

# **Second Helpings: A Novel Study Guide**

## **Second Helpings: A Novel by Megan McCafferty**

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## Plot Summary

Second Helpings is the second in a series of novels by author Megan McCafferty. The story follows the main character, Jessica Darling, as a high school senior trying to make it through her final year of school. Jessica is also trying to make a decision about which college she wants to attend, while also dealing with the aftermath of her almost losing her virginity to the elusive Marcus Flutie. The novel chronicles her final year of high school through letters to her best friend, Hope, and Jessica's journal entries.

When the novel first opens, Jessica is attending a special summer writing program in New York City, the summer before she starts her senior year of high school. She runs into her old high school crush, Paul Parliapiano, who attends Columbia University. During Jessica's conversation with Paul about the colleges that she intends on applying to, she realizes that she wants to actually attend is Columbia. The problem is that her parents think New York City is dangerous and not a place for Jessica to attend college.

When the instructor of her writing program recognizes Jessica's talent for writing, he even writes her a letter of recommendation to include with her application to Columbia. While Jessica awaits the response from Columbia, she keeps her application a secret from her parents. In the meantime, her beloved grandmother, Gladdie, dies and leaves Jessica \$50,000 to do with as Jessica pleases. When her acceptance letter from Columbia arrives, the Darlings are distraught when Jessica decides to use the money from Gladdie to pay for the first three and half semesters of attending. By the end of the novel, Jessica and Marcus are a couple and she graduates from high school. Jessica prepares for the next phase of her life - college.

This coming of age novel reveals the trials and tribulations that teenagers of the 21st Century face. While life throws Jessica several curve balls, she learns to deal with each hurdle with style and grace. In the end, she even learns that every experience you have in life makes you the person that you are. She decides that she likes the person she is so far.

# July The First

## July The First Summary and Analysis

Jessica Darling, the narrator and main character, is attending a special writing program. She mentions she has to keep a journal for the program. She used to write all the time, but shredded her previous journal covering her sophomore and junior years of high school. She says her best friend, Hope, moved to Tennessee after her brother died of an overdose. She also mentions a boy, but won't mention his name. Jessica says she won't talk about him or she'll have to burn this journal too.

# The Second

## The Second Summary and Analysis

Jessica scores a 1540 on her SATs. She mentions being able to choose a college because of her brain instead of running ability. Jessica says even if she chooses the wrong college, it can't be worse than her four years of high school.

Jessica lists out her high school traumas. The first is Hope moving swap. The second is the friends that tried to fill the void weren't good friends at all. One, Hyacinth Williams, who came to the school in order to write a book that is also optioned as a movie.



# The Tenth

## The Tenth Summary

Jessica writes about the high school stories of neighboring towns that have made it into the tabloids. Pineville is now notorious in her special writing program for two reasons: Hyacinth Anastasia Wallace's book and movie about the high school and that she knows the girl that went out with Kayjay Johnson and the video bitch that broke his heart.

Kayjay Johnson is Karl Joseph Johnson, a juvenile delinquent Pineville non-graduate turned boy-band famous. When Kayjay has to choose a girl for his music video, he choose Bridget Milhokovich. Bridget goes on one date with Kayjay, realizes what an asshole he is and then breaks up with him. Form this point on, she is known as the girl that broke Kayjay's heart. Jessica's roommate in the dorm recognizes Bridget right away.

Jessica has avoided writing about her roommate up until this point because every time she writes in her journal, her roommate accuses her of writing about her. Jessica lists some facts about her roommate, Mary "Call me Chantalle" DePasquale.

Jessica mentions receiving a letter from Hope, who is spending her summer in London. She thinks Hope will find friends and move on from their friendship because that's just the way Hope is. Jessica thinks she's using her journal as a way to express the feelings she has because she no longer has a best friend to share them with on a daily basis. Jessica also decides that she probably shouldn't be mad at the program or Pineville for not giving her a soul mate.

## The Tenth Analysis

Jessica does not like to be the center of attention. This is why she shies away from activities that might bring attention to her. This is why when everyone in her program founds out she went to the same high school as Kayjay Johnson and the girl in his music video, she gets stressed out.

Jessica and Hope are polar opposites. This could be why they had a such a good friendship when they were together. Hope also seems to balance Jessica. While Jessica analyzes everything and tends to lean toward the negative side of things, Hope is on the other side of the spectrum. Hope is always positive and people seem to be drawn to Hope for radiating this positive attitude.





# The Seventeenth

## The Seventeenth Summary

Jessica thinks that all of her classmates hate her. She also feels like she is not one of them. They all seem to be writers and poets. They are always going to poetry slams, literary events and drinking a lot of coffee. Jessica doesn't do any of these things. When she reads in class, everyone attacks Jessica's topics and suggests she write them differently, from a different point of view, or on a different topics altogether.

## The Seventeenth Analysis

Jessica admits that she has a mild case of depression. She is perpetuating her classmates' dislike for her by feeding into it. Instead of trying to become friends with them, she has built a wall, where she stands on one side of the obstacle and her classmates stand on the other.

Ironically, Jessica's classmates see her as "sunshiney," while they are all tortured souls. This indicates that Jessica is more like them and they are more like her than any of them know. If they took the opportunity to truly get to know one another, they might see this.



# The Twenty-first

## The Twenty-first Summary

Jessica decides that she should make other friends, since her classmates dislike her. She tries to hang out with Bridget and her friend Ashleigh. Even though Jessica and Ashleigh do like some of the same things, it irks Jessica that Ashleigh will argue with you until you see her side of the argument.

Jessica challenges Ashleigh's point of view one night after they order Chinese food for delivery. Ashleigh blurts out something about Jessica still being a virgin and Jessica goes back to her room. Unfortunately, her roommate is in the room with one of the Lucky Seven. Bridget comes after Jessica for apologizing for telling Ashleigh that Jessica is a virgin, and asks Jessica if she wants to come back now that Ashleigh is gone. Bridget hands Jessica her fortune cookie. The fortune says, "The road less traveled will not be smooth."

## The Twenty-first Analysis

Jessica is having to learn how to interact with people that are different than she is. Because she has a slightly negative attitude, it is preventing Jessica from befriending people that she might be able to form friendships with, such as Ashleigh. Jessica has to learn to accept people for who and what they are.

The message in Jessica's fortune cookie is twofold. First, it confirms something that Jessica already knows. Second, it foreshadows the difficult situations that Jessica's future hold, especially if she keeps trying to fight against forming new relationships instead of allowing the relationships to form.

# The Thirtieth

## The Thirtieth Summary

Jessica started keeping two journals: one for herself and one to turn into the teacher in class. When she turns in the journal, she turns in the personal one instead of the class one. She doesn't realize it until she is already on her way to her net class. Mac, the teacher, asks to speak with her. He tells her that he wants to see the writing in her journal in the work she does in class. He also tells her that she shouldn't be embarrassed about what she wrote, indicating that his second novel, which he assumes she read, was written to his lover, Raul.

## The Thirtieth Analysis

Jessica doesn't take Mac's conversation about her being a writer seriously. She has already made up her mind that she is going to be a psychiatrist. Mac thinks she is a better writer than the other students in the program, but that she has to allow this to come through in her class assignments. Ironically, Jessica doesn't see that she already is a writer because she obsessively writes in her journal all the time—even when it wasn't a SPECIAL program assignment to do so.

# August First

## August First Summary

Jessica writes a letter to Hope. She says she searched her journal for the greatness Mac saw, but she doesn't see it. What Jessica admits to seeing is a lot of negativity and very little focus on the good people and positive experience she's had so far at the program. She says she doesn't have much of an interest in fostering friendships with any of these people because it is exhausting trying to keep long-distance relationships afloat.

## August First Analysis

When Jessica is in a situation, she has a hard time seeing it from an outsider's perspective. Reading her journal, however, allowed her to reflect on what she has been writing. It allowed her to see her negativity and put her life in perspective. It foreshadows her having a different outlook as she continues with the writing program, and hopefully it will carry through to the rest of her life.



# The Fourth

## The Fourth Summary

After a night at Blood and Ink, Jessica runs into her crush, Paul Parlipiano, at a coffee shop. They sit down at a table and Jessica remembers that Paul is gay. He asks why she's in the city. She tells him about the writing program. He asks what her plans are for college and she tells him she's narrowed it down to four options. She goes through the elimination process she used to come to these four institutions. She points out that the reader should remember the point about the colleges her parents eliminated because they are in ghettos.

Paul tells Jessica she is making a big mistake. Jessica spits coffee at him accidentally, through her nostrils. She remembers a year ago after confessing her undying love for him that she threw up on Paul's shows at a summer party. Paul tells her that ruling out colleges in urban settings is a mistake because Columbia has changed his life. He tells Jessica that her columns in the school paper came to him via his step-sister, Taryn Baker, after he graduated and he thinks she has real talent.

Jessica is surprised to find out that Taryn is Paul's step-sister. Jessica tutored Taryn after Taryn took the fall for peeing into a yogurt came for "He Who Shall Remain Nameless" to pass a drug test, when Jessica is the one that peed into the yogurt cup. Paul also convinces Jessica that she is smart enough to get into one of the ivy league schools and offers to take her on a tour of Columbia. She blows off the reading at Blood and Ink and goes with Paul.

Jessica realizes that when she steps on foot of the campus that she belongs there. Only one other person has made her feel as if she belonged like Columbia does, and that's "Him."

## The Fourth Analysis

Jessica seems to have crushes on guys that are unavailable to her. This is probably a subconscious thing, but so far she has had crushes on two guys that are gay. Jessica telling the reader to pay attention to the colleges her parents eliminated suggests that she ends up getting into and going to one of these colleges.

Jessica's feeling of belonging when she tours Columbia with Paul further solidifies that she is going to apply to and get accepted into Columbia.



# The Ninth

## The Ninth Summary

Mac takes Jessica into his office to yell at her for going off on her own in the city. She tells him that the tour changed her life, changed her college plans. He congratulates her and the next day, in front of the whole class, he hands her a sealed letter of recommendation.

When Jessica gets back to the dorms, she shares the news with Bridget and Ashleigh. Ashleigh makes the assumption that Jessica is going to Columbia to follow Paul, even though he's a homosexual. Jessica shoots Bridget another dirty look. Jessica admits to the reader that she didn't open Mac's letter because she doesn't like reading other people's assessment of her intelligence.

## The Ninth Analysis

Jessica typically makes very logical decision. For example, she created a step-by-step formula for eliminating possible colleges. When she decides to go to Columbia, it is completely an emotional decision. While Jessica claims not to need social interaction, it is a basic human need that she seeks to fulfill by telling Bridget, and even Ashleigh, about her good news.

# Eleventh

## Eleventh Summary

Jessica creates a plan to follow to break the news to her parents that she is going to Columbia. When their parents come to pick them up from their respective programs, Mary hands Jessica a piece of paper with her email and phone number so they can keep in touch. This surprises Jessica because they haven't spoken to each other since Jessica walked in on Mary giving oral sex to one of the program attendees. Jessica waits to flush the information down the toilet when she gets home because she is trying to convince her parents that they have raised the perfect daughter, which is phase one of her plan.

