

Three Times Lucky Study Guide

Three Times Lucky by Sheila Turnage

(c)2015 BookRags, Inc. All rights reserved.



Contents

[Three Times Lucky Study Guide.....1](#)

[Contents.....2](#)

[Plot Summary.....3](#)

[Chapters 1-3: Trouble in Tupelo Landing; The Colonel; The Three Day Rule.....6](#)

[Chapters 4-6: Meeting Up at Lavender's; At the Carolina Raceway; Keep Your Windows and Doors Locked.....9](#)

[Chapters 7-9: Desperados; Miss Lana; The Cousin Information Network.....12](#)

[Chapters 10-12: At the Tobacco Barn; Murder Weapon to Go; Stay Away from My Crime Scene.....15](#)

[Chapters 13-15: Don't Call Me Baby; Deputy Marla; A Spiritual Curveball.....18](#)

[Chapters 16-18: Lavender Blues; Mr. Jesse's Final Contribution; Miss Lana!.....21](#)

[Chapters 19-21: Listening to the Stars; A Suitcase Full of Cash; Ransom.....24](#)

[Chapters 22-24: A Town Full of Nobodies; Creative Chaos; Right Under Our Noses.....27](#)

[Chapters 25-27: A Hurricane Party; Sorry; Storm Break.....31](#)

[Chapters 28-29: Didn't See It Coming; Dear Upstream Mother.....34](#)

[Characters.....37](#)

[Symbols and Symbolism.....41](#)

[Settings.....44](#)

[Themes and Motifs.....46](#)

[Styles.....53](#)

[Quotes.....54](#)



Plot Summary

"Three Times Lucky" tells the story of a murder mystery in a small North Carolina town, Tupelo Landing, population 148. Mo, short for Moses, LoBeau is the main character and also the narrator. She is an 11-year-old rising sixth grader who was sent downstream on a makeshift raft as an infant. A man nicknamed the Colonel and a woman named Miss Lana have been raising her ever since.

On a day like every other day, many of the townspeople are eating lunch at the cafe owned by the Colonel and Miss Lana. Mo helps out most days, since their house is attached to the cafe and she likes being around her caretakers. She and Dale were supposed to go fishing, but Miss Lana left town and the Colonel is too tired to cook so Mo and Dale take over. During the lunch hour, a stranger named Detective Joe Starr from Winston-Salem arrives at the cafe, in town to investigate a murder from his jurisdiction. The townspeople, including Mo, distrust him immediately.

Dale temporarily steals Mr. Jesse's boat for his and Mo's fishing escapade, but returns it after he and Mo convince Mr. Jesse to offer a \$10 finder's fee. Mo and Dale are asked by Dale's older brother, Lavender, to time Lavender's laps at the local raceway. They are honored, and take their responsibility seriously. On their way home, they learn that Mr. Jesse has been found dead aboard his rowboat behind his house. The murder weapon is not immediately found, neither is the killer. The people of Tupelo Landing don't like uncertainty, so they begin to stick together more than usual.

Since Mo and the Colonel don't trust Detective Starr, Mo decides to take matters into her own hands and try and solve the mystery of Mr. Jesse's murder. She and Dale form Desperado Detectives, a detective agency that Mo treats as completely legitimate. She and Dale follow leads, use their resources - including townspeople and insider information - and show up at Starr's interviews and at the crime scene. Meanwhile, there is a short, round-headed man following Mo and Dale around town. Dale thinks the man is his bodyguard, but the man hides every time Mo and Dale make eye contact with him.

Miss Lana comes back from Charleston, but then the Colonel leaves. Mo doesn't like when one of them is gone, but she's used to it. This time, though, she wants the Colonel home, safe and sound. She and Dale continue following leads and trying to solve the murder. They meet Deputy Marla who says she works with Starr on communications and some field work. Mo trusts her, but Dale thinks she's conning them.

Meanwhile, Mo and Dale raise more than \$1,000 for Lavender to fix up his car so he can race in the upcoming Sycamore 200. Lavender is so thankful, he gives Mo a kiss on her cheek, which elates Mo since she has a major crush on him. Mo races home to tell Miss Lana, but when she gets to her house she discovers a ransacked living room and no Miss Lana; Miss Lana has been kidnapped.



With both of her caretakers missing, Mo stays with Dale at his house. Dale's mom, Miss Rose, takes care of her and Dale encourages her not to give up. Even though giving up is not in Mo's nature, she's highly discouraged since both of her caretakers are missing. Mo and Dale continue to follow their leads. They tell Deputy Marla an old rumor about the Colonel, hoping it gives her some information that'll lead to either him or Miss Lana.

During the investigation, Hurricane Amy begins in the ocean and makes its way toward Tupelo Landing. Mo and Dale ride out the storm at Dale's house, and Miss Rose goes to great lengths to make Mo feel at home; she lights candles, spreads junk food out on the table, and plays five-card poker with Mo and Dale, since Mo is used to Miss Lana throwing a hurricane party at home when there is one.

Dale's phones are tapped when the Colonel calls to warn Mo not trust Starr or anyone else. She can only hear snippets of his warning, since the phone lines are fuzzy, but she hears enough to know to get a packet labeled "Slate" from the Colonel's closet. Marla doesn't pick up in time, so Mo is able to lie about who the call was from. When she and Dale go to retrieve the packet, Marla and Slate aren't far behind. They discover that Marla is in with Slate, not Starr, and knock her out then flatten her tires so she can't leave when she wakes up.

Mo and Dale go to the Blalock place to find Miss Lana, but all they find is blood on the floor and on the walls. They are afraid Miss Lana has been killed, so they hurry back to Dale's house to tell Miss Rose. As the storm rages outside, Dale's alcoholic father, Mr. Macon, arrives, threatening to move back in. He insults Dale and slaps Miss Rose, which is when Mo attacks by kicking him hard in the knee. He falls to the ground and Dale picks up his mama's shotgun and points it at his father, threatening to shoot. Mr. Macon tells Dale he doesn't have it in him, but that's when the Colonel shows up and says if Dale doesn't, he does. Mo ties up Mr. Macon with an extension cord, and the group remains at Dale's house to continue riding out the storm.

The Colonel pressures Mr. Macon into telling him where Slate is, since Slate hired Mr. Macon to deliver pizzas to Miss Blalock's place. Mr. Macon tells them to check Mr. Jesse's place, since they talked about going back there. The Colonel heads over to Mr. Jesse's house with Mo and Dale, since Mo refuses to be left behind and Dale feels a sense of loyalty to Mo. There, they find Slate. Mo and Dale attack him against the Colonel's orders to stay put, but they succeed in knocking him off his feet. Slate is caught, Miss Lana is found, and the Colonel finds out he used to be a lawyer, a profession he claims to hate.

The cafe reopens two weeks later. Miss Lana tells the townspeople how she and the Colonel knew each other for many years before they separately arrived in Tupelo Landing: the Colonel was Slate's lawyer back when Slate was charged with bank robbery. Slate murdered the Colonel's secretary because the Colonel wouldn't help him get the cash he stole, for which the Colonel blamed himself. He drove to Tupelo Landing to warn Mr. Jesse that Slate would probably come for him next, since Mr. Jesse's cousin was the guard shot in the heist, but the Colonel crashed into the bridge, erasing his memory of anything before the crash. When Miss Lana arrived a week later, the Colonel



had taken on Mo and had no recollection of Miss Lana or their engagement. Miss Lana stayed because she loves the Colonel, and she wanted to help him raise Mo.

Learning the story of Miss Lana and the Colonel helps Mo finally accept them and the people of Tupelo Landing as her people. She welcomes the Colonel home after his two-week trip to Winston-Salem with Detective Starr, and her world is righted once and for all.



Chapters 1-3: Trouble in Tupelo Landing; The Colonel; The Three Day Rule

Summary

Chapters 1-3 introduce Mo as the narrator of "Three Times Lucky." As narrator, Mo explains some of the background of herself and a few of the other characters. The story takes place in Tupelo Landing, a rural town in North Carolina.

Mo is an 11-year-old rising 6th grader living in Tupelo Landing, North Carolina, who was orphaned as an infant; her birth mother built a make-shift raft, tied Mo to it, and sent her down a river. One of Mo's main caretakers, the Colonel, is the one who found and picked up Mo on the raft; he had just crashed into Fool's Bridge and caught the raft just in time. The Colonel speaks in military terms and likes to watch military-related programming on the television. He and Mo share a special relationship, as the reader can see in their interactions. Rumors surround the Colonel because the crash left him with no memory of his life prior to the crash. The Colonel calls Mo, Soldier, and she seems to enjoy the nickname.

Mo's second caretaker is Miss Lana, a creative and motherly woman who is in a relationship with and lives with the Colonel. In the first three chapters Miss Lana is in Charleston visiting her cousin. Mo doesn't like when either of her caretakers is gone, but the make-shift family has a Three Day Rule whereby when one person is out of town, he or she has to call by the third day they are gone. Even though Miss Lana and the Colonel are her adoptive parents and she knows no other mother or father, Mo calls them by their names.

Another main character is Dale, Mo's best friend. They are supposed to go fishing, but Miss Lana is out of town and the Colonel is too tired to cook so Mo has to open the cafe. The cafe is not named by the author, but it is attached to Mo's house and is the only cafe in town. Mo takes her responsibility of opening the cafe very seriously. She can't operate any of the kitchen equipment since she is only 11 years old, so she improvises the menu by offering Miss Lana's mostly organic soup (cold), a baloney and cucumber sandwich, and a peanut butter and cucumber sandwich.

The first chapter introduces Detective Joe Starr, a police detective from Winston-Salem who is in town investigating a murder. The townspeople look at him with confusion and make it clear they do not like outsiders. He asks the Colonel some questions, specifically about the Colonel's Thunderbird, and the Colonel is not truthful about when he purchased it.

Mr. Jesse is another character in the cafe. His boat is missing. Dale took it, calling it "strongly borrowed," so he and Mo could go fishing. When Mr. Jesse complains about his missing boat, Mo and Dale suggest he offer a finder's fee, which he does for \$10.



Anna Celeste Simpson is also introduced; she is Mo's classmate and sworn enemy.

The evening Mo runs the cafe, she spends time writing in her autobiography, which she calls "The Piggly Wiggly Chronicles: Volume 6." "TOP SECRET" is written on the cover along with the title. In it, Mo writes letters to her Upstream Mother telling her about life in Tupelo Landing. Miss Lana calls from Charleston, then Mo and the Colonel share popcorn as they watch a movie.

The reader also learns the reason for the title of the novel. Mo considers herself three times lucky: once when her Upstream Mother tied her to a makeshift raft and sent her downstream; twice when the Colonel picked her up from the river; and three times when Miss Lana decided to raise Mo as her own.

Analysis

The first three chapters are an introduction and set up the rest of the novel. The townspeople of Tupelo Landing who play a part in Mo's life and/or the pending murder investigation are introduced. Mo's character is made clear right from the start: she is spunky and independently-minded. Even though she is adopted - though the author never states that she is legally adopted, only that Miss Lana took her in - Mo acts with a strong sense of loyalty to her caretakers. She and the Colonel have a rhythm going that works for both of them; they seem to have a positive parent/child relationship. Their relationship may be the way it is because of one thing they have in common: neither knows where they came from. Since Mo floated downstream and the Colonel's memory is wiped out with his crash, both Mo and the Colonel know only the life they live in Tupelo Landing. To have this in common gives Mo and the Colonel a special bond beyond parent/child.

The reader might be surprised at the Colonel's demeanor; with a nickname like "the Colonel" one might expect an extremely rigid, unyielding man who is not very good at raising a girl. But since Mo is more of a tomboy, and the Colonel feels bonded with her since they arrived in Tupelo Landing at the same time, he is not afraid to show his affection. His nickname for her, Soldier, is a huge compliment since he is identified as the Colonel.

Mo is also loyal to her best friend Dale, who repays that same loyalty. The author makes it clear they go everywhere with each other, even helping the other with work-like tasks, such as opening the cafe. They are rising sixth graders, which is a time in a person's life when friends are almost just as important as family. The author makes implications that Dale's family isn't an entirely cohesive unit, and since Mo is adopted, the two seem to have found a kindred orphan spirit with each other.

With only 148 people in Tupelo Landing, it's not unusual that the author would name as many characters as she did. In fictional accounts, small towns tend to have the reputation of quirky characters, a tight-knit community, and little-to-no crime, especially violent crime. Tupelo Landing fits that exact description as described the author, with its



one cafe, one church, quirky characters, and no violent crime as of yet. When Detective Joe Starr comes into town, both as an outsider and a member of law enforcement, the town doesn't take kindly to him for those two reasons. Why would an outsider come to a town of 148 people? Why would a member of law enforcement come to Tupelo Landing, when there is no crime to investigate? These kinds of questions leave the townspeople of Tupelo Landing confused and standoffish to Detective Starr, now and through the rest of the novel.

The reason for the title of the novel, the three reasons Mo considers herself lucky, is an example of Mo's character: she is positive, appreciates what she has, and sees things differently than most other people she comes across. This character trait does her well throughout the novel, as she is able to see things others can't, and it makes her unafraid to go after what she's looking for.

Discussion Question 1

What can you glean from the conversations between Mo and Dale about their roles in Tupelo Landing?

