

Running Out of Time Study Guide

Running Out of Time by Margaret Peterson Haddix

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Plot Summary

Running Out Of Time by Margaret Peterson Haddix is a thriller for young adults. Jessie Keyser and other children her age believe she is living in Clifton, Indiana in 1840. A diphtheria epidemic attacks the children of Clifton and Jessie's mother is forced to reveal that the year is actually 1996. Jessie must go to the outside world to find help from a mysterious man named Mr. Neely. Ultimately, Jessie figures out a way to tell the world about Clifton and save her sick friends.

Jessie goes with her mother on a late night call to see the Bentons. Both of the Bentons' children have gotten sick. Ma tells Jessie that she should meet her at the Forbidden Rock after school tomorrow. At the end of school, Jessie's sister, Katie, has taken ill. Jessie meets her mother at the Forbidden Rock, where her mother tells her it is not 1840, it is really 1996. Clifton is watched by tourists. Medicine used to be sent to Clifton, but for some reason, is no longer sent. Jessie is shocked, but listens to her mother. Ma tells Jessie she must go to the outside world and contact Mr. Neely for help. She takes some modern clothes and makes her way through a manhole that leads to the Clifton visitor center.

Jessie gets into the center and passes the guards. She hides in the bathroom all night. The next day, she disguises herself as a modern day student and walks around with children her age. Jessie realizes that her whole life has been viewed by people she does not know. She soon makes her way outside of the tour center and out of Clifton. Jessie makes her way to a gas station where she tries to call Mr. Neely, but he does not answer. She gets to another town, Waverly, and calls him at a KFC. Mr. Neely picks Jessie up and promises to help her. He takes her to his apartment and Jessie rests. She hears Mr. Neely talking on the telephone. He says that he thinks they will have to kill Jessie. Soon other people arrive at the house, including Miles Clifton. Jessie escapes because she does not want to die.

Jessie makes her way downtown to the capitol. There, she calls her own press conference. She tells the reporters of the truth at Clifton. After the press conference, Jessie faints and wakes up in the hospital. She finds that all the Clifton children are there. Mr. Neely is actually Frank Lyle. Lyle and a group of scientists had released diseases on the people of Clifton to see who would survive without medicine.

Jessie is finally reunited with her family. They return to Clifton so that Pa can manage the property until the state figures out what to do with it. The whole family is forced to embrace the "future," but they will try to do so together.



Chapter 1

Chapter 1 Summary

In Chapters 1 and 2, Jessie wakes up to her mother's stirring. Again, her mother has been called out late in the night to take care of the village's sick children. Her mother is known as a midwife and people would rather get help from her than from Dr. Fister. Ma tries to help people get better, since Dr. Fister has stopped passing out pills that actually cure diseases. Jessie goes with Ma to the Bentons, but waits outside because Ma does not want her to take ill. While waiting for Ma, Jessie thinks about the wild animals in the woods and that she is not afraid of them. She also is not afraid of the scary, haunted trees, and the black boxes that are on top of trees. Once, she tried to climb a tree to look at the black box that followed her, but was caught before she could investigate. As Ma leaves the Bentons, she sees Mr. Benton nail a QUARANTINE sign to the Benton's door. The two begin to walk back to their home, but Ma stops at the Forbidden Rock. She tells Jessie that she might have to do something dangerous. Jessie is to meet her at the rock right after school and tell no one.

Chapter 1 Analysis

Jessie, the main character, is introduced in this section of the book. Jessie is a pretty, strong willed and very smart girl living in the 1840s. She loves going with Ma on her runs because it gives her a chance to see her mother and feel involved. Jessie is aware that many children in Clifton are getting sick and gives some valuable information to the reader. She comments on the fact that Dr. Fister used to give out pills, but has recently been giving other remedies that do not work. This foreshadows the problems that are about to befall Clifton. Jessie and Ma are mystified that the pills have stopped and Jessie becomes worried because all the adults seem so scared.



Chapters 3-5

Chapters 3-5 Summary

On the way home from school in Chapter 3, Jessie notices that her younger sister, Katie is feeling ill. She gives Katie a piggy back ride home. After tucking Katie into bed and avoiding the questions from her siblings, Jessie runs to meet Ma at the Forbidden Rock.

Once there, in Chapters 4 and 5, Ma quickly and quietly tries to explain to Jessie that the year is not 1840. It is really 1996. Clifton Village had been created by Miles Clifton in the early 1980s as a place where people could get back to the basics and live a simple life. Ma laughs and tells Jessie that Miles Clifton could never survive in Clifton Village. He would miss his limousines too much. He wanted Clifton to be like Williamsburg, but even more authentic. Tourists could come to visit, and the villagers would not have contact with them. The villagers would be recorded by cameras. Ma reveals that she used to be a nurse, but gave up her job to move to Clifton to make Pa happy. Unfortunately, things in Clifton have changed. Before, residents could leave whenever they wanted, but now the entire village is guarded so no one can escape.

Ma is confused as to why medical supplies have stopped coming. There is a cure for diphtheria from which the children are dying. Ma tells Jessie she must escape from Clifton and get help from Mr. Neely, who had always been against the Clifton settlement. She gives Jessie food, more modern clothes, and the phone number of Mr. Neely. Ma begins digging in a crack, and finally finds a rough piece of metal with the letters MANHOLE written across it. Ma opens the manhole and Jessie goes through. Everything goes black.

Chapters 3-5 Analysis

Jessie is bombarded with information in this section of the novel. She cannot believe that her entire life has essentially been made up. She almost feels like it is a lie, but has no time to brood over the subject because she must get out of Clifton. Clifton seems to be like an ideal place to live until Jessie discovers that it is all fake. Ma asks Jessie to be brave and risk her life to help save everyone else.

Some might wonder why Ma did not attempt to leave Clifton herself. Ma insists that if she goes, her family could be punished. Ma explains that when Jessie had been younger, she had climbed up near the Forbidden Rock. One of the other Clifton men caught her. Pa was beaten as punishment for his daughter's actions. Jessie never realized the punishment was her fault. She becomes frightened when Ma reveals this to her.

