

Uglies Study Guide

Uglies by Scott Westerfeld

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Plot Summary

Uglies by Scott Westerfeld is the first in a trilogy of novels set in a futuristic world in which everyone is surgically altered at the age of sixteen to be pretty. In this novel, Tally cannot wait until her birthday when she will be turned pretty and allowed to live in New Pretty Town with her best friend Peris from childhood. However, when Tally's new friend, Shay, runs away, Tally is told by Special Circumstances that she will remain ugly all her life unless she agrees to track down Shay and bring her back. *Uglies* is a novel that questions the idea of social pressure to be beautiful and the quest of young people to conform to one specific idea of normal.

Tally's constant companion and best friend, Peris, is three months older than her and therefore is given the operation to become pretty sooner than she. Tally misses Peris so much that she sneaks into New Pretty Town at the risk of great punishment to see him. Tally is nearly caught, causing her to have to make a dramatic escape from the roof of his building. As Tally rushes back to Uglyville, she runs into another ugly who has also snuck into New Pretty Town, Shay. With their similar circumstances and the loneliness of being the last of their friends to turn pretty, Tally and Shay become good friends.

Shay begins to question the need to become pretty and makes veiled comments about her desire to remain an ugly. Tally misses most of these comments because she cannot imagine anyone wanting to remain ugly. However, a short time before their shared birthday, Shay tells Tally she plans to run away to a place called the smoke, a community of people who have chosen to remain ugly. Tally refuses to accompany Shay. However, on Tally's birthday she is taken to Special Circumstances where Dr. Cable tells Tally that if she refuses to help them find Shay, she will be forced to remain ugly for life. Faced with a life as an outcast and the pleading of her friend, Peris, Tally finally agrees to make the trek to the Smoke and activate a special locator upon her arrival.

Tally makes the long, dangerous trip to the smoke alone, almost getting burned and falling off a cliff. Finally Tally makes it to the Smoke. At first Tally finds the people of the Smoke ugly and unbearable to look at, their habits of eating fresh meat and cutting down trees outrageous, and their ethic of hard work too difficult. After a while, however, Tally finds herself growing accustomed to these new ways of living and even finding enjoyment in some of it. When David, the son of the founders of the smoke, tells her how his parents ran away from the city because of knowledge that the city leaders were somehow altering people's minds as well as their bodies during the pretty operation, Tally knows she cannot betray these people. Unfortunately, when Tally destroys the locator, it automatically releases a signal.

Special Circumstances descends on the Smoke and arrests everyone in sight. Tally and David manage to escape. Together Tally and David return to the city in an attempt to rescue David's parents and others from the Smoke who have been taken there. Their rescue mission is successful, however, David's father has died in an experimental surgery. Soon after, David's mother finds a cure for the brain lesions inflicted during the

initial pretty surgery, but cannot find a patient to test it on. For this reason, Tally agrees to allow herself to be turned pretty so that she can be the first test patient. Tally does this to make amends for bringing Special Circumstances to the Smoke.



Part 1, Turning Pretty: Chapters 1-5

Part 1, Turning Pretty: Chapters 1-5 Summary

Uglies is the first in a trilogy by Scott Westerfeld. This novel is set in a future world after the destruction of civilization due to a sudden absence of oil.

Tally Youngblood misses her best friend, Peris, who has recently been given the operation to turn pretty and moved to New Pretty Town. Tally decides to visit Peris in New Pretty Town, sneaking into the forbidden area as she and Peris used to do as children. Tally makes her way through the park that was once the limit to how far she and Peris would go. As she approaches a street where she will be revealed to all those around she sees a parade coming down the street. Tally grabs a mask from those dropped by a drum machine and puts it on to hide her ugly face.

Tally goes into the building where Peris now lives, Garbo mansion, and begins to search for him among the pretties. The pretties notice her mask and begin to gossip about her, making Tally fear discovery. Tally boards an elevator, but it will not respond to her commands because she is not wearing an interface ring. A pretty young man boards the elevator and Tally recognizes his voice. It is Peris. Peris seems pleased to see her, but he also seems different, more serene. Peris makes Tally promise she will not be caught in New Pretty Town and that she will do nothing to compromise her future operation. Peris then tells Tally about some bungee jackets on the roof that will aid in her escape. Just as a group of Pretties notice Tally, she jumps off the roof of the building.