Discussion Question 2

What seems to concern Mo most about the Colonel's lie about when he purchased the Thunderbird?

Discussion Question 3

Why might Mo keep her autobiography top secret from the Colonel and Miss Lana?

Vocabulary

mongrel, hydrangea, buzzard, idling, unsubstantiated, carnivore, tittered, fop, molten, autobiography, mutiny, lolled, intuitive, whim



Chapters 4-6: Meeting Up at Lavender's; At the Carolina Raceway; Keep Your Windows and Doors Locked

Summary

Chapter 4 begins the following day with Mr. Jesse at the cafe. Mo wants to go fishing but Dale doesn't want to until Mr. Jesse is less upset about his boat. Dale claims he's not afraid of getting caught, he just doesn't want to go to jail. Mo and Dale head to Lavender's place to watch him work on his own racecar. Mo goes ahead of Dale, as Dale goes to check on his mom.

Mo has a huge crush on Lavender and is convinced she will marry him someday. Lavender treats her kindly, not indulging in her claim that they'll marry but not being unkind, either. When Mo expresses concern to Lavender that the Colonel lied about when he purchased the Thunderbird, Lavender is concerned, too, because everyone knows the Colonel doesn't lie. Lavender mentions the fact that nobody knows where the Colonel comes from or who his people are, but then apologizes to Mo for making it sound like those things matter in order to trust a person. Mo moves on from the comment quickly. They talk about what makes a true family and Mo's autobiography.

Mo and Dale time Lavender's laps at the Carolina Raceway as he practices for the next big race, the Sycamore 200. Mo gets permission from the Colonel to miss Karate Night at the cafe, while Dale returns Mr. Jesse's boat for the \$10 reward money.

Chapter 5 takes place at the Carolina Raceway. Mo runs in to her teacher, Miss Retzyl, whom Mo is surprised to see since she's only ever seen Miss Retzyl at school. Mo comments extensively on how much she is surprised by Miss Retzyl's wardrobe, the fact that her knees are showing, and the fact that she has friends. When Mo goes back to Dale, the two are shocked to see that Miss Retzyl is sitting with Detective Joe Starr. Mo and Dale watch the race, timing Lavender's laps, until Lavender crashes. Doc Aikin patches Lavender up, but the car is totaled.

Dale offers Lavender to stay at their house for the night, but Lavender doesn't want to because of their alcoholic father. On their way home from the raceway, they are turned around at Fool's Bridge because the bridge is closed, though no one knows why. Miss Rose (Dale and Lavender's mom) learns of the crash and Lavender's injuries. She is angry at Sam Quinerly, Lavender's friend, for getting Lavender into racing. Mo wants to spend the night to take care of Lavender because Doc Aikin made her Doctor Appointed, but the Colonel wants her home immediately; he wants her safe with him after learning that Mr. Jesse has been murdered.



Chapter 6 is mostly the reaction of the town to Mr. Jesse's death. Karate Night is still going on at the cafe, and Mo is paired with Anna Celeste. Mayor Little arrives after others had come to the cafe looking for answers to Mr. Jesse's murder, and also looking for company. Mo and Dale realize that Anna Celeste saw Dale returning Mr. Jesse's rowboat, and are afraid she'll divulge the information to Starr. Starr arrives at the cafe and begins asking various townspeople about their alibi for the time when Mr. Jesse was killed. Mo is defensive with Detective Starr until the Colonel tells her to "stand down." Starr then begins asking about Mr. Jesse and states that he believes this murder is connected to the Winston-Salem murder Starr originally came into town investigating.

The reader finds out that Mr. Jesse had no family to speak of and that most people in town didn't like him. Detective Starr confronts the Colonel about the true timeline for purchasing the Thunderbird. The Colonel apologized for lying, reasoning that he doesn't trust law enforcement. After he leaves the cafe, the Colonel states that he thinks Detective Starr is going to be trouble, and Mo agrees.

Analysis

Mo and Dale are still shown to spend most of their time together, confirming to the reader their state as best friends. They work together at the cafe, they go to school together, fish together, and now head to Lavender's together. As Mo is on her way to Lavender's, she explains to the reader that she is in love with Lavender and intends to marry him someday. Her revelation may not surprise the reader, since Mo already acts like she wants to be older than her 11 years. Between working at the cafe, writing an autobiography, taking her Doctor Appointed role from Doc Aikin seriously, and wanting to marry a young man eight years her senior, Mo doesn't make any effort to hide her desire for maturity and responsibility.

Dale, on the other hand, is the opposite. Though he is honored to be asked by Lavender to time Lavender's laps at the raceway, his comments and actions are more immature than Mo's. He seems happy to go along as Mo's sidekick in life, rather than taking the lead. The author gives the first hint that Dale is upset with Mo for wanting to know her birth mother. He seems offended that he, the Colonel, Miss Lana, and the rest of town aren't good enough for Mo to consider family. Since Dale comes from a family with an angry, alcoholic family, he has found a kindred spirit and a kind of friendship home with Mo. But Mo's strong desire, sometimes obsessive desire, to find her birth mom might put him off.

Mr. Jesse's murder rocks the town of Tupelo Landing. The small, rural town of just 148 people - now 147 - is completely unaccustomed to violent crime. They like their protected bubble of safety and predictability. This event turns the entire town upside down, so that they are afraid to be out and about; they gather at the store because they know they'll be among friends.

Along with Mr. Jesse's murder comes Detective Joe Starr, an outsider who also turns the town on its tail. The people of Tupelo Landing don't take kindly to strangers; they are



used to each other and they don't want anything to change. Starr will have to work to prove himself, though he doesn't seem to care about doing that. He just wants to solve the murder case from Winston-Salem. But he's starting in the negative in Tupelo Landing, so getting help from the townspeople will prove to be a difficult task.

Discussion Question 1

What can the reader tell about Lavender's character by his interaction with Mo?

Discussion Question 2

Why is Dale really upset with Mo for writing her autobiography?

Discussion Question 3

Why do the Colonel and Mo agree that Detective Starr is in trouble?

Vocabulary

meringue, buttonhook, vulnerable, comrade, kudzu, rutted, careened, billowing, concussion, jealousy, brewery, idiocy, warbled, overzealous



Chapters 7-9: Desperados; Miss Lana; The Cousin Information Network

Summary

In chapter 7, Mo and the Colonel go home after everyone has left the cafe. Mo's Elvis nightlight that she always leaves on isn't lit, but when the Colonel investigates he finds it's just burned out. Mo and the Colonel are both worried about Miss Lana, but neither says so. Mo writes a letter to her Upstream Mother telling her of Mr. Jesse's murder and conversations she's had with Lavender and Miss Lana about wanting a normal family.

When the Colonel takes a shower, Mo calls Dale to tell him that he's the prime murder suspect because of him borrowing Mr. Jesse's boat. She tells him to stay out of town until she tells him differently. However, Dale shows up at Mo's flat in the middle of the night, terrified of being considered a prime murder suspect. Mo determines that she and Dale should start their own detective agency, Desperado Detectives, so they can find Mr. Jesse's killer themselves. As they're discussing the case, a stranger appears at Mo's window. She and Dale scream, and Mo hurls her snowglobe at the window. The round-faced, bald man jumps back and disappears. Mo and Dale try to get the Colonel's attention, but he doesn't answer. Mo assumes he's dead, but they find out he left and Miss Lana has come home.

In chapter 8, Mo and Dale tell Miss Lana about the stranger at Mo's window. Miss Lana calls Tinks Williams to come check out their property for any suspicious activity. Mo, Dale, and Miss Lana wait for confirmation of safety in Miss Lana's room, amidst her celebrity wigs. Mo and Dale clue in Miss Lana on their Desperado Detectives agency as the reason for Dale's visit so late in the night. They are also the ones to let Miss Lana know that Mr. Jesse is dead; she thought he was a suspected killer. Mo thanks Miss Lana for coming home so quickly, and Miss Lana makes sure Mo knows she'll always come home for her. Before going to bed, Mo writes another letter to her Upstream Mother about the events of the night as well as a recurring dream Mo has about finding a message from her Upstream Mother.

In chapter 9, Mo and Dale secure the services of Skeeter McMillan and Sally Amanda Jones (Salamander). Skeeter considers herself to be pre-law, and between the two of them they offer access to the Cousin Information Network; Skeeter and Sally Amanda have a lot of cousins in the county, and access to the Network would give Mo and Dale a greater chance for obtaining important information. The foursome discuss the fact that Anna Celeste saw Dale returning Mr. Jesse's boat. Mo and Dale want the information kept confidential, but Skeeter assures them that Anna Celeste will do what she wants with the information.

Mo and Dale advertise Desperado Detectives at the cafe. Their services include finding lost pets for free and solving murders. Miss Lana and Reverend Thompson decide to



hold a funeral service for Mr. Jesse at Creekside Church. They hire Mo and Dale to find his cat Spitz, last seen at the churchyard around when Mr. Jesse was found dead. At the conclusion on the chapter, Mo and Dale head over to the crime scene.

Analysis

Mo and Dale begin their investigation, which should not be surprising to the reader given Mo and Dale's character thus far. She likes answers, she wants to be in the know, and she acts more maturely than other 11-year-olds. Here the reader can see the themes of friendship and growing up being developed through the characters and their relationships with one another. Dale's character leans more on the supportive side; he seems more content not knowing as long as he isn't in trouble. Even though he encourages Mo to stay away from danger, Dale goes along with her in the spirit of best friendship. Mo is the lead in their friendship, and Dale goes along with her because he trusts her, she treats him with respect, and even though she might steer him into an adventure he's not ready for, she protects him all the way through.

The author begins using foreshadowing as the town begins processing Mr. Jesse's murder and Mo begins her investigation. The man at the window is connected to Dale's bodyguard, which is evident when the bodyguard doesn't make himself known, he's always hiding. A bodyguard is usually out in the open so he or she can immediately protect whomever they're supposed to protect. Since Dale's bodyguard is hiding, and there is a killer on the loose, the reader might pick up on the connection between the two.

The events of the day cause Mo to consider her Upstream Mother. She not only writes a letter, but she also dreams a recurring dream about finding a message from her Upstream Mother. Mo is 11 years old and doesn't know who her birth parents are. Even though she has plenty of friends and family in Tupelo Landing, Mo likes answers. She wants to know where she comes from, why her mom gave her away, and what made her send Mo downstream. Mo seems to use her autobiography as her diary, as well, and she processes her feelings and events from the day by writing them in letters to her Upstream Mother.

Though Mo voices hope that she'll one day find her Upstream Mother, it may be difficult for her to really believe since she's been sending bottles with no success. False bravado is one of Mo's trademarks in "Three Times Lucky," which the reader can see by noting Mo's words versus how she feels on the inside during a scary or tense situation. She again expresses her desire to be grown-up by forming Desperado Detectives and taking matters in to her own hands. She is demonstrating a desire to be in control, as she continually attempts to gain power in any given situation.

Discussion Question 1

Why does Mo want a 'normal' family?



Discussion Question 2

What's the significance of the dream Mo writes about in the letter to her Upstream Mother?

Discussion Question 3

Why might Lana and the Reverend want to host a funeral/memorial service for Mr. Jesse when he didn't have many friends?

Vocabulary

chifforobe, blabbed, cul-de-sac, peculiar, incriminating, settee, valise, rhetorical, flatlined, autopsied, confidential, illusion



Chapters 10-12: At the Tobacco Barn; Murder Weapon to Go; Stay Away from My Crime Scene

Summary

In chapter 10, Miss Rose is upset with Dale for being out of the house in the middle of the night. As punishment, he is ordered to clean out their old tobacco barn, clean out the stable, take the manure to Miss Rose's garden, and repair the things under their lean-to shelter. Mo lets Miss Rose know that they've started a detective agency, so Dale can't do all those things because they have to look for Spitz and Mr. Jesse's murderer. Miss Rose tells Mo that she better open a branch of their agency in the tobacco barn, because that's where Dale is going to be for a long time.

Mo and Dale head out to the tobacco barn and are overwhelmed by its size and the amount of work it will take to clean it. Miss Rose walks up behind them and offers Mo a ride to the cafe. On their way, Mo thinks of the crime scene just two miles away that she's having difficulty getting to.

In chapter 11, Mo is begging Miss Lana to bring her or let her go to the crime scene. Miss Lana, in a parental tone, tells her it's not safe. She gives Mo a present from Charleston: a green scrapbook for Mo's autobiography. Miss Lana had started it, with articles about the Colonel's crash, the cafe's grand opening, their housewarming, and Mo's kindergarten graduation. Mo looks through the scrapbook, asking questions as they go. She notices a suitcase in the Colonel's hand and asks Miss Lana if that's the suitcase rumored to be full of money. Miss Lana laughs off Mo's comment, saying Mr. Macon started that rumor.

Miss Lana concedes and says Mo can go to Mr. Jesse's, but not alone. Mo makes it to the crime scene with Redneck Red, where Moshalf is lingering around the edge of Mr. Jesse's property waiting for information from Detective Starr, who is on the property investigating. Sally Amanda asks Mo if she and Miss Lana will cater out where everyone is, noting that nobody will want to leave until they get some information. Mo has Sally Amanda take the orders while she rides her bike to the creek so she can do some investigating on her own. She hears Starr and a woman being called Deputy Marla, as well as a cop named Ben. Mo makes a noise that startles the investigators; when her identity is revealed they drop their weapons. Mo goes to pull up what she thought was a root, but was actually the oar to Mr. Jesse's boat, the end of which is covered in blood.

