

Tiger Eyes Study Guide

Tiger Eyes by Judy Blume

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Overview

Tiger Eyes has been acclaimed by some critics as Judy Blume's best work.

According to Robert Lipsyte in *The Nation*, "It is her finest book—ambitious, absorbing, smoothly written, emotionally engaging and subtly political. It is also a lesson on how the conventions of a genre can best be put to use."

The novel follows fifteen-year-old Davey Wexler as she learns to cope with and eventually to accept her father's untimely death. Along the way, the reader meets all of the important people in Davey's life and moves with her from New Jersey to New Mexico.

The many emotions connected with her father's death—denial, fear, grief, guilt, anger, and, finally, acceptance—are presented clearly and powerfully. In addition, an element of mystery develops as Davey's recollections of her father's death slowly unfold.

This novel does not deal solely with Davey's recovery from her father's death. There is the spice of romance as well, as Davey meets a young man who helps her overcome her fears. But, the relationship between "Tiger Eyes" and "Wolf" remains undeveloped, thus making *Tiger Eyes* less controversial than some of Blume's other books.

Another mark of a Blume novel is humor. Because *Tiger Eyes* deals with a tragedy, there is less humor within its pages than, say, *Tales of a Fourth Grade Nothing*. However, there are numerous funny episodes (often involving Davey's little brother) and passages that make the reader smile in recognition and sympathy. Moreover, the reader will appreciate the irony of Blume's choice of setting, placing this story of Davey's healing after a brutal murder in the midst of the "Atomic City," where bombs are made for the purpose of killing.

This is a book that most young people will enjoy. For one who has lost a parent and needs help in coming to grips with the situation, *Tiger Eyes* offers a chance of both comfort and growth. Although no final answers are given in this book, the reader is left with the knowledge that Davey has weathered this storm, emerging strengthened and ready to get on with her life.

About the Author

As a child, Judy Blume wished to become something exciting when she grew up, such as an actress or artist. With her amazing ability to remember the details of her childhood and to get inside the characters that she creates, it is no wonder that she became a writer, one of the most popular of her generation.

She was born on February 12, 1938 and raised in Elizabeth, New Jersey.

Her mother, Esther Rosenfeld Sussman, was a traditional homemaker with a passion for reading books. Her father, Rudolph Sussman, was a dentist. He was also "a bit of a philosopher" who enjoyed sharing ideas, fantasies, and game-playing with Judy and her older brother, David, and taught her to think for herself.

When she was in the third grade, she spent the school year in Miami Beach, Florida, with her mother and David, who was ill and needed to recuperate in a warm climate. This situation lasted for two years, during which time Dr.

Sussman visited them monthly for holidays and school breaks. After returning to Elizabeth, where she graduated from high school, she attended New York University to study elementary education, planning to become a second grade teacher.

During her sophomore year, she fell in love with a young attorney, John M. Blume, whom she married in 1959. She received her B. A. in Education from New York University in 1960, and a year later gave birth to a daughter, Randy Lee. A son, Lawrence Andrew, was born in 1963. For several years, Blume was content in her role as wife and mother, but once Larry started nursery school, she came to feel that she "needed to do something for myself—something that belonged to me as a person, apart from having a family."

Since it was not practical for her to take a teaching job at that time, she eventually turned to writing.

Blume's first attempts, rhymed stories that she made up while doing the dinner dishes, remain unpublished.

Recognizing the need for professional guidance and encouragement, she enrolled in a class in writing for children at New York University. During the course, she wrote *The One in the Middle Is the Green Kangaroo* and *Iggie's House*, both of which were soon published.

Still, it was not until the publication and success of *Are You There God? It's Me, Margaret* that Blume felt that she might really become a writer. Blume's inspiration comes from many sources including her own vividly-remembered childhood (*Are You There God? It's Me, Margaret*; *Otherwise Known as Sheila the Great*; *Starring Sally J. Freedman as Herself*, for example), matters of importance to her children (*It's Not the End of the*



World; Blubber; Forever), meetings and correspondence with other people (Deenie and Letters to Judy: What Your Kids Wish They Could Tell You), even a news clipping from her housekeeper about a boy who swallowed a turtle (Tales of a Fourth Grade Nothing).

The Blumes were divorced in January 1976, and the break-up prompted Judy to write her first adult novel, *Wifey*, which examines the paralysis of a woman in a traditional marriage.

Soon after her divorce, Blume married Tom Kitchens, with whom she and her children lived first in England and later in Los Alamos, New Mexico.

Blume and Kitchens divorced in 1978.

Blume lived in Santa Fe, New Mexico, until 1985, when she moved to Connecticut. She married for a third time on June 6, 1987. Her husband, George Cooper, has a grown daughter, Amanda, a political consultant. Cooper is also a writer, and the couple live in New York City.

Blume's observations and experiences in both New Jersey and New Mexico contributed the background for *Tiger Eyes*. Like Uncle Walter in *Tiger Eyes*, Tom Kitchens worked as a physicist in Los Alamos. As Blume explains, "In writing *Tiger Eyes* I tried to capture the wild beauty of the area as well as the fearfulness which affected many of the people who lived there. My daughter experienced some of Davey's frustrations with the high school and we all experienced the 'watch dog' mentality of the town."

The emotions in the novel came from her recollections of her own father's sudden and unexpected death of a heart attack when she was twenty-one.

She continues, "After all those years I think *Tiger Eyes* was my way of dealing with some of my feelings. I miss him still. . . . he taught me that life should be appreciated and lived to the fullest—that every day is a new experience—that there are ups and downs but one should not dwell on the downs. That's the gift he gave to me. The gift of appreciating life."

The special relationship that Blume shared with her father may be one reason that she is concerned about the lack of communication between young people and their parents. In 1981, she founded the KIDS Fund, originally funded in part with royalties from *Judy Blume Diary: The Place to Put Your Own Feelings*, but now funded with royalties from *Letters to Judy: What Kids Wish They Could Tell You*. The Fund contributes to nonprofit organizations that help children communicate with their parents.

Judy Blume has become one of the most popular children's and young adult writers of modern times; her adult novels are equally successful.

Her works have been translated into such languages as German, Scandinavian, French, Dutch, Hebrew, Spanish, and Japanese, and some have been adapted to the screen. *Fudge-a-mania* was adapted for the ABC Saturday Night Family Movie series,

followed by a thirteen-episode series based on the "Fudge" character airing on Saturday mornings.

Among the honors that Blume has won are: the Golden Archer Award, 1974; Today's Woman Award, 1981; Eleanor Roosevelt Humanitarian Award, 1983; the Milner Award, 1983; the Jeremiah Ludington Memorial Award, 1983; the Chicago Public Library's Carl Sandburg Freedom to Read Award, 1984; the ACLU's Civil Liberties Award, 1986; the Center for Population Options John Rock Award, 1986; and numerous Favorite Author-Children's Choice Awards in the United States, Europe, and Australia.

In addition, in 1983 *Tiger Eyes* was nominated for an American Book Award and received the Dorothy Canfield Fisher Children's Book Award, the Buckeye Children's Book Award, and the California Young Readers Medal.

Blume's fans are fortunate; the author is still writing and she produces a new book every few years. While her daughter, Randy, grew up to be a commercial airplane pilot (now writing a book about her flying adventures) and the mother of her first grandchild, her son, Larry (who at age three was Blume's inspiration for the character, Fudge) is a filmmaker who directed the movie version of *Otherwise Known as Sheila the Great*.



Plot Summary

Tiger Eyes is the story of a young New Jersey girl, Davey, trying to find her place after the death of her father. When Davey's mother chooses to move them to New Mexico for a few months, the family faces transitions that threaten to tear them apart, but ultimately bring them closer.

Davey Wexler is a teenage girl from Atlantic City, New Jersey, who loses her father at the opening of the novel. He is killed by robbers in the family's 7-Eleven store, and Davey is the last one to see him alive. Davey has to take a journey to New Mexico and a mental journey within herself before she is able to get over her father's death and the fear the tragedy brings into her world. Davey's travels introduce her to a world completely different from her home in New Jersey. However, in the end, Davey appreciates everything she learns there and everyone who intentionally and inadvertently challenges her to live happily.

Davey Wexler is a fifteen year-old girl, close to sixteen, who lost her father in a horrific tragedy. Davey's father was in the 7-Eleven store that he owned and was shot to death in a robbery. Davey feels alone and lost, but most of all, Davey begins to fear both life and death. Davey no longer feels comfortable around her best friend Lenaya because she has questions that Lenaya can't answer. Davey can't handle hanging out with her boyfriend, Hugh, without thinking about the night her father was killed, when she and Hugh were together. Davey keeps a knife under her pillow and has secretly stashed something in her closet since the night of the shooting. Davey tries to return to school but has anxiety attacks every time she is around too many students. The fear of one of them doing her harm or worse, if one of them were among her father's killers makes Davey panic enough to pass out.

Davey's mother becomes worried after a few of these incidents and takes her to see a doctor. The doctor prescribes medicine for Davey and a suggestion that Davey take some time in a different setting. Davey's mother decides to take her children, Davey and Jason to visit their aunt Bitsy and her husband in Los Alamos, New Mexico. Los Alamos is a predominantly white community based around the lab where Bitsy's husband works as a physicist. This lab was the site for building the first atom bomb and the whole idea makes Davey uneasy. Davey's mother eventually realizes that she can't handle returning to Atlantic City, and Davey is forced to enroll in the Los Alamos High School. Jason also enrolls in school, and Bitsy is delighted to take on the responsibilities that their mother can't handle. Walter on the other hand is not thrilled about Davey's laidback attitude toward what he considers 'serious' subjects in school and in life. Davey is frustrated with having to live in Los Alamos because of how different it is from her home and because of conflicts she has with Walter and Bitsy taking over as her parents.

Davey eventually finds one good reason to be in Los Alamos in the character of Wolf. Wolf is a young man that Davey meets in a canyon during her first outing alone in Los Alamos. At first Davey is distrustful of him but after a number of meetings in the canyon, Wolf teaches Davey, (who at first he only knows as Tiger) a lot about another side of



Los Alamos. As Davey continues to deal with life in Los Alamos and getting over the loss of her father, Davey and Wolf's paths cross outside of the canyon. Davey meets and befriends an old man dying of cancer while she is volunteering as a candy striper. She spends time with the man every time she works at the medical center and one day finds out that the man is Wolf's father. Davey and Wolf, whose real name is Martin, share the first emotional moment of their friendship. They previously made a point to keep things light and happy but, when Davey sees what's happening to Martin's father, she confides in him about losing hers.

Davey makes another friend in school, named Jane. Jane has a drinking problem and it takes her, and Davey arguing about it for Davey to realize that she really didn't give Los Alamos or life in general a chance. When her father died she let everything die with it. Davey's growth during her time in Los Alamos, along with her interaction with her friends and even her family makes Davey realize that she couldn't let the night of her father's death haunt her forever. In the end, she buries the contents she hid in her closet in Atlantic City and Los Alamos, including her clothes from the night of the murder, covered in his blood. When Davey let these items go, she was ready to let the pain go with them.



Chapter 1

Chapter 1 Summary

Davey Wexler is a teenage girl from Atlantic City, New Jersey, who loses her father at the opening of the novel. He is killed by robbers in the family's 7-Eleven store and Davey is the last one to see him alive. Davey has to take a journey to New Mexico and a mental journey within herself before she is able to get over her father's death and the fear the tragedy brings into her world. Davey's travels introduce her to a world completely different from her home in New Jersey. However, in the end, Davey appreciates everything she learns there and everyone who intentionally and inadvertently challenges her to live happily.

It is the morning of Davey's father's funeral and as the family prepares to leave, Davey cannot find anything for her feet except sneakers. Her mother offers Davey a pair of too small shoes, and Davey, her mother and brother, Jason leave for the funeral. The temperature is at a record high, and Davey dreams about what it would feel like to be on the beach where she normally hangs out. Unfortunately, she is at the cemetery facing the death of her father. Davey stands with her family and her aunt and uncle from New Mexico. She notices her friend Hugh standing off to the side. Even with everyone around, she feels completely alone to face her loss.

Chapter 1 Analysis

Grief is insinuated into this chapter even before the reader is told that the family is attending Davey's father's funeral. Everyone is distant and a little disoriented, as they get themselves together. At the funeral the heat adds to the discomfort of the occasion and causes Davey to get further lost in solitary thoughts. Overall there is an obvious distance between everyone that Davey's father must usually fill.



Chapter 2

Chapter 2 Summary

The day after the funeral, rain interrupts the heat, and Davey's best friend Lenaya visits her. Lenaya explains that she was in Baltimore when Davey's father was killed and she found out too late to make the funeral. Lenaya is a tall, slim black girl with a passion for science. Davey day dreams about the first time she met Lenaya, when she had given Davey a picture of a dissected frog, immaculately drawn and labeled. Thinking about how everyone assumes that Lenaya is good at basketball makes Davey remember that her father was a basketball star in high school and gave up his chances of a college basketball scholarship, when he got married and had Davey.

Lenaya breaks Davey's thoughts by encouraging her to get dressed. Davey is more interested in looking at all of the newspaper clippings describing her father's killing—he was shot four times by unknown attackers. Davey has collected a pile of the papers, noting that they used a nice photo of her father that she took. It is obvious that Davey is looking for understanding for what happened anywhere that she can. The newspaper proves to be the wrong place to look. "Nobody writes about how it feels when your father is murdered," she notes. Davey's aunt Elizabeth, nicknamed Bitsy, enters the room to let the girls know it is time to eat, but again Davey refuses. Bitsy tells Davey that she has to eat and she would bring the food to her room. Davey concedes to avoid a debate. Bitsy is Davey's father's sister and knowing Lenaya's interest in science Davey tells her that Bitsy's husband Walter, is a physicist in Los Alamos New Mexico at the lab where the atom bomb was built. Bitsy comes back with the food, and Davey drinks a little of the iced tea, but when she tries to eat the tuna sandwich she spits it back out into the toilet. She has apparently been throwing up every time she tries to eat.

Chapter 2 Analysis

Davey's conflict with her father's death is opened in this chapter. She cannot connect with anything or anyone, including her best friend, until she gets understanding of what losing her father really means. Davey's collection of newspapers covering her father's death is used to emphasize her confusion. Newspapers usually give all of the information the reader needs concerning events, but there are no answers for Davey in any of the articles.



Chapter 3

Chapter 3 Summary

After all of the visitors and neighbors leave on the night of Davey's father's death there is emptiness in the house. Davey and Jason join their mother in bed to comfort one another. They leave all of the remaining lights on in the house in order to feel more secure. Jason is full of questions about their father's murder. "What's it like to be dead?" "When Daddy got shot. Do you think it hurt him?" He asks all of the questions that Davey wants to ask, but she can't find the words. Davey simply squeezes her mother's hands and the three try to go to sleep.

Chapter 3 Analysis

Using conversation throughout the chapter, the reader is able to see first hand how Jason deals with his confusion about his father's death. He has a more innocent point of view than Davey, and he seems satisfied with the answers he is given. Davey is unable to speak, showing that she is coming to terms with bigger issues than that of her brother. The reader is encouraged to note Jason, but Davey's silence still brings the focus back to her.



Chapter 4

Chapter 4 Summary

After staying with Davey's family for ten days, her Aunt Bitsy and Uncle Walter prepare to leave. Bitsy encourages Davey's mother to leave with them and spend some time in New Mexico, but Davey's mother refuses. She feels that she has a lot to face and she knows that she has to learn to face it on her own. Bitsy drinks cup after cup of coffee and starts to reminisce about her little brother, Davey's father. She remembers that as a child he was good at everything he did, especially athletics. She notes that he was always a dreamer and has to ask Davey's mom "what were you living on anyway...love?" Davey's mom still believes in her husband's dreams, despite their obvious financial plight. "If you don't have dreams, what do you have?" Davey's mother assures Bitsy and Walter that they will be able to manage on their own, as they leave. Davey is happy to finally be alone with her family, but the lack of company heightens her father's absence. Davey wants to creep into her mother's bed at night the way her brother does, but she is fifteen and feels that she has to act older than her brother. So, Davey sleeps afraid and alone in her room every night with a bread knife under her pillow.

Something in a brown paper bag in Davey's closet makes her remember the night of her father's death, and she has to push the thoughts out of her mind. She feels a little assured that her mother keeps her father's gun under the bed and, if someone did come, they would have time before the intruder would make it upstairs. The gun was kept in her father's store, but he never kept it loaded for fear of Jason getting a hold of it. Even when the store was robbed he only used it as a scare tactic. For Davey's father the store was temporary collateral that he hoped to sell and open an art gallery. He was talented but his work didn't make it beyond the store and Davey's house, where he had sketches and portraits of his family and customers. Davey remembers that it was also in the store that she met Hugh. He worked for her father in the store all summer and eventually they started dating. Hugh isn't talkative so all Davey really knows is how she feels when she is around him.

Chapter 4 Analysis

Davey's father is highlighted through the thoughts of Davey's mother, Bitsy and Davey. He was a talented man, whose love and dreams carried him through life. There are conflicting ideas as to whether or not this lifestyle choice proved beneficial now that he is gone. Bitsy's opinion displays the cons of living through dreams. She offers Davey's mother money, because she can't see how they will survive otherwise. She knows that Davey's father had many opportunities in life and she obviously wishes he had taken other paths. Davey pointing out that her father would never use his gun is also ironic because if he had loaded the gun he might have been able to save himself. It is clear however that Davey's mother is not conflicted about her husband's choices. She does



not accept money from Bitsy and Walter, and she defends the life that she and her husband built. She now sleeps with the gun under her bed, ready to protect her family, if necessary.



Chapter 5

Chapter 5 Summary

Davey is in her room trying to read a magazine and finds that she is reading the same pages over and over. Her mother and brother are asleep and the doorbell rings. Davey can't avoid answering the door because she is the only one up, and she finds Hugh at the other end. They exchange uncomfortable hellos, and he hugs her, but he can't control his emotions, and he starts to cry. Hugh regains his composure and asks Davey to join him for a walk on the beach. Davey refuses, but her mother comes in and points out that she hasn't left the house since the funeral. Davey looks at the pain on her mother's face and agrees to go with Hugh to appease her. Davey goes to get dressed. She has dark circles around her eyes, and her pants are too big from all of the weight she has lost. "I look like hell. But I don't care."

Davey gets outside, and her eyes have a hard time adjusting to the light. She avoids looking at the 'CLOSED' sign she knows is on the store door. Hugh takes her hand and she presses his, as they silently try to comfort each other. "The smell of salt air...roasting peanuts, taffy and the musty smell of the amusement piers..." gives Davey a memory of her parents. They used to call her their 'Million Dollar Baby' because she was conceived under the 'Million Dollar Pier.' Her birth was the reason her father had to let go of his athletic scholarship to Rutgers University. At that time Atlantic City was rundown, but casinos were brought in and the city is thought to be on a rise. Hugh interrupts Davey's thoughts as he puts his arms around her and tries to kiss her. Davey wants to return the kiss but something won't let her. For some reason kissing Hugh reminds Davey of the night her father died so she runs all the way home and stays in bed for five days.

