

The Reapers Are the Angels: A Novel Study Guide

**The Reapers Are the Angels: A Novel by Alden John
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Plot Summary

As the story opens, Temple is happily living alone in a lighthouse just off the Florida coast. She is content being alone but one day a zombie arrives on the shore of the island. Though he's beat up and can't be a threat at all, she realizes this means others will follow and reluctantly returns to the mainland where she finds a car and heads north.

Temple has been living on her own for many years. She doesn't remember any parents and there has never been a time during her life that there weren't zombies. She remembers a young boy named Malcolm who might have been her biological brother and she feels guilt for his death. Since he died, she has always been alone.

Now she travels north and happens upon a community living in four towers. The office building and department stores have been converted into four neighborhoods and Temple wonders if she might be able to fit in here. She soon wanders over to the tower reserved for single men and joins a poker game for a short time. When she's back in her room, a man named Abraham Todd enters and attacks her. Temple kills him and soon learns that Abraham's brother, Moses, has sworn revenge on Temple. Temple flees and, once back on the road, encounters a retarded man she later learns is named Maury. She saves him from the zombies and takes him with her, planning to find a safe place to leave him. Temple stops for a few days at a large estate belonging to the Griersons. There she connects briefly with one of the sons and agrees to kill the man's father, who is a zombie being kept in a cage in the basement. Temple plans to leave Maury there but learns he has a note with the address of his family in Texas and realizes she feels a responsibility to take him there. Moses arrives and Temple ties him up, leaving instructions that he's to be released the following day.

Temple soon discovers a clan of people who are using mucus from the zombies to create a race of giants. She, Maury, and Moses are all three captured but Temple manages to escape by killing several of them, taking Maury with her and leaving Moses a weapon so that he might have a chance of escaping on his own. Temple and Maury hitch a ride on a train to Longview, Texas, where they discover a community trying to take back a portion of the city from the zombies. Temple and Maury continue their trek south and find the town where Maury's family lives, then the house Maury recognizes. Temple quickly realizes there's something horribly wrong and when she goes upstairs she finds a couple dead on the bed, obviously having taken an overdose of pills once the zombies took over. But Temple then discovers that Moses has arrived ahead of her and she runs from the house, hoping only to draw him as far away from Maury as possible. When she emerges through the door, she encounters the little giant girl, who was kidnapped by Moses when he escaped the giant clan. The little girl recognizes Temple as murderer of her family and she shoots Temple, fatally wounding her. Moses is infuriated that Temple's death is without honor because he's come to respect her. He kills the little giant girl and then sets out on a trip, taking responsibility for Maury.



Chapters 1 and 2

Chapters 1 and 2 Summary

As the story opens, Temple is living in an abandoned lighthouse on an island off the Florida coast. She has created a routine for herself here and likes her life. She has candles and fishing gear. She has nets set out for fish and gathers nuts. She often spends her afternoons looking through old magazines, the pictures depicting a life she's never known. Though the ocean's level has fallen with the changing season, she still feels safe because the breakers hit on the shoreline with such force it would be difficult for a zombie - that she calls meatskins or slugs - to arrive from the mainland without being battered to bits. On the day the first one arrives, it is beaten too badly to be a threat but she knows this is the end of the safety she's experienced here.

In Chapter Two, Temple gets ready to leave that night with plans to swim back to the mainland the following morning. She has gathered some important possessions, including a cooler, canteen, and a pistol with two rounds. Temple has a Gurkha, a type of knife given to her by a friend years earlier. She keeps it with her and in good condition always. She notes that it's a good knife and the blade is "a foot long with an inward curve to it."

Temple heads to the beach early the next morning but takes time to say good-bye to the lighthouse, a place that's been her home for awhile. She returns to the upper floor and takes one of the many mirrors that makes up the beacon. It takes about an hour to swim to the mainland. Once there, she sees some slugs lumbering along the beach but they haven't seen her and she focuses her attention on the cars that might provide transportation. One of the slugs spots her and begins the lumbering run toward her. It's a woman dressed in a nurse's uniform but she keeps tripping in the sand and Temple has plenty of time to get to one of the cars. She hotwires a jeep and heads out onto the road.

Temple soon finds a convenience store and enters, gathering some supplies including bottled water and packages of cheese crackers. She really likes the crackers and they taste especially good after the monotonous diet of fish on the island. She gathers flashlights and batteries, boxes and cans of food, and sodas along with a hairbrush and toothbrush. She then gets back on the road.

Temple rides on and considers that it would be a good thing to have a dog for companionship. She figures they could find a car with "comfortable seats" and that they could sing while they drive. She sees lights in the distance and heads toward it, knowing it means there are humans there. She develops car trouble and is stranded. She considers heading toward a nearby house and weighs that against the possibility that she could walk to the glow of lights in the city by the morning. She chooses the house and gets there to discover the smell that indicates there is either a corpse or a zombie in the house. She finds her way to a basement and is there when two zombies emerge



from a cabinet to attack her. She has her knife, a Gurkha that was a gift from a man who took care of her years earlier, and kills them though it's a horrific, bloody mess when she's done. She emerges from the house and heads toward the city.

Chapters 1 and 2 Analysis

The humor and the descriptions are dark from the opening pages. Temple discovers a battered zombie on the shore of her little island and she notes that it is in terrible condition. She's not particularly afraid of it and laughs at the fact that its bottom jaw has been torn completely off. She talks for a while, mainly to herself about her situation, then says she's done enough "jawing" for both of them, referring to the fact the zombie is missing his jaw. She crushes the zombie's head with a rock and the details are gory, describing how the eyeball is trailing out and the colors of the mucus.

There's an interesting scene when Temple enters the first convenience store after leaving the island. She gathers necessities but also picks up an entire roll of lottery tickets. She says she likes to see "how much of a millionaire she would have been in the old times." There are several important points here. First, Temple is not spending every single moment running from zombies or trying to protect herself. She needs a little entertainment and down time and there obviously aren't a lot of options for relaxation. A question that arises is how she can determine what she wins because Temple is illiterate. She can read numbers as evidenced by her ability to navigate using highway signs but she wouldn't be able to read the directions on the lottery tickets.

Temple remembers a joke she's heard about a zombie being invited to a wedding party. The punch line is that at the end of the event, there are "twice the leftovers and half the guests." Temple has been thinking prior to this joke about the fact that it's fortunate the zombies don't crave food that ordinary humans eat. The message of the joke is clear though the humor is dark. Another important aspect of this scene is the amount of food still in the convenience store, undisturbed. She picks up sodas and the packages of cheese crackers. Temple is a teenager and has never known a world in which there weren't zombies. This indicates there aren't many humans left alive. The convenience store obviously hasn't been restocked in decades but there are still plenty of food items for Temple to take what she needs.