In chapter 12, Mo is escorted back to the cafe in Detective Starr's unmarked police car. Mo maintains she didn't cross a crime scene since she was in the creek, but Starr remains irritated that she's interfering with the murder investigation. Mo lets Starr know



that she's a detective and points out that without her, they wouldn't have a murder weapon.

Starr brings Mo back to the cafe, which Miss Lana has decorated in a 1930s Paris theme. The lunches for the townspeople hanging out at Mr. Jesse's are prepared, so Mo asks for a ride back to Mr. Jesse's from Starr, but he ignores her. Starr wants to talk to the Colonel, who isn't around, but Mo and Miss Lana don't want him to know that. Mo calls his name, then comments that he must not be able to hear her. Miss Lana plays along.

Detective Starr and Miss Lana talk about Mr. Jesse's murder and some possibilities for a murder suspect. Miss Lana comments that Mr. Jesse's had a girlfriend whose husband is a jealous man. Mo is upset that Miss Lana gave Starr her best clues. Starr secures Miss Lana's alibi of being on a bus coming from Charleston at the time of the murder. After their conversation, Starr offers to drive Mo back to Mr. Jesse's, but Miss Lana insists she take Mo instead.

Mr. Macon, Dale's father, has been sitting in the cafe during the interaction between Mo, Miss Lana, and Starr. When Starr mentions that bad parenting can lead a child to murder another person, Mr. Macon takes it personally and verbally attacks Starr. Mr. Macon also defends Dale and insults Miss Rose. Miss Lana tells him that Miss Rose is the reason he's not in jail, and that he's the reason for mountain of bills and "a heart turned to stone with grief." Miss Lana also defends Dale to Starr, saying he is a gentle soul and that he couldn't be paid to kill a garden snake.

Analysis

Miss Rose demonstrates her parenting style: consequences for improper behavior. In this case, sneaking out in the middle of the night. Even though he left a note and was at Mo's, a home Miss Rose trusts, Dale still broke the rules. Miss Rose is also exercising her sense of power here, possibly because her oldest son doesn't live there anymore and her husband is an out-of-control alcoholic who verbally and physically abuses her and Dale. By giving Dale a consequence for his behavior, Miss Rose is reminded that she still has some control in her family.

The story's theme of friendship is demonstrated time and time again. It's important to note that Dale's punishment is an example of how even though Mo and Dale wish they were older and act in ways that makes them think they're older, both are still just 11-year-old kids who can be told what to do by their parents. In a small Southern town, respecting one's elders is likely extremely important. And since Dale doesn't like to be in trouble and likes to keep the peace, he wouldn't say no to his mama when she gives him an instruction. Also, since Mo considers Dale to be her very best friend and she is loyal by nature, Mo wouldn't let Dale go to the barn on his own.

An important object in Mo's life story is the scrapbook Miss Lana gifts her from Charleston. The reader can see the theme of family here; even though they are not all



of the same blood, Miss Lana, the Colonel, and Mo make up a family. Mo has no idea where she comes from and who her birth parents are, but she'd like to know. Mo knows Miss Lana and the Colonel love her like their own flesh-and-blood daughter, but she might be wondering how different the feelings are when it's actually one's own flesh-and-blood child. Mo's life started off on a make-shift raft floating down a river; her entire life has been based on a question mark. She's writing her own autobiography because nobody else started her story for her. This scrapbook will help Mo remember that even though her origins are unknown, she is abundantly loved by those who currently care for her.

Mo's senses of maturity and responsibility are heightened and then confirmed, in her eyes anyway, when she finds the murder weapon in Mr. Jesse's creek. She couldn't stand not knowing what Starr and his people were up to. She also couldn't stand how long she felt like the investigation was already taking; Mo likes things to happen fast, and when they don't, her impatience gets the best of her.

Family comes into play again when Mr. Macon defends Dale at the cafe to Starr. His belligerence gets the best of him when he verbally attacks Starr for indicating that he's a bad father. The defense of his son can be seen more as a matter of selfish pride than protection for his son; Mr. Macon doesn't treat Dale with kindness or respect, he just doesn't want to be embarrassed by being put in his place, especially by an outsider.

Discussion Question 1

What is the significance of the conversation Miss Lana and Mo have when Miss Lana gives Mo the scrapbook?

Discussion Question 2

If nobody really liked Mr. Jesse, why is half the town lingering on the edge of his property while Starr and his team investigates his murder?

Discussion Question 3

Who might Mo include in the scrapbook given to her by Miss Lana?

Vocabulary

suspect, condemned, privy, narcissus, finicky, underbrush, ramble, gunnells, bohemian, mercurial



Chapters 13-15: Don't Call Me Baby; Deputy Marla; A Spiritual Curveball

Summary

In chapter 13, Miss Lana drives Mo to where the townspeople are lingering around Mr. Jesse's property. Miss Lana doesn't know how to drive, so Mo questions her and asks her to consider another way to get there. Mo even offers to drive instead of Miss Lana. Mo coaches Miss Lana on some of the technicalities of the car and of driving, such as what R and D stand for. They drop off the lunches at Mr. Jesse's then go to Dale's to let Miss Rose know that Starr is looking for her and Dale.

The four of them go to Mr. Jesse's place so Starr can talk to Dale, who confesses that he did steal - in his eyes, borrow - Mr. Jesse's rowboat. Dale makes up the conversation with Mr. Jesse to make it look more positive than it was. Upon prompting, though, Dale tells Starr and Miss Rose the truth about when he returned the boat to Mr. Jesse. Starr doesn't believe Dale that he was alone because there were two sets of footprints where Dale hid the boat as well as by the creek bed. Mo reminds Dale that those prints are Lavender's, and Dale remembers that he borrowed Lavender's shoes.

Starr handcuffs Dale in case the killer is watching the interaction between the two of them, but takes them off as soon as they get to the cafe. Dale appreciates it as a setup for the killer, and with a sense of maturity tells his mother to not call him 'Baby' and holds out his hands for Starr.

In chapter 14, Dale soaks up his new-found fame. Anna Celeste can no longer hold anything over Mo and Dale's head, because Starr now knows it was him that she saw near Mr. Jesse's rowboat. The funeral is the next day and Miss Lana is trying to write a eulogy. Mo is still worried about the Colonel, but Miss Lana tells her not to worry; it's only the second day. Miss Lana asks Mo to drop off some gladiolas to Miss Retzyl, who offered to do the flower arrangement for the funeral.

At Miss Retzyl's, Mo makes a big deal out of being there. Mo also gets a chance to meet Deputy Marla, Starr's deputy. Marla does communications and fieldwork for Starr. She offers Mo a ride back to the cafe, but Miss Retzyl intervenes and gives Mo the ride instead.

In chapter 15, the entire town shows up for Mr. Jesse's funeral. Anna Celeste and Dale share a positive interaction, much to Mo's dismay. Anna Celeste's mom takes her away from the conversation, and when they're gone Mo punches Dale on the arm and asks if he's really singing at the funeral. As they're walking into the church, the twins that Lavender insulted by not dating either one of them swerved like they were going to hit him. Dale tells Lavender of his bodyguard, a short guy who sweats a lot.



Mo and Dale sit in the front pew beside Miss Lana. Miss Rose sat at the piano and played prayers for Mr. Jesse. There are out-of-towners at the service, so Mo scanned the crowd for anyone who looked like her, hoping she would finally find her Upstream Mother. Miss Lana gave a short eulogy, then asks everyone in the service to share something they learned from Mr. Jesse. She calls on Mo to be first, and Mo says she learned that one should tip well no matter how stingy they are. She also threatens the killer, hoping he's in the room. It is also revealed that Mr. Jesse slid a hundred dollars under the church door every Saturday night for at least 11 years.

After the service Deputy Marla approaches Mo, asking Mo if there's anything she wanted to tell her. Mo confesses she was hoping Marla could help with the case of her Upstream Mother, but Marla says they don't usually handle missing persons cases. After their conversation, Mo goes to Reverend Thompson's office where Starr is already conducting an interview for the investigation. This confirms that Mr. Jesse left the \$100 under the church door each week, and Mo and Starr wonder where he got that kind of money. Mo writes another letter to her Upstream Mother about death, faith, and the Colonel still not calling.

Analysis

A sense of small town cohesiveness can be seen in chapter 13, when instead of going to the cafe for lunch they all linger outside Mr. Jesse's property. They don't feel safe alone, so they stay together. The townspeople want to know who murdered Mr. Jesse and why, and they figure the best way to find that out is to stake out the crime scene while it's being investigated. They're also likely keeping an eye on Detective Starr, since he's an outsider they're not inclined to trust. They're even less inclined to trust him when he vaguely accuses Dale of being involved.

Cohesiveness among the people of Tupelo Landing can also be seen at Mr. Jesse's funeral. Nobody really liked Mr. Jesse, yet the entire town shows up to his funeral. If they didn't care about community, they wouldn't all show up to honor someone they didn't particularly care for. But because Mr. Jesse was one of their own, they show up. Mo is surprised, which speaks to the fact that she seems to have trouble accepting the fact that she is one of the Tupelo Landing townspeople. In her search for her Upstream Mother, she talks about not knowing who her people are. She doesn't seem to understand the staying power of the Colonel, Miss Lana, Dale, and the rest of the townspeople who treat her like one of their own.

Mo attempts to exert her power and show that she wants to be considered more than just an average sixth grader when she threatens the killer, if he's in the sanctuary, during Mr. Jesse's funeral. She is trying to show the killer and the town that she can and will help in the investigation. Not only does she think she can do a better job than Starr, especially because she found the murder weapon, but she thinks she can do it faster by getting inside information that an outsider wouldn't be able to obtain. She's using her position as a member of the town to achieve her goal.



The information that's revealed about Mr. Jesse - that he gave the church \$100 every week for 11 years - comes as a complete surprise to the community. The author is revealing the story one layer at a time. She is hinting at Mr. Jesse's involvement in and/or connection to the Winston-Salem murder Starr originally came to investigate. At this point, if the reader can string together the clues the author gives, the murder mystery is becoming clearer and clearer: there's a mysterious bodyguard for Dale who doesn't actually stand guard near Dale; a mysterious weekly \$100; and the Colonel not giving a reason for going out of town and not calling home. The author is giving the reader clues about who is involved in what, foreshadowing what's to come one detail at a time.

Discussion Question 1

Why might Miss Lana insist on driving even though she's known for not knowing how to drive?

Discussion Question 2

What clue does the author give that Deputy Marla might not be so trustworthy?

Discussion Question 3

What change has there been in the tone of Mo's letters to her Upstream Mother from the beginning of the story up until now?

Vocabulary

careening, asphalt, ominous, incarcerated, scrawny, skedaddled, cantankerous, faux, eulogy, trellis, forsythia, hubbub



Chapters 16-18: Lavender Blues; Mr. Jesse's Final Contribution; Miss Lana!

Summary

In chapter 16, the Three Day Rule has passed and the Colonel still hasn't called. Both Mo and Lana are worried, though Lana is acting like she's not. Mo and Dale leave the cafe to go to Lavender's then to look for clues. The three of them discuss the Colonel and whether or not they should tell Starr that he's missing; they decide not to because the Colonel doesn't like Starr. Instead, they decide to tell Deputy Marla.

Lavender tells Mo and Dale that he won't be able to race in the Sycamore 200 because his car won't be fixed in time; they don't have the money to purchase the parts they need. Mo offers to raise the money for him, which she does, along with Dale, by selling advertisements to be displayed on Lavender's car for various businesses in town.

Upon leaving Lavender's, Mo and Dale see Dale's bodyguard, whom they call Plainclothes Phil. Dale comments that he isn't very friendly, as the guy darts behind an azalea bush. The two friends start for the church to convince Thes to let them in the church to look for more clues.

In chapter 17, Mo gets a photocopy of Mr. Jesse's last \$100 contribution from Thes, who copied it before his dad gave it to Detective Starr. Thes lets Mo and Dale into the sanctuary, where Mo stumbles on Anna Celeste's mother scolding her daughter for not singing well enough. Mo doesn't like the way Mrs. Simpson is talking to Anna Celeste so she bursts in to tell the mom to stop before she realizes who it is. She calls Mrs. Simpson 'Mrs. Sampson' on purpose as a small dig.

On their way back to the cafe Mo tells Dale what she saw. Dale comments that Mrs. Simpson would make a terrible mother-in-law. At the cafe, Mo asks Deputy Marla about the case. There's nothing new to report, so Marla tells Mo about how she is an orphan, just like Mo. Marla leaves the cafe but Mo runs after her, asking what she should do about the Colonel not calling within their three day timeline. Mo frames the question in the hypothetical sense, not wanting to betray the Colonel's confidences.

The Colonel finally calls, though Miss Lana is still concerned due to the strange nature of the call: he calls Miss Lana 'baby' and Mo, 'Moses'. That night, Mo is restless and has trouble sleeping. She has her same old dream about finding a message floating in the river, but when she goes to read the words they blur.