Ma's confusion over the medical supplies foreshadows the events that happen during the rest of the novel. When her sister, Katie, takes ill, she feels the immediacy of the

situation even more. Although Jessie needs and deserves answers, she is only given the bare minimum because she must quickly get out of Clifton.



Chapters 6 -8

Chapters 6 -8 Summary

The door Jessie goes through leads into a long, dark corridor in Chapter 6. She hesitantly walks down the corridor and hears two men talking to one another. She marvels at the way they are complaining about their jobs. They begin turning on lights and Jessie quickly leaps from one dark area to the next. The men hear her and start to search the building. Jessie finds an open door that leads to a room filled with stage coaches. She decides to hide underneath one of them. The men search the room but cannot find Jessie. They continue to complain about their jobs and say that the amount of security around Clifton is worse than a prison. Apparently, the people in charge don't want anyone to escape. They have even heard rumors saying that Clifton will be shut down for good. After listening to the guards, Jessie leaves to find a bathroom. She enters the women's bathroom, locks the stall and sits on a white chair that Ma had described as a toilet.

In Chapter 7, Jessie is wakened by a loud whooshing sound. She is confused by the sound but also hears other female voices. Jessie peers out of the stall to see how the girls from 1996 are dressed and is excited when she fits in. She figures out how to use the indoor outhouse and feels happy with herself for figuring out 1996. She leaves the bathroom to see if she can sneak out of Clifton with a tourist group.

In Chapter 8, instead of quickly leaving, Jessie joins a group of students from a nearby middle school so that she will fit in. Being a tourist is very interesting because she can see that the tourists spy on the villagers from behind mirrors that are placed in all common areas throughout the village. There is also a live video feed streaming everything that the villagers do. The 1996 children are very rude and ask rude questions about the lives of the villagers. The tour guide makes a point of saying that everyone in Clifton receives modern medical attention. Before she can stop herself, Jessie speaks up against this statement, but the tour guide quickly insists that all residents receive medical care. The group walks past Pa in his blacksmith shop and Jessie intensely misses her father. She wants to run up to the glass and talk to him, but quickly has to stop herself. During the tour, Jessie meets a black girl named Nicole. She marvels at the fact that black children are in the group and wonders if slavery has been overturned.

Chapters 6 -8 Analysis

As Jessie steps into the outside world, she quickly discovers just how different it is from her own world. When she goes into the corridor, she sees globes of light and does not realize it is electricity. Jessie thinks these are cool at first, but quickly realizes that they can be used to find her. This shocks her. As Jessie works out her escape from the guards, she makes her way to the bathroom. She is excited the next morning to see



what real 1996 kids are wearing. Hopefully, she will fit in and Jessie is extremely excited when she does.

Walking through the village with the tour group proves to be extremely educational and emotional for Jessie. She learns the extent of the supervision she and the rest of her family has been under for many years. Jessie feels spied upon. She thinks about all the special events the village has had, especially the ones for different holidays. Were these all faked for the enjoyment of a tour group? Was anything even real?

Lastly, Jessie begins to think that the 1996 kids are not the nicest. They are very judgmental of the way that the villagers live their lives. They do not seem open to other ways of doing things. Jessie is excited to meet a girl named Nicole. As far as she knows, black people are still slaves. Jessie is excited to see that black people have been freed from slavery.



Chapters 9 - 11

Chapters 9 - 11 Summary

In Chapter 9, Jessie continues with the tour group. They visit the village center where the haunted trees surround the square. The tour guide tells them that they can rent the trees and stand inside them while they view the villagers. The tour guide also says that the villagers moved to Clifton knowing they were being watched by tourists. They agreed to it so they could live the life they wished. Everyone has total privacy except for common areas. Next, the group visits the village school. The 1996 children begin to make fun of the 1840 curriculum. Someone comments on the fact that so many children are missing from school and the tour guide simply says that there are "some germs going around." Jessie knows this is not true, but must stop herself from saying anything. Nicole asks Jessie to go to the gift shop with her, but Jessie knows she must get moving.

In Chapter 10, Jessie makes her way outside and is amazed that the floor is gray. She wonders about the grass and where it has gone. When she looks up, she sees rows and rows of large yellow carriages. She wonders if they are the limousines about which Ma had spoken. An angry driver in a car honks at Jessie, which startles her. She wonders why everyone outside of Clifton is so angry. Jessie sees an exit sign and begins walking toward it. She passes more large yellow limousines, which are actually school buses, and some smaller cars. She follows the signs toward the exits and decides to stay on the grassy areas because she will be more difficult to locate. Jessie is happy to see that birds and squirrels are still present in 1996 and then realizes she is just being silly.

Jessie begins to think about her life and wonders if everything her parents and the other adults in the villages had said was all just for show. Finally Jessie sees a fence. She also notices one of the black boxes from Clifton is also here. Jessie now knows there are cameras that will follow her every move. She knows she cannot get over the fence without getting caught by the cameras.

In Chapter 11, Jessie continues to evade the cameras and make her way to the guardhouse. The guard is busy because a family in a car has just driven up to his post. The family comments on the guards "weird" clothing and Jessie is personally offended. She thinks that the villagers' clothing is very normal. Finally the guard lets the car through. Jessie decides to follow a car or truck through the park entrance. She waits for a while for the perfect vehicle to follow, and finally sees a bread truck stop in front of the guardhouse. The driver leaves his truck to speak with the guard. The two speak about baseball, but Jessie does not understand what they are talking about. She uses the opportunity to sneak into the back of the bread truck. Finally the bread truck starts and Jessie is taken out of Clifton. She is very excited, but realizes that she does not know how to get out of the moving truck.



Chapters 9 - 11 Analysis

Jessie becomes even more offended by the behavior of the 1996 children. They seem rude while they make fun of Jessie's classmates and what they learn at their school. Jessie also finds out what the tour guides are telling the visitors. Apparently, they are blaming the children's absences on germs. The guide also lies about the medical care the villagers are receiving. She gets upset because the tour guide is lying to everyone. This makes her reevaluate the kindness of others and open her eyes to the fact that some people actually wish horrible things on others.

