

Thirteen Reasons Why Study Guide

Thirteen Reasons Why by Jay Asher

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Plot Summary

Bullying by students and the stigma of suicide are themes in the novel *Thirteen Reasons Why* by Jay Asher. New to town, Hannah Baker hopes to have a new life. Unfortunately, rumors, betrayal, and revenge by her peers affect Hannah's life more than anyone knows. Though Hannah tries to reveal her pain to others, neither the school guidance counselor nor other students recognize her cries for help. Before committing suicide, Hannah records a collection of audiotapes explaining the actions which she believes pushed her to make the decision to take her own life.

Clay Jensen, who had liked Hannah despite rumors he had heard about the new girl, is one of thirteen people who receives Hannah's audio suicide letter. He is shocked to learn how unfounded the rumors about Hannah being a slut were as they originated from one boy who was angry with her for not giving him more than a kiss. As Clay continues to listen to Hannah's tapes, he becomes angrier and angrier with the way other students have treated Hannah. He is also upset with himself for not doing more to let Hannah know that he liked her. The novel ends with a note of hope as Clay steps out to befriend a girl whom he'd always liked but never approached because of her reputation of being strange.

This novel addresses issues facing modern students. Although she is not physically abused, Hannah is a victim of bullying. Like many students recently, Hannah feels the only way to solve her problems and stop the hurt is to take her own self out of the equation. Hannah leaves audiotapes behind, telling those who persecuted her about the exact impact that they had on her life. Clay believes some of the people included in the tapes may interpret the tapes only as Hannah's way of blaming everyone else for her problems. Some good comes from Hannah's story as Clay decides to take an active role in helping those around him.



Cassette 1: Side A

Summary

Cassette 1: Side A (Introduction)

In the short introductory section “Yesterday – One Hour after School,” Clay Jensen, the narrator and main character arrives home from school to find a box of audio cassettes on his front porch. Luckily, his father has an old stereo in the garage with a cassette player. Clay takes the cassettes to the garage and puts in the first tape.

Cassette 1: Side A

Clay realizes the tapes he has been sent are an audio suicide letter. He hears Hannah’s voice say that the tapes will tell why she decided to end her life. All of the thirteen people who receive the tapes are part of the reason why she came to her decision. Hannah lines out two rules for the tapes. Each person has to listen to all of the tapes, and they have to pass them on to the person mentioned after them.

Clay’s mom interrupts him as he begins listening to the tapes. He tells her the tapes are part of a school project. She asks to listen, but he discourages her by telling her the tapes are for a friend’s history project. When she leaves, Clay returns to the tapes listening to Hannah tell him that all of the people who will be receiving the tapes are being watched. If they do not pass the tapes along as requested, a second copy of the tapes will be released. She tells those listening not to take her for granted again.

Clay knew Hannah because they worked together at the movie theater. He admits to himself he wanted to know her better. They’d made out at a party just shortly before her suicide. Clay can’t think of anything he might have done to hurt Hannah. He wonders if someone has sent him the tapes as a joke.

In Hannah’s tape, she references a map she slipped into peoples’ lockers just a few days before her suicide. She says the map has significant places marked that the listeners may want to visit as they listen to her story.

Justin Foley is the student that Hannah talks about first. She had a crush on Justin and met him at Eisenhower Park with the intention of getting her first kiss from a boy she’d like for years. Clay remembers that he’d heard that Hannah had taken her shirt off that night and let Justin put his hands up her bra. Hannah knows it was Justin who spread rumors that colored her as a slut to those at school. Even Clay realizes as he listens that he gave the rumors more credit than he should have.

After he finishes the first side of the first tape, Clay goes to visit Tony, a boy he knows from school. Tony has a Mustang that still has a cassette player. While helping Tony and his father work on the car, Clay notices Tony’s Walkman in the car. He swipes it with the intention of using it to listen to Hannah’s tapes as he visits the places she has noted on



the map. Tony offers to give him a lift, but Clay refuses. Clay notices Tony acting strangely and wonders if he has gotten copies of the tapes as well.

Analysis

The novel opens with a tone of surprise and shock as Clay realizes that he has just received a package of cassette tapes from a schoolmate who killed herself just a few weeks prior. Clay's surprise continues to grow as he learns that the tapes are intended for those who had a part in Hannah's decision to commit suicide. Clay searches his mind to remember what he might have done to hurt this girl. He can't come up with anything, remembering only that he had wished that he had gotten to know her better.

The structure of this novel is complex because Hannah is already dead. Author Jay Asher uses differing fonts as well as cassette player symbols to help his reader differentiate between Clay's thoughts, Hannah's recorded message, and conversations actually taking place between Clay and those around him. Since the story is told from Clay's point of view after Hannah is already dead, the reader learns not only the truth of how things happened from Hannah's viewpoint, but also Clay's interjected thoughts of what he had heard about the situations that Hannah references.

Things of importance to note in this section include Tony's odd behavior. He will play an important role later on in the novel. Note also the location of Hannah's first house. This location will be visited again. Another important factor to notice in this section of the novel is the author's choice to include Clay's mother as a character. Although she doesn't seem to be particularly important at the time, she will develop as a typical "nosey" mom who is curious to know what is happening in her child's life, pays attention to what is happening to him, and takes the time to let him know that she cares. At the same time, she is also willing to give him his space.

The theme of bullying is introduced in this section of the novel as Justin spreads rumors about the way Hannah acted when they met at Eisenhower Park. Although Hannah swears on the tapes the encounter was no more than an innocent kiss, Justin tells others that she let him feel her up. Clay remembers hearing these rumors. Although he did not know Hannah well, he had found himself attracted to her. After hearing the rumors, however, Clay decides that Hannah has too much experience and will not be interested in him. He, like others, lets the rumors he hears about Hannah influence his perception of her instead of getting to know the girl himself.

Discussion Question 1

Why is Clay so confused that he is included on the tapes that Hannah has recorded about the reasons why she committed suicide?



Discussion Question 2

Discuss Tony's actions when he talks to Clay. Is he acting oddly? Do you think he also is on the tapes that Hannah has recorded?

Discussion Question 3

Consider Hannah's feelings of betrayal that Justin turned their innocent first kiss into an opportunity to brag to his friends about things that never happened. In the process, he portrayed Hannah as a slut. How did this one action by Justin change Hannah in the minds of her peers?

Vocabulary

Encore, relevance, betrayal, literally, momentarily, upgraded, compatible, intriguing, contemplating, proposition, averted.



Cassette 1: Side B

Summary

Cassette 1: Side B

On side B of the first cassette, Hannah turns her attention to Alex Standall. Hannah says that Alex added to her reputation of being a slut by noting in a list of Who's Hot/Who's Not that has circulated around the school that Hannah had the best ass in the freshman class. Hannah reasons that this list made people notice and pay attention only to that part of her body, bringing more attention to her sexual attractiveness. Even Clay admits he laughed when he saw the list and thought about the reputation that Hannah was building.

Hannah next says that Jessica Davis was angrily tapping her pencil because her name appeared in the "Not Hot" section of the same list. Hannah hints that there is some reason that Alex put Jessica in this column, intentionally using Hannah to hurt Jessica's feelings. Clay listens to the tapes as he walks to the first star on Hannah's map which indicates the first house she lived in when her family moved to town. Clay is surprised to see that it is the same house where an elderly man, whom Clay had tried to help when the man had a wreck about a month prior, and his wife live. Clay had walked to the house the night of the crash to tell the man's wife, who had been on the phone with him at the time of the wreck, that he was all right.

Hannah next directs her listeners to Blue Spot Liquor where a boy from school comes into the store and slaps her on the rear. Then, he announces to Wally, the storekeeper, that she was voted best ass in the freshman class. Clay visits the store. He buys a drink and candy bar, which he throws away without eating. Hannah describes how she tries to walk away, but the boy grabs her by the wrist. His words are saying that he is only joking with her, but his actions telling her that he believes she is his personal play toy. As Clay listens, he remembers that he was influenced by a girl noted on the list as having the best lips. When he saw the girl from that point on, all he thought about was her lips.

Hannah warns Alex that when he brings attention to others, either for ridicule or praise, he needs to be prepared to deal with the consequences of those actions. Before she closes this side of her tape, Hannah says the next tape will be about Jessica Davis.

Analysis

The subject for this section of the novel is Alex Standall. He has helped to add to Hannah's reputation of being a slut as he deems her as having the best ass in the freshman class. Hannah believes this designation brings undue attention to her bottom, causing a boy she did not like to grab her bottom in a way that made her both angry and uncomfortable. She says it is after this action, which took place in a public store, that



she heard the storekeeper make the first noise that she had ever heard from him. Even though it is only a click of the tongue, Hannah believes this click denotes how angry the store clerk was about what was going on in his store, but he does not say anything to the boy about his behavior. Hannah also notes the boy who grabbed her ass also grabs her by the wrist as she tries to leave. Clay suddenly recognizes who the boy is and remembers having seen him grab a girl's wrist before. Although he'd wanted to make the boy let go of the girl, he instead had stood by and done nothing. Thus far, Clay's only faulty actions seem to be like those of the store keeper, his unwillingness to step in to help another person.

The theme of bullying continues to be developed, as Hannah is included on a list intended as a joke by one of her classmates. The joke has terrible consequences for Hannah as she feels her inclusion on it underscores her reputation as a slut. She blames Alex for the boy's behavior who slaps her on the bottom as if that part of her anatomy were his personal plaything.

One important factor to note is Hannah's referral to the "snowball" of events that led to her suicide. This term will appear again later in the novel as Hannah refers to the person who helped her coin the term. Notice also how Clay finally realizes why Alex treated him so strangely when Alex was pushed into Clay in the hallway during one school day. Just as Alex had not wanted to face Clay on that day, Clay does not want to have to face Alex after hearing his part in tormenting Hannah.

Discussion Question 1

What has Alex done to earn him a spot on Hannah's list of thirteen people who contributed to her suicide?

Discussion Question 2

Should the shopkeeper have intervened when the boy harassed Hannah? Why or why not?

Discussion Question 3

How is it that the boy crossed a line when he slapped Hannah's bottom? Do you believe Hannah's interpretation of the boy's words and actions were correct? Why or why not?

Vocabulary

Perverted, repercussions, traumatic, arrogance, erratically, mesmerized, condescending.



Cassette 2: Side A

Summary

Cassette 2: Side A

The section of the tapes found on side A of the second cassette is dedicated to the third person on Hannah's list, Jessica Davis. Hannah talks about how she, Jessica, and Alex were all new to the school that year. A teacher arranged a meeting with Hannah and Jessica, hoping they'd befriend each other. Although both girls were horrified at the way they were tricked into meeting, they developed a sort of support group that met at Monet's Garden Café and Coffeehouse. It is after they notice Alex checking Jessica out during their first meeting at the coffeehouse that he becomes part of the group.

