

Running from Safety: An Adventure of the Spirit Study Guide

Running from Safety: An Adventure of the Spirit by Richard Bach

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Plot Summary

Running from Safety: An Adventure of the Spirit by Richard Bach is a philosophical book that offers insight into religion, the meaning of life and facing one's fears. Richard is a writer who frequently has angels showing up to teach him lessons in life. One day, he meets an angel who reminds him of a promise he made to himself when he was nine. He had promised himself that he would come back in 50 years to teach the boy about all he had learned in life.

When the angel disappears, the 59-year-old Richard finds himself facing a very angry, nine-year-old version of himself, Dickie, who has been locked away in time and space for 50 years. Young Dickie wants to learn about life, but not necessarily from the man who locked him away. Richard must find a way to reach the child and establish a connection. Doing so, he can learn about himself and find answers hidden in his past.

The two establish a tenuous relationship, each blowing up or running from each other at any given time. Sometimes Dickie brings forth wonderful memories that Richard can use as teaching tools. Other times, Dickie brings up painful memories, such as the death of Richard's brother, Bobby. While this is painful, Richard finds that it is helpful to view the event from an adult perspective.

Richard has an instinct to run away from anything he is getting too close to. He would rather guard his emotions. This creates a conflict as he gets to know Dickie more. Richard is torn between helping the child and strengthening their bond and running away so Dickie is blocked out of his life. Richard's wife, Leslie, is well aware of his strengths and weaknesses. She helps him along the way as Richard gets to know Dickie better.

Since they are the same person, they share the same interests, such as flying. Richard enjoys sharing the joys of aeronautics with Dickie, and Dickie helps him re-live the excitement and awe of youth. Their flying experiences bring them closer together. Once Richard and Dickie open up enough to each other and become friends, they begin sharing thoughts and philosophies. Richard teaches by encouraging Dickie to question. They discuss topics ranging from friendships to marriage, religion and death. Richard comes to the realization that Dickie can teach him some things, too.

There is a subtle change throughout the book. The older Richard relives his younger days, and Dickie learns about thoughts and situations an older individual will face. By the end of the book, the two naturally merge. As Richard opens totally to his relationship with Dickie, the boy announces that he is going to leave. Richard realizes that Dickie never really leaves. He is part of his being, and together they are the captains of their own ship.



Intro through Chapter 9

Intro through Chapter 9 Summary

Running from Safety: An Adventure of the Spirit by Richard Bach is a philosophical book that offers insight into religion, the meaning of life and facing one's fears. Richard is a writer who frequently has angels showing up to teach him lessons in life. One day, he meets an angel who reminds him of a promise he made to himself when he was nine. He had promised himself that he would come back in 50 years to teach the boy about all he had learned in life.

In the introduction, the reader is introduced to a 59-year-old writer named Richard. He is looking back at his past to discover what life is about. He analyzes different religions and philosophies throughout high school and night college. Richard remembers a time when he is walking at night and a woman comes up to him and starts discussing what he is thinking. She is listening to his own mind. She lets him know that his life is changing. As she talks to him, Richard finds that she is becoming more beautiful. He gets a sense that he has met her before. She agrees. Richard points out that it is always like that. People come into his life at strange times, offering lessons for different events. He never knows whether the people in his life are mortal or not unless they disappear or take him to different worlds to illustrate points. The introduction concludes with Richard pointing out that this book is focused on one such encounter where he learns a lesson that forever changes his life.

Chapter one begins with Richard on top of Tiger Mountain, near Seattle, Washington. He is gazing out over the valley below, looking for the wind. He watches as one of his companions jumps off the mountain and begins soaring around on her paraglider. He follows shortly thereafter and relishes the feeling of flight. Rather than working to catch thermals, he drifts to the ground where someone offers him a ride back to the top. He gladly accepts the ride from the man who introduces himself as Shepherd. As they begin driving up the mountain, Richard realizes that Shepherd knows him. In fact, not only does he know him, but he knew him when he was a boy, according to Shepherd. He claims to be a teaching angel. Richard does not believe this at first, and asks Shepherd to prove it. Shepherd does this by describing in great detail places and events from Dickie's (young Richard's) life. Shepherd mixes past and present tense, and when Richard asks him about this, Shepherd states that time is just across the street.

As Chapter 2 begins, Shepherd asks Richard what he remembers about himself when he was young. Richard does not remember much at all. Shepherd reminds them about his passion for writing, and talks about how young Dickie wanted to learn all the aspects of writing, including the initial formation of letters. Richard asks Shepherd to give Dickie his regards and prepares to get out of the car. Just when he thinks they are about to part, Shepherd asks Richard to sign a book for Dickie. As Richard is preparing to sign the book, Shepherd reminds him of a promise he made to young Dickie. He promised that in 50 years he would write a book for Dickie, explaining everything the boy should



know about life. Shepherd tells Richard that the nine-year-old boy, Dickie, is waiting for the book that he promised. Richard says he is not going to write the book and he does not remember the promise. Shepherd says he thought that might happen and explains that he wrote the book for Richard, and now all Richard has to do is sign the book.

Chapter 3 begins with the angel, Shepherd, asking Richard to sign the book written about Richard's life. He points out that Dickie never needs to know that Richard broke his promise by not writing the book himself. Richard does not like the idea of lying and tells Shepherd to be honest. He points out that there is a lot of hard work in writing a book and Dickie will someday understand that. At Shepherd's suggestion, he agrees to sign the book instead of stating that he wrote it, and he will add a word of encouragement. As Richard looks through the book, he is dismayed over the table of contents and words placed in the book. It is nothing like anything he would write. Angered, he tears up the book in front of Shepherd. He gets upset over the fact that something like that would have been given to young Dickie. Shepherd is happy that Richard is feeling a connection to the child and Richard struggles with his anger. He refuses to let Dickie see a book like that with his name attached to it.

When chapter 4 opens, Richard is grabbing his paraglider gear and starting to walk away from the angel, who disappears. He has not learned a lesson this time. The angel is gone, and he is ready for another flight. As he jumps off the mountain, he thinks about Dickie. He thinks about what a lesson this flying experience would be for young Dickie. It is important to find something that you love and learn about it. He gazes over the beautiful Seattle skyline and Puget Sound and thinks how much Dickie would like to see what he is seeing. Instead of relying on Shepherd's knowledge of young Dickie, Richard is reminded that Dickie is part of his own past. Dickie is the basis of who he is today, and it is up to him to form his own link to the child. He makes a decision to dig deep inside himself to Dickie. Instead of a pleasant memory, he is faced with a young Dickie who wants to have nothing to do with him, the man he has become. He aims a flame-thrower at Richard and Richard instinctively mentally blocks Dickie from his mind and heads home where he is greeted by his beautiful, loving wife.

In Chapter 5, Richard is sharing the events of his day with his wife, Leslie. She asks him to think about reasons why Dickie would be upset at him. It forces Richard to think about it, and he realizes that the boy inside himself must have felt abandoned in the dark. That would make him angry. Leslie, prods him to remember his past since it is part of the man that he is today. To humor her, he recalls three memories and shares them with her. Richard explains that three of his grandparents died before he was born, and his brother died when he was nine. He says that he barely noticed when his brother died. Leslie asks if he remembers promising young Dickie that he would write the book. Richard denies remembering anything about it. She encourages him to pretend that he is nine again, right after his brother's death. She tries to get him to feel like the young Dickie. Humoring her once again, he closes his eyes and pretends. He immediately sees Dickie, then finds out that Dickie is not worried at all after the brother's death. He is terrified. Richard sees his old room, decorated by numerous airplanes and old games and toys. He sees himself as a young lad, and wants to encourage young Dickie. As Richard is thinking this, Dickie opens his eyes and sees Richard. Dickie opens his



mouth in a scream. Richard shuts down the memory, saying "hello" to the child seconds too late.

