

The Scorch Trials Study Guide

The Scorch Trials by James Dashner

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Plot Summary

"The Scorch Trials," a young adult novel, is the second installment in James Dashner's Maze Runner Series. It deals with the events surrounding the lives of Thomas, Teresa, and the other survivors immediately following the events of the Maze in the first installment.

Thomas, Teresa, and the other Gladers, having been rescued by the Maze, are put into dormitories for the night. When they awaken, Teresa has been separated and replaced by Aris, from another Maze group, the rescuers are dead, and there are Cranks struggling to get in. A representative from WICKED announces they are about to face the Scorch Trials, and will have two weeks and no rules to reach the safe haven one hundred miles north of their starting location.

Thomas and the other Gladers encounter deadly traps, Cranks, and the group of girls of which Aris was formerly a part as they struggle to get across a scorching desert, through a city, and over the mountains beyond the city. Thomas's group brings along Jorge and Brenda, two early-stage Cranks, who agree to help them get through the city in exchange for a shot at getting a cure. However, Teresa betrays Thomas, breaking his heart, by being willing to kill him as WICKED has instructed her to do. This destroys the feelings that Thomas has had for her, even though Thomas does not die. Teresa tells him she would have gladly sacrificed anything between them to make sure he is still alive. When they make it through the Scorch trials, Thomas is separated from Teresa, who attempts to converse with him telepathically. Thomas tells her to leave him alone, and Teresa tells him WICKED is good.



Chapters 1 - 14

Summary

Chapter 1

Teresa telepathically communicates with Tom, even though they are not being kept in the same dormitory room. She is hoping Tom will keep her company. They are dealing with horrendous psychological problems following their time in the Maze, having gone up against horrendous creatures known as Grievors. Thomas remembers his best friend, Chuck, stabbed in the chest, dying in his arms. Thomas and Teresa communicate until they fall asleep.

Thomas has vague dreams of his childhood, and of his mother, as he falls asleep. He is later awakened by Teresa telling him something is wrong.

Chapter 2

Thomas nearly falls back asleep, but he is awakened again by Teresa's voice and the knowledge that something is indeed wrong. Thomas feels something disappear inside himself—and it is Teresa. He realizes she is no longer with him. All around him, Thomas can hear the screams of the other Gladers, including Frypan, Newt, and Minho, as well as Winston. Thomas realizes that the source of the commotion is a broken window, covered by bars. It reveals a hideous looking madman screaming that he is a Crank who is urging someone to kill him.

Chapter 3

Minho points out that the terrifying people are at every window. Newt says that they have to find another room in order to have a Gathering, that the crazy people are everywhere. Thomas tries to contact Teresa again, and sees Minho and the other Gladers trying to get out through the door, but it is locked. Using a fire extinguisher, they break off the handle of the door. The Gladers argue about whether to pass through the door, or wait and think a while. Minho thinks they need to act fast, while Frypan thinks they need to wait and think. At last, they decide to move through the door to the common area, which is dark. Minho goes first, Thomas second, and then the others.

The Gladers find the light switches, turn the lights on, and see a dozen people hanging from the ceiling, dead. They are the people who rescued all the Gladers the day before.

Chapter 4

Thomas and the Gladers are shocked and terrified by the hanging bodies. The Gladers decide to spread out and find Teresa. They go to her room, where they find the following on her door: Teresa Agnes, Group A, Subject A1, The Betrayer. Thomas is startled by this, but mainly by what her last name is. He has been named for Thomas Edison, but



he did not know who Teresa Agnes was named for. This enrages Thomas. It is one more way for WICKED to distance children from their parents, by giving them false names.

They break into Teresa's room and hear the toilet flush. Thomas is relieved. Minho says they should wait politely for her to come out. Thomas nevertheless waits impatiently while Minho gathers everyone for a Gathering. Horrifyingly, a boy walks out of the bathroom. He wants to know who everyone is, and everyone wants to know his name. He says his name is Aris. The boy says he never met a girl named Teresa, that he is in the room they put him in. Aris explains he was put into the room by the people who had rescued them from the maze.

Chapter 5

Thomas realizes Aris isn't lying. Thomas suggests they all look around. They discover that all the doors are locked from the inside, and the only other doors lead outside. Thomas insists they keep looking for Teresa. Thomas begins to wonder if their minds have all been tinkered with, as had happened in the past. The Gladers –including Minho and Newt –want more information from Aris. He explains he was the only boy living with fifty other girls, and they were all thrown into the Maze. They escaped a few days before, and were kept in a gym until Aris was moved to the room Teresa had supposedly been put into. Minho realizes that WICKED must have built two Mazes, for their own group had had fifty boys, and one girl –Teresa. Aris, like Teresa, had been called “The Trigger”. Thomas and Aris both realize they can communicate telepathically.

Chapter 6

Thomas explains to the other Gladers that Aris can communicate telepathically. Aris reveals that his friend Rachel was stabbed by a girl named Beth, who was controlled by the enemy, by WICKED. Beth, it seems, is the version of Gally, who killed Chuck. The Gladers discover a tattoo on the neck of Aris, which says, “Property of WICKED. Group B, Subject B1. The Partner.” Aris is panicked, because the tattoo wasn't there the previous evening. Suddenly, the Gladers discover they have all been tattooed. Each of them has been given a different title. Minho is the Leader; Newt is the Glue; and Thomas, horrifyingly, is “Subject A2, to be killed by Group B.”

Chapter 7

Before Thomas can think about what is going on, the Newbie alarm goes off. The Gladers wander around, trying to figure out where it is coming from. They try to get out of the room, but the broken handle won't allow the door to open. Thomas tries calling Teresa mentally, but Teresa does not respond. The Newbie alarm goes off, and Minho wonders who the newbie will be. They realize the lights in the common room have been turned off, and they are able to get through the door again. When they turn on the lights, they see that the hanging bodies are gone.

Chapter 8



Newt cannot imagine what has happened. None of the Gladers can fathom how bodies were extracted so easily and quickly without a sound. Likewise, the infected people outside have stopped screaming. The boys then realize that all the windows have been bricked over. The sign on Teresa's door has even changed to "Aris Jones, Group B, Subject B1, The Partner." Thomas goes to lay down on his cot to try to contact Teresa, and Teresa responds, not knowing who Thomas is, and telling Thomas to get out of her head. Thomas cries himself to sleep. Thomas dreams of being seven or eight, and being looked at by people in green suits and face masks. They talk about cutting deep into his brain, and deep into the brain of another, for the Flare is rooted deeply. Thomas, they say, could save them all.

Chapter 9

Newt wakes Thomas up. Thomas has a bad headache. It is several hours later. Newt explains Thomas taking a nap helped to relax everyone. The Gladers are wondering about food. Newt believes they are where they are because there is a purpose to them being there. Three days pass without food, but the Gladers manage to scrape by on water from the bathroom sinks. Thomas goes to sleep. When he wakes up, Minho has brought Thomas an apple. There are plenty of apples, having been found out of nowhere, sitting in the common room. Along with the apples are all sorts of vegetables, other fruits, and small packages –as well as a thin man in a white suit sitting at a desk reading a book.

Chapter 10

The thin, old man in the suit is wearing all-white, from his tie to his socks. Newt explains the man has told them they have to wait until he is ready. Thomas tries to go talk to the man, but walks into an invisible barrier. Thomas slams on the barrier to get the man's attention, who exasperatingly tells Thomas there is still forty-seven minutes until Phase Two of the Trials. He recommends Thomas eat and replenish himself. He eats another apple, an orange, a bag of mixed nuts, and a raisin granola bar.