Chapter 5 Analysis

Davey is deteriorating physically and mentally. She has not interacted with anyone, but her mother and brother since Bitsy and Walter left and she still has no desire to. Her eating trends that were introduced in the second chapter have been ongoing because she has lost so much weight that her pants don't fit. Her mental state is still fragile and again she cannot interact well even with one of her closest friends. When Hugh cries Davey still doesn't cry and she can't bear being close to him without thinking of her father. When Davey runs away from Hugh her action represents how she is dealing with her emotions. She runs away and hides rather than face them with those around her, who are feeling the same pain.



Chapter 6

Chapter 6 Summary

Davey's mother begs her to clean herself up and get ready for her first day of high school, although Davey has no desire to go. She hasn't taken a shower in thirteen days and she feels like she wants to stay in bed under the covers all day rather than go to school. However once again, Davey obliges so that she doesn't hurt her mother. "She shakes me a little to make sure I am listening. 'For me Davey. Do it for me, okay?' It is the *for me* that gets through." So, the night before school Davey shakily gets herself out of bed weak and unaccustomed from lack of food and movement. Davey's cat Minka, a present for Davey's twelfth birthday, follows her into the bathroom. Davey thinks fondly about how Minka loves to lick everyone and wonders if Minka understands about the loss of her father. Davey concludes that Minka senses something because she spends all of her time in the bed with Davey since her father's death. In the midst of showering Davey asks herself if she will ever sing in the shower again, the way she used to love to do. Davey tells her mother that she isn't feeling well, and her mother tries to tell her that it is the anxiety of starting High School, but they both know that Davey still hasn't come to terms with the loss of her father. Tears form in Davey's mother's eyes, but Davey still doesn't cry. She tells her mother "...having you know isn't enough."

The morning of the first day of school Davey goes to the kitchen and finds her brother excitedly chatting about starting second grade. He is eating cereal in his Dracula cape which Davey thinks he should leave behind. In Jason's mind everything is going back to normal, and he asks his mom when she will open the store. Davey knows that none of them have stepped foot into the store since her father was killed and even she is starting to wonder what they will do to survive.

Davey's friend Lenaya is also starting High School, and they ride the crowded school bus together. Davey feels closed in by all of the students on the bus and almost passes out. Lenaya gives her an orange when Davey tells her that she didn't eat anything for breakfast, and Davey feels good enough to make it to school. Lenaya has the same schedule as Davey for the first portion of the day, and comforts her whenever she has the chance. Once Davey is on her own her nerves get the best of her. Other kids are all around her as she looks for her Geometry class, and Davey thinks "one of them could be the junkie who killed my father...there is no evidence that the killer was a junkie, or even a kid, but that is what I believe." (23) Again, Davey thinks about running away, but she can't move and she passes out. Davey wakes up in the nurse's office and the nurse assumes that Davey has jitters from the first day of school. Even after Davey's attempts to tell the nurse what her problem really is, the nurse is convinced of her own argument. Davey reluctantly takes the two aspirin the nurse gives her and wishes the nurse would go away. The nurse continues her questioning, sure that Davey's problem has to be one that she has encountered with other kids, including drugs, drinking or pregnancy. Finally, a boy comes into the office with an earache, and Davey is left alone to get some rest.



After passing out on the second and third days of school, Davey's mother takes her to their doctor, Dr. Foster. The doctor tells her that she is hyperventilating due to her anxiety levels. Dr. Foster suggests Davey control her breathing by calming her thoughts when she starts to feel anxious. He tells her to try another week at school and if things don't look better for her to go back to him. Dr. Foster gives Davey a high potency vitamin and tells Davey's mother that they might want to consider a change of environment due to the circumstances they are coming to terms with. Davey is notably annoyed with the doctor's visit. Davey's mother takes heed to the doctor's suggestion and calls Bitsy and Walter to take them up on their offer to join them in New Mexico. Davey is worried about how they will afford the tickets, but Bitsy and Walter have already handled all of the arrangements. Even Minka, the cat, joins the family on the trip. Davey is then more optimistic about going to New Mexico. She doesn't pass out during the three days that they prepare to leave, she doesn't go to school either, however. Davey takes the vitamins from Dr. Foster every day, and they make her urine green in color. When they get on the plane to New Mexico, Davey flushes them down the toilet.

Chapter 6 Analysis

Davey's state of mind is further explored here. She has a loyalty to her mother, but everything else seems optional. She is annoyed with her brother, distant with her best friend, distrustful of the nurse and the doctor and almost pities them for being so out of touch of what she is really going through. Davey has formulated her own inner circle that she feels no one will ever understand. The use of numbers to describe the time passing in Davey's world emphasizes that for Davey not a lot of time has passed and she is still taking one day at a time. She doesn't bracket the days into weeks, for example she counts out all thirteen days since she last had a shower and washed her hair. Even her mother doesn't get the right amount of days since the funeral and guesses ten days.

The unknown factors of Davey's father's death are also affecting Davey. She needs answers but doesn't want to be like her brother, asking questions every minute. She has come up with her own story as to what happened but this method proves unhealthy when she starts to think that her father's killer could be anywhere, including school. The terrible way in which her father died makes Davey conclude that someone erratic had to have committed the crime. So she adds junkie to the description of what his killer must have been. The introduction of New Mexico hints the possibility of renewal for Davey. Somewhere in the middle of her flight Davey flushes her prescription from the doctor down the toilet, symbolizing that she may be leaving her ties to her father's death behind.



Chapter 7

Chapter 7 Summary

Bitsy and Walter live in Los Alamos, New Mexico also known as The Hill. They meet Davey and her family at the airport and start the two hour long drive to their house. Davey is amazed by how clear and blue the sky is, as she and Jason ride in the back seat of her uncle's Blazer. Davey happens to look back and notice a rifle in the trunk where their luggage is packed, and her breathing immediately begins to falter. "Is there a lot of crime here?' I feel myself breathing harder, faster." Davey tries to relax her mind and drops the subject because Walter's attention leaves the road when he is talking to her. As they get closer to Walter and Bitsy's house, the roads get extremely curved and the altitude changes the air. Walter explains some of the recent history of Los Alamos. It was the site for what he calls 'Project Y', the building of the atom bomb. Los Alamos was the perfectly discreet place for the scientists working on the project to live. The town itself was a disappointment to Davey, it reminds her of an army base she once visited in New Jersey which was plain and flat.

As they pass the local school, Davey wonders for a moment what the kids at her school were doing at that moment. Walter and Bitsy's house is a renovated one family house with Bitsy's Volvo in the driveway. The house was previously a government duplex so the renovated rooms are very large, with small furniture in comparison. The house has two wings, and Davey and her family settle in the opposite wing from Bitsy and Walter. Davey looks around her room, there are family pictures on the wall, and Davey has to remind herself that Bitsy is her father's sister, a fact she sometimes forgets. Davey unpacks, placing the brown paper bag from her closet at home in the closet and the bread knife under her pillow. When she gets outside for dinner, everyone is already there. Walter is cooking and hamburgers on the grill and for the first time since Davey's father died, she feels really hungry. In the past, Davey had such a big appetite that her mother would joke about her one day getting fat. Now, Davey is five feet, five inches and only about 95 pounds.

As everyone eats, Bitsy talks about how her and Walter originally built the house with hopes of having children, but they were never able to. Bitsy is excited to have Davey and her family as company, even under the circumstances which no one mentions. Jason finishes his food to go play with his Frisbee, as Davey takes seconds. A few minutes later he comes running up to them covered in blood. He only has a nose bleed, but Davey sees the blood and loses control. She starts screaming and doesn't stop, until her mother shakes her and tells her that everything will be ok. When the commotion settles, Jason asks Davey "Did you think I was going to die?" she responds that she didn't, and he asks "Then why did you scream that way?" (38) Davey has no answer for her brother, she just shakes her head, still shaken up.



Chapter 7 Analysis

There are signs that the trip to New Mexico represents the path to Davey's recovery. At the same time, there are still obvious obstacles to that journey. The descriptions of Davey's progress and her setbacks are used back to back in order to highlight the fact that she still has a lot to work through. Davey is in awe of the scenery in New Mexico from the moment she gets off the plane. "The sky in Albuquerque is bright blue. Bright blue and perfect, without a cloud. I've never seen such a sky. I can't stop looking at it." The family gets in the car and she feels good about being there, until she looks in the back and notices that Walter keeps a gun. Fear creeps in, as she starts to wonder if she is in danger there too. When they arrive at Walter and Bitsy's house, Davey settles in comfortably, but she still doesn't feel quite right without the mysterious brown bag from back home and the bread knife under her pillow. For the first time since the tragedy, Davey is ready to eat and she does so with no throwing up, but in the midst of that Jason's nose starts to bleed, and Davey has a relapse of fear.



Chapter 8

Chapter 8 Summary

After a week with her aunt and uncle and their scheduled sightseeing agendas, Davey is ready to explore the area and spend some time alone. She noticed that Walter and Bitsy had matching bicycles in the garage and she asks if she can use Bitsy's. Davey wants to go riding while the family is out visiting Cochiti Lake, but she is very careful about how she asks. She doesn't want to offend Walter and Bitsy because they have been really nice. Davey has already grown tired of Walter's lectures on the area, science history and a lot in between so she appeals to them using the fact that she really needs some relaxation. After some deliberation Walter and Bitsy agree, once Davey wears a helmet when riding and promises to be extremely careful overall. Davey's mother was never a part of the conversation and when they try to include her in the decision, she gives them a distracted affirmative. Jason is happy to have Davey absent from the trip because he will have the back seat all to himself. Jason and Bitsy engage in a tickling game that they have going where Bitsy threatens to tickle him but never really does, while Davey wonders if Bitsy knows that tickling is known as a form of torture.

Chapter 8 Analysis

Davey is still a little uncomfortable interacting with the people around her. She appreciates that her aunt and uncle have been nice to her, but she is a little annoyed by them and needs to take time to herself. As Davey is taking steps to get over the tragedy that they all faced, it seems that her mother's progress is lessening. Davey notices that her mother is in a bit of a fog and she has left the parenting to Bitsy and Walter. It isn't clear yet how Davey's mother's change will affect them but taking the trip seems to have caused adverse effects on Davey and her brother in comparison to their mother.



Chapter 9

Chapter 9 Summary

Davey gets ready for her ride around the area and she sees Walter preparing their Blazer for the family outing. Davey is less uneasy, as she watches him put his gun in the back seat. She has grown accustomed to his ritual of taking the gun every time he travels away from The Hill. Davey is unsure of where the gun is kept and hopes to keep it that way. Walter reminds Davey to ride with the traffic, and Davey acknowledges with Walter and Bitsy's favorite saying, "you bet." Davey pedals off and after removing the helmet and letting her hair flow, the ride begins to feel really good. She passes the high school and remembers that she would be in school if she were home. She has already missed sixteen days. Davey pedals faster, until her limbs start to hurt, but the reminder that there is life there makes her ride even harder. Davey finally stops in an area wooded with large pine trees. She makes her way through the trees and finds herself looking at an amazing canyon. Davey sits on a rock at the edge of the canyon, taking in the view. Her mind flashes to the stories that Bitsy told her about freak accidents that happened in these canyons, and Davey begins to think about life and death and its uncertainty. Despite these thoughts, Davey decides to climb down the canyon. She doesn't know how long it takes to get down, because her watch is at home, but a part of her doesn't care. She looks back at how far she managed to climb down and suddenly has the urge to share her accomplishment with her father. She wishes that his death was just a mistake, and they would all get back to Atlantic City, and he would be there waiting. Davey then tries to convince herself that she has to face the reality of her father's death and the fact that he isn't coming back. She still desperately calls out to her father, her voice echoing through the canyon. However, Davey hears another voice respond to her.

The source of the voice is a young man, nineteen or twenty, who begins making a flawless descent to where Davey is standing. He thought Davey was in trouble because she was calling out for her father. Davey's fear of the stranger causes her to be very coarse with him. She marks a stone that she plans to use on his head if he tries to harm her. The stranger isn't deterred by Davey's attitude and keeps up with her smart remarks. He offers her a drink from his water, (to Davey's joy since she didn't think to bring a bottle of water with her) and introduces himself as Wolf. Wolf tells Davey, in a matter of fact way, that he has to leave for an appointment and she has to leave the canyon when he does. He knows that she is inexperienced and doesn't want her to end up hurting herself. After some contemplation Davey follows him to the top. Davey skins her knee on the way up but makes it to the top, wondering how she will find the energy to ride home. Wolf informs Davey that if she plans to do rock climbing she has to get herself a pair of boots. As Davey is leaving, he asks her name, and she says "Tiger." They share a laugh, as Davey rides away.



Chapter 9 Analysis

Davey's ride symbolizes her growth in dealing with her father's death. She has to go through a process on her own to come to terms with everything. She is beginning to feel life again, physically and mentally. There is still a part of Davey that wants to hold on to her father. It's the unrealistic side that makes Davey hope that maybe her father really didn't die. "Suppose it's all been a mistake, I think. Suppose he's not dead at all. That when we get back to Atlantic City he'll be there, working in the store." Davey has to talk herself out of this frame of thinking. Here her process to accept the loss in her life is shown. She also meets a young man in this chapter, and like the other people she has interacted with so far, Davey is very cagey and almost rude at first. The reader is given a chance to see that this is her defense mechanism for her fears. The young man, Wolf, is fortunately not intimidated by the wall Davey attempts to put up, and they manage to have a nice exchange.



Chapter 10

Chapter 10 Summary

Davey gets home, eats a sandwich her aunt left for her and takes a hot shower. Davey feels sore so the hot shower feels so good she starts to sing. Eventually she imagines herself in concert in Atlantic City with her name lit up on a revolving announcement sign. She imagines that her mother, brother, Lenaya and Hugh are in the audience drinking champagne and enjoying the show. Finally, her biggest fan, Wolf, sits alone watching from a table across the room. The conclusion of Davey's song demands an encore from her audience, and Wolf offers her a bouquet of all white roses. All of Davey's friends and family look on and wonder who the stranger is who is so obviously taken by Davey.

Chapter 10 Analysis

One foreshadowing moment has come full circle. In Chapter 6, Davey wonders if she will ever sing in the shower again. Finally, Davey feels good enough inside to actually sing while she is showering and, toward the end of the chapter, the reader finds out that her reform is due to meeting Wolf. For the first time, Davey fondly day dreams about her family, friends and of course, Wolf. Notably, her daydream doesn't include her father, showing that she is coming to an acceptance. Wolf has managed to at least temporarily take her mind off of her loss.



Chapter 11

Chapter 11 Summary

After Davey's shower, she dries off and starts to think about the night her father was killed, starting with the shower she took. The temperatures were so hot that Davey's shower didn't help cool her much, even with the air conditioner and fans on high. Jason was running around the house in his bathing suit and his Dracula cape, ignoring his mother's pleas for him to get dressed. Davey zips her mother's sundress up as her mother gives her an estimate of how long she would be at the clothing store, "Jean Machine" with Jason. Davey watches her mother check her watch, the one that once belonged to Davey's grandmother. Davey notes that her mother has a lot of experience with death since her mother died right before Davey was born and her brother, who Davey was named after, died when he was nineteen. Davey's mother asks Davey to bring Hugh to the house since it is safer there than on the beach, then she leaves with Jason. Davey talks to Minka as she gets dressed, informing the cat that what she feels for Hugh "...is pure physical attraction."

Putting on her favorite jeans, Davey thinks about how good it feels when Hugh touches her. Davey goes down to the store where her father is painting a portrait and waits for Hugh. Davey's father looks up from his easel to eye the revealing halter Davey is wearing, embarrassing her a little. Davey compliments her father's work, as they exchange private humor. Her father gives Davey the same warning that she heard from her mother previously, "stay off the beach, it's not safe at night." Hugh comes into the store to pick Davey up and with one more warning from Davey's father not to stay out too late. The two of them leave.

Chapter 11 Analysis

Some answers are revealed to questions left open in earlier chapters. In the opening chapters Jason wouldn't take off his Dracula cope and now the reader is told that is what he had on the night his father was killed. It took their time in New Mexico to get him to transition away from that night. Davey's experience the night of the shooting is starting to unravel. There is a hint that she may not have listened to her parents warning not to stay out too late or not to go to the beach. There is a chance that there is something in what happened that night that has made Davey hold on to the pain for so long. The timing of this flashback is also significant because she is openly thinking about her father's death for the first time and these thoughts take place right after she makes a new friend in Wolf. However these thoughts also signify Davey's conflict between moving on and holding on to what happened.



Chapter 12

Chapter 12 Summary

"Stop...Stop thinking about that night. Concentrate on how good it feels to be alive. No matter what. Just to see the color of the sky, to smell the pine trees, to meet a stranger in the canyon." Davey wills herself to focus on the joy of what she has and having met Wolf. She takes a paper and writes the word "alive" and the name "Wolf" and she finds comfort in seeing them on paper in front of her. There is a trunk at the foot of her bed that Davey once said if it were hers she would use it to hold special items. She places the papers with her comfort words into the trunk, then a few clothing items, a letter from Lenaya and finally the bread knife that moves daily from under her pillow at night to under the bed during the day. At dinner, Davey and her family exchange conversation about their days, as Davey notes that once again Walter had to tell all of the historical facts about the lake they visited. Later on Davey curls up with her brother on the deck, showing him different star constellations. Walter had been impressed by her knowledge of the stars and thinking that she had a hidden interest in astronomy, bought her a beginner's book on stars and planets. Davey feels close to her brother and gets an urge to hug him. "Watch it" he tells her jokingly.

Chapter 12 Analysis

All of Davey's thoughts support the ideas outlined in the previous chapter. Davey is trying to move on but something about the night her father was killed keeps drawing her back. Meeting Wolf has obviously given her something new to focus her attention on and the reader is given the impression that along with Davey's overall experience in New Mexico, Wolf will later have a big impact on Davey's growth. Davey's day ends with her bonding with her brother, which they haven't done since the novel began. There is also a note that Davey doesn't necessarily appreciate Walter's desire to educate them about every detail of everything around them.



Chapter 13

Chapter 13 Summary

It is two days before Davey and her family is scheduled to leave New Mexico, and Davey's mother gets a call from one of her friends back home. The friend gives Davey's mother the news that their New Jersey store has been vandalized. The culprits shot the windows out and smashed everything inside. With this news Davey's mother snaps. She starts screaming and crying, throwing everything in path because she feels so helpless. Davey wonders why her aunt and uncle don't try to stop her mother's tirade while Jason stands in corner afraid and covering his ears. "I know how she feels. I want to comfort her," Davey thinks, but she doesn't know how. Eventually her mother kicks the wall and stops screaming because she is now in pain. Bitsy goes over to comfort her, and they conclude that her toes are most likely broken. Davey's mother apologizes to them and promises Jason that she won't lose control like that again. At first she is too embarrassed to go to the emergency room, but the pain is unbearable and she has no choice. The doctors do conclude that she has broken two of her toes and tape them for her. Davey's mother doesn't know what to do about what happened to the store, and Walter assures her that he will take care of it. They decide that it would be best if Davey's family stay a little longer.

The next day, Davey goes into town to buy postcards for Lenaya and Hugh. She personalizes each of their cards with a message and drops them in the mail. She then goes to the library to pick out a few books. When she doesn't find anything that would keep her interest she leaves and notices a pair of hiking boots in the window of a store. She goes in and when the saleswoman gives her socks to try the boots on Davey notices that they are the same type of socks Wolf wore. Davey ends up buying the boots although they don't feel particularly comfortable or look like anything she would wear. After she leaves the store she almost feels guilty, wonder what her mother would think of her spending her summer earnings on one pair of boots. She decides to just keep the boots a secret and keeps her mind on going back to the canyon with hopes of seeing Wolf again. Unfortunately, Bitsy had already made plans to take them to the Science Museum where she volunteers on Wednesdays. Bitsy guides them through the museum with Jason excitedly asking questions all the way. He is fascinated by the bombs and how many people were killed by them.

