

The Secret Diary of Laura Palmer Study Guide

The Secret Diary of Laura Palmer by Jennifer Lynch

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Contents

The Secret Diary of Laura Palmer Study Guide.....	1
Contents.....	2
Plot Summary.....	3
Part 1 - July 22, 1984 to July 30, 1984.....	5
Part 2, August 7 1984 to October 3, 1985.....	7
Part 3, October 3 1985 to December 16, 1985.....	9
Part 4, April 23, 1986 to July 25, 1986.....	11
Part 5, August 3, 1986 to October 1, 1986.....	12
Part 6, October 3 1986 to April 2, 1987.....	14
Part 7, June 24 1987 to December 15, 1987.....	16
Part 8, December 16, 1987 to Christmas Eve Day, 1987 - Later.....	18
Part 9, January 3 1988 to April 7, 1988.....	20
Part 10, April 7, 1988 to August 10, 1988.....	22
Part 11, August 16 1988 to (undated).....	24
Characters.....	27
Objects/Places.....	31
Themes.....	33
Style.....	35
Quotes.....	38
Topics for Discussion.....	42



Plot Summary

This book is based upon characters and events originally developed and portrayed in the television series "Twin Peaks", in which solving the murder of Laura Palmer was a central narrative focus. The Secret Diary of Laura Palmer is a recreation of a key element in "Twin Peaks", a completed and fleshed out version of the diary that was referred to and utilized in the series as a source of clues and information. Considered on its own merits, the book explores themes related to the nature and tensions of various dualities, most notably the tensions between good and evil, appearance and reality, and the physical and spiritual sides of existence.

The diary opens with an entry written on Laura's twelfth birthday, the occasion of her being given the diary. She describes her intention to enter into the diary "everything", including things she doesn't tell anyone else. As the narrative unfolds, Laura does exactly that, writing into her diary a succession of secrets, stories, revelations and musings that, as she says several times, she can't share with anyone else.

Laura has several main points of focus and/or concern, all of which play important roles in defining the story of her last four years of life and therefore are the primary elements of her diary entries. Two manifest early in the narrative. The first is a preoccupation with sexuality and the pleasures associated with it, which she feels are actually "bad" and shameful. These reactions to her sexuality are the result of the second point of concern at work in her life and, by extension, in her diary, the frightening presence of a man called BOB. In the diary's early entries, BOB comes across as a kind of malevolent spirit or ghost who lures Laura out of the safety of her home and into the nearby woods. While there, Laura's writings suggest, he taunts her with the contention that she is by nature a "bad" girl, and that as such, she belongs to him. Laura, as she becomes increasingly aware of the dangers associated with his presence in her life, fights harder and harder to defend the "good" part of herself from him. Eventually, she takes action to try to beat him at his own game, to accept and even celebrate the "bad" part of herself in order to protect the "good" part.

The diary suggests, however, that once she takes that action, Laura becomes more and more deeply involved with that "bad" part, rationalizing her actions by saying her protection of her "good" self is becoming stronger and stronger. In fact, as her diary entries reveal, she is burying it further and further beneath her actual enjoyment of the sex and drugs now being introduced into her life. Diary entries also reveal the increasing desperation fueling her descent into drugs and sex, desperation that emerges from her lingering desire to both be perceived as "good" and to actually be "good".

Eventually, as Laura's sexual activities and drug use become more extreme and as she enters into charitable work in an effort to be "good", BOB becomes a more active presence in her life. When BOB actually starts writing in her diary, engaging in dialogue with her, it starts to seem as though he is a manifestation of something internal, of dark desires and beliefs at work in the core of Laura's psyche as opposed to an external

spirit or force determined to corrupt her. As Laura becomes increasingly aware of this aspect of BOB's presence in her life, she makes a couple of last-ditch attempts to live a "good" life. These efforts, however, are both paralleled and undermined by her increasing involvement with drugs, extreme sexual activity, and eventually prostitution.

As Laura's diary entries become more incoherent, the book incorporates "missing" pages, suggesting that in the actual diary (of which the book is, ostensibly, a reproduction), those pages were torn out by an unknown individual. There is significant irony here, in that at the point at which Laura is finally coming to terms with important truths about her life, truths that are, by implication, written about on the missing pages, someone is making an active effort to destroy her efforts at self-rehabilitation (i.e., tearing those pages out). The book concludes with the statement that shortly after the final entry, in which Laura's fear and despair are evident, "she was found dead".



Part 1 - July 22, 1984 to July 30, 1984

Part 1 - July 22, 1984 to July 30, 1984 Summary

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July 22, 1984 - In the first entry in her new diary, given to her for her twelfth birthday, Laura writes of her intention to tell it everything. The entry ends with Laura being called by her father to come downstairs and get a surprise.

July 22, 1984 (later) - Laura excitedly describes her surprise - the gift of a beautiful horse which she names Troy. She hints of mystery about the horse's origins, and closes with a comment that she hopes "BOB doesn't come tonight."

July 23, 1984 - Laura writes about her frequent bad dreams, describing the most recent one in detail - how she is drawn to an old, bedraggled man who holds her pet cat Jupiter hostage and makes the area between her legs so hot that all she can do is spread them wide open to cool. The dream concludes with the man saying "You are home". Laura notes her concern about being thought of as insane and that writing down her dreams makes them easier to bear.

July 23, 1984 - Laura writes with anticipation of the imminent arrival of her cousin Maddy.

July 27, 1984 - Laura comments that she's writing in her diary out in the fort that she, her best friend Donna, and Maddy built, and says she secretly enjoys Maddy talking about "tongue kissing" her boyfriend, even though Donna finds it disgusting.

July 29, 1984 - This entry is a poem written about a man who calls Laura to come out and play with him. "Sometimes I feel him near me," she writes, "and I know it is something just to bear." She writes of calling for help, and no one coming.

July 30, 1984 (1) - In this entry, Laura writes of the pleasurable excitement she feels when wearing some of Maddy's clothes, and of the awkward relationship between herself and Benjamin Horne, Laura's father's employer, who likes Laura to sit on his lap.

July 30, 1984 (2) - This entry is another poem, "Someday Growing Up will come Easier" In this poem, Laura writes metaphorically of her growing breasts and of her desperation to understand "the reason for [her] crying."



Part 1 - July 22, 1984 to July 30, 1984 Analysis

This first section introduces several of the book's most significant recurring elements. Some are stylistic, including the simplicity of the language, appropriate to a girl of Laura's age, and the sense of suspense, as particularly manifest in the frequent foreshadowings, of which the references to BOB are the most notable, or, less charitably, the most heavy handed. Some are plot related, again, the references to BOB, who appears throughout the narrative as Laura's principal antagonist, and the references to Maddy, whose actions in this section trigger developments in Laura's life in subsequent sections. Most significant are the elements relating to Laura's precocious sexuality, her dreams, and her despair, all of which define her struggles as a character throughout the narrative, meaning that the references here are further foreshadowing of future events and circumstances.

Further to the subject of BOB: as the unfolding narrative will indicate, it's very possible that the appearances of the two nameless men (the old man and the man who calls to her in the July 29 entry) can be seen as additional manifestations of BOB and the evil that Laura comes to believe he represents.



Part 2, August 7 1984 to October 3, 1985

Part 2, August 7 1984 to October 3, 1985 Summary

August 7 1984 - Laura writes despairingly that Maddy left three days before. She also writes of her belief that she thinks she had an orgasm in the night, and of her dream of a sweet, tender boy who began to make love to her, but ended up becoming her unborn child, adding that she writes that she preferred being made love to than being pregnant.

August 7, 1984 - Laura wonders what death would feel like, which in turn leads her to wonder how Jesus would feel about her and whether she's a child of Satan. She comments that sometimes when she has to see BOB, she thinks she is with Satan and she "will never make it out of the woods in time to be Laura, good and true and pure..." She then describes her plan to take her diary out into the woods, describes in detail the hiding place in her bedpost, and worries about the intensity of her sexual fantasies.

August 11, 1984 - This diary entry is written in the woods, at night, with a "boy owl" watching over Laura as she imagines about how she'll act when she's with a man, and she writes a poem in which she describes a secret inside her that tells her she will never grow old if she reveals its name.

August 16, 1984 - In this short entry, Laura writes (at five-thirty in the morning) of being led into the woods, of suddenly being lost, and of her belief that she is a bad person. She vows to stop having bad thoughts about sex and to be a good person like Donna.

August 31, 1984 - Laura writes of having finally "got her period", of feeling that while she feels a new force of life inside her she also senses a "stranger" part of her that she believes would keep her from being a good mother.

September 1, 1984 - Laura describes an experience of quiet, loving intimacy with her mother.

September 9, 1984 - Laura writes, without using the actual word, of her happy discovery of how to masturbate. She concludes by hoping that she is not doing something wrong.