As the three members of the group make other friends, they stop meeting with each other at the coffeehouse until Jessica approaches Hannah at school one day and tells her they need to talk. Hannah thinks maybe they are going to have another of their chats, but when she arrives, Jessica slaps the "Who's Hot/Who's Not" list on the table. Hannah admits to Jessica that she knows that Alex put her name in the list because he knew it would hurt Jessica's feelings. Hannah swears to Jessica that she never saw Alex outside of school, but Jessica does not believe her. Jessica slaps Hannah before leaving the restaurant, embedding one of her fingernails above Hannah's eyebrow. The nail left a scar that Clay remembers commenting about.

Analysis

It is in this section of the novel that Hannah begins to realize how seriously people are taking the rumors that have been circulating about her. Although Hannah feels that Jessica did get to know her to some extent during their time together at Monet's, Jessica still believes the rumors that she's heard about Hannah rather than what she learned about Hannah through their talks. Even though Hannah swears that she has not seen Alex outside school, Jessica does not believe her. Any friendship they once had is destroyed when Jessica slaps Hannah. Because of the slap Jessica has a constant reminder of Jessica's belief in the rumors in the form of a tiny scar above her eyebrow.

One important issue to keep in mind during this section of the novel is Hannah's reference to Mr. Porter. First, she notes that it is unfortunate that Mr. Porter was both an English teacher and a guidance counselor. When Hannah mentions Mr. Porter in her dialogue, Clay remembers the way the man acted when he learned about Hannah's suicide. The teacher left room and was gone from class for a week before returning. Clay wonders what part the teacher might have played in Hannah's death.



Discussion Question 1

What is the real reason that Alex put Hannah in the Who's Hot spot on his list?

Discussion Question 2

What does the fingernail shaped scar represent to Hannah?

Discussion Question 3

Why does Hannah try to make it so clear that she never considered Alex and Jessica friends?

Vocabulary

Blindsided, avert, montage.



Cassette 2: Side B

Summary

Cassette 2: Side B

In this section of the novel, Clay orders coffee as he tries to decide if he wants to try to listen to all of the tapes in one evening. A girl at the counter tries to strike up a conversation, but Clay is too disturbed by the tapes to talk much. She tells him they had a class together and that she'd always thought he was a nice boy. He wonders what she would think if she knew he was listening to tapes that would tell his role in a girl's suicide. When Clay starts Hannah's tapes, there is silence. Then, her voice is talking in a whisper. Hannah introduces the fourth person on her list, Tyler Down. She is sneaking up to his window trying to understand why he was so fascinated with waiting outside her window, taking pictures of her. As she waits outside his bedroom, Tyler returns from his yearbook staff meeting. Hannah pretends to be getting excited and understanding why Tyler found photographing her through her window so alluring.

Hannah tells the story of a night that her parents were out of town. The boy she'd gone out with had walked her to her door, then left. She remembers hearing the click of a camera when she walked into her bedroom to prepare for bed. Hannah says she could hear the sound because her window was open. She tries to pretend like no one is there, but she still crawls under the covers before changing into her pajamas. Clay wonders to himself why Hannah didn't call the police. Hannah interrupts her own story when Tyler finally walks into his room.

When she returns to the story, Hannah says she told a girl in class about her experience. Although she'd hoped just to get sympathy from the girl, the girl instead suggests they set the person up to catch him. The girl spends the evening at Hannah's house. As they pretend to gossip in Hannah's room, the girl is happily surprised when she hears the click of the camera. She convinces Hannah to let her give her a back rub. The girl devises a plan to catch the peeping tom in the act.

They put the plan in action, and when they pull up the blinds, Hannah identifies the peeper as Tyler while the other girl notices that he has been masturbating while watching them. Hannah approached Tyler about where he was that night the next day. Even though Tyler never bothered her again, Hannah still became paranoid about closing her blinds at night. She no longer was able to fall asleep looking outside as she had always done. She admits she feels that the privacy and comfort of her own home has been taken away from her by Tyler.

As Clay listens, he hears the sound of Hannah tapping on Tyler's window on the tape as she promises to make him understand how she felt. When he comes to the end of the tape, Clay gets the book that clients of the restaurant are allowed to write in, hoping that Hannah has put something in this book. He finds a quote added by Hannah, Alex, and



Jessica. Someone has also put a picture of Hannah smiling, standing beside Courtney Crimsen. He notes that Courtney looks nervous and wonders why.

Analysis

This section of the novel is disturbing not only because Hannah discovers that she is being stalked by a peeping Tom but also because the girl in whom she confides at school wants to encourage the peeper. The girl makes provocative suggestions to Hannah that the peeper can hear and would interpret to mean that Hannah really was a slut. The girl indicates Hannah let a boy touch her in some shocking place and that she has some hardware in her drawer that indicates that Hannah is “naughty.” Because Hannah wants to know who is spying on her, she plays along with the girl. Both are shocked when they see that Tyler is masturbating when they catch him outside the window. Although the girl thought of the evening as a fun escapade, Hannah is deeply disturbed by the knowledge that someone has been spying on her. She no longer feels comfortable in her own room.

Meanwhile, the atmosphere of tension strengthens as Clay wonders what role he played in Hannah’s suicide. He wishes that she would hurry and get to the part which talks about him. He thinks about the way the others must have felt when they heard about the way their actions affected Hannah and wonders if they are embarrassed that they have to pass the tapes along so others can know the way they’d treated Hannah.

Discussion Question 1

What do you think Hannah should have done when she first realized that she was being stalked by a peeping Tom?

Discussion Question 2

How does the girl who offered to help Hannah identify her stalker play Hannah and take advantage of her just as the stalker is doing?

Discussion Question 3

What factors work together to make Hannah’s experience with the peeping Tom even more disturbing?

Vocabulary

Amateur, candid, nostalgia, paranoia, validate, pervert, intimidated.



Cassette 3: Side A

Summary

Cassette 3: Side A

This section of Hannah's audiotapes addresses Courtney Crimsen. Hannah says that she addresses Courtney because she really believes that Courtney does not realize the way that the things that she does affects other people. Hannah relates the happenings of the day after she and Courtney caught Tyler. That day she and Courtney had spoken to each other, but it had seemed more like the meeting of acquaintances than close friends. Several days later Courtney approaches Hannah and tells her there is a party that night that they should attend together. Courtney claims she hasn't been ignoring Hannah when Hannah asks her. Hannah begins to believe Courtney is being sincere when Courtney asks if she can drive. The question makes Hannah wonder about Courtney's motives.

When Hannah picks Courtney up, the girl thanks her for the lift. Hannah realizes how the evening will go. Once they get inside, Courtney suggests they split up. She asks Hannah not to forget that she is her ride.

As Clay listens to Hannah's words, a girl whom he used to like in school calls his name. He has not been friends with her in a long time because she has a reputation for being weird. Clay wonders if he should get off the bus or if he should stay and try to talk to the girl. She says goodbye to him, keeping him from having to take any action. Clay gets off the bus and walks to Tyler's house, startled to see duct tape holding his bedroom window together. He hears a voice behind him asking if he wants to throw something. It is Marcus Cooley, a boy from school. When Clay suggests that Marcus must be on the tapes as well, something in Marcus' expression tells Clay he is not ashamed of the part he played in Hannah's suicide. He wonders why Marcus is encouraging him to throw rocks at Tyler's house since everyone included on the tapes played some role in Hannah's death. He thinks for a minute about turning the tables and throwing the rock at Marcus' house. When Clay asks Marcus what makes Tyler different, Marcus claims Tyler is a freak. He says he did nothing to Hannah. She only wanted an excuse to kill herself.

Clay walks away and turns Hannah's tape back on. She has witnessed her first fist fight and wants to leave, but she meets Tyler near the exit. She asks him why he has his camera with him just before a voice calls her name. A boy tells her that Courtney sent him to talk to her. After they talk for awhile, the boy confesses that Courtney didn't send him to talk to her, but he had overheard her talking about the things that Hannah had in her dresser drawers. It is at this point that Hannah is fed up and drags Tyler to take a picture of herself and Courtney. Clay recognizes it as the one in the book at Monet's. Hannah admits she left Courtney at the party, telling her to get another ride. However,



Tyler asks for a ride home. Hannah laughs at the irony of her situation, but she gives him the ride.

Analysis

In this section, Hannah admits her feelings of betrayal by someone she felt was becoming a friend. Not only did she learn that Courtney did not intend to be her friend, she learned that Courtney was spreading rumors about her. Clay learns the story of Courtney's unusual look of nervousness in the picture that he finds of Hannah and Courtney in the scribble book at Monet's. Courtney is nervous because she isn't sure what Hannah is up to. She also knows Hannah has every right to be angry with her. To make matters even worse, Tyler, the boy who has been spying on Hannah and taking pictures of her in her bedroom, asks for a ride home. Hannah, despite her intense feelings of betrayal, takes Tyler home but refuses to talk to him.

Notice in this section how sickened Clay is when he meets Marcus at Tyler's house. Since the others label Tyler as a "pervert" for taking pictures of Hannah, they don't feel bad about throwing rocks at his windows. They don't see that their crimes against Hannah were just as bad as Tyler's. Clay thinks briefly of turning the table on Marcus, who doesn't seem to think he has done anything wrong even though Hannah included him on the tapes. Clay fights down his urge to hit Marcus when the boy says that Hannah was just looking for an excuse to kill herself. He walks away after calling Marcus a dick.

One important thing to note in this section is Clay's encounter with Skye. He thinks briefly he should stay on the bus and talk to the girl, but he decides against it when she ends the conversation by saying "good-bye" to him. The girl is pretty and Clay had once had a crush on her. Now, she wears baggy clothes and refuses to talk to anyone or get involved in any way. Clay wonders what has happened to her.

Discussion Question 1

Why is Hannah hurt so badly by Courtney's actions? Why does she have Tyler take a picture of the two?

Discussion Question 2

Consider Marcus' interpretation of Hannah's tapes. Is he callous in his belief that Hannah just needed something to blame for her suicide? Or, is his point legitimate?

Discussion Question 3

Discuss the way that the others feel free to punish Tyler because he is a "pervert" while they, Marcus specifically, believe they've done nothing wrong? As a society, do we



interpret some acts of betrayal and bullying as worse than others? Is this the way we should think?

Vocabulary

Anthology, obsessed, diverted, pummel, amnesia, absurdity, nocturnal.



