

# **The Rest of Us Just Live Here Study Guide**

**The Rest of Us Just Live Here by Patrick Ness**

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# Plot Summary

NOTE: Citations in this study guide refer to the 2015 Harper Teen hardcover edition of *The Rest of Us Just Live Here* by Patrick Ness.

*The Rest of Us Just Live Here* is a young adult fantasy novel by Patrick Ness in which Mikey and his ordinary friends attempt to live as ordinarily as possible in extraordinary times, as the indie kids at school seek to prevent an Immortal invasion. Mikey struggles through the course of the novel with accepting that he is just an average kid, but comes to realize that his life is important and full because of the friends he has.

When the novel begins, high school senior Mikey is in love with Henna, his sister Mel's best friend. Mikey himself is best friends with Jared, a gay linebacker for the school football team, who is himself part god and has the power to attract and heal cats and people. Mikey is envious that Henna seems to have a crush on a mysterious new kid named Nathan, who appears to have formerly been an indie kid. While out with Mel, Henna, and Jared in their usual hangout place, the Field, Mikey sees an indie kid being chased into the woods by a smaller kid, after which a strange blue light can be seen.

In chapter prefaces through the novel, a background story is explained where the indie kids are always the ones to fight zombies, vampires, ghosts, and in this case, the blue-glowing Immortal invasion of Earth that is pending. A very light sketch of these events serves as a backdrop for the ordinary lives of Mikey and his friends as they struggle not only to survive the Immortal invasion, but to get through Finals, prom, and graduation. Mikey comes to feel badly about his own life because he has not done anything extraordinary and because he does not seem to have anything in his life—whether it is the powers of a god or love—to make his life worth living.

Mikey comes to suspect that Nathan has something to do with the Immortal invasion, but then admits to Jared his suspicions are primarily rooted in jealousy. Jared, despite his own powers, admits that indie kids annoy him because they think they are cool, superior, and that what they do does not affect anyone else—yet, the regular kids and people in town still have to deal with the effects of the Immortal invasion. Mikey and Henna kiss and sleep together to see what will happen, but then they both realize there is nothing romantic between them besides the sex. They choose to remain friends at the end of the day.

As this happens, the indie kids commit to their last confrontation with the Immortals. Mikey comes upon an injured indie kid just before graduation, whom Jared heals and allows to return to the fight. This inadvertently leads to saving the day—and Mikey has made his simple contribution to saving the world. It turns out that Jared and Nathan are actually attracted to one other, and Mikey now knows that his life matters because he has people who care about him in it.



# Chapters 1 – 5

## Summary

“Chapter the First” (Chapter 1) – A preface to the chapter describes the Messenger of the Immortals arriving, looking for a permanent Vessel, and chasing indie kid Finn to his final fate. In the main section of the chapter, Mikey Mitchell, his sister Melinda (called Mel), Henna, and Mikey’s friend Jared are in the Field, hanging out on a windy day. The Field is a property plot near the woods that has never been built on and is just down the rural road from where Mikey lives. Henna and Mel talk about guys they think are cute, which bothers Mikey because he likes Henna. Jared, a secretly gay football team linebacker, speaks of true love, while Mel believes the heart does not actually control anything. It is then that they see an indie kid come running out of the woods on one side of the Field, and into the heavy woods on the other. A glowing girl follows after him and Mikey and the others discuss if they know the kids and what they are doing when a pillar of blue light shoots up from the woods. Suddenly, the wind stops and the light disappears. An alarm on Mel’s laptop goes off, meaning that Mel’s and Mikey’s parents have left for the evening to visit their grandmother and that it is safe for Mikey and Mel to go home.

“Chapter the Second” (Chapter 2) – A preface to the chapter reveals that the indie kid Satchel is writing a poem while her parents give her space. Indie kid Dylan arrives to tell Satchel that a glowing girl has informed him of Finn’s fate. In the main section of the chapter, Mikey explains that he is in love with Henna, his sister’s best friend, but has never told her. He says that they have a lot in common, from anxiety to having difficult parental situations. Henna’s father is originally from Finland, while Henna’s mother is black. Both are involved in the church and in mission trips. After graduation in a month, Henna will be going with them on a mission trip to Africa. Henna and Mel wonder what is going on with the indie kids. Mikey explains directly to the reader that indie kids have cook-geek haircuts and dress and have names from the 1950s. Mikey and Mel look for their little sister, ten-year-old Meredith, who is very intelligent and also very in love with the country western boy band Bolts of Fire. Just then, Mikey and Mel’s mom, Mrs. Alice Mitchell, arrives home. She is a Washington state senator, and very strict. Henna and Jared take this as their cue to leave, so Mikey drives them both home. After dropping Henna off, Mikey and Jared talk about how crazy the world is. Jared looks out through the car window and says a mountain lion is out there, while Mikey says there is always a mountain lion out there.

“Chapter the Third” (Chapter 3) – A preface to this chapter reveals that Finn’s body is found, that Satchel once dated Finn, and that Dylan and another indie kid named Finn are asked by Satchel to speak with her alcoholic uncle, the lead police officer investigating the first Finn’s death. The Messenger, now in a new Vessel, is preparing for the arrival of the Immortals. In the main body of the chapter, Mikey explains that his town is just like the reader’s while the main identifying feature of the area is heavy forests. Mikey relates that the indie kids got rid of all the ghosts and vampires a few



years back. At school, Mikey is unhappy to see the new kid, Nathan, because Henna finds him attractive. The morning announcements bear news of Finn Brinkman's death and warnings to students about traveling alone. Mikey and the others go to the vice principal's office to tell him and a police officer what they saw the day before. The vice principal is in disbelief.

This exchange makes Mikey wonder why adults seem to forget everything they knew from before the age of eighteen, such as vampires. Henna is not surprised, as she received a similar reaction from adults when her older brother, Teemu, disappeared, though Henna still hears from him. While out eating Mexican food, Nathan approaches Mikey's group to talk about Finn. Henna begins asking about Nathan, and learns that Nathan is a former-indie kid and the son of an army mom who moves around a lot. At work at Grillers steakhouse that night, Mikey tells Jared he doesn't think he stands a chance with Henna against Nathan. Tina, their twenty-eight year-old supervisor, believes her boyfriend, Ronald, is cheating on her in revenge for her fling with Harvey the chef. On the way home from work, Mikey explains that he is getting into OCD-like loops, after which Jared tells Mikey if he ever needs a place to stay, he can stay with him.

"Chapter the Fourth" (Chapter 4) – A preface to the chapter reveals that Satchel and Dylan get coffee, during which time they discuss what Satchel's uncle has told them. Dylan tells Satchel that second indie kid Finn has feelings for her, while it is revealed that Dylan himself secretly has feelings for Satchel. The Messenger of the Immortals gives a surprise offer to indie kid Kerouac. In the main body of the chapter, Mikey tells the reader that he has to get some stuff out of the way. He explains that four years ago, Mel, who had an eating disorder, had a heart attack due to her starving herself, died, and was revived. It was their mother's campaign adviser, Malcolm, who told Mel she looked a little fat in press photos, leading to Mel's disorder. Not long before this, Mikey's father embezzled money from Uncle Rick's car dealership, which Mikey's mother had Rick (her brother) keep quiet for the sake of her political career. Since then, Mikey explains, Uncle Rick has kept his distance while Mikey's dad has gone into drinking and Mikey's mom has forced her family to keep up a perfect family image to the public. Mikey tells the reader that he himself is on and off anxiety medication, and that he ensures his sister is eating properly now. In the present, Meredith is looking forward to getting tickets to a Bolts of Fire concert but Mikey and Mel know their mother will never go for this.

"Chapter the Fifth" (Chapter 5) – A preface to this chapter reveals that indie kid Kerouac opens the portal for the Royal Family and Court, after which Kerouac learns the Messenger lied to him. Kerouac is killed. In the main section of the chapter, it is now Friday. Mikey and Henna are on the way back from prom dress shopping for Henna when Henna announces she will not be attending the prom as a group with Mikey, Mel, and Jared, but with Nathan instead. Mikey is hurt and angered. Henna then reveals that a war has broken out in the Central African Republic, but that she and her parents will still be going there to do mission work. Mikey is stunned. Mikey tells her Henna is in love with her, to which Henna replies she does not think he is.