Chapter 6 opens with Richard's missed chance to say hello to Dickie. He is telling Leslie what he saw. At Leslie's inquiry, Richard says that he knows that Dickie is going to be all right, then when Leslie asks how he feels about the boy, Richard declares that the scene broke his heart. He finds that he has a connection to the boy, and wants to keep Dickie safe and tell him that everything is going to be all right. He is appreciative of Leslie's love and caring. She gently prods and encourages him as he struggles to understand everything that is happening to him. Richard makes the connection that Dickie is his past, and he is Dickie's future. The two are part of a whole, and together they can fill the empty spaces in order to connect the whole picture of what they can be. Richard discovers that he wants to give advice to Dickie and thinks of how he can do that in the best possible way. In order to do this, he thinks about what he would want to know from a future Richard. He realizes that this might be a difficult task, educating young Dickie, since Dickie does not want to open up to Richard, whom he wants to fight.

In chapter 7, Richard pushes the connection to Dickie aside and decides that he does not want to delve into his imagination anymore, trying to find his lost inner child. His wife goes along with his evasive tactics. She says she loves him how he is, then makes some comments that makes Richard realize that although it is his own decision, she thinks it would be better for him to try to connect with Dickie. As he thinks more about connecting with Dickie, Richard addresses his own fears. He deals with the mundane task of making dinner and turns introspective, realizing how he naturally pushes himself away from obstacles physically and emotionally. He realizes that he wants to connect with Dickie and should not let his own fear hold him back. He needs to push through his own emotional barriers to connect with Dickie. Continuing with the mundane task of eating dinner, Richard talks with Leslie about his children and about how happy he is not to be a child anymore. Leslie responds by saying that it is a shame that anybody has to go through a tough time such as childhood alone.

In chapter 8, Richard is struggling to fall asleep. This is a very uncommon occurrence for him. He is usually a very good sleeper. Tonight he has other things on his mind. He is planning to go flying the next day, and hopes for inclement weather to hone his skills. As he plans the next day, his thoughts rise up regarding Dickie. He wonders if he is scared to go to sleep only to find that Dickie is ready to come after him. Richard once again admits to himself that he has a tendency to run away when things are going wrong. He questions his own self for running away from the wooden cell that Dickie has been locked up in. He feels badly about what has happened to his younger self, although he does not take credit for doing the deed since it was not a conscious decision. Richard gives himself a pep talk, telling himself to face his own fears. He does this, and reaches out to unlock the wooden door where he has locked Dickie away. Dickie is still belligerent and does not want to have anything to do with him. He is frustrated and yells about how he could have helped Richard if Richard showed any signs of caring. Richard tries to persuade him that he did not mean to lock him away,



but Dickie is angry and feels very alone. Richard is trying to make it up to Dickie and offers to help in any way he can. Dickie asks what it is like to fly.

Chapter 9 begins the next day as Richard narrates what happened the previous night to his wife. She addresses his past, asking him what he remembers and what he really felt about the time when his brother died. Richard denies feeling anything. She points out that Dickie is the age that Richard was when his brother died. She says that it is unnatural for him not to feel anything and challenges him to think about what Dickie is going through. She helps Richard come to the realization that he has made up a lot of his history as much as he has blocked out a lot of it. Richard confesses that he just wants to make peace with young Dickie and go on with his life. He asks Leslie how Dickie could possibly help him. She points out that Dickie could help him remember his way around problems instead of running away all the time.

Intro through Chapter 9 Analysis

The introduction of this book shows a man who is searching. Richard has been searching his entire life, and still obviously does not have the answers he is looking for. He is open to different religions and understands Christianity, although he professes a dislike for organized religion. Richard demonstrates strength in character in the fact that he was a line pilot in the Air Force, and he admires Socrates for choosing to die for principal rather than escape, which would have been easier. When he meets the woman he soon realizes is an angel, he is not shocked. He realizes that humans and angels are both used in his life to journey with him and teach him lessons. One lesson in particular stands out to him, and that sets the stage for this book.

Chapter 1 opens in the first-person narrative. As Richard looks down Tiger Mountain, trying to catch the perfect wind, he shows that he has a writer's mind—very onmiscient. He is observant and his words are filled with descriptive imagery. Instead of stating that he sees the effects of the wind blowing through the town, he describes it as tilting a few columns of chimney smoke in the town. Once he is aloft in his paraglider, Richard shows a true delight for the sport, although the reader might feel disappointment over the fact that it does not give him the adrenaline rush it once did. This shows insight into his character because it demonstrates that he is a man who loves adventure. Not only does he appreciate the danger the sport of hang gliding, but he actually misses the general rush that comes with it. When Richard accepts a ride with the stranger, Shepherd, and Shepherd says he knows him, the reader discovers that Richard is a celebrity writer. When he discovers that Shepherd is another angel in his life, his defenses rise. Although he is used to angels coming and going in his life as seen in the introduction, he makes Shepherd prove who he is. When Shepherd survives the first deluge of questions about Richard's life, Richard is ready to listen to him.

As Chapter 2 begins, Richard is ready to listen to Shepherd. Shepherd tries tugging his memory, and Richard is open to the prodding. He starts remembering when he was very young and learning to write his letters. He remembers how he thrived on his mother's encouragement. Richard is interested in Shepherd's relationship with Dickie, and seems



to want to make a connection with the child he once was. Just when the reader thinks the meeting is going to end, Shepherd adds a little twist. He asks Richard to sign a book for Dickie. It is the book that he knows Richard will never write, a book that Richard promised young Dickie. The chapter leaves the reader with a feeling that Richard has no control over his own destiny, which might be a good thing and might be a bad thing.

Chapter 3 is very short at slightly less than five pages. However, it packs a powerful punch. In this chapter Richard takes a good look at the book that Shepherd is about to give Dickie, the book that he supposedly endorses. He looks at the table of contents and glances through numerous quotes about life. When he puts himself in Dickie's shoes, he gets violently angry. 50 years of living should not amount to drivel like this in his opinion. He previously stated that he did not remember Dickie very much, but he seems to forget that in this chapter as he points out to Shepherd that young Dickie had a dream. It feels to him as if this book will take the dreams and turn them into a reality that Dickie will have to sift through to find the difference between facts and lies. By the end of the chapter, it is obvious that the older Richard is no longer cynical and uncaring. He is beginning to want to reach out to young Dickie.

In Chapter 4, Richard leaves Shepherd and prepares for another paragliding flight. His connection to Dickie becomes stronger as he steps off the top of the mountain and he remembers young Dickie's love for flight. He begins to think as his younger self would have thought. Richard makes a pivotal decision to try to share his life now with the younger Dickie that lives in his own memories. He realizes his own connections to the child are within himself. Richard digs into the memories long forgotten and finds them to be quite painful. He blocks out the pain and heads home where he is greeted with love and affection from his wife, Leslie. She asks him if he had fun, and he realizes he cannot really answer that. Once again, his life is changed.

As Chapter 5 opens, the reader gets a glimpse into Richard's marital life. He and his wife share a close relationship in which they can talk about anything, including the unusual events and thoughts he had that day. Instead of laughing at Richard and his encounter with the angel, Leslie is open to discussing it and probing into the thoughts that Richard has blocked out. She encourages him to make contact with Dickie and try to relate to the young boy that he has blocked in his mind. As a result of his love for her, Richard taps into his memories to a time right after his brother's death. The grown-up Richard thinks he had not cared about his brother's death, but as he delves into his memories, he realizes that young Dickie was terrified that he, too, would die at a young age. He is making a stronger connection with young Dickie, but when he is ready to really talk to the child, young Dickie sees him and seems terrified. Richard blocks the memory.

In Chapter 6, Richard comes to the realization that he wants to do everything within his power to help young Dickie. He realizes that he and Dickie are pieces in a puzzle, and that they need each other. Although he does not have a natural instinct to reach into himself to find the child, he realizes that he has to. He wants to tell young Dickie to lean into his fears so that they do not multiply around him and suffocate him. It seems as if he is talking to the grown-up Richard at the same time, telling himself that he has to



face his own fears of his past in order to reach out and help young Dickie. He realizes this will not be an easy job, since the younger child within himself is fighting to remain hidden.