Chapters 3 and 4

Chapters 3 and 4 Summary

In Chapter Three, Temple arrives at the city, located in Georgia, to find it apparently deserted except for the meatskins. She walks toward some tall buildings in the town and along the way discovers a jewelry shop. She stops and looks in the window, knowing there was a time when people coveted these things. She catches a glimpse of movement in the reflection of the jewelry store window and turns quickly. She finds a man who'd mistaken her for a zombie because she'd been standing still for so long. The man is handsome, in his thirties, freshly shaven and alert. He calls to his friends and Temple is quickly surrounded by a group of about a dozen. They note that she's covered in blood and want to make sure she isn't bitten. She assures them she isn't. They head back toward their base and Temple learns the blond is named Louis. Another man introduces himself to her as Abraham. When they ask Temple for her name, she lies, saying it's Sarah Mary Williams. Abraham reveals he has a brother and offers to protect her. She seeks to ignore him and begins talking with Louis who reveals they are staying in a huge multiplex of four tall buildings that were previously offices and department stores. They've been secured and converted to neighborhoods.

Once inside, Temple is introduced to a woman named Ruby who provides clean clothes. Temple learns there are a few children in the neighborhoods and that Ruby's sister, Elaine, holds school every morning in an effort to educate the children so they'll be able to "rebuild when this is all over." Ruby reveals there are seven hundred thirteen people in the four buildings they call neighborhoods. She said there is a doctor though medical facilities are limited. Ruby reveals a great many items available in the department store and Temple decides to paint her finger nails pink. She considers the possibility that she might make her home here and thinks it might be a good thing. Ruby recommends Temple stay away from the fourth building, saying that's where the single men live. She says the men are good but rough.

The following day, Temple walks around inside the buildings. She offers to help in the kitchen but she has no experience and is pretty useless there. One night she joins a group watching a movie. But she's soon antsy and feeling the need to do something. One night she can't sleep and makes her way to the fourth building where the men are playing poker with an array of pills being used instead of money. She is given a few pills and joins the game, soon winning several more. She is soon catching the attention of Moses and Abraham, which makes her uncomfortable. She goes to another part of the building that's set up as a watch tower. She's sitting there when Moses enters and takes a seat beside her. They talk for a few minutes and Temple says she believes Moses is more dangerous than the zombies and Moses says he has been thinking the same about her.

Back in her room, Temple takes one of the pills to help her sleep and goes to bed. She's wakened by Abraham trying to attack her. She tells him to go away but he continues the



attack and Temple hits him in the groin, driving him to his knees. He grabs her Gurkha knife and slices at her. Temple puts her hand out to try to stave off the blow and the knife slices off half of her little finger. Temple continues to fight back and Abraham gets very loud. Temple tries to hush him, fearing people will somehow blame her for the attack, and she puts her hand over his mouth, smothering him to death. When she realizes he's dead, she drives an ink pen into his brain so that he won't become a zombie as well.

In Chapter Four, Temple goes to Ruby's room where she asks Ruby to sew a flap of skin over her little finger in order to stop the bleeding. Ruby initially tries to object, saying there's a doctor, but Temple insists and Ruby complies. She sits down for a minute after the "mending" is complete and falls asleep, not waking until the following morning. Ruby tells her people are angry about Abraham's death and that Temple will have to slip away. Temple puts on a dress as if she's headed to the church service with Ruby but instead heads to the garage where Ruby shows her a car she believes won't be missed for a long time. Temple takes it and leaves the city.

As she heads out, it's raining and Temple notes that, rather than washing everything clean, the sun after the rain simply makes more mold and rot grow. She finds a toy store and stops to go inside where she finds a toy airplane. Temple remembers a conversation with a young boy named Malcolm after he'd seen a white streak across the sky. Temple explained to him that it was an airplane, such as they'd seen on television, and explains the general dynamics behind flying which she calls "aerodynastics."

About ten that night, Temple finds a group of hunters and stops. A man named Lee tells her they've been north to Canada and found Niagara Falls. He describes it and Temple thinks that might be somewhere she'd like to go. They are eating and she discovers it's zombie meat, which they call creeper. She is hesitant but eats it and discovers it tastes like pork. When Temple wakes the following morning, she learns another group has joined them and that they're telling the story of encountering a big man who is looking for a girl traveling alone. They believe that girl is Temple and she realizes the man searching for her is Moses Todd, Abraham's brother. Temple tells Lee that she killed Abraham and Lee asks if Abraham deserved it. Lee asks Temple if she'd like to stay with them but she says she'll continue north. Lee is a little reluctant to let her leave but admits that she's managed to take care of herself up to this point.

Chapters 3 and 4 Analysis

As she's walking around the four "neighborhoods" for the first time, Temple recalls stories she's heard of life before the zombies. She says there were tales of children riding bicycles on neighborhood streets, families going on picnics, and trips to the park or camping. Temple says these stories always sounded like tall tales to her. She says they are "dipped in nostalgia," indicating she believes this is how people have chosen to remember their lives rather than how they really were. Temple says the people of these stories had no cares other than whether they were going to be bitten by mosquitoes. She then says that aspects of life will always be ready to bite, whether it's a mosquito or



a zombie. To a degree, she's right. These stories reflect only a small part of life and don't at all consider hassles of work and trying to pay the bills, or the natural tendency of humans to argue, children chaffing under their parents' demands, and a myriad of other cares and concerns. The difference is that those things pale in comparison to the presence and dangers of the zombies.

The details of how people become zombies are never revealed as a list or definitive facts, but it appears that everyone who dies becomes a zombie unless their brain is stabbed or shot to keep it from happening. It apparently takes a short while for that transition and it seems that a person who is bitten can also be turned to a zombie without dying.



Chapters 5 and 6

Chapters 5 and 6 Summary

In Chapter Five, Temple continues to travel and encounters a man walking with an old woman in his arms. She's dead but Temple knows she can't have been dead long or she'd have become a zombie. There is a large group of zombies following them and Temple stops and points out he's "collecting quite a crowd." She says he's going to be in trouble soon but the man barely reacts and Temple realizes he's mentally retarded. She calls him "dummy" but doesn't feel she can just go off and leave him. She pulls a little distance in front of him and stops the car. She sets up with her rifle and begins picking off the zombies that are following him. She finishes off the rest with her knife and is going to leave him there but can't bring herself to do it. She has him dig a grave in the yard of a house and then sends him to pick some flowers. While he's out of sight, she shoots the granny in the head so she won't become a zombie. They complete the burial and Temple prepares again to leave but the dummy - who she later learns is named Maury - gets in the car. Temple objects but gives in.