Cassette 3: Side B

Summary

Cassette 3: Side B

Hannah tells her listeners how Marcus Cooley figures into her story. He claimed to be one of her matches in Oh My Dollar Valentine, a fundraiser for cheer camp. They agree to meet one another at Rosie's, but Marcus makes Hannah wait thirty minutes before he shows up. Clay stops to sit on a bench while he listens to the rest of Hannah's tape. Clay wonders if he had filled out his survey truthfully if he might have gotten Hannah as a match.

Hannah tells her listeners that she thought about not turning in her survey. In the office, Ms. Benson mentions to Hannah she's seen the picture of Hannah and Courtney together. Ms. Benson says that Hannah and Courtney appear to be friends. Hannah considers how fake her life has become. Hannah briefly considers retrieving her survey from the box, believing that it will just be another chance for boys to ask her out because of her reputation.

Clay begins to walk to Rosie's as Hannah's voice instructs him. His phone rings. It is his mother. She knows by the sound of his voice that something is wrong. She asks if she can pick him up, but Clay knows that he has to finish the tapes. He has his mother to bring her the remainder of them, then moves on toward Rosie's where he has said he will meet her.

Hannah describes how uncomfortable she felt as those around her whispered and gave her strange looks as she sat by herself. When Marcus does finally show up at Rosie's, thirty minutes late, Hannah says he had a plan. He jockeyed her into a booth near the back of the restaurant where he tried to feel her up. Clay stops outside Rosie's but cannot bring himself to go inside. Instead, he goes to the theater where he and Hannah worked together.

As he walks to the theater, he hears Hannah tell how the people around must have realized what was going on but did nothing to stop it. She wonders if the people were just being polite. She makes a point of asking Zach if he was just being polite. When Marcus puts his hand all the way up her skirt, she pushes him off the bench. Although people would generally have laughed, the people instead ignore Marcus, making Hannah sure that they are simply ignoring what is going on without wanting to help.

Meanwhile, at the theater Clay remembers Bryce Walker coming in with a date for a movie. The girl left, halfway through, crying. After the movie was over, Bryce had talked to Hannah at the counter. She had continued talking to him even though Clay wanted to make him go away. When Bryce finally leaves, Clay asks Hannah about Bryce. She tells



him that she knows his reputation. Clay asks why she kept talking to him but doesn't wait for an answer. She tells him only that he doesn't have to watch out for her.

Analysis

It is on this cassette where Hannah describes what she thought was going to be an innocent date with Marcus that Hannah first mentions feeling as if her life is falling apart. She has trusted others to the point that she is afraid to trust them any more. She decides to give other people another chance when she agrees to meet Marcus at Rosie's. Almost as soon as Marcus walks in, she realizes that he had a plan. He'd come to the café only because he thought he might have a chance with Hannah. He, like others, believes the rumors he has heard about Hannah and is not willing to learn who she really is.

One important thing to notice in this section is the reference to Jenny Kurtz. Clay remembers how shocked Jenny had been when she heard about Hannah's suicide. She had stopped what she was doing in biology lab and walked out. No one had seen her the rest of the day. Clay wonders what connection the two might have had other than their brief encounter in the Oh My Dollar Valentine fundraiser.

Discussion Question 1

Why does Marcus treat Hannah the way that he does? Why does he feel he hasn't done anything wrong?

Discussion Question 2

Why do you think the people in the restaurant don't do anything to intervene when Marcus tries to violate Hannah?

Discussion Question 3

In Hannah's tape, she facetiously refers to herself as making mountains out of mole hills, and taking things too seriously. Do you think this is the case? Why or why not?

Vocabulary

Pessimist, optimist, quirky, aura, pathetic, ornate, petty.



Cassette 4: Side A

Summary

Cassette 4: Side A

Before listening to side A of the fourth cassette, Clay runs the rest of the way to Rosie's Diner. He tries to compose himself because he knows his mother will be there soon. He worries that she will listen to the Hannah's tapes on her way to the restaurant. When she does arrive, Clay keeps up his story about the school project. He senses that his mother knows he is lying, but she warns him only not to be out too late.

Hannah's tape addresses the class called Peer Communications. She says it was her favorite class. Students are not allowed to snicker at other people's thoughts. The teacher encouraged discussion on all sorts of topics from bullying to self-esteem. Hannah's problem with the class is that Zach Dempsey stole notes of encouragement placed in a paper bag for her to read.

Suddenly, there is a pause in Hannah's story, and Clay looks up to see Tony. Tony has pushed the pause button on the Walkman. He asks Clay if that is his Walkman, and Clay claims he asked Tony if he could borrow it. Clay thinks he sees worry and concern in Tony's eyes. Tony gives him permission to keep the Walkman as long as he needs it.

When Clay starts the tape again, he learns that Hannah believes Zach stole her notes because she refused to talk to him right after her encounter with Marcus at Rosie's. Hannah indicates this was the lowest point in her life, the point at which she began considering suicide. Zach did not make matters better by apologizing to Hannah for whatever had happened with Marcus, but then following it up by being mean to her himself.

On her tapes, Hannah says she knew her notes were getting stolen because she was the only one in the class not getting any. Even after she had her hair cut short, there was no comment put in her bag, and she knows for sure that something is wrong. She learns that it is Zach who has been stealing the notes from her bag because she set him up. She watched him as he checked her bag for messages while checking his own. Hannah tells Zach that at the point where she was, those notes might have made the difference in her decision. Without them, she did not have the positive feedback she needed so badly.

As Clay listens, he realizes he is getting to know Hannah as she was in the weeks and days before her death. He compares what he hears to seeing the two cars collide at the intersection the night of the party. Although there were plenty of people around Hannah during her troubles and plenty of people around the night of the wreck, there was very little anybody could do to stop either tragedy from taking place.



Hannah says that she was waiting for Zach when he came out of the classroom after she watched him steal the note she'd put in her own bag. She'd been unable to talk to him though. It was only as she watched him hurry down the hall that she'd called after him, asking him why he'd treated her the way he had.

It is also during this tape that Hannah tells her listeners that she knows her parents love her, but they'd been preoccupied with the threat of a new superstore coming into town. They are concerned that the new store will pull business away from the downtown area. Although she realizes her parents are suddenly under a lot of pressure, she notes that when she cut her hair, her mother didn't even notice.

In response to what she is feeling, Hannah decides to anonymously introduce suicide as a topic for the students to discuss. When the topic is introduced, the students give some halfhearted suggestions of ways they could help the person but for the most part, they seem irritated that the topic has been brought up. They finally decide that suicide isn't a topic they should talk about unless they know who it is that introduced the topic. They indicate they believe the note is just a cry for attention.

Analysis

It is in this tape that Hannah first admits to her listeners that she thought about killing herself. The thought comes to her as she is sitting in the booth at Rosie's after Marcus tried to put his hand between her legs. She pushed him away so hard he fell out of the booth, but no one at the restaurant seems to notice her distress. Zach approaches her as she is thinking about suicide. She's still in such shock from what just happened that she doesn't even respond to him. He apologizes, and Hannah believes that he is sincere in his apology. Before she leaves the restaurant, however, Hannah hears the other students sitting with Zach teasing him about not being able to get a date with Hannah. She knows their teasing must have made him angry, but he sits there without retaliating.

Later, Hannah learns that Zach does retaliate for her behavior when he steals the notes of encouragement people left for her in her paper bag in Peer Communications. She is doubly hurt because she believed Zach was really trying to reach out to her. She feels as if she has been slapped in the face by the low level that he drops to get back at her.

During this section of the novel, Hannah begins to cry out for help in small ways, but those around her are so busy with their own lives that they don't notice her pleas. First, she cuts her hair, a change that Hannah says that her mother doesn't even notice. Second, she anonymously suggests suicide as a topic for her Peer Communication class. However, the class doesn't want to talk about suicide if they can't know who suggested the topic. They brush it off as someone's cry for attention. Although the teacher hands out brochures listing the top five signs of suicidal thoughts, even the teacher doesn't notice Hannah's change in appearance, one of the top five signs of suicide. The teacher also never checks with any of her students or makes any attempt



to determine who might have left the note, even though she knows that one of them might be contemplating suicide.

When Hannah decides to find out who is stealing her notes, she leaves a note to Zach in her bag. On it, she tells him how much the notes of encouragement that he stole from her might have meant to her. She writes to him about how low she is feeling. On the audiotape, Hannah says that she hopes that Zach is sick to his stomach learning that she was really serious about her desire to kill herself, especially since he knew how badly she was feeling but did nothing to stop her.

Notice also the way that the author draws a parallel between the deadly wreck the night of the party and Hannah's suicide. In both cases, no one was able to stop the events that led to either tragedy. They were only able to stand by and watch. It is only after Hannah's death that Clay is able to recognize the signs and realizes there were people who could have stepped forward to help her.

Discussion Question 1

Should suicide be a topic that is discussed in school? How might Hannah's teacher have steered the conversation so that it was more constructive in case there really was someone contemplating suicide in the room?

Discussion Question 2

In Hannah's class, her teacher indicates statistics are not really firm on the number of teen suicides as some parents pass their children's suicide off as accidents. Why is there such a stigma associated with suicide? Why is it such a difficult topic with which to deal?

Discussion Question 3

Why do you think Zach acts as he does toward Hannah? Do you think he was really sincere in his apology at Rosie's, or was he just trying to butter her up for a date?

Vocabulary

Melodramatically, pathetic, confront, prologue, disclosure.



Cassette 4: Side B

Summary

Cassette 4: Side B

As Clay begins listening to the second side of Hannah's fourth tape, he adjusts his napkin holder so he can watch Tony in its reflective side. As Hannah talks about her love of poetry, he watches as Tony leaves the restaurant and gets in his car, backs up away from the restaurant, then stops and turns his lights out. Clay wonders what Tony is doing. Looking out the window, he can also see the tip of the theater sign. He wishes that he'd used that summer to get to know Hannah better. Even though he hasn't heard how he figures into Hannah's tapes, he believes her suicide is partially his fault because he did not do anything to show her that he did care.

This portion of Hannah's tapes is about a poetry class that Hannah and Ryan Shaver took together. Ryan is notorious for "finding" things that students have written and publishing them in the school newspaper. One of the things that Ryan "found" was Hannah's poem *Soul Alone*. Hannah claims Ryan stole the poem from her even though he knew how personal and private that it was. The students at the school try to interpret the meaning of the poem, most of them incorrectly, and even make parodies of it, hoping the person responsible for writing it will take ownership.

As Clay listens to Hannah talk about the poem, he suddenly realizes that he is the boy in the poem. He remembers how relentlessly the students tried to figure out who had written the poem. Clay had been watching Hannah one day before the start of class as other students were discussing the poem. Even though she had looked up at him, Clay had looked away. Now he believes this action communicated to Hannah that she was on her own.