## Eleventh Analysis

Jessica has made a decision about going to Columbia that she knows her parents are not going to like. She is planning on applying to Columbia behind their backs and implementing a plan to help her break the news to them once she is accepted. First, there is foreshadowing that Jessica will be accepted into the program. Second, it foreshadows a big fight between Jessica and her parents about Jessica deceiving them and making the decision to go to a college that they specifically eliminated from her options.

There is a fine line here because Jessica will technically be an adult when she goes off to college. The problem is that she is not truly an adult because she is still financially dependent on her parents.



# The Fourteenth

## The Fourteenth Summary

On her first morning home from SPECIAL, Jessica's mom tells her that her grandmother, Gladdie, fell down the steps from a stroke. She also says they put her in an assisted living facility because she can't take care of herself anymore. Jessica thinks about how the Darlings avoid talking about bad things and that's how they deal with them. Jessica mentions that her older brother died of crib death when he was a baby. His birthday is in two days. Her mom deals with it every year by popping Valium and her dad deals with it by riding his bike from here to the moon.

Jessica goes to visit Gladdie because her mother insists it. She finds her grandmother, mid story, surrounded by a group of other senior citizens. Her grandmother remembers who she is, which is a good sign. Jessica spends the day going through various activities with her grandmother and her grandmother's friends. Jessica thinks senior citizen living is more in line with what she sees college like than what SPECIAL offered her.

## The Fourteenth Analysis

Jessica has learned to deal with adversity the way that her parents do. Her mom and dad avoid dealing with the death of their first child. Even though Jessica recognizes this as an unhealthy way to deal with things, Jessica deals with situations in the same manner. She is learning by the example her parents provide. For example, Jessica isn't telling her parents about applying to Columbia. She's waiting until she gets accepted to tell them about her decision. This is the same as her parents waiting until she comes home from SPECIAL, two weeks after it happened, that her grandmother had a stroke, fell down the stairs and is having memory problems.





# The Sixteenth

## The Sixteenth Summary

Today would have been Matthew Darling's 21st birthday. Mrs. Darling celebrates it by staying in bed. Mr. Darling pedals off on his bike. Bethany, Jessica's sister who lives in California with her husband, will spend it shoe shopping. Jessica will spend it contemplating that she would never have been born if Matthew hadn't died. She wishes him a happy birthday.

## The Sixteenth Analysis

As Jessica predicted, her parents are dealing with the pain from the loss of her brother by denying it. She feels as if she is the only acknowledging his existence. What she doesn't realize is that everyone grieves in their own way. Her parents deal with it by avoidance.



# The Twentieth

## The Twentieth Summary

Jessica invites her father to follow her on his bike while she runs. She hates this but she's trying to be nice to him. She wants to quit the cross-country team. Running has become a labored sport for her since she broke her leg. She wants to quit the team but knows that it's unheard of because she is a four-year senior veteran and captain of the team.

## The Twentieth Analysis

Jessica thinks that her inability to run as she used to is psychological, rather than physical. She implies that she only started running to deal with her emotions after she stopped having late-night phone calls with "Him." Jessica is also struggling with what she wants to do versus what her parents want her to do. Her father wants her to stay on the team, while Jessica wants to quit because running was never about being on the team in the first place, for her.



# The Twenty-eighth

## The Twenty-eighth Summary

While school shopping at the mall, Jessica runs into the Clueless Two: Sara and Manda. Sara lost a lot of weight and is deeply tanned. Manda is pretending as if she is bored with the conversation. Sara uses the catchphrase, quote, unquote all the time. Manda sleeps with other people's boyfriends, such as Burke, Bridget's ex. Sara asks Jessica what she did all summer. Then, she asks if Jessica heard about the new hottie that's going to their school. Manda seems to put an end to this conversation. Jessica thinks that all of the optimism she had about returning to Pineville for her senior years has been sucked out of her. She decides to apply for early admission to Columbia.

## The Twenty-eighth Analysis

Jessica has stereotyped Sara and Manda into their roles. She feels as if she doesn't have anything in common with these girls. In essence, Jessica doesn't feel like she belongs in Pineville at all. Since she feels as if she belongs at Columbia, this is what propels her to apply for early admission.

# September 1st

## September 1st Summary

Jessica writes a letter to Hope. The letter spells out Jessica's six goals and objectives for getting through her final year of high school.

## September 1st Analysis

Jessica is trying to bring back the optimism she had when she first arrived back in Pineville. She is thinking of everything she can to help the foundation for a successful and final year of high school. In her own style, she writes these objectives down and mails them off to share with her best friend, Hope.



# The Fourth

## The Fourth Summary

Someone hacked into the high school's scheduling program and messed up everyone's schedule. So, like Jessica, a third of the school is assigned to gym first period, so the bleachers are crowded with students. Pepe, Jessica's black friend from French, comes in talking about her whiteness and his blackness, which is a joke between the two of them. Bridget spots Jessica and waves her over to where she is sitting.

Bridget asks why Percy, Pepe's real name, didn't come with Jessica. Jessica tells Bridget that Sara lost a lot of weight. Bridget and Jessica are scanning the bleachers for Sara when Jessica spots Manda wearing Scotty's letterman jacket. Scotty is Jessica's ex from eighth grade, before he became popular.

Then, Bridget spots and points out the new hottie in school. He turns out to be geek cute, which is Jessica's type of cute. Jessica then spots "He Who Shall Remain Nameless," Marcus Flutie. She finally agrees to write and say his name. When Bridget notices that Jessica spots Marcus, she reminds her that she hates him.

Bridget is the only one that knows that Jessica almost had sex with Marcus last New Year's Eve. Jessica reveals that she almost lost her virginity to Marcus, until he admitted that it was a bet with his friends to see if the male slut of Pineville, Marcus, could sleep with the brainiac, Jessica.

## The Fourth Analysis

It seems as if Bridget has a crush on Percy, which is why she asks Jessica why he didn't come over to sit with them. Jessica is attracted to what she can't have, or what she knows is not good for her. Case in point is Marcus Flutie. She's trying to convince herself that she hates Marcus but she really loves him. This foreshadows the two of them becoming boyfriend and girlfriend, once she overcomes what he did to her last year.

# The Fifth

## The Fifth Summary

In English class, the teacher allows them to sit where they want instead of in alphabetical order. Marcus chooses to sit right in front of Jessica and the new hottie sits next to her. At the end of class, Jessica introduces herself to the new hottie. It turns out not to be a new guy, but a guy Jessica already knows, Len Levy.

When Jessica sees Sara and Manda laughing at her, she knows they set her up. She tries to convince Len that she knew it was him, even though he obviously transformed over the summer and leaves as Len and Marcus strike up a conversation.

## The Fifth Analysis

Jessica is trying to make Marcus jealous by approaching the "new hottie" after class. It backfires on her because the "new hottie" turns out to be the old nerd that cleared up his acne and changed his hair over the summer. The gesture seems to be lost on Marcus who end up striking up a conversation with Len and walking away from Jessica.



# The Seventh

## The Seventh Summary

While Jessica and Len are being photographed for their winning students of the month for September, Jessica asks how his summer was. she really wants to know about Marcus. Since Len is Marcus's only confidant, she knows she can probably get it out of Len. In true Len fashion, one question leads to a long and lasting answer from Len.

He tells Jessica he was on Accutane to get rid of his cysts. He launches into a long list of the side effects. He says he spent the rest of his summer in the basement with his band, which Marcus (Len calls him Flu) seems to be a member.

## The Seventh Analysis

Jessica is trying to use Len as her source of information about Marcus. While she does glean some interesting tidbits of information from what Len says, she doesn't get the answers to all of her questions. In fact, some of things Len says about Marcus sends Jessica into over-analytical mode, leaving her with more questions than answers.

# The Thirteenth

## The Thirteenth Summary

It's a few days after September 11th. Jessica says she hasn't been able to write in her journal since the tragedy unfolded. She lists out all of the things they were scared of before the World Trade Center fell. She is mocking the violations that landed her fellow classmates suspended from school. She questions why she makes jokes at a time when she should be very serious. She questions her mental state.

## The Thirteenth Analysis

Each person reacts to tragic situations differently. For Jessica, she tends to make jokes out of tragic situations. She wonders whether or not this makes her messed up mentally. In fact, it might be seen as the proper way to handle emotions, but it is the way in which she seems to handle her emotions.





# The Twentieth

## The Twentieth Summary

Sara is freaking out because her SAT scores got stuck in one of the post offices that had an anthrax scare. When Len finds out that Bridget isn't applying for college, he starts stammering about the matriculation rate and the ratio of students at Pineville that have to go to college. Jessica assures Len that Bridget is going to college and has already applied.

After 9/11, Jessica decides she can't go to Columbia and decides not to apply. After she scores 1650 on her SATs, she starts putting together her application for the four original schools she had in mind. While tutoring Taryn, Jessica asks if Paul mentioned running into Jessica over the summer. She tells Taryn about Paul convincing her to apply to Columbia and about why she changed her mind, but Taryn doesn't

## The Twentieth Analysis

The seniors at Pineville High School are living in a snow globe. Their only concern is scoring high enough on the SATs to get into the college they want to go. They are worrying about finishing out their senior year, completing college applications and receiving acceptance letters. Beyond that, the world doesn't seem to exist to them, not even in the aftermath of 9/11. They are self-absorbed and only concerned how what happened on 9/11 is going to affect them.

# The Thirtieth

## The Thirtieth Summary

Marcus shows up the doorway of Jessica's room. He says he stopped by on impulse after band practice when he saw her lights were on. They haven't really spoken to each other in nine months. Marcus strikes up a conversation with Jessica as if nothing ever happened. She asks why Marcus is here and he says to tell her two things. First, he tells her that he didn't tell her that he knew a lot about her from eavesdropping on Jessica and Hope's conversations while in Heath's bedroom. Second, he tells her that he works at the nursing home where Gladdie is, so Gladdie has been talking to him about Jessica. Third, he tells her that Len likes her. When Marcus leaves, Jessica's mom comes in asking all sorts of questions about Marcus. Then, she tells Jessica that Bethany and G-Money are flying into New Jersey for Thanksgiving.

## The Thirtieth Analysis

Marcus is trying to make peace with Jessica. He uses the war in the Middle East as a metaphor for the "war" between the two of them. When Jessica's mom asks Jessica a question, she says Jessica never gives her a straight answer. This is the same way Jessica feels about what Marcus says to her. Jessica always has a hard time figuring out what he is really trying to say.



# November 1st

## November 1st Summary

Jessica writes Hope a letter about Halloween. She tells Hope that it's interesting to see which costumes people choose because it reveals who those people want to be the other 364 days of the year. She describes everybody's costume to Hope. She says Marcus wore a black t-shirt with the letter Game Master on it. Jessica says Marcus must have seen Michael J. Fox's DVD on her bookshelf when he was in his room. He wore the t-shirt as a message to her, but she ignored it.