September 15, 1984 - Laura writes with shock and anger that she knows someone has taken and read her diary. She directly addresses whoever has "ruined [her] trust and [her] feeling of security", saying she hates whoever it is and warning that person to stay away from the diary.

October 3, 1985 - Laura writes of her belief that her mistrust in the world, not just in her family, is justified, adding that she has discovered that Troy was a gift from Benjamin Horne.



Part 2, August 7 1984 to October 3, 1985 Analysis

The parallels between BOB and evil (specifically, Satan) develop further in this section, as do Laura's feelings and fantasies relating to sex. Of particular note here is the first manifestation of one of the book's key themes, that of duality (two forces and/or experiences acting in opposition to each other). While the narrative explores several such relationships, the most relevant to Laura's personal story is the duality between "good" and "bad" - specifically, her "good" side, as reflected in her mother and Donna, and the "bad" side, as reflected in BOB, and in Laura's own desires. This specific duality is the source of the most affecting, troubling tension in Laura's life, and therefore in the narrative.

Important foreshadowings in this section include Laura's comment that she prefers having sex to being pregnant, which foreshadows her abortion in Part 7, her reference to the "boy owl", which is the first of several references to owls in the book, which also foreshadows Laura's conversation with the Log Lady in Part 3, which includes a comment about owls. There is also the revelation that her horse Troy was a gift from Benjamin Horne, which ironically foreshadows the moment in Part 7 when Benjamin delivers the news that Troy had to be put down because of what amounts to ill treatment. Perhaps the most significant foreshadowing is Laura's discovery that her diary has been read, which foreshadows a similar discovery, triggered by her discovery of missing pages, later in the book.



Part 3, October 3 1985 to December 16, 1985

Part 3, October 3 1985 to December 16, 1985 Summary

October 3, 1985 (2)- Laura writes of her sadness and anger at the hit-and-run death of her beloved cat Jupiter, of how the people in Twin Peaks don't know who she really is, and describes some of her sexual fantasies that she is afraid would end her friendship with Donna if she knew about them.

October 12, 1985 - Laura describes her first experience of smoking marijuana, obtained by and shared with a trio of young men visiting from Canada. At the conclusion of the entry, she writes of how much she enjoyed herself .

October 20, 1985 -Laura writes at detailed length of her second encounter with the three young men, along with Donna, who was also there. She describes going with them into the woods, drinking alcohol for the first time, going skinny dipping. She describes the immense joy she feels when she is kissed and fondled by two of them, how gentle the boys were with both her and Donna as they left for home, and how she and Donna agreed on the story they were going to tell their respective parents. Finally, she writes of how she and Donna hugged afterwards, as though they were "saying it was [their] secret, and that [they] were still friends, and that [they] were okay."

November 10, 1985 - In this chapter, Laura describes an encounter there with Margaret, "the Log Lady" who spoke of how the woods could be both a good and bad place, of the powerful presence of owls, and how things are often not what they seem.

November 13, 1985 - This entry is a poem entitled "Listening to the Wood", which begins with a comment that "inside the trees are souls" and which suggests that "the world / should walk deeply into the woods / [and] listen very carefully". The entry concludes to a reference that "he" came that night.

November 20, 1985 - In this entry, Laura describes in vivid detail a dream of being attacked by a giant rat, and how she hurt herself before the rat could. She voices the belief that her guilt about what happened with the boys from Canada is causing her to have the bad dreams, vows to hurt herself before anyone else can hurt her, and concludes by wishing that she could talk to her "mommy".

December 16, 1985 - After having another bad dream, Laura writes that she's going to put the diary away in the hopes it will make the nightmares leave her alone. The entry concludes with a plea that she is not "the only one on earth with this pain."



Part 3, October 3 1985 to December 16, 1985 Analysis

The influence of the two main forces of destruction in Laura's life, drugs and sex, increases in intensity in this chapter, as Laura takes drugs (marijuana) and experiences sexual stimulation from others, both for the first time. The main point to note here (aside from the lengthy, detailed eroticism with which the sexual encounter with the boys is written) is the manifestation of the good/bad duality. Specifically, Laura's eager investigation of sex is clearly contrasted to Donna's withdrawal from any sexual activity. In other words, Laura is being "bad", as she defines it, while Donna is being "good". Meanwhile, it's interesting to note that BOB is pretty much absent from this section, a fact that suggests that what Laura believes to be his plan for her to embrace the darkness and evil he represents is working. It's also interesting to note that Laura, perhaps due to his absence, is drawn to the mysterious Log Lady who, in spite of her obvious weirdness eccentricity is perceived by Laura as being on her side in a way that few people in Twin Peaks are. Here again is the thematic principle of duality at work - the darkness, as represented by BOB, and the light, as represented by the Log Lady, who is herself the embodiment of another thematically relevant duality, the tension between appearance and reality.

Important foreshadowings in this section include the death of Jupiter, which foreshadows events in Part 5 when Laura is the perpetrator of a similar accident and, more metaphorically, foreshadows the lingering death of the "good" parts of herself, as represented by her love for Jupiter, which continues throughout the book. Perhaps the most important foreshadowing here is Laura's reference to hurting herself before someone else can which, again in a more metaphorical way, foreshadows her choices later on.



Part 4, April 23, 1986 to July 25, 1986

Part 4, April 23, 1986 to July 25, 1986 Summary

April 23, 1986 - In this, her first diary entry for several months, Laura describes her agonized frustration at being "good" all the time and her deteriorating friendship with Donna, writing that she doesn't feel safe talking with Donna any more but feels she has to try.

April 24, 1986 - Laura includes a poem about skipping "before he told me to lie down / or to say things", and about how she has been "blind ... since the skipping stopped." She writes about feeling like something very bad and real is happening, and concludes with the exclamation-marked hope that Donna is still her friend.

June 21, 1986 - Laura describes how, as the result of a long conversation with Donna, she realized that Donna's thoughts (in general, and about sex in particular) are much purer than hers, but that she can't try to think the way Donna does any more. She also wishes for some marijuana, adding that she feels like she hasn't laughed for years.

June 22, 1986 - Laura writes in graphic detail of what happens when "he", identified here for the first time as BOB, takes her into the woods and manipulates her into what she sees as "dirty" sexual behavior. She writes of how clean she tries to keep herself, how she both longs to see him because she's afraid he'll go away, and how she's starting to wonder if God has something to do with what happens between them.

July 25, 1986 - Laura describes her carefully planned trip into the forest on her fourteenth birthday, her calling for BOB, and an intense session of masturbation during which she celebrates her sexuality. She describes herself (now fourteen years old) as a "new little girl", and indicates that she intends to continue her relationship with BOB, but on her terms. Finally, she describes how, on her way out of the woods, she "was nearly killed" as an owl "swooped down out of nowhere".

Part 4, April 23, 1986 to July 25, 1986 Analysis

The first point to note about this section is that it again manifests the central thematic duality of "goodness", as embodied by Donna, and "badness", as self-defined by Laura. There is the sense here that Laura is deliberately choosing to move away from being internally good, as Donna seems to be, and towards embracing her "badness". Nowhere is this sense clearer than in the July 25th entry, in which she welcomes and celebrates her sexuality, apparently with the idea that she's going to beat BOB at his own game; in other words, hurt herself before he has the chance to.

Also note the violent appearance of the owl. Traditionally, owls have been associated with wisdom: they were the mascot of Athena, the Ancient Greek goddess of wisdom, and the power of darkness; owls are deadly nocturnal predators.



Part 5, August 3, 1986 to October 1, 1986

Part 5, August 3, 1986 to October 1, 1986 Summary

October 1, 1986 - Laura writes of her ongoing relationship with Bobby Briggs, who gets her marijuana and alcohol any time she wants. She says that she has become two Lauras, the one who acts the way her parents want her to act and "the naughtier Laura", who goes into the woods with Bobby and, as she describes in considerable detail, loses her virginity with him. She writes of how he protests his love and loyalty and how she, in spite of her knowing that he could be the man to truly love her, laughed at him. This, she writes, is what she has to do in order to lure BOB to her and eventually conquer him, and keep the tender part of herself safe.

August 3, 1986 - In this brief entry, Laura writes of how Bobby called to apologize for saying too much too soon, and of how she hates having to play the "hard, masculine" role out of defense of her vulnerability.

August 4, 1986, 3:30 AM - In what appears to be a middle-of-the-night entry, Laura writes of having become fully aware of the game she is playing, how random life is, and how much danger there is in that randomness.

August 6, 1986, 4:47 AM - In another middle-of-the-night entry, Laura writes in elevated, at times even poetic language of the necessity of staying awake so she can combat BOB who is, she thinks, as inevitable a manifestation of nature as the sunset.