Davey is a little taken aback by the fact that Walter helps design bombs, because he seems so ordinary and she pictures someone in that line of work being more high strung and corrupt. Davey's mother is no longer in as much pain, and Davey hopes that she doesn't explode again. Instead Davey's mother has resorted to saying nothing at all. During dinner that night, she tells everyone that she has a bad headache and excuses herself to bed. Meanwhile Davey's mind is still on Walter and his occupation. The fact that his designs are used to kill people is something that she can't get over and she gets into a debate with Walter about it. He defends his line of work, believing that he serves



as more of a protector than a killer. That night Davey sleeps with her hand wrapped around her bread knife.

Chapter 13 Analysis

Davey's family is faced with another obstacle. They thought they were ready to get back to their lives in New Jersey. As it turns out, Davey's mother doesn't have as much of a handle on the situation as she thought. Davey's mother has been composed and strong for her children throughout their entire ordeal and the weight of losing her husband finally came down. Davey is slightly bothered by the fact that after her mother's breakdown, she became introverted. It is obvious that there will be further inspection about Davey's mother's growth. Davey's day away from her family in the previous chapter directly contrasts her experience in this chapter. However, with thoughts of Wolf and her friends back home, Davey's progress has not been hindered. At the same time, while Jason becomes more curious about death, Davey is more turned off by it. Her feelings toward death and killing widen the gap between her and Walter.



Chapter 14

Chapter 14 Summary

Davey sneaks her hiking boots into the garage and goes back into the house. Bitsy is getting ready to leave the house and offers to make Davey a sandwich first. Davey declines the offer sliding in that she plans to go out and get exercise. Walter and Bitsy exercise everyday so mentioning exercise is Davey's strategy for getting out the house without having to face too many questions. Davey assures her aunt that she follows their safety rules when she is out on her own and leaves the house. When Davey reaches the woods leading to the canyon she switches her sneakers for her secretly purchased boots. She goes through a combination of jumping and stomping to get her feet used to the boots before looking over the canyon to see if Wolf is anywhere in sight. At first she doesn't see him, and her mind drifts to the jetty on the beach in Atlantic City. The canyon reminds her of that spot where she would go to collect her thoughts.

Davey then sees Wolf below her and jokingly calls out to him. When he places the voice and sees where Davey is standing she makes her way down to him. Wolf notices that Davey has come to the canyon more prepared than the first time, with a canteen and her hiking boots. They sit and talk, watching the lizards and eating fruit and cheese. "You have sad eyes, Tiger." When Davey doesn't respond to Wolf's observation, he asks her if she wants to talk about whatever has made her eyes so sad. She says 'no,' and he doesn't press the issue. She tells him that maybe someday she will tell him about it, and he is satisfied. Back at home, Bitsy gives Davey flack. She saw Davey riding home without a helmet. She tells Davey, "we're trying to take good care of you but you've got to help us." Davey thinks to herself, "What does she mean by that? I can take care of myself."

The next day, the whole family leaves early to an annual hot air balloon festival in Albuquerque. The topic of actually riding in the hot air balloons comes up between Jason and Davey, and Bitsy and Walter state that actually riding in the balloons is dangerous and insane. Their opinion makes Davey even more steadfast about the fact that she would definitely like to go up in one. Davey's mother interjects "I'd like to go up and never come down." Everyone looks at her strangely, not sure how to take her comment. On the way home Davey day dreams about the day she will get to ride in a hot air balloon, and her mother is struck by another bad headache. As Davey's mother's headache increase in frequency and intensity, Walter and Bitsy take her to their doctor. . The doctor concludes that the headaches are brought on by tension and anxiety due to depression. One night while Davey is reading the *People* magazine that she had to hide from Walter (it is his opinion that the magazine is trash) Bitsy comes into her room with a snack. Bitsy tells Davey that her mother is still under a lot of stress, and they have all decided that the family will stay in New Mexico until things get better. At first Davey is in agreement, knowing that she can't take care of her mother in this state. The reality of staying sinks in to Davey's head when Bitsy starts to talk about enrolling her in the school there. Davey wants to take the rest of the year off, but Bitsy will not hear it.



Eventually Davey gives up the argument and goes to say goodnight to her mother. Davey's mother doesn't hear Davey come in. She is surrounded by old photographs and crying she calls her husband's name. Davey leaves the room not wanting her mother to know she was there.

Chapter 14 Analysis

Davey has hopes of seeing Wolf to help get her through her day. When she actually sees him, she is still unable to confess her pain in losing her father, but they have an enjoyable time anyway. Their connection is already deep enough that he can tell just from looking at her that she has a lot of pain in her eyes. It seems that Davey wants to confide in him, but she isn't quite ready yet.

Davey's mother, Gwen, is getting worse, as both Davey and Jason progress. Walter and Bitsy have clearly taken over the parenting roles, and Davey is not pleased with the transition. When Davey goes to her mother after talking to Bitsy about school, it shows that Davey is still looking for her mother's support and advice. Davey had problems facing everyone when she tried to start school in New Jersey. She has not come far enough that she is ready to make another attempt, and she is intimidated by the thought of facing school again, especially in a new town with new people. Davey's mother doesn't recognize that any of this is going on. She is lost in the pain of losing her husband. It is the first chance she has stopped to come to terms with her loss, and it has overwhelmed her. Davey's attitude clashes more with Walter and Bitsy as her mother becomes more distant. Davey can't come to terms with anyone other than her parents playing a parental role in her life.



Chapter 15

Chapter 15 Summary

After Bitsy informs Davey that she is going to have to go to school, Davey has three days before starting. Davey decides to spend this time at the canyon with Wolf. She likes the nature of their relationship. "I don't ask him any questions, he doesn't ask me any." She does notice that he always has to leave by two o'clock. Wolf shows Davey various parts of the canyon telling her native stories and about its history. Davey pictures her and Wolf living in those days, making love in the open air, raising a family. Wolf gives Davey a book entitled *The First Americans*, and he signs it "To Tiger Eyes, who makes me laugh, from Wolf." Wolf tells Davey that because her eyes change color in the light they really do remind him of a tiger's eyes. She wants to hug him or have him hug her but all she can manage is to say that she is glad to have him as a friend, and he agrees.

At the Los Alamos High School on that Monday, Davey tries to register as a temporary student. Davey is told that temporary status doesn't exist at their school and Bitsy is too prepared to have considered that option for Davey in the first place. When Davey is about to explain to the office rep that their stay in New Mexico was unexpected and she didn't have her school records, Bitsy presents them from her bag. Davey's suspicion is raised by this action, and her aunt responds "We sent for them...last week." That morning Bitsy offered her money, informing her that she intends to give Davey and allowance while she is living with them. Davey is unsure about how to respond to this and the fact that Bitsy won't leave to let Davey handle her school affairs on her own. Bitsy seems a little too excited about her new instant family, and Davey makes up her mind to talk to her mother about it later. Davey picks her classes and is a little late getting to the first one. The class is English, and her teacher pairs her with another student named Jane to help Davey catch up on the assignments and reading. Talking to Jane Davey says that her father is dead for the first time, but she tells Jane that he died of a heart attack. "He died in his sleep. Everyone says it was a good way to go. That there was no pain."

Jane tells Davey that she lives in an area known as Bathtub Row, which Bitsy later reveals is the most prestigious neighborhood in their town. Bathtub Row got its name because in the 1940's the most famous scientists resided there and the houses were the only ones with bathtubs. Bitsy was impressed by the credentials of Davey's new friend while Walter was more concerned with the fact that Davey didn't include any science classes in her school schedule. Walter drills her about this, and about her future, and Davey responds with anger. Davey goes to her mother's room with hopes of finding comfort, but her mother is sleeping in the midst of scattered pictures. Davey is angry with her as well. Jason comes into Davey's room later and asks if their mother is going to die. Davey assures him that she isn't, but he is also wondering if she did, would they stay in New Mexico. Davey tells him that they would probably have to and urges



him to give her a kiss goodnight. She tries to comfort Jason by telling him that everything will be alright.

Chapter 15 Analysis

Davey spends time with Wolf to prepare her to face going back to school. The two are become closer, and Davey has an obvious crush on him. She would prefer to spend her days around the canyon where no questions are asked than to rejoin her peers in the real world. Nonetheless Davey comes face to face with that world. She makes a friend quickly and comes close to opening up about her father but then draws back by embellishing the story about how he died. Davey is also coming face to face with the fact that Bitsy is trying to become her mother more every day. Bitsy refused to let Davey register on her own, and Davey's own mother is still suffering quietly at home. Bitsy already has Davey's life set up for New Mexico and it is all out of Davey's hands. More and more Davey get frustrated and it shows with how she relates to Walter.



Chapter 16

Chapter 16 Summary

Enjoying the scenery of the changing season, Davey rides to the canyon to look for Wolf. He is there waiting for her and asks where she has been. Davey tells him that 'they' made her go to school and Wolf doesn't pry into why she had to go or who made her. Davey finally confides in Wolf about the loss of her father. "Remember the time you told me I have sad eyes? It's because my father's dead." Wolf then reveals to her that they have a common bond because his father is dying. Davey and Wolf note that their meeting didn't make them laugh like usual, and they go their separate ways. For the first time Davey leaves Wolf feeling sad and she wants to talk to her mother for comfort. When Davey gets home her mother is asleep with the shades drawn, and Davey feels that her mother has disappeared from her life.

Later in the week Walter gives Davey a card that he instructs to keep in her wallet. It's a card with her reservation at a bomb shelter in case of crisis. Davey finds Walter's gesture a little amusing since she can't imagine needing the card. Walter on the other hand is very serious and feels that the country would be better off if everyone were prepared for the worst. Davey notices that Walter is in a depressed mood that night, and he is drinking his third glass of brandy.

Chapter 16 Analysis

Reality makes its way into Davey and Wolf's connection. They both choose to confide in one another and the reality of this confidence takes away from the joy that went along with their 'no questions asked' relationship. Davey has been forced to go back to school like a normal child her age and because of this she can't spend as much time with Wolf so there is a note in their new interaction that marks a new route for their friendship. Davey once again seeks her mother out for support in her life and doesn't get it. She misses her mother, especially now that she has returned to the real world. There is also a certain discomfort that continues to brew between Davey and Walter. While Bitsy is ecstatic with her new family, Walter seems a little frustrated with the responsibility.



Chapter 17

Chapter 17 Summary

Davey notices that Bitsy has her calendar filled with the town's clubs and activities and nonetheless makes time for her new family, especially Jason. Both Bitsy and Walter have grown very close to Jason, and he reminds Bitsy of Davey's father as a child. Joining clubs is also a trend at Davey's school. One of Davey's classmates, Danielle, is trying to convince Davey to join the Society for the Preservation of Creative Anachronisms, using their jousting matches as a selling point. Davey isn't sure what creative anachronisms are and declines, giving Danielle excuses about being "overextended." Danielle responds haughtily and moves on. Her response makes Davey think of the various cliques that make up the school, including Coneheads, Loadies, Jocks and Stomps. Each group is classified by interests and habits, which happen to include criticizing people from other groups. The whole concept makes Davey feel like even more of an outsider. Davey thinks about all of the other kids like her who don't fall into any of the group dynamics and wants them to call themselves the Leftovers. The school social dynamic isn't the only thing Davey notices. She asks Walter why there are only one or two black students in the entire school. When Walter responds that there aren't large numbers of black scientists, Davey reminds him that Lenaya plans to become one. Walter also points out that White/Anglo American are the majority in Los Alamos overall.

In Davey's geometry class her absent teacher arranges for them to watch a film. It is usual behavior for him to skip out on their class so the students take advantage of the class period however they feel. Davey usually like the films but this particular one is about hemophilia and the sight of the blood makes her feel light headed. She leaves the room and another student, Reuben, follows her out to check on her. Davey knows him from around the school, but they aren't friends so, fighting off nausea, Davey brushes him off. Davey proceeds to walk out of school, without permission or right, she goes home.

When Davey gets home, she finds the house empty except for her mother, who is in her room holding up photos. Davey starts to feel angry and lashes out telling her mother that she has to stop taking the medicine for her headaches. Davey's mother answers her absentmindedly, making Davey believe that her mother has taken over the role as a child in the family. The thought makes Davey appreciate having Bitsy and Walter around. Davey knows that she couldn't handle the responsibility of bringing her mother out of her depression. Davey's mother made another visit with the doctor, who recommended she see a therapist. That night Davey's mother joined them for dinner for the first time in a week and makes an announcement that she will begin the process to get her life back on track. Davey's mother mentions her husband's name for the first time since his death but cannot form the words to speak of his death. Davey completes the sentence for her. "Everyone looks at me. I feel my cheeks flush. Then everyone looks away as if I have broken some deep, dark secret."



Chapter 17 Analysis

Davey still won't let herself become a part of her new high school. She excused her way out of the clubs that both Danielle and Jane have asked her to join. Davey wants to make her own separatist type of social group outside of those already formed in the school. Her thoughts and actions support the fact that Davey still thinks of Los Alamos as a temporary home for her. Davey thinks of herself as a special case, exempt from the rules around her and she walks out of school without permission. Going home and facing the extremity of her mother's condition makes her realize that their stay in New Mexico is more permanent. Davey cannot imagine how she would have handled her mother's breakdown had they been at home in Atlantic City.



Chapter 18

Chapter 18 Summary

Davey decides to join the candy strippers with Jane, who is excited to have something to add to her college applications. Davey has other reasons for joining and isn't sure she wants to go to college at all, but she keeps these thoughts to herself. She has apparently heard a lot of lectures about her future plans. At the medical center where the candy strippers volunteer, Davey gets a case of the giggles, when she thinks of the male volunteers wearing candy striped jumpers while they work. Jane gives her a disapproving look. The director gives the group of volunteers a description of their duties and distributes their uniforms. As it turns out the boys' uniforms are white shirts and candy striped ties. Davey starts her first duty of giving the patients water to drink. One of the patients she meets is an older man, who greets her by telling her "I've been waiting for you." He is an older, frail man with a New Mexican accent. When Davey asks why he was waiting for her, he jokes that he was waiting for any pretty girl. Jane told Davey a story about how one of the patients flashed her sister, so Davey gets the feeling that he is ready to say something perverse. Instead, he shows her a dancing bear wind up toy that he got from his son. The man introduces himself as Willie Ortiz, and he is dying of cancer. Davey is surprised at how frank he is concerning his illness. "It's cancer you know...but I'm ready to die. 'He says it so easily I am sure I have misunderstood'" Davey doesn't know what to say and wonders why he had to tell her that he was dying. She resolves to look at the beautiful sunset. Willie tells Davey not to be sad, but Davey doesn't want to look at him in case he sees that she is close to crying.

On the way home, Davey asks Jane if she would rather have a long term death like cancer or a sudden one like getting shot. Davey knows the answer to her own question but partially listens to Jane's answer. "With cancer you'd have time to get ready...If you got shot, well it'd be so sudden..." Davey finishes Jane's sentence, saying, "You wouldn't have time to say goodbye."

Chapter 18 Analysis

For the first time since her father's death, Davey is forced to come face to face with the pain of death. Here is another example of Davey starting to acclimate herself with her new environment and gets potentially sidetracked by thoughts of her father's murder. The reality she has to constantly face is a sign that she has to come to terms with the pain she has experienced because she won't be able to avoid it. Willie Ortiz is an example of someone who has come to terms with death, and Davey doesn't know how to deal with it.



Chapter 19

Chapter 19 Summary

Davey's mother has been seeing her therapist for two weeks and is showing signs of improvement like joining Bitsy's jazzercise class. Meanwhile Bitsy is reading a book entitled *How to Feed Your Kids Right* and getting deeper into mothering Jason and Davey. Davey finds consolation in hopes of going home soon. One day Davey sits in the kitchen while her mother cooks the first meal she has made since they got to Los Alamos. Davey asks her mother what she talks about with the therapist, Miriam Olnick. Her mother is still hesitant about Davey's direct questioning. She can't look at Davey when she lets Davey know that she discusses the loss of Adam. As they eat dinner, Davey gets quietly angry at Walter for only picking at her mother's spinach pie. He tries to appease his actions by letting Gwen know that he had a big lunch but the tension is already heavy in the room. Davey remembers that her mother made spinach pie the night her father was killed. She has a memory of that day, walking on the beach with her parents and Jason. Jason had on his Dracula cape and dumped water over Davey's head. They all went home to spinach pie for dinner. The memory makes her ask Jason how he is making out in school. When Jason tells them that school is great Bitsy feels the need to confirm " I told you we had excellent schools here."

The next night, Davey plays Monopoly with Jason, who always buys Virginia Avenue, the street they live on in Atlantic City. Davey is sent to jail as her mother comes downstairs dressed to go to a party with Walter and Bitsy. Their mother is hesitant about leaving Jason and Davey at home alone, but Davey and Bitsy assure her that everything will be fine. Davey realizes it's the first time their mother has left them alone since the tragedy, but Bitsy convinces her that there is no safer place, and they leave. Davey and Jason proceed to fight over his alleged cheating when Davey wasn't looking. They chase each other around the house before settling into a fit of laughter and tickling. Davey eventually asks Jason if he misses their father, but he doesn't answer. Davey tries to get him to admit that he hurts over losing their father and tries to tell him that it's ok to cry about it. Davey only manages to alienate her brother, who angrily leaves her to finish the monopoly game alone. "I don't know why I did that. I don't know why I spoiled our game, our evening together. It's just that I have this need to talk about my father, with someone who knew him and loved him the way I did."

Chapter 19 Analysis

Davey's mother's progress is shown through cooking her first meal. Like in other chapters, each character ties their present experience back to what they went through the night of Adam's death. The first meal that Gwen cooks in New Mexico is identical to what she made the day she lost her husband. She still can't bring herself to really talk about Adam, but the fact that she cooks the meal in the first place overcomes her fears of leaving her children and still goes to the party displays some progress. Davey on the



other hand has reached desperation for expression. She has no one to express her feelings to. She lied to her only friend in school about how her father died. Davey and her friend Wolf savor their reality-free relationship too much for Davey to weigh it down with the details of her father's death. Walter and Bitsy seem to be more of an annoyance to Davey than people she can confide in. Finally, Davey's mother has been in a fog for weeks and she is the person Davey wants to turn to the most. Davey's loss for someone to depend on makes her turn to her brother, simply to have someone to share her experience with. Jason however, does not want to think about that time. Unlike Davey, Jason wants to leave the pain he feels behind and move on with his new life in New Mexico.