Suddenly, Henna hits a deer, which tears off the top of her car. Looking up, she and Mikey see dozens of deer all over the place. Mikey must go to the emergency room for his injuries, including needing some stitches and having a broken nose. He is treated by Dr. Steve. Mel, who is nineteen, gives her number to Steve in the hopes of a date. Mikey learns that local residents worked to help free him and Henna from the car while an ambulance was called. When Mikey's mom arrives at the hospital, Mikey is comforted by her presence. She then reveals that U.S. Congressman from Washington, Mankiewicz, has died of a heart attack, and that the state party has called her and asked her to run for his seat in a special election. Henna's parents, Mattias and Caroline Silvennoinen, thank Mikey for being with Henna through the accident. It is then that a hysterical dad is heard and seen as he is taken to identify the body of his dead indie son.

## Analysis

When Patrick Ness's novel *The Rest of Us Just Live Here* begins, it is clear immediately how important friendship is to Mikey, and how important friendship will be to Mikey through the course of the novel. Mikey clearly feels at home among his friends, including his sister, Mel, who seems more a close friend than just a sister. Mikey and Mel have a difficult home life, as do most of the other characters of the novel—and this makes their friendship with one another all the more important. Among friends, they have companionship, loyalty, support, and a sense of belonging which they would not otherwise have elsewhere—especially in family. For example, Mikey and Mel do not even want to go home if their parents are around unless they have no choice. They feel as if they are in the way, as if they are not wanted around, and as if they do not belong there.

Ness also ventures into territory relating to a divide between adults and almost-adults, like Mikey. Mikey is at the age where he is about to leave childhood behind forever but is not completely thrilled about it. One of those reasons is because adults seem to forget everything about their childhood, such as the existence of dark creatures. Adults have a habit of disbelieving things which do not seem to be true, but nevertheless are true. Mikey does not want to lose this knowledge. As a result, the subtle thematic argument that things which do not seem to be true are true is laid out.

The thematic argument that the everyday people in hero stories suffer just like the heroes is also laid out in this section of the novel. This can be seen in two specific places. The first examples is the Field scene where Mikey and the others watch an indie kid get chased by an Immortal but have no reason or cause to intervene. They are observers of something tremendous going on but not participants in events. Mikey longs to be a participant directly in things, but this will not happen. However, the idea that normal people still suffer because of such situations is made apparent in a second example—when an unusual sudden migration of deer, thanks to Immortal presence, causes Mikey and Henna to hit one and wreck Henna's car.



Mikey is rightfully disturbed by what has happened with the indie kid in the Field and with the incident with the deer. He wishes to become involved in what is going on and feels like he should be doing something more—but his friends have little real interest in what is going on except that they want to avoid it and just finish their senior year. Although it is not said clearly until later in the novel by Jared, the idea that not everyone has to be the Chosen One is made apparent early on. Indeed, even the title of the novel—*The Rest of Us Just Live Here*—pays tribute to the idea that not everyone can or will be a “hero” in the vein of a Chosen One. However, Ness is just a quick to begin and later expand on the argument that not being the Chosen One does not make one’s life less important. Rather, the things which make a life worthwhile will differ from person to person.

## Discussion Question 1

Why are Mikey’s friends so important to him? What does Mikey get through his friendship that he gets nowhere else?

## Discussion Question 2

Although Mikey has an interest in figuring out what is going on with the Immortals, no one else seems terribly disturbed or interested. Why?

## Discussion Question 3

What are Mikey’s greatest fears when the novel begins? Why does Mikey concern himself with these things? Are these regular fears, or are they somehow unusual? Explain.

## Vocabulary

platonically, anxiety, unrequited, exorcized, genetically, noncommittal, exaggerating, nonexistent, subsequent, guttural, decapitated



## Chapters 6 – 9

### Summary

“Chapter the Sixth” (Chapter 6) – A preface to Chapter 6 reveals that Satchel has received a note from Kerouac saying he has made a mistake and to wear the amulet he has put on her pillow. The preface also reveals that Satchel calls her uncle, who has taken Kerouac’s father to the hospital to identify his remains. In the main section of the chapter, Mikey must take painkillers to deal with the aftereffects of the accident. Late that night, Mikey heads over to the Field with his cat, Mary Magdalene, where meets with Jared. Mikey thinks about how Jared’s grandfather had fought Gods and Goddesses in the area, defeating them before they could take over the world. Jared also believes himself to be descended from one of the Gods. Because of this, cats have a special relationship with Jared, always listening to him, and Jared has the ability to heal them. Mikey asks Jared to heal his injuries. Because Mikey is not a cat, he cannot be completely healed, but Jared speeds up the healing process by several days’ time.

Mikey directly addresses the reader here, knowing the reader might not believe him. Mikey says everything being told is true, but only the readers can decide what is real or not for them, just as the readers cannot decide for Mikey what is true. Jared then tells Mikey he will sneak in to help heal Henna as soon as he can. Jared reveals that he has learned Mankiewicz is dead, and says his father—Mr. Shurin, who always runs for office against Mikey’s mom but always loses and remains friends with her—will try for the open Congress seat. Mikey thinks about how fast college and the future are coming. It is then that he sees a mountain lion emerge from the woods, which Jared casually pets. The mountain lion always guards Jared and Mikey when they are in the meadow. Mikey tells Jared he confessed his love to Henna right before the accident.

At home, Mikey and Mel relate to one another how they are not thrilled that their mom is running for Congress, but will have to pretend. Later that night, Mikey is awakened by his drunk and crying father, who says he feels horrible about what has happened to Mikey and then falls asleep on the floor. Mikey goes downstairs and sleeps on the couch.

“Chapter the Seventh” (Chapter 7) – A preface to the chapter reveals the indie kids in mourning for Kerouac, while the amulet tells Satchel that the Immortals have come. Dylan then kisses Satchel and she tells him that the Immortals have come. Mikey stays home from school on Monday. Mel tells Mikey that indie kid Kerouac Buchanan is dead. It is clear to Mikey and Mel that a bad wave of something is happening. Mikey goes on to think about Henna and his own past with other girls. He reveals that he has had sex with two other girls, including dating a twenty-seven year-old when he was sixteen. Mikey thinks about being with Henna, and wonders if he is actually in love with her. Mikey goes to see his grandmother at the nursing home. She always refers to Phillip, but no one has any idea who Phillip is. Although her memory is not all there, Mikey speaks to his grandmother as if it is, telling her all about his life, the car accident, and





Henna. On the way home, Mikey stops at Henna's wrecked car to find his phone. He finds it and then notices the world light up blue as the deer Henna hit returns to life and goes into the woods.

"Chapter the Eighth" (Chapter 8) – A preface to the chapter reveals that Satchel, Dylan, and second indie kid Finn commit to researching the Immortals. At the same time, the Immortals continue their search for permanent Vessels. Satchel's drunken, sleeping uncle has his head removed. In the main section of the chapter, with their mom away at the state capital preparing for her campaign, Mikey, Mel, and Meredith spend as much time together as possible, refusing to be out of one another's sight given the zombie deer. Meredith still wants to go to the Bolts of Fire concert. Meredith reveals their mother has given her the use of her credit card because she was tired of always having to enter the number for music purchases. Meredith has used the card to purchase three Bolts of Fire tickets so Mikey and Mel can take her. Mikey, Mel, and Meredith go mini-golfing. Jared, Nathan, and Henna join them. Mikey is not thrilled to see Nathan. Dr. Steve, fresh from the hospital, joins in. Nathan does his best to befriend Mikey, and Mikey warms up a little to him. That night, Meredith tells Mikey and Mel she wishes they were not leaving after graduation.

"Chapter the Ninth" (Chapter 9) – A preface to this chapter reveals Satchel finding her uncle wearing a scarf, and him and all the other offices with glowing blue eyes. At home, Satchel almost kisses second indie kid Finn again but then touches the amulet and has a vision of the handsomest boy she has ever seen. This causes her to run upstairs to her room to think about this. In the main section of the chapter, Jared reveals he has spoken to the God of Deer about the deer zombie, but that the God of Deer has heard nothing about such a thing. At Jared's, Mr. Shurin reveals that he wants to allow Jared, Mikey, and his friends to have an after-prom party at the old family cabin at the far end of the glacial lake. Mikey worries how he will get along without Jared in college. Mikey also asks Jared where he has been going lately on Saturday nights that he has told no one else about. Jared says he will reveal everything when the time is right. That night, Mikey and Henna go out on a date. Henna says she finds Mikey cute and wants to kiss him to see what it would be like but says that she also worries about things changing between them.