September 10, 1986 - In this short entry, Laura writes of how familiarly and easily BOB enters her room, wonders about whether he has arranged with her parents to go unnoticed, and asks herself whether they simply don't care.

September 11, 1986, 2:20 AM - In yet another middle-of-the-night entry, Laura writes of how fatigued she is becoming because of her late night vigils, and writes with poetic intensity of her hope that BOB comes soon and of her determination to defeat him, and of her longing for the safety she believes she would feel with Bobby.

October 1, 1986 - Laura describes how Bobby showed up at her window to invite her to a party being thrown by his friend Leo. She writes of telling him at first that she is too tired, and of his telling her that he has something that will give her energy. She then writes of her excitement at going out, warns her diary to be "careful" of the sometimes tardy BOB and, in a postscript, realizes that the name BOB is a warning: B-eware O-f B-ob.

Part 5, August 3, 1986 to October 1, 1986 Analysis

This section contains several manifestations of or variations on the book's thematic focus on duality - goodness versus badness, such as Laura's goodness to her parents



contrasted with her drug use and sexual awareness, appearances versus reality, in that Laura appears good to her parents but in fact is secretly bad, masculine versus feminine as Laura defines it, tough versus loving. By far, however, the most noteworthy element of this section is its shift in narrative style - specifically, in the expanding of the vocabulary and sentence structure Laura uses in writing her diary. There is the sense that, as the result of her experience in the woods at the end of the previous section, Laura has in fact become a new girl, one whose self awareness also manifests as a new and more expanded sense of intellect.

It's important to keep in mind, though, here and throughout the book, that Laura is barely into adolescence - at this point, she is only fourteen years old, a sexually and now intellectually precocious fourteen but, at heart and in spirit, very much a vulnerable little girl. Here again is a manifestation of the book's thematic focus on duality - specifically, worldly young woman striving to protect vulnerable, loving little girl, both existing in the same body, the same life, the same mind.



Part 6, October 3 1986 to April 2, 1987

Part 6, October 3 1986 to April 2, 1987 Summary

October 3 1986 - In language that, for the first time, includes words like "shit" and "fuck" (both of which are used repeatedly), Laura describes how Bobby warned her to be careful around the unpredictable Leo, and how surprised she was to see Ronnette Pulaski, a girl to whom she confesses she feels an attraction. She then describes her encounter with a girl, offering to pay someone to give her an orgasm, and how she (Laura) pushed ahead in the line of boys to try and gave the girl her first orgasm in two years.

December 14, 1986 - Laura describes a dream of BOB coming to her and telling her how awful she is. She also writes of her confusion, and of how her desire to be good conflicts with her desire to feel good (i.e., experience sexual/sensual pleasure), and pleads with whoever might read the diary in years to come to not hate her. Finally, she forbids BOB to come near her ever again.

January 10, 1987 - This entry begins with what appears to be a straightforward conversation between Laura and her father at breakfast, but then disintegrates into a strangeness that, Laura realizes as she writes, is the result of writing while she was asleep and dreaming, which she didn't realize she was doing.

February 3, 1987 - As she writes of how miserable she feels without cocaine and about how desperate she is to tell someone about BOB. Her writing is interrupted by BOB himself, whose words are written in all caps and who tells Laura that no one would believe her if she spoke of him. She tries to negotiate a deal with him to leave her alone, but he taunts her by telling her that even if he did agree, he "may change his mind".

April 2, 1987 (1) Laura writes of her belief that once she has some desperately desired cocaine she'll be able to face down BOB. BOB interrupts and taunts her with his power over her. She resolves to go to Leo's and get some cocaine, taking her diary with her.

April 2, 1987 (2) In this disjointed entry, Laura writes of waiting outside Leo's house, of realizing she forgot money and of how Leo gave her credit and her hopes that he will be fair.

April 2, 1987 (3) Having taken some cocaine, Laura writes of how BOB feels gone, of how she misses her life of feeling pure and safe and then of how Leo wants to have sex with her in exchange for the cocaine, which she calls "her friend". She is interrupted by BOB, who taunts her about how messed up she is. She taunts him back and calls him a coward.



Part 6, October 3 1986 to April 2, 1987 Analysis

Two key elements, possibly inter-related, appear for the first time in this section. The first is cocaine which, as Laura herself puts it, quickly becomes her drug of choice. The reason why is never explicitly defined, but there is the sense that cocaine's triggering of a sense of well being, particularly for the self-hating Laura, is a big part of it. The intensity of her need for it plays an important part in the rest of the narrative - in other words, its appearance here is a noteworthy foreshadowing.

The second key element introduced in this section is the intrusion of BOB into Laura's diary. He becomes an active presence, as opposed to one just thought and/or dreamt about. This raises an interesting question about the nature of BOB. To this point he has been portrayed as mysterious, powerful, and frightening, but with the sense that he is something external to Laura, a ghost or a spirit perhaps. Here, as he forces his way into her writing, there is the sense that he is doing so while emerging from her mind - in other words, he now seems to be a manifestation of something internal in Laura, perhaps an embodiment and/or projection of what she perceives as the "badness" in her. This, in turn, puts all her previous stories to him visiting her in a different light - does she dream those visits or imagine them? What exactly are they? Finally, it's interesting to note that BOB only emerges into Laura's diary after she becomes addicted to cocaine. Is her use of the drug a trigger of some sort for an expansion of power and/or influence of her "dark" side?

Other noteworthy elements in this section include the hint that Laura has started exchanging sex for drugs (the implication of her comments about Leo "giving her credit") and another change in her vocabulary. In this section she starts using swear words, a shift that, unlike the change in the previous section, which indicates a new kind of maturity and eloquence, indicates that Laura's internal censors are starting to break down. In other words, she's getting to the place where she's prepared to say, and do, anything. Boundaries are beginning to crumble.



Part 7, June 24 1987 to December 15, 1987

Part 7, June 24 1987 to December 15, 1987 Summary

June 24, 1987 - Laura writes despairingly of her feelings about setting her horse Troy free, feeling like she no longer deserves him and that he no longer deserves to be kept "in a small square box ... not free, but owned".

November 12, 1987 - In this lengthy entry, Laura narrates a violent encounter she, Leo and Bobby have with some cocaine dealers. She writes of how, just as they're about to escape (Laura with a kilo of cocaine between her legs), gunfire broke out and they had to take off, with Bobby shooting one of the dealers in the chest. Later, at Leo's home and high off the cocaine, Laura leaves to get some food, takes Leo's truck, becomes distracted by a porn magazine on the floor, and accidentally runs over a little girl's cat. She writes of stopping and apologizing, of weeping over the memory of Jupiter, and how when the compassionate little girl (Danielle) hears why Laura is so upset, forgives her and tells her she's nice. Laura writes of her guilt and gratitude, of how she wonders whether she did the right thing by setting Troy free, and resolves to turn her life around for the better.

November 13, 1987 - At the beginning of this entry, Laura recounts what happened when she went back to Leo's house after hitting the cat, how she and Bobby are manipulated by Leo, Bobby into leaving and Laura into following Leo into the woods in order to, as she puts it, "shake the scent of innocence" that calls BOB to her. She writes of how Leo took her in his truck, blindfolded her, tied her to a chair, and then brought what Laura guesses to be seven people of both genders to her. At that point, Laura writes, five hours of group sexual activity began. At the end of the encounter, Laura finds BOB back at home waiting for her, and in dialogue (with BOB'S words again capitalized), argues intensely with him about who has power over whom, with each insisting they each have power over the other. BOB disappears, but not before taunting Laura with the thought that she will never be rid of him.

December 15, 1987 - Laura writes of her increasingly frequent visits with Johnny Horne, how she uses the money she's paid for babysitting him to buy cocaine, and how her need for cocaine (which, the entry tells us, she keeps in her bedpost hiding place) makes everything easier.

Part 7, June 24 1987 to December 15, 1987 Analysis

The first noteworthy point in this section is Laura's reference to Troy being kept in a "small square box", which can be seen as a metaphor for Laura's own situation, trapped in a small box of sexual and drug addiction that seems to be shrinking all the time. The



comment, however, is ironic, since Laura doesn't seem to know that's what's happening to her.

Other noteworthy points include the violent confrontation with the drug dealers, which foreshadows references later in the narrative to Laura's dreams of the hell awaiting her and Bobby after participating in a murder, and the running over of the cat followed by Danielle's compassionate forgiveness. Here again, duality comes into play - evil (the drug dealers) versus goodness (Danielle's forgiveness), not to mention Laura's blame (of the people who killed Jupiter) versus Danielle's compassion (for Laura, who killed her cat). There is also foreshadowing in the death of Danielle's cat; specifically, Laura's role in the cat's death foreshadows the revelation of Troy's death. In both cases, she is responsible for the death of a beloved pet.