Chapter 20

Chapter 20 Summary

Jane invites Davey to spend the day at her house and sleep over. Bitsy encourages the friendship because Jane's father is one of the heads at the Lab. Of course Davey isn't concerned with the social politics of her new friendship. Jane's family consists of her mother, Brenda, father, (who Jane says make love every Saturday night) sisters, Linda and Taffy, (who Jane says make love every Saturday night) brother-in-law, Howard and nephew, Robby. It is Davey's first visit to their side of town, Bathtub Row. Their house is built like a log cabin, surrounded by trees and set away from the street. Jane finds Howard is in the front of the house waxing a pair of skis and greets Davey as if they were expecting her. Like Bitsy, who has made Jason her apprentice, Brenda does a lot of baking and that is what Davey finds her doing. Davey secretly imagines Jason getting so good at baking that when they go back home they can open a classy cookie shop that they all can work for and make a fortune. Davey asks to see one of the bathtubs that made their area so well known. It is an old fashioned tub with feet and separate cold and hot water faucets. Davey had almost expected to see a sign stating that J. Robert Oppenheimer had once had a bath there but there is nothing like that. The two girls talk about makeup, and Davey remembers trying on makeup at Woolworth with Lenaya when they were in eighth grade. Jane cleans her room and starts to give herself a manicure as she opens the subject of college. Jane and Davey clearly have different views on the subject. Davey isn't sure where or if she wants to go and Jane thinks college is something they should already be planning for. Jane's family have already expressed where they each want her to go, MIT or Wellesley. With two sisters who didn't do much in school, Jane has accepted that breaking the cycle of her parents' disappointment is up to her.

Jane starts Davey's manicure, noticing that she is in need of one, and the phone rings. Jane answers in another room and when she returns, tells Davey it was two boys from their school. Jane told the boys, Ted and Reuben, that she and Davey would hang out with them that night. When they start to talk about boys Jane tells Davey that she has only kissed two boys. Even with two older sisters Jane had to look the subject of sex up in library, and Davey is surprised at her naivety. The conversation makes Davey think about Hugh and the intimate times they spent together. But Hugh is not a subject Davey will share with Jane or anyone else. Davey's mind drifts back to the night of her father's murder. Hugh would call Davey 'Davina' in jest. The couple sat near the beach when Hugh suggested a walk on the beach. Davey refused, remembering both of her parents asking her not to. Davey suggests they go to her backyard to be alone as a compromise. In the backyard they began kissing and breathing heavily as Hugh rubbed Davey's back and waist. Davey was ready to allow her body to go wherever Hugh took her, until she heard a few loud noises like firecrackers. They pulled away from each other and began running to the store.



Chapter 20 Analysis

Davey's time at Jane's house brings out a lot of different things in Davey. The reader is reminded that she is a dreamer. This imaginative state only seems to come out when Davey is having a good day. She is at Jane's house and she has thoughts of her brother and the rest of her family getting rich when he becomes a baking genius. She pictures them opening a business together. All of Davey's dreams are back in Atlantic City, signifying that despite what happened back home, she still sees herself there. In this light Davey's dreams mean that she is moving on from the affects of losing her father, but she isn't truly settling into life in New Mexico. Davey's inability to make New Mexico home is also implied when she can't bring herself to confide in Jane about Hugh or boys in general. Davey freezes up at the thought of her male classmates coming to visit, and her fear isn't due to inexperience like Jane. The thought of being around a guy makes Davey think of what she was doing with Hugh when she heard the shots that killed her father. Davey holds some form of guilt for the incident and these feelings are beginning to come to the surface.



Chapter 21

Chapter 21 Summary

Davey gets lost in her thoughts while she soaks in the tub and runs late for dinner with Jane's family. At dinner Jane's father, Dr. Albertson and Howard get into a deep conversation about the Lab, and Davey can't keep up with the subject. Jane's mother and sister involve Davey in a conversation about skiing. They are all very good skiers, and they plan to start teaching Jane's nephew when he turns three. After the meal, they have dessert and Jane's father compliments the meal and goes into his study while Davey and the rest of the family wash the dishes. Later that night Ted and Reuben, the boys from Davey and Jane's school come to the house. Jane's mother calls out for them to dress properly for the cold weather and the four of them leave. As soon as they get outside, Ted pulls a bottle of vodka out from behind a tree. He stashed it there before ringing the bell so he wouldn't bring it into the house. Ted opens the bottle and passes it around to everyone. Davey doesn't drink, but she takes one swallow anyway. Reuben also doesn't usually drink, but he takes a drink to warm himself. Although Davey likes Reuben a little, she keeps her hands in her pocket to avoid him trying to hold her hand. Ted and Jane, on the other hand are drinking freely from the bottle of vodka, hugging and nuzzling together.

When the bottle gets passed to Davey and Reuben again, they both refuse. The four kids opt to go into town and beside the movie theater, Pizza Hut is the only thing open late. The group orders pizza and soda, which Ted spikes with the vodka for him and Jane who is already drunk. "I don't like seeing my friends drunk." Davey thinks. "Lenaya once said that if I drank myself I wouldn't feel so uncomfortable. But I don't like the way I feel when I drink, and I don't like the way I feel after."

When they get outside, Davey watches in disbelief as the shy and innocent she saw in Jane disappeared the more she drank. Ted suggests that they warm up in someone's car since everyone is in the movie theater. Davey thinks about getting in trouble by Walter and Bitsy, and doesn't like the idea of camping out in a stranger's car. Ted and Jane take the back seat of the car and begin kissing and giggling while Davey and Reuben sit apart in the front staring ahead. They are distinctly uncomfortable but their discomfort is relieved by Jane getting sick and throwing up, giving them a reason to go home. Jane likes Reuben more for not trying anything in the car. They all practically carry Jane home because she is too out of it to walk. Davey says goodnight to the boys and begins to wonder what she would do if Jane's parents catch them. She comes up with a story about Jane getting sick from the pizza but never has to use it. Davey gets Jane up to her room, undresses her and falls asleep, dreaming about Wolf.



Chapter 21 Analysis

Davey's strength as an individual is shown through how she responds to Jane and her drinking. Although Davey is having a hard time figuring out life after losing her father, a situation is set up in this chapter to show that she does have very strong and positive qualities. She knows that she doesn't like drinking so she doesn't get drunk. She also knows that she doesn't like when her friends drink so she loses some respect for Jane when the alcohol gets the best of her behavior. Davey is also very hesitant about getting physically close to any guys. Davey's confusion about being physical with Hugh while her father was shot is reinforced here. Davey doesn't mind being around boys, but cannot stand the thought of being touched by Reuben. She likes Reuben more because he didn't try to touch her. Davey is very uncomfortable with being forced to listen while Ted and Jane became increasingly intimate in the backseat of the car. Davey goes to Jane's house and dreams about Wolf because in her dreams they share an intimacy that is based on a reality that doesn't involve any physical interaction.



Chapter 22

Chapter 22 Summary

The next morning, Jane's mother wakes them at seven-thirty, letting them know to get ready for church. Jane wakes up confused and feeling miserable, and Davey has to ask her how much of the previous night she actually remembers. To Davey's amazement, Jane barely remembers any of it. Davey concludes that Jane doesn't need to drink anymore and she shares the thought with Jane. Jane thinks differently. She knows that her reservations and shy behavior goes away when she is drinking. For Jane, this is a good thing. Davey realizes that Jane only thinks she isn't experienced with boys when, in fact, she's had a lot of experience under the influence of alcohol. Davey is frustrated with Jane and makes up her mind to go home before they leave for church. Jane begs Davey to stay, so she won't have to deal with her family on her own. Davey reluctantly agrees to go and when Jane leaves the room she wonders to herself why she was so angry with Jane about her actions. "Was it the drinking? No, I don't think so. Then what? The making out in the back seat? Yes, maybe. But why? Because I wanted to be making out too? Because I wanted to feel strong arms around me again? Is that it?" Davey never answers her own questions.

On the way to church, Davey notices how many churches there are in the area and remembers an article she once read saying that "organized religion is based on guilt and fear." She wonders if the scientists in Los Alamos have more to be guilty and fearful about. Later on her way home, Davey goes to the canyon hoping that she will see Wolf there. She waits for two hours before she rides home with tears in her eyes and a strong feeling of loneliness.

Chapter 22 Analysis

Some of Davey's true feelings are brought to the surface. She is angry with Jane for being blind to the affects drinking has on her. The rest of Davey anger seems to come from being away from Hugh and her father. Davey has no one to turn to in order to feel a sense of closeness. She only has intimacy with Wolf in her dreams and she doesn't want to get too close to other boys in Los Alamos like Reuben. These feelings bring back Davey's desire to be at home. This time these feelings have surfaced in the manner of longing for companionship. It seemed in previous chapters that Davey didn't want to get close to anyone at all, but the truth is she wants to feel comforted by someone she has a connection with. The only reference she has for that is back home with Hugh. When she tries to find a substitute in Wolf, he isn't at their meeting place and she is has not choice but to go without filling that missing void.



Chapter 23

Chapter 23 Summary

Davey sits with her mother and asks if they will be able to go home for Christmas. "I thought you understood...that we're staying for the school year." Davey's mother informs her. Davey is clearly upset. She still had the thought in her mind that they would be leaving soon. Davey's mother says that Christmas would be the worst time for her to go back. She can't handle going back at that time and she doesn't want to take Davey out of school in the middle of the term. They talk about it a little, and Davey manages to calm down a little. She asks if she can learn to ski, since they will be staying and everyone has been talking about the upcoming ski season. Davey's mother responds that she would have to discuss it with Walter and Bitsy. When the discussion does come up both Walter and Bitsy won't even consider it. Davey turns to her mother for support, but her mother believes that Walter and Bitsy know best. Walter and Bitsy don't listen to Davey's pleas and only focus on the logical side. Skiing is dangerous not to mention expensive. They can't understand why Davey is having such a hard time conforming to life in their household, but they stand firm. As usual, Bitsy supplements Walter's argument with a horror story of a young girl, who was hurt skiing. Davey yells at them and rushes out of the room.

Chapter 23 Analysis

"I drop the bits of polish that I have peeled off my nails. They scatter to the floor like tiny flowers." The description of the nail polish chips falling is used as imagery for how Davey feels when it sinks in that her and her family really are not going home anytime soon. The imagery is also a good portrayal of what happens when Davey asks to learn skiing. It seems that Davey and her mother have reconnected somewhat Davey's mother is able to calm Davey about staying in Los Alamos. However, as soon as she counts on her mother for support, where it seems she would usually get it, her mother lets Walter and Bitsy take over the parenting once again. Davey is let down all over again and she turns to anger in response. She lashes out, Walter remains restrained and logical, Bitsy is most concerned with making everyone happy, Davey's mother is indifferent, and Jason remains innocent.



Chapter 24

Chapter 24 Summary

Davey begins to like candy striping and she looks forward to spending time with Mr. Ortiz. He is the patient she met on her first day and the only one who has remained there since. Davey doesn't understand, but appreciates his high spirits in light of the fact that he is dying. She isn't prepared for the day she will have to accept his death. It hurts Davey to watch his condition worsening. Nonetheless, every week Davey saves Mr. Ortiz' room for last so they can spend time together. He likes her to tell him about school and because he believes Davey has a swimmer's build he encourages her to try out for the swim team. Davey knows that she doesn't swim well but tells Mr. Ortiz that she would consider it. He always regretted not learning to swim and proudly lived through his son, the star swimmer of his high school team for three years. Davey is more interested in the school play, and plans to try out. They are performing *Oklahoma!* and Davey looks forward to an opportunity to sing other than in her shower. One day Davey comes to Mr. Ortiz' door, and it is closed. Davey thinks the worst and realizes she still isn't ready to deal with losing him. When Davey enters the room she is relieved to see him, and he has a visitor who he introduces as his son, Martin. When his son turns to face Davey, she is surprised to see that his son is Wolf. Wolf says 'hello' as if he is meeting Davey for the first time. Davey can't find the words to respond at first. Mr. Ortiz immediately begins bragging about his son.

Wolf stops his father, uncomfortable hearing so much about himself. It's a trait Davey was already aware of. Mr. Ortiz grows weary but continues to brag about how Wolf/Martin would one day be a Division Leader or Director at the Lab. He talks his strength away, until Davey has to lean in to hear him. He remembers to tell Wolf to wind the dancing bear for Davey to see it dance then fades to sleep. Wolf kisses his father goodbye until later that night, and he leaves with Davey. When they leave, Wolf explains that Davey never saw him at the medical center, because he works at the Lab in the afternoon and usually visits his father at night.

Wolf offers to drive Davey home and waits outside while she gets her belongings. Davey only has the chance to call out to Jane that they wouldn't be walking home together, and Jane is a little hurt by her abruptness. Nonetheless, Davey and Wolf drive to Davey's house talking about their lives for the first time. Davey learns that Wolf is working to become a physicist, because his father really wants him to do it. When Davey asks he is unable to answer what he wants for his future. Before Davey gets out of the car, Wolf asks her if her father died of cancer, making her bond with his father. Davey comes close to telling Wolf the truth about how her father died but only manages to get out "My father died suddenly." "It's tough either way, isn't it?" Wolf responds. Davey tries to comfort Wolf when he puts his head down on the steering wheel of his beat-up Toyota pick up truck. Davey asks if she will see him over the weekend at the canyon, but he is spending all of his time with his father now. Davey closes their conversation by telling him that she will see him next week at the hospital. They both



know by then his father will most likely have passed away. Wolf says goodbye, and Davey runs into the house before she starts crying.

The next day, Jane asks who drove her home in the pick up truck. Davey gives a guarded response, but eventually tells Jane that he is Mr. Ortiz' son. When Jane says that he is cute, Davey snaps at her, and Jane starts to cry. Davey feels bad for making her cry and walks away. That night Davey calls Jane and apologizes for her behavior. Although Jane points out that they were told not to get emotionally attached to the patients, Davey can't help but hurt about Mr. Ortiz dying. After some uncomfortable silence, Jane invites Davey to Santa Fe with her family to do last minute shopping. Davey accepts. At dinner, Davey's mother announces that she plans to look for part time work after Christmas. Walter offers to try to bring her in as a Casual, or part-time Lab worker. Davey's mother explains that she needs a reason to get out of bed in the morning. Jason's innocent humor breaks the serious tone at the table. "I get out of bed because I have to pee." "Not at the table," Bitsy responds. "No, not at the table, in the bathroom," Jason explains. Davey laughs, until her side hurts.

Chapter 24 Analysis

The reality of death is in front of Davey once again as she witnesses Mr. Ortiz' condition as it worsens. This reality crosses over into her worry-free relationship with Wolf, starting with learning each others real names. In the hospital with Mr. Ortiz, there is no more Wolf or Tiger, and it is really as if they have never met before. Davey is shocked for two of her worlds to collide and is literally speechless as Mr. Ortiz introduces them. Both Davey and Wolf/Martin are uncomfortable with having to meet under such serious circumstances. Martin also has to endure his father raving about all of his accomplishments. He tries hard to maintain the image he established with Davey in the canyon but it doesn't work. Davey's walls come down as well.

The potential death of this mutual individual forces them to open up a little. Here another parallel is made between Wolf and Davey, as they have to let go of their facades at the same time. They each show emotion in this chapter due to what they have lost. Davey's mother has almost come full circle as she brings her life back together without her husband. She is ready to go back to work with hopes of finding daily fulfillment there. The chapter ends with Davey laughing hysterically, another sign that things are progressing for the family as a whole.



Chapter 25

Chapter 25 Summary

Davey is very excited when she gets to Santa Fe. Life there is busier than in Los Alamos. She realizes that the movement of city life is part of why she has been so anxious to go home. Like Atlantic City, in Santa Fe, there are a variety of people doing so many different things that Davey just enjoys watching them. "In Los Alamos there is no one to watch...they have a sameness I find boring. In Santa Fe, the tourists mingle with the natives - the Spanish, the Anglos, the Native Americans." They are in a village in Santa Fe with quaint shops, reminding Davey of a book, *Christmas in Other Lands*, that she read in fourth grade. Davey sees a group of Indian vendors with wares for sale, laid out on blankets. Davey looks at the jewelry and decides to buy earrings for her mother despite the fact that they are out of her price range. Jane asks her parents if she and Davey can shop on their own for a while.

The group splits and, while Davey and Jane walk through the streets, Jane suddenly grabs Davey's arm as a group of boys come toward them. She tells Davey not to give the boys eye contact because they are Spanish, quoting the rape statistics in that area. Davey is not convinced that she should fear the boys simply because of their persuasion. She thinks about Wolf being Spanish and thinks to herself that Jane has a lot to learn and understand. The two girls go from store to store, and Davey buys a Computing for Fun book for Walter, a leather pouch for Jason to put marbles or shells, a pot holder for Bitsy and catnip toys for Minka. When Jane goes to the side to shop for her own family Davey buys her a cat mobile for her room. Just as Davey begins to think about odd jobs she can pick up now that her funds are almost depleted, she sees a candle. The candle has five wicks, depicting the Mexican Sunset and she knows her father would have loved it. Davey uses the last of her money and buys the candle. Davey, Jane and Jane's parents have dinner at a restaurant and by the time they are done it is nightfall. All of the buildings have lit their traditional New Mexican Christmas lights, candles set in sand and paper bags. The lights give the street a soft glow and Jane's parents walk holding hands. Davey remembers how happy her parents once were, and her eyes begin to tear. Davey realizes that her mother will have a hard time getting through the holiday without her father. When they all get back to the car, someone has vandalized it with magic marker and the words "Los Alamos Sucks." By the look of Jane's family this had happened before. "It makes me angry this two-way hatred. I don't understand it. I wonder how much of this is caused by fear?" She goes to sleep on the ride home.

Chapter 25 Analysis

Davey is reminded of the great differences between Los Alamos and her life in Atlantic City. Going to Santa Fe makes Davey think of all of the things she loved about city life. Thus many of the shortcomings of Los Alamos life such as lack of exposure and



diversity come to the surface. First Davey thinks of people watching and how the most exciting thing to watch are housewives going to the grocery and even they move with a certain monotony. Davey has an acceptance of cultural diversity that Jane doesn't share. Jane fears a group of boys simply because they are Spanish while Davey know she has a lot to learn. Davey only feared Wolf in the beginning because he was a stranger, and they were in a secluded space, but they were able to become good friends. The tension between races goes both ways, and Davey is frustrated by this unfamiliar dynamic.

Davey's parallel between Santa Fe and Atlantic City also put her in the Christmas spirit. Everything around her reminds her of being home around Christmas time and she buys Christmas gifts for everyone, including her father. Being in Santa Fe brings a sense of normalcy to Davey and she is able to enjoy the beauty of the city. Seeing Jane's parents walking through Santa Fe even makes Davey think about how her parents would happily walk on the Atlantic City beach. Outside of the Santa Fe, Davey has never made a connection between Jane's parents and her own. All of the links between Santa Fe and Atlantic City implies that going home may really be what is best for Davey.



Chapter 26

Chapter 26 Summary

It is Christmas morning, and Davey and her family exchange presents. Bitsy brings out a menorah that belonged to Davey's great grandmother. Davey likes celebrating both Christmas and Hanukkah and decides that she will do the same when she has a family of her own. Although the morning passes nicely and quietly, there is an unspoken pain about having their first Christmas without Davey's father. Bitsy and Walter invite friends from the Lab and a family friend to the house for Christmas dinner. Davey enjoys having new people around and thinks it was a good idea on Walter and Bitsy's part. Davey still makes a note that she doesn't appreciate how one of the men from the Lab, a divorcee, keeps looking at her mother. After dinner, once everyone has left, Davey takes her father Christmas present and speaking aloud, wishes her father a Merry Christmas, with a wish that he was there with her. Davey lights all five of the candlewicks and watches it burn into a mound of wax. It snows the next day, and Davey sits inside, frosting the picture window with her breath.