Henna admits to having feelings for Nathan, and to having broken up with her last boyfriend, Tony, who wanted to marry her after high school graduation. Henna goes on to explain that she needs to know what it would be like between her and Mikey, and that she is not trying to lead him on. They pull over and kiss. A police officer wearing a scarf and sunglasses suddenly appears at the window. The officer begins yelling at them about being young and impudent and then uses the flashlight to dent the car and smash the mirror. Suddenly, Mike and Henna realize they are surrounded by police officers, all who are wearing sunglasses. When the officers remove the sunglasses, they reveal glowing eyes. The officer with the scarf says that Mike and Henna are not the ones they want and allow them to drive away. Mike and Henna are glad they are not indie kids.



## Analysis

In this section of the novel, the author explores the theme of illusions and the idea that things which appear to be true are not. This much is Mikey's contention when he directly addresses the reader on questions of belief and truth. Mikey explains that readers may not believe him and he can't force them to believe him, but that what's true is true whether or not anyone believes it. Mikey, interestingly enough, admits that what is true for readers may not necessarily be believed by him. This, as readers will recall, and will note in unfolding chapters, is important to connect to Mikey's unhappiness with the idea that adults either do not remember, or choose not recognize the truth around them. Why this is, Mikey does not know, but he does know that the truth is still the truth.

In times of crisis, Mikey continues to turn to his friends rather than his parents. His parents do love him and his siblings, but are caught up in their own worlds (their mother with politics, their father with alcohol). Mikey even seeks to take things to the next level with Henna, though his declaration of love for her is followed by doubts about it. Nevertheless, Henna still means the world to him, as do all his friends. They are the bright spot in an otherwise dark situation. Things are, however, complicated by the constant appearances of Nathan, which awakens a jealousy in Mikey for Henna. Henna has a crush on Nathan, which further complicates the friendship between Mikey and Henna and essentially ensures that Mikey can never embrace Nathan as a friend.

The strange situation unfolding around the friends, however, once again enforces the idea that not everyone is meant to be or can be the Chosen One; and that the things heroes and villains do affect ordinary people as well as one another. Consider the scene in which Mikey and Henna are making out, only to be interrupted by a group of Immortal-possessed police officers. Mikey and Henna are in great danger, but are let go when it is realized they are not indie kids. Henna says quite clearly that she has never been so glad not to be an indie kid. Mikey, however, clearly wishes he were an indie kid so that he could participate in the ongoing fight against the Immortals—even though it means he would have likely been killed in the car with Henna.

At the same time that the Immortals complicate life, Mikey begins to consider life in general. He considers not only the lack of romance in his life, but also the lack of a committed family and his lack of being a Chosen One. As such, he considers his own life to be worth less than the lives of the indie kids. He feels as if he is not doing something that he should be doing, but he cannot quite figure it out specifically. He believes it should be geared toward fighting the Immortals, but he does not even know how to begin. The things that make life worthwhile are different for each person, as will be explained much later on in the novel—but for someone like Mikey, or everyone else, it is a question of finding what.

## Discussion Question 1

Mikey continues to find it annoying that adults will either not accept, or have forgotten the truth. Why does he believe they have? Why do you believe they have?



## Discussion Question 2

In what ways are the lives of Mikey and his friends affected by the goings-on between the indie kids and the Immortals? How does Mikey, in particular, respond to these circumstances? Why?

## Discussion Question 3

Why does Mikey begin to question whether or not he is actually in love with Henna? Why, despite this questioning, does he become especially jealous of Nathan?

## Vocabulary

amulet, secretive, ironclad, conjugations, fontanelle, palpating, ruminant, impudence



# Chapters 10 - 13

## Summary

“Chapter the Tenth” (Chapter 10) – A preface to the chapter reveals that indie kids Joffrey and Earth have disappeared and been found dead miles away, while Satchel, Dylan, Lincoln, Archie, Aquamarine, and Finn hide out in an abandoned drive-in. Satchel meets the boy in her visions in the blue light near the drive-in, and he tells Satchel she is beautiful in her own way. Satchel believes she can trust the boy and she and all the other kids return home. In the main section of the novel, Mikey is worried to learn about the deaths of Joffrey and Earth, which the cops list as a car accident and a suicide. Mikey and his friends know they cannot trust the cops anymore. Mikey reveals to the reader that he and the group are going to try to tough things out and live through graduation.

The graduation photos Mikey and the others have taken come in. Mikey does not believe he looks like himself in the pictures because he had to wear so much makeup due the deer accident, but Henna assures him he looks just like him. At the pharmacy where Mel works a scraggly man and old friend and bandmate of Teemu’s, Erik Peddersen, comes in, saying strange things are going on. At Grillers, Tina says there is a weird feeling in the air with everything going on. Meredith shows Mikey and the others some websites she has found on the deep web. The sites refer to the Immortals, blue eyes, and indie kids dying. Meredith worries it will cause Bolts of Fire to cancel the show. Henna later tells Mikey she wants to kiss him again soon. Meanwhile, Mikey begins to worry because Nathan appears outside behind the restaurant with no seeming purpose, then goes inside.

“Chapter the Eleventh” (Chapter 11) – The preface to this chapter reveals that the boy in Satchel’s visions is the Prince in the Court of the Immortals. The Prince reveals the fact that his mother desires to take over Earth. The Prince explains that he has fallen in love with Satchel from afar and will not let his mother win. He and Satchel kiss. In the main body of the chapter, Mikey’s mother announces her candidacy for the open Congress seat. Driving home with his mom, Mikey learns that it is only six months to the election. Mikey has a real talk with his mom, with his mom explaining that she wants to make the world better because she truly wants it to be better—including for young people. Although she does not go into detail, she tells Mikey the world is not safe. Mikey asks to see a psychiatrist again, which his mother says will be perfectly alright and that she will do all she can to keep Mikey out of the public view.

“Chapter the Twelfth” (Chapter 12) – A preface to the chapter reveals that Satchel and the Prince grow deeper in love, while Dylan gives her space. Following the Prince’s directions, the indie kids avoid danger and things seem to be settling down. In the main section of the chapter, Mikey and the others begin to take finals. The high school senior tradition of painting and tagging the old railroad bridge also comes along. It is illegal and so must be done at night. It is Nathan who encourages everyone to do it. Jared comes



to believe that, among the five of them, they will be alright. They arrive at the bridge and begin tagging it. They discover the names of all the dead indie kids written along the top railing of the bridge where no one can see them. Henna believes it is an indie kid memorial. Suddenly, down the tracks, a large crowd with glowing blue eyes can be seen approaching. Everyone takes off, with Nathan coming last. In the car, Mikey demands to know just who Nathan is and if it was his plan to get them all killed and eaten. Henna explains that the bridge idea was really hers, and says that Nathan offered to ask in case everyone turned Henna down. This angers Mikey because Henna didn't come to him first.

“Chapter the Thirteenth” (Chapter 13) – A preface to the chapter reveals that the Prince is tricked into handing over Satchel and second indie kid Finn to the Empress, and the need to sacrifice Finn to help Satchel escape. Satchel no longer trusts the Prince and as she saves Finn and they escape, she sees the Immortal Crux, the source of the power of the Immortals, in the Gateway. A piece from the Crux is missing—a piece exactly the size and shape of the amulet. In the main section of the chapter, Mel and Mikey talk about what has happened. Mel does not believe Nathan has anything to do with what is going on, while Mikey admits his suspicions are rooted in jealousy. Mel and Mikey visit their grandmother. Mikey talks about how time is short with the Bolts of Fire concert the following day, prom the following week, and then graduation the next week. Mikey worries about Mel because Mel seems to be eating less for lunch, but she explains she is just having a moment. This still worries Mikey, even when Mel assures him she will be okay. Mikey later accompanies Henna to a tattoo parlor even though she is still mad at him. Henna has the name of her brother tattooed on her side. That night, Mikey wakes up to discover an unknown car leaving the Field with the lights off. When Mikey looks carefully, he can see it is Nathan.