Temple begins to drive again and she remembers encountering the man she called Uncle Jackson. He'd found Temple and Malcolm in a drain pipe living off squirrels and berries. It was Uncle Jackson who'd given Temple the knife.

Temple watches as Maury continues to scratch at his head and she realizes he has lice. They stop at a house with a water hose and later at a hair salon where Temple helps him clean up. They continue to travel and Temple encounters one town where the zombie population is so dense she has to drive slowly to keep from hitting them because she fears damaging the car and she has to keep moving to keep them from gathering around her car. She notes that some of the zombies turn on their weaker counterparts, dragging them down and feeding on them.

As they get past the city, there are fewer zombies and Temple discovers a huge mansion sitting in the middle of a fantastic estate. Temple realizes there's an electric fence around the property to keep the zombies away. She goes near the gate and fires her gun into the air. A man soon arrives and says the estate is called Belle Isle, and that it belongs to Mrs. Grierson. He initially tells her she'll have to go away but Temple says she's only fifteen and that he'll have it on his conscience if he sends her back out. The man, who says his name is Johns, opens the gate and lets them in.

In Chapter Six, Temple and Maury enter the house and discover it's "like something she's seen in movies." Temple learns the estate is called Belle Isle. She's introduced to Mrs. Grierson who offers her tea and says only she, her son, and her two grandsons live on the estate along with their employees, Johns and Maisie. Temple tries to carry on polite conversation. She says Maury is her older brother and Mrs. Grierson's grandson, Richard, says it's not safe out and that Temple should remain with them.



Temple decides rather quickly that she'll be moving on soon but she decides to wait a few days, hoping that Moses will lose their trail and that the Griersons will become attached to Maury so that she can leave him there. That night Temple goes for a walk and encounters James Grierson in a wooded area near the house. James tells about being stationed in Hattiesburg where the military had set up a fort but were unable to keep the zombies fought off. James asks if she has family and she says Maury isn't really her brother but that Malcolm might have been. She says there was a man they called Uncle Jackson but that he wasn't really their uncle.

Temple remembers when Uncle Jackson came to her and announced he'd been bitten by a zombie. He had said Temple would have to cut his arm off with the hopes that the disease wouldn't spread. She had done so but he soon realized he was going to turn anyway. He had sent Temple and Malcolm away, keeping one gun and saying he'd take care of himself before he turned. She tells James that everyone has to die and that was Uncle Jackson's time. She says she and Malcolm were with him for a couple of years or more, and that they traveled after leaving him. James asks what happened to Malcolm and Temple evades the question. Instead, she begins kissing James though he resists, saying she's too young. They have sex and Temple returns to the house.

Temple spends a little time with Mrs. Grierson the following morning and then encounters James again. James takes her to "meet" his father and she discovers he's a zombie and is being held in a cage in the basement. James says his brother has tried to trick their father into eating meat but that he obviously is starving. Temple also spends a little time with Richard and discovers he wants to travel the world when things return to normal. A week passes and she begins to plan to leave. She's outside one evening when James finds her and says Moses Todd is in their parlor.

Chapters 5 and 6 Analysis

There is something strange about the Griersons from the beginning of Temple's acquaintance with them. Mrs. Grierson is obviously seeking to hold onto the life she remembers prior to the arrival of the zombies. She is holding to a level of comfort and sophistication to which she was obviously accustomed before the fall of civilization. Her ability to do so is a statement of the dedication of those around her because on her own, she would be helpless. When Temple learns that Mrs. Grierson's husband is a zombie and is being held in the basement, the reader is left to decide why she's gone to this length to keep him. It could be that she loves him but it seems more likely that she's unable to let him go because he represents a level of security from her past life.

An interesting note about Temple's first impression of the Grierson house is that she realizes there are no lookout places or other points of security except the electric fence. That has apparently been sufficient to keep the zombies at bay up to this point but Temple sees the need for additional security.



Chapter 7

Chapter 7 Summary

In Chapter Seven, James says Moses was allowed inside before he knew what was happening. Temple picks up her gun from the car and enters the house, tying Moses to a chair. Temple and Moses talk and she points out that she made sure Abraham wouldn't come back as a zombie. Moses thanks her for that but says it doesn't make up for killing him. Temple says she's going to leave Moses tied to the chair and she's going to leave. She says the Griersons will turn him loose in a day when she's had a chance to get away. She asks for his word that he won't hurt the Griersons and he promises. Temple prepares to say goodbye to Maury but encounters James before she can get out of the house. He asks her to kill his father, saying he knows it's the right thing but that he can't bring himself to do it. James gives her a gun but she uses a knife, knowing it will be quieter.

Temple remembers that Maury has a slip of paper in his pocket. She doesn't know how to read but asks James to read it to her before she goes. He does and the slip says, "Hello! My name is Maury and I wouldn't hurt a fly. My grandmother loves me and wishes she could take care of me forever," and goes on to indicate his grandmother is dead - obviously the woman Maury was carrying when Temple found him. The note indicates he has family, Jeb and Jeanie Duchamp, in Point Comfort, Texas. Temple decides she'll take Maury with her in search of his family.

Chapter 7 Analysis

There is an interesting conversation between Moses and Temple that indicates they both believe in predestination and fate. As they are talking in the Griersons living room, Moses points out that neither he nor Temple are in charge of their own fates. He asks the question, "Who made Abraham Todd my brother?" followed by the question, "Who delivered you into his mitts?" Moses says neither he nor Temple are in charge of their lives. Temple agrees. Moses says that his brother wasn't a good man and admits that he was an idiot, obviously indicating that he does realize Abraham had a role in his own death. However, he says that doesn't eliminate Temple's responsibility in the situation, indicating he still blames her for killing Abraham, even if Abraham deserved it. This theme is seen repeatedly throughout the book and it seems obvious that Temple believes in fate. During their conversation, Moses says that he and Temple are "just playing the parts written down and put before us," and she agrees. Later in the conversation, Moses says "the look of God is still on us," despite the fact that there are zombies overrunning the land and that most people have obviously given up on the idea that God is in charge.