Chapter 26 Analysis

The weight of losing a loved one lingers over the holiday, just as Davey expected. At the same time, Davey and her family manage to have an enjoyable Christmas. Davey's positive attitude toward the day makes her seem a part of their newly developed family for the first time. Rather than Davey's usual cynical character, Davey displays appreciation. She likes Bitsy's idea to celebrate the two holidays, and Davey has a thought about her own future celebrations.

Also, although Davey is usually bitter about Walter and Bitsy's way of life, she welcomes the company they invited to share Christmas night. Davey makes sure she takes the time to remember her father in private. Having Davey speak to her father out loud could either show progression in this character's growth. She is now able to admit that her father isn't there with her. On the other hand, Davey ending the day with giving her father a gift could show that at this point her only real connection is only with him rather than with the others in the house. Nonetheless, Davey's moment with her father where she burns the candle that he would usually save for special occasions is an important moment for her. She is perhaps still reflecting on it the next day when it snows and she just sits at the window watching.



Chapter 27

Chapter 27 Summary

Wolf's father, Mr. Ortiz has gone into a coma that the nurses assess he won't come out of. Wolf is at the hospital, sitting at his father's bedside. He accepts Davey's offer to get him a soda while he sits. When Wolf drives Davey home that night he tells her that he is going away soon and that he will miss her. When Davey asks if she will see him again his response is "*Cuando los lagartijos corren.*" When Davey asks what his words mean, he tells her to look it up and she sees him smile for the first time in a while. Wolf and Davey hold each other and say goodbye. When Davey gets into the house, Bitsy asks her who drove her home in the truck. Davey is a little evasive, but tells Bitsy that he is a friend, named Martin Ortiz.

Bitsy pushes more questions, and Davey answers with a lack of detail. Bitsy assumes that Martin is Spanish, and Davey neither confirms nor denies by saying that she never asked him, and he is from Los Alamos. Davey tells Bitsy that Martin works at the Lab, Bitsy assumes that he must do maintenance. Davey fights her initial reaction to laugh and make a sarcastic comment to fuel Bitsy's concern. Instead, she tells Bitsy "His father is a patient at the Medical Center. He goes to Cal Tech but he's taking the semester off." Bitsy is relieved, and Davey escapes to her room to write Wolf's words in her notebook so she can look it up at the Spanish department in school. The next day, Mr. Valsez, a Spanish professor, corrects Davey's spelling and informs her that the translation for Wolf's statement is, *when the lizards run*. When Mr. Valdez hears Davey repeat the words in Spanish, he tells her she should think about taking the language in school. Davey tells him that she is going to next year. She knows that Wolf meant that she would see him again in the canyon during the spring.

Davey's mother has gotten a job typing files and answering files, part time as a Casual. Davey's mother loves her new duties and says that working again makes her feel like she has a purpose. Davey isn't convinced. She thinks that being there for her, and Jason would give her more of a purpose than doing jobs at the Lab. Davey brings the idea of Driver's Ed to her mother, Walter and Bitsy. She gives them information with hopes of getting into the spring class. She goes to her room, leaving them to think about it. Later, Davey folds laundry with her mother and starts to tell her why she is interested in the class. Walter is busy doing paperwork and responds to her conversation without looking up. "Fifteen is much too young for Driver's Ed...There's no reason to rush it." He tells her she will have to make do with walking and riding her bike, until her senior year. Davey turns to her mother for support and almost connects with her mother for the first time in a while, but Walter interrupts, continuing his view on the subject. Bitsy adds her support of Walter, agreeing that driving too early is dangerous and can lead to trouble. Davey turns to her mother again, but this time her mother reverts back to agreeing with Walter and Bitsy, stating that they know best.



Davey loses her composure and starts yelling at her mother that she no longer has a mind of her own. Walter stops her there and starts yelling, but Davey continues her tirade. She is tired of Walter and Bitsy's paranoid, overly cautious attitude. Davey's mother unsuccessfully tries to calm her, and Walter tries to be firm with her. His words only make Davey angrier and she directs her anger at him. "You're a good one to talk...You're the one making the bombs. You're the one who's figuring out how to blow up the whole world. But you won't let me take Driver's Ed. Davey storms to her room crying, leaving her mother sympathetic to being her age, and Walter deciding that she just needs more work.

Chapter 27 Analysis

Davey and Wolf's relationship has culminated to a point where they are expressing feelings to one another. They reach this point when Wolf's father is at his worst point and expected to die at any moment and Wolf is preparing to go back to school. They are both sad about having to part but Wolf leaves Davey with hope of them reuniting, and they are able to laugh with one another again. Wolf's influence and the racial ignorance around Davey has again pushed her to think about future prospects when she tells the professor that she plans to learn Spanish next year. Walter and Bitsy's lack of exposure especially unnerves Davey in this segment. Walter and Bitsy's lack of exposure has led their fear of everything unknown. First, it is clear that Bitsy doesn't know anything about people of Spanish descent other than their maintenance work at the Lab. She was frazzled when Davey said that Wolf drove her home and from his name she concludes that he is of Spanish descent.

Davey knows that if she told Bitsy that Wolf was a maintenance worker, like Bitsy assumed, Bitsy would have lost all composure. However, Davey remembers her manners and tells Bitsy the points about Wolf that would make him ok in her book. However, Walter's household decision that Davey can't take Driver's Ed causes Davey to ignore her polite side and she tells everyone everything that she has been holding in. Ironically, Davey wants to drive most to be able to go to Santa Fe and get away from the limited mindsets and monotony of Los Alamos. Unfortunately, her family denies her that and she has to set herself apart from them so she starts yelling. In the conclusion of the chapter, it is insinuated that none of the adults are taking the time to understand what Davey is going through.



Chapter 28

Chapter 28 Summary

Davey and the rest of the family get dressed for a concert put on by Walter's Chamber Music group. Davey gives Bitsy flack about wearing a skirt and this isn't the first time they have run into problems since the Driver's Ed incident. Walter and Bitsy have already clarified that their rules have to be followed, as long as Davey is in their house. Davey has made up her mind that she might have to follow them, but she doesn't have to do so willingly. She is having a hard time accepting Walter and Bitsy telling her what to do. Nonetheless, Davey puts on the denim skirt her mother gave her for Christmas with a sweater she has to pick Minka hair off of. Davey is the first one dressed so she answers the door when it rings. Ned, one of the guests at Christmas dinner is on the other end. He is scheduled to replace the violin player for the night, and he greets Davey with the wrong name. Davey is not happy to see him, remembering how he stared at her mother at Christmas dinner. She tells him her correct name and is happy to move on as the bell continues to ring and the house fills with guests.

Davey and Jason sit on the floor and find that they are yawning continuously, although it is only eight o'clock. Davey wonders to herself if the music is called chamber music because it makes you want to go to bed. The concert concludes, everyone applauds and shares in coffee and cake. Davey watches, annoyed, as Ned, who she has renamed The Nerd, exchanges conversation with her mother. Eventually the two adults agree to meet up at a later date, and Davey is clearly angry. "Jason whispers something to me but I shake him away. I am steaming. Why doesn't Mom just tell The Nerd to bug off? Why is she going through this *I'm a widow* business?" Davey unhappily notes that her mother is starting to talk just like Walter, Bitsy and their friends and is almost disgusted by the idea of her mother spending time with Ned. Later Davey shares some of her thoughts with her mother. Davey isn't ready to handle her mother going on a date, but her mother brushes it off as a casual lunch.

Chapter 28 Analysis

Here the reader is given a further glance into Walter and Bitsy's lifestyle. Davey sees this lifestyle as boring and safe, but they do have friends and associates, who share the same interests. Displaying Walter and Bitsy in a social setting presents another side to what was previously only seen as monotonous. They are happy with things as they are, the problem is simply that Davey's ideals contrast directly with Walter and Bitsy's. The issue is no longer who is right and wrong, it is just clear that they cannot be happy in one another's world. With that said, the suggestion that Davey needs to be back at home is reiterated. Unfortunately for her, neither her mother nor Jason is having a hard time conforming to life in Los Alamos. Davey's main problem with her mother lies in Davey's fear of her mother becoming like the Los Alamos natives. When Davey's mother begins to converse and flirt with Ned Davey is not ready to see her mother



mingling with people and making friends there. She is critical of Ned because he carries the 'geeky' persona that Davey finds "blah" and mundane. She also wants her mother to focus on her and Jason before she starts socializing and working and carrying on her life there. Davey has not been able to use her mother as an outlet for the pain of her father's death and the more her mother becomes Walter and Bitsy, the less chance Davey will have. Davey notes that in order to get through to Walter she has to be devoid of emotion and if she has to relate to her mother in that same way they may never connect.



Chapter 29

Chapter 29 Summary

Davey goes to the Medical Center one day to find out that Mr. Ortiz died the night before. Davey is devastated and one of the nurses gives her an envelope from Wolf to try to console her. "Tiger, He wanted you to have the bear. Remember him as he was - full of life - full of love. I'll see you *cuando los lagartijos corren*." The letter only makes Davey cry more. She holds the bear and lets all of her emotions out. She cries more than she did for her father. She tells the director that she has to go home because of a headache. When she gets home she finds Jason baking cookies and takes her frustration out on him. Davey feels guilty for yelling at Jason when she gets back to her room. She realizes that she yelled at him for taking such an interest in baking when she once had a fantasy about just that. She starts crying again, telling herself aloud that she wants to go home to Atlantic City. Later that evening she writes a letter to Wolf. Davey tells him everything. She tells him the truth about how her father died and why she never told him. She tells him how his death made her afraid of everything, even Wolf on the day they met in the canyon. Davey fears death but doesn't want to live her life afraid forever. She asks what he thinks about the people in Los Alamos, who seem afraid of everything and yet build bombs. Davey gets the address for Wolf's college from her guidance counselor and mails it at lunchtime.

Chapter 29 Analysis

Davey's reaction to Mr. Ortiz' death simulates how much pain she has been going through with her father's death. She had the chance to prepare for losing Mr. Ortiz and still couldn't handle the loss. Davey also didn't release her pain when her father died so she became overwhelmed with emotion when she heard the news about Mr. Ortiz. She admits that she was numb when her father died so now she cries for both losses and apparently for the pain of death overall. She admits to Wolf that since losing her father life and death are things that she has come to fear. Davey hasn't dealt with those fears in same way as the fears of the townspeople of Los Alamos so it's easy for her to feel anger and frustration toward them and their lifestyles. Davey's letter reveals that Davey doesn't want her fear to turn her into those in Los Alamos so she fights those changes at every chance she gets.



Chapter 30

Chapter 30 Summary

Davey's letter to Wolf comes back to her on the same day that her school grades come in. Her mother is getting dressed to go out with Ned when Davey shows her the grades. They talk a little about her date, with her mother still insisting that she isn't dating Ned, but she needs adult companionship. She is pleased with Davey's grades considering that she missed a month of school. Walter on the other hand did not share that sentiment regarding Davey's report card. He tells her that she needs to apply herself rather than do enough to get by. Davey knows that he is partly right but will not admit that to him. What she says is "It's what you learn that counts, not what grades you get..." something her father once told her. Walter's frustration turns to insult, and he tells Davey that she will end up like her father with no education, wasting his life in a 7-eleven store. When Davey tries to retaliate she feels tears welling up and can only manage to tell Walter that her father was more of a man than he is and that she plans to tell her mother what he said about her husband. Walter is not moved by her threat, pointing out that Davey's mother has wasted her life as well.

Walter continues throwing insults about Davey's mother and when Davey can't take it any more she rushes toward him and starts hitting him. Walter comes back at her and slaps her across her face. Davey yells at him that she has always hated him and on her way to her room she sees that Bitsy and Jason witnessed the entire argument. Although Davey has no address for Wolf, she starts another letter to him, feeling like he is the only one she can relate to and who understands her. Walter comes into her room later that night, and Davey informs him that she has nothing to say to him. Walter comes in anyway and offers Davey an apology which she doesn't respond to. Davey keeps her focus on Mr. Ortiz' dancing bear as Walter expresses that he didn't intend to be insulting to her parents and shouldn't have slapped her. He asks for her forgiveness, but Davey turns her back to him and closes her eyes.

Chapter 30 Analysis

The conflict of ideals explodes in the confrontation between Walter and Davey. Walter's dissatisfaction with Davey's family comes to the surface. Walter puts all of his emphasis on education and the benefits that sometimes comes with it, including status and financial comfort. He sees Davey's attitude towards her grades and feels that she will remain stuck in a lower class bracket unless she changes. He clearly looks down on Davey's mother and father because they didn't plan their lives thoroughly. They weren't prepared for the odd chance that one of them dies, when preparation is what Walter lives for. An example of this is earlier in the story, when he makes the family carry their bomb shelter cards at all times. Walter has become a product of his environment and that environment directly contrasts that of Davey and her family. However, he hasn't taken the time to learn Davey's interests and perhaps Davey hasn't made them known



because of her own stubbornness. Walter didn't even know that Davey enjoyed singing, and Davey had never mentioned it before now. Davey knows the love her family shares and cannot conform to Walter's ideals. She looks to her family for emotional support and doesn't want them to lose that in the uniform life of Los Alamos. She is trying to find a way for her and her family to confront what happened to her father. Davey does not see a chance of that happening when they are hiding out in New Mexico.



Chapter 31

Chapter 31 Summary

Jane, and Davey have agreed to try out together for the school production of *Oklahoma!* Davey is a little nervous about trying out on her own and when Jane is ten minutes late, she has almost made up her mind to leave the audition. Jane shows up to the audition drunk because she refuses to get up on stage sober. Against her good judgment, Davey goes into the auditorium and waits her turn. The head of the music department, Ms. Dersh, is running the audition and calls groups of the three from the beginning of the alphabet followed by groups from the end. Jane is the third name to be called, and Davey makes a last effort to convince Jane not to audition drunk. Jane refuses, gets on stage and performs terribly off key and off beat. Davey is embarrassed for her and watches as she leaves the auditorium after announcing that she has to throw up.

For a minute Davey feels like she should give up the audition and help Jane, but Davey's anger toward Jane's drinking makes her stay. Davey is nervous but when her name is called and she starts singing she knows she is performing well. Later Jane calls Davey to get the verdict on how bad she was on stage. Davey feels that as a friend she should be honest, so she tells Jane that she should be embarrassed.

When the results of the audition are posted, Davey is given the lead role she auditioned for. Davey goes home in a good mood, singing and dancing with Jason, who is busy baking with Bitsy. Davey gets a letter that she is hoping is from Wolf, but it's a Valentine card from Hugh. Davey puts the card away and excitedly announces her good news to her mother. Davey's mother is in the middle of getting dressed and doesn't catch on what part Davey was auditioning for in the first place. Davey's mood sours, especially when she sees her mother pull out a blouse she usually saved for special occasions with Davey's father. To top it off Davey's mother is wearing the shirt because Ned is coming over for dinner.

After dinner Walter and Bitsy leave for a Bridge game, Davey sits on the floor doing homework, and Ned and Jason are at the table putting together a model airplane. When Davey's mother sends Jason to bed, Ned takes him, and Davey gets a quick talk from her mother about Ned. Davey's mother asks Davey to give Ned a chance, but when Ned comes back she embarrasses him by letting him know that he has had lettuce in his teeth since dinner. While Davey sits on the floor fuming at Ned's presence, Davey's mother seeks privacy and asks Davey to finish her homework in her room. Davey offers her mother a cynical comment and goes upstairs. The next morning Davey's mother suggests that Davey go for a few sessions with her psychiatrist, Miriam. Davey agrees, thinking that there is a lot she would like to tell Miriam about her mother.



Chapter 31 Analysis

Everyone has warmed up to the idea of Ned being around except for Davey. There are certain things that Davey feels should remain exclusive to her father even though he is gone. Although Davey came home in a good mood about her play, until she sees her mother wearing a blouse she would usually save for special times with Davey's father. The blouse is her mother's best blouse, and Davey does not appreciate seeing her mother wear it for dinner with Ned. She makes it clear that he shouldn't get special treatment when she tells her mother "I don't consider *him* company." Everyone leaves Ned, and Davey's mother to have privacy, but Davey refuses to give them privilege without first making her opinion known. She is looking for attention from her mother and it is reiterated in every chapter. This chapter concludes with Davey displaying that she needs someone to reach out and she accepts her mother's offer to see the psychiatrist. The suggestion also shows that Davey's mother still isn't ready deal with Davey directly and on her own concerning the pain Davey is still going through.



Chapter 32

Chapter 32 Summary

At school, the day before Davey is scheduled to see Miriam, Jane gets drunk during school hours and makes a scene in the hallway. Jane throws her bag around, spilling breaking all of its contents as she laughs and cheers loudly. Davey tries to tell Jane that she has a problem that she needs to get under control but Jane insists that she can stop drinking whenever she wants to. The next day at her visit with Miriam, after small talk about the weather Davey is upfront about her feelings toward her mother. "She doesn't think for herself anymore. She does whatever [Walter and Bitsy] tell her to do. She lets them make all the decisions. She even lets them choose her friends." (186)

Once Miriam assures Davey that their conversations are confidential Davey gets into her problems with Walter and Bitsy. She also tell Miriam how much she dislikes Ned, how different he is from her father. Davey then talks a little about her father and the fact that she misses him, but she starts to get choked up. At the end of their session, Davey tells Miriam about Jane and her drinking, so Miriam gives her a few pamphlets to pass on to Jane. When Miriam asks if Davey plans to attend another session, Davey isn't sure she has full trust in Miriam yet and won't commit.

Chapter 32 Analysis

A character completely outside of Davey's world needed to be brought in to find what is bothering Davey the most. She no longer feels like she can count on her mother, her father has passed away and her brother is too young and can't handle the depth of what she is feeling. On the other end of her family is Walter and Bitsy, and they represent the opposite of everything Davey has known growing up in Atlantic City. Davey wants to release some of the emotions she is feeling, and her aunt and uncle aren't used to dealing with emotionally heavy situations. All of Davey's suppressed have turned into anger toward everyone around her. Miriam's character represents a neutral force, she is not a part of Davey's group of family and friends, she is in Los Alamos but looks more honest and down to earth than the norm. Once privacy concerns are addressed between Davey and Miriam, Davey's character opens up. All of the concepts that are insinuated through Davey's actions throughout the story are already being positioned clearly for the reader through this session. Jane is another contrasting character for Davey because she isn't like everyone else in Los Alamos, but Davey doesn't like the means she has chosen to stand out.



Chapter 33

Chapter 33 Summary

It's Davey's sixteenth birthday and her first rehearsal for Oklahoma! When Davey gets home she finds that her family has put together a special dinner for her. Jane has been invited and everyone gives her gifts. Ned is there, and Davey graciously accepts his gift. It's a t-shirt, but Davey doesn't understand the humor in its statement, *A Woman without a Man is Like a Fish Without a Bicycle*. Walter and Bitsy give Davey a stopwatch and she is surprised at how impressive their gift is. Davey and Walter haven't spoken since their fight, but Davey gives him a formal thanks anyway, and responds the same. Davey's mom gives her an Indian bracelet, and Jason's gift is a painted picture and a poem.

When Davey hugs him tight he screams out about his hemorrhoids, making a joke. Davey is genuinely enjoying herself but still has thoughts about the plans she made with her father for her sixteenth birthday and she wonders if her mother remembers. They have Davey's favorite foods for dinner and for dessert Bitsy brings out a seven layer cake that Davey knows must have taken Bitsy and Jason all week. Davey makes her wish and blows out her candles. Weather the next day is very windy, stinging Davey's eyes from the dust. She tries to ignore it as she rides to the canyon with hopes of seeing Wolf again. She is disappointed to find he isn't there and there isn't a lizard in sight.