In Chapter 7, Richard is struggling inwardly over whether or not he really wants to connect with Dickie. At first he does not think that he wants to pursue it and seems to have his wife's support on that matter. However, he comes to realize that Leslie thinks he ought to face his fears and connect with the child. He does some self-analyzing and realizes that he is curious about finding out about his past, something that reconnecting with Dickie would open up for him. Richard thinks about his own children and what it took to get them through to adulthood. He really seems to connect with the hardships of childhood, and Leslie comments on the fact that it is a shame that anyone should go through that alone.

Chapter 8 continues with Richard's inward struggle. Now that his wife is asleep, it is up to him to face his own inward enemy. At first he tries to divert his thoughts by running away again, mentally, to his flight plans for the next day. This does not work and he analyzes the entire situation with Dickie and comes to the conclusion that he is at fault for locking Dickie away for all those years. He understands that it is his own fear holding him back from connecting with the inner child. He decides to face his own fears, but when he makes an attempt to face his past, he is once again rejected. Dickie angrily yells at him, and points out that if Richard had kept him free, he would have been able to help Richard. Instead of retaliating by shutting the door on his memories, this time, Richard takes a step forward and tries to rationalize with the young Dickie. He admits his wrongness and offers to help make a connection with the wronged inner child.

Chapter 9 is a retrospective chapter where Richard reflects on the experiences of the previous day and night. He opens up to Leslie, his wife, and talks about his feelings about Dickie and his brother's death. He generally does not feel that he cared one way or another when his brother died. Leslie points out that this is unnatural and encourages him to look deeper into what is going on with young Dickie. Richard seems to honestly be trying to figure it all out. Mostly, he is frustrated by the thought that knowing Dickie could have helped him live his life somehow. He admits to always running away from tough times and is open to the idea that there might be a way to face the tough times without running.



Chapters 10-19

Chapters 10-19 Summary

In chapter 10, Richard takes an airplane ride with Dickie. He sees the whole process of flight through a child's eyes as he explains everything to Dickie. He explains the different knobs and what they do and feels the controls as if he were flying for the first time. Seeing the flight process through Dickie's eyes brings back the magic of the airplane from takeoff to soaring through the clouds. Richard's eyes are opened as they see a bear higher than the adult brain would say a bear could reasonably survive. The chapter is filled with childish exclamations such as "holy cats!" and "go, Daisy!" Richard feels the magic of flight anew. When the flight is over, Dickie runs around to embrace the airplane as Richard thanks the airplane for a wonderful ride. He is not worried about Daisy's clean paint being marred by the childish markings of fingerprints and kiss marks. Dickie has reminded him of the magic of flight.

When Richard comes home in Chapter 11, Leslie is working. He checks in with her and tells her that he had an interesting day. It is hard to put the excitement of the day into words for him, and he is somewhat hesitant to do so. He is feeling as if he is acting childishly. Leslie encourages him to tell her all that happened and he begins to do that. He explains how it felt to be looking at the world like a child again. He expresses concern over the fact that he entertained Dickie using something that Dickie wanted him to do, but Richard was not sure how he was going to go about explaining other things that happen in life to Dickie in an interesting way. Leslie points out that they probably have a lot in common with each other since they are the same person. Understanding that Richard does not really know how to talk with Dickie, she encourages him to recognize the fact that Dickie most likely has the same interests as he does. Richard begins to see this. He shuts his eyes to try to find Dickie and realizes that Dickie is missing.

In chapter 12, Richard goes searching for Dickie. he goes into his mind to find the child, and cannot find him at first in the desolate landscape in his mind. He lifts himself up to a helicopter view, and Richard sees a small figure in the distance. As he gets closer to Dickie, the child does not run away, does not yell, but does not approach him either. Dickie is worried that he is going to lock him in the room again. He expresses his fear that Richard is going to forget about him. Richard asks if they can just be friends and get to know each other. He looks around at the dry landscape, and asks about it. Dickie says it is his own country. The cracked dry earth symbolizes the desert of Richard's childhood. Each section is one of Richard's memories.

Chapter 13 begins with Richard looking around at the desolate landscape that he mentally created. He asked Dickie if he can access the memories and Dickie says he can. Richard asked Dickie if he remembers a water tower and asks what a water tower means. Dickie mocks him, saying he probably remembers it because it was the largest thing around. Richard asked Dickie if he would trade him another airplane ride for the



memory. Dickie points out that he does not turn over anything after all those years of being locked up. Richard agrees to take a surprise. Richard tells Dickie that he does not owe him anything and he will try to do everything he can to make things right again. Dickie responds by reaching out to the cracked clay and handing Richard the water tower memory.

In chapter 14, Richard relives the water tower memory. He is taken back in time to his childhood when he is a boy on Arizona ranch. He remembers the chore of climbing up the wooden ladder and reporting on the water level in the water tank. He is afraid to climb the ladder, and his brothers always take over the chore teasing him about being scared. He remembers how he faces his own fear of climbing up the ladder by working up that ladder one rung at a time. The thought of his own cowardice propels him upward and he develops a strategy of staying on a rung until he is comfortable enough to whistle before going to the next rung. As the chapter ends, Dickie feels pride in making it to the top. Although he still feels terror of the great height, he sees the world differently and appreciates the beauty of the world as he faces it from his high vantage.

Chapter 15 opens with Richard coming out of the water tower memory. Dickie seems happy to have been able to share the memory. However, he also seems a bit sad as he explains what the memories are to Richard. He tells Richard that although he has the memories, he cannot understand them without Richard's help. Dickie asks Richard to explain everything to him. Richard says that each memory symbolizes the choice. He says that it is up to Dickie to give meaning to each memory and these meanings can affect his future. Dickie asks Richard if his fifty extra years of experience on earth have taught him how things work and Richard admits that he has figured most things out.

In Chapter 16, Richard states that he has been thinking about what to share with Dickie ever since Shepherd told him about the book. Dickie asked him to explain what he has learned in life in a way that he can understand. He tells Dickie that there are two things you need to know to get through life: the power of consent and the purpose of happiness. He says that the principle of the universe it is simply "life is." Dickie asks him what it is like to be old and seems to be inattentive. When Richard questions him on this, Dickie says that he thinks that Richard is making up his advice. He starts asking Richard different questions such as his age. Richard says he does not think about age and that numbers are not important. He associates numbers with death, saying that that is a person's second last name. He points out that whenever people die, they put the age right after the name. He encourages Dickie to free himself from numbers. As they converse back and forth, he appreciates the intellect of the child who quickly grasps onto the concept of agelessness.

In Chapter 17, Richard tells Dickie a story from his own memory. It is a story from Dickie's future. He and Dickie are going to watch the story in his mind, and it is up to Dickie to decide whether it is philosophy or not. In the story, Richard is hanging out with his friends Mike and Jack. The friends decide to drink beer, which he does not want to do. He tries a sip and hates it. When he comments on this and decides not to drink anymore, Mike tells him he has to drink it. Richard does not know how to react, but Dickie, living in the memory, throws a fit. He lashes out and yells that no one tells him



what he has to do before slamming out of the building. Richard laughs at Dickie's defense and the two bond. They realize that they are a good team, and they actually care about each other, he and Dickie.

Chapter 18 opens with a scared Dickie who is concerned about his future. Richard soothes his fears by creating a mental image that teaches a lesson from the memory that they just shared. As he thinks about what to share with Dickie, Richard thinks about the different levels that make up his whole being. He realizes that the different levels are there to help him, and shares with Dickie the vision of himself as the captain of a ship. The different layers of his self contribute towards decisions he has to make. However, it is up to him to ask the questions and then listen for answers within himself. Richard asked Dickie whether he thinks the image is philosophy or not. Dickie responds that he does not know, but from now on he wants to be called Captain.