In chapter 18, Mo and Dale sell advertisements to be displayed on Lavender's car during the race. They easily raise more than \$1,000. Lavender is so thankful, he gives Mo a kiss on her face. Mo and Dale run to Mo's, where they find the livingroom ransacked, Miss Lana gone, and a ransom note. Starr and Marla arrive to investigate



Miss Lana's disappearance. Mo becomes increasingly upset, and Marla suggests Dale call his mother for help. To calm herself down, Mo thinks of something the Colonel told her about the stars helping a person find their way back from being lost. When Miss Rose arrives, Mo sobs to her.

Mo, Miss Rose, Dale, Starr, and Marla talk about Miss Lana and who might have taken her. Dale finds out that his "undercover man" is actually a man named Slate, a wanted bank robber. Marla claims she hasn't seen Slate, even though he's been everywhere Mo and Dale have been and Marla's been watching them. Miss Rose brings Mo and Dale back to Mo's so she can gather a few things to stay overnight at Dale's.

Analysis

Mo remains preoccupied with the Colonel being gone and not having called. Being an orphan with no ties to real family, the Colonel and Miss Lana are the two most important people in Mo's life. Not knowing where one of them is and if he's okay is stressful and worrisome for Mo, a girl who doesn't like to worry and likes to be thought of as fearless. She also probably can't stand not helping bring the Colonel home, even though she doesn't know if he's missing by choice or by force. By telling Deputy Marla, Mo thinks she can help the situation. Mo's need to feel productive and in the loop of everything is satisfied.

The author is again touching on the oddity that is Dale's bodyguard; he darts behind a bush when Mo and Dale look his way. Why would a bodyguard hide from the person he's supposed to be guarding? Because he is hiding something himself and doesn't want to be seen. The reader should note that though he is only mentioned a couple of times, the guy Mo and Dale call Plainclothes Phil is pertinent to the story. He's also not helping ease any of Mo and Dale's discomfort with the entire situation. They just want the murderer found and everyone to be home and safe. Having a "bodyguard" who hides behind bushes just increases their uneasiness.

The kindness of the Colonel and Miss Lana has clearly been passed down to Mo, since she doesn't hesitate to subtly help Anna Celeste when Anna's mother is being mean to her. Mo's character is maturing, not keeping to her hard-and-fast rule of never helping her sworn enemy. She sees that everybody has something in their life that brings them sadness, anger, and frustration. Mo can understand that, since she has been trying for a long time to locate her birth mother. Her empathy is helping her mature.

The reader should note the Colonel's strange call he makes to Miss Lana. She is confused about him calling her baby and Mo, Moses, but this is just one more detail the author is using to reveal the mystery of who killed Mr. Jesse. The Colonel is sending warning signals by calling Miss Lana and Mo names he never uses; he's hoping it'll encourage Miss Lana and Mo to stay on their guard.

Mo's sense of family and her gratefulness for the Colonel and Miss Lana for taking her in is more pronounced now than ever, as she realizes how much she needs them. The



Colonel has given her words of encouragement that she now relies on to carry her through one of the most fearful nights she can remember experiencing. Mo has no idea where her two caretakers are and if they're safe, so she relies on their memory and the strength they've given her in the past.

Discussion Question 1

What other motivation, aside from her crush on Lavender, does Mo have for helping Lavender race in the Sycamore 200?

Discussion Question 2

What does Anna Celeste's reaction to Mo calling her mother Mrs. Sampson reveal about Anna's character?

Discussion Question 3

Why might the Colonel have used different names for Miss Lana (Baby) and Mo (Moses)?

Vocabulary

snookered, swagger, oar, hypothetical, solvent, goddess, mahogany, helter-skelter, haphazardly, silhouetted, granite, mugshot



Chapters 19-21: Listening to the Stars; A Suitcase Full of Cash; Ransom

Summary

In chapter 19, Mo is staying at Dale's house because the Colonel is gone and Miss Lana is missing. Queen Elizabeth II, Dale's dog, keeps Mo company in Dale's room, where Mo sleeps alone. Dale checks on Mo with a peanut butter sandwich. Dale wants to know where he and Mo are going to start in looking for Miss Lana. Mo is too upset to join Dale in believing they'll find Miss Lana. They toss ideas back and forth about why Slate might have taken Miss Lana.

To get herself to sleep, Mo reminds herself of the Colonel's words about letting the stars sing her to sleep. She dragged Dale's beanbag chair to the window and fell asleep there.

In chapter 20, Mo decides she wants to tell Starr about the Colonel's suitcase full of cash and the night he crashed into Tupelo Landing. She thinks it will help him with the investigation. Lavender agrees, but Mo mentions that they have to tell the story carefully so as to ensure Starr takes the Colonel seriously. Miss Rose reassures Mo that everyone takes the Colonel seriously; he only lost the mayoral race by one vote the previous year.

Miss Rose recounts the day she met Miss Lana and Mo, which includes the story about the Colonel having a stack of cash that he kept in a suitcase with a load of baby things. When Starr arrives to Miss Rose's house, Mo tells Starr about the rumor of the Colonel having a suitcase full of cash. To give him more detail, Mo shows Starr the Colonel's page in her scrapbook, which contains a letter written by the Colonel to Mo. The letter recounts how Mo was born in a hurricane, and a proposed story of how her mother decided to send her downstream.

Detective Starr takes the serial number off of the \$1 bill hanging in the cafe, hoping it is connected to Slate's bank robbery. Mo defends the Colonel, but Starr reminds her that everything he finds leads him closer to finding Miss Lana. Dale returns to the cafe dining area after answering the phone. When Miss Rose asks him who was on the phone, Dale tells everyone it was Slate, who said he would call back later.

In chapter 21, Grandmother Miss Lacy Thornton arrives at Miss Rose's for lunch. Mo and Dale join them, while Starr and Deputy Marla finish hooking up their phone-tracing equipment. By the middle of the day, half the town had shown up at Miss Rose's for lunch, since they couldn't go to the cafe. Mo asked Skeeter to check the serial numbers off of the \$1 bill from the cafe, as well as a \$5 bill.



The townspeople are waiting for any news on the investigation. The first phone call is another person in town calling Miss Rose to talk about her garden. The second phone call is a telemarketer. In the mean-time, Anna Celeste brings Mo a few nice bottles for Mo to put her letters to her Upstream Mother in. The third phone call is Slate, calling for Mo. He threatens Mo to be quiet if she wants to see the Colonel and Miss Lana again. Mo yells at him a couple times until the line went quiet except for a loud screeching in the background. Detective Starr gets on the phone, and the captor asks for a half-million dollars to return the Colonel and Miss Lana. Mo is upset that she couldn't keep her mouth shut, and when she ponders the thought of Slate killing the Colonel and Miss Lana, she throws up all over Starr's black leather shoes.

Analysis

Now that Miss Lana is missing, Mo needs Dale to stay optimistic for her. She's been fairly optimistic during the murder investigation, her optimism waning when the Colonel left but not completely disappearing. Part of being best friends is picking up the emotional slack when one person can't carry his or her weight. In this case, that means Dale believing for Mo that Miss Lana is safe, and that she will be found. Dale's unwavering loyalty to Mo is one of the reasons he gets so mad when she obsesses about her Upstream Mother. He feels like she's communicating that his friendship and loyalty aren't good enough.

The information Mo and crew share with Starr is given with careful consideration. They don't want to make a misstep, since they still don't trust Starr. And they don't want to betray the Colonel's confidences, since he really doesn't trust Starr. However, since the Colonel isn't there to speak for himself, his friends and family have to make the choice for him, and if the information could help bring him and Miss Lana back, Mo thinks it's worth it. However, she is unsure when Starr takes the serial number off the \$1 bill hanging in the cafe. Starr is still suspecting the Colonel of being connected to Slate's bank robbery, but Mo will defend the Colonel if it's the last thing she does.

The town's support for Miss Lana, the Colonel, and Mo, is again evident when they go to Miss Rose's for lunch, still waiting for answers. They want to know where the Colonel and Miss Lana are, and they will hang around Starr until they find out. They also want to stick together, and once enough of the regular cafe patrons had gone to Miss Rose's, more were sure to follow. If they can't have lunch together at the cafe, they'll have lunch together somewhere else because that's what communities do.

Unfortunately, Mo's optimism continues to wain after she yells at Slate when he calls. Her emotions take over and she threatens him, but he threatens her, too, and then asks Starr for half a million dollars to return the Colonel and Miss Lana. Mo's distress over not staying quiet can be translated as her blaming herself for the Colonel and Miss Lana not being returned yet. She wants them back more than anything, but her impulsiveness has gotten the best of her. She also wants the Colonel and Miss Lana to be proud of her, and she likely thinks they wouldn't be proud of her actions on the phone. Mo can be



hard on herself if she feels like she's failed herself, the Colonel, or Miss Lana, and this is one of those instances.

Discussion Question 1

What is the significance of the Colonel's words about the stars singing Mo to sleep?

Discussion Question 2

What is the main hesitancy about telling Starr about the Colonel's crash and the rumor about his suitcase full of cash?

Discussion Question 3

What character traits does Mo exhibit when talking to Slate on the phone?

Vocabulary

terrarium, gingham, rumor, dike, gizmo, seersucker, telemarketer, ransom, coax



Chapters 22-24: A Town Full of Nobodies; Creative Chaos; Right Under Our Noses

Summary

In chapter 22, Mo wakes up Friday morning in Miss Rose's room. Dale makes her a tomato sandwich, which she eats quickly. Mo can't believe she slept so long. The two friends start walking out to the tobacco barn but run into Deputy Marla. Mo's suddenly uncomfortable. She asks Mo about the Colonel possibly having a safe, a lockbox, or a bank book they might be able to find as a clue. Mo and Dale insist Mo doesn't know, and Marla insists that it's quite a coincidence that Slate's asking for half a million dollars, the same amount he and an accomplice stole from a bank many years ago.

On their way to the tobacco barn, Dale tells Mo that Deputy Marla is playing her and that Marla is a con. Skeeter showed up with a broccoli casserole, her mama's death dish. Dale and Mo are worried Skeeter found out that someone died, but she said they just didn't know what to make for a kidnapping.

Dale finds out Mo gave Skeeter a \$5 bill to check out with her cousin who works at a bank. He's upset that she didn't tell him about the bill. She has no answer for why she didn't tell him, but says that if she can't figure out the mystery she's alone. Dale gets upset again because Mo acts like nobody in town cares for her. He reminds her of all the people who have helped her and all the ways they've helped her. Mo apologizes about an hour later, and the two are okay again. Mo tells Dale that if his daddy tries to hurt him when she's around, she'll use her karate skills on him. She also tells him the real reason she didn't tell him about the \$5: she was ashamed that she wasn't completely sure about her information.

Mo writes another letter to her Upstream Mother about the investigation and the bottles she'll be dropping soon.

In chapter 23, Hurricane Amy makes its way toward Tupelo Landing. Miss Rose has Mo and Dale get the house ready for the storm. They go around the Johnson's property and tie down anything that is loose.

Deputy Marla is asleep on the couch. Mo finds out from Dale that she left in the middle of the night, and wonders why she did that when she's supposed to be waiting for Slate's call. The Colonel calls, but the reception is terrible so Mo hears only a few words. The Colonel's words give her enough information to find something the Colonel needs. The Colonel tells Mo to trust no one, so when Deputy Marla walks in, Mo pretends the call is from Slate and mentions that Marla is in the room. The Colonel ends the call, and Mo and Dale leave the house.



Mo tells Dale what she heard, and the two head over to Mo's house, which is currently considered a crime scene, to retrieve a packet labeled "Slate" for the Colonel. They find the Colonel's closet to be extremely neat, and they find the packet on the top shelf. Inside are newspaper clippings of the bank robbery Slate was involved in from years ago. They hear voices so they dive into Miss Lana's suite and slide under the bed. Mo and Dale realize that one of the voices is Deputy Marla's. When they make themselves known, Marla has a gun pointed at them. She lowers it when Mo reminds her they're unarmed kids.

Mo tells Marla she came to the house because she misses her family and is homesick. Mo then mentions Queen Elizabeth II, and Dale starts talking in detail about his dog. Before Mo and Dale leave Mo's house, Marla shakes Mo in an attempt to find out what she's hiding. Dale jumps up to defend Mo. When Mo is free from Marla, she tosses the Colonel's packet to Dale and when Marla turns Mo throws a steel-toed boot at Marla's head. She dodges the shoe but hits her head on the bunk. The two tie her up using both of the Colonel's neckties.

Mo flattens Marla's tires. The packet blows in the wind and some of its contents are lost. After Mo collects what she can, she runs toward Dale's bike to follow him home.

In chapter 24, Mo realizes Miss Lana is at Miss Blalock's place. She remembers hearing the screeking sound that the water tower near Miss Blalock's place makes when she's on the phone with Slate. Mo wants Dale to come with her there, but Dale wants to go home to help his mom.

Dale goes with Mo to Miss Blalock's place, but Miss Lana isn't there anymore. As the storm rages on, Mo and Dale search the property inside and out for signs of Miss Lana. Mo hears the same screeking sound, which confirms what she thought: Slate took Miss Lana to Miss Blalock's place when he kidnapped her.

Mo and Dale find blood in the living room, so they follow it out to the porch, where they find scuff marks. They determine Miss Lana must have put up a good fight.

