis. Ned has souvenirs from all of Uncle Hilary's globe-trotting exploits. When Uncle Hilary comes to visit Ned and his parents, the entire family becomes lighthearted and free. Uncle Hilary is deeply ashamed of having upset James Wallis by giving Ned the rifle.

## Evelyn (Evie) Kimball

Evie is perhaps Ned Wallis' closest friend. For most of the novel, Evie Kimball lives with her very large family in Tyler, New York. Evie's family is also quite poor until her father finds work at the new gas station in Tyler. Eventually, Evelyn Kimball gets a new pair of shoes, which she brags about constantly. In Chapter VII, Ned Wallis notices that Evie is beginning to change from a little girl into a young lady.

## Janet Hoffman

Janet Hoffman is another school chum of Ned Wallis. Janet lives with her family in Tyler, New York. Janet is energetic and lively. She is not fond of Billy Gaskell, believing Billy to be somewhat crude and boorish.

## Billy Gaskell

Billy Gaskell is a school friend of Ned Wallis. Billy is a rather large, slow-witted boy who enjoys teasing Janet and Evelyn. Billy and his family move from Tyler to Albany, New York after Billy's father gets a new job. Also, Billy has a brother who suffers from infantile paralysis.

## Doris Scully

Doris is the daughter of Mr. David Scully, Ned's elderly friend and after-school employer. Doris does not have a very close relationship with her father. Doris lives somewhere in the western United States. Doris is not a very friendly woman and she sends her father postcards with the same picture on them three months in a row.

## Mrs. Kimball

Mrs. Kimball is Evie Kimball's mother. Mrs. Kimball a trained practical nurse, takes care of Martha Wallis after Mrs. Scallop goes to work at the nursing home in Waterville. Mrs. Kimball is not a very good cook, but she is patient and kind. Ned and his parents prefer Mrs. Kimball to Mrs. Scallop.

## **Nurse Clay**

Nurse Clay works at the Waterville Nursing Home for the Elderly. Nurse Clay takes care of Ned's friend Mr. Scully. It is Nurse Clay who first informs Ned that Mr. Scully has passed away.



# Objects/Places

## Hudson River

The Hudson River flows through eastern New York state. The river is named after Henry Hudson, an English explorer who worked for the Dutch East India Company during the seventeenth century.

## Hungary

Hungary is a country located in eastern Europe. The capital of Hungary is Budapest.

## Zurich

Zurich is the largest city in the small European country of Switzerland. Zurich is one of the leading financial centers in the world.

## Molokai

Molokai is one of the islands which make up the U.S. state of Hawaii. Molokai is famous because in the twentieth century it was the site of a famous leper colony started by a man named Father Damien. Molokai is the fifth largest Hawaiian island.

## Hong Kong

Hong Kong is part of the People's Republic of China. It is estimated that seven million people live in Hong Kong. Hong Kong is another of the world's leading financial centers.

## Georgia Sea Islands

The Georgia Sea Islands are islands located off the coast of Georgia in the United States.

## Poughkeepsie

Poughkeepsie is a city located in New York state. Poughkeepsie is a Native American name.



## **Jericho**

Jericho is a Middle Eastern city located near the Jordan River. Jericho is also located near the Dead Sea.

## **Charleston**

The city of Charleston is located in the state of South Carolina.

## **Philippine Islands**

Also referred to as the Philippines, this group of islands is located in Southeast Asia. The Philippines are near Vietnam, Taiwan, Borneo and Indonesia.



# Themes

## Family

Ned Wallis is incredibly close to his parents. However, there are still some things he does not share with either James or Martha. Ned's family is traditional in many ways. The Wallis home is relatively stable and Ned and his parents are able to discuss things which happen in their lives. What is interesting about the Wallis family is that each of them undergoes personal changes which, in the end, prove to strengthen the family's foundation.

Ned's friend Mr. Scully is quite elderly and has a different view of life and the world. Mr. Scully's daughter Doris is not close to her father. This is made evident when Ned notices that Doris sends her father the same postcard for three months in a row. Sending her father the same postcard time and time again is an indication of Doris' lack of concern for her father. Doris seems not to care about his father or his life in the country. In fact, at one point, Doris refers to her father's small house as a "hovel", which takes Ned Wallis aback. It is clear that Doris does not know her father as well as Ned knows him or Doris would know about the gray cat and the fact that her father chooses not to use electricity to light or heat his home. Also, it is clear that Doris is unaware of Ned's close friendship with Mr. Scully. Doris does not recognize Ned when she arrives to put her father's affairs in order after Mr. Scully has a stroke. If Doris had been truly interested in her father's life, she would have known that Ned would come by after school to give Mr. Scully a hand around the house and keep him company. His lack of relationship with Doris contributes greatly to Mr. Scully's sadness.