In chapter 19, Richard is preparing to go to a formal party. As he prepares, he mentally expresses disgust over pill popping and medicine. He says that Leslie is the opposite of him. While he dreads the charity ball, Leslie thinks that it is a privilege to contribute to the advancement of knowledge over death and disease. Even as he dreads the event, he loves seeing his wife all dressed up. He helps her get dressed in her tight formal gown, and he is blown away by his attraction to her even after decades together. He acknowledges that his physical attraction to her help him weather marital storms, but also realizes that there is something beyond beauty in the attraction since he dated other beautiful woman in the past and those relationships did not worked out. As the chapter ends, he is describing to his wife how much he loves her and what it is that he loves about her, to her great appreciation.

Chapters 10-19 Analysis

In Chapter 10, the reader finally sees a true connection between Richard and Dickie. Richard is fulfilling his promise to the young lad that he will do everything within his power to make up for the years lost between the two. Dickie has asked him what it was like to fly, and now Richard is supplying the answers by taking the boy up in his airplane, Daisy. As the two of them merge to enjoy a flight together, Richard opens his eyes to the magic of flight he felt in his past. Every movement of the wheel and every turn and lift pulls him into the mystery of the sky. Rather than dealing with life rationally as an adult would, Richard allows him to explore the feelings that Dickie feels as he sees the world as a young child. He feels the excitement and leaves science behind in exchange for the exhilaration of the wonderment of childhood as Daisy and Dickie soar through the clouds and over the mountains.

Richard, now connecting with Dickie, continues to remember what it is like to experience the wonders of the world as a child would as the reader enters chapter 11. While reveling in this knowledge, he is also beginning to put up mental roadblocks for the next stage. As he talks with Leslie, the reader discovers that Richard has another conflict. He does not know how to relate to the child or share his experiences in situations outside of flying. Dickie asked for an explanation of flight, but Richard wants



to share much more than that. He wants to tell him about life in general, even some of the drier topics. However, Richard does not want to bore Rickie and does not know how to get the lessons of life across without turning young Dickie away. Instead of running away, Richard, with the help of Leslie, is ready to face the challenge of connecting with Dickie to teach him about the drier subjects in life, but his efforts are futile. He cannot find Dickie in his mind.

Chapter 12 symbolizes a change in Richard and Dickie's relationship. Richard realizes that he wants Dickie to be part of his life, and he is upset that he cannot find him. When they finally meet up, Dickie does not run away from Richard or attack him. He is able to state what he is upset about to Richard. When Dickie explains that the dry cracked earth of the desert around them represents Richard's childhood, the reader makes a visceral connection to the void in Richard's life.

As Chapter 13 opens, Richard is stunned by the realization that the desert around him is created by his own repressed memories. He realizes that there is hope since Dickie remembers all the memories that he has forgotten. The memories are not gone, they are just buried. Dickie has the power to bring them out and share them with Richard. To Richard's surprise, he realizes that he wants to know some of the memories. Dickie tries holding it over him, telling him he does not deserve to know the memories after locking him away. Richard agrees, to Dickie's surprise. Dickie acknowledges the newfound trust and respect by offering Richard a memory he asked for.

In Chapter 14, Richard faces the memory of a fear he overcame when he was younger. Checking the water level in the water tower meant climbing up a tall ladder on the windmill. He was terrified of falling and dying, yet he was even more distressed about being called a baby by Bobby and Roy, his brothers. As an adult, Richard realizes that he could have just explained to his brothers that he did not want to do it and they, especially Bob, would have understood. However, from his youthful stance, he only felt his cowardice. On his own, he overcame his fear. At the top of the tower, he felt an appreciation for the others who had been braver than he, he felt pride in his own accomplishment, and felt that his world had changed as he looked around at the beautiful world below him. This suppressed memory foreshadowed what he was to be, a pilot with an obsession for the sky.

In Chapter 15, Richard and Dickie start moving beyond basic relationship issues to more philosophical concepts. The memory spurs a reaction from Dickie, and he asks Richard to explain life in general. Richard uses the windmill memory to show how the lesson taken from a memory changes the future based on individual choice. If Dickie had chosen to associate the water tower memory with a fear of heights, his future would have been affected, and Richard would never have become a pilot. Instead, the focus of the memory was a wonderment over the world below, which led to a future with Richard as a pilot. Richard realizes that he has a lot to share with Dickie because he thinks he has figured out how things work in life.

Chapter 16 gives the reader more insight into Richard's true character. He feels that everything follows a logical cascade in life. He begins to talk about philosophy and is



interrupted by Dickie who wants to know some basic things. As they discuss numbers and agelessness, the reader discovers that it is important for Richard to defy convention. The reader also sees more of the pattern of Richard's perception on death. In the last chapter, he is afraid of heights and falling to his death. In this chapter, he avoids putting numbers to his age since he associates them with death. He encourages Dickie to just exist and not think of himself as young or old, but to defy convention and just be.

As Richard relates one of his memories to Dickie in Chapter 17, they hit upon a situation where Richard does not feel comfortable. Dickie rises up to defend him, and the two merge to stand up for themselves in front of the friends. This helps them realize that they can work as a team, and that they care about each other. It also teaches them about friendship and who you can believe in. In this chapter, Dick makes an appearance. Dick is a cross between young Dickie in the older Richard—a merging of the two. Realizing that the young child with his memories and the older man with his experience make a great team, Dick revels in the triumph of standing up for himself, and points out that he is his own best friend and the only person he can rely on. Dickie has already left and does not hear this pronouncement.

Chapter 18 begins with an introspective analysis. Richard realizes that he does not always have to push forward trying to make decisions, but it might be to his benefit to just listen to what he already knows. He realizes that his past can answer questions for his future. He is in charge of his own actions and reactions, and if he does not block things out, but actually draws from his own past experiences, it can benefit his future. He has control in his own world.

Chapter 19 focuses entirely on Richard's attraction to Leslie. Dickie never makes an appearance in this chapter. Richard is preparing to go to an event he does not support out of love for Leslie. He reflects on their love and analyzes the relationship between attraction and beauty. He wonders if there is a unique attraction for someone who is a soulmate.



Chapters 20-29

Chapters 20-29 Summary

Richard attends a charity ball in chapter 20. At first, he feels like Robin Hood disguised. He dreads the first toast to aspirin and mentally creates a dramatic escape plan in his mind, which includes dumping the drink, dashing up staircases, leaping through Windows, and scrambling over the rooftops. As he begins toasting, he starts enjoying himself and the time out with his wife. Later, at the table, he finds out that many of the people around him are pilots. To his surprise and delight, he thoroughly enjoys himself. When he gets home, Leslie rehashes the evening with him. She talks about things that she learned about him and they discuss what home really means. Richard says that home to him is a place where he is known and loved. The thought triggers a memory that he brings up without the help of Dickie.

Chapter 21 opens with him telling Leslie about a memory he had from sixth-grade. He now lives in California and attends a crowded school. He is riding a bicycle with his friend Budgie. They talk about age in relation to body and mind. Both of them feel as if they are grown up inside, although they are children outside. Richard is impatient to be perceived as a grown-up and sees life is a beautiful adventure that he wants to embrace, but Budgie is more accepting of his age. As Richard comes out of the memory, Leslie encourages him to remember some more. He remembers a time in the Air Force when he is looking at the Florida sky and feels as if a veil has been lifted, leaving behind a sense of joy. Leslie suggests to Richard that Dickie is looking for an instant perspective that everything is going to be okay.