## Analysis

The author continues to build suspense with Mikey's worries about the unfolding Immortal situation. He is desperate to find a way to help but also recognizes that for the moment, he does not have a way. Mikey directly addresses readers in Chapter 10, saying the biggest challenge at the moment will be to live through graduation. Mikey's desire and his inability to help the indie kids reflects the thematic idea that ordinary people must still contend with the direct drama that affects the heroes battling evil—in this case, the indie kids battling the Immortals. The fact that Mikey and his friends might all be killed prior to graduation is not a thought they take lightly. Mikey comes to suspect, both as a matter of jealousy and a matter of rushed scrutiny, that Nathan may have something to do with the Immortals—but this turns out to be incorrect. Even Henna slams Mikey for this assumption.

Interestingly enough, even the adults are beginning to feel as if something strange is going on around town. This can be seen, for example, in the way Tina speaks of a weird feeling in the air and the way everyone is concerned with the rash of indie kid killings. Things which do not seem to be true are true, Patrick Ness reminds his readers. The adults may be coming around and they may have suspicions, but they do not yet



embrace the truth. (Only later in the novel will one adult actually embrace the truth.) Nevertheless, Mikey and his friends continue to be aware of the truth of things even if they do not know the specifics. Confronted with a very bad situation, Mikey and his friends find comfort in one another and try to keep focused on finishing their senior year alive.

Still, though, Mikey is unhappy with his life. He continues to feel as if he should be doing something but also comes to believe that his life is, in most respects, empty. He is looking for meaning and for purpose, the sorts of meanings and purposes which have given life to his friends. It is perhaps because of this—in addition to his jealousy and suspicion—that Mikey comes to accuse Nathan of being in league with the Immortals. Successfully outing Nathan as an Immortal or an ally of the Immortals would certainly give Mikey a sense of purpose and something in his life of which he can be proud. As noted previously, however, it turns out that Nathan has nothing to do with the immortals at all.

## Discussion Question 1

Why does Mikey come to accuse Nathan of helping the Immortals? What evidence does Mikey have? Is any of this true? Why or why not?

## Discussion Question 2

Despite the ongoing Immortal-indie war, Mikey tries to focus on the school year and surviving graduation. Why? Does he succeed? Why or why not?

## Discussion Question 3

How does Henna react when Mikey accuses him of helping the Immortals? Why does she react in such a fashion? How does this affect Mikey's potential for romance with Henna?

## Vocabulary

obscure, multidimensional, vigorous, scuttled, unfiltered, spontaneous, iambic pentameter, surly, ossification, metaphorical



# Chapters 14 – 17

## Summary

“Chapter the Fourteenth” (Chapter 14) – A preface to this chapter reveals the Prince declaring his love for Satchel but Satchel doubting. They kiss, but then an explosion can be heard on the outskirts of town. In the main section of the chapter, Meredith is stunned to learn that her mother wants to take her to the Bolts of Fire concert. Meredith begs her mother to let Mikey and Mel take her and her mother ultimately consents. Mikey, Mel, and Meredith head to the concert. The audience goes wild as the show begins. Meredith is so happy she cries. The show is being done to benefit a cancer patient, young Carly. As the band takes the stage, a bomb goes off. People begin fleeing for the exits, trying to protect the children among them. Mel helps one of the little girls escape while Mikey carries Meredith to safety. Outside, an angry, influential blogger named Cynthia who is a fierce critic of Mikey’s mom recognizes Mikey and his siblings and demands to know why their mother isn’t there to protect them. A camera crew from a major news station arrives to film the confrontation. Mel punches Cynthia in the face.

“Chapter the Fifteenth” (Chapter 15) – This chapter’s preface reveals the Prince explaining that the missing amulet from the Immortal Crux is leading to explosive holes appearing between the Immortal world and Earth, like the one at the concert. However, he also reveals that returning it would make the Immortals invincible. In the main section of the chapter, the police blame the explosion on a gas main. An indie kid named Madison is revealed to have been the only person killed in the blast. Mikey’s mother is devastated by the attack and very concerned about the safety of her children. She is glad they have survived and keeps them home from school for a few days. Mikey asks Jared if the Gods know what is going on, but Jared says things do not work like that. Mikey insists they try checking with the indie kids or Nathan, but Jared tells Mikey to leave Nathan alone.

Jared tells Mikey not to live his life afraid, especially with their senior year winding down. He says that not everyone has to or can be the Chosen One. At work that night, Mikey is surprised to see his father show up saying that he is supposed to be meeting Mikey’s mom for dinner. Mikey tells him to sit where Mel, Meredith, and Henna are seated until she arrives. Mikey’s dad explains to Mikey that he will be going into rehab and that it is his own decision to do so. Mikey worries that he has taken something else, such as a prescription drug. Mikey’s dad asks Mikey to borrow some money, so Mikey hands over his cash. He tells his father not to drive away. It is then that Mikey realizes his conversation has been overheard by Nathan.

“Chapter the Sixteenth” (Chapter 16) – A preface to the chapter reveals that Satchel blames herself for the deaths of all her friends. Dylan kisses her and assures her is not so. Second indie kid Finn arrives, and Dylan asks how he and Satchel know they can trust him. In the main section of the chapter, Mikey goes to see his psychologist, Dr. Luther. Mikey begins filling Dr. Luther in on things, including his mother’s new campaign.



Dr. Luther, unlike other adults, acknowledges the strange events, saying that when he was young dark creatures were around. Mikey is comforted to hear an adult acknowledge this, and then goes on to say he feels like his life has little in it because his friends all have something important in their lives and all he has is his friends. He feels like beyond that, he does not matter. Mikey is worried about getting trapped in a loop. Dr. Luther tells Mikey he is facing a great challenge in his life: graduating school and preparing to live on his own. Dr. Luther then asks Mikey what he would do if everything did fall apart, to which Mikey replies he does not know. Mikey feels as if he needs to save everyone, that he hates himself, and that he feels trapped in an ever-deepening well. Dr. Luther says Mikey still has work to do in his life and that he must go back on his medication to help him cope.

“Chapter the Seventeenth” (Chapter 17) – A preface to the chapter reveals that Satchel does not know who to trust, so she trails her uncle. Satchel’s uncle tries to open a portal beneath the school prom, but Satchel knocks his head off to kill him and prevent this from happening. In the main section of the chapter, Mikey heads to Henna’s house to pick her up for prom while everyone else waits out in the giant yellow hummer limousine they have rented. They head to the prom, which has been themed “Forever Young.” Everyone at the prom in the gym is very friendly and doing their best to be together, as they all know something serious is going on. Mikey is worried something could happen, but Jared tells him to relax. After the prom, Mikey and the others all prepare to head to the cabin. Steve worries about this but agrees to go because Mel insists. Mikey becomes jealous when Henna talks to Tony and agrees to a call with him sometime. As they decide to leave the prom, the far exit of the gym opens and a crying girl and guy leave. They are not in prom clothing, and there is blue light in the door behind them. Mikey goes to see what is going on, but Jared and Nathan block the way. Henna insists they all leave, and Mikey agrees.

## Analysis

The author explores the theme of friendship in this section of the novel, asserting that friends can make up for the failures of family. At prom, Mikey and all the kids from school are friendly with one another, knowing not only that something is going on but not what is happening. Mikey also continues to take comfort in his friends in some of his darkest moments, such as when his father shows up at Grillers apparently high on prescription medication. However, it is Mel who lashes out at Cynthia following the explosion at the concert, all in defense of her family. Although Mikey’s parents may not always be present, his siblings are. The reader should note that it is Mikey himself who is primarily responsible for helping Meredith get away from the amphitheater following the explosion.

Interestingly enough, as noted in earlier analysis sections, one adult does indeed come to accept and understand the invasion situation, and that is Dr. Luther. This may be because Luther is in frequent communication with children because of his work, or it may be because Luther is simply one of the rare adults who have chosen to remember the truth of childhood. Whatever the case may be, it is left unsaid. Nevertheless, Luther





brings to attention the thematic argument that things which do not seem to be true are true. Luther could easily dismiss the Immortal invasion rumors as nothing more than rumors, but he takes them seriously and accepts them as the truth. What appears to be true is true, Luther knows, and it is because of this that Luther is able to speak with Mikey on such a personal level.