Tally lands surprisingly safe on the ground. Tally quickly runs back the way she came, suddenly aware of wardens searching for her. Tally rushes to the river, only to be sidelined when she sees a figure near the bank. Tally waits for the person to move on, but it does not. Finally Tally decides it is a warden waiting for her to make the first move. Tally calls out only to discover it is another ugly who has snuck into the forbidden area. Tally and Shay escape together back to Uglyville.

Shay has been teaching Tally how to ride a hoverboard. Tally's not good at it and her arms are sore from the crash bracelets that continuously grab hold of her wrists and pull her up as she begins to fall. After a great deal of practice, Tally begins to get the hang of it.

Tally and Shay are in Tally's dorm room playing with the software that allows them to see how they might look after the operation. Tally learns that Shay has never played with the software before. Tally bullies Shay into creating a new face for herself. Shay is unhappy with the image.



Part 1, Turning Pretty: Chapters 1-5 Analysis

The author begins his novel by thrusting the reader into the strange world of the future. In Tally's world, something has happened to modern society, creating a world where people live according to their level of beauty. Uglies are children who have not reached the age of sixteen when the surgery to make everyone pretty takes place. These uglies live in dorms in a place called Uglyville. After the surgery, new pretties are moved to New Pretty Town where they are allowed to party and generally have fun all day long. The next step is Middle Pretty when the older pretties begin to choose professions and train for those. These pretties also have children who stay with them in the suburbs until they reach school age and are moved to Uglyville. Finally there are the older pretties, referred to as Crusties, who live in the outer suburbs. At each step of life pretties are given operations that help maintain their beauty.

The main character of the novel is introduced in the first pages of the novel. Tally is an ugly who is three months short of her sixteenth birthday and the operation. Tally is looking forward to becoming a pretty and being reunited with her friends who have already turned pretty. It has never occurred to Tally to question the operation or the pressure in society to become pretty. However, when Tally meets Shay, Shay clearly questions the operation. Shay is unhappy with the idea of changing her looks and resists the normal play of the uglies in using computer software to envision themselves as pretties. Tally does not really notice Shay's reluctance at this point in the novel, but her comments inject some foreshadowing into the plot for the observant reader.

Also important about these early chapters of the novel is Tally's friendship with Peris. Peris was once someone who questioned authority and the purpose of the operation. However, now that Peris has become a pretty he seems more mellow and calm than he was before. Despite this, Peris continues to have some influence over Tally, encouraging her to prepare for the operation in order to join all the fun in New Pretty Town.



Part 1, Turning Pretty: Chapters 6-10

Part 1, Turning Pretty: Chapters 6-10 Summary

As they are riding their hoverboards on the outskirts of the city, Shay suggests that they go out to the Rusty Ruins that night. Tally questions the wisdom of breaking such an important rule, but finally agrees.

Tally leaves her interface ring in her dorm room and sneaks out to meet Shay. They ride their hoverboards over the river and come across some rapids. Tally finds it exciting to ride the rapids on the hoverboard. At the end of the rapids, they turn and look down on the city. It is a beautiful sight. When they leave the river, they are forced to carry their hoverboards because they work on magnets, but there is no metal in the ground here.

Shay and Tally move into the Rusty Ruins, the ruins of a city that once belonged to the previous civilization, the rusties. Shay takes Tally past the buildings where they have gone on school field trips to a roller coaster. They ride the coaster, but when Tally follows she discovers a break in the track that causes her hoverboard to fail momentarily. Tally is angry Shay did not tell her about the momentary fall.

Shay takes Tally into one of the ruined buildings and lights a sparkler. Shay tells Tally about a boy named David who often comes to these ruins. Shay has signaled David and is hoping he will come see them. When it becomes apparent David will not come, they decide to go back to the city.