In Chapter 22 Richard heads back into his mind and notices changes in the desolate land that Dickie brought Richard to. The dry land is being covered with grass and there are signs of other growth. Richard asks Dickie if he was at the ball, and Dickie admits to being there when Richard was scared. Richard contradicts this saying he was not scared, but Dickie ignores the protest and tells them that he was one who came up with the plan for escape. Richard says it did not need to be so dramatic and that there would be consequences if he acted like that. Dickie accuses him of acting too grown up. Dickie starts heading up a hill and asks Richard questions about his true beliefs. Richard answers the questions, telling Dickie that he does not believe in illness and he does not worry about his body image. He introduces the concept of thought experiments, which help you find out what you already know. He challenges Dickie to ask the question, "Who am I?" Dickie responds by asking, "Who are my friends?" Richard is excited that he is getting the idea of the mind game. He encourages Dickie to be careful about his choices and his values, once again pointing out there are consequences of the choices. When they reach the top of the hill, Dickie pulls out a seat-back from the ground. He wants to share it with Richard. It is a grave board for Richard's brother. The memories of his brother's death come back to him.



Chapter 23 opens with a memory of Dickie and his brother Bobby. Dickie is asking Bobby why he is so smart, and Bobby says he has to stay smart to lead the way for Dickie. One day when Dickie comes home from school, he sees his parents talking with Bobby at the kitchen table. They are talking quietly and ask Dickie to leave. He heads over to climb a tree and think. At first he is concerned that someone has died then vetoes that thought. Next, he wonders if they are talking about something that he has done wrong. Dickie notices that his brother is missing school more often after that evening. When he asks Bobby what is going on, Bobby says it is a secret he is not supposed to share. Two weeks later his brother goes off to the hospital with their father and never comes back. He dies without even saying goodbye. Dickie wishes they had not kept it a secret and that he could have talked to his brother about death. He observes that no one in the family cries, so he does not either—at least publicly. His mother tells him that Bobby had leukemia, which has no cure. At that point, Dickie's name is changed to Dick by his mother. Dick's life is changed. He no longer follows his brother, but has to figure out things on his own. It terrifies him. He decides to overcome his terror and live life to its fullest before he, too, dies. He leaves the terrified child that he once was behind.

Richard is jolted out of the memory in Chapter 24 as Dickie removes the grave board from his hands and asks him what meaning means. He presses on, asking what Bobby's death meant to him and how it changed his life. Richard realizes that he never thought about it until that moment but now he knows. It meant he was on his own. It taught him that an individual can change destiny. He remembers how his parents lived for other people, but thinks they were wrong. He wishes his mother had told him about Bobby's death instead of shielding him from it and feels that he would be a different person if she had told him. He might have even been caring. Dickie asks about religion and Richard says that the priest kills God for him after his brother's death. He decides to create his own theology. He talks about a cruel God who is all-powerful and can stop bad things are happening, yet he allows evil to exist. He also talks about an all-loving God who watches the evil in the world with sorrow, but does not have the power to stop it. He asks Dickie which God is real, the cruel or powerless.

In Chapter 25, Dickie ponders the choice and determines that there is not a choice. Richard says that neither option is real. He encourages Dickie to think even further and pretend that there is a god who understands mortals and their troubles. He tells Dickie to let go of space-time. He goes back to the concept of "Life Is"—a concept that is not based on appearances. Something that exists will be there no matter what physical changes happen to it. This is how Richard describes God to Dickie. It is a force that cannot be destroyed. Dickie thinks about it for a bit. He believes it is a nice concept but then asks, "So what?"

Richard thinks this is a great question and laughs in Chapter 26. He reminds Dickie that he is there to teach him what he knows, and although he does not usually believe in convincing or explaining, he is willing to take the time to tell Dickie. He does this by talking about arithmetic. He equates Life in Appearance to numbers. Each number is unique and can be made up by other numbers. He adds that in space-time, Dickie might think he is alone and unconnected, but outside of space-time, he is connected to



everything, no matter what. Richards reminds him that since "He Is," he should become a ruler of his own choice by being a master instead of a victim.

In Chapter 27, Richard emphasizes to Dickie how important it is to choose his own life. Richard scoffs at safety and recommends running away from it. He encourages Dickie to make choices, but to also leave room for the Principle of Coincidence. Richard recalls a time when he was desperate to learn how to fly, but lacks the funds. By coincidence, an individual alongside him in an archery class is training to be a Certified Flight Instructor and needs to teach students in order to get his certification. Richard encourages Dickie to be bold in his life choices.

In Chapter 28, Richard remembers what it is like to step away from the safety of the known and venture out into the unknown. This makes him think about what he learned in life and how he went about learning it.

Richard thinks about stability versus doing something he loves in Chapter 29. He recalls the time when he leaves the Air Force and becomes a technical writer in Long Beach, California. Although the job is very stable, he becomes bored with it and decides to leave for other, more creative writing ventures. His colleague encourages him to stick with the job since it pays well, and he will always have it. Instead, he quits. 20 years later he goes back to visit the place where he worked and finds that the economy has taken its toll. The building is empty, and the parking lot is overgrown. He decides he made the right choice, and security was not a given as everyone previously thought.

Chapters 20-29 Analysis

In Chapter 20, Richard is attending the ball that he dreaded so much in chapter 19. When he gets there, he feels hypocritical since he does not support drugs, even medicinally. He starts enjoying himself as he focuses on his love for his wife. He remembers how he once dreaded dancing, but took lessons anyhow. He is grateful that he did this because now he loves dancing with his wife. Once again, he overcame a fear and found beauty on the other side. This is a common theme throughout the book, and even attending the ball demonstrates an obstacle he overcomes. Richard sits at the table and converses with others, finding a common link in a love of flying. He discovers that he is enjoying himself. As he and Leslie enter into a deep discussion after the ball about acceptance and home, Richard realizes that he is learning more about himself than he has in the past. For the first time, he reaches inside himself and pulls out a memory without Dickie's help, demonstrating a growth in character.

In Chapter 21, Richard shares some memories with Leslie. He is remembering the good times in his life where he sees the world with great clarity and has an appreciation for friends that he can share things with. He shows this in his memory of his relationship with his friend Budgie, with whom he is able to share deep thoughts. Richard shows how much he admires intellect and wants to embrace life. He realizes that he appreciates stability and that Dickie is looking for some of that stability.



Chapter 22 begins to show a bit of transformation in the desert of Richard's childhood. Grass and trees are beginning to grow. Richard has the realization that Dickie is there with him even when he does not know it. For instance, he is there at the ball. As he makes yet another connection with Dickie, Dickie begins to open up and lead Richard deeper into his own past. They show a common link as they discuss their father and for the first time, they are able to show different sides of an argument without yelling at each other. The common bond is a base that Richard needs in order to face the next challenge with Dickie, who ends the chapter by bringing Richard to his brother's grave-board.

In Chapter 23, Richard is brought back to a relationship that he is forgotten. He remembers how much he adored his older brother and remembers, for the first time, the pain associated with his brother's death. This chapter is pivotal, because it demonstrates why young Dickie begins to block his memories of childhood at this point. He cannot face the pain associated with the loss of his brother.

The painful memory brings to head some deep philosophical questions in Chapter 24, such as the definition and meaning of religion. For the first time in fifty years, Richard digs deep inside himself to analyze what happened to his sense of self and sense of religion when Bobby died. The chapter deals with how and why he separated himself from his parents and began to question God.

Chapter 25 has Richard thinking about what he was like when he was young, in regards to thought processes. He begins to use mind games that help Dickie and the reader understand the philosophical concepts about how he perceives the world. He very clearly shows that while he might have answers to things, these answers only lead to more questions.

In Chapter 26, Richard is ready to bulldoze ahead, teaching Dickie lessons about life. He cuts off Dickie several times, and doing so, causes both himself and the reader to miss information that could be very important to the story. It is only after the reader has finished the entire book that they can go back to this chapter to see that some of the phrases are foreshadowing answers yet to come. Richard introduces Dickie to the concept of "Life Is." This principle is continuously referred to for the rest of the book.

Chapter 27 opens with Richard and Dickie having a discussion about Dickie's future. Dickie is concerned about safety and Richard recommends running from safety. This is where the book gets its title. He brings up the "Life Is" principle once again and uses examples from Dickie's life to explain more principles, but realizes that he is not completely getting through to Dickie, who has many more questions.

The author appears to use Chapter 28 as an impact point. Shorter than two pages, it questions the idea of running from safety. Richard questions where he learned everything he knows.