Chapter 8

Chapter 8 Summary

In Chapter Eight, Temple has stopped to work for a man with a huge berry patch, picking berries in return for a share of them. Maury is chopping wood for the man in return for eggs. Temple learns they are in Alabama and has to force the man to give them their share of the food they were promised. In Mississippi they find a huge museum and break in, spending a little time there. When they stop to sleep at night, Temple often sleeps with her head on Maury's chest, comforted by the sound of his heartbeat.

One day Temple sees a huge, loping being on the road. She immediately believes it to be a meatskin but it reacts to her car by hiding, indicating it is not a zombie. She wonders what it could be and goes to investigate. She follows it into the woods and sees a huge group of dolls. She is amazed by the sight and forgets to pay attention to her surroundings. When she realizes she can hear breathing behind her, she turns to find a horrific being standing over her, holding a rock, and then Temple is hit and passes out.

When she wakes, she sees what appears to be a giant though it has the face and hair of a little girl. The child says she's going to kill Temple and when Temple asks why, the girl says because Temple isn't her kin. Then a huge man appears, calls the girl Millie, and says she was told just to watch Temple. He carries Temple away from the woods to a building where they encounter Moses Todd. Moses says he isn't going to let the man kill Temple because that's his privilege, then shoots the man. Millie runs away and Moses is preparing to kill Temple. He asks if she has last words and she says she wishes she'd had the opportunity to see Niagara Falls, just because she's heard that it was so big. Just then a group of giants arrive and Moses tries to run before they are captured. They are taken to an inner room in town hall where they are placed in a cell. Temple notes that God is able to find her, even there, providing the peace of sleep. She falls asleep quickly.

Chapter 8 Analysis

One day Temple and Maury encounter a car headed the opposite direction. They stop for a moment and talk, the driver of the other car asking if Temple has any shotgun ammunition. Temple reveals they have only one kind and it's not what the man needs. Temple shares the berries she'd picked a couple of days earlier. This seems typical of the attitudes on the road in this time period. People who have managed to survive often stop to help each other and, for the most part, the people are honorable and willing to honestly help each other.



Chapters 9

Chapters 9 Summary

In Chapter Nine, Moses Todd wakes Temple. He's in the cell next to her and Maury is moaning and reaching for Temple in the cell next to Maury. Moses asks Temple to help bind his wounds but she refuses, saying if he dies she'll have one less worry. Two huge men enter the room and though they seem to be zombies they move like humans. One, named Bodie, tells the one named Royal to sit down for "a dose." The two take turns injecting clear liquid into each other then leave Moses and Temple discussing what the liquid might be and why there are zombies in another of the cells. The giant little girl named Millie arrives and gives each of the three prisoners raw corn.

The following morning, Millie again brings breakfast and that afternoon she brings them tea. Moses suggests Millie is treating them like playthings and Temple says she doesn't care as long as it means they are getting regular meals. Later, two men take Temple and Maury out of their cells to meet the group's leader, a woman they call "Mama." The woman is grotesque and asks if Maury might want to become a member of her family. Temple says she and Maury have somewhere to be. The woman says her family will "inherit the earth" and that the zombies are a blessing to her family. Mama sends them back to their cells with instructions to begin giving Maury the shots. The man called "Doc" arrives, splits open the skull of a zombie and extracts something which is then set aside to be injected into Maury. When they take Maury out of the cell, Temple gets vocal and they take her out, planning to inject her as well. Temple tries to resist the need to fight for Maury but can't and gouges out the eye of one of the men holding her. She fights brutally over the next few minutes, killing all three of the men.

Chapters 9 Analysis

Moses and Temple have an interesting conversation the evening they are both awake in their cells being held by the mutants. Moses says he'd met a woman soon after the dead began coming back to life and that she'd been mourning her husband who was recently dead. Moses says the woman told him she'd dreamed of him one night, that he'd come back to her and that he'd "tried to swallow her whole." Moses says the woman has an injury and she hadn't realized she'd been infected and will soon become a zombie. Moses says he did realize it and that he'd simply left. He says that, looking back on it from the years later and the understanding of the situation, he should have killed her. The fact that Moses and Temple have these kinds of conversations is evidence that they have some level of respect for each other. Moses seems to look back on the incident with remorse because he didn't kill the woman. He refers to the "code" and Temple has also referred to the need to eliminate the possibility that anyone will return as a zombie by damaging the brain soon after death. However, Moses says this particular code "doesn't feel like it fits exactly proper." He obviously has some regret that the killing is necessary.



As they continue to talk in the cell, Temple reveals that she wants to visit Niagara Falls. She says she's heard of people having honeymoons there and that seems to be "living it all the way up." This will be important later as Temple and Moses have a show down and Moses pledges to visit Niagara Falls in Temple's memory.



Chapters 10 and 11

Chapters 10 and 11 Summary

In Chapter Ten, Temple eventually stops beating the men and she and Maury leave the room, leaving Moses in his cell. Temple returns and gives Moses a knife, saying she hopes they kill him but that the knife will give him a fighting chance. She and Maury make their way back to where her car is abandoned. She has figured out that a tracking device has continued to lead Moses to her and knows she'll now leave the car behind. She finds one gun with a full clip and she and Maury begin the walk away from town.

Temple soon begins to follow the paths of a railroad track. She notes that the rails are shiny and wonders if they are somehow being used. They find a river and bathe, and Temple washes out their clothes as much as possible. Temple talks to Maury at length about her worries that she's completely evil. She says her hands seem to be good for nothing other than killing. She ends the conversation by saying she'd better get him to Texas soon so he can be rid of her.

In Chapter Eleven, they continue to follow the railroad tracks and only occasionally encounter zombies, all too weak with hunger to be a threat. At one point they find a stack of burned corpses and Temple ponders the meaning. They walk for days and on the fifth day, Temple hears an approaching train. She tells Maury anyone with the ability to operate a train will probably be the source of a ride farther west but she keeps her Gurkha knife handy just to be safe. The train comes to a stop and an old man named Wilson talks to her, saying things to the East are much more severe and that he'd been an engineer in Washington, D.C., when the epidemic hit twenty-five years earlier. There are other men on the train, mainly former members of the military who dedicate their lives to riding the rails in search of people to help. Wilson tells Temple she can ride with them to Longview, Texas, and that she can find directions from there to Point Comfort.

There are other passengers on the train and Temple says they are as hopeless as the zombies. When the train stops, Temple and Maury leave their boxcar for a different one without mattresses and furniture so that there are fewer passengers to deal with. Temple and Maury sleep and when she wakes, Moses Todd is leaning over her. Temple reacts quickly and when she's fully awake she realizes it's actually the man named Lee she'd met earlier. Lee says one member of his group was bitten and that he'd simply grown tired of the constant traveling.