## November 1st Analysis

Marcus seems like he is trying to get Jessica's attention. In previous attempts, he tried to speak to her directly. When he couldn't get a reaction this way, he tries to send her silent messages, such as the message he prints on a t-shirt for Halloween. No matter what Marcus says or does, Jessica ignores him either way.

# The Third

## The Third Summary

After three days of not reacting or saying anything about Marcus, Jessica goes to Bridget's house and tells her everything. She tells her about Marcus naming the band after a poem line he wrote for Jessica. She tells her about the Game Master shirt. She tells her about Marcus and Gladdie talking about her. Bridget tells Jessica to get over Marcus and says she should talk to Gladdie.

Jessica arrives at the nursing home to find Gladdie playing cards with Marcus, Moe and Irene. Marcus makes some insinuating comments. When Jessica tries to get Gladdie to go to her room with her, Gladdie says it's more fun out here with the guys. Jessica asks to speak to Marcus alone and he suggests to everyone that it must be about Len. They all whoop. When she says it's about Marcus, they all whoop again. Jessica gets frustrated and leaves.

## The Third Analysis

Jessica is in denial. She is trying to convince herself and everyone else that she doesn't have feelings for Marcus anymore. While she says she is attempting to keep Marcus at bay, Jessica is really looking for ways to ensure that he is still trying to get her attention. For example, she ignores him, but it is in hopes that he will do something else or say something more to her.



# The Sixth

## The Sixth Summary

Jessica calls the nursing home to see if Marcus is working before she goes to visit Gladdie. The resident that answers the phone thinks she's asking about "Market Phooey" instead of Marcus Flutie, so Jessica hangs up. Normally, Jessica would ask Len, but since Len likes her she doesn't think it's nice to ask him about Marcus.

When Jessica calls Marcus, he answers the phone saying hi to Jessica. He must have looked at the Caller ID. Marcus says he thinks she's using him, as the best friend, to get to Len. Jessica remembers when she and Marcus were friends that he admitted he is using his time not drinking and using drugs now to help Len get laid. Jessica asks Marcus if this is what he's trying to do. He says it is. She accuses his help of being a conflict of interest since he wanted to sleep with her 10 months ago.

Jessica says if Marcus wants Len and Jessica to get together, then why didn't Marcus tell Len to wear the Game Master shirt to impress her. Then, she hangs up the phone feeling as if she won. When she hangs up, she realizes she forgot to ask if he was working today, so she decides not to go visit Gladdie.

## The Sixth Analysis

Jessica says one thing but does another. She says she doesn't care about Marcus, but she seems pretty concerned with what he is doing and saying. Both Marcus and Jessica have insider information on each other. Since they were friends and talked about everything before, they both know things that can help them get under each other's skin.

# The Tenth

## The Tenth Summary

Marcus and Jessica continue to talk just by saying hi and bye to each other. Len asks Jessica on a date to go hiking with him. Their conversation consists of topics found in the New York Times. When they stop to take a break in the graffiti bridge, Jessica reminds Len about third grade when he broke her heart. He apologizes and says he would never do that now.

## The Tenth Analysis

Jessica goes out with Len got a couple of different reasons. One, she is trying to annoy Marcus. Two, she wishes age could fall for a nice guy like Len. In reality, Len is the one that is going to wind up with a broken heart this time.



# The Fifteenth

## The Fifteenth Summary

In class, Sara confront Jessica about a gossip email that was sent to students at school, called the Pineville Low. Sara thinks Jessica sent it. Jessica doesn't know what she's talking about so Jessica asks Bridget. Bridget tells her to be quiet about it but she'll show her later .

In French, Pepe says he know Jessica wrote it. Pepe says he didn't get it but Bridget showed him hers. Len asks Jessica to homecoming and she says yes. When Jessica gets home, she checks her email but her inbox is empty. Her dad tells her to check her spam folder and she finds it.

The email contains 10 pieces of gossip that it is easy to figure out who it is. Jessica forwards it to Len because one piece is about Len.

## The Fifteenth Analysis

It seems as if Taryn is writing the gossip email. She's quiet and low key but sees and hears a lot because of it. She is also being tutored by Jessica so picks up on things during their tutoring sessions. She is the person least likely to be suspected, which makes her the most obvious person.

# The Seventeenth

## The Seventeenth Summary

Bridget calls Len the next day. He asks why she sent the email to him and he apologizes that it says he plans on losing his virginity to his date on homecoming. She says she thought he had a right to know. At Bridget's house, Bridget tells Jessica to drop the act because everyone knows she wrote it. When Bridget points out the evidence that points to Jessica, even Jessica starts believing she wrote it, even though she didn't.

## The Seventeenth Analysis

Because the evidence points to Jessica, everyone thinks she wrote the email. This is going to cause everyone at school to walk on eggshells around Jessica because they think she is the one that is outing them. This also foreshadows Jessica going into investigator mode to try to uncover who the real writer of the gossip email is.





# The Twentieth

## The Twentieth Summary

One of the students' mothers forwards the Pinevile Low to the powers that be at school —anonymously. The story makes the front page of the local newspaper. The administration cancels homecoming because nobody will admit to writing the gossip email. The students protest but the protest falls apart when they say they'll suspend sports activities if the students don't return to class.

Marcus suggests they plan an alternative event to homecoming. Marcus tries to convince Len that it's time for the band to play. They decide they'll have to get Sara to host the party because she's the only with a big enough house. They swipe Jessica's name of "Anti-homecoming" and ask Jessica to convince Sara to throw the party.

## The Twentieth Analysis

Jessica mentions being one of the most antisocial people in school. She also mentions Taryn Baker being right there up with her being antisocial. This is ironic because Taryn, one of the most antisocial kids in school, is going to turn out to be the author of the Pinevile Low.



# The Twenty-first

## The Twenty-first Summary

Jessica kisses some serious butt to convince Sara to host the Anti-homecoming party. She also has a hard time, but finally is able to convince Sara to allow Marcus and Len's band to play at the party. Sara runs over to tell Manda and Scotty the news. Jessica thinks about how much the couple has been trying to prove that Scotty can get it up with the sexual innuendos in the hallways ever since the Pineville Low printed that Scotty can't get it up.

## The Twenty-first Analysis

As Jessica watches Scotty and Manda interact with each other, she thinks about still being a virgin. She mentions that it's one of the things that she and Hope still have in common. She worries that if Hope loses her virginity that it will put a damper on the unique bond the two have. Jessica has set very high standards on who she will lose her virginity to, which also makes her think that she's going to die a virgin.



# The Twenty-second

## The Twenty-second Summary

As soon as Bethany and G-Money arrive, they announce they are expecting. When Jessica mentions that she didn't think Bethany wanted a baby, everyone looks at her like she's crazy and doesn't speak to her until they sit down for Thanksgiving dinner. Moe, who came with Gladdie, asks Jessica why she hasn't been by the home. Gladdie says it's because Marcus says Jessica has a boyfriend. This statement gets Mrs. Darling's attention quick. Jessica explains about homecoming being canceled and the Anti-homecoming event.

Gladdie says Marcus is a firecracker and it's too bad he's not interested in Jessica. Gladdie goes on to say that Marcus said he loves Jessica's mind, but that he's not attracted to Jessica. Jessica has to stop herself from crying into her stuffing.

## The Twenty-second Analysis

Hearing Gladdie say that Marcus admits that he's not attracted to Jessica crushes her. She is going to have a major setback about being sad about them not being together again. All the progress she has made in the last 11 months will be for naught.



# The Twenty-third

## The Twenty-third Summary

When Len arrives to pick Jessica up, the whole family is lined up to greet him. When they get in the car, Len says he can't do it. Len is talking about losing his virginity, but Jessica thinks he's talking about playing in the band, which leads to a very awkward exchange. Len scampers off with his guitar when they arrive at the party. Everyone is at the party—even Taryn Baker and Paul Parlipiano.

Paul asks if Jessica sent in her Columbia application. Paul realizes she is scared because of 9/11 and urges her to send it in. Taryn whispers something in Paul's ear and he says they have to leave. Bridget and Pepe come to confirm she was talking to Paul Parlipiano. When Jessica turns to her left, Marcus is standing beside her.

When Jessica sees Pepe gaze at Bridget, she realizes that Pepe is lusting after Bridget. Bridget and Pepe leave to join their drama peers and Marcus and Jessica have a suggestive conversation with each other. Len comes up to get Marcus to start playing.

The band plays and the crowd goes wild. When Jessica sees all the 14-year-old girls rush the stage, she decides that if Len isn't going to make a move then she will. Jessica pounds two beers and tells Len they should get out of here when he finishes. When they get to the car, Len says he can't lose his virginity to Jessica or vice versa because he doesn't want to put his college plans in jeopardy. Jessica kisses him.

## The Twenty-third Analysis

Jessica is experiencing the feeling that she wants what she can't have. Since she can't have Marcus, she is substituting Len. Jessica also doesn't want other girls to have Len, so she decides to make a move for him.



# December 1st

## December 1st Summary

Jessica writes Hope. She tells her that it's time for the Health and Human Sexuality Class this semester. She talks about what it's like being girlfriend and boyfriend with Len. Jessica says she constantly has to remind herself what she has to do as a girlfriend. She says Len is a good kisser and that he won't dick her over.

## December 1st Analysis

Jessica is too comfortable with Len. This foreshadows Len doing something totally unexpected, such as cheating on Jessica. Jessica is also settling for Len. Even though Len is a nice guy, she's not attracted to him the way a girlfriend should be attracted to her boyfriend.

# The Fifth

## The Fifth Summary

The day after the Anti-homecoming party, Len calls Jessica up and lists out all of the reasons he likes her as his girlfriend. She tells him to come right over and they hook up. Jessica says she likes kissing Len because it's better than not kissing anyone.

## The Fifth Analysis

Again, Jessica is settling for Len. It's not that she doesn't think Len is great but she doesn't really want to be Len's girlfriend. Jessica's feelings for Len are starting to morph a bit because she mentions how much she's starting to like Len.



# January The First

## January The First Summary

Jessica wakes up the next morning still drunk and with a missing bra. She's in her own bed but is still wearing the clothes from the night before. Jessica pieces together the events of the evening through her own vague memories, eyewitness testimony and conclusive forms of evidence. Basically, they were at Sara's New Year's Eve Party, where Len's band was playing. Everything was relatively normal until Scotty gives Jessica ecstasy at around 11:15. Fifteen minutes later, she's wasted. By the time they are parked in Len's car, Jessica starts rambling about how she's going to lose her virginity to Len instead of to Marcus, like she's always thought she would for the past year. Len puts the brakes on going any further just as Jessica realizes she saying her thoughts out loud.

## January The First Analysis

Jessica is starting to experiment a little heavier than normal with drugs and alcohol. Mostly, this is from peer pressure. The rest is from curiosity. When the clock strikes midnight, Len kisses Jessica and some of her erogenous zones, which she equates with love.