Luther's session with Mikey also brings to the fore the ideas that everyday people suffer in hero stories and that the things that make life worthwhile are different for each person. Mikey explains to Luther that he feels like he should be doing something to combat the Immortal invasion, or that he should have something important in his life like romance to make it worthwhile. Mikey's pain is very real and is both influenced by and has nothing to do with the invasion. Luther tells Mikey that only Mikey can determine what has meaning in his life. For the moment, Mikey believes that all he has in his life are his friends, and that this is not enough to make a meaningful life. Interestingly, at the prom, Mikey tries to catch up with an indie kid and the Prince, but Jared and Nathan block him from doing so while Henna insists they all leave. Here, Mikey's friends prevent him from becoming involved in something which does not concern him. In effect, they are symbolically and literally saving his life—and this will become apparent in the final chapters of the novel.

## Discussion Question 1

Although the mother of Mikey, Mel, and Meredith is absent following the explosion at the amphitheater, Mel comes to the defense of her family. How? Why?

## Discussion Question 2

Why do you believe Dr. Luther believes the things Mikey says about an invasion when no other adults do? Do you believe Dr. Luther actually believes it all, or is just pretending for Mikey's benefit? How does Mikey respond to Luther, regardless?

## Discussion Question 3

What important information does Luther give Mikey concerning Mikey's life? How does Mikey take this advice at first? Why?

## Vocabulary

repository, pitifully, collateral damage, ironic, old-fashioned, refugee



# Chapters 18 – 21

## Summary

“Chapter the Eighteenth” (Chapter 18) – A preface to this chapter reveals that Satchel and the Prince have fled the gym, only for Satchel to be betrayed by the Prince and taken to the Court of the Immortals. Dylan then reveals himself to be the Messenger, preparing the way. Dylan then begins the ceremony that will allow the Empress to live in Satchel’s body as a Vessel and which will then open fissures to begin the invasion of the Immortals. In the main section of the chapter, Mikey, Mel, Henna, Nathan, Jared, and Steve arrive at the cabin. They eat steaks and watch the movie Tremors. Everyone decides to go night swimming. Suddenly, overhead, the sky over the town is crisscrossed with flashes and streaks of blue light. Everyone gets in touch with their parents. The same thing is happening in small towns all over, and so far, there have been no fatalities. Mikey and the others decide to turn in for the night. It is then that a blue light can be seen coming closer down the shore of the lake. It is a horribly mangled mountain lion that drops the ground. Jared forces the blue light out of it. Jared holds the mountain lion until she dies. Jared angrily speaks of the indie kids being elitist and believing that their actions don’t affect others. He then tells Mikey he is in love with Nathan, and that he thinks Nathan is in love with him. Everyone knows but Mikey, which hurts Mikey deeply. Back inside, Henna holds Mikey in her arms.

“Chapter the Nineteenth” (Chapter 19) – A preface to the chapter reveals that second indie kid Finn is actually a good guy, and helps Satchel escape. They are forced to kill Dylan, and must determine how to stop the invasion across town. In the main section of the chapter, meanwhile, Henna explains that Nathan was hanging around Grillers to meet Jared on break, that he met Jared in the Field, and that Jared was with Nathan on Saturday nights when he would not say where he was going. In the morning, Henna and Mikey return to town. At home later, Mikey’s mom reveals he has aced his finals. The blue lights are being written off as a freak lightning storm. It is then revealed that footage of Mel punching Cynthia has been turned out by Jared’s dad’s campaign. Cynthia has gone on the attack, saying she will sue everyone involved in her punching. Mikey confronts Jared about this, and tells Jared to get his father to take down the video. At home, Mel could care less about the video, believing it will all blow over in a week. A short time later, Mikey receives a text message from Jared, saying his father is not only pulling the video down but withdrawing from the race completely, as it was his campaign team who pressured him to allow the video to be put up. Mikey goes to Henna for advice. She kisses him, and the two have sex.

“Chapter the Twentieth” (Chapter 20) – The preface to this chapter explains that Satchel and second indie kid Finn close down every fissure, confessing their love to one another and kissing. It is then that the Court of Immortals come through the final fissure beneath the high school gym the morning of graduation. Finn is seemingly killed, and the Immortals prepare for the final ceremony, taking Satchel hostage to do it. In the main section of the chapter, Mikey and the others prepare for graduation. Mikey has not



spoken to Jared, while Cynthia has thrown her hat into the Congressional race. Mikey cannot stop thinking about Henna since sleeping with her but beyond sex, they realize there is nothing between them. Before the graduation ceremony, Mikey and Jared make peace and apologize to one another for everything. Jared explains that everything about him—including his real first name, Mercury—means he should be an indie kid, but that he does not want to be an indie kid.

Jared is very sad about how things will now change forever with graduation. Suddenly, in the bushes, Mikey and Jared find an indie kid who has been seriously hurt. They realize it is one of the Finns. Jared heals the Finn, stopping him from dying. Finn then runs off to get something from home to close a fissure. Mikey and Jared offer to help, but Finn says they aren't supposed to. Mikey and Jared then head in to graduate. Henna tells Mikey she will not be going to Africa after all. As Mikey and Jared head up to receive their diplomas, Jared tells Mikey that as part of the deal, he can now heal Mikey of everything, including his OCD and anxiety. Jared says he has been asking for it for years, but was always told it was too much power for the realm. Then, the girl Mikey saw coming out of the gym after prom runs into the graduation ceremony, telling everyone to leave because the school is about to blow.

“Chapter the Twenty-First” (Chapter 21) – A preface to this final chapter reveals the high school is blown up. In the main section of the chapter, everyone rushes out in the nick of time and watches as the school burns. Mikey declines Jared's offer of healing, saying it is something he himself must work on. Jared heals the broken arm Henna still has from the deer accident. Henna and Tony appear as if they are to rekindle their romance. Everything seems to have worked out well, except that everyone will soon be leaving. Despite this, Mikey is happy. Satchel and Finn approach Mikey and the others, thanking Mikey and Jared for saving Finn, and letting them know that everything is over and the world has been saved. Mikey now looks forward to the future, knowing friends are something worth having in life and knowing that if he needs them, they will be there for him.

## Analysis

By the end of the novel, Mikey and Jared have had a falling out and patched up their friendship. Despite their rocky family situation—now connected by the campaign for the Congressional seat and Mel's punching of Cynthia—Mikey and Jared are able to find comfort in one another because of their friendship. At last, Jared entrusts Mikey with the news that Nathan has no interest in Henna because Nathan and Jared are romantically involved. This is ironic given that for most of the novel Mikey has been jealous of Nathan and pursuing Henna, only to discover he and Henna will not mesh romantically and that Nathan had no interest in Henna to begin with. Only because of this is Mikey able to relax and begin to befriend Nathan by the end of the novel.

The everyday people in hero stories, like Mikey and Jared, suffer just like the heroes—although sometimes for different reasons. While Mikey and Jared are not directly involved in the invasion repulsion, they do feel its effects—though they feel the pain of



their own lives even more. Just because the world is under threat of being conquered does not diminish or erase the everyday human drama and situations in which Mikey and others find themselves. Mikey's almost-ruined friendship with Jared, his falling out of love with Henna, his graduation and knowing life will never be the same—these are world-ending causes of pain in their own right. Mikey and his friends suffer from these struggles and do their best to navigate around them.

Mikey ultimately comes to accept the truth that not everyone has to be the Chosen One. This does not make life any less important; it just means that different people have different paths in life. These different paths help determine what make a human life important. Mikey finally comes to realize that, despite helping Jared to find and heal the indie kid who helps to save the world, his life truly matters because he has loyal friends in it. He knows that the friends he has gives his life a kind of deeper meaning that he did not recognize earlier. In his friends, he finds acceptance, belonging, and support—things which do not exist elsewhere for him. Because of this, Mikey finally accepts that his life, normal though it is, has the meaning for which he has been searching.

## **Discussion Question 1**

What causes the falling out between Mikey and Jared? Is Mikey's anger toward Jared justified? Why or why not? What causes Mikey and Jared to resume and repair their friendship?

## **Discussion Question 2**

Although Mikey does not have a direct hand in saving the world, he does have a partial hand in helping. How does he assist the efforts of the indie kids, along with Jared? Why does this matter?

## **Discussion Question 3**

What does Mikey come to realize about his own life, and what his life involves? Why?