Chapter 33 Analysis

Positive things are lining up for Davey by the time her sixteenth birthday arrives. The chapter opens with Davey's first rehearsal for the school play. This is one thing that Davey has wanted from the first chapters of the story. Singing is something that she wants to do, and her whole family supports her in it. Using the beginning of this event as the opening of the chapter and making on her sixteenth birthday shows hope and growth for Davey. Davey is happy and pleasant with everyone at her dinner party and genuinely excited about all of their gifts. None of her previous issues with everyone at her party are prevalent. The focus is Davey's happiness. She is pleasant with Ned, affectionate with Jason and even speaks to Walter for the first time since their fight. Her thoughts about her father aren't heavy. She just wishes that they were able to spend her birthday together like they planned.

The conclusion of the chapter insinuates that her birthday wish is to see Wolf at the canyon. Davey has made a real friend, who in this story represents her progress. Davey goes through a windstorm the next day, symbolic of the challenges she still has to overcome. She braves the storm with hopes of meeting Wolf there. Although she doesn't get to see him, she still has the prospect of seeing him when spring officially comes.



Chapter 34

Chapter 34 Summary

It is opening night for the production of *Oklahoma!* at Davey's school. The thought of Ned, The Nerd sitting in the audience with her family, angers Davey a little and she comes close to asking her mother not to bring him. By the time her excitement about the night peaks, she is glad she didn't go through with her request. Davey is a hit in the play and is asked for an encore by the audience. Reuben is the first person to congratulate Davey. He was overwhelmed by her performance and pleasantly surprised, mentioning that he thought she was shy. Reuben gives Davey a quick kiss on her cheek, before she sees her family trying to find her. Davey's mother gives her a yellow rose, a kiss and a tight hug. Her mother is so proud that she is close to tears, embarrassing Davey a little. Davey and the cast perform the show for the remainder of the weekend, and Davey gets her picture featured in the weekly newspaper, *The Monitor*.

Spring starts with a snowstorm, but it melts quickly. With the warm weather, the students get spring fever. Davey and a bunch of the other students cut class to go for a hike in the Jemez Mountains. Davey takes this time to ask Jane if she reviewed the pamphlets, but Jane gets defensive about the subject. Jane still feels that she has the ability to stop drinking at any time. Davey responds that Jane isn't being honest with herself, and Jane rebuttals that Davey is the dishonest one because she lied about how her father died. Jane found out the truth when Bitsy told her mother. Davey explains to Jane that she couldn't deal with the truth and Jane asks Davey to take into consideration that there are things in her life that are hard to deal with as well.

Chapter 34 Analysis

Davey has come to a point where she has found something she likes in Los Alamos. Davey shines in the school production and let people know an honest side of her that they really appreciate. Davey doesn't let any of the negative thoughts about her surroundings affect her feeling of accomplishment. As much as Davey fought becoming a part of the Los Alamos community, she has found that certain aspects are not so bad. Her conversation with Jane, on the kids' spring cut day, also makes Davey see that her hasty judgment of everyone in the town may have been wrong. Jane points out to Davey that she isn't the only one with problems that are hard to deal with. Davey is learning that being a part of Los Alamos doesn't mean she has to change who she really is. This is the most positive the reader has seen Davey's character as she is the least angry with those around her. There is a clear sense of Davey letting go of her pain and becoming the person that was only previously hinted.



Chapter 35

Chapter 35 Summary

Jane makes an appointment to see Miriam after her conversation with Jane. Davey is pleased when Miriam greets her like they have been friends. Miriam saw the feature about Davey in *The Monitor* and explains why she didn't attend the performance. The session begins with Miriam starting where they left off about Davey's feelings toward her family. Davey stops her direction and blurts out that she lied to Jane about the circumstances of her father's death. Miriam sits up at attention and asks Davey what made her make up the story. Davey knows now that it was easier to make up a story than to tell anyone the truth. She admits to feeling slightly better once she wrote the letter to Wolf, telling him more honestly how her father died. Miriam offers to listen to Davey tell the full story of what happened that night to help Davey get it out. Miriam prompts her a little with what she knows of the night, hoping Davey will fill in the blanks. Davey tells Miriam "I was in backyard with my boyfriend, Hugh. We were making out when we heard the gunshots. I thought they were firecrackers...we ran to the store. I remember my screams when I saw my father on the floor. He was still alive. He said, Help me...help me, Davey. And I said, I will...I will, Daddy."

The pain of remembering that night makes Davey wonder if it is a good idea to bring the memory back to the surface. Davey's voice has softened to almost a whisper, but she continues the story. Davey's father was unconscious by the time the police and ambulance arrived. Davey stayed with him during the ride to the hospital, but her father was dead before they got there.

After a few moments of silence between Davey and Miriam, they speak again. Miriam tells Davey that she shouldn't feel responsible for her inability to help her father when he reached out to her in his final moments. Davey starts crying, knowing that she truly did want to help her father, but she couldn't. The session ends and Miriam tries to comfort and support Davey as much as possible. Outside, Davey runs all the way home and straight to her room. Davey wills the courage to go in her closet and pull out the brown paper bag she has hidden. She puts her bread knife into the paper bag and rides out to the canyon.

When Davey gets there, she climbs down and removes the contents of the bag containing her blood stained clothes from the night of her father's shooting. "There was blood everywhere that night. Everywhere. It was splattered on the loaves of bread that were stacked under the cash register. It was dripping down the charcoal portrait on my father's easel. It was forming a puddle on the floor, next to my father's body. It had soaked through his clothes. And when I held him in my arms, it soaked mine, too." Davey buries the clothes and the knife in the cave Wolf showed her, under a large pyramid of rocks. She tells her father a heartfelt goodbye, letting him know that she won't forget about him, but she has to move on and accept what happened. Davey sits



alone for a while outside the cave, and when she gets up to leave, she notices a lizard scurry by.

Chapter 35 Analysis

The healing process that has guided this story has come to its core. In one chapter, Davey confronts everything that she has grappled with to this point. First, Davey admits to Miriam that she has been lying to people about how her father died in order to avoid facing what really happened and her feelings toward the loss. For the first time the reader shares with Miriam, as Davey tells her version of the night her father died. As it turns out Davey was holding guilt about not being able to help her father. His last words to her were reaching out to her for help. Davey held on to the pain of not succeeding in his last request just as she held onto the fear of his death and even the clothes she wore the night he died. The package of clothes was mentioned in other areas of the story and the fact that the items themselves and their meaning were kept hidden symbolizes the weight Davey has been holding onto the entire time. Davey finally no longer feels responsible for the loss of her father and leaving the items from that night in canyon indicate that she can truly let go. The canyon has become Davey's special place and the canyon cave is where she chooses to leave the memories for that night and reflect on her father for a while. Once again Wolf represents hope for her. He originally showed her the cave, and her happiest times in Los Alamos were there with him. Fittingly, the chapter closes with Davey seeing a lizard, reminding her that she will see Wolf again soon.



Chapter 36

Chapter 36 Summary

Two days after Davey visits the canyon cave she receives an unmarked package in the mail. She thinks the package is marked from Big Sur, California and it turns out to be from Wolf. In the box is a flat stone that changes color in the light and attached there is a note that reads, "A tiger's eye from my Tiger Eyes. Wolf." Davey wonders where Wolf is as she holds the stone to her lips, but she is satisfied that he is thinking of her. Later that day Davey's mother tells her that she has made a dinner reservation just for the two of them at a restaurant called Philomena's. Davey is excited and surprised that they will be going without the family and Ned and that her mother tells her she can wear whatever she wants. Davey decides that she will wear a skirt. Davey gets dressed and puts Wolf's stone in her pocket. Davey's mother borrows Bitsy's Volvo, and they drive to Philomena's, which according to Davey is the only good restaurant in town.

At the table Davey's mother is very fidgety and a little anxious, but they both agree that it is nice for the two of them to be out together. Over a meal of chili enchiladas and Sangria, Davey's mother admits that she has been 'afraid' of spending time alone with Davey because she knew Davey would want to talk about her father. Davey has wanted to talk about her father to someone for a long time but now realizes that she no longer needs to. Drinking the Sangria to cool the burning from the chili, Davey thinks about Jane and her drinking. She wonders if Jane has taken a look at the pamphlets. Davey's mother interrupts Davey's thoughts by telling her that Ned has asked her to marry her. Davey is filled with conflicting thoughts. She knows that Ned or anyone else will never be as good as her father. She also knows that her father is gone and won't come back. Nonetheless Davey's mother explains why she turned Ned down.

Davey takes this time to ask when they are going back home to Atlantic City, hoping that she doesn't hear they are staying in Los Alamos permanently. Surprisingly, Davey's mother asks what Davey what she thinks about leaving when school is over. Davey's mother explains that they will have to sell the house and the store for extra money and to avoid the constant reminder of Davey's father's murder. Davey has no argument, and they even agree that they should look for an apartment on the beach. Davey's mother hasn't told anyone else in the family about her plans yet but both Davey and her mother are glad that the fear that brought them to Los Alamos is finally diminishing. The two are able to share a laugh even in the emotion of the moment.

Chapter 36 Analysis

This chapter is the first feature dedicated solely to Davey and her mother. Davey has anticipated a time like this since they arrived in Los Alamos but apparently before this time neither of them was actually ready for it. The completion of Davey's story is marked here. All of the things that she has desired to this point have happened. Davey mother



makes her see that everyone around her, including Walter, Bitsy, Ned and others, were not the obstacles that Davey had to overcome. In actuality, both Davey and her mother had to find a way to come to terms with losing Davey's father before they could reach out to each other. All along, Davey's mother wasn't actually blind to what Davey was going through. She just didn't have the capacity and courage to take charge of her role as a mother. The theme of fear also closes neatly here, when Davey's mother admits that she was and still is afraid of what she will have to handle without her husband. Davey knew the role that fear played in all of their lives she just needed time to figure out how it applied and how to get passed it.



Chapter 37

Chapter 37 Summary

Davey and her mother take Jason for a walk in order to tell him of their plan to go home after school is over for the summer. Jason has many questions for them, "Will Walter and Bitsy come with us? What about Minka? What about Ned? What about school? What if somebody tries to kill us?" He is convinced that Atlantic City isn't safe, and they should stay in Los Alamos where they won't be hurt. Davey and her mother do their best to assure Jason that they will do ok back home, and he is comforted eventually.

Naturally, with the news of leaving, Jason begins to bring himself closer to Davey and her mother. Davey's mother sends Jason outside to play and breaks the news to Walter and Bitsy, who think that she is announcing an engagement to Ned. Bitsy tries every angle to get Davey's mother to change her mind but nothing works. Davey is happy to see her mother so confident again. Bitsy starts to choke up, offering to help them start a life of their own in Los Alamos, but they all know that the plan is already established. Bitsy runs out of the room and all Walter can manage to say is that Bitsy doesn't want to lose them.

Chapter 37 Analysis

Bitsy shows raw emotion for the first time. Her character has been the flawless caregiver until this point. The world of Davey's family and that of Walter and Bitsy have been contrasted in every chapter, and here is another indication. The renewed strength in Davey's family reveals a weak spot in Walter and Bitsy's family unit. In turn, Bitsy becomes the opposite of what she has portrayed all along. In fact, Bitsy shows some of the same traits that she, and Walter tried to so hard to get Davey away from. Davey is even uncomfortable watching the scene play out. Walter, who is usually very opinionated, resolves to stay silent.



Chapter 38

Chapter 38 Summary

Davey rides to the canyon carrying all of the letters she has written to Wolf. She knows that she won't see Wolf that day, but she knows that they may see each other again, and that is enough for her. Davey climbs down the canyon, wanting to take in the memory of it and carry it home with her. She describes it as the place she felt "closest" to her father. She sees lizards everywhere and she leaves the package of letters on the rocks she used to bury the remaining items from the night of her father's death. She writes For Wolf Only on the envelope she wants him to open first. Davey knows that Wolf will come back one day to read the letters and will understand all that Davey was going through.

Chapter 38 Analysis

Davey ends her journey in the place where it started and with Wolf and her father's spirit holding her together. When Wolf first met Davey, she was in the canyon calling out for her father. She has physically and mentally left the pain from that day in the canyon and taken away the beauty and happy memories of her father and Wolf. Davey no longer feels disappointment and hurt when she doesn't find Wolf there. Wolf's friendship gave her the support she needed and she is finally ready to move on with her life. The envelopes of letters and the fact that she keeps his stone with her, shows that the relationship they built would always be there.



Chapter 39

Chapter 39 Summary

Walter take Davey's family to pick out a car and she likes a Subaru that looks like the car Jane threw up in the first night she got drunk. Walter pulls Davey's mother to the side to talk to her about her choice to go back to Atlantic City. He wanted make sure they weren't leaving because of him and Bitsy. He admits that he can have a strong personality at times. Davey's mother assures him that he needed to be strong enough for her at times, and he wasn't the reason for her decision. Jane comes over while Davey is packing and cries the whole time. Jane has become very dependent on Davey's friendship and isn't sure how she will make out with Davey gone. She did take Davey's advice and read through some of the alcoholism pamphlets and admitted that she might have a serious problem.

Nonetheless, she backed out of the two appointments Davey made for her at the alcohol abuse clinic. Jane is scared that she won't be able to expand her thinking outside of Los Alamos and take chances without Davey's support. Davey knows that Jane has to start to count on herself and she assures Jane that she will be ok, and they will always be friends. Davey also has to assure Bitsy that everything will be alright when she comes in to say goodbye.

Chapter 39 Analysis

Davey has wrapped up her life in Los Alamos literally and figuratively. In this chapter, Davey is packing and saying goodbye to everyone. It is clear that Davey's time in Los Alamos has opened her eyes to a lot and those that she leaned on now need her to assure them that things will be fine. Jane has grown but still feels like she needs Davey in order to be the person that she wants to be. Davey's lesson has been to keep fear out of her life and this is the advice that Jane needs. Jane's character was never developed enough to know what stresses caused her to drink, but Davey has been through enough pain to know that she is giving good advice. Davey's final words to her aunt are in Spanish, showing how much she has been able to get from living in Los Alamos. Bitsy doesn't even know what the words mean until Davey translates. "Life is a good adventure."



Chapter 40

Chapter 40 Summary

Back in Atlantic City Davey watches Jason running on the beach with his Dracula cape as she sits with her mother, listening to the waves. Davey has come to the realization that she can't live for the memories that Atlantic City holds. She wonders if Lenaya and Hugh will notice the changes in her and resolves that she will reconnect with them the next day. Davey knows she has undergone the type of change that happens deep inside and decides that maybe that's the way things are supposed to be.

Chapter 40 Analysis

Davey is at home and able to start to think ahead rather than living for the night her father was murdered. She knows how much she has changed and she is finally ok with it. Jason is still going through changes of his own. He's instinctively wearing his Dracula cape again. Davey is now ok with change, and home for her now has a new meaning.



Characters

Davey Wexler

Davey is the central character to the story, who loses her father right before the story opens. Davey's father was murdered in their family store with Davey only feet away in the backyard. Davey's father's final words were a plea for Davey to help him and for almost a year Davey carries guilt for not being able to save him. Davey was also very close with her father before his passing so getting passed his death is very difficult for her. In an effort to help the family move on from the tragedy, Davey's mother takes Davey and her brother to Los Alamos, New Mexico to stay with Davey's Aunt Bitsy and her husband, Walter. Davey is fine with the trip, until her family decides it will be more permanent. Davey resents when her mother can't handle parenting her and leaves the job to Bitsy and Walter.

Both Davey's aunt and uncle are very different from her own parents and Los Alamos is very different from her home in Atlantic City. When Davey meets a young man named Wolf she decides to give the town a chance. Wolf becomes Davey's hope for moving on from her father's death and finding a place for herself in this new town. Along the way, Davey manages to settle into life in Los Alamos, but she is nonetheless overjoyed when she has the chance to go back home. Davey was happy to say that her trip taught her a lot about herself as well as other people and most of all it allowed Davey to let go the pain of losing her father.

Wolf (Martin Ortiz)

Martin, known to Davey as Wolf, is the mysterious character who, without trying, taught Davey the most out of everyone in Los Alamos. Wolf meets Davey one day when he is at the top of the canyon and hears her calling out to her father. He thinks she is in trouble so he calls out to her. On that day the two of them make a silent pact to be friends. They start to meet each other regularly at the canyon, knowing nothing about each other beside the nicknames they each made up for emotional safety. Martin is Wolf, and Davey is Tiger. They interact with each other purely through their senses, as if they were truly these animals. The connection between Davey and Martin is tested when their real lives collide. Martin finds out that Davey works at the hospital where his father is being cared for. Unknowingly, Davey befriended his father and on one of Martin's visits to the hospital he finds out. Martin's father dies, and the commonality of losing someone you love makes Davey and Martin's friendship stronger. It's one that surpassed time and location.

Davey's Mother, (Gwen Wexler)

Davey's mother starts as the rock for her family, when they lose Davey's father. She encourages Davey to get back into the swing of things and answers all of Jason's



questions. When Davey starts to have anxiety attacks in school, and they all take a trip to Los Alamos, the weight of losing her husband starts to affect Gwen. She finds out that the store back in Atlantic City was vandalized, and her life starts crashing. It takes her a while to find relief from her pain, and having Walter and Bitsy take care of Davey and Jason gave her more time to grieve. She had a close relationship with her husband, and they didn't make any plans for a loss as great as death.

Davey's Father, (Adam Wexler)

Davey's father was very loving and loyal to his family. Adam and Davey were clearly very close and shared a lot of plans and dreams with one another. Davey's father was a great athlete when he was younger and gave up a full athletic scholarship to Rutgers University when Gwen got pregnant with Davey. His dream as an adult and father was to sell the 7-Eleven store they owned and ran to use the money and open a small art gallery. Adam did portraits of his family in his spare time and was very talented. Unfortunately none of his talents reached their full potential before he was killed by people trying to rob the store. He left his family with little to support themselves and this is where his sister Bitsy steps in to help. His death is the catalyst for most events in the main character's lives throughout the novel.

Jason Wexler

Jason is Davey's little brother who throughout the story communicates through his actions and his questions. He is the lighthearted character making everyone laugh because he is mutually witty and naive. Every time Jason feels fearful he wears the Dracula cape that he was wearing the night his father was killed. Davey later calls him the adaptable one in the family because when they get to Los Alamos he is the first one to feel comfortable and at ease. He stops wearing his Dracula cape after the first day. When it is time for Davey's family to go home to Atlantic City and rebuild their lives, Jason remains close and loyal to Davey and Gwen.

Bitsy

Davey's Aunt Bitsy is featured throughout the story but only as a passing entity, lightly injecting her opinion. Bitsy has come to love her safe life in Los Alamos. Their biggest worries are the wrong types of people infiltrating or disrupting the 'perfection' of their community. Bitsy aims to live up to the standard of that perfection, never taking risks and supporting everyone. Bitsy is clearly attached to Davey's family, because they complete the package for her. Bitsy and Walter are unable to have children, and Bitsy longingly holds on to the idea of having a big family. When she has the chance to mother Davey and Jason, she jumps in whole heartedly, the best she knows how. She goes to school with Davey on the first day of school, asking all of the right 'parenting' questions, much to Davey's annoyance. She teaches Jason how to be a master baker, also sometimes to Davey's annoyance. Bitsy perfect facade is only interfered with, when



she no longer has Davey's family to support. When this happens, Bitsy becomes an emotional, raw, honest person. By then, she has to say goodbye to her extended family unit.