Tally and Shay watch the new uglies coming to Tally's dorm. As they gather in the library, Tally and Shay stage a fight in which Tally throws Shay over the balcony in the library. Shay falls, but she is wearing a bungee jacket that catches her. Afterward they go swimming. As Tally talks about their impending operation, Shay becomes moody. Shay announces she does not want to become a pretty. Tally tells her she should just grow up.

Part 1, Turning Pretty: Chapters 6-10 Analysis

Shay takes Tally to the rusty ruins. This, the reader will recognize, is a city built by modern people that has been abandoned and turned to rust. Tally has seen this place before during school field trips designed to show the children how a civilization can destroy itself with greed and prejudice. However, Shay shows Tally some parts of the ruins that the city leaders do not want the children to know about. Shay also talks about a boy named David who often comes to the ruins but does not live in the city. All of this introduces Tally to something she was not aware of before, that the city leaders have lied or withheld information and that some people exist outside the cities. These are things that are not well known and that Tally has never thought to question.



At the same time, Shay expresses a desire to avoid the pretty operation. In Tally and Shay's world, no one resists the operation. This causes Tally some confusion as she slowly comes to realize that Shay is serious. However, Tally believes that Shay is simply afraid of growing up, something she associates with the operation. This explains, in Tally's mind, the changes in new pretties, such as Peris.



Part 1, Turning Pretty: Chapters 11-16

Part 1, Turning Pretty: Chapters 11-16 Summary

Shay comes to see Tally at night in her dorm room. Shay shows Tally her pack filled with survival gear. Shay has decided to run away and she wants Tally to go with her. Tally refuses. Shay gives Tally a coded note that tells her how to follow if she changes her mind.

It is Tally's sixteenth birthday and she is waiting to be picked up to go have her operation. Tally waits alone. At the hospital, Tally waits over an hour before a strange man comes and tells her there has been a problem and she must go with him.

Tally is taken to a strange building and placed in a room where a woman named Dr. Cable comes to speak to her. All these people Tally has met are pretties, but vicious looking pretties. Dr. Cable tells Tally that she knows that Shay ran away and she wants to know everything Tally knows. Tally refuses to help her. Dr. Cable threatens to leave Tally ugly for life.

Tally is returned to her dorm. Tally is embarrassed to have returned here and she hides in her room until hunger finally drives her out. Tally's parents come later in the day and try to convince her to help Special Circumstances, but Tally continues to resist.

Tally hides in her room during the day, but at night she goes riding on her hoverboard in the forest, covering her face and arms with scratches from the trees. When Tally returns near dawn she finds Peris waiting for her. Peris makes Tally promise to help Special Circumstances so that she might have her operation and be with him in New Pretty Town.

Tally goes to see Dr. Cable and learns that Dr. Cable wants her to use Shay's encoded note to go to the Smoke. Once there, Tally is to use a special locator to signal Special Circumstances and lead them to the hidden community. Tally reluctantly agrees.

Part 1, Turning Pretty: Chapters 11-16 Analysis

In these chapters, Shay has decided to leave the city to avoid getting her surgery. In her explanation to Tally, the reader learns that Shay was supposed to run away before, with a group of friends, but that she chickened out at the last minute. Shay is filled with guilt and decides to go now and wants Tally to go. However, Tally is excited by the idea of becoming pretty and she refuses to go. Tally is an example of someone who never questions authority, who believes everything she is told. Tally is not really naive, but she has been taught not to be a free thinker, therefore she is not.

Shay's disappearance causes the leaders of Tally's city to notice. Tally learns that Special Circumstances, something like the FBI in our society, has been looking for the

Smoke for years and sees Shay's disappearance as a fresh chance to find it. Tally is being used as a pawn in Special Circumstances desire to find the Smoke. Tally is not happy about this, but she is being blackmailed and finds the situation unavoidable. In order to keep a promise to one friend, Tally has decided to betray another. This shows the reader how ingrained in her personality the desire to become pretty is for Tally.