It is closing time at Rosie's. As Clay prepares to leave, the man at the counter refuses to take his money. He tells Clay he doesn't know what has gone wrong in his life, but he wants to help. The only way he can think to do so is to cover the cost of Clay's milkshake. Clay's throat is too tight to say "Thank you." He can only nod at the man before he leaves the restaurant.

Analysis

Perhaps, the criticism that Hannah feels as her poetry is made public is one of the final straws that cracks her delicate emotional state. She feels betrayed in one of the most private ways. She has not felt comfortable at school for some time, and because of Tyler, no longer feels comfortable at home. Now, even her thoughts are fair game for criticism. Hannah stops writing poetry because Ryan published her poem. Since Hannah had used the exercise of writing as a coping strategy, she not only feels



violated, but she also has no other way to express herself that she feels won't be discovered and criticized.

It is in this part of the novel that the bullying of Hannah goes to a level where even the teachers unknowingly participate. Mr. Porter makes a comment as he hands out the poem which seems to indicate that he hopes someone will take credit for the work. Following the teacher's lead, the students make fun of the poem with the hopes that they will force the poem's owner to speak up in defense of themselves. Hannah is strong and never gives them the satisfaction. Clay even remembers how persistent the other students were in trying to get some reaction out of Hannah. He wishes now that he hadn't looked away when she met his eye during class that day.

Also, note Tony's odd behavior in this section of the novel. He acts almost as if he is watching Clay. His actions are obvious enough that Clay notices his odd behavior and watches him as he slowly eats a meal, then backs his car away from the restaurant and stops, turning off his lights. Clay wonders what he is waiting for but seems to be too distracted by the tapes, as well as the restaurant clerk's honest offer of help, to pay too much attention to him.

Discussion Question 1

Should the teachers have allowed this anonymous but obviously very personal poem to be used in class? Why or why not?

Discussion Question 2

How is writing therapeutic? How did Ryan hurt Hannah twice as much when he published her poem?

Discussion Question 3

Consider Tony's strange actions. Why do you think he is acting as he is?

Vocabulary

Abstract, metaphor, decipher, depth, subtlety, perspective, semiannual, vouch, curriculum, parodies, escapades.



Cassette 5: Side A

Summary

Cassette 5: Side A

When Tony leaves Rosie's, Tony calls him. He tells Clay to get into his car, and Clay obeys. As soon as Clay shuts his door, Tony tells him that he has the second set of tapes. Tony finds out which tape Clay is about to listen to. When he finds out, he tells Clay he will tell him why he has the second set of tapes after Clay listens to the next tape. He wants Clay to listen to that tape while he is in Tony's car because the next tape is about Clay. Clay cries as he starts the tape.

In this tape, Hannah admits she had always wanted to get to know Clay better because all she'd ever heard about him was good. Hannah says that generally if a person seems that good, they have some sort of fatal flaw. Hannah admits that she never found one in Clay. Clay is able to breathe when she tells him that he doesn't belong on the list the way the others do, but that he has to be included in order for her to tell her story.

Hannah talks about the party, where she and Clay really connected for the first time. Clay remembers hating that night because it was the night of the wreck. Hannah admits that she was not supposed to be at the party because her parents had grounded her. She had heard Clay was going to be at the party, so she sneaked out of her house to go. She wanted to talk to Clay at the party. Clay had approached her and told her he thought they needed to talk. She describes how wonderful she felt as they sat on the couch and talked to one another. Since the other girl on the couch keeps bumping Hannah, the two walk around until they find an empty room. Hannah remembers suddenly feeling alone even though she is connecting with Clay. She believes she feels this way because she wanted to be alone, to not take a chance of anyone hurting her again. Clay kisses her, and they move into the empty room where they make out until Hannah suddenly pushes Clay away when Justin comes to mind. Hannah turns away and screams at Clay, asking him to leave when he tries to talk to her. Listening to the tape, Clay wonders why he listened to her and left.

It's the night of the party when Hannah says that she made the list of names and connections between all of the people who contributed to her decision to kill herself. She tells Clay that she is sorry. Hearing what Hannah has to say about him, Clay realizes how much he misses her.

Analysis

Clay learns several important things in this section of the novel. First, he learns that he did not contribute to Hannah's suicide in the way others did. She tells him that he is on the tapes only so she can tell the remainder of the stories more clearly. Her experience with Clay is an important part of the party, and it explains why she was there even



though she was supposed to be grounded, Clay's part in the novel is interesting. If any of the other characters on Hannah's tapes had acted as narrator, they would have had a completely different reaction to the tapes than what Clay had. Because Clay is a person who liked Hannah while she was alive and is truly sad that she is gone, he is willing to listen to Hannah and give her the benefit of the doubt. Any of the other characters might have listened to Hannah's stories with a jaded sense of injustice that they are being blamed for another person's actions. This attitude would not have allowed the story to be presented as it is. So, Clay's part in the tapes might not be as important to the story as his part of narrator is to Hannah's story.

During this section of the novel, Clay also learns why Tony has been acting so strangely around him. Tony is the one to whom Hannah entrusted the second copies of the tapes. He has known all along that Clay was probably listening to the tapes. This is why Tony followed him to Rosie's and why he was not angry when he realized Clay had his Walkman. This is also why Tony tarried so long over his dinner and why he backed his car up away from Rosie's to wait for Clay to leave. Tony has given himself the position of seeking out those people on the tapes and trying to help them cope with what they learn about themselves.

It is at this point in the novel that Hannah's story begins to grow. The evening of the party was obviously a climax for her in her decision to kill herself. One point of interest to keep in mind as the story moves forward is the odd connection that Hannah feels with the old man who now lives in the house in which she once lived. Notice that Clay also references the old man as he thinks about the night of the party, which was the same night as the wreck. Clay remembers how badly he felt telling the old man's wife that everything was going to be all right, when he knew the driver of the car the man had hit wasn't going to survive.

Discussion Question 1

What is Tony's role in the novel?

Discussion Question 2

What is Clay's role in the novel?

Discussion Question 3

Could Clay have done anything differently the night of the party, after Hannah screamed at him to leave? If so, what might it have been?

Vocabulary

Stellar, surreal, intrusive.



Cassette 5: Side B

Summary

Cassette 5: Side B

Before Clay starts this tenth tape, he asks Tony why Hannah picked Tony to have the second set of tapes. Tony promises to tell Clay as soon as they reach the party house. When he starts the tape, Hannah talks about what happened in the room after Clay left. She says that Jessica and her date had come into the room. The date had tried to kiss Jessica and get romantic, but Jessica was so drunk she was barely responsive. The date finally leaves the room but stands outside the door. Hannah says she got up to walk to the door but noticed someone else walk up outside the door. At first, Jessica's date wouldn't let the other boy in, but he relented when the other boy said he was on the night shift and needed to spend just a minute with Jessica before he left.

Hannah was sick when Jessica's date lets the other boy in so easily. She crawled to the closet to hide. Clay realizes that it must be Bryce Walker who had been let into the room as Hannah relates that the boy tells Jessica to "just relax." Hannah knows that Bryce is raping Jessica. She is angry with herself that she doesn't do anything to stop the attack. After Bryce leaves, Hannah runs from the room. The first person she sees is Justin Foley, the boy who allowed Bryce to enter the room. As Tony pulls his car up to the party house, Clay gets out and throws up. Hannah's story continues, telling Justin that both of them were at fault in Jessica's rape. Although either one of them could have stopped it, neither of them did.

Analysis

In this section of the novel, Hannah realizes how easy it is to be on the other side of her own story. Up until this point, she had been the one in need, but no one had stepped forward to help. Now, she is the one who stayed silent while another needed her protection. The whole time Hannah is aware of what is happening to Jessica and not doing anything about it, she is angry with herself and sick to her stomach. Still, she does not act. She is angry with Justin for not acting either, for allowing Bryce to be alone in the room with Jessica. Hannah feels she has now taken an active role in destroying someone else's life, just as others have done things that she feels have destroyed her own life.

Discussion Question 1

If you had been in Hannah's position at the party, what would you have done?



Discussion Question 2

Why is it significant that the author puts Hannah in a position where she feels responsible for hurting another person?

Discussion Question 3

Why do you think Tony keeps putting off answering Clay's questions?

Vocabulary

Voyeuristic, denial.



Cassette 6: Side A

Summary

Cassette 6: Side A

This section of the novel begins with Tony explaining to Clay that when Hannah had come to see Tony, he had recognized all the signs that she was contemplating suicide. He tells Clay that he, too, had a chance to help Hannah but did not take it. Tony tells Clay that Hannah had come to give him her bike. She tells Tony that she is done with it. Though Tony now realizes this was a sign of suicidal thoughts, he didn't recognize it. He says Hannah asked to use a handheld recorder in exchange for the bike. Then, one day, he got home from school to find a box of cassettes. Because Hannah had been in class that day, Tony said the tapes didn't make much sense to him. Tony had tried to call Hannah at home but didn't get an answer. He then called her parents' store and told them they needed to find her. The following day, Hannah was not at school.

After Tony leaves Clay, he listens to the next tape. In this one, Hannah relates how she thought she needed to go home, but she feels too weak to walk. Jenny Kurtz puts her hand on Hannah's shoulder and asks if she needs a ride. Jenny makes Hannah feel comfortable and cared for until Jenny hits a stop sign with her car. It is at this point in Hannah's narrative that Clay realizes it was Jenny that caused the fatal accident involving the old man.

Hannah relates how she asked Jenny to park the car. Jenny refuses. She tells Hannah to get out when Hannah continues to press her not to drive. Hannah asks to use Jenny's phone to tell someone about the sign, but Jenny refuses, saying the call could be traced. She drives away. Hannah says that she realizes that Jenny got away with much more than just knocking down the sign. She knows that it was because the sign was down that night that a senior at the school was killed in a car crash.

It is during that day of the senior's funeral that Hannah begins thinking of her own funeral. After Jenny's car hit the sign, Hannah admits that she didn't run for a phone to call the cops. Instead, she walked around town. She finally reached a gas station where she called the police on a pay phone. She tried to tell the dispatcher about the sign but was cut off when the dispatcher told her the police were already on their way. At first, Hannah thought Jenny must have called, but she realized the following day the police were called because there had been a wreck at that intersection.

Analysis

Clay's horror in listening to Hannah's tapes intensifies as he realizes she was involved in the fatal accident. Although she had pleaded with Jenny to call the police, Jenny refused and, instead, ordered Hannah out of the car. By the time Hannah made it to a pay phone, an accident had already taken place because of the missing stop sign.



Hannah was sickened because she could not understand how Jenny could be so selfish. She is more worried about covering up the fact that she had an accident than ensuring that no one else is injured. When Hannah learns the next day that a senior in her school was killed because the stop sign was gone, she is devastated because she didn't do something to stop the accident. It is at this point that she seems to make her mind up that she will kill herself.