Walter

Walter is Bitsy's husband, who lives with Bitsy in Los Alamos. He is a physicist at the lab where some of the nation's deadliest bombs were built, and he does research for the same type of technology. Walter isn't a blood relative of Davey and her family, and it shows. Walter has resentment toward overly emotional people. As Gwen says in Chapter four, their family was living on love rather than money. Having a family built on these ideals infuriated Walter and caused him to have endless conflict with Davey. In the end, Walter like the other characters, was forced to take a look at himself and see that he can be a little overwhelming at times. It seemed that his interaction with a real family did have some of a positive effect on him.

Jane

Davey meets Jane on her first day of school, and they become friends. Their friendship is based mainly on Jane's need to lean on other people and things to find strength. Nonetheless, Davey didn't have any friends in Los Alamos and was happy meet Jane. Early in Jane and Davey's friendship, Davey learns that Jane may have a drinking problem. Jane is shy and turns to alcohol to find the courage to be a part of certain things, like talking to boys or trying out for the school play. The habit bothers Davey, especially when Jane's habit crosses over to school, but she tries to reach out to her and help her get through the things she is dealing with.

Lenaya

Lenaya is Davey's best friend in Atlantic City. She is introduced to the story right after Adam Wexler's funeral when she comes to visit Davey. Lenaya has a strong interest in becoming a scientist in the future. Davey wasn't ready to connect with Lenaya about losing her father and it didn't seem that Lenaya knew how to deal with the situation either. The two friends, who were friends since the eighth grade, stayed in contact while Davey was in Los Alamos through letters. Davey didn't seem to be able to confide in her even then, but at the end when Davey returns to Atlantic City, Lenaya is one of the first in her thoughts.

Hugh

Davey met her boyfriend, Hugh, at her father's store where he worked. Davey and Hugh were clearly attracted to each other, and Davey misses that chemistry when she is alone in Los Alamos. Hugh feels the loss of Davey's father and as the story opens he tries to comfort her and himself but it doesn't work. Davey's guilt about not being there



for her father is all she can think of when she kisses him. It takes Davey the entire time in Los Alamos to think about Hugh and not remember the horrific murder of her father.

Mr. Ortiz

Wolf's father, Mr. Ortiz becomes the spark that it takes for Davey to realize she has a lot of emotion built up concerning the death of her father. Davey meets Mr. Ortiz when she volunteers as a candy striper at the local Medical Center. Mr. Ortiz surprises Davey with how prepared he was for his death, and he was still very pleasant and happy. Davey always saved Mr. Ortiz for the end of her round, and they would talk. He had a dancing bear that his son gave him that he would always start for Davey to see the dance. Eventually he passed away and left the bear for Davey to hold onto. When he died, Davey felt the emotion that she never allowed herself to feel when she lost her own father.

Ned Grodzinski

Ned is Walter's friend from the Lab, who is courting Gwen, Davey's mother. Davey describes him as geeky, and he reminds her of a nerd she saw on the National Lampoon movie poster. "He carried six pens in his shirt pocket, his high water pants show off his white socks and his hair is short and slicked down." (163) Davey calls him The Nerd for the entire story until the day that her mother asks her to dinner without him. Ned dates Davey's mother for some months and spends time at the house with the family. He is divorced and has children of his own so he was hoping to bond with Davey and Jason. He eventually wants to make them all one family, and he asks Gwen to marry him. She turns him down because she is not in love with him or ready to commit to another marriage that quickly.



Objects/Places

Atlantic City

Atlantic City is the city in New Jersey, where Davey was born and raised. She seems open to visiting other places, but all of her long-term dreams are set in Atlantic City.

7-Eleven

The 7-Eleven store is owned and run by Davey's parents. Davey's father's assailants were robbing the store when they murdered him. While Davey's family is in Los Alamos the store is vandalized and by the end of the story Davey's mother has decided to sell it.

The Atlantic City Beach

Davey's fondest memories of Atlantic City are on the beach there. Her parents told her she was conceived on a pier of the beach. When Davey remembers how happy her parents were she thinks of them walking hand in hand on the beach. When Davey and her mother discuss selling their house and moving into an apartment, Davey's first thought is they should find one on the beach.

Los Alamos

Los Alamos is the town in New Mexico known as The Hill where Davey's Aunt Bitsy and Uncle Walter live. Davey and her family move there, when Davey's father is killed. Los Alamos is the secluded town, where the first atom bomb was built.

The Canyon

Davey climbs down to the canyon on her first outing alone while in Los Alamos. She meets Wolf here and most of their interaction takes place here. Davey was originally attracted to the scenery and the view from the canyon and she was able to be alone to think about her father. Because of Wolf and the fact that she felt closest to her father there, the canyon became Davey's favorite place in Los Alamos.

Santa Fe

Davey was excited, when she went on an outing to Santa Fe with Jane and Jane's parents. She was finally given the opportunity to see various types of people interacting and go into quaint shops. She felt most at home in Santa Fe because it reminded her of



the city life she left at home in Atlantic City. Davey begs to get her drivers license just so she would have the chance to drive to Santa Fe whenever she wanted to.

The Blazer

Walter's car was always referred to as 'the Blazer.' This car was significant because this is the first car that Davey was in upon arriving in Los Alamos. She often made reference to the car because it displayed some of Walter's personal traits. In the Blazer was the only time Davey saw Walter's gun. He took the rifle with him whenever he left The Hill and whenever he returned home he would wash the Blazer thoroughly.

The Tiger Eye Stone

Wolf sends Davey this gift when he goes back to school in California. He wants Davey to know that he has been thinking about her and the stone reminds Wolf of Davey's eyes. Once before he told her that her eyes do remind him of a tiger's.

The Lab

The Lab is central to the livelihood of Los Alamos. Most people who live in the town work in the Lab. The Lab is where the first atom bomb was built and the physicists there still do research and production for the nation's bombs.

The Dancing Bear

When Mr. Ortiz meets Davey, he makes a toy bear he has dance for her, and she enjoys it. The bear was a gift from his son and, after their first meeting, he always made the bear dance for Davey. When Mr. Ortiz dies, Martin leaves the bear for Davey, with a note that Mr. Ortiz wanted her to have it. Davey keeps the bear close to her at home and holds it at times for comfort.



Setting

The action in *Tiger Eyes* occurs in two states, New Jersey and New Mexico. It takes place before, during, and after fifteen-year-old Davey Wexler's first year of high school. The year is approximately 1980 (Davey's father, who graduated from high school in 1964, was thirty-four when he was shot and killed during a robbery of his 7-Eleven store). In the opening scene, the Wexlers are getting ready for the funeral and Davey is desperately trying to find a pair of shoes to wear.

Chapters 1 through 6 take place in Atlantic City, where the Wexlers live in an apartment above Mr. Wexler's store.

After the school year begins, when it becomes apparent that the family is not adjusting well to their loss, they travel to Los Alamos to stay with Davey's aunt and uncle.

Despite being called the Atomic City, Los Alamos, also known as The Hill due to its altitude of 7,300 feet, is pictured as a very safe town, particularly compared with dangerous, crime-ridden Atlantic City. In Los Alamos, Davey lives in a large home and, after a few weeks when it is determined that they will stay for a while, attends Los Alamos High, "a very good school."

Although Davey finds Los Alamos "flat and ordinary," it is strategically isolated and surrounded by spectacular scenery. This locale provides Davey with a beautiful canyon to explore, and it is in this canyon that she meets Wolf.

Except for a trip into Santa Fe for Christmas shopping, the action in Los Alamos occurs at the aunt and uncle's home, the high school, the canyon, Davey's friend Jane's home, the Los Alamos Medical Center where Davey takes a job as a candy striper, and a family counselor's office.

Throughout the story there are flashbacks to the Tuesday evening at the store on Virginia Avenue, the night Mr. Wexler was killed, as Davey slowly allows herself to relive the tragedy and face the facts of his death.

Not until the very end in Chapter 40 do the Wexlers return to Atlantic City and its familiar beach. It is understood that they will sell their apartment and the store where Mr. Wexler was killed.

The reader never learns where the family will live, only that they are, at last, home.



Social Sensitivity

Although Blume is one of the most popular writers of young adult books in the last two decades, she is also among the most controversial. Many of her novels have been criticized and censored repeatedly, mainly because of themes of sexual maturation, frank language, and the absence of customary moralizing. Some critics fault her colloquial prose, her tendency to dwell on even the most mundane of life's experiences, and her prosaic treatment of the character's thoughts and feelings, while others consider these elements to be among her strengths. In any case, her name, which is well known to children, is used on children's books and often-explicit young adult and adult novels alike, a circumstance that some people feel might confuse younger readers who may be led into reading novels that are not appropriate for their age group.

Forever has received the brunt of the criticism, having been attacked for its depiction of an adolescent sexual encounter. *Are You There, God? It's Me, Margaret*, *Then Again, Maybe I Won't*, and *Deenie* have been criticized as well.

The sexual themes and objectionable language have been subdued in *Tiger Eyes*, and critics have found little to condemn here. The sensitive handling of issues such as death, racial tension, and teen-age alcoholism are well done and timely. Indeed, many have praised *Tiger Eyes* as Blume's best work.

Interestingly, at her editor's suggestion, Blume deleted from *Tiger Eyes* both a section filled with profanity and a passage dealing with masturbation.

She now claims to regret the deletions, and vows that she will not allow herself to be pressured to make similar changes in the future. As it stands, though, the novel is an important one in its examination of death, fear, and the survivors of death.



Literary Qualities

Tiger Eyes follows the format of most of Blume's novels. Written in simple prose, it is a first-person narrative that reads like a diary. The chapters are short and the characters and themes are developed through action and dialogue. As in Blume's other books, the plot explores the theme of maturity as the main character faces a challenge or tragedy. The ending does not have an obviously didactic moral or lesson, but instead reflects the protagonist's gradual understanding and growth. It is a formula that has proven to work for Blume.

Tiger Eyes is written from Davey Wexler's point of view. Instead of the usual past tense, the novel employs present tense—which is perhaps disconcerting to read but has the advantage of making the events described seem as if they are happening at that moment. The style works to bring the reader into the writer's world.

The use of flashbacks within chapters and as separate chapters, as Davey gradually recalls details about the night of her father's murder, is very effective. In the flashbacks, there is a touching depiction of the special ritual that Davey and her father shared. After a while, she cannot bear to think about her father's death any more; Chapter 12 begins, "Stop! I tell myself. Stop thinking about that night. Concentrate on how good it feels to be alive."

Blume also describes the heroine's fantasies or imaginings. Throughout the novel, Davey thinks about how things might be. For example, most of Chapter 10 relates Davey's thoughts—how she would become a singer and her family and friends would come to hear her and Wolf would give her white roses. These fantasies make Davey seem a real, vulnerable, and human character.

Certain symbolic objects reflect Davey's fear. After the murder, she sleeps with a bread knife under her pillow at night. Even in Los Alamos, she keeps the bread knife close at hand. The choice of a bread knife is an interesting one because, as a weapon, a bread knife would not provide much protection. Moreover, bread is mentioned several times in connection with Davey's father: Jokingly, he tells her that she is good at stacking bread, and when he is shot, Davey sees his blood "everywhere. . . . It was splattered on the loaves of bread that were stacked under the cash register." The imagery of the blood is repeated throughout the novel.

Mystery surrounds the brown paper bag that Davey has on her shelf in Atlantic City and which she dutifully brings along with her to Los Alamos. It is a representation of her fear, and she cannot bear to think about it or look at it until, after a session with Miriam, she is able to dispose of its contents, along with the bread knife, in the canyon where she met Wolf.

There is symbolism in the choice of cities as well. Los Alamos is called the Atomic City because the first atomic bomb was built there. The city itself grew up around the Los



Alamos Scientific Laboratory, the most important weapons development center in the country, which was established in 1943.

The city represents the ushering in of the atomic era, a time when no one on earth felt safe any longer due to the chance of atomic warfare and the possibility of global destruction. On the other hand, the resort community of Atlantic City voted in 1976 to allow gambling in its casinos. Gambling brings with it elements of crime, the Mafia, and loss of morality; conversely, gambling offers the hope of winning.

At the end of Tiger Eyes, the Wexlers 4146 Tiger Eyes decide to leave the place that appears safe on the surface but harbors the seeds for destruction of the modern world. They take a gamble and return to their Atlantic City home.



Themes

Fear

"Each of us must confront our own fears, must come face to face with them. How we handle our fears will determine where we go with the rest of our lives. To experience adventure or to be limited by the fear of it." (170) Every main character in this story has a fear that they are either trying to overcome or trying to ignore. Davey is able to identify every character's fears but cannot come to terms with her own until the conclusion of the novel. Davey and her family have fear that stemmed from the death of Davey and Jason's father. Due to the manner in which Adam was killed they feared for their safety in Atlantic City. Davey's mother deals with that fear originally by going to Los Alamos under the cover of Davey's needs. She is afraid to return to Atlantic City so she extends her stay in Los Alamos.

Unfortunately, being in Los Alamos has adverse effects on her progress and she uses Los Alamos as a place to hide from her fears. Jason is very young and doesn't clearly identify his fears but his Dracula cape is an indicator of when he is afraid. The cape becomes like a safety blanket. After his father's murder the only safe place Jason knows is Los Alamos so when they are in Atlantic City he keeps his cape on at all times. The novel is based around Davey finding and facing her fears because this journey takes her through so many stages. At first Davey feels like she is completely alone when she loses her father. The loss makes Davey distrustful of everyone around her. She can't function in school when her fear brings on anxiety attacks from being around other students, any of which could have been the one who killed her father. Davey has to let go of that form of fear in Los Alamos, but she knows that she can't completely move forward by hiding out there. In the end she realizes that facing her fears did not mean she had to be at home, she had to let go of the fear within. Her triumph is marked by burying all of the reminders of that night along with a bread knife she kept in her room as her safety item.

Davey's frustration with being afraid makes her attack everyone else's fears. She thinks that everyone in Los Alamos is afraid to really live. The fear makes them distrustful of outsiders or anyone different from them, and they aim to live in the 'safe' bubble of their small town. Davey constantly compares Los Alamos to her home and can only conclude that the residents of Los Alamos are hiding from the adventure of the rest of the world. Walter carries a rifle in his truck every time he leaves Los Alamos and washes his car down every time he comes back. Walter and Bitsy deter Davey from doing anything new and adventurous, and Davey resents them for it. They hide their fear behind the need to be safe and prepared at all times. Even Jane admits that without Davey, she doubts she would ever leave Los Alamos to see anywhere new. She had never even been to a state with along a coastline and seen the water. Jane uses her drinking to overcome her social fears and she admits that as well. "Does building bombs make them [Los Alamos townspeople] feel afraid, or is it the isolation from the rest of the world?" (171)



Race and Culture

Davey's unguarded personality toward other cultures and races contrasts directly with the general mindset of those living in Los Alamos. Davey's best friend Lenaya is black and she doesn't explore that fact, until she notices that there are only one or two black students at her school. She asks Walter about it and counters his statement that there are few black scientists by informing him of Lenaya's goals to become a scientist. Davey has also noticed that Los Alamos' population is made up almost solely of Anglo, white people. Strangely they are the minority in the state of New Mexico. The Hispanic students live in the area because their parents work maintenance at the Lab. In turn when Bitsy asks Davey about Wolf and hears that he has a Hispanic last name, Bitsy assumes that Wolf or his father does maintenance work.

Davey gets angry about the race issues in and around Los Alamos because she is unaccustomed to the unnecessary tension. When Davey takes a trip to Santa Fe with Jane and her parents their car is vandalized because they are from Los Alamos. Earlier that same day Jane shows her fear of Spanish people when a group of boys walk by and she freezes. She tells Davey about the rape statistics, assuming that because the boys are Spanish they would fall into the rapist category. "It makes me angry, this two-way hatred. I don't understand it." (152) Davey has always lived where all cultures usually interact freely and openly and she thinks the people of Los Alamos need to open their minds. Davey is happiest when she first arrives in Santa Fe and sees that it almost parallels Atlantic City with its diversity. In Los Alamos there is no one to watch, except the housewives in the supermarket and even they have a sameness I find boring. In Santa Fe, the tourists mingle with the natives - the Spanish, the Anglos, the Native Americans, all together. (148)

Life and Death

Death is clearly the leading theme of this novel. The largest issue in the novel is how Davey and her family learn to cope with the loss of a loved one. The theme of death is continually compared and contrasted with the theme of life as each character tries to find fulfillment in everyday living. "I don't want to go through life afraid. But I don't want to wind up like my father, either. Sometimes I think about dying and it scares me, because it's so permanent. I mean, once it's over, it's over. Unless there is something that comes after. Something we don't know about. I like the idea of an afterlife but I can't bring myself to really believe in it." (170)

At first, Davey uses her imagination to paint pictures of a happy life when she can't find that happiness in her reality. Losing her father makes Davey's happy times come in the form of fantasy. Davey fantasizes about life if her father never died, about a happy life with just her, Jason and her mother and about a life of personal happiness. Davey knows she can't live through her imagination and tries to bring up conversations with everyone on the subject of death in order to find some understanding. She even lies to people about how her father dies in order to try to get some closure on losing him. None



of these tactics seem to work, and then Davey is faced with losing Wolf's father, Mr. Ortiz. It is the presence of death resurfacing in Davey's life that ultimately makes her face the reality of death itself. Mr. Ortiz' death becomes a catalyst for Davey reclaiming her life in the wake of death. While Davey goes through her transition, the rest of her family are struggling with life after her father's death as well. In the end, they all have to face the reality of death in order to move on.



Themes/Characters

Davis "Davey" Wexler, who was given her mother's maiden name because there was no one else left to carry on the family name, is a perfect Blume heroine, feisty and feeling, smart and assertive, one not afraid to show emotion, be it sadness, anger, elation, or fear. She has brown hair, eyes like a cat, a swimmer's build (although she does not swim or dive), and a personality that combines toughness and vulnerability with a sense of humor. Her parents are both half Jewish. She is fifteen at the novel's beginning, sixteen at its end.

Those most important to Davey are her immediate family: her father, Adam Wexler, who recently died but who is still very much alive in Davey's thoughts; her mother, Gwendolyn, who falls into the depths of depression following the death of her beloved husband; her seven-year-old brother, Jason, who is young and innocent enough to adjust more easily to the loss and who provides much of the comic relief in the book; and her cat, Minka. Davey's best friends in Atlantic City are Lanaya, a tall, skinny black girl, and her boyfriend, Hugh, who was with her on the night of her father's death.

In Los Alamos, the Wexlers live with Adam Wexler's older sister, Elizabeth "Bitsy" Kronick, and her husband, Walter. Davey has met this couple only once before, when she was five and her grandmother died. The Kronicks have no family of their own, and they soon adopt the Wexlers into their lives. Aunt Bitsy, an enthusiastic clubwoman and science museum guide, enjoys organizing and controlling everyone's lives while Uncle Walter works as a physicist at the Lab in W (for Weapons) Division; ironically, the Kronicks are preoccupied with a fear of accidents and are overly concerned with everyone's safety. Bitsy will not let Davey ride a bicycle without wearing a helmet and Walter, who carries a loaded rifle in his automobile, will not let Davey take Driver's Education or learn to ski because it is too dangerous. The entire family has a space reserved for them in a bomb shelter.