Part 2, The Smoke: Chapters 17-22

Part 2, The Smoke: Chapters 17-22 Summary

Tally leaves the city after midnight with provisions and a long-range hoverboard provided to her by Dr. Cable. Tally follows Shay's directions, easily understanding the first part of the message but unclear about her next step. However, when Tally spots a railroad track not far from the broken roller coaster, she is able to decipher Shay's clue.

Tally travels most of the night until she reaches a bridge with a large break. Tally nearly falls off the edge of the broken bridge, but manages to lift herself up again with the hoverboard's weakening power and the wind. Tally decides to camp on the bridge, enjoying a hot meal of spaghetti Bolognese before going to sleep. When she wakes, Tally travels on, coming to a second broken bridge and what appears to be the next clue in Shay's directions. Tally once again settles down for the day, discovering that all the food packets in her kit are the same SpagBol.

That night, Tally checks out the break in the bridge and tries to puzzle out Shay's clue. Tally finally decides Shay intended for her to allow herself to fall down from the bridge with the idea that the hoverboard would find some metal and come to life before she could be injured. Tally does this and is relieved to find she was correct. Tally travels for several days and become filthy. Tally decides to take a bath in the freezing river, only to have some kind of machine fly over her as she sits naked in the water.

Tally hides in the water and watches as some kind of rusty machine tears apart her campsite. Tally later gathers her scattered belongings and continues on her journey, coming to the next clue in Shay's directions. Tally makes her choices on direction when she comes to a fork in the river and is rewarded a short time later with the view of thousands of white flowers, as the directions said she would. Tally hides her hoverboard from whatever machine flew over her the day before and goes to sleep in a bed of flowers.

Tally wakes to a world on fire. Tally runs for her hoverboard and ends up in the river to escape the fire. The same machine she saw the day before appears and several people with strange bug-like eyes jump into the water to rescue her.

After Tally calms and realizes her rescuers are humans, and pretties at that, she realizes these are the bug eyed creatures Shay wrote about in her coded directions. These people tell Tally they are rangers whose job it is to burn the wild orchids in the fields before they can kill the area's natural vegetation. Tally also learns that the rangers have a deal with the Smoke to deliver new arrivals to a special meeting place. Tally is left in a large open field with a new pair of shoes where she hikes to the last place mentioned in Shay's directions to wait for the arrival of the rescue team from the Smoke.



Part 2, The Smoke: Chapters 17-22 Analysis

Reluctantly, Tally leaves the city all alone and begins her trek to the Smoke. Tally is leaving four days after her birthday, therefore it is important for her to make good time in arriving at the Smoke so that no one will question why she did not get the operation on her birthday. Tally makes quick time, but she also comes to near disaster twice, leaving her spooked and even more unhappy with this situation than she was to begin with.

The trip to the Smoke is veiled in mystery and Tally has some difficulty finding her way, which explains why Special Circumstances has had so much trouble locating this place that they have to trust a sixteen year old girl to the situation. The fact that Tally is sent alone in such a dangerous situation also implies that Special Circumstances has little concern for Tally's safety or her safe return. Clearly Special Circumstances cares for little but results.

Tally has finally reached the rendezvous point with the people of the Smoke. Now tension builds as the reader wonders if the people of the Smoke will learn of Tally's duplicity and what will happen when she activates the Special Circumstances' locator.



Part 2, The Smoke: Chapters 23-27

Part 2, The Smoke: Chapters 23-27 Summary

Early the next morning Shay arrives with several people from the Smoke, including the mysterious David. Tally is introduced around and then scanned for bugs. There is a bug on the hoverboard that David quickly removes, but David's detecting device does not detect the locator Tally wears around her neck. David, Shay, and Croy walk Tally to the Smoke.

Shay takes Tally straight to the library where she is to meet the boss, an older citizen who hands out job assignments. As they wait for the Boss, Shay shows Tally some ancient magazines filled with pictures of the rusties. Tally is shocked by their ugly appearances, especially one Shay calls a model. The model is much too thin and her beauty is nothing like the pretties Tally has grown up with.