Analysis

Dale and Miss Rose taking care of Mo is a natural course in the story; they are the next closest to Mo after the Colonel and Miss Lana. She trusts them, and Mo needs to be made to feel safe, secure, and loved. Miss Rose and Dale act like family to Mo, and even though Mo doesn't realize that until later, she is respectful to Miss Rose and thankful to Dale for supporting her and helping her through the emotional ups and downs she's been experiencing.

The author uncovers another layer of the mystery when Mo and Dale run into Marla on their way to the tobacco barn. Mo likes to follow her instincts because they're usually right, and she doesn't always follow Dale's, since she thinks he has a tendency to be wrong. She also likes to be in control. However, when Mo and Dale see Marla outside Dale's house, Mo is suddenly uncomfortable. Later, Dale says Marla's a phony and is



playing Mo, but Mo refuses to believe it. Dale should be trusted in this instance because his family is known for being in trouble with the law; knowing a con when he sees one might be a natural talent for him.

The author takes a different aspect on friendship, as Mo and Dale have an argument when Dale finds out she didn't tell him about the \$5 bill she had checked for its serial number. He's upset that she acts like him and his mom aren't good enough to be considered 'like family.' Friendships are often tested during stressful situations, and theirs is no exception. Both Mo and Dale are stressed about the murder, the investigation, and the Colonel and Miss Lana missing, and they briefly take it out on each other. However, when Mo concedes and apologizes, the two quickly go back to normal. They're best friends, which means they can argue and still remain best friends. Their friendship is too important to each other to let it go over one argument.

The storm approaches at approximately the same rate as the murder mystery is revealed. The storm comes to Tupelo Landing one element at a time: first the clouds, then the wind and rain, then the extreme wind. Similarly, the murder mystery is being revealed one element at a time via clues from the author: Slate calling the cafe; Slate kidnapping the Colonel and Miss Lana; the Colonel having a packet labeled 'Slate' in his closet; the mysterious man acting as Dale's bodyguard; Deputy Marla being strangely friendly to Mo and Dale; Deputy Marla breaking her facade a few times in reactions to information regarding the investigation; and finally, the screeking Mo hears when she's on the phone with Slate. Each piece of information brings the reader that much closer to the solution to the murder mystery.

Mo has gotten her optimism and courage back, since she goes to Miss Blalock's place where a potential murderer is, in order to help Miss Lana. She's back to believing Miss Lana can be found, and the scuff marks they see outside the house confirm to Mo that Miss Lana put up a good fight and that she's probably still alive. This news puts Mo at ease only in the sense that she knows Miss Lana is still alive. However, Mo is far from satisfied since Miss Lana is still missing.

Discussion Question 1

What evidence does Dale have that Marla is a con?

Discussion Question 2

Why is Dale so concerned about going to Mo's house?

Discussion Question 3

Why does Mo pretend to be Marla on the radio to Starr, instead of ignoring it and saying nothing?

Vocabulary

synchronized, heaves, gingerly, accomplice, lockbox, attache, chambray, brittle, sanctuary, scricked, promotion, poppycock, bayonet, haunted, surveillance



Chapters 25-27: A Hurricane Party; Sorry; Storm Break

Summary

In chapter 25, Mo and Dale go back to Dale's house to tell Miss Rose what they've learned. Mo is most concerned about the blood she saw on the floor and on the wall. Miss Rose tries to comfort her, but Mo is very scared. Mo mentions that she flattened Deputy Marla's tires, and Miss Rose is okay with that. The hurricane is in full force, so Miss Rose insists they stay put and wait out the storm. The three of them gather candles, junk food, and playing cards. After Mo wins a round of cards with four Aces, the door slams open and there is a man standing in the frame whose face is hidden by a hood. Mo, Dale, and Miss Rose think it's Slate, but it's Mr. Macon. Miss Rose tells him to leave right before he just pushes her across the floor.

In chapter 26, Mr. Macon is drunk and belligerent. He accuses Miss Rose of being Detective Starr's girlfriend, but Mo corrects him. Dale, Mo, and Miss Rose move carefully around the living room. Mo and Dale light the candles, and Mr. Macon angrily states that he has moved back in to the house. Mo remembers that the Colonel feeds Mr. Macon when he's drunk to make him sober, so Mo offers him a peanut butter and jelly sandwich. Mr. Macon doesn't like her offer and tells her to shut up and sit down.

Mr. Macon slaps Miss Rose, and Mo and Dale jump to her defense. Mo knocks him down with a kick to his knee. In the meantime, Dale gets the shotgun and threatens to kill Mr. Macon. Mr. Macon insists Dale doesn't have it in him to shoot, but the Colonel shows up at the door and says maybe Dale doesn't have it in him, but he does. Mo helps the Colonel tie up Mr. Macon, as Mr. Macon tries to apologize to Miss Rose.

Mr. Macon tells the Colonel to look for Miss Lana at Mr. Jesse's place. The Colonel doesn't go yet; he wants to wait out the storm at Miss Rose's.

In chapter 27, the Colonel and Mo go to find Slate and Miss Lana. Mo gives the packet labeled 'Slate' to the Colonel, apologizing for losing a few articles. The Colonel looks through the papers in the packet and realizes he was involved in Slate's bank robbery. He tells Mo how proud he is of her for being strong through everything that's gone on.

Mo begins writing a letter to her Upstream Mother, but scratches it out and instead writes a note to Miss Lana. The storm breaks, and Miss Rose lends the Colonel her Pinto so he can go find Miss Lana. Mo tells the Colonel she's going with him. When he tells her to stay with Miss Rose, she insists again and Dale tells the Colonel there's no point in arguing when she's like this. Dale goes, too, in support of Mo.

The Colonel, Mo, and Dale set out for Mr. Jesse's house. The storm is still strong, so the car is getting blown around the road. They skid sideways down the road and slowly



slide toward Fool's Bridge. Once they make it past the bridge, the Colonel drove to the edge of Mr. Jesse's driveway. The three of them sneak up to the porch. The Colonel goes back into the rain, while Mo and Dale watch Slate pry open part of Mr. Jesse's floor. Mo decides she and Dale should attack. Slate ends up falling into the hole he opened with his pry bar, and Mo and Dale slide a table over it so Slate can't get out.

Slate tries to bribe Mo and Dale with part of the money, but neither give in. In his rage, Slate ends up pushing the table hard enough that it lifts up and topples over Mo and Dale. The Colonel shows back up, demanding to know where Lana is. The Colonel has Mo tie up Slate with an extension cord. Mo keeps the pistol they took from Mr. Macon pointed at Slate.

Slate confesses that Lana ran away and he doesn't know where she is. Starr appears at the door with Miss Lana, and she and Mo reunite in a hug.

Analysis

Miss Rose is trying to make Mo feel at home, which Dale has to tell Mo since Mo doesn't seem to pick up on it. Miss Lana always gathers candles and junk food during a storm, so that's what Miss Rose is doing. It's still important that Mo be made to feel safe, secure, and loved, since her two caretakers remain missing. Though Mo's facial expressions and actions - such as having a poker face and unabashedly winning the last round - don't suggest she's still scared, the reader can tell she is. But she needs a break from thinking only about the murder and the fact that the Colonel and Miss Lana are still missing. She's also probably really bothered by the fact that she knows where Miss Lana was at one point, but she got there too late to help.

Mr. Macon's involvement in the story serves two purposes: one, to show Dale's evolution as a character who goes from being afraid and hesitant to courageous and bold; and two, to set the stage for the Colonel's return. Dale's action of pointing the shotgun at Mr. Macon shows the reader that his time with Mo and their involvement in the murder investigation has built his confidence up. He no longer wishes to tolerate his father being a bully, and he's unafraid to tell him that. The Colonel's return into a situation where he can help save one or more persons is on par with his personality.

After the Colonel tells Mo how proud he is of her is when Mo writes her first letter to Miss Lana instead of to her Upstream Mother. She is beginning to accept the Colonel and Miss Lana as her family, instead of thinking that they're just the people who took her in until she finds her Upstream Mother. It's a significant point in the story and in Mo's adolescence when she chooses to write a letter to Miss Lana instead of her Upstream Mother; she is attaching herself even more so to Tupelo Landing and to the people who have already attached themselves to her.

Slate's attempted bribery of Mo and Dale falls on deaf ears; they couldn't care less about what Slate is offering, because they trust him less than they trust Starr or Marla. Their fear is gone, as Mo keeps the pistol pointed at Mr. Macon and Dale helps slide the



table over the hole in the floor so they can trap Slate. Having caught half of the two-man team responsible for Mr. Jesse's murder, Mo, Dale, and the rest of the town can feel safe again.

Discussion Question 1

What is it within Mo that makes her unafraid to physically attack grown men when they are attacking her or someone else?

Discussion Question 2

Why did Mo choose to write a letter to Miss Lana this time instead of her Upstream Mother?

Discussion Question 3

Why might the storm feel familiar to the Colonel?

Vocabulary

bluffing, staggered, vicious, traitor, coward, skidding, underpinned



Chapters 28-29: Didn't See It Coming; Dear Upstream Mother

Summary

In chapter 28, the group waits out the storm at Mr. Jesse's. Miss Lana tells the Colonel, Mo, and Dale how she came to be Slate's hostage. Miss Lana thanks Dale for his and Mo's hard work in getting her to safety. Starr handcuffs Slate and sees the metal box under the floor where Slate had pried up a floorboard. It's the cash from Slate's bank robbery and the source of Mr. Jesse's church contributions.

Starr tells the rest of the group that Mr. Jesse's cousin was a guard at the bank where Slate committed his robbery. The cousin got shot in the hold-up and died a week later, with Mr. Jesse by his side. Mr. Jesse took the cash as revenge for Slate not going to jail. Slate wanted his share of the cash but Mr. Jesse wouldn't give him any, so Slate killed him.

Mo and Dale reveal to Starr and the Colonel that Deputy Marla has been giving Slate inside information, prompting Starr to handcuff Slate to the upright. Starr asks the Colonel to step into the kitchen so they can talk privately. The Colonel comes out a couple minutes later, upset. He has just found out that he is a lawyer.

Chapter 29 starts two weeks later, when the cafe finally reopens and everything goes back to normal. In the two weeks since Slate was caught, Miss Rose divorced Mr. Macon and started her own business; Slate and Deputy Marla were charged with kidnapping and murder; Mr. Macon became a state's witness; Spitz disappeared again; and Lavender sold his car just before the Sycamore 200 race. The Colonel spent those two weeks in Winston-Salem with Joe Starr, sorting legal details and getting medically examined.

At the cafe's grand reopening, Mo and Anna Celeste are kind to one another. However, it gets awkward so they go back to teasing each other, but this time with no disdain. Miss Lana explains to the town how she and the Colonel know each other from long ago, when the Colonel had represented Slate. The Colonel and Miss Lana were to be married, but the Colonel had no clue of that after he lost his memory. When Miss Lana found the Colonel a week later, the Colonel had bonded with Mo.

The townspeople and Detective Starr postulate on how Slate and Deputy Marla carried out the course of events. Miss Lana apologizes for deceiving the town, and she is immediately forgiven.

Mo and Dale find Spitz in the creek, but before they go back home Mo sees a piece of paper curled inside of a bottle, just like in her dream. Inside, she discovers a letter to her Upstream Mother. Dale expresses sympathy, but Mo has finally come around to the fact



that Miss Lana and the Colonel are a more-than-acceptable set of parents. She runs to her house to welcome the Colonel home.

Analysis

Now that the murder mystery is solved and the dangerous people are in custody, everyone can feel safe. The entire story of the bank robbery, Mr. Jesse's murder, and the Colonel's connection to Slate opens everyone's eyes, as it explains much of Slate's behavior as well as some of the Colonel's. The biggest point of irony in the novel is when the Colonel realizes he used to be a lawyer; he has a "NO LAWYERS" sign hanging in the cafe. As his past is revealed, the reader can assume that subconsciously, the Colonel took his secretary's murder very hard and never got over blaming himself for her death. He likely felt hatred for himself, and so even though he can't remember why he hates lawyers, that's what happened when he lost his memory in the crash.

The cafe had closed for two weeks following the night Slate and Marla were caught, so everyone is happy to have it back again. The cafe represents normalcy and predictability, two things the people of Tupelo Landing thrive on. As is common in a traumatic event, people who don't normally get along change their attitude toward one another. Mo and Anna Celeste, though they continue directing insults at one another, do so on a new level of understanding. Instead of the root of their insults being disdain for the other person, the basis is mutual respect. Since they don't know how to communicate outside of insults, they continue with an understanding that they're not friends, but they're not enemies anymore, either.

Miss Lana's explanation of her history with the Colonel explains many things to the reader: why they're not married yet are raising a child together; why Miss Lana sometimes needs a break from the Colonel; why Miss Lana stays even though the Colonel drives her crazy; and why the Colonel sometimes drives her crazy. To have been in love with and engaged to someone who crashes his vehicle then doesn't remember you is a harsh reality. She is remaining loyal to the man she promised to marry, even if he can't remember that promise. She tells the town their history without the Colonel present because she doesn't want to upset him. The Colonel is happy with his life in Tupelo Landing, and since he remembers nothing before it, Miss Lana thinks there's no use in dredging up the past.