# The Second

## The Second Summary

Jessica is in her room vowing never to do drugs again when her mom brings Scotty upstairs. Scotty says something happened between them the night before. Jessica says it was just the E talking. Scotty tries to kiss her but she uses Len as an excuse.

After Scotty leaves, Jessica calls Ken. They agree to meet at Helga's diner. When Jessica arrives Marcus is there. When Len arrives, he asks them what happened between the two of them. Marcus says he tried to sleep with Jessica a year ago but she turned him down. He says that's it. Len kisses Jessica and she thinks she sees a glint of a tear in Marcus's eye.

## The Second Analysis

Jessica is evaluating what possessed her to try drugs in the first place. The overdose of her best friend's brother was enough to scare her from even trying drugs. Additionally, she also thought that her body chemistry and drugs would not mix. Len handles the situation in a very adult manner. He calls for Marcus and Jessica to meet with him on the diner, so they can all have a candid discussion and get to the bottom of what happened the night before.





# The Fifteenth

## The Fifteenth Summary

On the Monday after the E incident, the Pineville Low issue includes information about Jessica and Scotty doing drugs together. This sends Manda into a fit. After school, Jessica goes to the nursing home to thank Marcus for what he did with Len. Marcus also makes a comment about Taryn knowing Jessica is the one that peed into the yogurt cup for Marcus.

## The Fifteenth Analysis

Everyone thinks the email contains information about Jessica to throw them off that she's writing the email. Marcus mentioning Taryn knowing their secret is going to clue Jessica in that Taryn is the one writing the emails.



# The Nineteenth

## The Nineteenth Summary

It is Jessica's 18th birthday. She is hanging out with Len at his house. Jessica is trying to impress his mother because Len told Jessica about Jessica doing drugs at the New Year's Eve party and her previous encounter with Marcus. Len's mother makes a joke, that Jessica doesn't really think is a joke, about Jessica being arrested now if she does things that are illegal.

## The Nineteenth Analysis

Jessica realizes that Len is extremely nice guy. She is doubting whether she is good enough for Len or not. The challenge Jessica faces is that she knows if she breaks up with Len that there isn't a nicer guy in their high school that she could possibly date.



# The Twenty-fifth

## The Twenty-fifth Summary

Jessica admits that all she can think about is sex. In her Health and Human Sexuality class, the teacher talks about how the Bush Administration is promoting abstinence. Len raises his hand and speaks in support of abstinence. Manda says she agrees with Len. When Jessica grunts in disagreement, the teacher asks Jessica if she has something to share. Jessica says that with people waiting longer to get married, it's a bit too much to ask people to wait for marriage to have sex. Marcus says that very informed people even make stupid decisions when it comes to sex and hormones. Len doesn't speak to Jessica after class or come by her locker later in the day.

## The Twenty-fifth Analysis

It's ironic that Manda agrees with Len about abstinence considering that she is one of the biggest whores in school. It seems as if Manda is taking Len's side for a reason, foreshadowing that the two might hook up at some point later in the novel. Len is mad at Jessica because he is committed to his beliefs and what Jessica said in class totally contradicts those beliefs.



# The Twenty-seventh and February 1st

## The Twenty-seventh and February 1st Summary

Jessica is thinking about sex right now. She describes a dream she had the previous night. She has a dream where someone whose name could also have made the last line of a birthday song she wrote rhyme was a stable boy and she was a countess.

Jessica writes Hope a letter to tell her about the sex ed. class. She tells Hope about a survey that the teacher passed out. Jessica says she answered the questions, although she felt like it was entrapment, so she wouldn't fail a class in the third semester of her senior year. Jessica also tells Hope that she used to not want to know if Hope loses her virginity, but now she wants to know. She thinks when Hope loses her virginity it will be for love and romance.

## The Twenty-seventh and February 1st Analysis

Jessica infers that she had a sexual dream about Marcus. One of the bonds, even across the miles, that Hope and Jessica still share is their virginity. Jessica worries that she will make the wrong decision in whom she loses her virginity to, or that she will never lose her virginity. She knows that Hope's convictions will lead her to choose carefully the person she loses her virginity to, which will be with someone Hope loves and that loves Hope.



# The Fourth

## The Fourth Summary

Jessica gets accepted into Piedmont University with as scholarship to cover half tuition and priority housing and scheduling. Jessica's parents are thrilled when she tells them because they think Piedmont is her first choice. They order in pizza to celebrate.

Jessica tells them she's waiting on the Williams' response because there she applied for a full scholarship, which is a stalling tactic to avoid telling them about Columbia. Jessica calls Len to talk about her Piedmont/Columbia problem but hangs up when Mrs. Levy answers. Right after she hangs up she thinks about Caller ID. Jessica mentions not thinking much about the fight she had with Len because all couples fight, except for Bethany and G-Money—because they don't talk enough to fight about anything.

## The Fourth Analysis

The guilt in lying to her parents about applying to Columbia is stressing Jessica out. By not telling them the truth upfront, it foreshadows them taking the news even worse later, if and when she does have to tell them. Len getting so angry with Jessica about the abstinence fight, and not speaking to her, indicates that he is angry over something much bigger than the fight itself. His "disappearance" foreshadows that he might be dating someone else. The fact that Manda ironically agreed with Len in class on the abstinence issues indicates that it might be Manda with which Len is cheating.



# The Fourteenth

## The Fourteenth Summary

The latest Pineville Low issue reveals that Len broke up with Jessica for Manda. Jessica can't believe that she was so worried all this time that Manda was after Marcus. In the end, Jessica realizes now that Manda was after Len the whole time. The part that upsets Jessica the most is that whoever writes the Pineville Low emails knew about what was going on between Len and Manda before Jessica.

After being holed up in her room for three days, Jessica wanders downstairs to get ice cream out of the freezer. She sees someone has already started eating it and finds Bethany there. Bethany says she's been there for three days, but Jessica realizes she hasn't seen her sister because she hasn't left her room since Friday. Bethany tells Jessica she looks terrible and says she knows it's because Len broke up with Jessica on Valentine's Day. Bethany, who was the Manda of her senior class—minus the slut part—says she knows how Jessica feels. She proceeds to tell Jessica how she used to steal name brand clothing tags from the mall to put in her Trapper Keeper because that was the cool thing to do when she was in high school. Jessica retreats back to her room.

## The Fourteenth Analysis

While it is simply a tip in the recent issue of Pineville Low, it seems as if Len and Manda are together now. This is the utmost of irony, considering that Manda is a slut and Len is a virgin. To add to the irony, Len cites one of the reasons for breaking up with Jessica is their different stances on pre-marital sex, yet Manda has slept with half of the school. Bethany is trying to bond with Jessica to help her make it through her break up. The problem is that the two sisters could not be any more different than they are. What Bethany sees as a problem is not anywhere near the level of what Jessica sees as a problem.



# The Twentieth and the Twenty-second

## The Twentieth and the Twenty-second Summary

Jessica makes a list of the top six things to do when you are staying home playing hooky from school.

After Jessica misses a week of school, Bridget and Pep show up at her house. Jessica admits that her staying home has nothing to do with Len because she didn't want to be with Len from the start. They tell her the best time to come back to school is Monday because Scotty, Len and Manda start their two-week suspensions. Scotty and Len got into a fight, hence their suspensions. Manda punched Scotty in the nuts when he went after Len, hence her suspension. Jessica starts to joke around with Pepe and Bridget, so they know she's starting to be herself again. She says she has to do something second, right after she takes a shower.

## The Twentieth and the Twenty-second Analysis

Jessica is staying home from school wallowing in her own self-pity. It is ironic that Jessica is staying home from school because she has never missed more than one day of school at a time before. The thing Jessica says she has to do after she takes a shower might be to confront Taryn about being the writer of the Pineville Low emails.



# The Twenty-fourth

## The Twenty-fourth Summary

Jessica goes to the nursing home to visit Gladdie. As soon as she walks in, she can tell that they are all looking at her about whispering—presumably about the breakup. Marcus comes up to Jessica. They start talking about Len and Manda. Marcus assures Jessica that Len and Manda are not sleeping together. Marcus also says he tried to get Len and Jessica together because he thought they would be happy together. Marcus also goes on to tell Jessica that she had to go through with dating Len and then managing the break up in order for her to love again and move on through life.

## The Twenty-fourth Analysis

Jessica goes to the nursing home to visit Gladdie. As soon as she walks in, she can tell that they are all looking at her about whispering—presumably about the breakup. Marcus comes up to Jessica. They start talking about Len and Manda. Marcus assures Jessica that Len and Manda are not sleeping together. Marcus also says he tried to get Len and Jessica together because he thought they would be happy together. Marcus also goes on to tell Jessica that she had to go through with dating Len and then managing the break up in order for her to love again and move on through life. Marcus telling her that allowing her brain to go out with Len and then break up with him permits Jessica to experience what it's like so that she move on to the next one is an inference and foreshadowing that Jessica and Marcus will end up as a couple after all.





# March 1st

## March 1st Summary

Jessica writes Hope. Jessica tells Hope that she received an email from Paul Parlipiano. He is inviting her to spend spring break in New York City going to a demonstration with him. Jessica also says Paul assures her that it doesn't mean it's bad news that she hasn't received her letter from Columbia because they are known to send out their letters later than the other universities.

## March 1st Analysis

Jessica continues to look up to Paul, even though she knows there is no chance for her crush to turn into something more because Paul is gay. While Jessica does think Paul is a great person, the reason she continues to carry a crush on him is that she knows she cannot have him. Since she cannot have Paul, it also means that she cannot get hurt.

# The Fourth

## The Fourth Summary

Gladdie tells Jessica that she has to approach her first day back at school with Len and Manda back from their suspensions with dignity and grace. Jessica keeps repeating this mantra to herself as she enters the school that Monday. Sara runs up to Jessica and starts going on and on about how she would just die if her boyfriend humiliated her like Len humiliated Jessica. Len comes up to Jessica's locker to apologize for hurting her. Jessica goes off on Len, in front of a crowd in the hallway, that applauds when she's done. Marcus tells her so much for dignified grace. Jessica thinks his approval of what she said and did is better late than never.

## The Fourth Analysis

Gladdie tells Jessica that she has to approach her first day back at school with Len and Manda back from their suspensions with dignity and grace. Jessica keeps repeating this mantra to herself as she enters the school that Monday. Sara runs up to Jessica and starts going on and on about how she would just die if her boyfriend humiliated her like Len humiliated Jessica. Len comes up to Jessica's locker to apologize for hurting her. Jessica goes off on Len, in front of a crowd in the hallway, that applauds when she's done. Marcus tells her so much for dignified grace. Jessica thinks his approval of what she said and did is better late than never.