After they eat, the Gladers sit and wait on the man in white. He finally speaks to them. He explains to them they are all there because they have been able to survive the odds. He explains that many of the things that have happened to them have been solely for the purpose of judging and analyzing responses, to construct a blueprint. The situations they are faced with are called Variables. They are doing work to help save the human race. He explains he represents WICKED, or World In Catastrophe, Killzone Experiment Department, whose goal is to save the world from catastrophe. The man explains that WICKED has unlimited money and resources, and they control everything that happens to the Gladers. He tells them never, ever, should they believe their eyes and what they see. Everything, right down to the murder of Chuck and the rescue, were manipulated events. The man then goes on to tell the Gladers that things will now be difficult.

Chapter 11



The man continues his explanations, saying that the will to survive is only part of the wider experiment. He says that sun flares have ravaged the earth, and a disease called “The Flare” is ravaging the people of earth. Surviving governments have joined together to create WICKED, which is meant to fight the new problems of the world. The man says that each of the Gladers has already caught the virus, but that it takes a while to set in. The end of the Trials means a cure. Thomas is deeply troubled and worried. The man explains that by cooperating, the Gladers will receive the cure that so many people want. The Scorch Trials, Phase Two, will begin at six a.m. the following morning. They must step through the Flat Trans that will appear within five minutes.

The man tells them to find their way to open air, head due north for one hundred miles, and if they make it to the safe haven within two weeks, they will be cured of the Flare. The man says there are no rules, no guidelines. The Gladers have been given the Flare to give them an incentive. He also says that those who stay behind will be executed almost immediately. The man then exits the room through the Flat Trans.

Chapter 12

The Gladers argue and raise questions among themselves. To Thomas, the scariest things are the knowledge that they have the Flare, and the coming Scorch Trials. Thomas, Newt, and Minho talk about the Flat Trans, and wonder where they will be transported to. Frypan has gone on to take control of the food stock. They wonder about how they will organize, but Minho believes that the tattoos on their necks are being used to mess with their minds. Thomas, however, worries about the tattoo on his neck, which says he is to be killed.

Chapter 13

The Gladers spent the rest of the evening packing food in makeshift backpacks made from bed sheets, and using plaster food containers to store water. Minho grudgingly agrees to be the leader. As Thomas goes to sleep, he vows to get back at WICKED somehow, even if it only means surviving their tests. The Gladers all set their digital watches for five a.m, wake up, shower, and prepare for the Flat Trans. Minho goes through the Flat Trans first, telling Thomas to go last, making sure everyone goes through.

Chapter 14

The Gladers follow Minho through, with Thomas bringing up the rear. Only Aris seems to be utterly nervous about going through, but goes through anyways. On the other side, they are surrounded by blackness, as if they are in a windowless, lightless room. They realize they are in some kind of hallway or tunnel. They hear an old, whispery voice, telling them to go back, that they have a one chance deal to go back, and they won't be sliced. Frypan encourages everyone to consider going back. The voice tells them they will all be sliced, but the Gladers decide to go on anyways. As they head on, they realize it is getting warmer, and dusty. Ahead, one of the Gladers screams and begins thrashing



about. When Thomas tries to settle the kid, he finds that the kid's head is no longer there, but a large, smooth ball of cold metal has replaced it.

Analysis

The utter power and control wielded by WICKED in the first installment of the Maze Runner series continues in the second, unabated. James Dashner's "The Scorch Trials" opens up immediately following the rescue of Thomas, Teresa, and the other Gladers from the Maze. Thomas, Teresa, and the others once again find themselves in a situation that is completely out of their control. They have absolutely no say in the things that are going on, from being separated from Teresa, to the appearance of Aris and the Cranks, to the murder and hanging of their rescuers. Perhaps, even more frustrating is discerning the ultimate goal of WICKED and what their reasoning is for putting Thomas and all of the others through horrendous trials and tests.

From what can be gathered thus far is that there is some kind of brain-rotting virus called The Flare that transforms people into mindless beasts, and WICKED is attempting to map brain patterns to see if there is a way to immunize people to the Flare. And as it is explained to Thomas and the other Gladers, their experiences and brain patterns are being used to build a blueprint -though the Gladers still do not fully understand their role in things. But perhaps what is most terrifying to them is that they are about to be released into the real world, to have struggle and combat against odds that are not all of the making of WICKED. There will be no rules, and the Gladers will be on their own for two entire weeks. They head out into the world with nothing but bed sheets, food, and water.

Discussion Question 1

How does WICKED encourage the Gladers to go through with the two-week Scorch Trials? What is WICKED's reason for doing this?

Discussion Question 2

According to WICKED, what is the reason why the Gladers are going through such terrifying experiences? Should they believe WICKED? Why or why not?

Discussion Question 3

What does the man in white tell the Gladers about what they see? Why do you believe he says this, especially on the heels of Thomas discovering Teresa's identity as "The Betrayer"?

Vocabulary

Lingering, avail, revulsion, perplexed, instinct, subtle, disoriented, festering, meticulously, absurd, opaque, inexplicable.



Chapters 15 - 24

Summary

Chapter 15

Thomas can feel the dead boy's blood, realizing that he must no longer have a head at all. They decide to run. A death ball gets one more person, and the Gladers come to what they believe is a staircase. At the top is a door which, when opened, lets in bright light. The stairwell heats up quickly. The Gladers wonder if they can head out or not. As they talk, a silver liquid flies into Winston's face, causing him to scream and topple down the steps.

Chapter 16

The Gladers watch as the silver drop covers Winston's face, and Thomas struggles with Winston to get it off. As it comes off, the silver goo hardens into a ball, and disappears in the darkness. Winston is a mess. His hair is gone, and blood is seeping through raw skin. Minho orders Frypan and Jack to help Winston along, who is in deep pain, and will probably be scarred for life from the attack. Aris is told to bring along the things Winston had been carrying. They then head through the door.

Chapter 17

The Gladers decide to use their bed sheets as masks to protect themselves from the sun. Minho, Thomas, and New go out to explore. In one direction there is nothing but rocky, hard ground. In the other direction are mountains and some kind of collection of buildings, like an old town. Minho thinks the town is thirty miles away, with the mountains sixty or seventy miles beyond. Newt hopes the whole world has not been ravaged by the sun flares. They decide to head toward the town. Minho orders everyone to move out.

As the Gladers head toward the town. Thomas asks Aris about Teresa. Aris has never heard of Teresa, but he remembers his own Teresa-like counterpart, Rachel. But up ahead, they see two people running toward them.

Chapter 18

Minho orders the Gladers to pack in tighter, to prepare for a fight if needs be. The runners stop just short of the Gladers, wearing filthy clothing. Their hands, the only thing exposed to the sun, are red, cracked, and scabby. Minho demands to know who they are. They start circling the Gladers, and the man and woman announce that they are Cranks. They want to know how the Gladers got into the Scorch. The man says that not all Cranks are gone, past the Gone. Different Cranks are at different levels. The man tells them to learn who to trust quickly, because of the other Cranks, and the other group coming to kill them. Minho, Thomas, and the others believe it is Group B. The



Cranks leave, and the Gladers decide to head toward the town, prepared for what they may find as the night comes on.

Chapter 19

As the Gladers trek along, they hear a girl screaming. They decide to eat, drink up, and move as far as they can before dawn. They will avoid the oppressive heat when it returns. As they get closer to the town, they see that there are more buildings than previously figured. The Gladers ask Aris about his Maze experiences as they walk, and he explains it was similar to their experience, but with girls instead of guys. Meanwhile, the girl in the distance keeps screaming.