Dickie is always looking for security and in Chapter 29 Richard really thinks about this concept. He remembers making a conscious decision to leave security in his past and found that there were great benefits in doing so.



Chapters 30-39

Chapters 30-39 Summary

As Chapter 30 opens, Richard is looking at the news and hearing about all the horrible things that are happening in the world. Dickie is fearful of death and the end of the world, and Richard gives him a pep talk about handling the storms in life by facing them head on. Richard puts a strong emphasis on building a unique, personal world where one can find peace in the midst of chaos.

In Chapter 31, Dickie appears as Richard is shopping. They discuss philosophies for life. Dickie asks about the philosophy of flight and suggests that there is probably a philosophy of bowling and gardening, also. He asks how things happen and why, and wants Richard to talk to him as a grown-up. Richard tries to explain space-time to Dickie as if he were a quantum mechanic. He says that humans are focus points of competition and are extremely creative. Humans generate creativity particles that are polarized by attitudes, choice, and desires. This contributes to the human experience.

Chapter 32 opens as Richard is test-flying Daisy. Dickie asks Richard to tell him something that he needs to know more than anything. Richard tells him that life is a game. Dickie is disappointed and does not think that is much of a secret. Richard goes on to talk about why he thinks life is a game, and how individuals must follow rules. He brings up Bobby's death, and talks about how Bobby would not be sad about leaving the game board, but everyone left on the board is affected. Dickie asks for some maxims that he can use daily. Richard starts spouting a series of maxims until Dickie is overwhelmed.

Richard is beginning to remember childhood memories on his own as Chapter 33 opens. He tells Leslie that he is going to consider Dickie his little imaginary pal. The conversation shifts, and Leslie asks him what he plans to tell Dickie about marriage. Richard says that he is going to tell Dickie that the secret of marriage is to do what you think is right. She disagrees with him. They talk about love and how it makes people act. Love takes work and the two of them discuss letting Dickie know about their fights and marriage lessons.

In Chapter 34, Richard is heading out to do some paragliding. He reaches into his mind to find Dickie and finds him on a lush hilltop, the same one that used to be barren. Dickie asks him about marriage. Forgetting everything he discussed with Leslie, Richard just tells Dickie to remember the word "different." Contrary to what Dickie might have think or believe, every person is unique, and having a wife who is different will make him a better person, according to Richard.

In Chapter 35, Dickie asks Richard if everything is his own personal responsibility. Richard says that this is true, and Dickie asks how Richard builds his entire civilization. They are talking in the abstract, rather than about reality. Richard teaches Dickie about



self preservation and unconditional love. He tells Dickie that Dickie is responsible for his own future and he can be anyone he wants to be.

Richard is contemplating good and evil in Chapter 36. It is the middle of the night, and Dickie is not around, but Leslie is awake. Richard wonders if good and evil are related to happy and sad. He decides that it is up to individuals to have their own self-analysis for unique situations. Happy is only good if a person is willing to live with the consequences of their choices.

In Chapter 37, Dickie is becoming more integral to Richard's mind. He is able to see what Richard is thinking and how he processes things. They talk about how the differences between good and evil are not always black and white. Once again Richard brings up the idea of consequences for actions and decisions. Richard tells Dickie that there are even consequences of what he chooses to write depending on what readers take from his writing.

Dickie leaves Richard for a while in Chapter 38. When Dickie reappears, he wants to know Richard's name for his religion. Richard refuses to give it a label. They begin talking about symbols. Dickie tells Richard that he has to make a choice about whether or not to stick around. Richard does not like the idea of his leaving. Richard realizes that Dickie has become more of a friend than a lost inner child. Just when Richard realizes how important Dickie is to him, Dickie makes his decision to leave.

In Chapter 39, Richard thinks about Dickie's decision to leave. Leslie guesses that he is gone and talks about it with Richard. As he tries to assimilate what he feels about it all, Richard comes to the conclusion that he will always remember Dickie and that he appreciates being a teacher instead of the student for once. Leslie ends the chapter by telling Richard to tell Dickie that she loves him the next time that he sees him.

Chapters 30-39 Analysis

In Chapter 30, the reader learns more about the shell Richard has built up around himself. Dickie is having a hard time facing the horrible things that happen in the world, and Richard shows him how to deal with it and build up his own defenses to create his own world.

Chapter 31 shows more of a merging in Richard and Dickie's thoughts as Richard teaches Dickie about more principles and life and the universe. At the child's request, Richard begins talking to him as if Dickie is an adult, using large words and difficult concepts to illustrate his points.

Rather than focusing on philosophy in chapter 32, Dickie asks Richard to focus on the single most important lesson Richard can tell him. Richard thinks about this and says that life is a game. This is the premise for much of the rest of the book, in which he is constantly referring to rules and playing the game of life.



In Chapter 33, Richard begins to struggle with his relationship with Dickie. It seems as if Dickie is getting too close to him and he runs from the safety of the relationship by calling Dickie an imaginary friend. Leslie helps Richard face up to what he is doing and he begins to think about their marriage and what he is going to tell Dickie about marriage. This leads to a small argument with Leslie and Richard reflects on the way marriage brings out the good and bad in people. It is the love that helps overcome the bad. This is symbolic of the relationship he has had thus far with Dicky. They have had their own arguments, yet a bond is growing between the two, whether he is ready for it or not.

Chapter 34 opens in direct contrast to the way chapter 33 opened. Rather than brushing Dickie aside as an imaginary friend, Richard is actively seeking him out. He is ready to share his knowledge with him once again.

In Chapter 35, Dickie comes by to ask about responsibilities in life. Richard uses facts, symbolism (such as taking care of Daisy) and examples (such as playing checkers instead of simply rote-talking) to teach Dickie what he believes about life and existence. He delves a little deeper than he did in Chapter 33. Instead of talking about simple love, he ends up discussing unconditional love with Dickie. He also stresses the importance of being free and enjoying life because you are free to be yourself.

As Chapter 36 opens, Richard is not feeling unsettled, angry, or confused. Instead, he is thinking about how to talk about good and evil with Dickie. Leslie expresses that she feels that Richard is going to teach Dickie to be selfish.

Richard drifts off to sleep at the end of chapter 36, and in chapter 37 he is once again with Dickie. There are signs of change around them, including a now-lush area where the desert once was. Richard never responds to Leslie's accusation about selflessness, but in this chapter he shows that he cares about other people and what they think. As he talks with Dickie about the rules of life, he talks about consequences including ones that you have no control over. Richard expresses unhappiness about the effects of some of his innocent actions on others who reacted poorly.

In Chapter 38, Dickie has left Richard without even saying goodbye. This reveals how close they have become because Richard feels bereft without him. When Dickie reappears, it is only to say that he is going to make a choice to leave, but Richard tries to persuade him to stay, showing the bond that has grown throughout the entire book is now solid.

Dickie is gone at the beginning of Chapter 39, and Richard is trying to get used to the idea. Richard is mulling over what has happened to him and realizes that he enjoyed the role of teacher more than the role of student in the game of life.



Chapter 40-Epilog

Chapter 40-Epilog Summary

In Chapter 40, Richard is lying awake in the middle of the night and realizes that Dickie can remember birth. He goes into his mind to find Dickie and locates him launching a glider from a rock ledge. He realizes he can get information from Dickie on the changes from before birth to after. Dickie agrees to share the memory.

Richard remembers his birth in Chapter 41. He re-experiences the powerlessness and helplessness associated with being a baby. He remembers how his mom took care of him and comforted him. As he comes into existence, he remembers the importance of rules and limitations. He remembers the hardships and joys of becoming a physical being.

In Chapter 42, Richard and Dickie discuss the pre-birth experience. Richard comes to the startling realization that all along, Dickie knew everything. The appearances of strangers in Richard's life, from the angel on campus to Shepherd, were there to help Richard remember. Richard realizes that Dickie actually is Shepherd. Every question and experience that he had through this relationship was really from himself.