Looking at the novel's timeline, it seems that the day that Hannah went to visit Tony is the day of the funeral for the senior who was killed in the car crash. She indicates in her thoughts that day that the following day she will no longer be around. It seems that she has decided to kill herself not so much for other people's role in making her life miserable, but for the part she sees herself playing in causing other people misery. As a sensitive girl, this knowledge seems to be unbearable to Hannah. Clay realizes that although the people on Hannah's tapes play a role in making her miserable, she is the one responsible for taking her own life. He also realizes that he would have listened if Hannah had talked to him. He only wishes that she had given him the chance to do so.

Discussion Question 1

Discuss Clay's opinion of Hannah's decision to kill herself at this point in her tapes.

Discussion Question 2

How are Tony and Clay's roles in Hannah's suicide similar?

Discussion Question 3

Why do Tony and Clay recognize Hannah's behaviors as indicative of being suicidal only after her death?

Vocabulary

Repercussions.



Cassette 6: Side B

Summary

Cassette 6: Side B

Hannah opens this portion of her tapes by talking freely about suicide. She's decided to take pills, thinking that is the least painful option. She lines out what she will do on her last day including mailing the tapes to Justin. She asks her listener if he remembers how he treated her on that last day. Clay is certain that he smiled at Hannah.

She then tells the story of the weekend after the accident. There was another party that day, but she didn't attend. She was dog sitting for a friend of her father, at a house close enough to hear the music at the party even with the television on. She can only think of what happened at the last party. As Clay listens to her story, he remembers the last time he saw Hannah. They had bumped into each other in the hallway at school. Both had said "I'm sorry" at once. He had watched her walk down the hall, not knowing then that she was disappearing forever.

After the party is finally finished, Hannah takes a walk outside. She thinks maybe there is somebody she can help out as she walks past Courtney's house, the house where the party was. Instead, someone calls her name. Despite her knowledge that it is a bad idea, Hannah joins Bryce and Courtney in the hot tub. Clay realizes that Hannah makes this decision with self destruction in mind.

Hannah tells how Bryce slid over until his shoulder was touching Hannah's. He makes moves on Hannah even though she doesn't respond. Courtney gets out of the tub and walks away. Bryce reminds her of her spot on the "Who's Hot" list. Hannah begins to cry but Bryce doesn't seem to care. It is at this point that Hannah gives up, gives into the reputation with which everyone has branded her. Hannah admits on the tape that she was using Bryce to make herself so disgusted with herself that she could give up completely.

As Clay has been listening to this tape, he's been punching and gripping a chain link fence. He promises to Hannah he will kick Bryce's ass. When he notices his hand is cut and bleeding, he finds a gas station for Band-Aids before listening to the final tape.

Analysis

The night of this final party, the party that Hannah did not attend, becomes a critical night for her. The sounds of the party bring back memories of her time in the closet, knowing Jessica was being raped but doing nothing about it. After the party is finished, she leaves the house for a walk, hoping to find someone she can help. She is hoping to find some way to restore her own faith in herself. Instead of finding someone she can help, Hannah runs into two people who have already degraded her. Instead of walking



away and searching for redemption that she knows she might not find, Hannah takes the route that she knows will be most self destructive. She ends the evening so disgusted with herself for finally giving in to the stories that the others had told about her that she believes that her death will be a relief.

Discussion Question 1

Why does Hannah go out walking after the party nearby had broken up?

Discussion Question 2

Why does Hannah give into Bryce?

Discussion Question 3

Of what does the music from the party remind Hannah? What effect does it have on her?

Vocabulary

Preconditioned.



Cassette 7: Side A and Cassette 7: Side B

Summary

Cassette 7: Side A and Cassette 7: Side B

Clay decides to listen to the last of Hannah's tapes at Eisenhower Park. On this first side of this final cassette, Hannah says that she is giving life one last chance. She has made an appointment with Mr. Porter, her school guidance counselor. Hannah tells Mr. Porter that she feels empty and doesn't care about anything anymore. She says she feels as if she doesn't have any friends. While Clay can hear the questions that Hannah is posing for Mr. Porter, he feels that Mr. Porter either doesn't understand or doesn't comprehend how serious the matter is to Hannah. He questions Hannah, getting her to acknowledge there was a sexual interaction of which she is not proud. He tells her that if she doesn't want to report the rape and she doesn't want to confront the boy, the only other choice is to move past it. Hannah interprets his advice as telling her to get over the encounter, a course of action with which Clay knows Hannah cannot follow through. After this Hannah leaves the room quickly even though Mr. Porter suggests to her there are more things they could talk about. Hannah seems to hope that Mr. Porter will care enough to follow her out of the room. He does not. He lets her go. As the tape ends, Clay wishes that Hannah had come to him and that he had been able to help her.

On Side B of the final cassette, there is at first only the sound of the hum of the tape spooling. Then, in a warm voice, Hannah says simply "Thank you."

Analysis

It is in this final tape that Clay learns that Hannah approached someone else, an adult who was supposed to be able to help her, with her problems. Instead of helping her, Mr. Porter left Hannah with the impression that she should just get over what had happened to her and get on with her life. Mr. Porter does not realize that what Hannah will be getting on with is her own death, not her life.

In hindsight, Clay can clearly see the clues and cues that Mr. Porter is missing in Hannah's visit. Even though he begs Mr. Porter to take Hannah seriously during her visit, it will not do any good since the visit is already in the past. Earlier in the novel, Clay had remembered Mr. Porter's reaction when he learned of Hannah's suicide. He had stared at her chair, then left class and been gone for a week. It was probably not until this point that Mr. Porter realized how serious Hannah really was when she came to him with her problems. Like Clay, Mr. Porter is able to see the signs of what Hannah had planned once he heard of her death. At that point, however, it was too late for either of them to do anything about it.



In her tapes, Hannah demonstrates an active hatred for Mr. Porter for not taking her seriously. In the first tape, she says the thirteenth person who will hear the tapes can take them with him to hell. The thirteenth person is Mr. Porter. This statement demonstrates how seriously Mr. Porter's lack of adequate advice hurt Hannah. It cemented in her mind that no one, not even the people who were paid to do so, cared about her.

Discussion Question 1

Even if Hannah had approached Clay the same way she approached Mr. Porter, do you think that Clay would have recognized the signs of Hannah's desire to kill herself? Can one see these signs only in hindsight?

Discussion Question 2

With a typical teen having a tendency toward drama, how realistic is it that Mr. Porter might have been in a scenario like this one before with a teen who didn't later commit suicide?

Discussion Question 3

Did Hannah put too much emphasis on Mr. Porter's ability to rescue her from herself? What might she have done differently to show Mr. Porter how badly the rumors and such were affecting her? What might Mr. Porter have done differently to see that she got the care she needed?

Vocabulary

Definition, conspiracy, confidential.



The Next Day after Mailing the Tapes

Summary

The Next Day after Mailing the Tapes

The next day Clay does not want to have to go back to school and face the people singled out on Hannah's tapes. He's late because he mailed the tapes to Jenny Kurtz that morning. He also wants to avoid Mr. Porter's class. He is afraid he will only be able to stare at Hannah's empty desk. As Clay tries to open his locker, he wonders how many times he'd stood in that same spot too afraid to try to reach out to Hannah again after the night at the party when she'd pushed him away. He remembers seeing Hannah for the last time outside the door to Mr. Porter's classroom. A student comes out of Mr. Porter's class and nearly collides with a girl in the hallway. The girl apologizes, but the boy ignores her, instead joking with Clay because he is late. Clay notices the girl in the hallway is Skye. They catch the eyes of each other, and Clay realizes he let her get away the prior evening. As he watches her walk down the same hallway where he watched Hannah disappear the last time he saw her, he decides he needs to follow her. As he glances into Mr. Porter's room on the way past, Clay feels anger, sorrow, and even hope. He calls out to Skye as he follows her down the hallway.

Analysis

Although the tone for this story has been dark and pensive, the ending of the novel shows a glimmer of hope. Clay seems to have learned the lesson that Hannah hopes to pass on to her listeners. Instead of allowing Skye to slip away down the hall, Clay follows her and calls out to her with the intention of pulling her out of her shell.

Discussion Question 1

Why was Clay the ideal narrator for this novel?

Discussion Question 2

How are Skye and Hannah alike?

Discussion Question 3

At the end of her tapes, Hannah says "Thank you." For what is she thanking her listeners?

Vocabulary

Profoundly.



Characters

Clay Jensen

Clay Jensen serves as the narrator for this novel and is one of the main characters. He is one of the people included on Hannah's suicide tapes, but he is not on the tapes because he hurt Hannah in some way. Instead, Hannah tells Clay that he should not be on the tapes but that he must be included so that she can more fully tell the rest of her stories. Clay makes an ideal narrator for the story because he liked Hannah despite the rumors he had heard about her. His part of the tapes is not accusatory, so he does not react angrily to what he hears. Instead, he learns that Hannah liked him as well but was too scared and too deeply hurt to let him know. This makes Clay a more sensitive narrator than others on the tape might have been.

Clay knew Hannah because she was in one of Clay's classes. They also worked together at the city's theater the summer before her death. At a party, the two connect. They talk and make out. Both Clay and Hannah enjoy their time together, but Hannah becomes scared and pushes Clay away. As he listens to Hannah tell her story, Clay wishes that he had overcome his fear and tried to do more to help Hannah. He wishes that Hannah had told him what she was going through.

Clay is angry for what his classmates have done to Hannah. He is especially angered by Marcus, who seems to think that he did nothing wrong even though Hannah accuses him of trying to put his hand between her legs during a date. Even though Clay is angry with his peers and finds it difficult to face them the following day, he ends the novel with a feeling of hope. He decides to overcome his fear and try to reach out to a girl named Skye. He once had a crush on Skye; but, she has become strange and withdrawn.

Hannah Baker

Hannah Baker is the main character of the novel even though she is not alive during the time period of the novel. She has committed suicide by taking pills just a few weeks before the time of the novel. Hannah is new to the area and is hoping for a fresh start in her new town. She is a sensitive girl who is concerned about what others think about her. Hannah also appears to have a sense of humor though this sense of humor seems jaded and sarcastic in her tapes.

Hannah records a set of seven tapes addressing those whom she indicates had an active role in her decision to kill herself. Through her tapes she describes the way people chose to believe the rumors spread about her instead of who she really was. Although she wanted to date, all the boys whom she meets act on the rumors that they have heard that Hannah is a slut. Clay is the only boy who treats Hannah with respect, but she pushes him away because she is so afraid their relationship might go badly. Hannah is also bullied and mistreated by other students. One takes pictures of her in



her bedroom, another steals a poem and gives it to Hannah's classmates, and another manipulates Hannah by using her as a friend only when she can get what she wants from Hannah.