Aris believes he knows why there are two groups of people. He believes WICKED wants to weed out the best and have them breed. Perhaps, they want to weed out one whole group or the other. Up ahead, they see a little dark building, and from behind the building emerges a girl with long, dark hair.

Chapter 20

Thomas tries calling to the girl, believing it might be Teresa, but there is no response. Frypan and the others believe the girl ahead was the girl screaming. Thomas volunteers to go up to the girl alone, in case it is a trap. As Thomas approaches, he realizes the girl is Teresa, but the girl does not respond. She goes into the dark shack, and Thomas follows. Inside are speakers. Teresa's eyes are full of tears, and Thomas knows she knows him. When he touches her, she tells him not to. She struggles with something, apparently in her mind and heart. Then, she rushes toward Thomas, embracing him and kissing him. Once again, she tells him to get away from her, to keep everyone away from her. Thomas then leaves, confused, telling Teresa that he will find her.

Chapter 21

Thomas feels horrible, but he is glad that Teresa is alive. Thomas explains to Minho and the others that he saw Teresa, leaving out the part about the kiss. Thomas believes she saved them from a trap and that she will be punished for it. As the morning dawns, the Gladers decide to get some sleep, using the bed sheets for protection from the sun.

Chapter 22

The Gladers sleep about four hours, until the sun becomes unbearable, making sleep impossible. The heat is horrendous, and the goings slow. The Gladers stop for food and water as they can. They can see the city getting closer, with fires burning within it. At midnight, Minho orders the Gladers down to sleep. Thomas remembers Teresa helping him to be able to communicate telepathically.

Chapter 23

Thomas wakes up, freezing. A cold wind has begun, whipping away Thomas's sheet. A storm is coming. Minho orders everyone to eat and move out. They come across an old



man lying in the sand, looking up at the sky, wrapped in blankets. The old man tells them to stay away, for the storm brings out bad people. Nevertheless, the Gladers begin to run for the city.

Chapter 24

The storm that cuts in across the land is bad, and the city becomes hazy as it grows near. There is lightning as well. It strikes Jack, killing him. Thomas throws up from seeing Jack. Minho's clothes catch on fire, and Thomas helps put it out, though Minho is in bad shape. They make it to the first building in the city. The rain then comes down.

Analysis

As if to further encourage the Gladers out into the world, a series of silver substances that materialize into hardened spheres and decapitate people have been set up at the end of the hallway which leads to a stairwell, and a scorched desert. The world is a hideously hot place, and the Gladers struggle through the desert, doing everything they can to combat the blaring sun and the blazing heat. Thomas is emotionally weakened, having to go on without Teresa. He may well be in love with her, without fully realizing it as such. His emotionally vulnerable state is further impaired by the fact that he discovers Teresa once again, only to have her kiss him, and leave him once more. His heart has been set up for a fall.

The hot sun is not the only issue the Gladers have to contend with -beyond the Cranks. The scorched landscape and the sun flares have also given rise to horrible storms that unleash deadly, devastating lightning strikes in ways previously unseen before the sun flares. Such a storm hits the Gladers as they make it to the outskirts of the city. The storm could not have been planned more perfectly, if it had been planned at all. They make it to the buildings just before the rain comes down., having lost some of their group.

Discussion Question 1

Why do you believe Teresa kisses Thomas when she meets him outside the city? What motives could she possibly have in mind? Why?

Discussion Question 2

What theories does Aris present about WICKED and their motivations for having two groups? Which explanation do you believe is more likely? Why?



Discussion Question 3

Why has Teresa refused to contact Thomas? Does she say why? Given that she has been listed as "The Betrayer", do you believe her? Why or why not?

Vocabulary

Searing, coalescing, obliterate, exasperated, abscess, luxury, agonizing, manacle, belligerence.



Chapters 25 - 43

Summary

Chapter 25

Thomas watches the rain for two hours. He finally falls to sleep listening to the rain. As dawn falls, Thomas awakens, and is hungry once more. Newt is the only other Glader awake. He is bitter, wondering if being alive even matter, then thinks better of it. Minho wakes up, in pain, but it is clear his injuries will heal in time. Only eleven Gladers are still alive. They wonder how they will fight their way through a city with only eleven of them. Above them, an Hispanic man jumps through a hole in the ceiling, lands, says his name is Jorge, and announces that he is the Crank who runs the building.

Chapter 26

Jorge wants to Gladers to follow him. He says they have a lot to learn about WICKED, how things work in the city, and how there are different levels of the Flare. Jorge demands to know who they are. Jorge and Minho grapple, but Thomas urges them to stop as more Cranks show up. Thomas entreats Jorge to a ten minute private meeting, saying they are worth more alive than dead.

Chapter 27

Thomas and Jorge sit down to talk. Thomas tells everything they have been through to Jorge. Thomas explains that if perhaps the Cranks help them get to the safe haven, they might be able to get the cure, too. Cranks, when they test positive for the Flare, are sent to the city, explains Jorge. And everyone in the city has the disease, but at a different stage. Jorge agrees to help the Gladers, provided Minho dies.

Chapter 28

Thomas says no to Jorge, that Minho cannot be killed. If Minho is killed, all of his skills die with him. Jorge reluctantly agrees, realizing that Group B are probably competitors to Group A, and that Group B has to succeed if the Cranks have any hope or a cure. Jorge will only tell one other Crank, named Brenda, about the safe haven trip, but he won't tell any of the other Cranks. Jorge wants to be able to sneak past the long-gone Cranks, and not have to fight them. Getting away from Jorge's fellow Cranks will be tricky as well. Back with the others, Jorge announces that the Gladers must be fed, and Minho will not be killed. Thomas sees a pretty, older teenage girl and wonders if it is Brenda. Instead of dying, Minho will lose a finger off each hand.

Chapter 29

Jorge announces that he and Brenda, the pretty, older teenaged girl, will bring the Gladers to eat, and then everyone will meet up at noon for lunch for the rest of the



Cranks. A man named Barkley isn't totally convinced, but accepts things as they are. The other Cranks leave. Brenda says she would easily kill Minho, but that she likes Thomas. She even kisses him on the cheek. They move out, and Brenda brings the Gladers pork and beans and sausage. Brenda explains that before the sun flares, the city was a food manufacturing place, with several warehouses full of canned food. She believes this is why Cranks are sent there to die. Thomas realizes he likes Brenda.

Brenda reveals she is from northern Canada, and made it to one of the camps set up by the government coalition that later formed WICKED, to respond to the Flare, released from a disease-control place. Suddenly, sounds of danger arise, and massive concrete blocks fall from overhead, causing Brenda and Thomas to run off in one direction.

Chapter 30

Thomas wonders what has caused the explosion, doing his best to keep up with Brenda. They come dangerous close to the Underneath, an underground network of tunnels beneath the city, very little of which has been explored. Brenda makes Thomas promise her that he will bring her to the cure, to the safe haven. Thomas agrees. Brenda believes Barkley is the cause of the explosion. Brenda keeps holding onto Thomas, apologizing, saying things are different where she comes from. Brenda tries to encourage Thomas to go alone with her to the safe haven, but Thomas wants to go back and find the others. Brenda reluctantly agrees.

Thomas and Brenda find no dead bodies at the scene of the explosion. Brenda realizes they will have to go through the Underneath. With flashlights and backpacks, they head in.

Chapter 31

Thomas wonders who had originally built the Underneath, and for what purpose. Eventually, they come to the halfway point of the city. They hear someone coming behind them, hearing the sound of crunching glass, realizing that whoever is following them is breaking lights, perhaps in the attempt to lure Thomas and Brenda back. Suddenly, a man just appears beside them, looking insane, and speaking nonsense.