As Jessie continues on her journey, she must devise her own plan to get out of Clifton. Jessie is introduced to the cameras and guards that have been surrounding all of Clifton. At one point, Jessie thinks that she has been caught by a camera, but continues on with her journey. At this point, Jessie must use her own intelligence and power to find a way out of Clifton. This is when she learns there is always a time when a person must grow up and strike out on their own.



Chapters 12 - 15

Chapters 12 - 15 Summary

In Chapter 12, Jessie is still trying to figure out a way out of the bread truck. She is being thrown all over the back of the truck. The driver hears her and stops. He gets out to check the back of the truck, but before he can find Jessie, she leaps out of the truck and rolls into a ditch. Jessie feels badly for getting the driver in trouble, but she has to get out of Clifton to save her family. Jessie begins walking along the highway. Luckily, she finally sees a sign, North 37, just like Ma said she would see. She slings her pack over her back and begins walking towards the sign, hoping that she will soon be able to help her town and the rest of her family.

Jessie continues to walk in Chapter 13, but she is no closer to finding a phone so that she can call Mr Neely. She is also nervous that she will not know what a phone looks like. She finally decides to stop and eat the food Ma had packed for her. Jessie sits next to a creek on the other side of the highway and eats her lunch. The food reminds her of her mother. Also in Ma's package is money. Jessie is not sure if Clifton money is as good as 1996 money, but then figures that money is money and she should be okay. Looking at her money, she notices that the \$20 bill has a picture of Andrew Jackson on it. She shyly kisses the \$20 bill and then realizes that Andrew Jackson would have died over 150 years ago. Maybe there were no more problems with the banks in 1996. In 1840, the grown ups were always talking about money problems.

Jessie reads a note that Ma had included for her. It comforts her. Also in the package is Ma's Pennsylvania Driver's License and a picture of Jessie and Hannah as babies. Jessie realizes that her whole life has been a charade. If Clifton is not real, does that mean she is not real? Who is Jessie? Jessie is interrupted by a man who yells, "Stop it!"

In Chapter 14, an angry fat man comes up to Jessie and yells at her to stop drinking the water from the creek. He also tells her that she should not be on his land, littering with her food items. He says that the water is poisoned and Jessie is confused because this is the creek out of which she always drinks. She asks the mean man where she can find something to drink and he tells her that there are many shops or gas stations where she can get a drink. Jessie is confused but decides to try walking. The man invites Jessie to go to his house to use the phone, but she refuses. The man does not sound like he works for Clifton, but he is a little crazy. About a mile after the creek, she finally sees stores. She buys a drink and cannot believe how much money the drink costs. The boy who works at the counter tells Jessie she can find a phone outside. She finally notices a sign that says TELEPHONE. Jessie goes over to the phone and tries to use it but cannot figure out how it works. Every time the woman in the phone asks her to put in money to make the call, Jessie gets confused. She does not know how to give the phone money. Finally, Jessie gets the phone to ring and is able to call Mr. Neely. Unfortunately, no one answers. Ma had warned Jessie that this might happen. Jessie could wait, but could the other children in the village wait?



Jessie is about to walk away from the pay phone when a man slips and crashes into her in Chapter 15. He and she both fall. The man apologizes and helps Jessie up. He also looks at Jessie's note. Jessie feels very panicked. She is unsettled by the way the man is looking at her. Jessie tries to back away and notices that the man writes something in a notebook and then makes a phone call. Jessie wants to believe that the man is not with Clifton, but she is so scared that she turns and runs.

After a while, Jessie has not found another phone. She gets worried she won't be able to locate one in time and that the children of Clifton will die. Jessie begins thinking about her family, especially her sister. Thinking of Hannah helps her to focus on finding a phone. She begins to think she might have to walk to Indianapolis. Jessie stops for a second to marvel at the street lights and how they change without a person actually changing the lights. She continues walking, but is stopped by a greasy young man who jumps out of a car and yells at Jessie to "Get in!"

Chapters 12 - 15 Analysis

This section of the book has a lot to do with Jessie's thoughts as she travels on her own and tries to find a phone. Opening the package from Ma brings back many memories from home. While Jessie is thrilled by the world she is discovering, she misses her family. She is doing something important for her community but is she old enough to handle all of this pressure? How can she cope with what is happening to her?

As Jessie meets new people she learns how different she is from 1996 children. The author never really goes into the fact the other people suspect Jessie of being from Clifton because of her behavior. Jessie also sometimes becomes very frustrated with being so isolated from the technology she must quickly learn how to use.

Finally Jessie is able to find a telephone that she can use. She is disappointed when she finally tries to call Mr. Neely and he does not answer. The narrative of the story quickly picks up pace as the man in the parking lot bumps into Jessie. She can sense that something is wrong and she should be wary of those around her.



Chapters 16 -18

Chapters 16 -18 Summary

Jessie is startled by the boy who tries to pull her into his car in Chapter 16. The young man, Ray, says that they slowed down to pick her up and help her. Jessie has a hard time believing this. She says she is not a hitchhiker (she isn't even sure what that is). Ray continues to persuade Jessie while his friend, Tol, stays in the car. Jessie is becoming more panicked by the minute. She wrestles her hands free from Tol and runs all the way to Waverly, which is the next town over.

In Chapter 17, Jessie makes her way to a restaurant called KFC. A woman lets her use the phone and she is finally able to contact Mr. Neely. Mr. Neely agrees to pick up Jessie. On the phone, he asks her to explain what her mother said she should do. She tells him about the Board of Health and calling a press conference. He promises to help. Finally she feels a sense of relief. In the car, Mr. Neely tries to ask Jessie many questions. Jessie is amazed by Indiana, and even more so by Mr. Neely's apartment. Jessie gets ready to rest while Mr. Neely makes some calls. Jessie decides to listen at the door to find out with whom he is speaking. She hears Mr. Neely say that Jessie knows too much and he may have to kill her.