## **Vocabulary**

staler, weeps, wincing, recovery, patronizing, assumption, superiority



# Characters

## Mikey

Michael “Mikey” Mitchell is a high school senior and is the primary narrator and the protagonist of the novel. Mikey is the younger brother of Mel and older brother of Meredith, and is the son of Alice. Mikey is also the best friend of Jared, and has a crush on Henna. Mikey is a very kind but very unhappy teen who is not looking forward to graduating because it means his friends will all move away. Mikey believes his love for Henna will go unrequited and he does not believe his life has any meaning. Mikey, through the course of the novel, tries to help the indie kids out in their fight against the Immortals to give himself purpose, but he is never able to actually help either because he is told not to or does not know how to. However, by the end of the novel, it is Mikey who helps lead Jared to an injured indie kid whom Jared heals and allows to save the world. Mikey, due to his own difficult family situation (his father is an alcoholic while his mother is cold and distant), takes great pride in his friends and comes to realize his life does have meaning after all because of his friends in it.

## Mel

Melanie “Mel” Mitchell is the older sister of Mikey and Meredith, the daughter of Alice, and is best friends with Henna. Mel is recovering from a heart attack suffered due to a struggle with anorexia, and so has been held back in high school a year due to the time she missed. Along with Mikey and the others, she is looking to graduate. She is very close with Mikey and reminds him to remain focused on things other than the Immortal invasion. Mel comes to the defense of her family following the Bolts of Fire concert explosion by punching a cruel blogger in the face when the blogger tries to make things political against their mother. The incident does not faze Mel at all, and she is thrilled to graduate a short time later.

## Henna

Henna is the half-Finnish, half-black best friend of Mel, and is the love interest of Mikey. Henna is an intelligent, kind, and beautiful girl who is set to do mission work with her parents in Africa after graduation. Henna develops a crush on Nathan until she learns that Nathan is gay, and pursues a romantic test with Mikey to see if anything could be possible between them, but this does not work out. By the end of the novel, Henna has decided she will not go to Africa, preferring to stay home instead for the summer.

## Jared

Jared is the best friend of Mikey, and is a large, tall, gay linebacker whose own father is a perennial political candidate who often runs against Mikey’s mom but always loses.



Jared's ancestry can be traced to the gods, so he has been gifted with the powers both to heal, and to attract cats of all kinds to him. Jared is also able to use his powers to heal people to some degree. Jared helps heal Mikey after Mikey's car accident, and then helps heal the indie kid Mikey finds outside of the school on graduation day. By the end of the novel, Jared reveals he and Nathan are romantically involved.

## **Nathan**

Nathan is a former indie kid and new kid at school whom Mikey at first suspects of having feelings for Henna and being an ally of the Immortals. As it turns out, Nathan is gay and romantically involved with Jared. It also turns out that Nathan has nothing to do with the Immortals at all.

## **Meredith**

Meredith is the younger sister of Mikey and Mel. She is brilliant, sweet, and obsessed with the band Bolts of Fire. She spends much of the novel planning, plotting, and manipulating everyone into taking her to the show, ultimately getting Mikey and Mel to agree to go with her. Meredith is terrified by the explosion at the show, and is rushed to safety by Mikey while Mel punches the face of an angry blogger trying to politicize the fact that Meredith and her siblings are without their mother.

## **Alice Mitchell**

Alice Mitchell is the mother of Mel, Mikey, and Meredith. Alice is a very career-oriented woman, serving as State Senator for Washington and looking to represent Washington in the next election in U.S. Congress. She is often away, cold, and distant emotionally, but in serious situations her compassion shines through. This can briefly be seen after Mikey's car accident and to a greater extent after the Bolts of Fire fiasco. Although Mikey wishes he had different parents or was closer with them, he comes to be thankful for his mom in the end.

## **Indie kid Satchel**

Indie kid Satchel is a secondary character in the novel who serves as the Chosen One. She, along with other indie kids, seeks to fight and defeat the Immortals, preventing them from invading and conquering Earth. Satchel is nearly killed and is betrayed on a number of occasions, but ultimately survives to win the day.

## **Second indie kid Finn**

Second indie kid Finn is a friend of Satchel's. He has feelings for her and works with her to attempt to bring down the Immortals. Finn is, at various times, trusted and distrusted



by Satchel, who herself is being manipulated by the Immortal Prince and Immortal ally, Dylan. Finn is seriously injured to the point that he is believed dead late in the novel, but Mikey and Jared find him and heal him in the nick of time. Finn then goes on to help Satchel defeat the Immortals.

## The Prince

The Prince is an Immortal who struggles with romantic feelings for Satchel and loyalty to the Immortals. At various times he appears to be genuinely loyal to her, while at other times, he appears to be manipulating her for his own ends. Ultimately, the Prince is either killed or sent back to his own dimension with the explosion of the school. His fate is unclear.



# Symbols and Symbolism

## Blue light

Blue light is the primary indicator of the presence of an Immortal. The Immortals, in addition to the Vessels they occupy, give off a blue light that in turn gives them away. Immortals can easily be identified by that blue light, so Immortals needing to function undercover often resort to things like sunglasses in order to conceal their true nature.

## Sunglasses

Sunglasses symbolize deception and are worn by the police officers of town to conceal their true identities as Immortals in Vessels. The sunglasses prevent people from seeing their blue-glowing eyes, which indicate they are immortals. Mikey and Henna are surrounded by a group of police officers at night, all wearing sunglasses, tipping them off that the police are not their normal selves.

## Scarf

A scarf symbolizes both leadership and the presence of an Immortal in the novel. Satchel's uncle, a police officer, has his head chopped off before his body is inhabited by an Immortal. A scarf is worn to keep the head on the neck, but also to distinguish the officer among the other Immortals who have inhabited officers. To defeat her uncle, Satchel removes the scarf from his neck, causing the Immortal to flee.

## Prom

Prom symbolizes a normal goal of the everyday kids like Mikey and Jared who are doing their best to go about their lives as normal despite the Immortal invasion that is pending. Jared reminds Mikey that they need to stay focused on normal things in order to better get along and make sure their regular lives have a sense of normality and meaning. For Mikey, prom night is a chance not only to be normal, but to be close with Henna.

## Final exams

Final exams symbolize a normal goal of the everyday kids like Mikey and Jared who are doing their best to go about their lives as normally as they can despite the unfolding Immortal invasion. Mikey himself notes that he needs to stay focused on things like finals, rather than running off to try to participate in the Immortal war. Mike's focus on his finals pays off, as he ultimately aces all of them.





## Explosive tears

Explosive tears in the fabric of reality symbolize the imbalance between Earth and the Immortal realm. Because the amulet piece is missing from the Immortal Crux, the barriers between both worlds are unstable and explode. These explosive tears occur all over, including at the Bolt of Fire concert.

## Amulet

Satchel's amulet symbolizes the balance of power between Earth and the Immortal Realm. Satchel is given an amulet to wear to protect her until she realizes it is a missing piece from the Crux beyond the Gateway, causing violent instability between worlds. Satchel comes to be conflicted, because to return the amulet would be to throw open the Gateway, while to keep it would mean more explosive tears and more deaths among citizens in town.

## Therapy sessions

Therapy sessions symbolize Mikey's growing acceptance of his own life. Mikey attends therapy sessions with Dr. Luther over his depression, anxiety, and sense of having no purpose or meaning in life. Mikey comes to learn from Luther in these sessions that his life is only what he can make it, and only matters if he lets it matter and he realizes that not everyone has to be the Chosen One to have a life that matters.

## Vessels

Vessels symbolize Immortal attempts to break through to Earth. Vessels are human and animal bodies inhabited by Immortals to influence events on Earth to allow for a major Immortal invasion of Earth. The Immortals become very specific with the Vessels they take, such as when they take over the entire police force to ensure control of the town.

## Healing powers

Healing powers are given to Jared by the gods, and allow him to heal cats and other felines, while also allowing him to partially heal human beings. Jared uses his powers to heal both Mikey and Henna in the novel as well as to save the life of second indie kid Finn. Jared's powers are increased through a deal he strikes with the gods, which in turn enables him to actually save Finn's life.



# Settings

## The town

The unnamed town and surrounding rural area in which Mikey, Mel, and the others live, appears to be in rural Washington State. The area is described as being like any other regular American town, but that it is heavily forested and features a nearby glacial lake popular with locals. Mikey and his friends are not all fans of the place and look forward to going to college out of town. The unnamed town becomes the locus point for the Immortal invasion, and while Mikey and the others do their best to go about their lives as normal, a confrontation between the indie kids and the Immortals occurs. The area, as Mikey explains elsewhere, has a long history of being targeted by dark creatures. Why it is not known, but what is known is that successive generations of indie kids have defended and saved the place.