Chapter 32

Other cranks spill into position behind the first Crank. All of them are missing their noses. The first Crank says he wants a new nose. Brenda and Thomas go off running, and Brenda brings Thomas into a secret room she found while exploring once. They go in, and Brenda holds Thomas's hands. Thomas feels like he is cheating on Teresa. The Cranks come near, and whisper among themselves as if they are strategizing. Several of the Cranks leave. After a while, Brenda switches on her flashlight, causing a Crank to reach in to grab Thomas's shirt.

Chapter 33



The Crank slams Thomas's face into the wall, causing Thomas to bleed. Brenda stabs the Crank's forearm with a knife. The man screams and runs, and Brenda announces that they cannot let him get away. They fight desperately with the Crank, overcoming him. Thomas is the one who must kill the Crank, and he plunges a knife into the Crank's chest.

Chapter 34

Thomas is horrified that he has killed another person. He wants sunlight, so Brenda brings him to the surface. They travel above ground through the city, avoiding everyone they can. As darkness falls, they spend the night in an old truck in an alley. Thomas feels badly about killing a man. Brenda tells him that he saved her life, too. They say they are glad to have each other. Brenda explains that WICKED killed her father when he tried to stop them from taking Brenda. Brenda is scared to death of going crazy. Thomas and Brenda hold hands and fall asleep.

Chapter 35

Thomas has a nightmare and wakes up. Brenda comforts him. Thomas asks her to tell him about life, since most of his memory was taken before the Maze. She explains that the sun flare survivors were getting along well, until the Flare. WICKED has managed to slow the Flare down, but not stop it. Brenda explains they are somewhere in Mexico. Anything between the Tropic of Cancer and the Tropic of Capricorn is mostly a wasteland.

Brenda says one of the ways to slow the Flare is with a mind-numbing drug called Bliss, because the virus thrives on brain activity, and weakens without it. The Flare causes people to lose their humanity. Thomas falls asleep again, and dreams of being fourteen. They are spying on two people speaking about the horrors of the Maze trials, but how horrific things have to happen, and how there is someone they don't want to die. The people talking about the Trials are sad they will never see the end result, but that the future generations will thank them. When Thomas wakes up, he sees a sign on the wall of the alley that says, "Thomas, You're the Real Leader."

Chapter 36

Brenda explains that there are signs all over the city that say the same thing about Thomas. She and Jorge figured it was not a coincidence when Thomas showed up. Brenda says she will do anything she can to earn her spot in the safe haven. Thomas goes on to explain to Brenda about the Maze, Aris, and Group B. Brenda wonders if Thomas has something going on with Brenda, but Thomas doesn't know. They hear what sound like drumbeats in the distance. They realize there is music playing, and they'd better take off. He and Brenda decide to head out, and come across Cranks that aren't Gone, who are having a party. They demand Brenda and Thomas attend the party. Thomas pretends he and Brenda are together, and they reluctantly go to the party. There, a guy tells Thomas they've been waiting for him.

Chapter 37



The man tells Thomas they watched him and Brenda all night, and saw his reaction to the sign, figuring he had to be Thomas. Meanwhile, many of the other Cranks, hot and sweaty, are dancing. He and Brenda decide to dance so they can talk. Thomas says they have to find a way to escape. The partiers force Brenda and Thomas to drink something, nearly kiss, and then they pass out as Thomas tells Brenda she could never be Teresa.

Chapter 38

When Thomas wakes up, he is tied up, and Brenda is nowhere to be seen. Some of the partying Cranks arrive to question Thomas about who he is, and what his purpose is. Thomas decides to tell them everything. He asks to be untied. Suddenly, there is a commotion upstairs. The Cranks go up, and only one person comes down. It is Minh.

Chapter 39

Minh explains that as Jorge and the other Gladers were moving through the city, Frypan came across Thomas and Brenda being herded into the Crank party. Brenda is short and emotionless, and Thomas realizes he must have hurt her. Brenda is angry with him. All eleven Gladers are still alive. Some of the Cranks got out, but the others are being held prisoner. As they decide to move out through the city, one of the Cranks shoots Thomas, hitting him in the left shoulder.

Chapter 40

Before the Crank can fire again, Minh has tackled him, beating him down. Thomas is reeling from the pain. Jorge says he can get the bullet out with a fire. The pain is so intense that Thomas passes out. When he awakes, he passes out again. When he reawakens, he passes out a third time as a glowing hot knife is pushed into his shoulder. As Thomas reawakens, he senses Brenda is holding his hand. Thomas can also feel, in his half-consciousness, the beginnings of the Flare inside him. When he awakens once more, Brenda is no longer holding his hand, but Jorge and the others are looking to the sky, to a massive airship, a Berg, coming in. Brenda apologizes to Thomas just before she is pulled away by men in green suits and gas masks. They also grab Thomas, picking him up, and causing him to pass out. Their suits say WICKED.

Chapter 41

Thomas, in half-consciousness, realizes he is in a hospital. He passes out again. When he reawakens, he feels no more pain, realizing he must have been given some kind of a drug. He nods off to sleep. He awakens, but keeps his eyes closed, listening to two people talk about brain patterns in the killzone. They discuss how there are only three or four viable candidates left, but that Thomas has the best chance. Someone worries Thomas might be listening, but the other person responds that it is better if Thomas knows that WICKED will do what it must when it must. The other person then tells Thomas if he is listening, that he is being put back where he was taken from.

Chapter 42



Thomas is returned to the Gladers, Jorge, and Brenda. Thomas wonders why WICKED has been so concerned about him. Thomas explains what he has been through. He realizes the others had brought him out of the city, to within a day or so of the mountains. They realize they are all being watched. Some of the others begin to think there is something special about Thomas. In sleep that night, Teresa tells Thomas that something bad is going to happen to him, but he has to trust her. She tells him that he won't hear from her again until they are back together.

Chapter 43

Thomas worries about what is coming that will test him so much. He is awakened by Newt. They wonder whether WICKED is good or not. They eat food, and then the entire group heads out just as the sun disappears behind the horizon. Newt wonders if WICKED is breaking its own rules, coming down to rescue Thomas. Thomas and Brenda make up. In front of them, a girl arises from the ground, carrying a long stick with a blade on the end. It is Teresa.

Analysis

The storm has claimed the lives of seven Gladers. Now there are only eleven left. Thomas and Minho are desperately trying to get through the city. In order to do that, they make a deal with Jorge and Brenda, who will serve as guides for them through the city in exchange for the cure. Strikingly, just as Teresa becomes distance -despite the kiss she has shared with Thomas- Brenda seems to grow close to Thomas immediately, chalking it up to expressing her feelings differently because she was raised differently. Yet, the reader cannot help but wonder if Brenda knows something else about Thomas that even Thomas himself does not know. Indeed, Brenda is especially devoted to keeping Thomas safe while she is with him. He comes to slowly develop some kind of feelings for Brenda, though he is feeling guilty because he does have feelings for Teresa.

Unfortunately, while in the city, Thomas is shot. Despite there being no rules or regulations, WICKED intervenes to save Thomas's life and clean him of infection from being shot. This makes Thomas realize -in addition to overhearing a conversation- that there is something special about him in particular. He realizes that WICKED will intervene in order to protect him, though it will not do so for anyone else -and it has nothing to do with circumstances -such as the gun- that WICKED does not foresee. Nevertheless, WICKED returns Thomas to the other Gladers for them to continue on their trip. Thomas, meanwhile, has bits and pieces of his memory return to him, and he realizes that he is somehow involved with everything -but in what capacity, he does not yet know.