Jessie gasps when she hears Mr Neely's words in Chapter 18. Mr. Neely is talking about seeing something through. He continues on to say that Miles is panicking and does not want blood on his hands. Soon three other people come over to the apartment. They agree that the research will continue as they had planned. Mr. Neely also says that he has drugged Jessie so she cannot escape. To appease the others, Mr. Neely says they can all go and check on Jessie to make sure she is still asleep. Jessie panics and runs back to the bed, but before she can reach it she falls and hits her head. She quickly blacks out.

Chapters 16 -18 Analysis

In this section, Jessie feels the sting of betrayal. Just as soon as she thinks everything will get better, she discovers that Mr. Neely is an enemy. Jessie does not know what to do with this information. As someone from the past and a child, she is very naive. Although she has learned a lot in her travels, she blindly believes people who are lying to her. Had she been exposed to more people, she may have been able to tell that Mr. Neely was not who she believed him to be. Mr. Neely's betrayal also foreshadows the revelation of his true identity. As the novel continues to unfold, the reader will slowly learn who the real Mr. Neely is.



Chapters 19-21

Chapters 19-21 Summary

The next morning, Jessie wakes with a horrible headache in Chapter 19. For a second, she can't really remember where she is. She finally remembers that she is at Mr. Neely's house and he has been trying to kill her. She checks the door, and when she finds it locked, she knows she had not been dreaming. Jessie notices that her window is open and that it is her only way to escape. If she jumps, she will probably break her legs, but if she can land on the ledge and slowly climb down, she could make it. Jessie thinks of her brother Andrew as she makes her way down the side of the apartment building. She knows she can be brave just like him. Finally, when she feels she is low enough to the ground to let go, Jessie kicks off and makes her way to the ground. Jessie's leg hurts so she sits down on the grass and begins to cry.

In Chapter 20, Jessie finally realizes that she has to start moving again. When she stands up, the pain she feels in her leg is almost unbearable. Jessie remembers how her cat used to track its prey. Just when the mouse thought it was safe, the cat would pounce. Jessie does not want this to happen to her, so even though she is in pain, she begins to slowly walk thinking about her family and how much she wants to cry and hold her Ma or Pa. Jessie finally finds an outdoor bench where she can sit. While she is deep in thought, an old woman begins talking to her. She tells Jessie she should get on the bus if she wants to go downtown. Jessie listens to the woman and when the bus comes, they both get on. The old woman talks on and on, but Jessie wishes she would be quiet so Jessie could think. Luckily, she is able to ask the woman, Mrs. Tyndale, for information on how to find phone numbers. Mrs. Tyndale launches into a long story about different ways Jessie could find phone numbers. She also explains to Jessie that people hold a news conference when they want to make a big announcement. As they pass by the capitol, Mrs Tyndale points out a news conference to Jessie. Jessie can see a man speaking to a large group of men and women. Some people in the group are holding large black boxes. Jessie decides the only way to help her people is to call her own news conference and contact the Board of Health.

Jessie gets off the bus at the next stop. Outside, Jessie finally finds a phone. She calls directory assistance and asks for the State Health Department. When she is finally connected, the woman on the other line thinks she is joking and hangs up on Jessie. Jessie tries calling again and the woman threatens to call the police. Jessie slumps to the ground of the phone booth and is overcome with emotion. She just wants to go home. She knows she needs to call others to get the press conference planned but she is so scared. Finally, Jessie works up the bravery to go through the phone book. She dials the first number and tells the person who answers that there will be a news conference concerning the terrible problems at Clifton Village.

In Chapter 21, Jessie sits on the steps of the capitol building waiting for reports or radio stations to show. She wishes she could lay down and sleep on the steps. Jessie can



see a small group starting to grow. One cameraman asks another if they know what is going on. No one is really sure, but they would like some information after Clifton announced that Clifton Village would be closing. As the reporters talk and speculate, no one pays any attention to Jessie, who stands on the outskirts of the crowd. Slowly Jessie stands up and announces that she had called the press conference. The group thinks she is pulling a prank. Jessie quickly tries to explain that she is from Clifton. Her sister and many other children from Clifton are sick and will die if they do not get help. Mr. Neely had said he would help, but then said he wanted to kill her.

The reporters begin to walk away, but one of them insists that they should hear Jessie out. Jessie explains Ma's quest for Jessie, Mr. Neely, and the diphtheria outbreak in the village. The reporters are confused because Mr. Neely died six years ago. The reporters have many questions, but Jessie can answer none. They ask her if she can tell them anything else, but she says no. Many of the reporters do not want to publish the story because they cannot prove who Jessie is. They don't understand why Miles Clifton would want innocent children to die.

Finally, Ann, one of the reporters, asks Jessie to recite the presidents and the states as they do at the Clifton School. Jessie does so and as she gets to the end she begins to sway. One of the reporters touches her forehead and realizes Jessie is burning up. They call an ambulance and Jessie passes out.

Chapters 19-21 Analysis

This section is the climax of the story. Jessie's escape from Mr. Neely is filled with tension. She has to get out of the apartment or she will be killed by Clifton's men. The author does a good job of building up the suspense while Jessie tries to get out of the apartment complex.

Jessie becomes extremely emboldened in this section. She is able to use all the knowledge gained from the outside world and her Ma to put together her own plan of action. This is extremely important for someone who feels they are about to give up. Jessie uses everything she has left in order to save all of the people from Clifton.

Surely, now that the press has heard about the story, the children from Clifton will be saved! Jessie's mission has been fulfilled, but not without some difficulty. When Jessie collapses, it becomes clear that her health has been at risk the entire time. After being exposed to diphtheria, it had just been a matter of time before it would take over her system.