Temple describes some of the places they pass through, including some ghost towns that are so deserted that even the zombies don't remain there. She says these places are treated with respect and they have been spared the rot and decay the zombies bring with them, but they are still completely left behind in this new world order.



Chapters 10 and 11 Analysis

Temple is beyond brutal with her killing of the three giants. When she's completely destroyed the bodies of the three men, she's covered in gore. Temple and Maury leave the room but Temple returns and seems to seek some kind of reassurance from Moses. She points out the mess to him and says she doesn't understand how it could possibly be that she went so far overboard in the killing. She says she understands her need to kill the men but doesn't understand why she went crazy with it. Moses reaches through the bars and rubs his thumb along her cheek, then shows her that he has a smudge of the gore on his hands. He says this proves that it wipes off. He seems to be saying that she's capable of moving on past any specific actions and that she's a good person.

Temple is obviously struggling with memories of the past. She talks about her fears with almost everyone she spends any time with, including Lee. She tells him that, for her, staying alive hasn't been nearly as difficult as "staying right." When Lee asks who she'd mistaken him for when she woke him, Temple says she'd thought he was a man she'd left to die, and says that's one of the things she would rather not remember.



Chapter 12

Chapter 12 Summary

In Chapter Twelve, the train stops in Longview, Texas. They pass through a barricade and Temple finds a community trying to survive inside the gates. There are people inhabiting nine blocks of the city and Wilson says this is the largest "stronghold east of Dallas." The passengers leave the train, the men who are frequent visitors to Longview or who live there moving away with girlfriends and family. The newcomers are welcomed and Wilson moves away with some leaders, deciding which of those will remain and which will be taken on to Dallas. Lee says he's going to find a cold drink but Temple declines his invitation to join him. Instead, a teenager named Dirk introduces himself to Temple and invites her on "a date." After ascertaining there is ice for sodas, she agrees and they go together to a diner. Dirk talks a great deal and Temple notes that most of his ideas are out of touch with the horrors waiting just outside the city's barricades. It's quickly evident that Dirk expects Temple to remain in the city with him. He describes his passion for music and says he likes to play the guitar. He asks Temple what she enjoys and she realizes she spends most of her time trying to stay alive and that those activities aren't on the same level as a hobby. Temple tells him she won't be staying in the city and he kisses her, saying he'll never forget her.

Temple rejoins Lee and the others and is given directions to Point Comfort. She memorizes the highway numbers. She's provided a car and some food. Lee asks to go along but Temple refuses, saying if he dies she'll have his death as one more burden on her conscience.

Temple and Maury travel on and encounter an old woman living in what was apparently once a carnival. She speaks only Spanish and she and Temple can't understand each other, but the woman welcomes Temple into her hiding place. The old woman is mentally deranged but provides food, which Temple appreciates. After Temple eats, the old woman rocks back and forth, chanting something in Spanish and begins knitting on a scarf that's "impossibly long." Temple talks to the old woman for a long time though she knows the woman can't understand. She describes the people she's killed and tells of her guilt and grief over Malcolm's death. Temple and Maury had been at a place where a large iron statue stood beside a building. She had decided to go inside to be certain it was safe before allowing Malcolm inside, but once she was inside, she found blueprints on the walls and became so caught up in them that she forgot about Malcolm and didn't even hear his screams until the zombies had already attacked him, ripping his body open. Temple says she burst on the scene and slaughtered them all, taking delight in the carnage she was creating. She says she is to blame for Malcolm's death, the same as if it were she who split his abdomen open. She had held Malcolm's lifeless body and severed his head before leaving him so that he wouldn't return as a zombie himself. Temple talks for a long time more, talking of her feelings and things that have happened to her, but eventually leaves the old woman behind, still working on her knitting.



Chapter 12 Analysis

Temple's encounter with the old woman is interesting though it's also somewhat confusing. The old woman seems to play no role in the story other than providing Temple an outlet through which to tell of her life, her past actions, and her fears about herself. She focuses a great deal on the fact that she's an evil person. Temple's thoughts on this point are complex and are caught up in the idea that killing is wrong. It's not clear why she believes killing is wrong but it brings up the question of nature versus nurture. It's not clear whether Temple recalls being taught that killing is wrong or if she's only hating those times she is out of control in her killing.



Chapters 13 through 15

Chapters 13 through 15 Summary

In Chapter Thirteen, Temple and Maury arrive in a city and Temple faces choices including whether to follow a sign that says "Safe road." In years past, that section of the city had been home to a band of raiders that sent unsuspecting people into cul-de-sacs and dead ends where they were attacked and robbed, then left for the zombies. By the time Temple and Maury are traveling through the city, there aren't any humans left. One night they face a thunderstorm and Temple sleeps for awhile. She continually looks in the rearview mirror, expecting to see the headlights of Moses Todd following her. She has left the car with the tracking device behind and knows he can't possibly find her, and she isn't certain whether to be happy or sad at that thought.

They find Point Comfort and Temple starts looking for the street and house number. As they get near, Maury begins to whine. Though he doesn't say any words, it seems clear he recognizes the neighborhood. The area is deserted and there aren't even any zombies in the streets. She finds number 422 and pulls up to a stop. Before she can get out of the car, she notes there's a "strange flickering glow coming from the front windows." Temple tells Maury he might be about to receive a miracle because it appears there might be someone inhabiting the house.

They stay in the car for twenty minutes and Temple watches closely for any sign of life. She finally decides to go inside and tells Maury to remain behind her because she isn't certain what they'll find. She knocks on the front door, her knife handy but hidden behind her back, but doesn't get an answer. She pushes the door open and finds a fire burning in the fireplace. When the door is opened fully, Maury pushes past her and rushes into the house. He immediately grabs a glass paperweight and sits down in the living room. Temple takes that as a sign he knows where he is but is still perplexed that no one seems to be at home despite the fire burning.

Temple goes upstairs, looking farther into the house in an effort to figure out what's going on. She senses something isn't right but can't figure out what is really happening. Once she's upstairs, she sees a blue flickering from a room. She enters cautiously and discovers the television is on, producing the light she'd seen from that room. There are no television channels and the screen is merely flickering. She moves on and finds the master bedroom. Inside, there is a couple on the bed, both dead for many years. She finds an empty pill bottle beside the bed and surmises the two had taken their own lives when the zombies overran the country. Temple squats beside the bed, angry at the situation. She says she's brought Maury to this place thinking his family would want to have him back. Jeanie Duchamp, one of the corpses on the bed, seems to be laughing. Temple says she's worn out and then accuses Jeanie of being "nothing but a big set of teeth." As soon as the words are out of her mouth, Moses Todd says the teeth are "all the better to eat you with, my dear."