## The high school

The unnamed high school, located in the unnamed town, is where Mikey, Mel, and the others attend class, and later in the novel attend prom and graduation. The high school is described as an ordinary high school, except that it is going to be blown up to stop an Immortal invasion. During graduation, the indie kids tell those assembled to flee the building for the final Immortal portal in the basement of the high school can only be destroyed by explosion.

## The field

The field is located not far from Mikey's house, and is an unused housing plot surrounded by forest. The field is the regular hangout spot for Mikey, Mel, Jared, and Henna. It is where the four friends are when the novel begins, and where they see an indie kid being chased across the field by a glowing-blue girl. It is at the field where Mikey later meets Jared to be healed following the car accident, and is also at the field that Jared and Nathan express their romantic meetings.

## The glacial lake

The glacial lake, located about eight or nine miles from town, is popular with locals, especially kids. It is to Jared's family's cabin on the lake that Mikey, Jared, Nathan, Henna, Mel, and others go for an after-prom party. It is while they are at the lake that strange blue lights can be seen over town in the distance, and it is at the lake that a severely injured mountain lion comes to see Jared so Jared might expel the Immortal from its body and let it die in peace. It is at the lake that Jared declares that indie kids are wrong to think the things they do don't affect other people.



## **Bolts of Fire concert**

The Bolts of Fire concert is where Mikey and Mel bring Meredith to see the band Bolts of Fire. It is located at a nearby amphitheater, and occurs during a larger country event. It is at the Bolts of Fire concert that the explosive tears begin appearing in the boundary between Earth and the Immortal realm; and it is at the Bolts of Fire concert that Mel punches out a cruel blogger, creating a political firestorm.



# Themes and Motifs

## Friendship

Patrick Ness explores the theme of friendship throughout *The Rest of Us Just Live Here*, implying that friendship can overcome the deficiencies of family. Friendship is crucial to Mikey, Mel, Jared, and Henna in the novel, as each of their families is in some state of difficulty of some kind—whether is it beyond their control or of their own making. With such difficult home lives, Mikey, Mel, Jared, and Henna take great comfort in their friendship with one another.

Mikey and Mel have parents who are, at heart, loving and kind, but due to the circumstances of their lives, are cold and distant. Their mother is a career-driven politician, while their father is an alcoholic thief. Both are rarely around, and even when they are, Mikey and Mel go out of their way to avoid them. Jared's own family has been split apart by ancestry to the gods, while Henna's parents are more concerned with church work than with her.

In one another, Mikey, Mel, Henna, and Jared find the acceptance, belonging, support, and loyalty they lack at home. This becomes especially important for them as their senior year winds down. With graduation looming, they realize they will all soon part ways and their lives will never be the same again. They spend as much time as possible with each other, relying on the encouragement, compassion, and comfort they offer one another.

Even in difficult situations among themselves, their friendship holds true. For example, they encourage one another to stay focused on things that matter to them, such as prom, despite the potential Immortal invasion. Mikey thinks he is helping everyone by pointing out that Nathan is an ally of the Immortals, but this turns out not to be so. When Mikey and Jared fight over the video of Mel, they quickly repair their friendship while Jared takes advantage of the renewed friendship to confess he is dating Nathan. Mikey comes to realize that the friendship he has with Mel, Henna, and Jared is the most important thing in his life, and that it makes his life worth living as a result.

## Illusions of Reality

Patrick Ness explores the theme of illusion in *The Rest of Us Just Live Here* in several ways. In the novel, Mikey directly addresses the reader numerous times, including to talk about truth and belief. He explains that the reader may not believe anything in the book, but disbelief does not make what Mikey speaks of untrue. Mikey says the same is true for him and events in the readers' own lives.

Mikey and his friends, at the start of the novel, all know that there have been dark creatures, beings, and entities which have descended on the town before. They also know that only kids seem to accept this as truth, while very few adults do. Mikey does



not know whether this is because adults forget or intentionally try to forget, but he does know that very few adults either have a suspicion something is wrong or know something is wrong.

Despite the disbelief and simple ignorance of the adult world, the Immortal race is indeed attempting to stage an invasion of Earth beginning with small towns like Mikey's. Some adults, like Tina, have a suspicion that something is going on, but do not bother to find out the whole truth. Others, like Dr. Luther, either do believe or claim to believe the truth, but leave the handling of the Immortals up to the indie kids.

Mikey and his friends fully believe something is going on because they have encountered the truth. They have encountered the indie kid being chased across the field by a glowing girl, have been stopped by a group of possessed police officers, have seen the strange lights in the sky, have seen the mauled mountain lion, and have seen the injured indie kid in the bushes—let alone the exploding school. Because they have been able to experience such things firsthand and have minds open enough to process what they have experienced, they believe the truth when so many others do not.

## The Suffering of Ordinary People

The everyday people in epic stories suffer just as the heroes do. These stories usually focus on the suffering of the heroes and those closest to them, but in reality, everyone suffers—including the average, everyday people who get caught up in events far beyond their control. This is true of Mikey and his friends, upon whom the title of the novel is based: they are not indie kids and are not part of the epic battle; they just live in the town where the battle is taking place.

Late in the novel, Jared encounters an injured mountain lion possessed by an Immortal. Jared frees the mountain lion of the immortal and comforts the lion as it passes on. Jared angrily speaks about the indie kids, saying that they run around and consider themselves so hip, so cool, so elitist, and so superior while believing nothing that they do matters. Jared explains that everyone suffers, including non-indie kids. In other words, people like Mikey and Jared are the forgotten victims of epic situations.

Mikey and his friends must deal with circumstances beyond their control. They are affected by them, but are unable to change them. Mikey desperately tries to involve himself in the battle against the Immortals throughout the book but is either unable to find a way to help or is told he cannot help—such as the case with the recovered Finn. Jared also tells Mikey that not everyone has to be the Chosen One.

Indeed, after Mikey and Henna are surrounded by Immortal-possessed policemen, Henna gladly says she is thrilled not to be an indie kid or they would have certainly been killed. Mikey does not share this opinion, but he, along with everyone else, must deal with the terror of the situation—from being chased by the possessed at the railroad tracks to watching the school blow up on graduation day. Mikey finally has his chance to



help when he discovers the injured Finn, allowing Jared to heal him and in turn allowing Finn to save the day.

## **Not Everyone Must Be the Chosen One**

The idea that not everyone must be the Chosen One is an assertion made by Jared later in the novel (specifically on page 216 in Chapter 15) when he and Mikey talk about the Immortal situation and when Mikey explains he wants to take part in stopping them.

In keeping with the thematic ideas that everyday people suffer in epic situations, and that the everyday people form *The Rest of Us [Who] Just Live Here*, the author contends that not everyone has to—or can be—the Chosen One. Many individuals like Mikey will want to help, and many, like Mikey when he finds Finn, will be able to help an overall effort in a small or even important way. However, these characters themselves are not (and perhaps cannot) be front and center.

Jared's assertion that not everyone has to be the Chosen One is not a limitation, but an embracing of who someone is. Not everyone has to be a hero, but that does not mean that everyone beside the hero is unimportant. It does not mean that the lives of non-heroes are unimportant or without meaning, either. It does mean recognizing and embracing that a quiet, everyday life can be just as meaningful as the life of someone like Satchel or Finn, the efforts of whom most people will forget about in due time.

That not everyone can be the Chosen One is also upheld in Finn's assertion that Mikey and Jared are not supposed to help win the final battle. Even someone like Jared, with actual superpowers, is denied being able to help the indie kids win. This could be for any number of reasons, ranging from an understanding of the situation to Mikey and Jared simply not being the people the Immortals have directly involved. Nevertheless, Jared's assertion that not everyone has to be, or can be the Chosen One is upheld.

## **Individual Life Meaning**

The things that make life worthwhile are different for each person. Throughout the novel, Mikey is depressed because he believes his life is empty. He believes there should be something important in it that would in turn make his life meaningful, but it turns out he simply has his priorities wrong.

Initially, Mikey looks at the lives of people like Jared, Mel, and Henna as having purpose: Jared has superpowers while Mel and Henna have romance in their lives. Mikey considers that all he has in his own life are friends who will soon move away and probably fall out of touch. Mikey, spurred on by the Immortal invasion, believes participating in stopping the Immortals will give his life the purpose he believes it needs. However, Mikey is both unable to and told he cannot help.