Another interesting family in *One-Eyed Cat* is the Kimball family. Although Evelyn's parents do not have a great deal of money, Mr. and Mrs. Kimball choose to have quite a few children. Evelyn does not, in the beginning, seem to be conscious of her family's poverty. However, Ned does notice a change in Evelyn's demeanor when she receives a new pair of shoes. The narrator describes Evie Kimball as "prissy" at one point (p. 203).

Although nothing is known about Mrs. Scallop's family, it is clear that she is alone in the world, because for a time she lives with Ned Wallis and his family. Mrs. Scallop's job at the Waterville Nursing Home gives her a group of people to care for. In essence, the elderly patients at the nursing home become her family. Mrs. Scallop feels needed by the patients in a way that she did not feel needed at the Wallis home.

## Changes Can Be Good

Throughout the novel, Ned Wallis and the people he knows and loves experience quite a few changes. First of all, Ned turns eleven. To some people, turning eleven might not seem all that important. For Ned, though, turning eleven is the beginning of another



series of changes. When Uncle Hilary gives Ned the Daisy air rifle for his birthday, Ned has his first experience with trying to hide something from his parents. After sneaking to the attic and taking the air rifle out into the woods, Ned learns about guilt. He also learns about lying and how easy it is to tell one lie after another in order to cover up what he thought he did wrong. Eventually, though, Ned tells Mr. Scully and then Mama the truth.

When Ned is still a very young child, his mother develops rheumatoid arthritis. This change came on relatively quickly and Ned often wonders what happened to make his mother so sick. The change in Mama's health caused Ned to re-evaluate his life up to that point. After Ned becomes accustomed to his mother being bed-ridden, her condition begins to feel somewhat normal. And although Ned finds his mother's arthritis difficult to comprehend, he does not love her less — he comes to love her differently. Mama's illness makes Ned aware that people's bodies can change but the person they are inside does not necessarily have to change. After Mama begins having injections for the rheumatoid arthritis, she returns to her once-healthy self. The transition for Ned is almost seamless. Mama being ill is the same as Mama being well because her personality stays the same. Granted, Ned is happy when Mama can once again walk and enjoy things outside the house, but Mama's physical condition does not diminish her in Ned's eyes.

Chapter VIII highlights some of the more significant changes that take place in young Ned Wallis' life. Ned takes the changes around him in stride. Evelyn Kimball's attitude and appearance change. She is getting older and she is more conscious of herself as a young lady. In addition, the Kimball family's financial picture changes when Evie's father begins working again. Billy Gaskell undergoes changes as well. His family's relocation to Albany is something that momentarily disappoints Ned, as he and Billy had begun to be friends (p. 203). Ned learns that Billy has a brother with infantile paralysis and that his brother's treatments will be expensive. Billy welcomes the change that will come with living in a different city. Ned, too, accepts the change and realizes that while some changes may be difficult to adjust to, changes will happen all the way through life.

Perhaps one of the most significant changes in Ned Wallis' life is Mr. Scully's death. Ned is eleven years old and has little or no idea what death is like. But when Mr. Scully dies, Ned realizes that the good feelings he always had for Mr. Scully do not end simply because he cannot visit the old man any longer. Ned learns the importance of memories when Mr. Scully passes away.

When Ned and Mama are sitting on the veranda of Makepeace mansion, Ned sees the one-eyed gray cat once more. The cat's life has changed as well, as Ned can see by the two kittens laying in the moonlight. Even though the cat has lost an eye, she is nevertheless able to go on with her life and give birth to kittens. And although Ned might feel guilty about possibly being responsible for the cat's injury, he can see that the cat adapted to the change as well.