Chapters 22-23

Chapters 22-23 Summary

Jessie wakes up, but everything seems to be in a daze in Chapter 22. She asks for Katie and Ma and Pa, but is only told to sleep and get better. Finally, Jessie wakes up one morning and feels clear headed. To her surprise, Kate is next to her. Katie tells Jessie that she had seen her in a black box. She had been upset when Jessie fell. Jessie tells Katie it is just a type of picture. Katie also informs Jessie that all the children from school are in the hospital and that the nurses and doctors take care of them. They have not yet seen their parents. Hannah and Andrew come to visit in wheel chairs. They tell Jessie that Abbey and Jefferson died.

After the news conference, reporters had started calling Miles Clifton and the Board of Health. The Board of Health had gone over to Clifton, demanding to be admitted. Clifton's men inside the village had panicked and taken over the schoolhouse. Mr Seward, one of Clifton's men, had a rifle pointed at all the children. Mr. Seward would not let any children go to the bathroom. Finally when the police had been positioned outside of the schoolhouse, Mr Seward had threatened to shoot all of the children. Hannah had tripped him and then Mr. Seward's son, Chester had grabbed the gun and turned it on his own father. Then, everyone had been released. This is the last time any of the children had seen their parents.

In Chapter 23, Jessie is unable to sleep. She wishes she could be with her entire family, including her parents. She becomes so restless that she gets out of bed and begins wandering around the hospital. In the waiting room, she sees the television. On TV is a Mr Neely. Jessie becomes panicked because she does not realize that Mr. Neely is not in the room, he is just appearing on a television. She finally realizes this and listens to the narrative. Mr. Neely and Miles Clifton are saying that they had been conducting scientific research on the villagers. Mr. Neely is actually a man named Frank Lyle. He says that the medicines we have today keep many people alive. These weaker people would have died without medicine, so they are weakening humanity's gene pool. Weak people are surviving and passing on their weaker genes. Already, there are super germs that antibiotics cannot kill. In another generation or so, our immune systems may not be able to handle these germs. Mr. Clifton begins to apologize for what has happened and insists that the science had been so convincing that he agreed to allow testing in Clifton. Suddenly, a nurse walks into the waiting room and insists that Jessie should go back to bed. Jessie is reluctant. She wants more answers. She is sick of being told to be quiet. The nurse gets testy with Jessie and forces her back to bed. She says that Jessie is not allowed to watch television.



Chapters 22-23 Analysis

The climax of the novel occurs in this section. Jessie's fainting spell causes her to catch the attention of all the reporters. Her extreme exhaustion also makes the climax much more intense. At this point in the novel, Jessie is extremely exhausted and out of time. She is out of time for the Clifton children, but also out of time for herself. Jessie breaks down with the same disease that is rampant in Clifton. Now, the reader is scared that Jessie will also die and more children won't make it. Luckily, the reader is quickly informed that Jessie will make it out alive.

Throughout the end of the novel, Jessie becomes upset because the adults continue to treat her like a child. She has been on a long, tiring, and extremely grown up journey, but everyone continues to treat her like a child and give her no answers. Jessie feels neglected and wronged. In a way, Jessie is coming into her own. For so long, she had been left in complete darkness about her life. She now wants to know everything.



Chapters 24-25

Chapters 24-25 Summary

Whenever Jessie talks to the nurse, the nurse insists that the state is checking up on her parents. In Chapter 24, the officials say they have to make sure that all of the parents are good parents to the children. Jessie insists that her parents are the best, but no one listens to her. Jessie's brothers and sisters are sent to live with foster families while Jessie stays at the hospital to get better. The social worker and police officers come in to visit Jessie but answer none of her questions.

Jessie suddenly has an idea to call Bob from the Indianapolis Gazette. Bob arrives and is excited to get the first interview with Jessie. Jessie asks that Bob answer her questions first, before she gives him the interview. Bob says that the state officials are blaming the Clifton parents so that they do not have to take the blame for not keeping a better eye on Clifton. So, the state is hesitant to say that the Clifton parents must not be suitable parents. They also question why Ma had sent Jessie out of Clifton. Many think she put her daughter in too much danger. Bob then explains that the tourism part of Clifton had been just a cover, an excuse to get the families to live in the 1800s. The diphtheria had been part of the experiment. The Clifton organizers had been trying to create a community where people never got sick, a kind of superhuman race. The organizers would slowly remove parents until only the second generation of Clifton was left. These people (Jessie and all the other children) would believe Clifton was real. But, the organizers could not wait, and had gotten overeager. They had started the program too soon and tried to close down Clifton Village too quickly. Bob explains that most scientists do not think this is an ethical way to conduct experiments. People are comparing this science to that of the Nazis (Bob explains who the Nazis are to Jessie).

Bob then explains that Frank Lyle had been alerted to Jessie's escape. When they had discovered that Jessie was looking for Mr. Neely, they had Lyle go to Neely's old apartment and break in. He picked up Jessie's call and then went to find her. Bob promises to write a good article. Hopefully, it will help get Ma and Pa back. Two days later, Jessie is finally reunited with Ma and Pa. They cannot bring Jessie home yet, but are allowed to visit her for a while. Ma comforts Jessie about everything, but Jessie still feels uneasy.

Chap 25

Jessie climbs to the top of the King Mountain Rock. She feels good to be back in her Clifton clothes. While the state tries to figure out what to do with the land, they have hired Pa to look over Clifton. Jessie and her siblings will all go to school. They all seem excited about it and want to learn more about 1996. Jessie is apprehensive. She does not know if she can handle being a real kid from 1996. Ma tries to comfort Jessie and let her know that she is not worried. She thinks Jessie is strong, smart, and brave. Jessie is



scared, but feels better. She is not sure what the future holds for her, but also knows it will be alright.

Chapters 24-25 Analysis

Jessie is so happy to finally be back with her family. Jessie is not sure how she will handle being a 1996 kid, but her mother assures her that she has nothing about which to worry. Pa will have a difficult time adjusting, but the other children are extremely excited to start their new lives. The entire family is embarking on a new journey together.

Jessie is glad to know that all of the children are getting better. Unfortunately, some of the children do not make it through the ordeal and the scientists will have to answer to the consequences. In this section, the full research plan of Frank Lyle and Clifton is released to the public. These scientists have chosen extremely unethical means of doing their research. While their ideas of wanting to guard humans from a super germ are good, they are unable.