Discussion Question 1

What is the message that Teresa has for Thomas? How does this affect Thomas? What could it possibly mean in relation to Teresa, her identity as the Betrayer, and the kiss?



Discussion Question 2

Why does Thomas, in particular, have the attention of WICKED? What is special about Thomas?

Discussion Question 3

Why does WICKED intervene to save Thomas's life? What does Thomas learn from this?

Vocabulary

Blasphemy, abomination, mirth, chortle, stoic, suffusing, ironically.



Chapters 44 - 57

Summary

Chapter 44

From all around Teresa emerge another twenty girls, all carrying weapons of some kind. Teresa asks Thomas if his name is Thomas, and Thomas says his name is Thomas. Teresa tells him he is coming with her and her group. Thomas consents to going, and Teresa hits him with a spear, knocking him down. Some of the other girls put Thomas in a bag. Thomas sees sympathy in Teresa's eyes and hears sympathy in her voice, but not in her words, which tell him that he will be killed.

Chapter 45

Thomas tries to talk to Teresa, but a fist hits him in the stomach with the threat that if he speaks again, his friends will die. As they head away, Teresa tells Thomas in a whisper that their telepathic communication is being blocked. They head out across the desert and then into the mountains. Teresa tells the other girls they will kill Thomas when the time is right, in revenge for what he did to her.

Chapter 46

Thomas tries to figure out what he has done to Teresa. They head into a shallow cave, where it is obvious the girls have made camp. Along the way, Thomas learns some of the names of the girls, such as Harriet and Sonya. Thomas is tied to an old, dead tree. He then remembers the label Teresa had received: The Betrayer. Sonya and Harriet guard Thomas, and he asks them if they really want to kill him. They don't have a choice, they say. Thomas sees Teresa and asks her what he did to make her hate him. She refuses to talk to him about what he could have possibly done.

Chapter 47

Thomas dreams of when he is fifteen. He and Teresa are watching scenes from the Maze, seeing everyone dead. Thomas wonders if they can pull off what needs doing with all the Creators dead. Thomas says that all that matters now are the killzone patterns, not deaths. Teresa agrees and squeezes his hand. Thomas wakes up from his dream to see both Harriet and Sonya staring at him. They tell him they want to know what he knows, that they might be able to help him. They ask him if he had a choice to kill himself or to kill all of them, which would he choose? He answers that he would not kill himself. He insists perhaps that the girls are being faced with a test. The girls go and rouse everyone else to come to talk to Thomas.

Chapter 48



Thomas explains to the girls everything he knows about WICKED and the Variables. He wonders what sense it makes to kill him, unless it is only a test, to see how the girls will respond, if they will act rationally. Harriet says if they decide not to kill Thomas, Teresa can't do anything about it. When Teresa returns, Harriet confronts her. They decide not to kill Thomas, but Harriet tells Thomas to watch out around her.

Chapter 49

Thomas eats with Group B and then heads out with them, hanging toward the back. He wonders if he should try to find his own group, for he misses them. Harriet speaks to Thomas, telling him that most of their trip had been through the underground tunnels. Teresa apparently has told the other girls their kiss had been controlled by WICKED. Harriet explains that Teresa has made Thomas out to be a monster who did something horrible to her, but she has not divulged it. The fact that Thomas is not as he was described causes all the girls to change their minds about him. She also reveals that their instructions were to catch Thomas in the desert and bring him to a mountain on the north side with a special place to kill Thomas.

When they reach the end of the pass, the girls cannot see anything and neither can Thomas. They decide to get to the bottom of the mountain by sunrise, and keep heading north. Teresa, meanwhile, has disappeared. As they head down the mountain, Teresa grabs Thomas, who is last in line, and tells him to come with her.

Chapter 50

Teresa tells Thomas she knew Aris before the Maze, and they could speak in their minds, too. She tells him that WICKED is all there is, and they need to do what WICKED says. Aris appears behind Thomas with a knife. Teresa brings Thomas to a cave where she and Aris kiss, hurting Thomas deeply. Teresa says she befriended him only to escape the Maze, and that Aris is her best friend. Teresa says she is willing to do whatever it takes to take care of Aris. Teresa says it is time for Thomas to go.

Chapter 51

Thomas is enraged. He will not go down without a fight. They near a green glass door. Teresa takes a flashlight to look inside while Aris guards Thomas. As Aris then brings Thomas to the door, behind which is a metallic pit, he asks Aris what it looked like when Rachel bled to death. Aris freezes, giving Thomas time to react. He smacks the knife out of Aris's hand, and punches Aris in the stomach, knocking him to the ground. But, Teresa hits Thomas twice with her spear. He tries to fight back, but Aris and Teresa force him into the pit. Teresa thanks him telepathically for being their sacrifice.

Chapter 52

Trapped in the pit room, Thomas feels hurt and betrayed, and his head is in severe pain from being hit by Teresa. Nozzles in the room begin to emit a foggy gas. He is enraged that having survived so many things, he is going to die from gas. He then falls down unconscious.



Chapter 53

Thomas dreams of being sixteen. He is with Teresa, some girl he does not recognize, and Aris. Thomas shakes all of their hands, and goes into the Maze. Teresa tells him it is all going to work. Thomas then embraces Teresa, and follows Aris through a door.

Chapter 54

As Thomas drifts towards consciousness, he hears whispers in the dark. Thomas realizes that he is not dead. He realizes he had been a part of WICKED all along, a part of the Maze and everything that followed, and Teresa had once been his friend. The door opens, and Teresa is standing there, crying, apologizing, and she runs to Thomas to hold him, but he doesn't hold her back. Thomas doesn't know if Teresa is playing tricks with him again. Thomas pushes her away. She tells him she told him to trust her. Aris is also there. Teresa tells her that the chamber thing had to be done, that it was all an act. She asks what happened in the chamber, but Thomas tells her she needs to talk first. Aris says that they need to walk and run while talking to reach the end, for they only have five and-a-half hours left before the two weeks is up.

Teresa says there is no safe haven where they are. While the girls are a few miles out, the group of guys is just a little west. Off the mountain and out of the trees, they begin to run. Teresa explains that after she talked to him in the dormitory rooms, men in suits came and took her out. She says, telepathically, that she and Aris have been talking since she first showed up in the Glade, mostly while she was in a coma.

Chapter 55

Thomas demands to know why she never told him about Aris, having realized that they were supposedly all on the same side. Teresa explains she was put in with Group B, and that they had no choice but to capture and kill Thomas. The effect is to make Thomas feel betrayed. Teresa explains she had no choice, worried that Thomas would be killed if she didn't go along with Group B. She apologizes for what she did. She tells Aris to turn his back and kisses Thomas, but Thomas actually feels nothing..

Chapter 56

Thomas pretends to enjoy the kiss, saying he understands what Teresa did. He says that they need to keep moving, as a storm seems to be coming. As they move out, Teresa tries to hold Thomas's hand, but he is already moving. Up ahead, Groups A and B begin to converge. They decide to run to catch up to the other groups, having only three hours of time left. As they run, Thomas tells Teresa about his memories, telepathically. Teresa tells Tom she is really sorry, but that saving him was worth losing what they might have had. Thomas doesn't know how to respond. Up ahead, both groups have stopped to gather around something. Minho reveals that Harriet has explained everything, so they are not fighting. Between them, a stick pokes up out of the ground with an orange ribbon on it that says "The Safe Haven."

Chapter 57



No one can understand how the stick can be the safe zone. They all suspect something bad is going to happen. Teresa is coldly received by Minho. Brenda introduces herself to Teresa, emphasizing that she cuddled with Thomas in the truck in the city. They have fifty-five minutes left. However, the storm that is coming builds up in intensity. Minho and Thomas speak to Newt alone. Neither of them trusts Teresa or Aris anymore. Suddenly, dozens of white, coffin-like containers rise up from the desert floor.