Richard sums up his experience in the epilogue as he thinks about the parts that make the whole. His memories, his spirit, and his questions merge together to make him the person who he is. He is the captain of his ship.

Chapter 40-Epilog Analysis

In Chapter 40, Richard is once again reaching out for Dickie as he realizes that Dickie can offer him something very valuable—a memory of physical birth.

Throughout the book, Richard is teaching Dickie about life. In Chapter 41, Dickie teaches Richard. The memory of birth reminds Richard of the harsher realities of life and brings back memories of a mother who helped make things better for him.

In Chapter 42, Richard puts the pieces of everything he has learned with Dickie together. He realizes that Dickie is not a separate entity, but a part of himself that he has hidden away.

In the Epilog, Richard acknowledges that his own thought processes have made him the man he is today, and he is ready to stop running from safety and face his past, present, and future.



Characters

Richard

Richard is the main character of this book. He is a famous 59-year-old writer who has an obsession with flight—both in the sporting world and in relationships. A former pilot, he loves flying his airplane, Daisy, and partaking in other means of flight such as paragliding.

Richard is very good at blocking his emotions, but when he allows himself to feel, he feels deeply. The reader sees this in his devotion to his wife, Leslie. He is a man who would rather rely on himself than others. As the story progresses, Richard discovers that he enjoys being a teacher.

He enjoys philosophy and has, in his own opinion, pretty much figured out the universe and how it runs. He is not hard-line about it all, though. When others disagree with his philosophies, he is willing to listen to them and discuss their theories until he can meet them on a common ground.

While he comes off as a strong, solid individual, Richard does have some weaknesses. He has a fear of death and does not know how to work with his emotions. He is very introspective and will analyze his feelings until he is ready to face them, but it does not come naturally.

Dickie

Dickie is nine-year-old Richard. He is a wise child who sometimes comes across as a child trapped in an adult's body. He wants to know what life is about. Dickie is furious at Richard for neglecting him and locking him away for 50 years but, with only a few contentious moments, seems more eager to learn than hold a grudge.

When Richard comes to him for memories, Dickie shares them and discusses them with Richard. He is also blunt about his feelings and fears. He fears heights and death. He makes friends easily and has a nasty temper when pushed too far. The child is very creative and has a great imagination.

He grasps lessons quickly and the reader can see his growth in maturity as the book progresses. Dickie loves his older brother with a passion and feels abandoned when he dies. Instead of working through his feelings, he puts up imaginary walls to protect himself. Like Richard, he is intrigued by the sky. Although he has a fear of heights, he pushes himself to overcome any fears he has and feels pride when he succeeds. His love of the sky stems from overcoming his fear of heights as he climbs the water tower and is amazed at how beautiful the world looks below him.



Shepherd

Shepherd appears at the beginning of the book as a stranger offering a ride to Richard, who is headed up the mountain for another paragliding adventure. At first, Shepherd comes across as a writing fan, but he soon reveals himself as a teaching angel. He is the one who reminds Richard of his promise to 9-year-old Dickie to tell Dickie about the important lessons he has learned in life.

When Richard says he will not write the book, Shepherd says he already knew that would happen so he wrote the book himself. This reveals a manipulative side of his character; he wrote the book in a manner that disgusts Richard to a point that he wants to share his own thoughts with Dickie.

Shepherd seems like a regular person, aside from the fact that he claims to be an angel. He knows everything about Richard and Dickie. He also seems to have human characteristics, such as the fact that he is a horrible driver. While Shepherd only has one major scene in the book, he is still a main character because Richard constantly refers to him. He is also a crucial piece of the puzzle that ties the book together in the end, where he is revealed to be Dickie.

Leslie

Leslie is Richard's wife. From his observations and comments, the reader knows that she is extremely beautiful. She appreciates medicine, is a great dancer and is health-conscious. She loves doing things with Richard, but is comfortable doing things on her own, also.

Sometimes it seems as if she knows Richard better than he knows himself. She does not try to solve his problems, but she is great at asking him questions that help him solve his dilemmas on his own. Leslie has great insight into Richard's inner struggles. She knows when to argue with him and when to encourage him. She knows when to stand up to him and when to be silent so he can figure out his own thoughts.

Ceejay Sturtevant

Ceejay Sturtevant is a woman who is paragliding with Richard near the beginning of the book.

Richard's Dad

Richard's dad is mentioned a few times. He is a smart man who can be funny with a straight face.



Richard's mom

Richard's mom is a woman devoted to helping others. She is a very caring mother who tries to protect her children, but does so in a way that Richard does not appreciate.

Roy

Roy is Richard's older brother whom he mentions but never talks about in detail.

Bobby

Bobby is the older brother who dies of leukemia when Richard is nine. He helps Dickie navigate life and leaves a huge hole when he dies.

Jack

Jack is one of Dick's friends mentioned in a memory.

Mike

Mike is another one of Dick's friends mentioned in a memory. Mike tries to make Dick drink beer when he does not want to.

Budgie

Budgie is a friend mentioned in a memory. He is friends with Richard in sixth grade, and they find a commonality in being adults trapped in children's bodies.

Colleague

Although he does not have a name, a colleague encourages Richard to stay with a job he no longer appreciates just for security.

Daisy

Richard's beloved airplane.



Objects/Places

Tiger Mountain

Tiger Mountain is the place Richard goes to para-glide at the beginning of the book.

College Campus

The college campus is where Richard is walking one time when he encounters an angel.

Shepherd's Car

Richard accepts a ride from Shepherd, who offers to take him back up Tiger Mountain for another para-gliding flight.

Daisy's Hangar

Daisy's hangar is the place where Richard works on his beloved airplane.

Seattle, Washington

Seattle, Washington is where Richard lives with Leslie.

Arizona

Arizona is where Richard lives in his memory of the water tower.

Desolate Land

The desolate land is a place found in Richard's mind. It is made up of his suppressed memories. Dickie can often be found in this land and the land eventually springs to life as Richard and Dickie share memories.

The Hill

There is a hill in the desolate land. At the top of the hill is Bobby's grave board.



Mike's House

In another memory, two friends try to make Dick drink beer at Mike's house while he is underage.

California School

Dick goes to a school in California for sixth grade. He talks about it as he remembers conversations with Budgie.

Long Beach, CA

Richard enjoys working at the publications division of the Douglas Aircraft Company when he leaves the Air Force.

Florida Barracks

Richard has a memory of an incredible sky one evening as he is walking back to the barracks while he is in Florida in the Air Force.



Themes

Running From Safety

Running from safety is not only the title of the book, but it is also a main theme in the book. Bad things happen in everybody's life, but aside from his brother's death, Richard seems to live a good life. His parents care about him, although he does not appreciate the way they deal with his brother's death. They do not give him any warning and keep his brother's illness a secret from him. They do not talk about Bobby's dying, even after he is gone. Richard decides never to be like them at that point. After his brother's death, he has friends, he has good self-esteem and he has a beautiful and caring wife.

This is not enough for him and the one event that is negative stands out and traumatizes him to a point where he blocks out all of his own emotions. Whenever he starts feeling safe, he begins to run from the safety of the situation. When he starts feeling close to Dickie, he tries to shut Dickie out of his life. He breaks off his relationship with his parents for the most part until they are just somewhat fond memories. His marriage is strong, but that is largely due to the way Leslie understands him. When Richard analyzes his life, he remembers his past marriage and other relationships that did not make it.

This book shows intense character growth as Richard starts understanding Dickie and understanding himself. At first he does run away, then he builds partial walls. Soon he starts accepting some of the benefits of safety without running away. By the end of the book, he has learned to stop running away from safety and to embrace it.

Overcoming Fear

Throughout this book, Richard and Dickie are constantly confronted with different types of fear. There is the fear for their physical bodies, especially as they see Dickie's older brother die. There is also mental fear, as they think about others around them, relationships and their own souls. They have a fear of getting to know each other. Dickie has a fear of heights. Richard has a fear of awkward social occasions. Both fear death.