Tally has lunch with the people of the Smoke and is shocked by their appearances, especially those who are older and beginning to age. Tally finds it entertaining to tell the people around her stories of her trip there. After lunch, Tally accompanies Shay and David out into the woods to help harvest metal from the old railroad tracks.

David shows Tally an old train tunnel that has caved in and tells her how he would like to find a way to clear the entrance so they can harvest the metal inside. David then tells Tally how his parents are runaways, doctors who left the city from which she came, but that he was born in the Smoke.

After dinner that night, Shay helps Tally trade some of her remaining SpagBol for a sleeping bag and a handmade sweater. Shay then asks Tally about the heart necklace she wears around her neck, guessing Tally met a boy before leaving and that she told that boy about the Smoke. Tally allows Shay to believe this rather than admit the truth, that the necklace is a hidden locator from Special Circumstances.

Part 2, The Smoke: Chapters 23-27 Analysis

In these chapters, Tally arrives in the Smoke and begins to experience some of the differences of life outside the city. Tally is shocked and horrified both by the appearances of the uglies who have begun to age and the appearances of people from the age of the Rusties. This shock comes from the fact that Tally has never seen a person age before as all people in the cities receive ongoing operations that keep their appearances from changing due to age. Tally has also never seen a person who was allowed to grow fat or thin naturally because the operation also deals with these types of issues. Tally is also shocked by the cutting down of trees and the eating of wild animals as these are also things that are not done in the city and are openly discouraged because the leaders in the cities suggest that these things led to the destruction of the Rusties' civilization.



Despite Tally's shock and discomfort with life in the Smoke, she does not immediately activate the locator hidden in her necklace. Instead, Tally allows herself to be drawn into life at the Smoke and to become a part of the community. In fact, Tally quickly begins to build a friendship with David, the son of the founders of the Smoke. Not only this, but Tally tells lies to Shay to hide her true reasons for coming to the Smoke. This creates a building of tension as the reader realizes eventually Tally's lies will be revealed, one way or the other.



Part 2, The Smoke: Chapters 28-32

Part 2, The Smoke: Chapters 28-32 Summary

Several days pass. During work one day, Croy questions Tally about her supply of SpagBol, suggesting that she is lying about how many days it took her to travel to the Smoke. A short time later, Shay becomes angry with Tally because David gave Tally a pair of old leather gloves even though Shay openly has a crush on him.

Tally sits down to dinner alone, but David soon joins her. David asks Tally to go somewhere quieter with him and they end up walking alone in the woods. David tells Tally that he feels he can trust her because she is the first person to come to the Smoke alone, suggesting she is a very brave, adventurous person. Tally then tells David that she told someone in the city about the Smoke, but allows him to believe as Shay does, that that person was a boy.

David takes Tally to meet his parents. David implies that his parents have a secret to tell that they normally only tell to Smoke citizens who have been there for a long time. David pushes his parents to trust Tally and tell her now.

Under pressure from David, David's parents, Maddy and Az, tell Tally that they were doctors in the same city where she lived who often performed the operation to make an ugly pretty. However, Maddy and Az stumbled upon some evidence that the operation causes a lesion on the brain of the patient. With further research, Maddy and Az discovered that this lesion was caused intentionally.

Maddy and Az continue their story by telling Tally that they discovered that the lesion could be removed somehow if the pretty were to choose a profession that required quick thought or action, such as a doctor or ranger. However, their research drew attention from Special Circumstances before they could figure out how to reverse the brain damage and they were required to turn it all over. That is why they ran away.

David walks Tally back to the Smoke. Before they arrive, David admits to his feelings for Tally and they kiss. When David calls her pretty, Tally realizes she does not want to expose the Smoke to Special Circumstances. Tally throws the necklace containing the special locator into the fire and decides she wants to remain in the Smoke for good.

Part 2, The Smoke: Chapters 28-32 Analysis

Tally begins to settle in in the Smoke despite suspicion from Croy, Shay's old friend and anger on Shay's part because of David's apparent interest in Tally. Tally has put off activating the locator, suggesting to the reader that she no longer is interested in returning to the city to have her own pretty operation.