In addition to feeling the pain of having those around her betray and hurt her, Hannah also disappoints herself by allowing a girl to be raped by not stepping forward to stop the rape. Hannah is again angry with herself because she is involved in an accident in which a stop sign is knocked down. She doesn't report the accident until it is too late to avoid another accident in which a high school student is killed. Hannah finishes off her self-respect by allowing Bryce to have sex with her.

In the end of the novel, Hannah hangs the hopes for her life on Mr. Porter, her guidance counselor. When he lets Hannah down by telling her she must get over what is happened to her, Hannah leaves, her decision to kill herself solidified.

Mr. Porter

Mr. Porter is Hannah's guidance counselor and English teacher. He is the one who passes out her poem to be used as part of his English class and then seems to bait the author to come forward by comparing them to a dead poet because they cannot make sure the poem is interpreted properly. Because he is her guidance counselor, it is also on Mr. Porter that Hannah hangs her last attempt to save herself. Just days before she kills herself, Hannah goes to Mr. Porter with the hopes that he will understand the seriousness of her situation. He does not understand and instead tells Hannah that if she does not want to press charges against the boy who raped her and she doesn't want to confront him, she must move on. Hannah interprets what he has said as meaning that she should get over what has happened. She quickly leaves the room even though Mr. Porter tries to convince her to stay and talk. Hannah seems disappointed when Mr. Porter does not come after her. When he learns about Hannah's suicide, Mr. Porter stares at Hannah's empty desk for a few minutes, then leaves class and does not come back for a week. Mr. Porter is the thirteenth and last person on Hannah's suicide tapes. He is the person that Hannah indicates she hopes will go to hell.

Courtney Crimsen

Courtney Crimsen is included in the list of people whom Hannah believed contributed to her decision to kill herself. Courtney pretended to be friends with Hannah but really was only using her to fit her own agenda. Courtney is the girl who encourages Hannah to let her come over to her house to try to catch the peeping Tom. Instead of just taunting the peeping Tom, Courtney also says things while talking to Hannah that contribute to her reputation as a slut. Later, Courtney barely talks to Hannah, giving her the feeling the two aren't as close friends as Hannah thought they might be. Later, Courtney again pretends to be friends with Hannah because she wants Hannah to give her a ride to a party. Courtney says that she invites Hannah because she wants to go to the party with



Hannah. As soon as they get to the party, Courtney suggests that they split up. A boy at the same party later tries to strike up a conversation with Hannah because he hears from Courtney that Hannah is a slut. When Hannah learns this, she has Tyler take a picture of she and Courtney in which Hannah looks happy but Courtney looks nervous. Clay finds this picture in the scribble book at Monet's. Later, Courtney again lets Hannah down when she sees that Bryce is trying to take advantage of Hannah in the hot tub but leaves without doing anything.

Bryce Walker

Bryce Walker is the twelfth person on Hannah's list. He is a student at Hannah's high school. He is a year older than Hannah. He has a reputation for being cruel to his girlfriends. Clay has seen the boy grab girls by the wrist and twist their arms, a movement that Bryce used on Hannah when she tried to walk away from him at Blue Spot Liquor. Bryce had just slapped Hannah on the ass and announced to the store clerk that she had been named the best ass in the freshman class, an action that embarrasses Hannah. Bryce next appears the night of the party when he rapes Jessica Davis while she is drunk. Later, Bryce sees Hannah walking down the street after another party and invites her to join him and Courtney in a hot tub. While in the tub, Bryce puts the moves on Hannah. Bryce upsets Hannah by reminding her of her reputation even as he seems to be trying to seduce her. Hannah gives into Bryce because she is tired of fighting against what others think of her. She also allows him to take advantage of her because she knows that it will make her dislike herself enough that she will be able to go through with her plan to kill herself.

Jessica Davis

Jessica Davis is a girl who is also new to the area the same time as Hannah. A teacher at the school arranges a meeting between the two girls hoping they can become friends. Jessica and Hannah never become close friends but do help each other cope with being new at school for the first two weeks by meeting for talks at Monet's. They are joined in their meetings by a boy who is also a new student. Jessica gets angry with Hannah because this boy, Alex Standall, lists Hannah as the freshman with the best ass while he puts Jessica in the "Not Hot" column across from Hannah. Hannah knows that Alex is using this list as a way to get revenge on Jessica for breaking up with him. Jessica, however, believes the rumors she's heard about Hannah being a slut and confronts Hannah about the list one day at Monet's. She slaps Hannah, leaving a scar from her fingernail above Hannah's eyebrow. Later in her tapes, it is Jessica whom Hannah witnesses getting raped by Bryce but does nothing to stop the attack.

Tony

Tony is the boy from whom Clay "steals" the Walkman so he can listen to Hannah's cassettes and walk to the places she indicates on her map at the same time. Tony also



approaches Clay at Rosie's and asks about his Walkman but doesn't seem disturbed that Clay has the machine. Tony parks outside Rosie's and waits for Clay to leave. When Clay is in the car with him, Tony tells Clay that he is the person to whom Hannah gave the second set of tapes. She'd offered him her bike if he'd let her borrow a handheld recorder. Even though Tony saw all of the symptoms of suicide in Hannah, he didn't recognize them until he received the tapes. At that point it was too late. Tony drives Clay around in his car until Clay has finished listening to the part of the tape that is about Clay. In a way, Tony must feel that he is trying to make up for his mistake in not recognizing what Hannah was going through by helping those on the tapes, especially Clay, get through their experiences.

Jenny Kurtz

Jenny Kurtz is the person who receives Hannah's tapes after Clay. She is the cheerleader who helped Hannah with her Oh My Dollar Valentine ballot. She asks Hannah to let her know how Hannah's date with Marcus went, but Hannah never tells her. The next time Hannah sees Jenny is at the party where she witnesses Jessica Davis getting raped. Jenny offers to give Hannah a ride home but on their way, Jenny hits and knocks over a stop sign with her car. Jenny refuses to report the downed sign and orders Hannah to get out when she tries to keep Jenny from driving any more that day. Jenny never admits to being the person who was responsible for knocking down the stop sign. Because the stop sign was down, an old man ran a stop sign and ran into a car driven by another teen, killing that teen. Hannah indicates in her tapes that it seemed strange to her how quickly Jenny's car got fixed.

Marcus Cooley

Hannah includes Marcus Cooley in her suicide tapes because he uses the Oh My Dollar Valentine fundraiser to see if what he has heard about her is really true. At first, Marcus arrives for the date that he has arranged thirty minutes late. When he does show up, Marcus jockeys Hannah into a booth at the back of the restaurant where he tries to put his hand up her skirt. Marcus is also the boy who meets Clay outside Tyler's window with a rock when he sees that Clay is listening to the tapes. Marcus is hoping that Clay will throw the rock through Tyler's window because Tyler is a "freak" for taking pictures of Hannah in her bedroom. Marcus, however, doesn't see that he has acted similarly to Tyler as he also played a part in tormenting Hannah.

Justin Foley

Justin Foley is the first person on the tapes. He is an infamous boy who has the intention of getting Hannah's first kiss. Hannah tells on her tapes that kissing is all that the two of them did at the park. Justin, however, tells others that Hannah let him put his hands up her bra. Justin later appears in the novel at the party where Hannah and Clay had made out earlier. After she has pushed Clay away and asked him to leave, Hannah



witnesses Justin letting Bryce into the room where Jessica is sleeping off her drunkenness. While in the room, Bryce rapes Jessica.

Zach Dempsey

Zach Dempsey is included on Hannah's suicide tapes because he stole notes of encouragement written to Hannah by members of her Peer Communications class. Zach's actions are especially painful to Hannah because he had approached her at Rosie's after Marcus had tried to put his hand between her legs. Zach apologized to Hannah about the incident but apparently became angry because she was too shocked to talk to him. Hannah later writes a note to Zach, which she had put in her own encouragement note bag to see if he was the one stealing the notes, telling him how badly she was feeling. But, he never approaches her again or reports what she has revealed to him.

Alex Standall

Alex Standall puts Hannah's name on a list of "Who's Hot and Who's Not." He indicates on the list that she had the best ass in the freshman class. This list is detrimental to Hannah in two ways. First, it reinforces her reputation as a supposed slut. It also makes Jessica believe that Hannah has been messing around with Alex. Instead of confronting Hannah in private, however, Jessica has a meeting with Hannah at Monet's, where she belittles and slaps Hannah in public. Alex is also the boy with whom Hannah and Jessica had become friends at the first of the school year because they were all new to the school.

Ryan Shaver

Ryan Shaver is the editor of the school's newspaper. He is known for publishing things students have written that he claims to have "found." While Ryan and Hannah are in a poetry class together, Ryan "finds" a copy of one of Hannah's poems that she knows she never lost or left laying around. The poem becomes part of some teacher's class material with students trying to interpret and, in the process, making fun of Hannah's poem. Hannah feels as if Ryan has violated her privacy and exposed her thoughts for public scrutiny.

Skye Miller

Skye Miller is a girl that Clay had a crush on in the eighth grade. At the conclusion of the novel, Clay decides to try to break through Skye's shell in case she is thinking or feeling the same way that Hannah had before she killed herself. On the night that Clay listens to Hannah's tapes, Skye happens to be riding the same bus. Clay describes the girl as being pretty, but she is hiding herself in baggy clothing. He isn't sure when she became



an outcast; but, he remembers that at some point she stopped wanting to be involved in anything.

Mrs. Bradley

Mrs. Bradley is Hannah's Peer Communications teacher. Even though Hannah makes an anonymous suggestion that the class talk about suicide, class members decide the topic should not be discussed unless the person would let the class members know who suggested the topic. Mrs. Bradley does pass out some information lining out the signs of suicidal thoughts, but she does little else to identify the student who might need help.

Tyler Down

Tyler Down is included in Hannah's suicide tapes because he is the boy who took secret pictures of Hannah while she was in her bedroom. When Courtney and Hannah catch Tyler outside her window, he is not only taking pictures of the two, but he is also masturbating. Hannah is angry with Tyler for making her feel uncomfortable, even in her own home.



Symbols and Symbolism

Shoebox-sized Package

Clay Jensen comes home to find this shoebox-sized package, with Hannah's tapes inside, on his front porch.

A Map

Hannah had put maps, marked with significant locations, into the lockers of the people who received the tapes several days before she killed herself.

Second Set of Tapes

Hannah warns that if the tapes are not passed along as she has requested, there is a second set of tapes that will be distributed.

Tony's Mustang

When Clay first receives Hannah's tapes, he goes to visit Tony because his Mustang has a cassette player. He also knows that Tony has an old-fashioned Walkman that plays tapes. While helping Tony work on his car, Clay spots this Walkman in the Mustang and slips it into his backpack so he can listen to the tapes and walk to the spots that Hannah has specified on her map.