# The Ninth

## The Ninth Summary

Piedmont is hosting a tea for the honors students they are trying to woo in New Jersey. It's being held at a district attorney's home who is an alumna of the university. Jessica's parents are forcing her to go but when she comes downstairs, her mother tells her she cannot wear what she's wearing. Mrs. Darling pulls one of Bethany's old suits out of Jessica's closet and forces Jessica to wear it.

When they arrive at the home of the DA, Jessica notices that there are only girls in attendance. When she mentions this, the DA explains the Piedmont separate-but-equal policy. The dorms for girls and guys are separate. Everything is separate, but the classes are coed. Jessica runs into Call Me Chantalle, her roommate from the writing program. She drags her mother out of the tea party, saying she has no intention on going to Piedmont.

## The Ninth Analysis

Jessica has multiple opportunities to tell her mother about applying to and wanting to attend Columbia. Each time, however, Jessica backs out. Again, this type of buildup is just going to make it worse when and if Jessica does get accepted into Columbia. If she told her parents before applying, they would most likely be less angry than they are going to be when she tells them so long after the fact.



# The Fifteenth

## The Fifteenth Summary

Jessica isn't in the most recent issue of Pineville Low, so she decides to talk with Percy (Pepe) about his crush on Bridget. Percy insists that he doesn't have a crush on Bridget because a girl like Bridget could never like someone like him. In the meantime, Bridget plans a trip to NYC to confront Hy Wallace at a reading and book signing event. Jessica says she'll ride the bus with Bridget because it's the same day as her march with Paul. Bridget expresses her concern to Jessica that since Jessica and Len broke up, Jessica seems to be re-obsessed with Paul. Bridget reminds Jessica that Paul is gay.

## The Fifteenth Analysis

Jessica is fixated on the gossips included in the Pineville Low issues. Mostly, this is because what is in each issue typically turns out to be true. She feels a sense of relief when the issue doesn't have anything to do with her, which allows Jessica to focus on other things going on in her life. All of the time that Bridget and Pepe are spending together foreshadows a romantic relationship developing between the two of them—even if they are direct opposites, besides their mutual love for acting.



# The Seventeenth

## The Seventeenth Summary

For St. Patrick's Day, Jessica and her parents attend a celebration at Gaddie's nursing home. Marcus is dancing with Gladdie and he's wearing a "Kiss Me, I'm Irish" t-shirt. He says Gladdie gave it to him. Gladdie urges Jessica to kiss Marcus. When the Darlings ask Marcus about his college plans, he announces that he isn't going to college. This astonishes the Darlings. Marcus mentions Jessica is conflicted about her college plans, to which Mrs. Darling agrees. Marcus says that if he was going to college that he would go to New York City. Jessica wonders how he knows about Columbia and why he's saying this to her parents, so she pulls him aside. Marcus says he knows about Columbia from Len.

## The Seventeenth Analysis

Marcus seems to very involved with Gladdie. Partially, this is because he works at the nursing home. Second, it is very convenient that Jessica's grandmother just happens to be one of the patients he deals with during his work shifts. It seems as if Marcus is trying to stay connected to Jessica by forming a relationship with Gladdie. It's similar to how he stays connected with Jessica and what's going on with her through his friendship with Len. All of this is a further indication that Jessica and Marcus end up dating and together in the end.



# The Twenty-first

## The Twenty-first Summary

Jessica is tutoring Taryn in the library. Scotty busts in and asks Jessica if they are going to prom together or not. She sarcastically answers him. Jessica asks Scotty what happened to him. She is about to tell Scotty that she would have totally said yes to the old Scotty, when he storms out of the library in a huff. Jessica also thinks about how she's been altering her behavior to be more like Jessica Sweet, her alter ego in Hy's book.

## The Twenty-first Analysis

The fact that Taryn is present during the exchange between Scotty and Jessica almost guarantees it will make it into the next Pineville Low issue. Ironically, Jessica is chastising Scotty for changing his behavior and changing the way he is, when she has been doing the exact same thing. It's also a bit ironic that one of the most popular boys in school and a star athlete has it so bad for Jessica that he's asking her to prom, yet she doesn't feel worthy of being a girlfriend.



# The Twenty-eighth

## The Twenty-eighth Summary

When Jessica comes downstairs in the morning, she tells her mom and Bethany that she's riding the bus with Bridget to New York. Mrs. Darling gasps, saying she didn't know the book signing was in the city. When Bridget comes in, she seems to divert her mother and sister's attention. They verify that Bridget knows her way around the city, so they relent in allowing her to go. On the bus ride, Jessica divides the bus riders into a few different categories—one being children and another being perverts. When they arrive in NYC, they part ways. Jessica makes it to the apartment that is the headquarters for the organization and meet-up place for the march. As soon as Paul sees Jessica, he starts picking out things that are wrong with her, such as she is wearing Gap jeans and drinking Coke. He explains how both of these companies are oppressive.

Finally, Jessica strikes back—telling Paul that he and his organization are against anyone that doesn't share their opinion and that they are marching today without a real cause. Paul asks if Jessica's anger has anything to do with Taryn, but Jessica asks what Taryn has to do with this. Jessica leaves and heads to the bookstore to meet Bridget.

When Jessica gets to the book signing, Bridget isn't there. Jessica talks to Hy. Jessica mentions how her character in the book is her, but better. Hy says she doesn't know what Jessica is talking about—that she sees Jessica in real life as the person she portrayed in the book. When Jessica gets back on the bus, she finds Bridget there hanging her head in shame, admitting she couldn't confront Hy.

## The Twenty-eighth Analysis

Jessica learns one valuable lesson in both run-ins with her ex-high school classmates. With Paul, she learns that he isn't as great as she has always made him out to be. She was hoisting Paul onto a pedestal, but now she realizes that who he is and who she thought he was are two different people. It is a similar situation with how Hy sees Jessica and how Jessica views herself—it's two completely different people with some similarities.

# April 1st and The Twelfth

## April 1st and The Twelfth Summary

Jessica writes to Hope, congratulating her on getting into the design school in Rhode Island she applied to attend. She tells Hope that she's dreading the letter from Williams because then she might have to come clean with her parents because she is running out of ways to stall them until she hears from Columbia. Jessica asks Hope why Jessica always wants what she can't have and never wants what she can have.

In homeroom, Sara is going on and on about her letter from the girl that is her freshmen initiation coordinator at Harrington College. Jessica teases her, asking if she's sure she got into a college and not a sorority after hearing what the letter contains. Jessica realizes she's jealous over Sara's enthusiasm for the college she is going to, as she is with the same enthusiasm Len, Manda, Scotty and even Bridget have when they receive their acceptance letters. Jessica questions why she still hasn't heard from Columbia yet.

## April 1st and The Twelfth Analysis

Jessica is following a pattern than many people do—the wanting what she can't have and not appreciating what she does have. There is a fine line, however, between aspiring to reach your dreams and settling for what you can get. Jessica is still learning how to achieve this balance. Again, Jessica is playing in the role of a victim. She thinks that everyone else gets what they want, but that she never does. This also causes Jessica to say sarcastic things and tease people that find joy in what they have rather than just acting happy for them.





# **The Fifteenth, The Seventeenth, The Nineteenth, The Twenty-third and The Twenty-seventh**

## **The Fifteenth, The Seventeenth, The Nineteenth, The Twenty-third and The Twenty-seventh Summary**

Jessica's rejection of Scotty's prom invitation makes it into Pineville Low. Jessica hates Mac and Paul for making her want to go to Columbia. Jessica creates a very sarcastic list of her college options since she doesn't want to attend any of the ones she been accepted to attend. She finds out that one her options—the clown college—closed last year so now she only has two options left. She thinks the mailman is Satan.

Jessica's stress level is so high that even yoga isn't helping. She gives up yoga and goes for a run. This is the first time she's run in six months. Jessica realizes during her run that running is a stress-reliever for her. she enjoys her run and when she walks in the door her father starts yelling at her. Jessica assumes he's yelling because he has caught her returning from a run, but then she sees the fat and open envelope from Columbia. She was accepted and there was a delay because there was a technical error with the computer system. Jessica and her parents yell at each other about her attending Columbia until they all have laryngitis.

## **The Fifteenth, The Seventeenth, The Nineteenth, The Twenty-third and The Twenty-seventh Analysis**

Jessica has a tendency to swing from highs to lows and from lows to highs in her moods. She remains at a very low point in her life, but when she receives the acceptance letter from Columbia, she elated. Just as Jessica predicted, her parents freaked out when they find out she applied to and got accepted into Columbia. They refuse to pay for her college education if she goes there, so this foreshadows Jessica having to take out student loans and work in order to come up with the money she needs to pay to attend Columbia.



# The Twenty-eighth

## The Twenty-eighth Summary

Jessica and Gladdie are talking at Bethany's baby shower. Gladdie mentions Columbia and Jessica asks how she knows about that. Gladdie confesses Marcus told her. Gladdie asks Jessica when she is going to give Marcus a chance, but Jessica reminds her grandmother that Gladdie said he wasn't interested in Jessica. Gladdie says she just said so Jessica wouldn't make it too easy on Marcus.

## The Twenty-eighth Analysis

Jessica sees Gladdie as someone who is in direct contrast to herself. The truth is that Jessica and Gladdie are a lot alike. This is one of the reasons why they get along so well. Gladdie is trying to teach Jessica some valuable life lessons.



# April 30th and May The Second

## April 30th and May The Second Summary

Jessica writes to Hope, telling her how mad she is at Marcus. She says Marcus is always butting into her life and trying to mess it up. Jessica says Marcus does it because he doesn't have anything better to do now that he's sober and not sleeping with everyone. Jessica also asks Hope how she doesn't hate him after what Marcus did with her brother, and how Marcus is still alive but Heath is dead.

Four days after the shower, Gladdie dies in her sleep. Jessica says that the lesson Gladdie is trying to get across to her is that Jessica has to live life while she is alive.

## April 30th and May The Second Analysis

Jessica says she's angry at Marcus for butting into her life, but subconsciously, she enjoys that he is interested in what is going on in her life. It is ironic that Jessica hates Marcus as much as she claims to hate him, when what he did to her pales in comparison to what Hope and her family have had to cope with after the death of her brother. Jessica finally starts to realize that she has to stop moping around and making decisions about her life to please others. Instead, she really has to start living and enjoying the life that she has while she has it. This foreshadows Jessica finding a way to pay for Columbia, even if her parents refuse to help her.



# The Third

## The Third Summary

Jessica and her family are at the funeral home for Gladdie's wake. Jessica is disgusted that the only people truly mourning Gladdie properly are her father and Gladdie's boyfriend, Moe. Jessica is additionally disgusted by the way Gladdie looks because she doesn't look like herself. As Jessica is heading into the bathroom to be alone, Marcus puts his hand on her hand and tells her how sorry he is. They end up making out in the bathroom until Bethany bangs on the door trying to use the bathroom. While Jessica is trying to figure out how to get out of there without Bethany noticing Marcus, and before she can hide the hickey on her neck, Marcus opens the door and leads Jessica out by the hand. Jessica gets mad at Marcus and sends him away. After he's gone, all she can think about is his lips and tasting him again.