As Tally's relationship with David grows, he ironically feels a need to be completely honest with her. This leads to David pushing his parents to tell Tally the truth about the pretty operation. Tally learns that the operation includes a component that causes a lesion on the brain that changes a person's personality. Tally suddenly understands the attitudes and behaviors of her own parents and of her friends who have become pretty, such as Peris. However, in an ironic twist of the plot, Tally does not share David's need for honesty and does not tell him about Special Circumstances or about the locator she wears around her neck. Instead Tally destroys the necklace, implying that she has decided to remain in the Smoke and with David for life. However, from previous foreshadowing, the reader suspects that escaping Special Circumstances cannot be that easy.



Part 3, Into the Smoke: Chapters 33-38

Part 3, Into the Smoke: Chapters 33-38 Summary

Tally wakes up to discover that she is alone in the dorms and that Special Circumstances is in the Smoke. Tally rushes out of the dorm and tries to find a way to slip into the woods. Tally runs into the Boss, who talks Tally into creating a distraction so that he might escape with the ancient magazines. Tally runs toward a Special Circumstances agent who is watching the woods. As Tally and the agent struggle, Tally is able to release some habanero pepper powder into her face and escape. Unfortunately, Tally is caught by another agent as she hides in the woods.

Tally is taken to the rabbit pen where she is placed with other Smoke citizens who tried to escape. Croy tells Tally he thought she was the one who gave them away, but now that she is being held with the others he believes she is not. Shay, however, openly accuses Tally of betraying them. When the Special Circumstances agents come over and read eye scans on each of the prisoners, they recognize Tally as one Dr. Cable has requested be found, confirming Shay's doubts.

Tally plays along with Dr. Cable, convincing her that she still wants to become pretty. In doing this, Tally learns that damaging the locator is what brought them there. Dr. Cable asks Tally to give her the locator. Tally lies and says that it is on the roof of the supply building, inspiring Dr. Cable to send Tally there with a single guard. Tally is able to knock the guard off the roof of the supply building and escape with Croy's hoverboard.

Tally rides the hoverboard along the railroad tracks she and the others have been harvesting. Tally worries she might fall off the board because she is barefoot and does not have her crash bracelets. As the hovercars follow her, Tally recalls the cave David showed her and decides to take cover there in the hopes that hiding that deep in the ground the hovercars will not be able to track her heat signature. In the darkness, Tally discovers David has hidden there as well.

Tally finds herself forced to lie to David about how she escaped from Special Circumstances.

David and Tally return to woods above the Smoke the next morning and watch it for a while, waiting to be sure it is empty. Finally David and Tally enter the community and find it is deserted except for shoes abandoned in the rabbit pen that Tally believes Croy encouraged everyone to leave for her. In the woods, Tally discovers the Boss has been killed, but he managed to hide the magazines.

Part 3, Into the Smoke: Chapters 33-38 Analysis

Tally wakes to discover the Smoke is being invaded by Special Circumstances. Convinced that she could not be responsible for this, Tally tries to escape, but soon she

is captured and learns that she is responsible because she damaged the locator. Tally is filled with guilt, especially when Shay openly accuses her of betrayal and when she is forced to lie to David. This shows the reader that Tally has changed a great deal since arriving at the Smoke. Tally is no longer obsessed with being pretty, but instead has found that there is more to life than looks and conformity.

Tally is responsible for the destruction of an entire community, including the recapture of people who have chosen not to undergo surgery to conform to a specific look. Although filled with guilt, she finds that she is constantly lying to everyone around her, including the boy she has fallen in love with. This shows Tally's capacity for self-preservation and suggests that despite changes in her own behavior. The plot is now filled with tension as Tally and David discover the destruction of the Smoke and decide what to do next.



Part 3, Into the Fire: Chapters 39-44

Part 3, Into the Fire: Chapters 39-44 Summary

Maddy and Az. David and Tally go up to the home occupied by David's parents, Maddy and Az. Tally searches the house and finds it burned, but no evidence that Maddy and Az have been killed. David goes inside and finds a knife that tells him his father did not leave on his own. David takes Tally to a hiding place where they load up on supplies and prepare to go after Maddy, Az, and other citizens of the Smoke.