Tony's Walkman

Clay steals Tony's Walkman from his Mustang while helping Tony work on the car. Tony later tells Clay that he knew Clay had the tapes because Clay stole his Walkman.

Rocket Ship

Hannah's vision of his first kiss includes this rocket ship slide in Eisenhower Park.

Who's Hot/Who's Not List

This list, compiled by Alex Standall, causes problems for Hannah because it draws attention to her bottom and makes other boys believe this part of her anatomy is public property. It also makes Jessica jealous of Hannah. Hannah realizes that Alex is using the list to get revenge on Jessica for breaking up with him. Jessica believes that it means Hannah had been messing around with Alex.



Scar

This tiny scar above Hannah's eyebrow was caused by Jessica's fingernail when Jessica slapped her when she confronted her about the list at Monet's. Hannah sees this scar as a visible reminder of what her peers believe about her.

A Rock

When Clay follows Hannah's tapes to Tyler's house, Marcus meets him there with a fist-sized rock. Marcus intends for Clay to use the rock to finish off Tyler's window. However, Clay is angry with Marcus because Marcus believes Tyler's role in Hannah's suicide was somehow worse than his own.

Scribble Book at Monet's

Clay looks in this book at Monet's hoping to find some happy memory that Hannah might have left behind. While looking through it, he finds the picture Hannah made Tyler take of herself and Courtney at a party.

A Picture of Hannah and Courtney

Since Hannah is angry with Courtney for using her only as a way to get to a party then spreading rumors about Hannah once they are there, Hannah has Tyler take a picture of herself and Courtney. When Clay sees the picture, he notices that Courtney looks nervous. Tyler posts the picture in the yearbook office where a teacher happens to see it and comments to Hannah that it is a fun picture. To Hannah, the picture represents what a farce her life has become as there was nothing fun or happy about the picture in reality.

Oh My Dollar Valentines

This list of possible dates, based on a survey, was a fundraiser for the cheer squad. Hannah fills out the survey. A boy who tells her she was on his list meets her with the intention of trying to feel her up.

Peer Communications

Peer Communications is the class where students were supposed to be able to discuss concerns and troubles with their classmates. When Hannah suggests the class discuss suicide, the class refuses to talk about the subject unless they know who it is that is asking for the discussion.



Paper Bag Notes of Encouragement

Zach Dempsey is angry with Hannah for not talking to him at Rosie's. For revenge, he steals the notes of encouragement that other students put in Hannah's paper bag in Peer Communications. At the point Hannah has reached in her life, these notes were important because she needed all of the encouragement she could get.

Hannah's Haircut

It is not until after Hannah's death that Clay recognizes that Hannah's haircut was one of the signs that she was considering suicide.

Soul Alone

Soul Alone is a poem that Hannah wrote during a poetry class. Ryan Shaver gets a copy of the poem and shares it with other students at the school. Hannah feels even her thoughts are being ridiculed as students try to interpret her poem and even write parodies of it.

Hannah's Blue Bike

Clay remembers Hannah riding a blue bike to school. When she approaches Tony about getting a handheld cassette recorder, she offers him her bike in exchange.

Handheld Recorder

Hannah uses this handheld recorder that she borrows from Tony to record her audio suicide letter.

Stop Sign

As Jenny Kurtz is taking Hannah home from a party, she hits a stop sign, knocking it down. Hannah tries to convince Jenny to call the police and asks her not to drive anymore, but Jenny gets angry with her, orders Hannah out of the car, and drives away. Later, a fatal accident in which another high school student is killed is the result of the stop sign being down.

Snowball

Hannah refers to the troubles she faces as a snowball that continually gets larger.



Settings

Eisenhower Park

Eisenhower Park is the park where Hannah plans to get her first kiss from Justin. Hannah intends this kiss to be sweet and innocent. Instead, Justin spreads rumors about how Hannah let him put his hands in her bra.

Blue Spot Liquor

Blue Spot Liquor is the store where Hannah stops for a candy bar after school. It is in this store that Bryce approaches Hannah and slaps her on the bottom, announcing she was voted hottest ass in the freshman class.

Hannah's First House

Ironically, the first house that Hannah lived in after she moved to town is the same house that the elderly man involved in the fatal crash the night that Jenny Kurtz knocked over the stop sign lives.

Monet's Garden Café and Coffeehouse

Monet's Garden Café and Coffeehouse is where Hannah and Jessica go to talk after they are first introduced to one another by Ms. Antilly. For a short time after school starts, Hannah, Jessica, and Alex continue to meet there to talk because they are all new to the school. Later, it is at Monet's where Jessica confronts Hannah because she believes Hannah has been messing around with Alex.

Rosie's Diner

Rosie's Diner is where Marcus was supposed to meet Hannah for their date. He finally arrives thirty minutes late. He tries to feel Hannah up.

Crestmont Theater

Crestmont Theater is where Hannah and Clay worked together. Clay wonders why he did not try harder to reach Hannah while he had the chance.

Community Room at the Public Library

The community room at the public library is where Hannah's poetry class met.



512 Cottonwood

512 Cottonwood is the address of the house where a party was held. It was at this party that Clay and Hannah made out, but it is also the same party where Hannah heard Bryce raping Jessica but did nothing to stop the rape.



Themes and Motifs

Effects of One's Actions on Others

One of the main lessons that Hannah seems to be trying to teach through her suicide tapes is the effect that one person's actions have on those around them. While one could see Hannah's recorded "letters" as blaming those to whom she speaks, it seems most likely the letters are actually more of a plea for these people to consider the effect their actions and words might have on others.

While Hannah seems deeply hurt by the lies and rumors that students choose to believe about her, she seems most disturbed by her own actions that she knows will affect other lives. Hannah is sickened by her own action as she stands by as a girl is raped and does nothing to stop the rape. Hannah is again angry with herself when she does not find some way to report the stop sign being down before it has caused a fatality. It is these two incidents that seem to really get Hannah seriously considering killing herself. She seems to be realizing that she has done to others the same things that others have done to her. While she has not hurt anyone intentionally, however, she has hurt them with her lack of action.

In her letters, Hannah tries to convince her listeners that their actions do really have an effect on others. Most of the people whom she references had a negative effect on her life beginning with Justin Foley who lied about how far Hannah allowed him to go with her and made her seem a slut in order to bolster his own reputation. Alex Standall accentuated this reputation by voting her the "top ass" in the freshman class. Even Clay, who likes Hannah but feels she is too sexually knowledgeable to be interested in him, admits to himself while listening to the tapes that he based his opinion of Hannah on rumor more than actual experience with her.

Bullying

Although the book's foremost theme is not bullying, Hannah is a victim of bullies. She is a sensitive girl who hopes to rise above rumor in a new town. Almost as soon as she arrives, however, the rumor mill starts working against Hannah. In Hannah's case, the bullying is of a sexual nature beginning with a boy with whom she'd shared her first kiss claiming that she'd allowed him to put his hands on her in inappropriate ways. A second boy uses Hannah's name in a list of "Who's Hot and Who's Not" to get revenge against another girl. This list in itself is sexual harassment, as it lists Hannah as the freshman with the best ass. The designation leads to another boy feeling that he is free to put his hands on Hannah anywhere he'd like. Hannah, who has not asked for this type of attention, isn't sure about what to do to make the harassment stop. She only knows that other people are noticing what is happening to her, but they are doing nothing to put an end to the improper behavior.



A fundraiser for the cheer squad is even used against Hannah as a way for one of her “dates” to try to take advantage of her. The boy is cruel to Hannah for setting up the date to start with when he doesn’t really seem interested in Hannah. He then makes her wait, embarrassed for thirty minutes before he shows up. When he finally does show up, he tries to put his hand between her legs. Even though Hannah pushes the boy out of the booth they are sitting in at this point, the people sitting around don’t seem to notice that Hannah is being harassed.

Hannah also falls prey to a peeping Tom who sets himself up where he can look into Hannah’s bedroom and take pictures of her. Knowing that she already has a reputation as a slut, Courtney feeds these rumors by having Hannah give her a back rub while the peeping Tom takes pictures. She also arranges for rumors to be spread about Hannah having sexually related items stored in her dresser drawers. It is not until she has decided to end her life that Hannah decides to give into the reputation that others have made for her. She allows Bryce to take advantage of her, mostly because she’s too tired to fight him off any longer. She also knows that it will be a way to make her so disgusted with her own self that she will go through with her suicide.

Suicide

Thirteen Reasons Why deals with suicide and the stigma attached to the act of killing one’s self. The novel also encourages readers to tread lightly on the emotions of others and be kinder to one another as we never know the way our actions might influence another person. As in Hannah’s case, what we do or say may be the dividing line between whether a person decides to live or die.

From the beginning of the novel, it is known that Hannah killed herself. What is interesting is the way she introduces the idea slowly through her tapes. In the first few tapes, suicide is not a topic that she mentions. In fact, it is not until her “date” with Marcus that she begins to consider killing herself as a serious possibility. Before then she’d had passing thoughts of wishing she were dead but no cemented idea of doing away with herself. Even Hannah finds it difficult to say the word “suicide” in her tapes. Once she says the word and accepts the idea, it seems to become easier for her to think and talk about it, especially when she begs for help from those around her. But, no one seems to notice the signs until it is too late.

One of the first reality checks that Hannah gets about society’s opinion of suicide occurs when she tries to get her Peer Communications class to discuss suicide. She tries to introduce the topic anonymously, which the class decides against. They refuse to talk about the subject if they don’t know who wants it brought up. It is almost as if they think the threat of suicide is a plea for attention, as a spoiled child might cry in hopes that someone would pay attention to them. There is little class discussion given to the topic; so, Hannah believes that it is clear that they feel uncomfortable talking about suicide.

Although the class won’t discuss suicide, Hannah’s teacher does pass out some information about signs of suicidal behavior and statistics. She says the numbers on



teen suicides probably aren't right because many parents will pass the death off as an accident. When Hannah thinks about the way she will kill herself, she considers what will be the least painful method for her parents. She considers driving her car off the road in an area where she was sure not to survive, but she is afraid her parents would find out that the accident was actually staged. She finally decides on taking pills as she believes this will be the least painful option.

Hannah recognizes herself immediately from the first sign (a change in physical appearance) on the suicidal behavior sheets that the teacher passes out. However, no one else interprets the signs correctly until it is too late.