At the conclusion of the novel, Mo again scraps writing a letter to her Upstream Mother in favor of running to the Colonel, welcoming him home. She has at last accepted the Colonel, Miss Lana, and Dale as her family even though they're not blood-related. This evolution was not an easy one to come by, since she didn't seem to realize how much of a family the three of them were until Miss Lana and the Colonel went missing at the same time. Her loyalty never wavered, but it seems to have grown deeper for the people in her life who have cared for her since she first arrived in Tupelo Landing 11 years ago.



Discussion Question 1

A lot of truths are revealed in the last two chapters. Which truth does Mo seem to appreciate the most, and why?

Discussion Question 2

Why might the town immediately forgive Miss Lana for not telling them the truth about herself and the Colonel?

Discussion Question 3

What is evidence of Mo's change of heart in regards to her Upstream Mother, the Colonel, and Lana, and their places in her life?

Vocabulary

hideous, captured, bedraggled, heist, rubbish, elope, arrogance



Characters

Mo (Moses LoBeau)

Mo LeBeau is the main character in "Three Times Lucky". She is an 11-year-old orphan, unofficially adopted by the Colonel and Miss Lana when she arrived in Tupelo Landing as an infant, riding in a basket down the river. She takes her role in the Colonel and Miss Lana's family quite seriously, paying attention to all of their rules and having a special relationship with each one of them. She also takes her role as cafe worker/helper seriously, happily and dutifully taking over for Miss Lana and the Colonel when neither one of them is available to open the cafe.

Mo is best friends with Dale, another relationship she takes to heart. Without blood relatives to claim, Mo remains extremely loyal to the people who have taken her in as family. Mo expects Dale to participate in every adventure she sets out to have, whether it be for leisure or business. Mo considers herself a responsible member of Tupelo Landing, again feeling loyal to the people who have taken her in despite not being a blood relative.

Mo's character is spunky and straight-forward. She only holds back when she has information or people she is trying to protect. She thinks quickly and tends to act just the same, and she makes protection of her loved ones her first priority. She does well with change and going with the flow, as she seems to easily find ways around any obstacle or hindrance to what she's trying to accomplish, though if the situation is life-or-death, she does expect for certain rules to be followed.

The novel follows themes of family, loyalty, friendship, false bravado, and mystery, all of which Mo either exhibits or involves herself in. Mo doesn't like to be left out of any loop. She likes answers, which is likely why she routinely writes letters to her Upstream Mother, hoping she and her birth mother can eventually be reunited. Though Mo's perspective on needing to know her birth mother changes by the end of the novel, her character trait of wanting to be in the know does not.

Dale

Dale is Mo's best friend, also 11 years old and a rising 6th grader. He trusts her and even though he sometimes hesitates, he follows Mo into each adventure she sets out to experience. Dale's father is an alcoholic, and his family is known for two things: getting in trouble with the law and having their utilities turned off for lack of payment. Dale's family's poor town reputation doesn't hamper his friendship with Mo; each of them treat the other person as an equal, likely because both have fairly unstable beginnings.

Dale's character does not have a great amount of common sense, as exhibited in his questions to Mo and his lack of understanding of what is considered a rhetorical question. Mo kindly answers his questions and lets him know when a question is



rhetorical or not. However, Dale picks up on Deputy Marla's deception long before Mo does. This is likely because of Dale's family's routine interaction with police; Dale knows when a police officer is a real police officer.

Dale's character is very much a side-kick to Mo. He doesn't seem to envy Mo for being the lead in their adventures, but he doesn't shy away from fame, either. He isn't afraid to let Mo know what he thinks, but even when he doesn't agree with her, he follows her. His actions speak to his sense of loyalty and strength of their friendship more than his inability to say no. Dale does exhibit more fear than Mo, but he seems to rely on Mo's courage to participate in their adventures.

Dale has different relationships with each member of his family. He has had to witness his alcoholic father threaten his mother and his older brother, Lavender, and because of this Dale knows more about care-taking than a typical 11-year-old might. He seems to trust his mom more than anyone aside from Mo, and his relationship with Lavender is a typical younger-brother-older-brother relationship, where Dale looks up to Lavender and Lavender treats Dale well, but they bicker from time to time.

The Colonel

The Colonel is one of Mo's two main care-takers. He is a former Marine who has carried the military mind-set into everything he does: when he runs the cafe, the decor and menu are crisp with no flexibility; his closet is extremely organized; and his speech pattern is military-oriented, such as speaking in military time and using military terminology when talking rules with Mo. Aside from his military background, the Colonel likely keeps his life so ordered because he has no recollection of how he came to live in Tupelo Landing, since he arrived by crashing at Fool's Bridge. Not being able to remember any part of his life before that night would naturally cause a person to want to be as ordered as possible in his current life, in order to feel a sense of control.

The Colonel and Miss Lana are a couple, though it's not revealed until the end of the novel their true history. They drive each other crazy and each leaves for a few days at a time in order to deal with feeling annoyed and frustrated by the other person. They are, however, a family with each other and with Mo, never wavering on that fact and working hard to protect each other throughout the murder investigation.

Miss Lana

Miss Lana is Mo's other main caretaker. She is just as protective of Mo as the Colonel is, though she has a gentler way of speaking with Mo as she acts more like a tender mother figure. She treats Dale as her own, too, when he's at the cafe helping out. When Miss Lana runs the cafe, she decorates it in a theme. She seems to have a flair for the dramatic and for romance, as evidenced by the aesthetic themes she displays in the cafe and the way she tells the story of her and the Colonel.



Miss Lana does not exhibit any resentment toward Mo trying to find her birth mother. She is understanding and even encourages it. This speaks to her strength of character, as does the facts that she took in Mo without hesitation and stuck with the Colonel after he lost all memory of their prior relationship. Miss Lana is kidnapped, but the room from where she is kidnapped is a mess, letting the reader know Miss Lana fought her kidnapper.

Detective Joe Starr

Detective Joe Starr is the character that disrupts the order and predictability of Tupelo Landing. When he arrives to town, nobody trusts him, simply because he is an outsider. He is straightforward about his purpose for being in Tupelo Landing, He has been a detective for a long time and as such, uses law enforcement terminology and tone with everyone he speaks to, including Mo and Dale.

Detective Starr could be the face of the 'change' theme for "Three Times Lucky", since his appearance causes a disruption in the force of a small town in North Carolina. Though he is a fellow North Carolinian from Winston-Salem, he is not from their town and he is seeking information about their town members, which makes him a threat to their small town predictability. Even so, Detective Starr is professional at all times, somewhat grudgingly appreciates Mo and Dale's help with the investigation, and is thorough in his work.

Deputy Marla

Deputy Marla is another character that the townspeople of Tupelo Landing have a hard time trusting. Though she is kind and professional, she is an outsider who is a disruption in the town's predictability. Dale especially doesn't trust her, and it turns out his instincts are correct. Though Deputy Marla appears to be kind toward the children, especially Mo as she tells Mo she is an orphan the same as Mo, she does give subtle clues in her facial expressions and in her reaction to information that she is not on their side. Her facade breaks a few times, but they are subtle enough that Mo and Dale remain in her care.

Miss Rose

Miss Rose is Dale's mom. She takes care of Mo when the Colonel and Miss Lana are both missing, and she goes out of her way to make Mo feel comfortable, comforted, and at home. Miss Rose exhibits strength and compassion as she cares for Mo, but she also exhibits fear when it comes to her husband, Mr. Macon. Dale's father is an alcoholic who becomes violent, and Miss Rose is not shown to stand up to him. She offers to fix him a sandwich so that he won't continue causing trouble.



Mr. Jesse

Mr. Jesse is only alive for the first four chapters; he dies in the middle of the fifth chapter. He interacts briefly with Mo and Dale. In that interaction, Mr. Jesse is cranky and ornery. His rowboat is missing, and on Mo and Dale's insistence he offers a \$10 reward for the person who finds it. Mr. Jesse is later found dead in that same rowboat. Mr. Jesse's funeral is well-attended, by everyone in the town as well as some from out of town. During the investigation, the town learns that Mr. Jesse gave the church \$100 every week, but it's not revealed until the end of the investigation as to why he did so.

Slate

Slate is a significant part of the murder investigation. He is said to be Dale's bodyguard who works from a distance, but the reader finds out that he is on the criminal side of the investigation. He is Miss Lana's kidnapper, and he complains loudly when she fights back and when he's caught by Detective Starr.

Anna Celeste Simpson

Anna Celeste Simpson plays a part in Mo's character evolution throughout the novel. She is Mo's sworn enemy who Mo has nicknamed Attila. Anna Celeste's mom speaks unkindly to her on a regular basis, which is something that when Mo sees, helps Mo to not only understand Anna Celeste a little better but also treat her a little differently.



Symbols and Symbolism

Hurricane Amy

Hurricane Amy in and of itself is significant to the story, but it also represents certain aspects of "Three Times Lucky." The storm itself is significant to the story because the murder investigation comes to a climax during the worst part of the storm, making the scene dramatic for the reader. It's also a metaphor for the storm of events going on in Tupelo Landing, as well as the storm of emotions going on for Mo.

A hurricane is a fierce storm that floods streets, knocks down trees, and blows heavy objects around. By nature, a hurricane is a strong force that has the power to completely change the landscape of wherever it lands. Tupelo Landing is a small rural town in North Carolina with a population of 148 people. Its townspeople are used to calm and predictable, and Mr. Jesse's murder, learning the truth about the Colonel and Miss Lana, and having new people in town make for quite a lot of activity. The townspeople of Tupelo Landing are likely feeling frightened, which is a common feeling for those enduring a hurricane.

As for Mo, she is a mix of emotions that seem to go all over the place. She experiences happiness, sadness, fear, confusion, surprise, and anger. Just as a storm is a mix of strong elements - thunder, lightning, wind, rain, sometimes hail - Mo's emotions are a strong mix that at times overwhelms her.

Mo's map of North Carolina

Mo keeps a map in her room of North Carolina where she pinpoints places she knows her Upstream Mother does not live. She is using the map to help her find her birth mother. She pins where the bottles are sent so she can keep track of her search.

Mo acts quite confident, but being an orphan she is trying to find out exactly where she comes from. As a map is used to find a physical place, Mo is also trying to find her place in the world, and specifically in Tupelo Landing. She loves the Colonel and Miss Lana for taking her in, and she's appreciative of Dale as a best friend, but it's not until the conclusion of the story that Mo decides the Colonel and Miss Lana are her forever home.

The Piggly Wiggly Chronicles

The Piggly Wiggly Chronicles are Mo's autobiography. She's on Volume 6. They are significant to the story because for Mo, they are just one more expression of her trying to find her place. By releasing her thoughts and her unsent letters to her Upstream Mother in writing, Mo is able to work through feelings of not belonging and the strong



desire to find her birth mother. They are also a place where Mo might not have to be as confident as she portrays to everyone else.

Mo's bottles

Mo puts her letters to her Upstream Mother in glass bottles so she can send them down any river or stream that flows into the one that goes through Tupelo Landing. She sends them with the townspeople when they go out of town, and she eagerly awaits a call from her Upstream Mother. The act of sending a message in a bottle is an old-fashioned notion, which represents the thought process of not only Mo, but also the town. Instead of searching on the internet, which Mo could do since the story takes place in 2012, Mo decides that the old fashioned way of communicating worked a long time ago, why wouldn't it work this time? Small towns are thought to encompass old-fashioned ideals, which Mo's sending a message in a bottle represents.

Anna Celeste's bottles

Anna Celeste Simpson is Mo's sworn enemy; Mo has even nicknamed her Attila after Attila the Hun. The two throw jabs at each other any chance they get and in no way do they act friendly toward one another. After Mo catches Anna Celeste's mother being mean to her, she takes a subtle jab at Anna Celeste's mother. To show her appreciation, Anna Celeste, as a peace offering, gives Mo a few bottles for Mo to put her letters in. They are fancier than the bottles Mo usually uses.

Anna Celeste's bottles are representative of one of the concepts present in the story: nothing is as it seems. Mo thought she knew exactly who Anna Celeste was and that Anna Celeste would never change. Her act of kindness changes Mo's perception. The same could be said in reverse: Anna Celeste realizes that Mo wasn't just her sworn enemy, she was also a rising 6th grader, just like Anna Celeste, who doesn't like seeing people be cut down.

Mr. Jesse's anonymous church contributions

Mr. Jesse contributed \$100 to the only church on Tupelo Landing for several years, adding up to tens of thousands of dollars. His contributions were anonymous, adding to the mystery of the whole situation. His church contributions represent the same idea as Anna Celeste's bottles: nothing is as it seems. Mr. Jesse didn't attend church and was considered a cranky man, making him an unlikely suspect for the anonymous contributions.

Mo keeping information from Dale

As close of friends as Mo and Dale are, Mo still kept information from Dale during the murder investigation. When he confronts her about it, she can't give a reason why she



did. Her keeping information is a symbol of her belief that she is on her own in this world, despite having two dedicated caretakers and Dale. She may not have kept the information on purpose, but the act represents a deep-seated belief that comes as a result of being orphaned.