Analysis

The extent of Teresa's betrayal is clear. Following Thomas's emotionally vulnerable state after Teresa is separated, Teresa kisses him and saves him, she turns on him, and has apparently been in some kind of relationship with Aris -though this is later revealed to be an act, or supposedly an act, When Teresa and Aris work together to kill Thomas, as to the direction of WICKED, all of Thomas's feelings for Teresa are snuffed out like a flame. Teresa attempts to tell Thomas that she would have gladly risked anything that could have ever been between them, in exchange for Thomas's life. But Thomas is heartbroken and does indeed feel betrayed. He cannot bring himself to speak to Teresa about anything personal, and indeed, there is almost a physical distance that has grown between them.

Interestingly enough, while Teresa is determined to follow through with the plan, all for the greater good of WICKED, the other girls from Group B, Harriet and Sonya, and all of the others, all have a moral problem with doing anything to Thomas that involves killing him. Thomas is actually able to convince them not to kill him. He believes the real test is in not killing him, rather than actually killing him -and the other girls agree. Unfortunately, Teresa does not agree. As she has said, the willingness to save Thomas's life, sacrificing anything between them, was enough for her. However, it is not clear that Teresa knows that Thomas will not actually be killed -and so her explanation is not exactly trustworthy.

Discussion Question 1

What reasons does Teresa give Thomas for following through the directives of WICKED, even against her feelings for Thomas? Should Thomas believe her? Why or why not?

Discussion Question 2

What memories come back to Thomas through his dreams, and through his time in the gas chamber? What does this say about his and Teresa's relationship, both to each other, and to WICKED?



Discussion Question 3

Why does Teresa kiss Thomas following the gas chamber episode? How does Thomas react? Why?

Vocabulary

Concocted, radioactive, ethereal, treachery, elation, vindication, muddled.



Chapter 58 - Epilogue

Summary

Chapter 58

Thomas and Teresa communicate telepathically, wondering if Grievors are inside the coffins, as they had been before, or if maybe they are meant themselves to go into the coffins. The lids of the coffins all fall off to reveal something bulky inside. Thomas and Teresa decide to investigate one, together. But before anyone can move, the bulky things are revealed to be hideously deformed creatures, pulling free of the coffins. Blades protrude from their hands. Minho orders everyone to grab weapons as the creatures close in on them.

Chapter 59

Teresa gives Thomas a sword while she wields a spear and a dagger. Minho orders everyone to charge and take on a creature. A battle ensues. Thomas jabs at the creature's bulbous like fleshy spots, stabbing them, causing sparks to fly out, and causing the creature to slow. Around them, the storm breaks, and lightning flashes to the ground once more.

Chapter 60

As the creatures are defeated, the lightning intensifies, and everyone knows they have to find cover. They decide to get into the pods. Even Jorge and Brenda get into one with Thomas and Teresa. The minutes tick down to two weeks at the lightning strikes their pod. But another sound takes over the sounds of the storm, something loud and artificial. They open their pod to discover a massive Berg coming to hover over top of them.

Chapter 61

Thomas helps Brenda out of the pod, who in turn helps Jorge and Teresa out. The Berg has landed fifty feet away, with its cargo door open. The people in the Berg only watch as more mechanical creatures move around to block off the escape route. Everyone charges headlong into the creatures. They battle and defeat them, only to see the Berg beginning to lift off. They rush toward it. Three girls and some Gladers reach the Berg, followed by Teresa and Thomas. Thomas helps Teresa in. Harriet and Newt pull in a girl while Minho helps Aris. Only Brenda is struggling by herself to get in. Thomas and Teresa both pull on Brenda, and Jorge holds onto Thomas and Teresa. They pull Brenda in.

Behind them, a man with short red hair demands to know who Brenda and Jorge are, and Thomas explains it to them. Thomas says they could do what they had to do to get to the safe haven, and that Jorge and Brenda helped them along the way. The man with



the pistol tells them that only one can stay. Thomas says sickening words, saying to take Brenda.

Chapter 62

Halfway to throwing Brenda out, Thomas acts. He attacks the man, takes the gun, holds him at gunpoint, and tells him no one else is dying, that all the tests have been passed. The man says his name is David as the cargo hatch door closes. David promises they are going to a place of safety, and all the tests and trials will make sense, and they will have the cure. David tells Thomas he can keep the gun, and they can have more guns. All that needs to happen now is for them to listen, to know what is behind everything, and then they can do as they please. David offers everyone the chance to shower, eat, and sleep, because the flight is very long.

Chapter 63

David and the others tend to, feed, and take care of the survivors. Teresa sits down beside Thomas on a couch, and asks him what he is thinking. Thomas tells her he hates that she is trying to act as if nothing has happened. She says she is trying to forget as much as he is. She says she wouldn't change anything, because the plan worked, and Thomas is still alive, and she wouldn't trade that for anything. Around him, the other Gladers and Group B girls are going to sleep. He is worried that Jorge and Brenda are nowhere to be found, and he realizes he misses Brenda. He then falls asleep.

Chapter 64

Thomas hears a voice telling him he will understand everything very soon. It is Brenda. She says things are going to get very bad for him very soon. He then screams and wakes up.

Chapter 65

Thomas wakes up in a room that is all white. There is a brown desk and chair nearby. He realizes he is in the Box all over again. Thomas tries to contact Brenda, Aris, and Teresa, but to no avail. He falls asleep. He then wakes up with Teresa trying to contact him. She says all the others are in another dormitory, but that Thomas was taken away because the Flare is rooted too deeply in him, and he is becoming violent. Thomas tells her it is a trick; Teresa tells him a week has passed. Thomas has had it. He tells Teresa to go away, not to say another word, to tell WICKED he is done with their games. Teresa tells him WICKED is good, and then she is gone.

Epilogue

In a memorandum to her associates, Chancellor Ava Paige explains that not everything has gone according to plan and everything is not ideal, but the plan must be kept. Emotions cannot interfere. The coming days will decide the fate of mankind. The memories of the Gladers must be restored so that they can be ready for what is asked of them. The patterns needed for a blueprint, for a cure, are at hand. The Psychs are



deliberating for the time to remove the Swipes to tell the remaining subjects if they are or are not immune to the Flare.

Analysis

As the novel concludes, two very startling things have occurred that will dramatically alter the course of the events of the final novel, even beyond what had been anticipated by WICKED. However, WICKED believes events will unfold as they hope, beyond the Maze and the Scorch Trials. The first dramatic shift in things is the rupturing of the relationship between Thomas and Teresa. No matter what explanations Teresa gives Thomas, he simply cannot get over the fact that she was willing to go against her own feelings for him, in support of WICKED instead. He is also heartbroken that Teresa has withheld incredibly important information from him, such as her being on telepathic communication with Aris before they were even rescued from the Maze. This ultimately leads to Thomas telling Teresa to leave him alone; and, it leads to Teresa telling him that WICKED is good. Thomas is sickened by it.

The second startling thing is that, supposedly after controlling and manipulating everything before, WICKED is prepared to return free will to the Gladers, in exchange for their listening to things just a little longer. However, no one knows if they can trust WICKED -especially Thomas. Indeed, Thomas realizes now that he has had something to do with WICKED, with the Maze, with everything that has transpired. He is responsible for the deaths of innumerable people because he had, in the past, been associated with WICKED -and because he apparently volunteered to become a part of the same experiment that has claimed so many lives. Thomas is resolved that he will emerge triumphant in the end.