In Chapter Fourteen, Temple asks Moses how he found her again. He says while they were locked in the cells being held prisoners by the giants, he'd become "friendly" with Maury and that Maury had shown him the slip of paper in his pocket indicating where his family was waiting for him. Moses says he'd assumed Temple would bring Maury here. Moses says he had to fight his way out of the giants' prison and indicates a bandana tied over one eye, saying he'd been injured. He says he took the girl, Millie, hostage before he was able to escape. Temple and Moses talk for some time, Temple explaining how she and Maury made their way to Point Comfort without a vehicle. Moses is amazed that Temple rode a train and says he hasn't seen one operating in many years. Temple says she wishes she'd had the chance to visit Niagara Falls and Moses says he went there once. They talk on and Moses asks for her thoughts on the couple who committed suicide. Temple says they are worse than the zombies because they gave up.

Moses holds the gun at her forehead and tells her to turn around but she refuses. She watches his trigger finger and, when she sees the twitch that indicates he's going to pull the trigger, she lunges. They fight and she gets away. Her one thought is to lead him away from Maury and she runs toward the front door, hoping Moses will follow her outside which will mean Maury won't have to see Temple die or kill Moses. She makes it to the door and rushes through. She makes several steps before she sees Millie standing in her path. The girl says, "I'm gon kill you" and Temple doesn't realize Millie is holding a gun until after she hears the shot. Temple falls to the ground and is quickly nearing death.

In Chapter Fifteen, Moses steps through the front door just as Millie kills Temple. He's furious and kills Millie, shouting that Temple was "his little girl." He thinks about Temple and wonders where she's gone now that she's dead. She fires a single shot to her head so that she won't return as a zombie. He finds a shovel and digs a grave in the front yard, then buries her. He engraves a brick as a makeshift headstone. He finds Maury and talks to him, telling him he didn't intend for Temple to die this way. He says he has a daughter named Lilly who would have been about Temple's age, and that he'd spent years searching for her before realizing he was making himself crazy and made himself stop looking. Moses takes Maury outside and instructs him to say good-bye at Temple's graveside. Then they leave with Moses planning to head north.

Chapters 13 through 15 Analysis

Moses' intentions and motivations are somewhat confusing. He seems about to kill Temple in the fourteenth chapter but is then furious when Millie kills Temple. Moses says the situation was supposed to involve only Moses and Temple and he seems angry at Millie's interference. However, he also seems upset that Temple is dead at all and he goes to great lengths to give her a proper burial. It's not clear whether he would actually have killed Temple. When he's angry at Millie, he admits that he doesn't really know what he means by his statement that, "It was her and me."



The story of Moses' wife and daughter is an interesting side of him that provides some insight into his character. Moses says his wife and daughter were with a caravan that was to travel to Jacksonville. Moses was to meet them there but when he arrived, he discovered the entire caravan had vanished. Moses says his daughter, Lilly, would have been about the same age as Temple, which may explain some of their connection between Moses and Temple.

Temples' final thoughts are lofty. She feels as if she has time to slow down, a luxury she's never had in life. She believes she'll have time to find a safe place for Maury and time to bring Malcolm back so she can talk to him more about jets. She imagines herself floating over Niagara Falls and that she's a part of the river and the sky.



Characters

Temple

Temple is a street-wise teenager who is the main character of the book. She's never known a life without zombies and she is accustomed to killing them. The situation has made her hard. She vaguely remembers life in an orphanage and recalls a little boy who may have been her brother. Temple is self-sufficient but also takes responsibility for the safety of others when they are weaker than she. This is seen with the "dummy" she befriends. Though she has no loyalty to him when they meet, she sees a human who is weakened and she sets out to keep him safe. This is an important aspect of Temple's character. Temple isn't educated and is unable to read but she's quite capable in most situations despite that. When she learns that Maury has family in Texas, she sets out to take him there. Despite the fact that she doesn't know the way and can't read road signs, she finds her way. As the story opens, Temple is living alone in a lighthouse and has enjoyed her time alone. She seems comfortable being alone and later, when she's lived in the tower community for a short time, is less comfortable than when she'd lived alone. Temple has never had the opportunity to be a young girl and is enamored with the idea of nail polish, but she's also quickly willing to return to the practical things of life. When she's attacked, she kills the man who attacked her in order to protect herself.

Moses Todd

Moses Todd is a rough man who lives in the four towers where Temple discovers an entire community has been built. Moses is the brother of Abraham who attacks Temple. When it's discovered that Temple killed Abraham, Moses sets out for revenge. There's a strange sense of honor in Moses' actions and he and Temple seem to understand that about each other. Moses is tough as evidenced by his ability to handle situations. When Temple leaves him locked up in the cell where the giants have taken them hostage, Moses asks her to release him. He promises to give her a head start if she does, the same promise he makes when she leaves him tied up at the Grierson's estate. When Temple leaves Moses at the Griersons, she warns him not to hurt any of them. When he reconnects with Temple next, he says that he didn't. Moses wants to kill Temple but when the little giant girl kills Temple, Moses is furious, saying that Temple's death has counted for nothing because it was done wrong. He seems to feel that he should have been the one to kill Temple but there seems to be more this his anger than just being robbed of his revenge. Moses feels he owes Temple something after her death was so poorly executed and he pledges to take over her care of Maury, and he sets out to fulfill Temple's dream of seeing Niagara Falls.



Maury

A retarded man who is running from a pack of zombies with his grandmother's body when Temple first sees him. Maury is gentle and Temple is able to direct him to do what she needs him to do.

Malcolm

A young boy who dies before the opening of the book, Temple remembers Malcolm as being with her in the orphanage and believes he might have been her biological brother. Malcolm is killed by zombies.

James Grierson

James Grierson is the young man Temple meets when she and Maury stop for a period of time at the Grierson estate. James and Temple connect romantically and James calls on Temple to kill his father who is a zombie.

Abraham Todd

Abraham Todd is a man who lives in the towers community who tries to rape Temple in her bedroom. Abraham is the brother of Moses and Moses pledges to kill Temple out of revenge.