The first friend Davey makes in Los Alamos is a mysterious young man, about twenty years old, whom she meets while exploring a nearby canyon.

Although she is too filled with pain to open up to him immediately, she recognizes in him a kindred spirit. He, too, is suffering from a tragedy—his *Painting by Norman Walker for Tiger Eyes* by Judy Blume. Macmillan: New York (1981).

father is dying. He tells her to call him "Wolf," and when he asks her name, she replies, "Tiger." Wolf calls Davey "Tiger Eyes" because her eyes remind him of a tiger's, "the way they change color in the light from golden to brown." Later, Davey learns that Wolf, who is of Hispanic descent, is a National Merit Scholar and a junior at Cal Tech who is working at the Lab for a semester to be near his terminally ill father.



Once Davey starts attending Los Alamos High School, she meets several teachers and many young people her age. The students are classified into groups: Coneheads (those who are into computers and calculators, and are carbon copies of their fathers), Loadies (the ones into booze and drugs), Jocks, and Stomps (who dress in ten gallon hats and cowboy boots, chew tobacco, and ride in pickup trucks). Davey feels that she will never fit into any of the groups. She befriends others who also do not belong—regular people, as she calls them. She becomes closest to Jane, who lives on the prestigious Bathtub Row and whose father is a physicist.

Jane is a smart girl, but she is lacking in self-confidence and turns to alcohol for courage. Davey becomes acquainted with Jane's family, and she also gets to know two boys with whom she and Jane double-date, Ted and Reuben.

Reuben likes Davey, but Davey only likes Reuben as a friend.

Through Jane's encouragement, Davey becomes a candy striper at the hospital. There she meets a patient, Willie Ortiz, a gentleman of fifty-seven who is dying of cancer. Even in his weakened condition, he is "full of life—full of love."

After Davey's mother begins to recover, she becomes friendly with Ned Grodzinski, a man who works at the Lab. Davey does not like him, and feels that he cannot compare to her father.

Privately, she calls him The Nerd.

The last important character to appear in the novel is Miriam Olnick, Gwen Wexler's counselor. Mrs. Wexler convinces Davey to have a session with Miriam, and Davey finds it liberating to be able at last to discuss with someone her father, the night of his death, and her conflicting feelings.

Feelings are an important part of Blume's novel. As Davey puts it after reading a newspaper account of her father's murder, "Newspapers are very big on facts, I think. But not on feelings. Nobody writes about how it feels when your father is murdered." Judy Blume writes about how it feels—death is a major theme in *Tiger Eyes*.

This book about coming to terms with the concept of death takes place in the very city where atomic bombs— weapons capable of inflicting a multitude of deaths—are designed and made. The town's inhabitants are preoccupied with everything except the destructiveness of the weapons that they create ("There are more than 250 clubs in this town and Bitsy belongs to nine of them, not counting morning walk, twice a week Jazzercise and batiking class," Davey reports). Blume shows that healing and understanding can occur in such an atmosphere.

Adam Wexler's murder is the primary death that Davey and her family must deal with. Later, Davey also faces the death of Mr. Ortiz. In another sense, she also must accept the death of her life as it was before the murder and somehow learn to carry on and to build a new life on the ruins of the old one.



Closely tied to the theme of death is the theme of love, and in this novel Blume presents nearly every type of love—love for a parent, a sibling, a pet, a family, an extended family, friends, first love, romantic love. Davey finds that she can continue to love a person who dies even as she learns to live without that person.

Along the way, minor themes are touched on. One of these is the lack of understanding between the generations. Adults have a habit of telling young people what to do without considering the youngsters' wishes. Overprotective Uncle Walter wants to plan Davey's life for her; similarly, Mr. Ortiz plans out his own son's life and tries to tell Davey what to do as well.

These efforts to control others are shown as a type of lack of communication.

Dual themes of fear and security arise in the wake of Adam Wexler's senseless murder. Rampant crime makes Atlantic City an unsafe place to live. Gwen sleeps with a loaded gun under her bed, Davey with a bread knife under her pillow. Jason needs frequent reassurances. While Los Alamos is safer, its primary business involves devising ways to kill others.

Perhaps that is why Aunt Bitsy and Uncle Walter seem paranoid; they do not believe that anyone can be too careful. In stages the Wexler family overcomes its fear of death and in the end they return to their home in Atlantic City in spite of the dangers. "I can't let safety and security become the focus of my life," Gwen Wexler insists at the book's end.

Another theme touched upon is that of teen-age drug and alcohol abuse.

Davey recognizes that her friend, Jane, is an alcoholic although Jane will not admit her addiction. In the end, Davey helps Jane by giving her some pamphlets from the counselor's office and encouraging her to seek help.

Racial bigotry crops up throughout the novel. Three ethnic groups comprise the residents of New Mexico—white, Latino, and American Indian; each group looks down on the other two. Davey, whose best friend in New Jersey is black, exhibits more maturity and tolerance toward minorities than do her peers and the adults in New Mexico. For example, she will not accept the notion that all Hispanic men are out to rape white girls. Wolf in particular does not fit the local stereotype of "typical" Hispanics: he is very bright and works in the lab rather than in maintenance. Davey knows enough people who are exceptions to the stereotypes that she refuses to classify anyone solely on the basis of ethnic background.



Style

Points of View

The entire novel is written from the main character's point of view. Using Davey's outlook to guide the story allows the reader to live through everything that Davey lives through making her a very relatable character. Relating to Davey is important because her character goes through various changes and developments. In order to follow the emotions that the characters around Davey can't understand, the reader has to know how Davey is feeling. In the end Davey's transition into closure is clear because the reader has gone through her entire grieving process with her.

The viewpoint used in the novel also makes Davey's position as the main character indisputable. Davey is a very emotional character going through one of the hardest things that any person can go through so it is almost necessary to hear her story in her voice. All of the transitions that Davey's character goes through are clearly marked because the reader is aware of everything in Davey's mind. Davey starts out feeling numb and alone at her father's funeral. The reader knows about the belongings that she has hidden in her closet and that she keeps a knife in her room at all times. These are points that the surrounding characters are not aware of.

The only limits of using Davey's voice to relay the entire account is that the details about the other characters are limited. The reader is left wondering how Walter's mind really works. Walter has the most conflict with Davey and it is hard to be objective about him only using her descriptions. Davey also has preconceived assessments of other characters like Jane and Bitsy that are never clarified.

Setting

Los Alamos is a perfect setting to represent the changes in Davey since it is the exact opposite of Atlantic City where her tragedy occurs. As her doctor suggests in the first chapters, Davey did need a change of scenery after her father's murder and Los Alamos worked in a strange way. Los Alamos is where the core of the narrative takes place. The town is small and very introverted. The townspeople live and interact on levels of hierarchy based on status at The Lab. Overall, the lifestyle is very mundane. The main reason that Davey longs to be at home for the majority of the story. At the same time, Davey appreciates the beauty of New Mexico from the minute she leaves the airport. The sky is clear and blue, the mountains are beautiful and the air is clean. Davey falls in love with the canyon where she ends up spending most of her time. She later notes that the canyon is where she comes to realize that Los Alamos wasn't where she and her family needed to be permanently, but it was what they all needed to get passed the pain they left behind in Atlantic City.



On the opposite spectrum from Los Alamos is Atlantic City. Here is where the beginning and end of the story takes place. Davey also frequently flashes back to Atlantic City in her mind. The lifestyle there through Davey's eyes is free, happy and adventurous at all turns. So much that Davey could find enjoyment from just looking at people pass. Davey loved the beach there and the happiness it brought to her family. Going home to Atlantic City brought closure to Davey's long journey.

Language and Meaning

Los Alamos is in New Mexico, a predominantly Spanish state. Walter and Bitsy have always lived there but due to barriers they have set up in their lives never expose themselves to the Spanish language or culture. Walter, Bitsy and most people on The Hill are what Davey describes as Anglo. They fear what is different, in this case their Spanish neighbors. In the time Davey spends in Los Alamos she exposes herself to other cultures and takes a liking to the language. Her curiosity begins because of Wolf, but she decides that she will sign up for classes in school. Davey is the only character out of her family and their friends who even uses a Spanish phrase. Thus, Davey is set aside from the others. She fought her family for assimilating to Los Alamos but unknowingly Davey found an aspect of New Mexican culture to assimilate to as well. Interestingly, Davey assimilates and learns without knowing and without becoming too much different from the girl she was before her father died. The few Spanish quotes that the Davey shares with the reader show that she has a lively, adventurous and sentimental side. The most pivotal moment between Davey and Wolf is when he tells her that he will see her again "*Cuando los lagartijos corren*" (155) Originally Davey doesn't know what it means but the words remain with her. Even when she doesn't see him when he promised, she is able to hold on to their pact, knowing she will see him again. Using Wolf's native tongue to represent Wolf and Davey's final tie, shows that the depth of their bond goes beyond the barriers around them.

Structure

The novel is made up of forty chapters. None of the chapters are made up the same. Some chapters are broken into segments, while others are long and flowing. Here is another technique to make the reader relate to Davey personally. Davey is a fifteen, eventually sixteen-year-old teen, who has just lost her father. Her moods are erratic, and her thought flow varies. Davey's most indulgent moments are in the shortest chapters for emphasis. Chapter 16 is only a page and half. This is where Davey tells Wolf that her father died, and they have their first serious moment since they met.

Some of the short chapters are very reflective and sometimes dreamlike, clearly some of her happier moments. Chapter 26, which takes place on Christmas Day is one of Davey's first happy and insightful times. She is happy that her family made Christmas special. Later, she takes the time out to think about her father, as she presents him her Christmas gift. The reader is able to dream with Davey and hurt with Davey and the final chapter, her resolution is unmistakable. As the composition of each chapter flows and

breaks with the main character, there is no question about what she goes through at every step. The story is built to learn Davey's lesson with her and arranged in blocks as each transition takes place.



Quotes

"Nobody writes about how it feels when your father is murdered." (7)

"What's it like to be dead?" " When Daddy got shot. Do you think it hurt him?" (9)

"What were you living on anyway...love?"

"If you don't have dreams, what do you have?" (12)

"I look like hell. But I don't care."

"The smell of "salt air...roasting peanuts, taffy and the musty smell of the amusement piers..." (16)

"She shakes me a little to make sure I am listening. 'For me Davey. Do it for me, okay?' It is the *for me* that gets through." (18)

"'Is there a lot of crime here?' I feel myself breathing harder, faster."

"The sky in Albuquerque is bright blue. Bright blue and perfect, without a cloud. I've never seen such a sky. I can't stop looking at it." (29)

"Did you think I was going to die?"

"Then why did you scream that way?" (38)

"Suppose it's all been a mistake, I think. Suppose he's not dead at all. That when we get back to Atlantic City he'll be there, working in the store." (46)

"Stay off the beach, it's not safe at night." (59)

"Stop...Stop thinking about that night. Concentrate on how good it feels to be alive. No matter what. Just to see the color of the sky, to smell the pine trees, to meet a stranger in the canyon." (61)

"I know how she feels. I want to comfort her," (64)

"You have sad eyes, Tiger."

"We're trying to take good care of you but you've got to help us."

"What does she mean by that? I can take care of myself." (78)

"I'd like to go up and never come down." (79)

"I don't ask him any questions, he doesn't ask me any."



"To Tiger Eyes, who makes me laugh, from Wolf." (84)

"He died in his sleep. Everyone says it was a good way to go. That there was no pain." (90)

"Remember the time you told me I have sad eyes? It's because my father's dead." (94/95)

"Everyone looks at me. I feel my cheeks flush. Then everyone looks away as if I have broken some deep, dark secret." (103)

"It's cancer you know...but I'm ready to die. 'He says it so easily I am sure I have misunderstood'" (107)

"With cancer you'd have time to get ready...If you got shot, well it'd be so sudden..."

"You wouldn't have time to say goodbye." (108)

"I don't know why I did that. I don't know why I spoiled our game, our evening together. It's just that I have this need to talk about my father, with someone who knew him and loved him the way I did." (114)

"I don't like seeing my friends drunk." Davey thinks. "Lenaya once said that if I drank myself I wouldn't feel so uncomfortable. But I don't like the way I feel when I drink, and I don't like the way I feel after." (129)

"Was it the drinking? No, I don't think so. Then what? The making out in the back seat? Yes, maybe. But why? Because I wanted to be making out too? Because I wanted to feel strong arms around me again? Is that it?" (134)

"Organized religion is based on guilt and fear." (135)

"I drop the bits of polish that I have peeled off my nails. They scatter to the floor like tiny flowers." (136)

"My father died suddenly."

"It's tough either way, isn't it?" (145)

"I get out of bed because I have to pee."

"Not at the table...No, not at the table, in the bathroom," (147)

"In Los Alamos there is no one to watch...they have a sameness I find boring. In Santa Fe, the tourists mingle with the natives - the Spanish, the Anglos, the Native Americans..." (148)

"It makes me angry this two-way hatred. I don't understand it. I wonder how much of this is caused by fear?" (152)



"Cuando los lagartijos corren" (155)

"His father is a patient at the Medical Center. He goes to Cal Tech but he's taking the semester off." (157)

"Fifteen is much too young for Driver's Ed...There's no reason to rush it." (159)

"You're a good one to talk...You're the one making the bombs. You're the one who's figuring out how to blow up the whole world. But you won't let me take Driver's Ed. (161)

"Jason whispers something to me but I shake him away. I am steaming. Why doesn't Mom just tell The Nerd to bug off? Why is she going through this *I'm a widow* business?" (165)

"Tiger, He wanted you to have the bear. Remember him as he was - full of life - full of love. I'll see you *cuando los lagartijos corren.*" (168)

"It's what you learn that counts, not what grades you get..." (173)

"I was in backyard with my boyfriend, Hugh. We were making out when we heard the gunshots. I thought they were firecrackers...we ran to the store. I remember my screams when I saw my father on the floor. He was still alive. He said, Help me...help me, Davey. And I said, I will...I will, Daddy." (198)

"There was blood everywhere that night. Everywhere. It was splattered on the loaves of bread that were stacked under the cash register. It was dripping down the charcoal portrait on my father's easel. It was forming a puddle on the floor, next to my father's body. It had soaked through his clothes. And when I held him in my arms, it soaked mine, too." (200)

"Will Walter and Bitsy come with us? What about Minka? What about Ned? What about school? What if somebody tries to kill us?" (208)



Topics for Discussion

1. After Adam Wexler's murder, why is Gwen Wexler the strong one while Davey falls apart, yet later Davey is strong and her mother sinks into a depression? What effect does the mother's breakdown have on her children?
2. What is in the paper bag on Davey's closet shelf, and why does she keep it there? Why does she finally get rid of the bag's contents?
3. Why does Wolf send Davey a stone from California? What kind of stone is it?
4. Wolf is a National Merit Scholarship winner and a student at Cal Tech.
Why is this important to the story?
5. What different groups of students are found at Los Alamos High School?
How do they compare with the students at your school?
6. What is the significance of Bathtub Row?
7. Why did Davey decide to become a candy striper? Was she happy with her decision?
8. Davey finds that there are a large number of clubs and churches in Los Alamos. Why might this be the case?
9. What does Davey buy her father for Christmas? Why does she buy him a gift?



Essay Topics

Explore the author's use of detailing time. Why is time mentioned so specifically in hours, days, weeks and months?

What is the significance of time in relation to Davey's life and growth?

Examine Davey and Martin, versus Tiger and Wolf. Do Wolf and Tiger have notable differences from their identities as Davey Wexler and Martin Ortiz? What aspects of their personalities are most visible within each identity?

Why were the animal identities needed, and what did they represent for each character?

Is Davey the same as the natives of Los Alamos? Did she conform to Los Alamos life in the end, even after fighting so hard not to?

Parallel the cities of Los Alamos and Atlantic City. Did the main character need both cities to reach her goals? What does each city represent for Davey?

Ideas for Reports and Papers

1. Research the history of Los Alamos from its founding to the present and explain why it is called "The Atomic City."
2. Davey's friend Jane has a drinking problem. Contact an alcoholic prevention program in your area to find out about alcohol abuse among teen-agers in the United States.
3. Read about Atlantic City, New Jersey, and Los Alamos, New Mexico.

Discuss how the cities are the same and how they are different.

4. Stunned by Adam Wexler's death, the family travels to Los Alamos to recover. Blume's choice of Los Alamos is an ironic one. Why?
5. Tiger Eyes shows three major cultures in New Mexico. Compare how the three are presented in the novel and explain how they are alike and how they are different.
6. Read a book by Elisabeth KublerRoss. Write a paper on the "stages of dying." Discuss how the survivors pass through similar stages when a loved one dies.



Further Study

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Background information on Blume along with numerous quotations from critics.

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(*Dictionary of Literary Biography*, Vol. 52.) Offers biographical details about Blume and discusses each of her novels through 1986. Contains valuable information on *Tiger Eyes*.

Stine, Jean and Daniel Marowski, eds.

Contemporary Literary Criticism. Vol.

30. Detroit: Gale Research, 1984: 20-26. Contains excerpts of reviews, both complimentary and derogatory, including several of *Tiger Eyes*.



Related Titles

While the style and format of most of Blume's books are similar, and the theme of maturity crops up in many of them, *Tiger Eyes* is not closely related to any of her other works. Generally, her novels deal with personal growth and sexual maturity on the one hand and a particular social issue on the other. For example, *Iggie's House* is concerned with racial bigotry, *Are You There God? It's Me, Margaret* with religious bias, *It's Not the End of the World* with divorce, *Deenie* with physical deformity, and *Blubber* with obesity. *Tiger Eyes* follows this same format, but its heroine is older and more mature than most of Blume's characters, and the writing is more masterfully crafted.

Blume has said of *Tiger Eyes* that it is "the most adult of my young adult books." Perhaps the quality that makes it "adult" is its concentration on the theme of death with less attention given to sexual concerns. *Tiger Eyes* may well be Blume's masterpiece.



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Beacham's Encyclopedia of Popular Fiction

Editor

Kirk H. Beetz, Ph.D.

Cover Design

Amanda Mott

Cover Art is "Pierrot," 1947, by William Baziotès Oil on Canvas, 42 1/8 x 36 Donated by the Alisa Mellon Bruce Fund, ©, 1996 Reproduced with Permission from the Board of Trustees, National Gallery of Art, Washington, D.C.

Library of Congress Cataloging-in-Publication Data Beacham's Encyclopedia of Popular Fiction

Includes bibliographical references and index

Summary: A multi-volume compilation of analytical essays on and study activities for the works of authors of popular fiction. Includes biography data, publishing history, and resources for the author of each analyzed work.

ISBN 0-933833-41-5 (Volumes 1-3, Biography Series)

ISBN 0-933833-42-3 (Volumes 1-8, Analyses Series)

ISBN 0-933833-38-5 (Entire set, 11 volumes)

1. Popular literature—Bio-bibliography. 2. Fiction—19th century—Bio-bibliography. 3. Fiction—20th century—Bio-bibliography. I. Beetz, Kirk H., 1952-

Z6514.P7B43 1996[PN56.P55]809.3—dc20 96-20771 CIP

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Printed in the United States of America First Printing, November 1996