## The Third Analysis

Jessica is experiencing normal feelings over the loss of her grandmother. She is disgusted by the way other people in her family seem to be grieving. What Jessica should understand is that everyone grieves differently. Her reaction to what Marcus does is somewhat ironic. She's been wanting to kiss and be with Marcus, but when it happens, she lashes out at him for making it known to her sister. Then, when he's not around, she longs for him once again.

# The Fourth

## The Fourth Summary

Jessica is at Bridget's confessing her shame at making out at Gladdie's wake. She doesn't tell Bridget who it is though. Jessica questions herself on why she's ashamed of making out with Marcus when it is something she wanted to do. While they are talking, they hear the front door open downstairs. As they hear footsteps up the stairs, Bridget's face turns red and Pepe bursts into the room.

Jessica confronts them and says that Bridget lied, which she never does. They admit they've been dating since they did the play together in October. They say they are keeping it a secret to keep everyone out of their business. Jessica questions why she never sees things coming. Bridget says it's because Jessica is too self-absorbed to notice other people.

## The Fourth Analysis

Bridget and Pepe have been dating each other secretly. Jessica accidentally busted them. Jessica realizes Bridget is right. She gets so fixated on one thing that she misses all of the other things that are happening right in front of her face.



# The Fifth and The Sixth

## The Fifth and The Sixth Summary

Jessica and her family find out Gladdie left them half a million dollars. Fifty thousand is for Jessica to do as she wishes. Jessica plans to use the money for three and a half semesters at Columbia. They find out Gladdie got the money from playing the stock market.

Jessica decides to act as if the kiss between her and Marcus didn't happen. At school, Marcus says he wants to talk about the kiss. Jessica tries to change the subject, asking if he knew Gladdie was a stock genius. Marcus says he knew and Jessica asks why he didn't tell her. He says because she told him to stay out of her business. Marcus asks why Jessica is always pushing him away. He tells her to consider him out of her life and walks away. Jessica runs out of school and all the way past her house.

## The Fifth and The Sixth Analysis

Not knowing about Gladdie's ability to play the stock market, Jessica ponders how well one person can really know another person. Jessica is trying to push Marcus away because she knows if she lets him in that he might hurt her again. Marcus is trying to move their relationship forward but Jessica is holding back.



# The Fifteenth

## The Fifteenth Summary

Pinevile Low questions who really peed in the yogurt cup for Marcus. Since Taryn is the one who said she did but didn't, combined with what Paul said to Jessica about Taryn, Jessica realizes Taryn is the writer of Pinevile Low. Jessica corners Taryn in the library and confronts her. Taryn admits to writing the emails because Paul is always pushing her to stand up for something. Taryn says she also did it because of Jessica's editorials when Jessica was writing for the school paper. Taryn also poses the question to Jessica asking if Taryn isn't the one who peed in the cup, then who did?

## The Fifteenth Analysis

Taryn admits that because people act as if she doesn't exist that it was easy for her to gather the information she needed to write Pinevile Low. Taryn seems to know that it is Jessica that peed in the yogurt cup for Marcus to pass his drug test. Taryn is inferring this when she poses the question to Jessica. Taryn could be posing the question simply to let Jessica know that Taryn knows it is Jessica that peed in the cup. Taryn could also be telling Jessica this as a warning that she is going to expose the truth in an issue of Pinevile Low.



# The Thirtieth

## The Thirtieth Summary

Jessica's niece, Marin is born. Jessica is driving home alone from the hospital with her father. Her father and her haven't spoken much since she stopped running, but he mentions that he still remembers the night Jessica was born. Jessica is a little shocked about her father's emotion and says that she always thought that after her brother died that they didn't want to have another baby. Her father says they very much wanted her. He also says that Flashdance was playing on the radio when he was driving her mom to the hospital and that he still thinks of the night Jessica was born when he hears the song. Mr. Darling also says that he doesn't agree with Jessica's choice to go to Columbia, but that he respects her opinion and that his mother left her the money she needs to pay for it.

## The Thirtieth Analysis

Slowly, Jessica and her father are healing the rift in their relationship. Jessica feels like she is an adult and should be able to make her own decisions. Mr. Darling still feels like Jessica is their baby and that they should still be able to control what she does. He started to realize his loss of control when Jessica quit the track team, and the college choice is taking his realization to the next level





# June 1st

## June 1st Summary

Jessica writes to Hope. She mentions to Hope how when they were freshmen that they always thought the seniors were so cool and how everything seemed to revolve around them. Now that they are seniors, Jessica doesn't understand the stigma. She says it could be because she is more of a bystander in the senior activities than she is a participant, including deciding not to attend prom. Jessica has managed to attend four years of high school without attending any of the formal events. Jessica also says that there are 20 days left of school. With everything that has happened in the last 20 days—Marin being born, Jessica and her father having their first conversation and Gladdie dying—she realizes that a lot can happen in just 20 days.

## June 1st Analysis

While she isn't admitting it, and might not consciously realize it, Jessica is regretting not being more of a participant in her final year of high school. She has been looking so much toward the future and getting out of Pineville that she really hasn't taken the time to enjoy what her senior year has to offer. Additionally though, Jessica also realizes that a lot can happen. She has experienced some major events in her life all in a month—Gladdie dying and Marin being born. This help Jessica to understand that life happens, and it happens fast. This also foreshadows that even though there are only 20 days left of school that something is going to happen between her and Marcus.



# The Second and The Fifth

## The Second and The Fifth Summary

Bridget shows up at Jessica's house early on Saturday morning. When she comes into Jessica's room, she has a very worried expression on her face. She asks Jessica to go to prom with Percy because Bridget has a big audition in LA the day after prom and she can't go. Jessica agrees to go with Percy.

Two days before the prom, Jessica still doesn't have a dress. She decides to ask her mom for help. Jessica explains who Percy is and why she is going to the prom with Bridget's boyfriend. Mrs. Darling says it's too late to shop for a dress and suggests Jessica look in Bethany's closet. They end up finding a silky red gown that is so retro that it's cool. With a push-up bra it will fit Jessica. When Jessica tries it on, her mom bursts into tears and admits that Jessica is old enough to make her own college decisions, even if they don't agree with them. Jessica hopes that her mother will confide in her one day about her brother's death, but for now she realizes that this is her mother's decision, just as choosing a college is Jessica's decision.

## The Second and The Fifth Analysis

Jessica realizes what a good friend Bridget has always been to her. Once Hope left, Bridget stepped into a more prominent role as Jessica's friend. Jessica, however, is just realizing this and vows to be a better friend to Bridget. For this reason, Jessica agrees to go to prom with Percy. While Jessica and her father had a defining moment that rekindled their relationship after the college news broke, not Jessica and her mother have had their own bonding moment. Jessica has always had it in her head that she was substitute for her dead brother, or the baby her parents never wanted, but she is starting to realize that this is an idea she concocted in her own head, and is not what her parents think at all.



# The Eighth

## The Eighth Summary

Jessica provides some highlights about the senior prom. She says Pepe and Bridget went to the prom together to debut as a couple. Jessica admits she never made it to prom and provides some scenarios that occurred at the pre-parties to the reader to see if they can guess why she didn't make it to prom.

The first scenario is that Manda approaches Jessica at Sara's pre-party. Manda apologizes for what happened between Len and Jessica. She says she and Len are really in love. Manda also launches into an explanation as to why guys with low self-esteem delay their sexual activity, while girls with low self-esteem tend to sleep with guys too soon.

The second scenario is Scotty approaches Jessica at the pre-party to tell her how hot she looks in her dress. He also answers Jessica's original question to him about why he changed. He says he changed because he used to be a pussy. Jessica says he had a better chance with her when he was a pussy than he does with the way he acts now.

The third scenario involves Marcus stepping up on stage at the party to sing a song meant for Jessica. The song, essentially, is a confession that Marcus still wants Jessica and that he wants to be with her. When Jessica and Marcus talk, she finds out that Hope called Marcus. Hope, Marcus, Bridget and Pepe were all involved with the scheme to get Jessica to go to prom, but more importantly to be at the pre-party so Marcus could sing Jessica his song.

Jessica admits that she didn't make it to the prom because she and Marcus drove back to his house and she lost her virginity in his bed.

## The Eighth Analysis

Jessica's friends realize that Jessica is trying to push Marcus away because she is scared of what will happen if she lets him get close to her. For this reason, they decide to intervene. Hope lets Marcus in on how Jessica really feels. Marcus takes control of the situation and makes the first move so that Jessica can relax and succumb to her feelings. The entire plan works.

# The Fourteenth

## The Fourteenth Summary

Jessica says it is harder for her to write about the love she feels for Marcus than it is for her to write about sex. When Jessica tells Hope about losing her virginity, she talks to Hope on the phone, and she wants to make sure that it doesn't affect their friendship. Hope says that it doesn't. Jessica also writes in her journal about skipping Senior Cut Day and spending it in bed with Marcus. They talk about his drug use, which Marcus says was always exaggerated. They also talk about all of the girls Marcus has been with, and Jessica asks if the numbers too were exaggerated. Marcus admits that they are not exaggerated but that he has never felt about a girl the way he feels about Jessica. Jessica insists that they've wasted so much time this year that they could have been together but Marcus insists that they not dwell on the past—that they had to take this journey to become the people they are individually and as a couple.

## The Fourteenth Analysis

Marcus is trying to teach Jessica about living in the moment. He is trying to convince her that she has to enjoy things as they come. He is also reinforcing a previous lesson to her—that you have to go through things in life to mold you as the person you want to be so that you will recognize good opportunities when they are presented to you.



# The Twenty-first

## The Twenty-first Summary

Jessica prepares to meet Marcus's parents for the first time. She tries to find out what they like from Marcus because she is worried they will hate her like Len's mom hated her. Jessica is also nervous because she found out that Mrs. Levy loves Manda. Jessica and Marcus's parents get long great. At the end of the night, Mrs. Flutie says how much she loves Jessica, and Marcus mouths that he loves Jessica too. Jessica tells Marcus out loud that she loves him too.

## The Twenty-first Analysis

Jessica learns that she isn't the only one that is embarrassed by her parents. She always thinks of Marcus as solid and unwavering, but she can see that even he gets embarrassed by the things his parents say and do. Additionally, Jessica learns that people like her for the person she is, so she doesn't have to try too hard or pretend to be someone she is not.



# The Twenty-fourth and The Twenty-eighth

## The Twenty-fourth and The Twenty-eighth Summary

It is the last week of school. Not much is going on because Jessica aced out of all of her finals, but the school tacked on some additional days because of the schedules being messed up at the beginning of the year. Some of the students, such as Manda, Sara, and Scotty seems to be particularly nostalgic because Jessica thinks they realize that high school is the peak of their life and they know it.