They do not let their fear stop them, however. Dickie develops a strategy on his own, and in private, to go up the rungs on the water tower, step-by-step until he is comfortable enough to whistle, and he is rewarded with the view from the top. Richard goes to a potentially awkward social event to please his wife and discovers a group of pilots on the guest list so he ends up having a wonderful evening. In spite of their relationship fears, Dickie and Richard get to know each other and life is forever changed for the better. They come up with different philosophies and strategies to deal with the concept of death.

Fear is what makes a chasm between Dickie and Richard during the 50 years that separate them. Richard has to go through a series of painful thought processes to



reconnect with himself and figure out where he stands in the game of life, in order to overcome the fear that makes him build the walls in the first place. Once he overcomes this final fear, his life takes on new meaning.

Love

Love is a major theme throughout this entire book. *Running from Safety* opens with a love for flying that Richard has and that love permeates the entire story. The reader sees how his love helps him develop an appreciation for the world as he views it from the sky. He cares for his plane as much as he would care for any human.

At first, Richard does not have any love for Dickie, whom he does not remember. As the book progresses, they develop a tenuous connection that grows tighter. Soon they become good friends and eventually reach a point where Dickie is an integral part of Richard's life. Love has overcome the distance of the years and forged a bond between them.

Richard also shows a deep love for his wife, Leslie. This love works both ways and Leslie is a pivotal part of the story as she tells Richard to reconnect with Dickie. Together, they show that love does not always make everything smooth. In fact, it often brings out other emotions such as anger and contempt. However, in the long run, love prevails.

As Richard is teaching Dickey about different philosophies in life, he touches on the aspect of love for one's self. There are several times where he points out to Dickie the fact that his own self is the greatest friend he can count on. He remembers the love his parents had for him, and the way he loves them back, even if it is not an ideal type of love. Richard shows Dickie that love can be shown and perceived in many different ways.

Style

Point of View

In *Running from Safety*, the author uses a first-person perspective in the narrative. The main character is a writer named Richard. This not only sets the tone for the book, but also keeps the reader wondering how much of the story is based on the true author's own real life situations. This is particularly true when the author, Richard Bach, speaks in first person through his main character, Richard, and mentions other books and characters that he has written in real life as part of the story.

The reader can easily see what Richard is thinking and how he is feeling. This is particularly important since Richard grows exponentially between the beginning of the book and the end of it. This growth primarily happens through introspective analysis and internal thought processes.

The author has Richard talk about and address his thoughts, both the good and the bad. He uses dialogue to argue points and demonstrate philosophies. Several pivotal scenes in the book happen when Richard is lying awake in bed at night. Readers can follow his thought processes and look into his mind as he explains what he is going through in first-person dialogue.

Setting

As the book opens, Richard is ready to jump into the sky. Right from the start, the reader understands his passion for anything that deals with flying. He lives in the Seattle area and appreciates the beauty of the mountains in the Puget Sound area. Most of the scenes in the book take place either in Richard's house, on Tiger Mountain, up in the air, at a formal gathering, or in his airplane hangar.

As the book progresses, the reader is introduced to other locations that are part of Richard's life. In one scene he is walking on a college campus. In another, he is in the Air Force in Florida. The reader gets brief glimpses into his life when he lived in Arizona and when he lived in California when he was a child.

When Richard meets Dickie, he is introduced to a land that lies in his mind. It is a desolate, cracked land with no signs of growth. Dickie explains to him that the places between the cracks represent buried memories. These are memories that Dickie cannot retrieve. As the story moves forward, and Dickie starts sharing memories with Richard, there are changes to the landscape of the desolate land. Each time Richard goes back to the land, he sees differences such as grass trees growing. It is in this land that he faces the memory of the death of his brother. To reach this memory, Dickie leads Richard up a hill to the grave board. By the end of the story, there are signs of growth even on the hill.



Language and Meaning

The language in this book is an interesting mix between conversational and scholarly. The book is riddled with large words, but it is also interspersed with words that the author makes up. All the words are used in context so it is not difficult for a reader to understand what is going on, even with the made-up words.

Since the premise of the book includes 59-year-old Richard meeting and conversing with nine-year-old Dickie, a reader might expect the language to be very different between the two. This, however, is not the case. It is probably the greatest weakness in the book. There is one chapter in which Dickie asks Richard to speak to him as if he were a grown-up. In this chapter, Richard increases the number of large words and proposes scientific as well as abstract ideologies that might leave a reader scrambling for dictionary.

The book is very philosophical, and it stands to reason that there will be many questions put forward. This is very true, and the author uses his dialogue to open a reader's mind. Sometimes Richard is asking the questions of others, sometimes they are asking questions of him, and sometimes he is asking questions of himself. When answers are proposed, there is often debate among the characters in the scene over whether or not the answer to the question is valid.

Structure

This book is comprised of an introduction, 42 chapters and an epilog. The author uses the spelling of "Epilog" rather than the popular "Epilogue." The chapters do not have any names, and are separated merely by numbers. Sentences vary in length, with some of them very short and others extending to a full paragraph length.

Most of the chapters signify the end of the scene. This can be either a thought process, or a time when a character is about to leave a location. Some of the chapters are extremely short, as if the author is trying to make a point. There are chapters that are only two sides of the page, but there are also chapters that span more than 15 pages.

In some ways, the book seems to jump around since it is dealing with Richard's memories of his childhood. Sometimes he is dealing with the present with other individuals such as his wife. Other times he is in the present, yet in his own mind, talking with Dickie. Still other times, he is reliving the past, yet in a present tense format. The division of the chapters helps the reader stay on target with the book's premise without getting too lost.

When the author has Richard trying to explain difficult concepts, he uses simple examples that a reader can relate to in order to get the point across. In the novel itself, great value is placed on education and knowledge. The structure of the book makes it clear that the author expects his readers to share this value and open their minds to different philosophies and choices.

Quotes

"Books are written on years turned inside out by ideas that never let go until you get them in print, and even then writing's a last resort, a desperate ransom you pay to get your life back." Chapter 3, Running from Safety, p. 18.

"We're all teaching angels, we've all learned something that someone somewhere needs to remember." Chapter 5, Running from Safety, p. 29.

"Still he trembled over darkness to come, no matter how clearly I knew the dark was the shadow of adventures ahead, discovery sweeping down to pick them up and teach him what he begged to know." Chapter 6, Running from Safety, p. 38.

"Running from safety is the only way to make your last word 'Yes!'" Chapter 27, Running from Safety, p. 196.

"The only security is 'Life Is,' and that's all that matters." Chapter 27, Running from Safety, p. 197.

"Guilt is the tension we feel to change our past, present or future for someone else's sake." Chapter 32, Running from Safety, p. 244.

"We don't have rights until we claim them." Chapter 32, Running from Safety, p. 246.

"He could say he invented you, decide you're only an imaginary future, walk away and leave you with everything you need to tell him unsaid." Chapter 33, Running from Safety, p. 248.

"Every structure is consciousness." Chapter 35, Running from Safety, p. 269.

"'It's okay' is a cosmic truth, I thought, and felt the tension drain away." Chapter 38, Running from Safety, p. 309.

"Two ends of a lifetime, we had been, reaching toward a center that neither of us could find alone." Chapter 40, Running from Safety, p. 321.

"'We wait all these years to find someone who understands us...Just yesterday I found that magical Someone is the face we see in the mirror. It's us and our homemade masks.'" Epilog, Running from Safety, p. 346.

Topics for Discussion

Why is Dickie so angry at Richard at the beginning of the book, and what makes him decide to let go of his anger?

What makes Richard want to reach out and get to know Dickie?

After Dickie and Richard start to get along, why does Richard try to block Dickie out?

How does Richard help Dickie with his knowledge?

How does Dickie help Richard?

What makes Dickie make the choice he does at the end of the book?

How does Richard react to Dickie's choice and why?

How will Richard be different in the future as a result of his time with Dickie?