Finally, Hannah approaches her school guidance counselor, a man who was supposed to be able to help her, but he does not respond as she had hoped. Mr. Porter seems to believe that Hannah is having trouble opening up about exactly what is bothering her. Instead of listening to her, he tries to come to a point by asking questions. Based on the questions that he asks, he steers Hannah in the direction of talking about her sexual encounter with Bryce, the activity of which she is least proud. In discussing this delicate topic, Mr. Porter tells Hannah that if she can't charge Bryce with rape and won't confront him about it, she has no other choice than to just move on. Hannah, however, is not able to move past this one bad mistake which she feels all the rumors, lies, and bullying led her to commit. She walks out of Mr. Porter's office, telling him that she intends to get on with her life. Even though Mr. Porter seems to sense Hannah is still troubled, he doesn't come after her as she had hoped that he would.



Styles

Point of View

This story is told from the first person point of view from two different people. The first person whose point of view is used in the telling of the story is Clay's point of view. Clay is one of the students who receives Hannah's tapes although she admits that he shouldn't be on the list as he was not one of the people who she feels contributed to her suicidal thoughts. Clay is probably an ideal narrator because he is not one of the people whom Hannah is singling out for the nasty ways they treated her. The others on the tapes appear not to have liked Hannah and probably would not have presented her story in the way that Clay does. Any other person narrating the story would either have been angry with Hannah for exposing their deeds or so emotionally distraught because they have learned the results of their actions that they would not be able to present the story in the innocent way that Clay does.

Hannah's tapes, understandably, are also told in the first person point of view. These tapes were recorded by Hannah before she died. They are her way of letting those in her life know how deeply the actions of others in her life affected her. She records these tapes just as if she were talking to the people in a face to face conversation. The only exception to this rule is the session of the tape where Hannah takes the recorder with her to the counseling session with Mr. Porter. Hannah records this session from beginning to end so that the listeners get to hear both sides of the conversation.

Language and Meaning

The most significant use of language in this novel is found in the words of Hannah. She is describing some of the most difficult times in her life. At the beginning of her story, Hannah manages to incorporate humor, even though it is a biting and almost caustic humor. The reader feels Hannah's pain. This pain increases as Hannah continues her story. Hannah's story is told in a simple, conversational manner, which is easy to follow and understand. She is telling her story on the tapes, just as if she were talking to the people face to face.

Structure

This book is a frame story. Clay narrates the story as he receives and listens to Hannah's personal story being told on the tapes. Although Hannah's story takes place over the course of a couple of years, the story told by Clay covers only a portion of one evening. The narrative of Hannah's tapes is introduced with a chapter describing how Clay comes home to find the tapes on his front porch. The book closes with another chapter that tells how he mailed the tapes to the next person on the list, then went about trying to deal with his new knowledge of the people around him at school the following day. The seven tapes that make up Hannah's audio suicide letter are the main content



of the fourteen interior chapters of the book. Each side of each cassette has its own chapter, with each chapter addressing one individual that Hannah credits with having helped cement her decision to kill herself. Each chapter is titled with the number and side of that cassette.

Within each chapter, the author uses a variety of different techniques to differentiate Hannah's spoken words, Clay's responses to what he hears on the tapes, and his conversations with others. The content of Hannah's tapes is written in italics. Clay's responses to what she is saying, usually in the form of his own thoughts, are in regular type. The author also uses the symbols of play, stop, and pause found on cassette players to indicate when Clay stops and starts the tape. These symbols are clearer than a sentence describing Clay's actions. The symbols also show when Clay breaks from the tapes to interact with other people in real time.



Quotes

I hope you're ready, because I'm about to tell you the story of my life. More specifically, why my life ended. And if you're listening to these tapes, you're one of the reasons why.

-- Hannah Baker (Cassette 1: Side A paragraph 5)

Importance: This quote is significant because it tells, in Hannah's words, the main idea of the novel. Even though it comes postmortem, these tapes are Hannah's way of confronting those who made her life so unbearable.

Because it's Hannah's voice. A voice I thought I'd never hear again. I can't throw that away.

-- Clay Jensen (Cassette 1: Side A paragraph 83)

Importance: Clay cannot throw the tapes away and cannot stop listening to them because they are from Hannah. He listens to them out of respect for her.

Every single event documented here may never have happened had you, Alex, not written my name on that list. It's that simple.

-- Hannah Baker (Cassette 1: Side B paragraph 45)

Importance: Hannah's words here are significant because they indicate that she believes the origin of her problems was a popularity list put out by Alex Standall that drew attention to her feminine sexuality.

Why didn't you leave me alone, Tyler? My house. My bedroom. They were supposed to be safe for me. Safe from everything outside. But you were the one who took that away.

-- Hannah Baker (Cassette 2: Side B paragraph 213)

Importance: Hannah tries to express to Tyler how vulnerable and insecure that his act of taking pictures of her in her bedroom made her.

I don't think you do this intentionally, Courtney. And that's why I put you on these tapes. To let you know that what you do affects others. More specifically, it affected me.

-- Hannah Baker (Cassette 3: Side A paragraph 21)

Importance: These are Hannah's warning words to Courtney Crimsen. They tell her to be aware that her actions do affect other people.

So why did Marcus choose this rock for me? He's heard the rest of the tapes, but he wants me to be the one to finish off the window. Why?

-- Clay Jensen (Cassette 3: Side A paragraph 173)

Importance: Since Clay has not listened to all of the tapes and does not know the full story of the events that led up to Hannah's suicide, he is not sure why Marcus believes that he should be the one to throw a rock big enough to break Tyler's window.



I wanted them to know me. Not the stuff they thought they knew about me.
-- Hannah Baker (Cassette 3: Side B paragraph 166)

Importance: Although many of the people whom Hannah thought were her friends have spread rumors about her, stabbed her in the back, and betrayed her trust, she still holds onto the hope that she can make people see who she really is.

I'm listening to someone give up. Someone I knew. Someone I liked.
-- Clay Jensen (Cassette 3: Side B paragraph 283)

Importance: Clay is deeply upset as he listens to Hannah and realizes how real her problems were and how little he did to reach out to her.

No one knows for certain how much impact they have on the lives of other people. Oftentimes, we have no clue. Yet we push it just the same.
-- Hannah Baker (Cassette 4: Side A paragraph 68)

Importance: Hannah shares the hard-learned lesson with her listeners that people often don't realize what an effect their actions have on other people. Even though others may not realize how much they are hurting another, they still continue to push that person, sometimes to the breaking point.

My world was collapsing. I needed those notes. I needed any hope those notes might have offered.
-- Hannah Baker (Cassette 4: Side A paragraph 157)

Importance: Hannah describes how much the encouragement she might have received from the anonymous notes left in her paper bag during Peer Communications might have helped her to deal with the difficulties she was facing. Instead of allowing her to have these small encouragements, a boy in her class, who was angry because she had turned him down, stole the notes as a petty form of revenge.

No one insisted on knowing who wrote those topics. But for some reason, they refused to have a discussion on suicide without specifics.
-- Hannah Baker (Cassette 4: Side A paragraph 229)

Importance: Hannah's feelings are deeply hurt because of the way that her class members react to her anonymous note to a teacher indicating she is thinking about suicide. The other students feel that topic cannot be discussed without knowing who is thinking about suicide, even though they've discussed various other topics without knowing who might have expressed an interest in them.

I deserve to be on this list. Because if I hadn't been so afraid of everyone else, I might have told Hannah that someone cared. And Hannah might still be alive.
-- Clay Jensen (Cassette 4: Side B paragraph 60)

Importance: Even though Clay has not yet reached the part of the tapes that are about



him, he already faults himself for Hannah's death because he feels he did not do enough to show that he cared.

The poem wasn't about my mom, you said. Or a boy. It was about me. I was writing a letter to myself . . . hidden in a poem.

-- Hannah Baker (Cassette 4: Side B paragraph 140)

Importance: Hannah explains that a poem that she wrote was stolen and made public. It was a letter to herself. It was not about other things which people read into it.

Now, suddenly, even my own thoughts were being offered up for ridicule.

-- Hannah Baker (Cassette 4: Side B paragraph 165)

Importance: When Ryan Shaver makes her poem public and other students scrutinize it, Hannah feels that even her thoughts have been violated.

And that's you, Clay. But you need to be here if I'm going to tell my story. To tell it more completely.

-- Hannah Baker (Cassette 5: Side A paragraph 81)

Importance: It is with these words that Hannah tries to explain why Clay is included in her story even though he did not do anything that overtly led her to her decision to kill herself.

And when you mess with one part of a person's life, you're not messing with just that part. Unfortunately, you can't be that precise and selective. When you mess with one part of a person's life, you're messing with their entire life.

-- Hannah Baker (Cassette 5: Side A paragraph 94)

Importance: Hannah describes the way that the unkind treatment she received from the other students at school has affected every part of her life.

Because no, I didn't push her away. I didn't add to her pain or do anything to hurt her. Instead, I left her alone in that room. The only person who might've been able to reach out and save her from herself.

-- Clay Jensen (Cassette 5: Side B paragraph 4)

Importance: Here, Clay feels that he let Hannah down by not refusing to stay with her even when she asked him to leave. He feels he should have been more aware of the pain she was feeling and that he should have done something to stop her.

No, you're right, you didn't rape her. And I didn't rape her. He did. But you . . . and I . . . we let it happen.

-- Hannah Baker (Cassette 5: Side B paragraph 106)

Importance: Through her audio-taped suicide note Hannah has been chiding the other students for the way their actions affected her. It is in this quote that Hannah brings to



light the awful realization that sometimes no action is just as bad as a hurtful action. She realizes this as she and a boy remain silent while a girl gets raped.

It was to report an accident. An accident caused by a fallen sign. An accident I was never aware of . . . until then.

-- Hannah Baker (Cassette 6: Side A paragraph 212)

Importance: By the time that Hannah decides to call the police and report the downed stop sign, there has already been a fatal accident because the sign is down. Hannah feels responsible for the accident because she did not take action to report it earlier.

Some of us will be too angry at Hannah for killing herself and blaming everyone else.

-- Clay Jensen (Cassette 7: Side A paragraph 220)

Importance: Clay believes that some of the people who hear Hannah's tapes will not understand the message that she is trying to send because they will feel that she is blaming everyone around her for her own actions.

Instead, I believed what other people said about her. And I was afraid what they might say about me if they knew I liked her.

-- Clay Jensen (The Next Day After the Mailing of the Tapes paragraph 13)

Importance: Clay chastises himself for believing what others have said about Hannah instead of getting to know her personally. He is also angry with himself for being afraid of what people might think of him if he were to have been friends with her.

But Skye's walking down the same stretch of hall where I watched Hannah slip away two weeks ago.

-- Clay Jensen (The Next Day After the Mailing of the Tapes paragraph 41)

Importance: When Clay sees Skye walking down the hallway that he last saw Hannah walking down, he realizes that he has the opportunity to make a change in Skye's life where he missed his chance with Hannah.