Anna Celeste's nickname

Mo has nicknamed Anna Celeste Attila, presumably after Attila the Hun, who is an ancient ruler regarded as a barbarian and a fierce, brutal warrior. Anna Celeste's family is more well-off financially than Mo's family, and Anna Celeste has a habit of trying to cut down Mo. Mo's nickname is a way for Mo to attempt to exert power over Anna Celeste by insulting her, and it's a way for Mo to show Anna Celeste how she really feels about her.

Desperado Detectives

Desperado Detectives is the informal detective agency Mo and Dale create in order to participate in the investigation of Mr. Jesse's murder. Their creation of this "agency" is their way of asserting their maturity and independence. Mo and Dale are growing up and want to be considered mature and responsible so they will have important tasks assigned to them. Desperado Detectives puts them, in their minds, on the same level as Detective Starr and his investigation.

The Colonel's closet

Mo and Dale go to the Colonel's closet to retrieve the packet labeled "Slate." Upon opening it, the reader discovers that his closet is pristine: clean, neat, extremely orderly and organized. The Colonel is well-known in town, and his desire to have everything neatly organized and in order mirrors how Tupelo Landing likes their town: organized and predictable. Tupelo Landing doesn't like strangers; they don't take kindly to people coming in and looking for information about various townspeople. They don't want anything messing with their system, just as the Colonel would not take lightly to anyone messing up his orderly closet.



Settings

Tupelo Landing

Tupelo Landing is town in which "Three Times Lucky" takes place. It is a small town in North Carolina with a population of just 148 people. The inside of the front and back covers of the book show a map of the town. The cafe is on the West end of town, close to Mr. Jesse and Anna Celeste's homes. Lavender and Miss Retzyl live in the center of town near the Piggly Wiggly, and the church and Fool's Bridge are on the far East of town. Miss Blalock's place is separated from the main part of town, and so is Dale's family's home.

Cafe/Mo's house

The Colonel and Miss Lana, adoptive parents to Mo, run the town's only cafe. It is attached to their home; the cafe is the front of the structure and their home is the rear of the structure. It is decorated differently depending on who is running the cafe on a particular day, whether it be Miss Lana or the Colonel. Sometimes Mo is in charge, in which case only cold menu items are offered since she can't operate the stove and oven. The cafe is where the town (and the reader) is introduced to Detective Starr.

On the other side of the structure is Mo's home, shared with the Colonel and Miss Lana. Mo has her own part of the house she calls her flat. The Colonel's bedroom is described as crisp and neat, especially his closet. Miss Lana is kidnapped from the house, as shown by the ransacked living room and the note left by Slate on their kitchen table.

Crime scene at Fool's Bridge

Mr. Jesse is discovered dead in his own rowboat, but the murder apparently occurs at Fool's Bridge. During the investigation, the townspeople linger as close to the bridge as they can without crossing into the crime scene. According to the map printed on the inside cover of the book, the bridge is on the far East of Tupelo Landing.

Mr. Jesse's home/property

Mr. Jesse's property and home are part of the murder investigation, since he is the victim. The murder weapon (an oar) is found in his pond, and the remaining cash from Slate's long-ago bank robbery is found underneath the house. The cash is found to be the source of Mr. Jesse's weekly church donations over the years.



Church

Tupelo Landing's only church is the setting for Mr. Jesse's funeral, as well as part of the murder investigation. When information surfaces that Mr. Jesse donated \$100 per week to the church, the church is searched for clues. The church is described as glistening white, and is packed out for Mr. Jesse's funeral. There's a mirror behind the piano on the altar, and Mo uses it to scan the crowd for anyone who looks like her, hoping it's her Upstream Mother.

Miss Retzyl's house

Mo goes to Miss Retzyl's house to drop off something for Miss Lana. Mo is surprised that the house looks like a normal person's home, with wicker chairs, a love seat, an Oriental carpet, and a ceiling fan. The location is significant in the fact that Mo has her first conversation with Deputy Marla, a character that plays a significant role in the murder investigation.

Carolina Raceway

Carolina Raceway is where Lavender races the cars he and Sam rebuild. While nothing significant happens at the raceway, it's important to note that it is a regular hang-out place of Mo and Dale while Lavender races. Lavender asks Mo and Dale to time his laps, which they are happy to do.

Dale's home

Mo rides out part of the storm at Dale's house. Miss Rose gathers a load of junk food and playing cards, and she, Dale, and Mo play poker as the storm rages outside. Mo also spends the night at Dale's house when Miss Lana and the Colonel both go missing. Since Mo and Dale are best friends, it is natural that Mo would feel safest at his house, and that Miss Rose would feel a sense of motherly responsibility, as Mo's adoptive parents are missing.



Themes and Motifs

Friendship

Friendship is one of the most powerful and prominent themes in "Three Times Lucky". It is mostly shown through Mo and Dale's friendship. The pair go everywhere together, they rely on each other for physical and emotional support, and they work through conflicts immediately, which is a testament to how important their friendship is to them. From the beginning of the novel when Mo lets Dale know she can't go fishing with him, and instead Dale comes to the cafe to help her, to the end of the novel when Dale expresses offense that Mo is always searching for her birth mother. Dale wants Mo to know that there are people in Tupelo Landing who care for Mo like family, and he is one of them.

Mo and Dale are rising 6th graders, which is a time in an adolescent's life when friendships are extremely important. Especially for Mo and Dale, both of whom have their own family-of-origin struggles. They seem to have found a kindred spirit within each other, since Mo is an orphan and Dale is treated like an orphan by his father. Mo and Dale never judge each other, and even when they question each other, they inherently trust one another.

The theme of friendship is also woven into Mo and Dale's interactions with other classmates. Though none are nearly as close of friends as Mo and Dale are, Sally Amanda Jones, Skeeter McMillan, and Anna Celeste Simpson (nicknamed Attila) are all treated as friends by Mo and/or Dale at some point in the novel. Their common age and class makes them treat each other as friends by default, even if they're more acquaintances than friends.

Friendship doesn't play as much of a role in the adult relationships as it does in the kids' relationships. The adults of Tupelo Landing treat each other with respect as fellow townspeople rather than close friends.

Loyalty

Loyalty plays a significant role in the lives of the characters in "Three Times Lucky". Not only are the characters in the novel loyal to each other because they are friends, but because they are members of the same small town. With only 148 people living in Tupelo Landing, it is only natural that they remain loyal to each other. Evidence can be found when the entire town attends Mr. Jesse's funeral. Mr. Jesse wasn't a particularly kind man, but because he was a citizen of Tupelo Landing, the entire town showed up to his funeral. They are loyal folks, treating one of their own with respect.

Mo has nicknamed Anna Celeste Attila after Attila the Hun, a powerful and unkind ruler from ancient times. However, when Mo sees Anna Celeste being treated by her mother in a way that humiliates her, she not only makes a subtle dig at Anna Celeste's mother,



but she is cordial the next time they interact. Mo's loyalty toward Anna Celeste may have come from the fact that they're both from Tupelo Landing, both from the same class, or females of the same age. There were likely other feelings involved in Mo's decision, such as mercy or compassion, but loyalty likely played a factor in Mo's giving a subtle insult to Anna Celeste's mother so that only Mo and Anna Celeste were aware of it. Loyalty protects and defends, as Mo was trying indirectly to do in her situation.

The loyalty between the Colonel, Miss Lana, and Mo is obvious. Even though Miss Lana and the Colonel drive each other crazy, they have family rules like calling by the third day when one of them unexpectedly goes out of town. Miss Lana could be considered the most loyal one, since she reveals that before the Colonel's accident, the two had every intention to marry. But since the Colonel doesn't remember anything before the crash, including Miss Lana, she had a choice to make: either keep their relationship in the past, or try to make the Colonel fall in love with her again. Her loyalty comes through when she chooses to stick by the Colonel, who ultimately does fall in love with her, and the two remain a couple. To stay in a relationship with someone who has lost all memory of being one's partner is a sure sign of loyalty.

Mystery

Mystery surrounds the characters throughout "Three Times Lucky," most obviously because it's a mystery novel. Mr. Jesse has died and the suspect and reason are a mystery until the last three chapters. The townspeople don't like mystery because they don't like surprises; they like predictability and safety. Mystery is unpredictable and cannot be trusted until the mysterious situation is known absolutely to be safe. The townspeople insist on answers, which is why they hang around Fool's Bridge during the investigation.

Mo is no stranger to mystery; she's an orphan that floated down the river into Tupelo Landing at just a few days old. Nobody, especially not Mo, knows where Mo came from, who Mo's mother and father are, and why she was given up and sent downstream. She has taken her mystery to a healthy place, by writing in a journal named as an autobiography. She's not afraid to ask questions and she's not afraid to send a message in a bottle into the same river she floated into town from. Mo loves answers, and the fact that her birth mother is a mystery bothers her for most of the novel. It isn't until the end of the novel that Mo becomes okay with her mother's identity being a mystery, and it's only because she realizes the people she has in her life care greatly for her.

Another strong element of mystery is the Colonel. He has no idea who he was before he crashed in Tupelo Landing. His prior life is a mystery. The way the Colonel and everyone else deals with this mystery is something to note because as stated above, the townspeople don't like mystery. The Colonel is someone the town seems to have innately trusted, despite his mysterious background. The reason the town implicitly trusts him is not known, though the reader might conclude it is from his military background. He presents himself as a put-together man who could protect anyone he



chooses to protect. In this case, the townspeople let his mysterious background go and accepted him as one of their own.

Independence

Mo and Dale are rising 6th graders, a fact Mo makes known any chance she gets. The two of them are clearly seeking more and more independence from their caretakers and even from other members of the small town.

Mo, while she obeys the Colonel and Miss Lana, pushes her luck when there is something she really wants to do. She thinks she's old enough to ride her bike or walk somewhere that the Colonel or Miss Lana want her to get a ride for. She is seeking independence not because she doesn't like how they parent her, but because she is a young lady who knows exactly what she wants and has strong ideas about how she can get it.

Another aspect of independence is present in Dale's family. Since his father is an alcoholic, Dale's older brother Lavender doesn't live with his family. Mr. Macon, Dale and Lavender's father, threw him out of the house, and now Lavender lives on his own. He seems to still rely on Dale for some family news, but he seems to take it in stride. Mo is in love with Lavender, which could be a latent expression of her desire to be older and more independent.

The Colonel and Miss Lana also represent the theme of independence. Mo makes it clear in her storytelling that the two of them are in love, but need a break from each other once in a while. The reader might conclude that Miss Lana's solo trips are because of her exasperation with the Colonel's strict lifestyle, or the fact that she needs a break from the stress of knowing she and the Colonel used to be engaged, but the Colonel not knowing that. The Colonel's independence may be a byproduct of his military lifestyle. He is used to being in charge - evidenced by his nickname, the Colonel - and as such, is likely used to his own sense of independence, which is hard to maintain in a small town where everyone knows everyone else's business.

Family

Multiple family dynamics are woven throughout "Three Times Lucky," the most prominent being the dynamic of an adoptive family. Mo floated into Tupelo Landing the same night the Colonel had his crash at Fool's Bridge, so not only do they have their Tupelo Landing arrival date in common, but the mysterious way they both came into town. The Colonel, Miss Lana, and Mo make up a unique adoptive family. They have family rules that must be obeyed out of respect for one another, they run the cafe together - even if Miss Lana and the Colonel do have different ideas of how to do it, and they protect one another. Each is offered an opportunity to protect one of the other members of the family, and without hesitation each one follows through each time.



Another mode of family dynamics shown throughout the novel is the dysfunctional family, or tension-filled family. Dale's family is known as the family that has an alcoholic patriarch and can't pay their bills. Also, Anna Celeste is shown to have a tense interaction with her uptight mother, revealing something Mo didn't know and has sympathy for. The tension-filled families are on opposite ends of the spectrum in terms of how they're regarded in the town, since Dale's family is considered of a lower social status than Anna Celeste's family. These families are not shown protecting each other, other than Dale's mother setting rules - and a punishment - for Dale when she doesn't know where he is.

The family situations shown in "Three Times Lucky" might come as a surprise to the reader, given the fact that there are only 148 people in the town. With such a small population, one might assume there is a small chance for unconventional family dynamics, but that's not the case for Tupelo Landing. Different types of families exist no matter where a story takes place.

Deception

Deception is a theme that runs throughout "Three Times Lucky," and sometimes it is from a character the reader might not suspect. For example, the Colonel tells Detective Starr a lie when he says the Thunderbird was purchased two years ago instead just a couple weeks prior to Detective Starr's visit. Mo is concerned that the Colonel would want to deceive someone, especially because he is so adamant about Mo never lying. His reason is made clear at the end of the novel, but he is just the first of several characters to purposely deceive others. The Colonel is a character who likes order and honesty, so his deception is confusing.

Deputy Marla is someone that the reader would have to pick up on little clues to see her deception before it's revealed. Dale picks up on it earlier than Mo, likely because Deputy Marla told Mo she was an orphan, too, in an effort to win her trust. Her connection to Slate and Mr. Jesse's murder isn't revealed until the end because she is able to successfully deceive most of Tupelo Landing during the investigation.

Dale is another character who deceives someone: Mr. Jesse. Before Mr. Jesse is murdered, his boat is missing. Dale took it to use for him and Mo, but he and Mo convinced Mr. Jesse to offer a reward for whomever found it. Dale brought the boat back to Mr. Jesse and got the reward money. Dale's is a fairly innocent deception, since their money was used simply for snacks at the raceway.