Characters

Jessie Keyser

Jessie is the second oldest child of the Keyzers. She lives in Clifton Village in what she thinks is the year 1840. Jessie is described as being a pretty young girl. Although she likes to help her parents and does her homework, she has been known to break the rules. Jessie is thought to be one of the bravest girls in Clifton. She loves her family very much. Jessie's caring nature is seen in the way she interacts with her brothers and sisters. When Katie takes ill, Jessie carries her sister home and makes sure she gets the care she needs, before leaving to find her mother. Jessie's deep caring for her family leads her to get the courage to go through with the journey.

Jessie is the protagonist of the novel. Ma chooses to tell Jessie the truth about Clifton because she thinks Jessie is the most mature and bravest of her children. Ma tells Jessie that the real year is 1996 and Jessie is compounded with many different feelings. Instead of wallowing in her own despair, Jessie must push forward and find the medicine that her friends and siblings need. Jessie's journey causes her to grow intellectually and gives her experience in a foreign and new world. The reader sees a shift in Jessie from brave young girl to smart, confident, and strong young woman.

Ma

Ma, is the mother of Jessie, Andrew, Hannah, and Katie. She lives in Clifton Village with her children and husband. In the village, Ma is a midwife, but everyone calls her when someone is sick, especially because Dr. Fister has stopped giving out pills that work. Ma becomes concerned when an outbreak of diphtheria starts in Clifton and no medicine is being sent. When she and Pa had brought their family to Clifton, there had always been an understanding that up to date medicine would be provided for the residents. When this is no longer the case, Ma begins speaking with other adults to figure out what to do. She decides to send Jessie out of Clifton because she is scared that she or another adult will be recognized and caught.

Prior to living in Clifton, Ma had been a nurse. She did not become a nurse in Clifton because there were no nurses in 1840. Ma had decided to go to Clifton because her husband was so excited to raise their family in a place that would get back to the basics of life. Ma had gone along with the idea because she loved her husband so much. She regrets not being able to tell Pa that she will be sending Jessie, but does not want to endanger her family. Ma is later thought to be an unfit mother because of her decision to send Jessie.



Frank Lyle

Frank Lyle is a scientist who works for Clifton Village. It had been his idea to build a superhuman race and do experiments on people to create this race. Lyle poses as Mr. Neely. Shortly after Jessie escapes Clifton, Frank goes to Mr. Neely's old apartment and breaks in. He is there to answer the phone when Jessie calls and impersonates Mr. Neely. He thinks that Jessie should be killed because she knows too much about the true nature of Clifton. Lyle is manipulative, smart, and sneaky. He used Clifton and his money to build the village, but had an evil plan to use the Clifton residents all along.

It is through Frank Lyle that the theme of ethics of science can clearly be seen. While Lyle says his goal is to protect mankind, several questions arise. Creating a superior race of people is a dangerous undertaking. Lyle's ideas are compared to that of the Nazis who had experimented on others in order gain information while creating their own superior Aryan race. Lyle can also be said to be somewhat cruel. In order to continue his research, he is willing to let innocent children die. Currently, scientific standards mandate that any human research participant agrees to be tested. Lyle has no one's permission. Lyle becomes a manipulative, self serving scientist.

Hannah Keyser

Hannah is Jessie's older sister. Hannah is very calm and always thinks things through. Jessie thinks about Hannah as she goes along her journey. Hannah surprises everyone by tripping Mr. Seward when he holds the children in the school house hostage.

Miles Clifton

Miles Clifton is the financial backer for Clifton Village. The villagers believe that Miles founded the town, when in reality he is a rich man who built the town so that he could make money from tourists. Clifton is persuaded by Frank Lyle to allow scientific experiments on the villagers.

Mr. Smythe

Mr. Smythe is the only teacher at the Clifton School. Jessie thinks he is very cruel. He smacks the children with rulers and speaks to them in disrespectful tones.

Mr. Seward

Mr. Seward works for Clifton and Lyle. His family is given medicine when his children get sick. Mr. Seward goes crazy towards the end of the novel and locks all the children in the schoolhouse. He threatens to shoot all of them if they do not help.



Dr. Fister

Dr. Fister has knowledge of Clifton and Lyle's plans. He used to supply the villagers with pills that actually cured their sicknesses.

Ray and Tol

Ray and Tol are two hooligans who try to pick Jessie up on the highway. They say that they only want to give Jessie a ride home, but Jessie senses they are up to no good. She can also tell that they have been drinking alcohol.

Bob

Bob is a reporter in Indianapolis. He is at the capitol when Jessie calls the press conference. At first, he does not believe Jessie's story but then decides to hear her out. Jessie remembers him while she is in the hospital and agrees to give him a special one on one interview.

Katie Keyser

Katie is Jessie's youngest sister. She gets ill with diphtheria before Jessie goes on her journey.



Objects/Places

The Forbidden Rock

This is one of the highest points in Clifton Village. Children and adults are not allowed to go up on the rock because there are cameras there. Also near the rock is a manhole that connects Clifton Village to the visitors' center.

Haunted Trees

The children of Clifton are told that the trees in the village square are haunted so that they will not go near the trees. In reality, visitors can purchase seats inside of the trees so they can get a very close view of the lives of the villagers.

Telephone

Throughout the entire first half of the novel, Jessie is searching for a telephone so that she can call Mr. Neely. Jessie has no idea what a telephone looks like and struggles to find one.

Cameras

Jessie soon learns that her entire life has been scrutinized by cameras. Her mother explains to her what a camera is and Jessie realizes it is a black box that she has seen on the tops of trees. While escaping from Clifton, she encounters many cameras that could potentially give her away.

Indianapolis

Clifton is not far from Indianapolis. In Jessie's time, Indianapolis is the capital of the entire state. Indianapolis is a large city and Jessie is completely amazed by it.