Another reference to duality shows up in Laura's references to her relationship with Johnny Horne, who appears to be able to bring out her good side. The irony, of course, is that she uses the money she earns from taking care of him to pay for cocaine - the good side fueling the dark side.

Finally, there is Laura's sexual encounter in the woods, a reiteration and deepening of her commitment to beat BOB by playing his game better than he does. In other words, by embracing her dark (sexual) side, Laura believes she is protecting her good (innocent, loving) side, and therefore preventing BOB from getting to it first. She is, again, hurting herself before she can be hurt by another.



Part 8, December 16, 1987 to Christmas Eve Day, 1987 - Later

Part 8, December 16, 1987 to Christmas Eve Day, 1987 - Later Summary

December 16, 1987 - In this entry, Laura talks about her guarded relationship with her mother, her renewed relationships with Bobby, whom she is dating like a "normal" high school girl, and with Donna, who is dating a football jock named Mike, and her ongoing, orgiastic visits with Leo. She also writes of becoming sexually and financially involved with a drug dealer named Jacques.

December 21, 1987 - Laura writes of her current practice of embodying pictures out of pornography magazines for Leo and Jacques, and how while doing so she goes into a dream world, and of how Leo and Jacques promise to help her live out one of her sexual fantasies.

December 23, 1987 - Laura writes of a frightening dream in which the man shot by Bobby during the drug theft warns both her and Bobby that they're going to end up in hell. She writes of calling Bobby to talk about the dream, of how he starts crying and hangs up, and of the nice Christmas present she bought him with the money she's not spending on coke, since (as she reveals) Leo and Jacques are giving her cocaine to get her to play sex games.

December 23, 1987 (2) Laura writes of calling Leo, who can't see her because of problems with his wife, and Jacques, who tells her to look in the bra she had been wearing the other night for her Christmas present. She discovers a variety of drugs, wrapped in a picture from a porn magazine that, she supposes, is one of Jacques's fantasies. She writes of doing some of the drugs and of thinking of the fantasy she wants Leo and Jacques to fulfill.

"Christmas Eve Day, 1987" Laura describes a sentimental encounter with her father and mother at the Christmas tree which left her dad with a tear on his cheek. She then comments that she had intended to work on her fantasy, but the time and place aren't right. She decides to go to the Double R Diner for some coffee.

"Christmas Eve Day, 1987 - Later" Laura describes her encounters at the diner - with the friendly waitress, Norma, and with Leo's wife Shelley, who Laura simultaneously pities and feels triumphant over. She also encounters a slow-moving elderly woman who inspires her to think about helping older people.



Part 8, December 16, 1987 to Christmas Eve Day, 1987 - Later Analysis

The book's central thematic exploration of duality manifests clearly in this section. Laura's relationship with her parents (a perhaps idealized manifestation of an ideal family life) and her Norma-triggered impulse to do volunteer work are both clearly at odds with what she perceives as her real life of drugs and sex and bad dreams: the good/bad and appearance/reality dualities. There is also a new duality emerging here, the idea of fantasy versus reality. Specifically, Laura's drug-fueled attraction to and embracing of the Leo/Jacques fantasies can be seen as one side of a duality that has, as its opposing force, the real and troubling conflict she's experiencing between her "good" and "bad" sides. What is beginning to emerge is a sense of dualities layered one on top of another, with the result that Laura is losing sight of the situation and experience at the core of her disjointed, disconnected life. It's not until she encounters Dr. Jacoby later in the narrative that the layers begin to peel away and her core truth begins to emerge. By that point, however, as the narrative reveals, it's too late.



Part 9, January 3 1988 to April 7, 1988

Part 9, January 3 1988 to April 7, 1988 Summary

January 3, 1988 - Laura writes of Christmas with her understanding but clueless parents, and of a happy New Year's Eve with Bobby, during which they each admit that they each have things going on they can't tell the other. They then, in Laura's words, "make love" and return home. Laura's writings are again interrupted by BOB, who in spite of her attempts to get rid of him, brings her a message from "a dead man" that "a seat is being saved for [her]".

January 7, 1988 - This entry is a poem, "In the Eyes of the Visitor". Laura writes of herself as "an animal of prey", a "defect in the cycle of life".

January 20, 1988 - Laura writes of a happy day with Jimmy, in which his request for her to tell him stories resulted in her telling of all the happy times in her life. At the same time, she writes of her other activities that day - preparing to enter a "Fantasy of the Month" competition in a porn magazine.

February 1, 1988 - Laura writes of her decision "that it is important to look at at least the initials of each person [she] has been with". She writes down forty sets of initials, and adds that there were "several unseen unknowns - out by the cabin".

February 9, 1988 - Laura writes of how a trip to visit Leo and Jacques goes wrong when she accepts a ride from four truckers who take her to their motel room. In fear for her life, Laura secretly drugs the men, three of whom pass out. She knocks the fourth unconscious with a beer bottle and seeks refuge with Leo and Jacques, who help her get home.

March 4, 1988 - Laura writes of her disillusionment with Donna, who is making a big deal of losing her virginity with Mike.

March 10, 1988 - Laura writes of not having heard from Bobby ever since she told him what happened with the truckers, and then of receiving a phone call from Benjamin Horne, telling her that Troy had been found in such bad shape the border patrol had to put him out of his misery. She writes that Horne told her "he would find [the] awful person" who let Troy out and punish them. Laura berates herself for so thoughtlessly setting Troy free.

Part 9, January 3 1988 to April 7, 1988 Analysis

In structural terms, there is a sense of momentum starting to build, of narrative complications compounding upon themselves, of tension building towards an upcoming point of climax. Laura's struggles are slowly becoming more desperate, her self-constructed psychological net is starting to tighten, and the sense of impending self-



destruction is taking on an air of increasing inevitability. She is letting go of more and more of "the good side" she's been clinging to, going deeper and deeper into self-loathing, triggered particularly by the story of what happened to Troy, and acting out, trying to alleviate the intensity of that feeling by venting it in other actions. In this context, it's possible to see her encounter with the truckers in two metaphorical ways - as a perversion of the sexual joy and pleasure she found in her encounter with the two Canadian boys, and as a foreshadowing of her death at unknown hands.

Meanwhile, there is a powerful and quite touching duality at work in this section; specifically, her joy at spending a happy day with Jimmy, a joy undermined by the immediate reference to her indulgence in porn and fantasies. Other important elements include the title of the poem, "In the Eye of the Visitor", in which she writes about herself from BOB's point of view, and her cynicism about Donna and Mike, which is an intriguing contrast to the somewhat pathetic joy in her reference to "making love" with Bobby. Finally, there is the "initials" chapter which, in its stark under-writing, is powerfully and chillingly evocative of the clinical coldness with which Laura is starting to view herself and her activities.



Part 10, April 7, 1988 to August 10, 1988

Part 10, April 7, 1988 to August 10, 1988 Summary

April 7, 1988 - Laura writes of her happiness with her new job "at the perfume counter" and at working with Ronnette. She also writes of how her relationship with Bobby has cooled and muses on the strangeness of falling in love, on how vulnerable it makes people, and how she can't let herself do it until she's sure BOB is really dead.

April 10, 1988 - Laura writes of her distaste for Mr. Battis, the manager at Horne's Department Store, where she works at the perfume counter, and of her simultaneous jealousy and resentment of Donna's happiness with Mike. When Donna left the store, Laura writes, "it was like she was leaving forever."

April 21, 1988 - Laura details the secret code she and Ronnette have developed for getting together and sharing drugs, her idea to make some extra cash selling sexy pictures to porn magazines, and how Leo and Jacques both got excited as they photographed Laura.

July 22, 1988 (1) - On her sixteenth birthday, Laura writes in regretful detail of how all her dreams of a perfect life have turned out badly.

July 22, 1988 (2) - Laura confesses to her diary that she's pregnant and doesn't know who the father is, and tells herself to stop crying because it is her sixteenth birthday and "everyone will want to know why it is that [she] is so upset."

August 2, 1988 - In this five-line entry, Laura says it's been a week since BOB visited her and that part of her wishes he would come back and "cut her" like he used to — cut some of the pain out of her.

Two pages identified as being "ripped out" of the diary, as the diary was found, are followed by an undated entry in which Laura describes death as "a companion [she] long[s] to meet". She signs off "Goodbye". Another "ripped out" page is followed by an undated dialogue with BOB, in which he reminds her that she keeps saying she's going to stop doing bad things but keeps doing them, eventually telling her that he is she fears he could be. He signs off by wishing "happy last days" to Laura's baby.

August 10, 1988 (1) - Laura describes having an abortion - the clinical doctor, the friendly nurse, and her own grief and confusion at ending her child's life.