Mikey confesses his frustrations to both Dr. Luther and to Jared. Jared tells Mikey that not everyone is meant to help, though everyone is vulnerable and prone to suffer. Jared



explains that not everyone can be the Chosen One. Luther explains that Mikey does not need some massive or important event in his life to give his life meaning. Likewise, Mikey's life does not need to be like everyone else's life to have meaning. Mikey accept this, but does not embrace it.

Only at the end of the novel, with the Immortals defeated and Mikey aware of how much his nearly-lost friendship with Jared and Henna truly are does he realize that friendship itself is what gives his life meaning. He has friends who love him, accept him, and are loyal to him, and this is not something to take for granted. There are people who do not have as much, and Mikey realizes he is lucky to have what he has. He knows that his friends will always be a part of his life no matter how far away they live, and that they will always be there for him. This gives his life value and meaning.

# Styles

## Point of View

The narrative in *The Rest of Us Just Live Here* is related in both the third-person omniscient and first-person limited points of view. Each narrative mode is given specific purpose in the novel. A preface section to each chapter is told in the third-person omniscient perspective from the point of view of an unknown narrator, who reveals to the reader the unfolding battle between the indie kids and the Immortals. The reader is given a broad overview of these events, while in the bulk of the chapters, narrated in the first-person by Mikey, Mikey and the other characters do not have the same knowledge. Essentially, the third-person contextualizes for the reader the bits and pieces of information cobbled together by Mikey through his own personal experiences with the Immortal war as a backdrop to his own life. This is also in keeping with the idea that not everyone can be or has to be the Chosen One. Someone else other than Mikey is the Chosen One, so someone other than Mikey is narrating events directly in relation to the indie kid confrontation with the Immortals.

## Language and Meaning

Patrick Ness relates his novel *The Rest of Us Just Live Here* in straightforward and uncomplicated, casual language. This is done in both the first and third-person sections of the novel. Mikey is a high school-educated teenager who lives a casual, everyday kind of life apart from the Immortal situation. As such, the language that he uses is casual, everyday English, reflecting his place in life. The language used by the third-person narrator is also the same. The simplicity of the language used allows Ness to make his points very clearly, or to very clearly convey the emotions and feelings of his characters. For example, consider when, on page 216 in Chapter 15, Jared tells Mikey, “Not everyone has to be the Chosen One.” Or consider Mikey’s unrequited love for Henna on page 11 of Chapter 2 where he explains, “Over the course of my life, I’ve told Henna about my mad, desperate feelings for her exactly zero times.”

## Structure

*The Rest of Us Just Live Here* is divided into twenty-one consecutive, chronological, numbered chapters. Each chapter is given a unique way of numbering in that the chapters do not read, simply, Chapter 1, Chapter 2, or Chapter 3, but instead read “Chapter the First,” “Chapter the Second,” and “Chapter the Third.” This method of titling the chapters is reflective of the unique role the indie kids play in the novel, affecting the plot directly and overall without personally becoming involved in the lives of Mikey and the others. Each chapter therein begins with a (usually) short preface, in which general details and events in the unfolding indie kid-Immortal confrontation are provided in order to present context for the rest of the chapter. The rest of the chapter consists of Mikey’s



first-person account of his own experiences within the parameters of the general overview of wider events given in the preface. This helps the reader to make sense of the things Mikey encounters or experiences, while also giving the reader a broader picture: the indie kid-Immortal war both does, and does not, touch the lives of Mikey and his friends.



## Quotes

Over the course of my life, I've told Henna about my mad, desperate feelings for her exactly zero times.

-- Mikey (Chapter 2)

**Importance:** Mikey reveals early on in the novel that he is very much in love with his sister's best friend, Henna. But because of his anxiety, he has been unable to confess his true feelings for her. Time is running out, though, as they are due to graduate in a couple of weeks, after which Henna will be going on a mission trip to Africa.

The indie kids, huh? You've got them at your school, too.

-- Mikey (Chapter 2)

**Importance:** Mikey, Mel, Henna, and Jared wonder what is going on with the indie kids following their strange encounter in the field. Mikey takes a moment to explain to the reader that every school has indie kids. He explains that indie kids have cool-geek haircuts, and clothes and names from the 1950s. It is the indie kids who have vanquished the area's ghosts, vampires, and other dark creatures so the rest of everyone can live safely.

What happens to you when you get older? Do you just forget everything from before you turned eighteen? Do you make yourself forget?

-- Mikey (Chapter 3)

**Importance:** When Mikey and the others tells the vice principal and a police officer what they have seen the day before Finn's body was discovered, Mikey and his friends are met with disbelief. Mikey wonders why most adults do not believe kids. He wonders if they force themselves to stop remembering childhood when they get older. This is a strange and unhappy thought to Mikey, who is himself nearing adulthood.

I can't tell you what's real for you.

-- Mikey (Chapter 6)

**Importance:** Mikey, when explaining Jared's part-god physiology where he can heal cats and partially heal humans, tells readers that they don't have to believe him even though what is true, is true. Mikey explains he can't force anyone to believe anything, but then at the same time says no one can force him to believe anything.

I've never been so happy not to be an indie kid in my entire life.

-- Mikey (Chapter 9)

**Importance:** When Mikey and Henna have their car surrounded by police officers, they are panicked. All of the officers have glowing eyes. Mikey and Henna realize the officers are looking for indie kids. The officers allow Mikey and Henna to leave, at which time



Henna explains she is glad she is not an indie kid. They know something bad is going on, and are glad not to be a part of it.

We're just going to stick together and tough it out and try to live long enough to graduate. The usual.

-- Mikey (Chapter 10)

**Importance:** Mikey reveals the death of two more indie kids, and explains the situation of the battle of good and evil from the standpoint of someone who is not a hero or a villain. Just an average kid, Mikey says he and his friends are going to try to stick together and survive through graduation. Mikey here makes the case that even in epic situations, average people also suffer tremendously and must deal with dangerous situations.

Time is short.

-- Mikey (Chapter 13)

**Importance:** When Mikey and Mel visit their grandmother, Mike comments that time is short. Their senior year is almost up. The following day will be the Bolts of Fire concert, then the prom the following week, then graduation the next. As things are coming to a head for their senior year, things are also coming to a head for the indie kids.

Not everyone has to be the Chosen One.

-- Jared (Chapter 15)

**Importance:** When Mikey worries about the events with the Immortals, Jared tells him to relax and not live in fear. He explains that Mikey does not have to try to make things right, because not everyone has to--or can be--the Chosen One. Mikey, in other words, is a regular guy who has to leave certain things up to others.

I'm too busy repeatedly counting ketchup bottles and wishing I was dead, wishing I was dead, wishing I was dead, wishing I was dead.

-- Mikey (Chapter 15)

**Importance:** While at work, Mikey's dad comes in, saying he plans to go to rehab and saying he needs to borrow money. Mikey hands over his tips to his dad. It is then that Mikey realizes his dad appears to have taken some kind of prescription pill, and that everything has been overheard by Nathan. Mikey returns to work, wishing he was dead because of what has happened, and that because someone outside of the family, Henna, and the campaign now knows about his father.

The indie kids think they're the only people in the world. They think their actions don't affect anyone but them.

-- Jared (Chapter 18)

**Importance:** While at the lake after the prom, a mangled mountain lion arrives, possessed by blue light which Jared drives away. Jared is horrified by the sight of the



lion, and angrily says the indie kids think they're better than everyone else, think they're the only people in the world, and think that they can do whatever they want and that it won't affect anyone else. This is hard truth of hero stories: their actions affect many others. Heroes themselves are not the only ones ever affected. Everyone suffers.

I don't think you're supposed to! But thanks!  
-- Second indie kid Finn (Chapter 20)

**Importance:** When Mikey and Jared discover Finn has been injured, Jared saves his life. Mikey and Jared offer to help him defeat the Immortals, but Finn tells them they are not supposed to help. This is in keeping with Jared's assertion that not everyone is supposed to be a hero. Others simply have to live and get by, like him and Mikey.

I know, if I need it, they'll save me.  
-- Mikey (Chapter 21)

**Importance:** Mikey, at the end of the novel, comes to realize that having friends in his life is enough, and is important in its own right. He realizes his friends will always be there for him if he needs them. He realizes that he will be alright in his own life, even if his friends are not immediately at hand. He realizes he has a life worth living after all.