Clifton Village

Jessie lives inside of Clifton Village. The people of Clifton think that they live in 1840. Clifton Village was created by Miles Clifton as an alternative to places like Williamsburg. People are supposed to live more authentic to the time period in Clifton. Unbeknownst to the villagers, science researchers planned to plant a disease in the village and let the weaker people die off.



Diphtheria

Diphtheria is an acute infectious disease caused by bacteria. It occurs in a human's upper respiratory tract.

1996 clothes

Jessie is amazed by the clothing that the women in 1996 wear. Mostly, girls wear their hair down. They also wear tighter shirts and pants.

Press Conference

Jessie decides to call a press conference because Ma had suggested that Mr. Neely would call a conference. When Mr. Neely is not who he seems, Jessie tries to call her own press conference to alert the media about the troubles at Clifton.

Visitor Bathroom at Clifton Village

Jessie spends the night in the visitor's bathroom at Clifton Village. She is amazed by the indoor outhouse and figures out how to use a toilet.



Themes

Ethics of Science

At the beginning of the novel, the reader has a sense that something is going wrong with Clifton. When Ma reveals that modern medicine is available, but is no longer being supplied in Clifton, Jessie, Ma, and the reader know that something is wrong. Finally as the novel unravels, the reader learns that the sole reason Clifton has been created is to do research on people. Frank Lyle and his cohorts wished to create a super human race. They lied to the families wishing to move into Clifton. They offered them a way of life and the only consequence should have been the tourists. In actuality, the tourists were a cover up for the real Clifton. Today, in order to be a part of medical trials or studies, people must sign waivers and are kept fully abreast of what is being done with them. They must consent before anyone can perform any experiments on them. This might not be authentic, but it is the ethical way to conduct experiments.

The ethics of science become a theme throughout the novel because Frank Lyle and other scientists believed it was okay to release viruses on people to discover who would live. They were willing to let children die to further their research. While there is some merit to parts of their logic, specifically super germs that have developed a resistance to all of our antibiotics, they cannot test their research on people without their consent. Bob, the reporter, says that people compare Lyle's science to that of the Nazis. The Nazis claimed that they were making a super human race, which is not far from what Lyle wishes to accomplish. While it is important for our technology and sciences to progress, ethics must be considered and followed.

Bravery and heroism

Throughout the novel, many characters make important decisions that test their own bravery. Although Jessie has an amazing journey ahead of her, Ma makes an intense decision to let Jessie go and tell her the truth about Clifton. While Ma believes she cannot go on the journey herself, it is not because she is not brave. Rather, if Ma leaves, she will be more easily spotted by Clifton's men. Ma seems to be an extremely brave person for sending her child out into a world about which she knows nothing. Ma risks her children, husband, and individual safety to cure the rest of the children in Clifton.

Hannah, Jessie's sister, is known for being soft spoken and hesitant. Throughout Jessie's journey, she thinks a lot about how her sister would have reacted in a situation. She realizes that acting before you think is not always the best answer. Jessie is shocked to find out that Hannah tripped Mr. Seward when he held all the children captive in the schoolhouse. Sometimes, it is necessary to step out of ourselves to save others.



Lastly, Jessie's character is taken on a long, physical, and emotional journey far from what she knows. First, Jessie is asked to be brave by her mother because she knows her daughter can handle the journey. Jessie somewhat calmly takes in all the information. Although she is extremely confused, she knows that lives are at stake. The only way to save the children of Clifton is to push through all the questions and begin her journey.

Throughout the book, the reader grows with Jessie. They see how she accepts each new thing that is thrown at her. Although Jessie sometimes falters and cannot overcome her fears, she ultimately pushes on to find out the answers. This makes Jessie an unlikely hero. As a young girl with no experience in 1996, many do not think she will be able to figure out the new world before her. Jessie's resilience, intelligence, and attitude are what make her a hero.

Differences Between 1996 and 1840

A large portion of the book is used to show the differences between 1996 and 1840. As Jessie travels through time she discovers many things have changed. New things have been invented and the ideas of people have changed. One startling difference that is continually brought up is the difference between the children of 1996 and 1840. Jessie notices that the 1996 kids get cool clothes, nice school buses, and have interesting ways to speak. They also seem to be more advanced than Jessie is. From joining their tour group, she learns that the 1996 children seem incredibly rude and quick to run their mouths. She does not like the way that they make fun of her family and friends.

As for the 1840's, Jessie loves all of the people who are in town, but always feels like something is missing. The reader gets a little hint as to what her life had been like in Clifton. She had attended school, but after a while, Jessie's education would be limited to what children studied in the 1840s. Jessie and her friends deserve the same schooling as other people. Jessie hates some of the chores she is forced to do like laundry, cooking, and cleaning because they seem to take so much longer in the 1840s.



Style

Point of View

The novel is written in the third person, limited point of view (POV). Instead of Jessie narrating the story, the story is being narrated about Jessie. The reader still knows the protagonist's feelings, thoughts and beliefs. This allows the reader to feel like they are going on Jessie's journey with her. This point of view does not allow Jessie to hide anything from the reader. Because the point of view is limited, the reader does not know the feelings or thoughts of other characters unless a physical description of feeling or the character's dialogue makes their thoughts known. This would be a third person, objective point of view.

This POV works well for the story because the author wants to show the intense journey for which Jessie has been chosen. While Jessie's journey is very physical, it is also extremely emotional and intellectual. If we did not know her thoughts, the reader would only see Jessie's physical exertion to save the children. Because the reader is able to hear Jessie's thoughts, he or she can relate to the fear, anger, and confusion Jessie feels as she is bombarded with a new world. Knowing Jessie's thoughts on the difference between 1840 and 1996 gives new insight into the current 1996 culture. It makes the reader look at their own culture through different eyes, which is an interesting perspective.