Ruby

Ruby, a woman who lives in the tower communities and who helps Temple get settled in, provides Temple with nail polish and tells her about the community. It's also Ruby who sews up Temple's hand after she has the fight with Abraham.

Mr. Grierson

The father of James, Mr. Grierson has become a zombie and is being held in the basement of the family home. Temple compares it to keeping a pet. James hates the way his father is being held and wants to kill him but doesn't have the heart to do it himself. He asks Temple to kill him and she does.

Dirk

A teenaged boy who lives in Longview, Texas, in the settlement, Dirk asks Temple to go on a "date" with him and she accepts. Dirk seems hungry for a normal life though he isn't old enough to remember a life prior to the zombies.

Lee

Lee is a man who is traveling with a group of hunters encountered by Temple soon after she leaves the four tower neighborhood. Lee reveals that Moses Todd is looking for Temple and worries about her setting out on her own but accepts that she's managed to keep herself safe thus far.

Uncle Jackson

Uncle Jackson is a man who takes Temple and Malcolm in when they are young and cares for them over a length of time during their childhood. Uncle Jackson gives Temple the knife she always carries. He is bitten by a zombie and has Temple cut his arm off, hoping that will stop the spread of the disease, but it doesn't. He sends Temple and Malcolm away before he completely turns and indicates he'll kill himself before he turns completely.



Objects/Places

Florida

Florida is the state in which the opening scenes of the story occur.

The Lighthouse

The Lighthouse is the building in which Temple is living as the story opens.

Slugs and Meatskins

Temple calls the zombies slugs and meatskins.

Point Comfort, Texas

Maury's family members live in Point Comfort, Texas where Temple is killed.

Gurkha

The knife Temple uses is called a Gurkha and it was a gift from a man who'd taken care of Temple and Malcolm for a period of time.

Longview, Texas

Longview, Texas is the town where the train line comes to a stop and where Temple goes on a date with a young boy named Dirk before heading south to find Maury's house.

Georgia

The four towers that have been taken over and converted into a small community are in Georgia.

The Four Towers

The Four Towers is a group of buildings that have been converted into "neighborhoods" where hundreds of people are seeking to establish a normal life for themselves and their families.



Niagara Falls

Temple wants to go to Niagara Falls after she leaves Maury, but she never makes the trip to this popular tourist destination.

The Train

Temple and Maury take the train to Longview, Texas, after they escape the giants.



Themes

The Will to Survive

The will to survive is an overwhelming theme in this story, made more important by the state of the world. An extension of this theme is the need to live with oneself. Temple and the other characters are faced with the constant threat of violence and death at the hands of zombies and at the hands of other people who have become corrupted by the situation. Temple feels little as she's bashing in zombies' heads or hacking their brains to neutralize them as threats. Many people are seeking to form "neighborhoods" with life as nearly normal as they can manage under the circumstances. In one of these neighborhoods, the families go to church, the children go to school, and there are suites of rooms set aside for family living. There are patrols in this case that care for the needs of the group with regard to safety and these patrols kill off some zombies regularly in order to "keep the population down." In Temple's case, the will to survive is tempered by her need to keep others safe. She feels a deep guilt over Malcolm's death and that makes her feel responsible for those around her. Temple's need to keep Maury safe results in her death. As she is running from Moses Todd, all she can think is that she needs to lead Moses away from Maury so that Maury won't have to see whatever happens between them. Temple rushes headlong into the giant girl, Millie, who kills Temple.

Living with Consequences

Temple feels a huge amount of guilt over Malcolm's death. She and the boy are traveling alone when they find an interesting warehouse or office building with a huge statue outside. Temple plans to go inside to see that it's safe before allowing Malcolm to follow, but as soon as she's inside her attention is captured by a large set of blueprints on the wall. She's fascinated and so enthralled that she doesn't hear Malcolm's screams for help. When Temple discovers Malcolm's dead body, she goes crazy and slaughters the group of zombies that killed him. Temple is not only guilty over her role in Malcolm's death, she is also upset at her reaction. She says she is justified in killing the zombies but that the level of violence in the slaughter is over the top. A similar situation occurs when she and Maury are captured by the giants. Temple sleeps a great deal during the early hours of her captivity and seems almost indifferent to their fate. However, when it's evident that the giants are going to make Maury into one of them, she goes crazy, killing the three in the room at the time. She is brutal about it and continues to beat one of them long after he's dead. When she calms down and sees the level of brutality, she is again upset with herself. She believes this makes her evil and seeks reassurance from Moses Todd on this front. Temple worries that she will again feel responsible if anyone near her is hurt or killed and refuses Lee's request to accompany her because of this fear.



The Effects of Zombies

The new world order drives a great deal of the story based on how the presence of zombies affects life in general. One notable point is that everyone expects to encounter zombies all the time. When Temple goes into a store, she notes the presence of zombies a short distance away but she gathers the things she needs until they get near. When she's in a large city with a huge population of zombies, she carefully drives through them, keeping her speed constant so they are not able to break into her car but slow enough that she won't hit one and damage the car. The fact that anyone can become a zombie makes it necessary to damage the brain soon after death. Temple does this to Maury's granny and to Abraham, and Moses does the same to Temple. Another important aspect of the zombies' presence is seen in the giant family. These creatures have evolved as a way of gaining superiority over the zombies. Families have been torn apart as is seen in the lives of Moses and Temple. Temple doesn't remember her mother and says she isn't certain whether Malcolm is her biological brother. She mentions growing up in an orphanage where there were apparently many children who had lost parents. Moses lost track of his wife and daughter and never found them. There are many other things that have changed because of the zombies' presence, including technology and entertainment.



Style

Point of View

The story is written in third person but almost completely from the limited perspective of Temple, the main character of the story who spends a great deal of time alone. The limited perspective is acceptable in this story because the action follows Temple throughout her travels. There are pieces of historic information presented in the form of flashbacks. For example, it's noted that Temple and Malcolm, a little boy who might have been Temple's biological brother, spent some time with a man who cared for them much as he might have cared for his own children. Temple's memories of this part of her life are all the reader knows about that situation, but that's really all the reader needs to know. The limited perspective means the reader doesn't know what's happening with other characters until Temple finds out. This is an important aspect of the author's use of suspense. For example, when Temple arrives in Texas with Maury, she almost immediately realizes there's something wrong with the situation but she doesn't know what. While the reader might suspect that Moses Todd has arrived before Temple and Maury, the reader doesn't know this for certain until Temple makes the discovery. The important deviation from this perspective is seen in the moment following Temple's death. Without her as an eye for the perspective, the author changes the point of view to that of Moses Todd.