## Love and Loss

Ned Wallis loves his parents and they love him. What Ned learns about love, though, is that it is ever-changing and that sometimes people you love do things which are difficult to understand. For example, Reverend Wallis takes the rifle away from Ned and hides it in the attic. At first, Ned is disappointed. However, after he sneaks into the attic and takes the rifle into the woods, Ned begins to understand that loving someone often means doing things which may seem confusing. At one point in the narrative, Ned finds himself wishing he had simply gone along with what his father said. Ned does not realize that he is not responsible enough to handle the rifle until after he sneaks into the attic and takes the rifle out into the woods to practice shooting. Almost immediately after he shoots at a shadowy figure in the woods, Ned loses interest in the rifle. This is a result of his recognition of his own immaturity. Ned realizes that his father was right to take the rifle away. Ned was not ready to deal with the rifle in a responsible manner. The sense of loss he felt at having his father put the rifle in the attic was something that Ned chose to ignore. For a brief moment, Ned lost a privilege. When Ned chooses to take advantage of the privilege before he is ready, he pays the price. In this case, the price was accidentally shooting a cat's eye out.

Ned experiences another kind of loss when his mother is stricken with rheumatoid arthritis. Ned remembers what his mother was like before the arthritis. He remembers her as light and lively, active and involved. When Mama takes to her bed, Ned is forced to turn his loss into something else. Mama is ill but she is still Mama — just in a different physical state. Ned still manages to share special moments with his mother and he learns to adjust. When Mama's injections prove to be successful in giving her some relief, Ned is once again able to enjoy his mother as being an active participant in her son's life. It is important to remember, though, that once Mama is better, Ned does not miss a beat. He matures and learns that no matter what happens with or to a person's body, that person is the same on the inside.

Another kind of loss that Ned Wallis experiences is the loss of his friend, David Scully. Ned felt true affection for Mr. Scully, but he did not realize this until Mr. Scully had a stroke. Until then, Ned took for granted that Mr. Scully would be around for a long, long time. When he visits Mr. Scully at the nursing home, Ned comes closer to the realization that people do not live forever, no matter how much one might care for them. Ned's sense of loss at Mr. Scully's death confuses him at first. But after thinking it over, Ned admits to himself that he knew Mr. Scully would pass away eventually. Ned's sadness is mitigated by the fondness he feels for Mr. Scully and by the fact that before Mr. Scully died, Ned told him the truth about the one-eyed gray cat.

# Style

## Point of View

The entire novel is written from the perspective of an omniscient narrator. That is to say, the person telling the story of Ned Wallis and his family is a neutral voice. The narrator is not involved in the story in any way. In addition, the narrator does not comment specifically on what happens in the story. The use of a neutral narrator gives the reader an opportunity to decide for him/herself what matters in the story and what does not matter as much. The omniscient narrator can be everywhere in the story all at once. For this reason, the story flows smoothly and unfolds in a way that helps the reader follow what happens to Ned and those around him.

The narrator simply tells the reader what goes on without giving an opinion which might influence the reader's interpretation of the events being presented. The narrator in *One-Eyed Cat* is sympathetic, if uninvolved. It is clear from what the narrator says that the narrator is interested in Ned and his family and friends while remaining in the background. *One-Eyed Cat* is as much the story of the cat as it is the story of Ned Wallis. The omniscient narrator is completely objective. This serves the narrative well, in that a narrator who is invested in what happens in the story is less likely to tell the absolute truth about what is going on.

## Setting

The entire novel takes place in and around Tyler in New York State. Some of the novel's action takes place in Waterville, the site of the Waterville Nursing Home for the elderly where Mr. Scully stays after he has a stroke. There are many exotic locations mentioned in the novel, including Hong Kong, the Philippines, Hawaii, and Zurich, Switzerland. Geography figures prominently in the narrative even though the main character, Ned Wallis, never goes far from home. On more than one occasion, the magazine *National Geographic* is mentioned. Also, Ned Wallis has a stamp collection which features stamps from all over the world, including Rwanda. Furthermore, the use of so many interesting geographical locations speaks to Ned's curiosity and the value his parents place on knowing the world beyond one's own country. The Wallis family might live in a tiny town, but there is the understanding that in their minds and imaginations, they are travelers. One example of a traveler is Ned's Uncle Hilary, who has no shortage of adventures in a variety of locations. Ned himself benefits from Uncle Hilary's globe-trotting by way of an extensive collection of souvenirs that his uncle sends him from locations all around the world. Ned's souvenir collection includes a Matriushka doll from Hungary and a bronze goat from Greece.