August 10, 1988 (2) - Laura writes of having cried all the way home from the clinic, her pride at being nineteen days sober, and of a planned meeting with Norma to discuss ideas for "helping the elderly of Twin Peaks".



Part 10, April 7, 1988 to August 10, 1988 Analysis

The first point to note is how the narrative's momentum towards its climax continues to build. Among the elements that contribute to this sense of escalating tension and increasing narrative energy are the sense of desperate happiness in Laura's comments about her job at the perfume counter and about her volunteer work with Norma. The sense of finality about Laura's farewell to Donna is also a factor, as is her reference to BOB not having visited for a week, a reference that creates the sense in the reader (as it does in Laura) that a reappearance is inevitable, and is probably going to be significant, to put it mildly. Also, the inconsistent length of diary entries and the fact that several of them are undated give rise to the sense that Laura's mental and emotional states are becoming increasingly erratic and desperate. The element of the ripped out pages is also, in this context, a significant contributor to the sense of increasing narrative tension.

By far, however, the most important element of this section is Laura's abortion, which metaphorically follows through on Laura's earlier reference to preferring making love to being pregnant. On another metaphorical level, there is the sense that with her abortion, Laura is also "aborting" the good, life giving/affirming, loving part of herself, the little girl she has been struggling with increasing desperation to protect. The most pathetic aspect of this episode is the reminder that Laura at this point is only sixteen.



Part 11, August 16 1988 to (undated)

Part 11, August 16 1988 to (undated) Summary

August 16, 1988 - Laura writes of how hard it is to be sober, of wondering whether she's the bad influence BOB always tells her she is, and of her new friend Harold Smith.

The entry ends there, and is followed by another torn page.

August 20, 1988 (1) - Laura writes of a nightmare in which she is unable to get the attention of any of her old friends, and from which she wakes up to a vision of BOB.

August 20, 1988 (2) - Laura is invited by Mr. Battis to join him and Ronnette on a new job as a "hostess" at a bar called One Eyed Jack's, another business owned by Benjamin Horne. "Walking back to the counter," she writes, she "made the decision that sobriety was not for [her]". She takes some of Ronnette's cocaine into a back room, takes some, turns to leave ... and sees BOB, "smiling victoriously". She signs off "new game, Laura".

August 23, 1988 - Laura celebrates having cocaine again, writes of her arrangement with Norma to provide "meals on wheels" to shut-ins, and of how one of her deliveries was to Harold Smith.

Two more ripped-out pages are followed by an entry for August 31, which begins with Laura commenting on how she "reread yesterday's entry" (which is missing) and suddenly feeling "very embarrassed about being alive". She writes of another, violent dream of BOB which concludes with her coming face to face with a giant owl. She then resolves to reflect on everything the Log Lady said, and to prepare a second diary that will give whoever may find it a picture of the Laura that everyone thinks she is.

November 13, 1988 - Laura writes of beginning to see Dr. Jacoby, a therapist who she says is trying to help her reconcile the two different parts of herself. She writes of her fear that she is becoming bad, like BOB, or that maybe she has, as Jacoby suggests, "forgotten how to be loved".

January 13, 1989 - This entry reveals that Laura has been dictating her thoughts and experiences into a "hot pink tape recorder" from Dr. Jacoby, and that listening to the tapes helps her get some distance from her problems.

March 27, 1989 - This entry reveals that Laura has been spending time with Harold Smith, telling him stories of her "hostess" work, and questioning the pleasure she feels when she sees the fright in his face. She wonders whether she is beginning to enjoy the fear of others the way BOB does.

June 4, 1989 - Laura writes of working with Josie, an ex-dancer and prostitute from Hong Kong, on improving her English, and of how Josie tries repeatedly to seduce her.



August 6, 1989 - Laura writes of going on one of her meals on wheels deliveries and discovering that one of her clients has died. She describes how she stayed with the body an hour before calling the ambulance, studied it, and realized there is nothing about it that she could not have imagined herself.

October 5, 1989 - Laura describes an encounter with the heroin-addicted prostitute Blackie, with whom she works at One Eyed Jack's, writing of how Blackie's attempt to dominate and manipulate her resulted in being dominated herself.

October 10, 1989 - Laura describes the disgust she feels for both herself and for Josie after sexually manipulating her. She also writes of having had a vision that BOB was going after Danielle.

An "October 31st" entry, beginning with a reference to being given money owed her by One Eyed Jack's ends after a reference to Blackie's sister wanting to talk to Laura, and is followed by another "ripped out" page.

The undated entry that follows narrates Laura's conversation with Dr. Jacoby. She writes of telling him how she had been seeing a school mate in the hope that his "purity" would help her out of her inner darkness, of her self-disgust at being elected Homecoming Queen, and of essentially raping Harold Smith in his home, "his only refuge". She also describes speaking of her fear that Bob is "very close."

There are two more ripped out pages and then the diary's final entry, undated. Laura writes of knowing who BOB is and of her determination to tell everyone, of her awareness that someone has torn private pages out of her diary, and of her terror of death. She writes of her decision to give the diary to Harold for safekeeping, and of her realization that she "can't stay sober any more ... [she has] to be numb".

The book concludes with this note: "The preceding was Laura's last entry. She was found dead just days later."

Part 11, August 16 1988 to (undated) Analysis

As the momentum builds through this section towards the final, climactic revelation of Laura's death, events in Laura's life embody the book's thematic focus on the nature of duality in some very telling ways. The appearance/reality duality is embodied in Laura's election as Homecoming Queen, an experience she writes about with exceptional disgust for both herself and the people that elected her. The goodness/badness duality is embodied in the relationship between her volunteer meals on wheels work, with its life-giving essence contrasted with both the death of one of her clients and the soul-destroying rape/seduction of Harold Smith. There is duality in his presence here as well - she has such a lack of respect for him that she essentially rapes him, but has enough respect for his trustworthiness that she leaves her diary with him. Finally, there is the duality of self-destructiveness (e.g., drug use, prostitution) acting in opposition for the self-help and self-affirmation of Laura's work with Dr. Jacoby which, for a moment or two, seems to offer enough possibilities and hope that she might be able to pull herself



out of the downward spiral she has gotten herself into. There is irony in the conclusion of the entry dated August 20, in that she evidently believes she is starting a new life when, in fact, she is taking the final steps on her journey towards what seems now to be her inevitable death.

Other motifs and/or narrative elements that reappear here include Laura's decisions to return to cocaine use and to accept the offer of a job as "hostess" (a euphemism for prostitute), both of which are manifestations of her determination to "hurt herself" before BOB or anyone else can. There is also the resurgence of BOB into her diary and, by extension, her thoughts, strengthening the impression that he is more of a projection of Laura's psyche than anything external. Finally, in the revelation that One Eyed Jack's is owned by Benjamin Horne, and Laura's passing reference to sleeping with both her boss and his colleagues, that there is a reiteration of what has been a somewhat unsavory implication all along - that Horne has, throughout Laura's life, been inappropriately attracted to her.

The important thing to note about the ending of the book is that it is, in fact, a beginning - that is, the book is an extension of the television series "Twin Peaks" which begins shortly after the discovery of Laura's body. In other words, everything the reader has experienced so far has been clues to the nature of an event rather than an event itself. On one level, this can make the book, if experienced outside the context of the series, somewhat disappointing. On another level, however, and if considered on its own merits, the book can and perhaps should be perceived as an independent, autonomous study of despair and duality, of aspirations and failures and ultimately of a simple, universal desire to be safe that tragically, and fatally, becomes twisted and ultimately broken.



Characters

Laura Palmer

Laura is the book's central character and first person narrator. The book's content is made up of entries in her diary, covering the years from her twelfth birthday (July 22, 1984, when she receives the diary as a gift) and the days shortly before the end of her life in November of 1989, when she was just seventeen. In the diary entries between those dates Laura is portrayed as extremely troubled - by bad dreams, by a strange relationship with an apparently supernatural predator named BOB, and by what she believes as inappropriate sexual thoughts and desires. All these experiences contrast with Laura's simultaneous beliefs that she should act and/or be perceived as a "good girl", following the example of her best friend Donna. Her efforts to act on those beliefs, however, are undermined by her beginning to enjoy the sexual side of herself, which in turn begins as the result of her discovery or rationalization that embracing that part of herself is the only way she can counter the influence of the manipulative BOB. The deepening, intensifying tension between who Laura is and what she believes she should be is a key component of her deepening drug use, her increasingly profound despair, and what she comes to believe is a kind of insanity. There is the strong sense about Laura that she is caught in circumstances, both supernatural and earthly, beyond her control, and that her struggles, not to mention her difficult choices, to free herself from those circumstances ultimately result in her destruction. This, in many ways, makes her a tragic character, a victim of her own vulnerability.