Setting

The story is set in the United States in some unnamed time. The exact time setting is not important but it seems to be fairly modern-day because there is electricity and vehicles, and there was once television and radio. There is no mention of other technology such as cellular phones or computers, but it could be that these things simply have no place in this world order. As the story opens, Temple is on an island off the Florida coast. Though it's irrelevant whether the exact island and lighthouse actually exist, it's reasonable to believe they might. From Florida, Temple moves northward toward Georgia and then on to Texas. The general places she stops are real. The train she and Maury ride on stops at a settlement in Longview, Texas, a real town not far from Dallas. The use of these real places as overall settings could be an effort on the part of the author to lend a higher level of believability to the story. There are several specific settings that are important to the story. The lighthouse is the first and Temple feels somewhat sentimental about it. The large office buildings in Georgia are also important because it's here that Temple kills Abraham Todd, prompting Moses Todd to vow revenge for his brother's death. The final setting, a neighborhood in Point Comfort, Texas, is also important because it's here that Temple is killed by the little giant girl. The various settings are described in adequate detail and are appropriate to the story.



Language and Meaning

The story is written through a series of scenes in which the action moves quickly. It could be argued that the language is lyrical except for the gory subject matter. There is a great deal of description as zombies are killed. At times, Temple is covered in the gore of battle and the author describes these scenes in great detail. As the story opens, Temple is faced with a zombie on the island she's called home for some time. The zombie has been beat to pieces on the breakers and the details indicate his body is in poor condition. "The place where the eye was is now a mushy soup of thick clear fluid mixed with blood, like ketchup eggs." This is typical of the descriptions and some readers may find the gore overly graphic and disturbing. There is another particularly gory scene in which Temple kills the giants who are trying to infect Maury with their virus concoction. The overall tone is one of hope as Temple finds some people seeking to regain control of their lives as they fight off the zombies. There are small communities being formed as the survivors set out to survive in as nearly a civilized state as they can. Temple is always enamored with the idea of iced drinks and ice is available at several places. Temple's personal tone is that of pain as she seeks to outrun the memories that plague her. She believes she is responsible for Malcolm's death and feels a great deal of guilt over that situation. Temple is tough and that aspect of her character usually overrides any softer side though she seems to form a brief relationship with James Grierson. There is some foul language and some readers may be offended by the frequency and the level.

Structure

The story is divided into three parts. Part one includes the first seven chapters of the book. This part begins with Temple's life on the island off the Florida coast and the realization that the zombies have discovered her hiding place. This section ends with the realization that she knows where Maury's family lives and that she feels an obligation to try to take him there. Part Two begins with Temple and Maury working for a man who tries to cheat them. Chapters Eight through Twelve are included in this section. In Chapter Twelve, Temple and Maury have spent a little time in the settlement in Longview, Texas, and have headed south toward Point Comfort. They encounter an old woman who spends her time knitting and Temple talks to her though the old woman seems indifferent to Temple's ramblings. The final section includes Chapters Thirteen through Sixteen. In Chapter Thirteen, Temple and Maury finish the last bit of the journey to Point Comfort where they find Maury's house. In the final chapter, Temple dies and Moses Todd pledges to take over Maury's care. The story is not presented with typical punctuation, specifically when it comes to dialogue. Though there is a great deal of dialogue, it's presented without quote marks. This may seem confusing to some readers though the consistency is such that most readers will eventually become accustomed to the method of presentation.



Quotes

"The place where the eye was is now a mushy soup of thick clear fluid mixed with blood, like ketchup eggs. There's a sting of kelp sticking out of the nose that makes him look almost comical - as though someone has played a practical joke on him."

Chapter 1

"She would start in New York and then adventure herself all the way to San Francisco, where they have steep driving hills. She could find a stray dog or a tame wolf and have it sit next to her and puts its head out the window, and they could get a car with comfortable seats and sing songs while they drive."

Chapter 2

"It's hard for people to have children here. We have a doctor but our medical facilities are limited. But also, it's just hard for people to be ... optimistic."

Chapter 3

"Alive, he was the very picture of honor and noblesse. Dead, he's just like every other slug."

Chapter 6

"See, it's a daily chore trying to do the right thing. Not because the right thing is hard to do - it ain't. It's just cause the right thing - well, the right thing's got a way of eluding you."

Chapter 7

"She turns to see the face a full two feet above her, skeletal and horrid, peeled half away, the bone dry and filthy gray, the gumless teeth, the intelligent eyes. Then she sees the arm like a tree limb, raised above her, and the stone clutched in the hand."

Chapter 8

"If they was handing out mamas down at the five-and-dime, I reckon I would take myself one."

Chapter 9

"Ain't no hell deep enough to keep heaven out."

Chapter 9

"Moses, he says I ain't evil, but then if I ain't evil ... If I ain't evil then what am I? Cause my hands, see, they ain't seem to got no purpose except when they're bashing in a skull or slittin a throat."

Chapter 10

"The enemy that sowed them is the devil; the harvest is the end of the world; and the reapers are the angels."

Chapter 11



"You die, and that's one more thing I gotta carry around with me."
Chapter 12

"He takes care of her so she won't come back - a single shot in the head where it won't muck up that face of her."
Chapter 15



Topics for Discussion

Who is Temple? What are her strengths? What are her weaknesses? Is she a likeable character? Is she believable? Support your answers with examples from the text.

Who is Moses Todd? What is his motivation for tracking Temple across the country? Does he believe he's justified? Do you believe he's justified? What is his reaction when Temple is killed? Why do you believe he reacts this way?

What is the false name Temple gives when she meets new people? Why do you believe she chooses this name? Could she be trying to portray an innocence? Is Temple innocent in any way? Does she want to be? Is there a difference in this work between innocence and weakness? Support your answers.

Who is Maury? What is his role in the story? Why does Temple take care of him? Why does Moses take over his care after Temple's death?

Compare the community that's been established at the four towers to the settlement in Texas where Temple arrives by train. Compare Ruby and Dirk. What are the efforts each is making at a normal life amid the chaos? Are the two being honest with themselves? Are their actions believable given the circumstances?

Describe what's known about Temple's life as a child. What is the effect of her childhood on her ability to survive as a teenager? What kind of person might she have been if her childhood had been different?

Describe the giants Temple and Moses encounter. What do you believe to be their motivations? What is the end result of the encounter with the giants?

What do you consider the most important setting of the story? Why do you believe this is important?