Jessica is planning her escape to Columbia and having Marcus move to Manhattan. She thinks he'll play gigs at the local clubs and they'll spend countless hours drinking coffee at cafes, visiting art exhibits and being together. Marcus tells Jessica that he has to tell her something. He takes her to the boardwalk in Seaside Heights. Jessica never imagines having fun at the place she slaved when she was working at Wally D's. Marcus tells her there is a lesson in this. They spend the day at the boardwalk and then Marcus tells Jessica that he is going away in six days to a liberal arts college, Gakkai College.

## The Twenty-fourth and The Twenty-eighth Analysis

Marcus telling Jessica he has to tell her something indicates that she isn't going to like what he has to say. Ironically, Jessica ends up having a great time at Seaside Heights, even though it is a place she despises. The lesson Marcus is referring to is that it matters more about the person you are with than where you are or what you are doing.

# The Thirtieth

## The Thirtieth Summary

Len ends up getting valedictorian and Jessica comes in second in the class. She gets to give her speech first, which is not the speech everyone expects from Jessica Darling. Her speech blows Len's predictable speech away. After the ceremony, Hope surprises Jessica. When Hope and Marcus shake hands in greeting, Jessica feels a sense of relief. She admits to living in the moment for the first time—and not worrying about the future so much. She also says her living in the moment is short lived.

Jessica includes a copy of her speech. It says that they probably all expect her to stand up and berate Pineville and Pineville High, but that isn't what she's going to do. She says she wouldn't change anything, not even the bad stuff, because all of it is what made her who she is. She also admits to liking who she is, but that she also knows she has a lot of evolving to do. In the end, she thanks the Pineville Class of 2002.

## The Thirtieth Analysis

Ironically, Jessica is evolving and changing as she gives her speech. The thoughts that have driven at least the last four years of her life have changed and she is thinking from the opposite direction that she once was. The end of the novel leaves the opening for the start of the third novel in this series of books, where it foreshadows a lot of the loose ends that are still hanging from this novel to be tied up.



# Characters

## Jessica Darling

Jessica Darling is a high school student living in Pineville, New Jersey. Jessica is the youngest of three children. She has an older sister and an older brother. Her older brother died when he was a baby, so Jessica never knew him. Jessica has a dark and negative view of the world and is looking forward to getting out of Pineville and starting her new life away at college.

She is head over heels in love with Marcus Flutie, but has stopped speaking to him and hanging around with since she found out he was just trying to get into Jessica's pants. Jessica's best friend is Hope. After Hope's brother died of an overdose, Hope's parents moved her to Tennessee. Jessica writes letters to Hope throughout the novel to keep Hope up to date on what is happening in Jessica's life.

Jessica experiences quite a few rites of passage during the novel. She experiences the first death in her family, which is her grandmother, Gladdie. Her first niece is born, Jessica loses her virginity and graduates from high school before the novel ends.

## Marcus Flutie

Marcus Flutie is the boy Jessica is in love with, but keeps trying to push out of her life. He was also the best friend of Hope's brother, prior to him overdosing and dying. Marcus is a former male slut, known for sleeping with as many girls as possible. He is also a recovering drug addict and alcoholic.

While many people think of Marcus as a stoner and a male slut, he is also very intelligent. He is a member of the band that Len starts and Marcus and Len are best friends. Marcus is the one responsible for helping Len and Jessica to become boyfriend and girlfriend.

He is known for the unique t-shirts he wears. Typically, the t-shirts have sayings. Marcus seems to be deep into connecting with his spiritual side, which leads him to enroll in a liberal arts college, Gakkai College, in California.

## Hope

Hope is Jessica's best friend. Jessica and Hope grew up in Pineville together. When Hope's older brother overdoses on heroin, Hope and her parents move to Tennessee. Hope has blonde hair and is beautiful. Jessica says that people are drawn to her and Hope makes friends naturally. Throughout the novel, Hope and Jessica are writing letters back and forth with each other to keep one another up to date on what's





happening in their lives. At the end of the novel, Hope surprises Jessica by attending Jessica's high school graduation ceremony.

## Percy

Percy is African American. He and Jessica are in French class together in high school, so Jessica calls him Pepe. While Percy once had a crush on Jessica, he starts dating Bridget. Similar to Bridget, Percy loves drama and theater, so he and Bridget bond over these shared interests. They become boyfriend and girlfriend.

## Mrs. Darling

Mrs. Darling is Jessica and Bethany's mom. She loves to shop from catalogs, so she often has some home supply catalog on hand. Mrs. Darling and Bethany bond over shopping and Bethany's pregnancy. While Mrs. Darling and Jessica are not as close, they too end up bonding when Mrs. Darling helps Jessica choose a dress to wear to prom.

## Mr. Darling

Mr. Darling is Jessica and Bethany's father. He loves to ride his bike. He rides his bike from dawn until dusk on the birthday and anniversary of the death of his, every year. Jessica's dad is also a staunch supporter of Jessica's running. When Jessica quits the track team, Mr. Darling stops speaking to Jessica for a while. They reunite after Marin is born.

## Bethany

Bethany is Jessica's older sister. She is married to G-Money and gives birth to a daughter, Marin. Bethany is a stay-at-home mom. She, G-Money and Marin live on a communal property in California. One of Bethany's favorite pastimes is shopping, so she is very close with her mother. Bethany typically talks to her mom on a daily basis.

## Marin

Marin is Bethany's daughter and Jessica's niece. Marin's birth changes the dynamic of the relationship between Mr. Darling and Jessica. Jessica is also mesmerized by how much one little person can change your life and how much Jessica loves Marin, even though Marin just came into their lives.



## G-Money

G-Money is the nickname Jessica has given to Bethany's husband. He is a former dot comer that has had to downscale their lifestyle somewhat since the dotcom bust. After the market tanked, he moved onto a property that he and Bethany share with two other couples. Jessica calls it the commune.

## Bridget

Bridget is one of Jessica's friends. She is also Percy's girlfriend. Bridget is blonde and beautiful. She aspires to be an actress. She even tries out to play the role of her own characters from the book that Hy Wallace writes. When Bridget does land the part of herself, she gets mad and vows revenge on Hy Wallace.

## Mac

Mac is the instructor for the special writing program Jessica attend over the summer before starting her senior year. Jessica has a crush on Mac, but finds out that he is gay. When Jessica accidentally hands in her private journal to Mac instead of her class journal, Mac discovers Jessica's true writing talent. He ends up writing a letter of recommendation for Jessica to use when she applies to Columbia.

## Len

Len is Marcus's best friend. Len and Jessica are neck to neck all year as to who will be the class valedictorian. Len comes to their senior year looking like a new person, so Jessica doesn't even recognize him. Marcus is instrumental in hooking Len and Jessica up as boyfriend and girlfriend. Len, however, ends up dumping Jessica on Valentine's Day to start dating Manda.



# Objects/Places

## Pineville, New Jersey

Pineville, New Jersey is Jessica's hometown. Pineville is not a really small town, but it's small enough that the majority of the residents know each other. Not much changes in the town. It has relatively remained the same since Jessica was a child. It is a suburban town and the primary setting for the novel.

## Columbia

Columbia is the college that Jessica wants to attend. It is in New York City. After Jessica tours the campus with Paul Parlipiano, she decides it is where she belongs. The problem is it will be a bone of contention between Jessica and her parents because they think New York City is dangerous. Eventually, Jessica is accepted to attend Columbia and her parents agree to allow her to make her own decision about going there for college.

## Park

The local park was a popular hangout for Jessica and Marcus. They were in the park when Jessica found out Marcus is trying to get her to lose her virginity over a bet he had with his friends. Since that night, Jessica doesn't return to the park much because it reminds her of Marcus.

## T-shirts

Marcus wears specialty t-shirts. It is akin to a uniform for him throughout the novel. The t-shirts are usually white with black lettering or black with white lettering. He even makes Jessica a t-shirt to wear under her graduated gown that has the lyrics to one of his songs on it.

## Journals

Jessica is constantly writing in her journal throughout the novel. She uses the black and white composition notebooks as journals. When she is attending the special writing program over the summer, she mixes up her two journals and accidentally hands in her personal journal to her writing instructor.



## Gladdie's Walker

Jessica grandmother, Gladdie, uses a walker. Gladdie is always color-coordinated. This means that she even decorates her walker to match whatever clothing she is wearing that day.

## Silver Meadows

Silver Meadows is the nursing home where Gladdie lives after her stroke and fall down the stairs. It is also where Marcus works, so he and Jessica run into each other often when Marcus is working and Jessica is visiting Gladdie. Gladdie meets and falls in love with Moe at Silver Meadows.

## Pineville Low

Pineville Low is an email newsletter that an anonymous person creates and sends around to some of the high school students. The Pineville Low contains rumors and gossip, but almost everything the email contains is true. Taryn turns out to be the person writing and sending out the emails that she names Pineville Low.

## E

At one of Sara's parties, Jessica tries E. She ends up doing things she doesn't like and has a very bad hangover from it the following day. Jessica assumes that her taking the drug is why Len is mad at her. It is really that while under the influence of E, Jessica confesses that she always thought she would lose her virginity to Marcus, right before she and Len are about to have sex.

## Diner

The diner is a local place where the kids meet up and eat. It is also where Len asks Marcus and Jessica to meet him. When the three are in a diner booth, Len confronts them about what happened between Jessica and Marcus.



# Themes

## Relationships

One of the primary themes running through the novel is relationships. The novel reveals that even the individuals that make up a family have different relationships among the family members. For example, Jessica is much closer to her father than she is to her mother. On the other hand, Bethany is much closer to their mother than she is to their father.

Friendship is another type of relationship the novel tackles. Jessica goes through many different friends as the novel unfolds. The only friendship that remains the same is the one between Jessica and Hope. Primarily, the girls end up just being pen pals, but they are able to reunite and be together at the end of the novel when Hope shows up for Jessica's graduation. Jessica also realizes what a good friend Bridget has always been to her, but that Jessica has taken their friendship for granted. She starts to try to be a better friend to Bridget when she realizes this.

Romantic relationships are also tackled in the novel. The entire novel is about the relationship that Jessica has with Marcus. It also includes Percy and Bridget's. Even though the relationship between Marcus and Jessica wavers, in the end, they both realize that they love each other and something keeps them coming back to each other.

## Coming of Age

One of the primary themes that run throughout the novel is growing up and coming of age, even against adversity, such as a breakup, and normal rites of passage, such as graduating from high school, the death of a family member, and the birth of a family member. Jessica struggles with the fact that her coming of age includes having her first true love try to use her for sex and then attend college on the other side of the country from her. Jessica struggles with her love for Marcus and questions their relationship constantly.

Jessica and her fellow classmates are all struggling with finishing their senior year of high school. Additionally, they are experimenting with drugs and alcohol. Toward the end of the novel, the characters are also learning about transitioning from high school students to college students.

## Family

Family is the central theme throughout the entire novel. This is because the storyline is about the lives of Jessica's family, the Darlings. Their family situation affects how each member of the family deals with their emotions. Jessica deals with her emotions in writing. Mrs. Darling shops or sleeps through traumatic events. Mr. Darling likes to ride

his bike to reduce his stress. Bethany seems somewhat oblivious to the traumas of the Darling family.