BOB

BOB is the narrative's principal antagonist. He is a haunting, threatening presence in Laura's life that the book never fully explains - is he a real person? A spirit? A figment of Laura's imagination? A psychic embodiment of guilt? But while his true nature is never completely defined, both the quality and the impact of his presence are undeniable - he is frightening, unpredictable, relentless, and ultimately destructive. In those terms, he can be seen as a manifestation, whatever his origins, of what could be described as pure evil.

Laura's Parents

Laura's parents are portrayed throughout the narrative as being loving, supportive, and a bit bewildered by their apparently moody daughter. Given that they are written about from Laura's perspective, it's possible to see them as being more than a little idealized. Laura tends to set them, and their goals for her, on something of a pedestal. While she strives to reach the top of that pedestal herself, she ultimately sees herself as being fundamentally unable to do so, which in turn feeds her lack of self worth which in turn



feeds her self-destructiveness which in turn feeds her sense of failure and so on into the heart of a cycle of self-hate.

Donna Hayward

Donna is Laura's best friend, a long standing relationship that goes back beyond even the first diary entries. She, like Laura's parents, embodies a standard of behavior and belief that Laura strives intently to emulate but sees herself as continually being unable to meet. Laura eventually drifts away from the friendship when she comes to believe that she and Donna have very little in common.

Maddy

Maddy is Laura's cousin. She appears only in the diary's very early entries and is referred to only once or twice later on. Aside from being a friend and confidante, as well as a relative, Maddy plays an important role in Laura's life because of the clothes she lends Laura - tight, sexy, and fun. Laura's discovery of the sensual pleasure at wearing these clothes marks the beginning of her emerging, precocious, dark-sided sexuality.

Benjamin, Audrey and Johnny Horne

Benjamin Horne is one of the wealthiest citizens of Twin Peaks, and is the employer of Laura's father. Audrey is his daughter, similar in age to Laura. Johnny is his mentally disabled son. Audrey plays less of a role in the narrative than either her father or brother, with the former being a mysterious, slightly sinister presence - Laura describes him as enjoying it when she sits on his lap, the implication being that even when she's a little girl, he is sexually attracted to her. Unsavory associations with this implication emerge later; first, when Laura is younger and she discovers that Benjamin and not her father bought her a horse as a birthday present, and later on when Laura gets a job working in Horne's department store and is eventually hired to be a "hostess" at one of his restaurants. Johnny Horne, by a very telling contrast, is one of the few sources of pure, selfless, compassionate feeling in Laura's life - as she matures into her teens, she discovers that she enjoys spending time with him, reading to him, just giving him joy by being with him. There is a notable irony here, however, in that Laura uses the money she is given by the Hornes for staying with Johnny to fund her self-destructive cocaine habit. In other words, when spending time with Johnny, she is simultaneously nurturing and destroying herself.

The Three Boys from Canada

On a visit to a local bar, Laura and Donna encounter three visitors from Canada who introduce them both to marijuana and who intrigue them enough that they go back to the bar a second time in hopes of re-encountering them ... which they do. On the second visit, the boys take the two girls out into the woods, where they drink, again



smoke marijuana, and indulge in sexual exploration. Donna abandons the sex early, but Laura moves into kissing and petting, with the result that her sexual desires and fantasies (already awakened by wearing Maddy's provocative clothing and by BOB) are heightened and take even more of her attention. In short, the three boys from Canada can be seen as profoundly important catalysts and/or triggers for Laura's exploration of the darker, sensual side of herself.

The Log Lady

The Log Lady (Margaret) was one of the more memorable characters in "Twin Peaks", the television series on which this book is based (see "Objects/Places" - Twin Peaks, The Series"). She was, and is in the book, portrayed as being strange and eccentric, with an almost otherworldly awareness of people, events, and omens. In the "...Diary...", she offers Laura insight into herself and into some of the circumstances of her life, insight which while not always acted upon is, according to Laura's writings, usually recalled.

Bobby Briggs

Bobby is Laura's boyfriend, and like Laura is on the surface attractive and popular, but beneath appearances is, in his own way, as dark a personality as she is - a drug user and dealer and sexually active (although not to the extent, or the depth, that she is). For consideration of Bobby's negative influence in Laura's life, see "Topics for Discussion - What do you think is the relationship ..."

Leo and Jacques

Drug dealer Leo is introduced to Laura by Bobby, while dealer and businessman Jacques is introduced to her by Leo. The two men, one of whom is married (Leo), introduce Laura to sexual games and manipulate her into engaging in sexual activity in exchange for drugs ... activities that become more and more extreme and, in Laura's mind, increasingly depraved.

Ronnette

Ronnette is a friend of Laura's from high school who exists on the periphery of the circle of drug use and sexuality that Laura, Bobby, Leo and Jacques all form the core of.

Danielle

Danielle is the name of a little girl whose beloved cat is killed by Laura who's driving while high on drugs. The experience wakens, in Laura, memories of the similar death (i.e. by hit and run) of her own beloved cat, while Danielle's compassion and



forgiveness awaken in Laura both a sense of guilt and an increased determination to be a loving, compassionate, forgiving person herself.

Norma

Norma is a waitress in a restaurant in Twin Peaks. Her encounter with Laura on Christmas Eve triggers, in Laura, a renewal of her desire to be a better person - in this case, to manifest her "good girl-ness" by delivering food to the elderly and the shut-in.

Harold Smith

Smith is a client to whom Laura delivers food as the result of her Norma-inspired decision to help the shut-ins of Twin Peaks (Smith is an agoraphobic, someone afraid of open spaces). Laura describes him as handsome, intelligent, vulnerable and trustworthy, all qualities she sees herself betraying later in their relationship when she forcibly seduces him. Ultimately, however, he becomes the last person that she trusts, a circumstance indicated by her leaving her diary with him for safekeeping.

Mr. Battis

Mr. Battis is the manager of Horne's Department store where Laura gets a job working at the makeup counter. Laura describes him in terms that portray him as being somewhat creepy and as someone to be avoided. Later, however, when he offers her a job as a "hostess" in another business owned by Benjamin Horne, she finds his offer impossible to resist.

Doctor Jacoby

Late in the narrative, Laura begins having sessions with Jacoby, a therapist (it's not clear whether he's a psychiatrist or a psychologist). With his encouragement, she begins an in-depth examination of her behavior, its triggers and its sources. He is, Laura contends, the first person in her life to hear about all the sides of herself and not react with the sort of negative judgment that she fears.



Objects/Places

Twin Peaks (the television series)

"Twin Peaks" was a television series in the early 1990s, and provided the source material such as characters and situations that forms the basis of this book. Hailed as innovative and dramatically powerful, the show developed an intense cult following, but in its second season changed its narrative focus and, to a degree, its style and lost most of its fan base. The show was cancelled at the end of that season.

Twin Peaks (the town)

Twin Peaks is the town where the narrative and the television series were set, a small community in the shadow of a mountain range. It's possible to see a sexual aspect to the name "Twin Peaks", albeit a somewhat crude one, in that "twin peaks" can possibly be seen as a somewhat crude euphemism for a woman's breasts. This, in turn, can be seen as justified, if not appropriate, given the highly sexual nature of the dramatic goings-on in the town, and in the life of Laura Palmer that gave the television series its narrative core.

The Diary

Laura's diary played an important role in the narrative of Twin Peaks, which focused on solving the mystery of who killed Laura Palmer. The book was written and created as a recreation of the diary as referred to in the television show, complete with torn-out pages and references to the various characters. In both circumstances (in the show and in its own right), the diary provides key insights into the character of Laura Palmer, not to mention the circumstances of her life and death.

The Woods

Throughout the narrative, the woods are portrayed as the setting for Laura's encounters with the darker sides of herself and her life. The woods are where she goes with BOB, where she has her sexual encounters first with the Three Canadian Boys and later with Leo, Jacques and a number of anonymous partners, and where she attempts to empower herself in her battle against BOB by celebrating her sexuality.

Owls

Several times in the diary, owls are referred to a mysterious, powerful presence in Laura's life and experience. What, exactly, they represent is never explicitly defined, although Laura (and the reader) are both certain they mean something. In the case of



the former, the strangely knowing Log Lady says so, while in the case of the latter the frequency and timing with which they appear is an unavoidable implication of symbolic meaning.

Cocaine

Cocaine, with its associated euphoria, becomes Laura's drug of choice early in her overall experience of drugs. She becomes addicted to it, to the point that all her decisions, actions and reactions are based on and/or defined by her need with the drug.

Laura's Bedpost

This is Laura's hiding place where she keeps all her drug paraphernalia, her sex toys, her porn magazines - all the things she doesn't want her parents to know about.

The Double R Diner

This restaurant in Twin Peaks (the setting for a number of notable scenes in the television series of "Twin Peaks") is the setting for a key encounter, the Christmas Eve conversation between Laura and waitress Norma that inspires Laura to volunteer to do good for people in an effort to counter the bad things she does.