Discussion Question 1

Why does Thomas refuse to accept either Teresa's apologies, or her explanations for things as they have unfolded? Do you believe Thomas is correct in his approach to Teresa? Why or why not?

Discussion Question 2

What special ability does it turn out that Brenda has? Why is this important? Who could Brenda be with respect to Thomas?

Discussion Question 3

What truths are revealed in Ava Paige's memorandum -specifically, as it pertains to the Gladers and to the Flare? What do you believe will be the response of the Gladers when they learn these truths?

Vocabulary

Artificial, ferocious, futile, retaliating, tension, cognitive, vigilance.



Characters

Thomas

Thomas is the main character and principal protagonist of James Dashner's novel, "The Scorch Trials." Thomas appears to be in his late teens, is unfailingly kind, gentle, moral, but is often prone to despair and unhappiness. A Runner from the Maze, Thomas has the ability to communicate telepathically with Teresa, a teenaged girl for whom he has romantic feelings. Thomas and the other Gladers are rescued from the Maze and then sent into the Scorch Trials, in which they have two weeks to reach a safe haven and receive a cure for the Flare disease, which they all have. Thomas proves to be the sound mind and source of reason for both his group, and for Group B. His heart is broken by Teresa, who, following a kiss, goes on to capture Thomas with the intent to kill him, as per the orders of WICKED. Though Thomas survives and Teresa insists she truly does have feelings for him and only wanted to save his life, Thomas does not believe her. The novel concludes with Thomas being separated from the other Gladers, and telling Teresa to leave him alone.

Teresa

Teresa is a beautiful teenaged girl who has the ability to telepathically communicate with Thomas. It is clear that Teresa has feelings for Thomas, though she ultimately betrays him, apparently feigning a relationship with Aris in order to hurt Thomas, and to gain the upper hand over him. Teresa later claims that this is to save Thomas's life, though he does not believe her. Teresa spends much of the rest of the book attempting to apologize Thomas, to get him to forgive her, though she says she will accept that she may have cost herself everything between them, though she would gladly have sacrificed that in exchange for Thomas's life. Teresa is ultimately told by Thomas to leave her alone, which she does after telling him that WICKED is good.

Aris

Aris, a member of Glade Group B, replaces Teresa for the Scorch Trials. Like Teresa, Aris can communicate with Thomas telepathically. Indeed, Thomas remembers knowing Aris in a dream of the time just before the Maze. Aris later works with Teresa to betray Thomas with the intent to kill him, as per the orders of WICKED.

Newt

Newt is a member of the Gladers, and a survivor of the Maze. He is trustworthy, friendly, and a good fighter. He often takes Thomas into his confidences.



Minho

As the declared and appointed leader of the Gladers, Minho is a courageous, brave, and determined individual. He is burned pretty badly by a lightning-caused fire, but survives the Scorch Trials.

Brenda

Brenda is an early stage Crank who is a native of northern Canada. She has been sent to the city to die. There, she meets Jorge and later Thomas. She travels along with Thomas's group to the safe haven. Brenda is a pretty, older teenager who has the ability to communicate telepathically.

Jorge

An Hispanic man who controls a group of Cranks, Jorge concedes to sparing the lives of Thomas and the others, as well as guiding them through the City, in exchange for a chance at the cure for the Flare.

Harriet

Harriet is a member of Group B, and she is one of twenty girls to have survived the Maze. She and the other girls decide to spare Thomas's life. Harriet is one of the survivors of the Scorch Trials.

Sonya

Sonya is a member of Group B, and one of twenty girls to survive the Maze. Like Harriet, she agrees to spare Thomas's life.

Ava Paige

Ava Paige is the Chancellor of the government that has assembled WICKED. She is a calculating, results-oriented and utilitarian woman who believes the ends justify the means.

Symbols and Symbolism

Gun

A gun is wielded by a Crank in the city and is used to shoot Thomas in the shoulder. The gun is a variable that WICKED did not count on. As a result of its use and presence, they are forced to save Thomas's life and cure his body of infection.

Berg

Bergs are massive airships that are used for various reasons by WICKED. A berg appears in the novel in order to collect Thomas and heal him of infection following his gunshot wound. Later, it picks up the survivors of the Scorch Trials.

Identity Tattoos

Identity tattoos appear on the necks of the Gladers and identify them with certain roles. Minho, for example, is the leader, while Thomas is the individual to be killed by Group B.

Spear

A spear is wielded by Teresa throughout the latter half of the novel. Teresa uses the spear as a weapon, and uses its shaft to beat up Thomas several times.

Gas Chamber

A gas chamber appears to be the method of execution for Thomas, and Thomas is shoved into a gas chamber in the mountains by Teresa and Aris. In reality, the gas causes Thomas to dream and remember things that he had not previously remembered about Teresa, Aris, and the time before the Maze.



Settings

The Dormitory

The dormitory is where Thomas, Teresa, and the other Gladers are taken following their rescue from the Maze. It is also where they are allowed to eat and rest before their next test. The dormitories are clean and quiet. They surround a common area, where food is dispensed. The common area contains a Flat Trans for transportation to the Scorch Trials.

The Desert

The desert is the first part of a series of obstacles to be overcome during the Scorch Trials, which are located in Mexico. The desert borders the mountains, and a city sits upon the desert. The desert is hot and unforgiving, ravaged by a brutal sun and merciless storms.

The City

The city sits upon the desert in Mexico. Once a food-producing center, the city has become a depository for the infected victims of the Flare. It is where Jorge and Brenda are sent and where Thomas and the Gladers later show up.

The Mountains

The mountains are bordered by the desert. They rest just beyond the city. The mountains are craggy and full of dead trees and caves, one of which contains the gas chamber Thomas is forced into by Teresa and Aris. The mountains are the last real geographical object to the safe haven.

The Safe Zone

Denoted by a stick with an orange ribbon, the Safe Zone is the objective point of the Maze survivors. It lies beyond the mountains, due north of the dormitories, desert, and the city. Once there, the survivors must fight off fleshy robotic creatures and board a Berg that arrives to take them to safety.

Themes and Motifs

Friendship

Friendship is a dominant theme of James Dashner's novel "The Scorch Trials." Friendship, which includes mutual feelings of affection, loyalty, concern, and compassion between one or more individuals, is shown among Thomas and those around him in various ways.

Despite the horrible circumstances WICKED has forced Thomas, Minho, Newt, and the others to contend with, they look at one another as more than just fellow test subjects. They look at one another as human beings. Friendship develops quickly between Thomas and Minho, though they never speak openly about it. Indeed, their reliance on one another has more to do than with just surviving the Maze, and later the Scorch Trials. They have come to trust one another to the point that they take one another into each others' confidences. Indeed, when Teresa betrays Thomas, it is Minho and Newt who step in to protect and look out for Thomas.

Proof of friendship is further provided by the decision of Minho and the others to stand by Thomas, when Thomas is singled as the one to be killed by Group B. Indeed, in the city, when Thomas becomes separated, Minho and the others decide to come to his rescue, even though he is of no value to their group in order to finish the Scorch Trials and make it to the Safe Haven. When Thomas is shot, Minho beats Thomas's attacker to the ground, perhaps to death. Apprehending the man, or chasing him off would have been enough, but the friendship between Minho and Thomas has been violated by the gun injury, and Minho will not let the assailant get away with it.

Betrayal

Betrayal is a major theme that is present in the second half of James Dashner's novel, "The Scorch Trials." Betrayal concerns treachery, the abandoning of loyalty to one's own side, friends, fellows, or family. In the novel, betrayal is executed primarily by Teresa, with help from Aris, against Thomas.