# Style

## Point of View

The novel is written in the first-person point of view, from the perspective of the main character and narrator, Jessica Darling. The novel sections are journal entries and letters, which is how Jessica narrates the story.

The point of view of this novel is intimate, allowing a reader to connect closely with the main character, Jessica. The book written in this manner allows the reader to get inside Jessica's head, thoughts and inner struggles. The reader cares what happens to the narrator. The point of view also allows the author to inject her own opinions into the narration and to expand on the events taking place around the other characters and the occurrences taking place.

## Setting

The novel is set primarily in the town of Pineville, New Jersey. The other primary setting is New York City and Columbia University campus. The novel unfolds during the 21st century. The main characters are involved in Jessica's life during her senior year of high school.

The setting of this novel works well with the plot. At first, the reader is not aware of who the guy is that Jessica is struggling to get over and out of her system. However, as events unfold, Jessica's life is a constant part of the plot, the lives of the characters and even the outcome of the novel.

## Language and Meaning

The language of this novel is relatively simple and easy to read. The language is from the 21st century, which is when the novel is set. The language is descriptive enough that it helps to explain the situations and is detailed enough for the reader to truly understand. In some instances, the narrator makes up her own slang words to describe the situation. Even when she does this, it is still easy to comprehend what she is saying from the context in which she uses the slang.

## Structure

The novel is divided by the dates Jessica writes letters or her journal entries. The novel tells the story primarily in exposition and some dialogue. The narrator injects her own voice and thoughts throughout the book, providing her opinions and feelings of the events unfolding in the novel.

The novel contains one main plot and several subplots. The main plot is that of human relationships - both friendship and romantic relationships. One subplot is the coming of age of the characters, primarily Jessica. Another subplot is family relationships.





## Quotes

"Would you mind moving your head please? I can't see the blackboard" (July 1, p. 4).

"Cellulite, on my thighs looks like stucco, makes me cry. Butt of blubber" (July 2, p. 6).

"If you sit on your ass thinking about artsy-fartsy crap all summer, you'll pay for it in September" (July 3, p. 10).

"I know we just met, but now you're pissing me off" (July 5, p. 15).

"You can write in whatever form you feel is best for self-expression" (July 6, p. 18).

"Call me Chantalle" (July 10, p. 24).

"Her brother died of a drug overdose when he was eighteen" (July 17, p. 27).

"I shouldn't have told Ashleigh that you're, like, you know, a virgin" (July 21, p. 32).

"Why is that nothing you've written for me in class holds up to what I read in this journal" (July 30, p. 35).

"LOL" (August 1, p. 38).

"Amherst, Piedmont, Swarthmore, and Williams" (August 4, p. 49).

"Your letter of recommendation. Don't read it, though. I don't want it going to your head" (August 9, p. 57).

"Our Jessie already has! She has her pick of the ivies" (August 11, p. 60).

"She fell down the stairs again while you were at SPECIAL" (August 14, p. 62).

"Happy birthday, Matthew Michael Darling" (August 16, p. 66).

"I told you to work out at that artsy-fartsy camp! Now look at you! Do you want to get beat by freshman again" (August 20, p. 66).

"Omigod! Have you heard about the new hottie that's gonna be in our class" (August 28, p. 70).



"I will try not to be such a buzzkill" (September 1, p. 72).

"I'm supposed to remind you that you, like, hate him" (September 4, p. 80).

"Omigod! She totally fell for it" (September 5, p. 84).

"So now we're called Chaos Called Creation, inspired by one of Flu's poems" (September 7, p. 87).

"Is this my way of denying the depths of horror of what happened" (September 13, p. 89).

"Don't you see how this would be a challenge, one that, if you don't mind me saying, you so greatly need to prevent complacency and boredom from making a waste of your senior year" (September 21, p. 91).

"But this is a different kind of war, Gladdie" (September 29, p. 94).

"Um. Do you have a meet on Saturday? Or" (October 1, p. 102).

"I don't want to do this anymore. I don't want to spend another second on this field" (October 7, p. 105).

"You've only missed a few practices. It's not too late to come back" (October 12, p. 110).

"If you can't annoy somebody, there's little point in writing" (October 14, p. 113).

"How's the cult" (October 17, p. 115).

"She's going to college, Len. She already applied" (October 20, p. 120).

"What hope is there in the Middle East if you and I can't make peace" (October 30, p. 126).

"Game Master" (November 1, p. 128).



"Would you, Jessica Darling, care to join me in a game of hearts" (November 3, p. 135).

"The girl goes through the best friend to get the guy" (November 6, p. 138).

"Do you remember breaking my heart in third grade" (November 10, p. 142).

"The e-mail" (November 15, p. 144).

"Bridget! It's not me! Why does everyone think it's me" (November 17, p. 150).

"We'll call it the Anti-homecoming. If you don't mind me swiping your idea" (November 20, p. 155).

"Omigod! Why should I let Krispy Kreme set a foot in my house" (November 21, p. 155).

"He likes your brain, J.D., but he ain't attracted to you, which is a cryin' shame, if you don't mind me sayin' so" (November 22, p. 161).

"I'm so happy that you like me back and I'm flattered and quite frankly flabbergasted that you wanted to lose your virginity to me tonight and were nice enough to let me know your intentions by forwarding me the Pineville Low e-mail, but I wished you had felt comfortable enough to discuss it with me directly" (November 23, p. 168).

"The I remind myself that Len is smart, focused, and driven to go somewhere and do something in life" (December 1, p. 170).

"Then, the day after the Anti-Homecoming, Len launched into a list of reasons why he's happy I'm his girlfriend" (December 5, p. 173).

"There is a character named...Jenn Sweet" (December 11, p. 176).

"Pineville Low" (December 15, p. 180).

"What's Jenn Sweet like" (December 18, p. 183).

"...goes balls-out in everything she does" (December 23, p. 186).

"If you ask me, I think some dumb girl broke his heart" (December 30, p. 191).

"Oh, God. What the hell did I do last night" (January 1, p. 199).

"He's really upset but own't say why. He just told me that we all had to be here" (January 2, p. 209).



"Um. My mom knows" (January 15, p. 213).

"Now you can be tried as an adult for crimes" (January 19, p. 220).

"There is a movement in Washington to provide funding only for programs that promote abstinence until marriage" (January 25, p. 221).

"I Know he's not saving himself for marriage" (January 27, p. 224).

"Hearing about a devirginization like that would validate my decision to wait" (February 1, p. 226).

"Since when is your first choice Williams" (February 4, p. 229).

"It's not you. It's me. And it's also my mom" (February 14, p. 231).

"What virgin guitar god broke up with his brainiac girlfriend on Valentine's Day so he could carry on with the very experienced super-femme half of the class couple" (February 15, p. 233).

"I know this is about the boy who dumped you. On Valentine's Day" (February 18, p. 235).

"Six fun activities for when you're playing hooky and feeling very, very sorry for yourself" (February 20, p. 237).

"I never really liked Len, so how could it be about Len" (February 22, p. 239).

"He's not having sex with her" (February 24, p. 242).

"Yes! I'll be there" That'll be so cool" (March 1, p. 245).

"You broke up with me before I had the chance to break up with you" (March 4, p. 250).

"Thta psychosis is a symptom of advanced-stage syphilis" (March 9, p. 256).

"It's just since Len dumped you, you've kind of, like, gotten reobsessed with Paul Parlipiano" (March 15, p. 259).

"If I were going to college, however, I would definitely consider going to school in New York City" (March 17, p. 262).

"What happened to you, Scotty" (March 21, p. 263).

"Ignorance is no excuse, Jessica" (March 28, p. 269).

"Why do I always want what I can't have" (April 1, p. 276).

"Are you sure you got accepted to a college and not a sorority" (April 12, p. 281).



"I hate the Mystery Muckracker" (April 15, p. 281).

"Ringling Brothers Clown College. My moniker could be Dinky Dumbass" (April 17, p. 282).

"Ringling Brothers Clown College closed last year" (April 19, p. 283).

"The mailman is Satan" (April 23, p. 283).

"You have been offered a spot in the Columbia College Class of 2006" (April 27, p. 284).

"You gotta do what you want to do" (April 28, p. 287).

"Why don't you hate Marcus" (April 30, p. 289).

"And now she's dead" (May 2, p. 293).

"That went well" (May 3, p. 297).

"You lied" (May 4, p. 300).

"This money is to be spent doing what it is you want to do, J.D" (May 5, p. 303).

"Pushing me away" (May 6, p. 306).

"You'd be amazed the things people say right in front of someone who isn't there" (May 15, p. 309).

"I remember the day you were born like it was yesterday" (May 30, p. 310).

"While I'm happy to be running again, I don't regret quitting the track team" (June 1, p. 313).

"Why would Pepe want to go to prom with me when you're his girlfriend" (June 2, p. 317).

"Thanks for finally realizing that, Mom" (June 5, p. 322).

"And it's the only song I'll ever sing. So I hope you're listening" (June 8, p. 327).

"There is nothing I can write in here that I won't tell you in person" (June 10, p. 332).

"We are the way we are supposed to be" (June 14, p. 336).

"Remember, don't just slam people for the pure joy of slamming them" (June 15, p. 337).

"And I love you" (June 21, p. 339).



"This is the last time I'll ever eat school pizza" (June 14, p. 340).

"We won't even have the summer" (June 28, p. 344).

"Don't let anyone else's noise drown it out" (June 30, p. 349).



## Topics for Discussion

Who is the true Jessica Darling? Why do you think she falls in love with Marcus? When Hope leaves, how do you think this shapes the person Jessica becomes? What does Jessica ultimately realize about her relationship with Marcus?

Who is the true Marcus Flutie? Why do you think he chooses to hook Len up with Jessica instead of pursuing Jessica himself? Why does Marcus choose to attend a new age type school all the way in California? What does Marcus ultimately realize about his relationship with Jessica?

Discuss the relationship between Jessica and Hope. Are they friends, pen pals or somewhere in between? Is there true competition in their relationship? How does Jessica feel about Hope? Do you get a sense of how Hope feels about Jessica?

Discuss the relationship between Jessica and Len. Are they friends, foes, lovers or somewhere in between? Is there true competition in their relationship? How does Jessica feel about Len? How does Len feel about Jessica? How do Jessica's feelings change? What does she do about it? What happens to Len?

Discuss the relationship between Bridget and Percy. Do you think they are an example of true monogamy? Is there true competition in their relationship? How does Bridget feel about Percy? How does Percy feel about Bridget? Why do you think they keep their relationship a secret but then debut it at the prom?

Who is Len? Why do you think he changes the way he looks between the summer of his junior year and his senior year? What role does Len play in Jessica and Marcus getting back together?

Discuss Jessica's attitude. What impact does this have on the characters in the novel? How does it motivate them and how does it derail their lives?