Setting

The novel begins in Clifton Village, a small town outside of Indianapolis. Jessie and her family live in the year 1840, or at least they think they do. The novel opens at Jessie's home. Jessie follows her mother to the Benton's home to learn that the Benton children are sick. Ma tells Jessie she might have to go on a special journey. At school the next day, Jessie's sister Katie gets sick also. Jessie goes to the Forbidden Rock to meet Ma. There, Ma tells Jessie that it is not 1840, it is really 1996. Ma tells Jessie she must get to the outside world and call Mr. Neely from a phone. Jessie goes through a manhole and begins to walk down a corridor. She is left in the visitors center. Jessie spends the night in the ladies bathroom. The next day, she takes a tour with a group of school children. She uses the tour as a chance to escape. Once outside, she finds a parking lot and follows it to the exit gate. She sneaks into the back of a bread truck and gets on to the highway. Jessie walks on the side of the highway trying to hide from cars. She finally makes her way to the Shopping Point, which has a phone. She buys juice and tries to use the phone but Mr. Neely does not answer. A man bumps into her and Jessie becomes really nervous. She goes to Waverly, a nearby town and uses the phone to get in touch with Mr. Neely. Mr. Neely picks her up and takes her to his apartment. There, Mr. Neely tries to drug Jessie, but she escapes. She takes a bus downtown and calls reporters to the capitol for a press conference. Jessie collapses at the conference and wakes up in the hospital. There she sees her brothers and sisters. All the Clifton kids



have been brought there. As the novel ends, Jessie is reunited with her family. They are allowed back on Clifton land so that Pa can take care of the town until the state decides what to do with the land.

Language and Meaning

The novel has many different tones. It starts out very emotional. The author wastes no time in getting to the root problem of the story. The Clifton children are not getting medicine and a sickness is striking the village. As Ma tells Jessie that she should leave the village to go get help, the tone gets extremely urgent. Jessie knows that she is fighting against time to make sure that all the children in Clifton survive. After Jessie is out of Clifton, the tone of the novel is one of wonder. She cannot believe everything she is learning in the 1996 world. When Jessie is confronted by the man from the phone booth, the boys on the highway, and Mr. Neely's betrayal, she is filled with fear and the book takes on a fearful tone. As Jessie thinks about her home and all the ways the adults of Clifton have lied to her, she feels anger and confusion.

The author's ideal audience for this novel is young adult readers. The text is very simple to follow and understand. The dialogue flows smoothly and, while not complex, is extremely informative for the novel. Although the audience is young adult, it is still a good story that adults will like also.

Structure

The novel is structured into twenty-five short chapters. This is most likely because of the audience the author is trying to reach. In young adult literature, the chapters are generally shorter. Although the chapters are short, they are still extremely descriptive. The chapters are only numbers. There are no titles.

The plot of the novel is fairly simple because of the reader audience. There is only one major plot line which is followed throughout the entire novel. The reader never learns about Ma and Pa's life before Clifton, the background of Lyle, or the private lives of other Clifton families.



Quotes

"For a long moment, Jessie couldn't say anything. How could it be 1996? Jessie's mind felt jumbled. If it wasn't 1840, last year wasn't 1839 and —"

Chap 4, pp. 22

"Jessie had never heard of women wearing pants. But these trousers were so odd that Jessie began to believe the world outside Clifton truly was different. She trembled, afraid. Before, she could have believed that Ma was making up the whole story."

Chap 5, pp. 31

"All three girls had hair as wild as Jessie's, and Jessie grinned. Her hair fit in without her having to do a thing with it! For the first time she could remember, she could get up in the morning without braiding her hair."

Chap 7, pp 49

"Jessie rubbed her forehead. If only she could get everything straight in her mind."

Chap 13, pp. 93

"Jessie backed away from the man, her thoughts jumbled. The man couldn't be from Clifton, because he would have captured her right there. Wouldn't he? But why would he knock her down? What had he written?"

Chap 15., pp. 107

"Jessie took another step back. In a minute she'd be in a ditch, and the ditch here had water flowing in it. Her heart pounded. She might have been able to outrun Ray, but not Tol. Think, she told herself. You have to outsmart them."

Chap 16, pp115

"Jessie found the phone in a small entryway between doors. Her legs still shook, and she felt more like sobbing than talking. But she put her quarter into the opening at the top and punched the buttons like before, this time remembering the 1 first. Then, when asked she put in more money."

Chap 16, pp. 117

"At the edge of the bed, Jessie tripped over her own boots. She went sprawling, her head striking the bedside table. She hit the floor as the door opened."

Chap 18, pp. 134

"Jessie sat up and hugged her knees. Tears came to her eyes again, but they were happy ones. She grinned, realizing she hadn't really thought she would escape. But she had."

Chap 19, pp. 140



"Jessie's mind felt scrambled with all of her questions. Her legs trembled- maybe from climbing down the wall, maybe from being scared. There was so much she didn't know."
Chap 20, pp.142

" 'I'm too scared to do this.' She closed her eyes. Unbidden, the image came to her of the night of Katie's birth. Jessie had only been seven then, but Ma had let Jessie help Mrs. Ruddle with the delivery. Pa said Jessie was too young for such a thing, but Ma said, 'She's seen the horses and cows and cats plenty of times. It's no different.' At the end, Jessie was left holding a clean tiny Katie, wrapped in a blanket."
Chap 20 pp. 150-151

"He kept talking, oblivious. Jessie sat down before her legs gave out. But she stayed by the door, because she couldn't believe she could be safe so close to Mr. Neely."
Chap 23, pp. 169



Topics for Discussion

How do Jessie and Hannah borrow personality characteristics from one another? Explain.

Do you think that Ma should have risked her family's safety to leave Clifton? Why or Why not?

What do you think is the true intention of Ray and Tol when they stop Jessie on the highway?

Can you describe a recent ethical dilemma that the science world is facing? Explain the dilemma and where you stand.

Research the role of women in 1840. Describe what women were expected to do with their time.

What medicines were readily available in 1840? List at least 5 different types of medicines and if they are still considered effective.

Examine Pa's character. Why does Pa want to stay in Clifton so desperately?

Do the 1996 children seem to be more rude than the 1840 children? Why or why not?

How does Jessie's age work to her advantage as she travels throughout her journey?