Throughout the first installment in the Maze Runner series, Thomas and Teresa are very good friends. This friendship continues to such a point throughout the early part of "The Scorch Trials" that it is clear that there are romantic feelings between Thomas and Teresa. Teresa even risks her life to protect Thomas, so strong are the romantic feelings that apparently exist between them. When Brenda snuggles up to Thomas, Thomas feels as if he is betraying Teresa, somehow.

Yet, it is this love that Teresa betrays, going along with the directives of WICKED, over her own personal feelings for Thomas. Thomas may well have been killed, though Teresa believes that by obeying WICKED, she will be saving Thomas. She tells Thomas that her betrayal may have cost her any feelings between them, but that she would



gladly have betrayed Thomas if it meant saving his life. Thomas is not amused, nor moved -and a growing distance between them continues through the end of the novel, culminating in Thomas telling Teresa to leave him alone.

Dystopianism

Dystopianism is an overarching theme found throughout James Dashner's novel, "The Scorch Trials." Dystopianism involves a society, country, or land ruled by an all-powerful, all-knowing government that is utilitarian. It denies citizens their basic, God-given rights. The government's purposes are to increase its own power and to guarantee its own survival.

In the novel, dystopianism appears in the form of WICKED. WICKED is tasked with ensuring the survival of the human race, and by extension, itself. It therefore concocts the Maze and the Scorch Trials, so that it may find a cure for the Flare. But, in the process, WICKED takes away the basic human rights of Thomas, Teresa, and the other Gladers and the girls from Group B. They are forced into the Maze and the Trials without a choice in the matter. Everything they encounter is controlled by WICKED, or has been orchestrated by WICKED in some way, shape, or form. There is no escaping WICKED.

The government coalition that controls WICKED operates just like WICKED, but on a much larger scale. Cobbled together by surviving world governments, the government that controls WICKED also controls the globe. It has such unchallenged and unrivaled power that it can delegate such freedom-denying tasks to WICKED, without any fear of consequences. The government quarantines Cranks in various places against their will, and denies access to other places, thus denying people their basic human rights.

Styles

Point of View

James Dashner tells his novel "The Scorch Trials" in the third-person limited omniscient narrative mode, revolving around the character of Thomas. This is done for several reasons. The novel revolves around Thomas primarily because the novel deals with events as witnessed, experienced, and undertaken by Thomas, who later turns out to be the best hope WICKED has of curing the Flare. The novel is told in the limited omniscient narrative mode, allowing the readers only to know as much as Thomas does, and therefore securing mystery around the events of the novel, which slowly unfold over time,. The novel is further told in the third person, because it allows the narrator to briefly delve into the minds and thoughts of others as appropriate -something that would have been impossible with the first person narrative mode.

Language and Meaning

James Dashner tells his novel "The Scorch Trials" in language that is simple and straightforward. This is done for at least a few reasons. The first is that the novel deals with teenagers who are relatively uneducated, and so the simplicity of the language contributes to the believability of the characters portrayed. It also allows the reader to move briskly through sometimes dramatic events, allowing the reader to focus on the events, mystery, and issues surrounding Thomas and the Gladers, rather than being dragged down by dense language or esoteric vocabulary.

Structure

James Dashner divides his novel "The Scorch Trials" into sixty-five consecutive, chronological, and linear chapters, all capped by an epilogue. The consecutive, linear, and chronological nature of the division of chapters allows the reader to progress rapidly through the events of the novel, paying attention to the plot rather than the structure of the novel. It also allows the reader to easily navigate the novel itself, especially against the wider backdrop of mystery surrounding the plot. From there, Dashner ends his novel with an Epilogue, taking the form of a memorandum from Chancellor Ava Paige, ultimately paving the way for the third installment in the series, "The Death Cure."



Quotes

Or he and the others might save us. Save us all.

-- Unknown WICKED agent (Chapter 8 paragraph Paragraph 42)

Importance: In a memory, Thomas can recall listening to WICKED scientists and agents speaking about coming experiments that will be conducted to save the human race. This is the first tip of the hat that Thomas gets to understand that he himself is the most important future Glader, and the best hope that WICKED has to save themselves, and the human race.

It was clear now that the rescue from the Maze had been a sham.

-- Narrator (Chapter 12 paragraph Paragraph 63)

Importance: Thomas, Teresa, and the other Gladers had all believed they had been rescued from the Maze. But, their rescuers are found dead, and WICKED is still clearly in control of the entire situation. This is a heartbreaking revelation for Thomas and the others, who were lulled into a false sense of security -and finality.

Could this be any more different from what they put us through in the Maze? There, we were trapped inside with walls, with everything we need to survive. Now we have nothing holding us in, but no way to survive unless we go where they told us to. Isn't that called irony or something like that?

-- Thomas (Chapter 17 paragraph Paragraph 97)

Importance: As Thomas and the other Gladers move out into the Scorch Trials, Thomas makes this revelation about the way things have changed dramatically. The Maze meant rules and assured safety; the Trials mean no rules and no assured safety. Although WICKED will be overseeing everything, Thomas and the others are clearly now on their own, at least for two weeks.

At least she was alive. At least she was alive.

-- Narrator (Chapter paragraph Paragraph 118)

Importance: After Thomas meets Teresa in the desert, she kisses him. Although she is taken away once again, Thomas has to reassure himself again and again that, at least, Teresa is alive. That means there is hope.

He'd just killed a man. He'd taken the life of another person. His insides felt full of poison.

-- Narrator (Chapter 34 paragraph Paragraph 196)

Importance: Thomas kills a Crank in order to save his life and Brenda's life. Even though Thomas kills in self-defense and saves Brenda's life by killing a subhuman, he still cannot help feeling sick at having taken a life.



If Thomas is going to croak and die, it wasn't supposed to come from a bloody infection.
-- Newt (Chapter 42 paragraph Paragraph 248)

Importance: Newt and the other Gladers discuss Thomas' rescue and recovery by the WICKED berg. They realize that Thomas is somehow very important. If he is supposed to die, it will be from something other than a gun and an infection.

You lose your humanity.
-- Brenda (Chapter 35 paragraph Paragraph 204)

Importance: Brenda, explaining the animalizing aspects of the Flare virus, tells Thomas that when the Flare takes over, anything human about someone is lost forever. Brenda is trying to comfort Thomas following his killing a Crank, and goes on to explain that the Flare destroys everything human about someone.

But even then, through all that, the deeper ache of truly losing Teresa gnawed away at his heart. He just couldn't let himself cry.
-- Narrator (Chapter 42 paragraph Paragraph 298)

Importance: Following Teresa's betrayal, Thomas is beside himself with heartache and confusion. In fact, he is so hurt that he cannot cry. Teresa's betrayal continues to eat away at him, and will indeed affect his future actions, and his feelings and actions toward Teresa.

I kind of accepted it, in a way. That saving you was worth losing what we might have had.
-- Teresa (Chapter 56 paragraph Paragraph 317)

Importance: Here, Teresa explains to Thomas her rationale for betraying Thomas. To Teresa, it wasn't a betrayal at all, but was actually saving his life instead. She is willing to sacrifice any potential love between them in exchange for his life, and adopts a very utilitarian posture in so doing.

The future of the human race outweighs all.
-- Ava Paige (Epilogue paragraph Page 358)

Importance: In the Epilogue, Ava Paige displays her utilitarian tendencies by explaining the motives of WICKED and the government that has created WICKED. The ends justify the means. No matter what is done, it has to be done for the ultimate end. Paige reminds all those associated with the Maze and the Trials that what is done to Thomas and the others pales in comparison to failure to do what must be done.