Along with the foreign locations mentioned in the novel, locations in New York State also figure prominently in the narrative. Poughkeepsie, New York is mentioned, as well as Albany, New York and New York City. For Ned Wallis, the world is at once a very large



and a very small place. The main characters themselves operate within a small geographical area but the world outside New York presses in on them in ways which enliven and make the characters' small-town lives much more rich and interesting.

## Language and Meaning

The novel is written in standard English. Even though this book is aimed at an audience that ranges from eight to twelve years of age, a good deal of the vocabulary is quite advanced. The characters are interested in a wide variety of subjects, including nature, and names of flowers are interspersed throughout the narrative. At different points along the way, the narrative mentions lilies of the valley, dandelions, blood-root and trillium. In addition, there are a few medical terms used in the novel which may prove to be challenging for readers in this age group. For example, Martha Wallis suffers from rheumatoid arthritis and is treated using chrysotherapy, which is not a common term or treatment. In addition, Billy Gaskell's brother is afflicted with infantile paralysis and Mr. Scully suffers a stroke. Furthermore, there are words which refer to religious observance which may also provide a challenge. The words "pulpit," "parishioner," and "congregation" are all used throughout the narrative. Also, Uncle Hilary's travels provide interesting vocabulary words as well. Uncle Hilary refers to a "junk" in one letter to Ned and he mentions "appendicitis" in another note to his nephew.

## Structure

One-Eyed Cat is 216 pages in length. The book is divided into eight separate chapters. Chapter VII is the longest chapter, with forty pages. Chapter VIII is the shortest chapter, with ten pages. The novel proceeds in a linear fashion. That is, there is a beginning, middle, and end to the narrative. The novel begins in 1935 and ends approximately one year later. The passage of time is also dealt with in a linear manner. Each chapter in the novel has its own title, which gives the reader an indication of what is to follow. Before the novel begins, the author has inserted a quote attributed to American poet Walt Whitman. The first chapter introduces the main characters to the reader. Chapter I, entitled "Sunday," talks about Ned's personal history and how his family came to be living in the old farmhouse.

Also, there are inter-chapter divisions, which indicate the passage of a substantial amount of time. Uncle Hilary's letters to Ned and his family appear in italics, as do book and magazine titles.



## Quotes

"On warm days the voices of the choir - especially the high tremulous voices of the oldest singers - would float into the darkness of the barn like the thick, sweet aroma of meadow flowers."

p. 2

"Ned decided that the worst thing you could do to a person was not to say why you were angry with him."

p. 6

"[Ned] was pretty sure [Mrs. Scallop] had been listening to them, that she often eavesdropped, and that whatever she heard filled her up like a big supper."

p. 24

"The painful thing was that, though Ned didn't always trust his father, his father trusted him, and that seemed to him unfair, although he couldn't explain why it was so."

p. 40

"A lie was so tidy, like a small box you could make with nails and thin pieces of wood and glue. But the truth lay sprawled all over the place like the mess up in the attic."

p. 54

"[Ned] suddenly imagined Mrs. Scallop stuffing the whole Wallis family so full of food that they would all float up into the sky, and she would gather the strings that held them to the earth and carry them around like a bunch of human balloons."

p. 94

"Holidays had an orange tinge to them except for Christmas which was red and green."

p. 111

"[Ned] hated the way [Mrs. Scallop] spoke in that false soothing voice, as if she owned the country of calm and he was some kind of fool who'd stumbled across its borders."

p. 151

"Life often gets better all by itself."

p. 173

"It was as though [Ned] had been suddenly let into a room where only grown-up people live and talk, and he couldn't understand the language yet."

p. 215



## Topics for Discussion

What reason does Papa give for taking the Daisy air rifle away from Ned?

Why, in your opinion, is Chapter VII called "Disappearances"? Who, if anyone, disappears?

Why does the Wallis family dislike Mrs. Scallop so much?

What reason does Mrs. Scallop give Ned for Mama's illness? Is she telling the truth?

What explanation does Mama give Ned for having run away from home? Does Ned understand Mama's reason for leaving?

Discuss Ned's friendship with Mr. Scully. Do you think Mr. Scully has a happy life?

Why does Ned stop caring for the one-eyed cat after Mr. Scully passes away?

What is unusual about the postcards Doris Scully sends her father?

Why does Papa want to stay in Tyler instead of moving into the parsonage in Waterville?

What happens when Ned finally tells Mama the truth about the one-eyed cat? How does Mama react?