Horne's Department Store

Late in the book, Laura gets a job working at the perfume counter in the store of businessman Benjamin Horne.

One-Eyed Jack's

Laura gets a job as a "hostess", or perhaps prostitute, at this local bar, a circumstance that, in her mind, makes her descent into sexual/drug-use depravity complete.



Themes

Goodness versus Badness

The main concern of the book's central character, and therefore of the book itself, is the tension between being "good" and being "bad". Laura begins the book both believing and acting as though she is a "good" girl: good in terms of both behavior and how she is perceived by the community. As the result of her relationship with BOB, however, and as the result of other encounters (i.e., with Cousin Maddy), Laura discovers parts of herself that make her believe she is bad while, at the same time, she feels physically good. In other words, she believes her sexual, sensual side is bad, but experiences it as being good, with the tension between the two experiences defining and manifesting both the central conflict of the plot and the book's thematic explorations.

It's important to note, however, that the book as a whole remains ambivalent on the question of good versus bad. It does not come out and suggest either by implication or by direct statement that sexual activity is bad and/or sexual restraint is good, but rather that it is Laura's opinions and beliefs that make them so. In short, the book's portrayal of the circumstances of its thematic exploration is subjective while the exploration itself is actually objective, presenting the subjective experience objectively and, in an interesting way, almost daring the reader to make a judgment. There is the sense, in fact, that in portraying Laura's reaction to her sexuality as so destructive, the novel may in fact be thematically suggesting that it is the negative reaction to sexuality rather than the sexuality itself that is the "bad" thing.

Appearances versus Reality

The goodness versus badness dynamic is one of several instances in which a duality, and the tensions between its two sides, is explored throughout the narrative. Another duality explored is that of appearances versus reality, what people see or perceive or want to believe about an individual life versus what actually goes on in that life. Again, this theme is played out principally in the character of Laura, who is caught between the demands of how she wants to be perceived (i.e., as a good girl) and what she believes she truly is (i.e., a bad girl). In other words, the appearance is of goodness, the reality is of badness, a duality that, in her diary entries, she sees as manifesting throughout the town. It must be noted that the exploration of this particular theme is implied, rather than overt, but it is nevertheless there, in that there are repeated hints that Twin Peaks has a number of citizens who present themselves one way in public and behave differently in private.

This particular duality - appearances versus reality - also manifests in other ways. The Log Lady, for example, is portrayed as being generally perceived as being insane and not really worth the time or serious consideration of the other characters, while at the same time being portrayed as someone who has insights and experiences into the



why's of people and behavior that the other characters don't have. In other words, her appearance of insanity protects her reality: that she knows, sees, and understands more than most. In the Log Lady, the reader can see that having a different reality from that one presents might, in fact, be a good thing. Here again is duality, the two sides of insanity: vulnerability versus self-protection.

The Physical versus the Spiritual Worlds

Both these themes are manifestations of a third, that of the tensions and differences between the worlds of physical and spiritual experience. This dynamic is particularly interesting, in that each is portrayed as both good and bad, with physical experience (i.e., sexuality) being portrayed as simultaneously dangerous and empowering at the same time as spiritual experience, such as in the form of the evil BOB and the enlightening Log Lady, being portrayed as simultaneously terrifying and, again, empowering. It's important to note, meanwhile, that in keeping with the book's concept of duality as outlined above, there is little or no sense that neither the physical nor the spiritual realities are intended to be considered as purely "bad" or purely "good". There is, in short, a very strong sense that the book is interested in exploring the shades of gray, the blending of the absolutes of black and white that make the book, and by extension life in general, so difficult to navigate, as it becomes for Laura.

All that said, exploration of this particular theme is particularly interesting when the two polarities of the duality intersect, when the physical triggers enlightenment in the spiritual and when the spiritual brings an extra dimension of insight and meaning into the physical. Here again, Laura is the fulcrum of the duality, with physicality and spirituality coming into and manifesting intense conflict within her, with the resulting implication that neither is strictly autonomous or independent. In Laura, and by extension throughout the book, the physical and the spiritual simultaneously nourish, trigger, and challenge each other, existing in the same experience to the point where neither can be considered as existing completely independent from the other.

Style

Point of View

As perhaps goes without saying, given the book's title, "The Secret Diary of Laura Palmer" is narrated from the first person subjective point of view ... in this case, the point of view of a young woman going through an intense period of physical transformation, emotional uncertainty, sexual awakening, and spiritual trauma.

What is particularly noteworthy about the book is the way its point of view evolves and matures as its character does. This is, in general, a result of how language is used (see "Language and Meaning", below). The writing in the earlier diary entries reflects Laura's youth, innocence, curiosity and joy, tempered as it is by the occasional glimpses of her fears of BOB (although these are also expressed in a relatively naïve, childlike fashion). In other words, her words and ideas are those of a girl. As her awareness grows, however, as her insights into and questions about herself mature, her point of view on her situation likewise matures. She begins to see connections between the external and internal circumstances of her life, begins to ask questions about meaning and experience, and perhaps most importantly begins to draw more sophisticated conclusions. This doesn't mean that, given the dualities at work throughout the book, those conclusions are the right ones. They are, however, made from the point of view of a more considered, if traumatized, young woman.

By the end of the book, the point of view has shifted even further, becoming that of a woman driven to the edge of sanity by both circumstance and experience, and also by her beliefs about what both say about who and why she is who she is. All in all, then, the book's point of view is the subjective experience of someone who moves from relative innocence and sanity into a place of self-perceived corruption and madness.

Setting

There are two important aspects of setting to consider here. The first is the physical environment of the town of Twin Peaks. While it is never described in extensive detail (Laura has, after all, lived there all her life and has no real reason to describe the place to herself), there are enough passing glimpses to give a sense of smallness, isolation from other large centers, and of a closeness to nature. Here again, as discussed in "Themes" above, the reader can perceive the idea of duality - civilization (the town) vs. nature (the woods), a duality that reflects several of the core duality's at work in the experience of the central character (see "Topics for Discussion - In what way does the duality ...")

The second important aspect of setting to consider in relation to the diary is the psychological environment of Laura's mind. In other words, events and experiences and characters are as defined by her experience, perspective and belief systems as they are



by whether they take place in (for example) Twin Peaks or in the woods. The same could not necessarily be said of other first person narratives which are, in most cases, telling a story and therefore more externally directed. But a diary, by its very nature, is internal, reflective of its writer's psyche ... the writer's internal emotion-scape, to coin a phrase. It could be argued that this argument is splitting hairs, given that the book in question is not a real diary. But the book in question is intended to give the IMPRESSION of being a real diary. This means that an important stylistic component is creating the sense of a diary's perspective which, as noted, is internal and defined by who the writer is, and is set in the context of the boundaries of the author's psyche (which, in Laura's case, are flexible and, at times, almost non-existent).

Language and Meaning

As noted above, the use of language plays a particularly important role in the book, specifically in defining Laura's transformation and/or evolution from child into young woman. There is, in fact, an almost jarringly clear line of demarcation between the two, a line defined by language. While Parts 1 and 2 are written, in general, in with almost breathlessly childlike words and phrasing, between Part 2 (which ends on December 16, 1985, when she vows to put the diary away) and Part 3 (April 23, 1986, when she picks it up again), something in the character has shifted powerfully. Laura's way of writing about herself and experiences from this point on contains a much more sophisticated vocabulary and sentence structure, in keeping with the increased maturity of her insights into herself and her experiences. Further indications of "maturity" (if that's the right word for these particular circumstances) appear at the beginning of Chapter 4 (October 3 1986) when Laura starts to use swear words for the first time. Here again, language is used to indicate a state of being in a clear, inescapably pointed way. Finally, there is the language of the final few entries which, for the most part, is much less coherent and/or focused than it was throughout the preceding sections, a reflection of Laura's incoherent state of mind.

In short, language is effectively used throughout the book to reflect and/or manifest character and situation, adding a layer of meaning to the recounting of experiences that illuminates and deepens the reader's insight and/or empathic understanding of the central character's experience and transformation.

Structure

The book's structure is straightforward and linear, moving in a progression from beginning to end - specifically, a point of innocence and eagerness for life to a point of cynicism, despair, and fear of what life can/may/will bring. There is, in fact, highly effective interplay between structure, language and point of view that results in a very strong sense of authorial focus and purpose ... the portrayal of a (systematic? inevitable? self-destructive?) decline into (self) victimized, manipulated hopelessness.