The reader can see that deception is used in two different forms: to harm and to help. Deputy Marla used deception to harm since she was involved in Slate's attempted heist. The Colonel's deception was to protect his family, since he wasn't comfortable with Detective Starr being in town. And Dale's deception was normal kid fibbing. He didn't harm anything, but he didn't hurt anything, either.



Fear

Fear is a theme running throughout the novel. It shows up in each character when Mr. Jesse is killed, because nobody expected such an event to happen in Tupelo Landing, a small town in rural North Carolina. The townspeople are rattled, and as such are afraid. They seek answers to mitigate that fear. The unexpected and the unknown are two things that can easily elicit fear, and that is what the townspeople are experiencing.

Mo, who prides herself in being brave and strong, shows fear when her two caretakers come up missing. It is only natural that a rising 6th grader would be afraid when her two caretakers go missing, especially since she found her home ransacked when she ran home to talk to Miss Lana.

Mo's fear is entirely appropriate for the situation. She is a child whose caretakers are missing. Mo is already orphaned from her birth mother sending her downstream, and now she has to worry about her adoptive parents possibly being dead. Mo covers her fear with everyone except for Dale and Miss Rose, Dale's mom. Though she doesn't come out and say she's scared, her constant worry over Miss Lana's whereabouts communicates her fear of not only losing two of the most important people in her life, but likely of being orphaned a second time.

Growing Up

Growing up is a natural theme for a novel about rising 6th graders. Mo and Dale make it clear that they are rising 6th graders, and as such believe they are privy to certain information as well as privileges. They are middle-schoolers, an age when pre-adolescents begin to assert their independence and push the limits of what they can say, do, and get away with.

Mo and Dale want to be considered older than they are, so they create Desperado Detectives to help with the murder investigation, they hang out with Lavender and Sam - and are honored when Lavender asks for help timing laps, and they work at the cafe. They want to be considered by their caretakers and by the town to be mature, responsible, and reliable for tasks that average 6th graders might not be entrusted with.

Mo and Dale are two characters that have had to grow up at a faster pace than some of their peers. Being an orphan, Mo had a lot more to think about than her peers who have both of their parents. She wonders where she came from, who her birth mother is, why her birth mother would have sent her downstream, if she'll ever meet her birth mother, etc. Those kinds of thoughts often result in a kind of self-reflection, as Mo looks inward to see what part she may have played in her mother giving her up, as well as what she can do that might bring her mother back. She also is in the care of the Colonel, who expects Mo to act wisely and maturely. He speaks in military terms and expects Mo to understand and to obey.



Dale has had to grow up faster than some of his peers because of his father being an alcoholic. Dale has not only seen his father's rage when he's been drinking, but he's likely had to do more around the house to help out his mother than his peers. He looks up to his older brother Lavender, admiring the way he races. Dale has had to act more maturely than he might have been ready for, but he likely feels like he had no choice in the matter.

Community

The idea of community might be obvious to the reader, since the book is about a small town that sticks together during a crisis. The town of Tupelo Landing has only 148 people, 147 after Mr. Jesse is murdered. It would make sense that they all know each other, and that there are some who are more friendly toward each other than others might be.

Regardless of their feelings for one another, the townspeople of Tupelo Landing follow each other around and depend on each other for information, support, and safety. They eat lunch at the same time at the cafe, and when the cafe is closed they migrate to Miss Rose's. Though their eating together is not an organized event, they're so much of a community that they're on the same schedule and like the consistency of the same people eating at the same time each day.

A sense of community can usually be found in a small town, and especially when the town experiences a crisis. The uncertainty of the event can cause people to stick together more than usual, and that is certainly the case with Tupelo Landing. They give each other rides to different places, they linger outside of Mr. Jesse's property together to find out anything they can, and they distrust outsiders.

Power

The idea of having power over others and over one's situation is present throughout the novel. Mo comes across as bold and unafraid of others, indicating that she doesn't want anyone to have power over her unless they are one of her caretakers. Even with Dale, Mo puts up a strong front and makes it known that she is in charge. She prefers to have control of a situation, likely as a result of both having no control over her birth mother sending her downstream, and also the Colonel's style of parenting. When she feels like she's lost control of the situation, she also loses her optimism and her belief that Miss Lana and the Colonel will return home. Her powerlessness gets to her, and she relies on Miss Rose and Dale to encourage her.

Since the story centers around a murder mystery, the murderer certainly holds a certain amount of power over the town. Since his identity is not revealed until near the end of the story, he holds a power over the townspeople that makes them afraid. Also, since the murderer holds Miss Lana and the Colonel captive, he thinks he has the power to demand anything he wants. However, when Mo, Dale, and Starr figure out who the murderer is and how they can get to him, the power is now in their hands. Slate is now



at the mercy of multiple people who are after him and have the power to physically injure him, as well as get him put back in jail.

Identity

The theme of identity is a theme that can be found in *Mo and the Colonel*. Mo's strong desire to find her Upstream Mother holds a desire to know where she comes from, which is where most people obtain their identity. Mo seems to think that she can't really know who she is until she knows exactly where she came from. Even though she was raised in Tupelo Landing and Dale tries to tell and show her that who she is has come from this town, for most of the novel Mo wants to find her identity in her birth mother.

The Colonel's tie to the theme of identity is not revealed until the conclusion of the novel. He has no memory of his life before the crash where he found Mo, but he never shows an interest in knowing his past. He seems content to not know where he came from and who he used to be. The Colonel is happy with who he is and what his life looks like. It's not until the end of the novel that his previous life is revealed, and when it is, the Colonel isn't happy about it. He would rather keep the identity he has found in Tupelo Landing.

Styles

Point of View

"Three Times Lucky" is told from a first-person point of view. The narrator is Mo, an 11 year old who floated into the town of Tupelo Landing on a makeshift raft when she was just an infant. The only pieces of the other characters that are explained are what Mo can see: outward appearance, facial expressions, reactions, and actions. Even though the main narrative of "Three Times Lucky" centers on a murder investigation, the story is really about Mo's search for identity and family. For the reader, having the story told from Mo's point of view ensures that all feelings and experiences related to Mo's process are known.

The tone of the novel suggests the author wants readers to immediately like Mo like a little sister. She is spunky, opinionated, smart, observant, and persistent. The title puts a positive spin on Mo's life, which is something Mo does, too, despite having started her life floating down a river on a makeshift raft. Mo knows that she's lucky, but this sentiment is deepened through the telling of Mo's experience during Mr. Jesse's murder investigation.

Language and Meaning

The language of "Three Times Lucky" is informal and Southern. Terms like y'all are used by the character to emphasize the fact that the story takes place in a rural town in North Carolina. The author uses figurative language throughout the novel in order to help the reader picture exactly what's going on. Similes and metaphors color the entire story, and help the reader know how Mo is perceiving what's going on around her. Whether it's the words or actions of other characters, the similes and metaphors are written to come from Mo, so the descriptions are how Mo sees the chain of events.

The author likely wrote the story in this way so that the reader would understand the point of "Three Times Lucky", which was not to find a murderer but to help Mo discover where she belongs.

Structure

"Three Times Lucky" is split up into 29 chapters, all of which are named based on what happens in each of the chapters. There is also a map of Tupelo Landing at the beginning and end of the story, so that the reader might get a geographical idea of the town.

Quotes

The Colonel and Miss Lana are the closest thing to family I've got. Without them, I wouldn't have a home.

-- Mo as narrator (chapter 1 paragraph 10)

Importance: This statement from Mo as narrator tells the reader of important relationships, as well as some background information. It's important that the reader understand the dynamics between Mo, the Colonel, and Miss Lana. Their relationships and Mo's position as an adopted child play significant roles in her attitude throughout the ordeal of Mr. Jesse's murder and the investigation.

The lunch crowd is the breakfast crowd shaved and combed, plus the Azalea Women, who call themselves the Uptown Garden Club.

-- Mo as narrator (chapter 1 paragraph 3)

Importance: Mo's description of the cafe's lunch crowd as being the cleaned-up version of the breakfast crowd shows the reader how small of a town Tupelo Landing is. It also shows how the members of the town spend a lot of time together, which is a fact that plays a role in the overarching narrative of "Three Times Lucky."

Mostly, I didn't like the way he didn't smile.

-- Mo as narrator (chapter 2 paragraph 3)

Importance: Mo is speaking of Detective Joe Starr, the stranger who comes into Tupelo Landing to investigate a murder. The people of Tupelo Landing don't like strangers to begin with, but they are inclined to take well to kind-looking people rather than frigid-looking individuals. Detective Joe Starr is untrusted from the get-go.

I might come home tore up from fighting or late from being punished, but I'd never come home crying.

-- Mo as narrator (chapter 3 paragraph 6)

Importance: Mo's statement shows her personality and how she approaches life: she is unafraid to confront what needs confronting, and she is a determined young lady. Her personality is one of the reasons Mr. Jesse's murder mystery is solved.

You guys are usually like get and got, one right behind the other.

-- Lavender (chapter 4 paragraph 4)

Importance: Lavender is speaking to Mo, about Mo and Dale. The statement speaks to the fact that the two are known to be best friends, and friendship is one of the most prominent themes in the novel.

As we practiced, more townsfolk drifted in, hungry for information and the comfort of friends.



-- Mo as narrator (chapter 7 paragraph 9)

Importance: Mo's statement comes after the town finds out about the murder of Mr. Jesse. It is testament to the small town loyalty the citizens of Tupelo Landing exhibit throughout the novel.

I studied her parents' faces: strong faces, with eyes that peered straight into my heart. I wondered if my own people would look into my heart too.

-- Mo as narrator (chapter 11 paragraph 2)

Importance: This statement goes right to the heart of Mo. The reader should know that Mo puts on a brave face, but she is genuinely curious about her birth mother. Her family is Miss Lana and the Colonel, but at this point in the novel she still calls her birth family 'her people', even though she knows nothing about them.

Dale squared his shoulders. 'Don't call me baby,' he said, and held out his hands.

-- Mo (as narrator) and Dale (chapter 13 paragraph 9)

Importance: One of the themes in "Three Times Lucky" is independence. Miss Rose is the one who calls him baby, and she does it in front of other people, unintentionally embarrassing him. Since Dale is a character who tends to follow others, this statement is significant in Dale's character evolution.

That's another thing about a small town: Everybody knows everybody's schedule. We spin around each other like planets around an invisible sun.

-- Mo as narrator (chapter 14 paragraph 6)

Importance: The characteristics of Tupelo Landing as a small town - the loyalty, the knowledge of one another's comings and goings, the dislike of strangers/out-of-towners - are important to the story of "Three Times Lucky." The people of Tupelo Landing stick together, and work together to help solve the mystery of Mr. Jesse's murder.

It felt like my heart would rip through my shirt, I was so scared.

-- Mo as narrator (chapter 21 paragraph 5)

Importance: Since Mo is the main character, many of the themes can be tied to her. Mo's false bravado and her fear are shown in this statement. Mo has a lot of trash talk and she can give a threat on the spot, but underneath her false bravado is fear, because she's a rising 6th grader whose two main caretakers are missing.

I feel like a sky without stars.

-- Mo (chapter 22 paragraph 7)

Importance: Mo writes this in her latest letter to her Upstream Mother, yet she is speaking of the fact that Miss Lana and the Colonel are missing. The reader might note the title of the chapter: A Town Full of Nobodies. Mo is in the middle of deciding if she will continue searching for her Upstream Mother, or if she will settle in once and for all



as the Colonel and Miss Lana's adopted daughter. Her loneliness is because Miss Lana and the Colonel are missing, so the reader can assume she is making a decision toward her caretakers and Tupelo Landing.

The wind gusted, shaking dead limbs from the trees and perfuming the air with their scent.

-- Mo as narrator (chapter 23 paragraph 11)

Importance: The hurricane has made landfall in Tupelo Landing, and this statement shows the reader how strong the storm is. The hurricane outside mirrors the storm of activity going on in Tupelo Landing, including Mr. Jesse's murder investigation, a new detective and deputy in town, and the fact that the Colonel and Miss Lana are missing.

By noon, half the town draped themselves over Miss Rose's yard, chatting and eating lunches they'd brought over themselves.

-- Mo as narrator (chapter 21 paragraph 7)

Importance: Mo's description in this statement is of how the townspeople made Miss Rose's home their cafe for the day, since the cafe is considered a crime scene. The people of Tupelo Landing show great loyalty and cohesiveness with one another.

Field Command. Attack!

-- Mo (chapter 27 paragraph 9)

Importance: In two short sentences, the reader can pick up on a few aspects of Mo's personality. First, that she looks up to the Colonel and has taken on some of his mannerisms by speaking in military terms. And second, that Mo will not sit still if she can do something to protect or save someone she loves.

As I watched them together, my earth found its axis and my stars found their sky.

-- Mo as narrator (chapter 29 paragraph 2)

Importance: As the story comes to a close, the reader can see that Mo has accepted the people of Tupelo Landing as her family. She has always trusted and respected the Colonel and Miss Lana for taking her in, but just before she says this she changes her mind about writing a letter to her Upstream Mother. Instead, she spent the time with the people who have been in her life since she floated into town.