What's particularly interesting to note about the book's structure is the span of time it covers. The entries begin on July 22, 1984 and conclude a little more than five years later, in the fall of 1989 (the last few entries are undated). In other words, between the ages of twelve and seventeen the book's central character goes from relatively innocent girl to near-insane drug addicted prostitute. It's an intensely transformative journey that takes place in what could be argued is a relatively short period of time. This idea is reinforced by there being significant gaps between diary entries. There are points in the book, such as the gap referenced in "Language and Meaning", in which Laura seems to have drastically changed overnight, without any sense of step-by-step transition.

Finally, a particularly intriguing element of the book's structure is the missing pages late in the narrative. There are two points to note here. The first is that the diary was intended to be a recreation and/or amplification of an element from the "Twin Peaks" television show (see "Objects/Places") down to the last detail, including the missing pages. In that context, the missing pages illustrate the tie-in and ultimately direct the reader to the series for an explanation ... or at least clues to an explanation. The second point to note about the missing pages is the way they draw the reader thoroughly into the book - what, s/he is forced to wonder, was on those pages? What did Laura know and/or write about that someone didn't want to make public? This, in turn, raises the interesting question of what was it in the rest of the diary that the person who ripped out the pages DID want the public to know, and why.



Quotes

"I promise to tell you everything that happens, everything I feel, everything I desire, And, every single thing I think. There are some things I can't tell ANYONE. I promise to tell these things to you." p. 1

"Sometimes when I'm dreaming I feel trapped there and so frightened. But now when I look at what I just wrote, it doesn't seem so scary. Maybe I'll write down all of my dreams from now on so that I won't have to be afraid of them." p. 6

"I'm so tired of waiting to grow up. Someday it will happen and I'll be the only person who can make me feel bad or good about anything I do." p. 6 (2)

"I can't help but think sad thoughts sometimes. Sometimes they are the closest things to my mind." p. 8

"Some of [Maddy's] clothes are very beautiful. I liked the way they made me feel. Especially the short skirt and the high heels with this little fluffy white sweater." p. 13

"I can't stop my mind from wanting to think ... the thoughts that make my body warm, and my chest go up and down, filling with air and letting go, the way they do in books and movies, but still different, because they never talk about the fantasies I have." p. 18

"Something happens to parents, or people who become parents. I think they forget they were ever children themselves and that things might embarrass or upset their kids ..." p. 23

"I trust no one, and only rarely myself. I struggle most mornings, afternoons, and evenings with what is right and what is wrong. I do not understand if I am being punished for something I have done wrong, something I don't remember or if this happens to everyone and I am just too stupid to understand it." p. 27

"I know drugs are bad, but I'm beginning to get the feeling I like being that way. Kind of bad." p. 33

"I wonder if pain ... the kind that you have to live with - can it ever be a friend? Pain as a shadow or companion. I wonder if that's possible." p. 34

"It was like the woods got us all acting crazy, like the trees and the fact that it had gotten dark made us forget anything else existed." p. 38

"Everything disappeared and I suddenly didn't care if I never saw Donna, Mom, Dad, anyone - ever again. This warm feeling of being needed, wanted, and special, like I was a treasure - was all I wanted to feel, forever ... I was ageless, and I was everything these two boys wanted. I was something from their dreams!" p. 39



"If this doesn't make the nightmares and the fire and the ropes and the little silver blades go away - maybe I am supposed to give into them. Maybe that is what is meant for me. Maybe I just have to be patient and stop fighting it, and it will go away." p. 50

"I would be like Donna, I'll bet, if I were still just skipping through the trees, instead of - what happens now." p. 55

"Maybe BOB knows God, and that is why he always knows what I am feeling inside. God must be telling him what to do to me. God wants me not to be afraid, maybe, of being dirty. If I'm not afraid, he'll take me to heaven." p. 59

"I have to keep my parents happy. I have to keep loving them, like their little girl should. I have to support what I have not chosen, but have, quite simply, been given. Two lives. Two very different lives." p. 63

"... the Laura who loved him back, the young girl who so desperately hoped he would come after her, when the time was right, cannot come out to play. She is inside resting. Deep inside, cradled in the braver half. The one that finds this Bobby boy satisfying, yes, but not interesting beyond that. There is no strength in him - no challenge." p. 66

"I sit awaiting his arrival, kept awake by the notion that I shall grow accustomed to the dark far easier than he to the light." p. 71

"This is the drug I have been waiting for all of my life! I feel strong, confident, sexy, intelligent, pretty fuckin' cool, I have to say ... I can hold my fuckin' own ..." p. 78

"I only want to play the games where I have to say dirty things sometimes, not mean things like BOB thinks, and if I am punished I am punished with sex, not pain." p. 83

"If [BOB is] in the woods he'll get me now, 'cause fuck if I don't plan on having a big fat line of confidence up my nose in about half an hour. A big white line that calls my name the way a lover should." p. 86

"You cheat by never having to argue with someone strong enough to fight you - conquer someone like that, then I'll admit you've won. I'll even follow you. No arguments." p. 89

"Temporary happiness is better than slowly allowing friends, family, lovers, a frightening peek at how close I am to self-destructing." p. 91

"Call me crazy, but weapons often cause me to hyperventilate and desire large quantities of fresh air ASAP". p. 93

"Words have been strange to me these past few days. Mine have been lies, again and again. Another comes along to help the other lie live ... Bobby's words have been like little knives." p. 100

"Each and every fantasy one might conjure late at night ... was performed on, with, or for me. It was like I had been swallowed by a dream, perfect in every way. My only



responsibility was to maintain my blindness and allow each person his chance to come and be with me."

"The whole reason I go out for the orgies at Leo's, the reason I let him tie me up and hit me sometimes - the whole reason, besides a strange enjoyment, is because I feel like I belong in dark places like that. I belong with sleazy men who are actually crying babies ..." p. 112

"I get a high sometimes when I think that BOB will see me in this dream and realize he should finally set me free." p. 115

"They are mostly pictures about people being someplace, or with someone who is totally a fantasy person. There is no tomorrow or yesterday. No hours or minutes or rules or parents or mornings or anything to worry about. I like that part ..." p. 116

"Just hours before the dancing, I was in my room buried deep in a very, very different world. I hope I never have to choose between the two. Each one makes me happy for different reasons." p. 121

"I told him that sometimes I would choose the coke over him, but that I would sometimes choose coke over anyone ... I just feel that sometimes I am better company only to myself, because of what is happening in my life, than I am or would be to anyone else." p. 125

"I cannot believe what is happening to me and my life! How can one day be so unbelievably precious, and another a nightmare - a dark dream that makes me dream of dying - right this very minute." p. 141

"I love to sleep with women sometimes because I know exactly how to please them and it gives me so much control! I long for such strength all of the time, which again explains the cocaine." p. 148

"I wished that whoever this child was would come back when the time is right. When there is a marriage. A union that you were born of, not responsible for. You, child, should be a gift to those who are ready, not a burden like so many others before you. Come back, child, when I am no longer a child myself." p. 157

"I saw his face across the room, highlighted by the orange-ish glow of my night-light. Only a pane of glass separated us. He kept laughing and then lowered himself, slowly, out of the square that is my window. I was unable to rest until the sun rose and the window held the light that does not allow him to return." p. 161

"Harold Smith [is] ... an interesting man. Very handsome ... an agoraphobic. He believes death is just outside the door, and that late at night it calls to him from outside like a strange bird." p. 164.

"The girl who received this diary on her twelfth birthday has been dead for years, and I who took her place have done nothing but make a mockery of the dreams she once had



... I'm a cocaine addict, a prostitute who fucks her father's employers, not to mention half the fucking town, and the only difference from last week is that now I'm getting paid for it. My life is whatever the other person in the room wants it to be." p. 167

"I believe I am merely living my life in order to die." p. 173

"...it felt like the school and the town and the world were mocking me by voting me Homecoming Queen - how could they not see how I was being swallowed up by pain? How dare they make me a spectacle like that and ask me to smile again and again and again!" p. 179



Topics for Discussion

What do you think is the relationship between BOB (whose name, Laura believes, is an acronym for "Beware Of Bob"), and Bobby Briggs? Does Bobby do anything for Laura to "beware" of?

Who/what do you think BOB is - an externalization of an internal aspect of Laura's character and/or identity? A dream? A nightmare? A ghost? A fantasy?

In what way does the duality of civilization vs. nature, as manifest in the proximity of the town of Twin Peaks to the woods, reflect and/or manifest in Laura?

Who do you think ripped out the missing pages? Why? Why did that person leave the pages s/he did? What do you think s/he wanted the people of "Twin Peaks" to know about Laura?

Do you have enough information to come to a conclusion about who killed Laura? If not, what information do you need? If yes, who was it and why.

What do you think owls represent in Laura's life?

Obtain and view a recording of an episode or two of "Twin Peaks". What does the series tell you about the book? What does the book tell you about the series?

What are your experiences of duality? In what ways are you, like Laura, pulled between opposing desires? How do you navigate those desires?