David and Tally leave at dawn the following day following a different path than the one Tally took in arriving at the Smoke. As they travel, David tells Tally how the Rusties died out when someone invented a bacteria that ate up all the oil in the world.

They travel through a desert and then follow a river. When they reach the ocean they are sidelined for several days by a hurricane. Finally they arrive at the Rusty Ruins outside Tally's city. When it becomes dark, Tally takes David to the Special Circumstances building and they debate how they might get past its security. Tally suggests bungee jackets.

On the way back to the Rusty Ruins, Tally and David go into Uglyville and steal a couple of bungee jackets from the art school. Back in the Rusty Ruins, they run into a group of uglies who had been attempting to contact David. Tally comes up with a plan by which these uglies can help them distract the Special Circumstances agents.

Tally and David wait all day for darkness. When it comes, they go into the city again and wait for the uglies to set off their distraction in New Pretty Town. When they do, the Special Circumstances agents immediately set off after them. Tally and David use this distraction to jump over the security fences of Special Circumstances onto the roof of the building with the bungee jackets.

Tally and David manage to break into Special Circumstances through an elevator. Tally goes first and calls for David. They search the floors and finally come to a door through which they can hear Dr. Cable's voice. As Dr. Cable comes out, Tally distracts her while David hits her on the head. Behind Dr. Cable, Shay appears. She is pretty.

Part 3, Into the Fire: Chapters 39-44 Analysis

In these chapters, Tally and David travel as quickly as they can to the city where Tally came from. There they hope to rescue David's parents and some of their friends from the Smoke. As they make their plan, they run into some kids hoping to go to the Smoke, proving that the idea of the Smoke is still alive and well. Tally lies to the kids and makes them believe the Smoke still exists, using the lie to get the kids to help them distract Special Circumstances so that they might break into the facility to affect their rescue mission.

The power of the Smoke is clear in these chapters, showing the reader that the leaders of the city have good reason to worry about the number of runaways from the cities. The time has come for some to question the need of the conforming surgeries that supposedly will protect civilization from the ruination that impacted the Rusties. David and Tally are clearly early pioneers of a group of rebels that might, someday, cause a change in their current society.



part 3, Into the Fire: Chapters 45-50

part 3, Into the Fire: Chapters 45-50 Summary

Tally and David free Maddy, Croy, and several others from their cells. As they rush out of the holding cells, Maddy tells David his father is dead.

Tally and the others make it to the roof where Maddy takes charge, instructing everyone to board the hoverboards and make separate getaways, leaving trackers from the prisoner's suits in different locations. Tally takes Shay and they rush to a cave hidden behind a waterfall. Tally tries to talk to Shay about her betrayal of the Smoke, but Shay is clearly affected by the brain lesion and no longer cares.

Tally and Shay are quickly joined by Croy and two others, but Maddy and David have gone to the ruins so they can talk alone. Tally, Shay, Croy, and the others hike to the Rusty Ruins when it gets dark. When they arrive, David tells Tally that his mother was able to get some information from Dr. Cable's computer tablet and believes she can cure the lesions on the brains of pretties.

Maddy works day and night on the cure as they hide out in the Rusty Ruins, joined nearly daily by local uglies who want to go to the Smoke. When Maddy finally finds the cure, she is unable to test it because Shay, the only pretty to whom they have access, refuses to take the pill. Tally becomes angry and insists Maddy cure Shay, but Maddy refuses to do anything that goes against the Hippocratic Oath, especially since Az essentially died because Dr. Cable experimented on him against his will.

Tally tells David and Maddy that she is the one who betrayed the Smoke, telling Special Circumstances where to find them. Maddy has known all along, but David did not and he becomes angry. To make up for the betrayal, Tally convinces Maddy to allow her to return to the city, become pretty, and then be the first to try the new cure for the brain lesions.

Before leaving, Tally writes a letter to herself, reasserting her desire to be a test subject for Maddy's lesion cure. Tally then goes to the heart of the city with Shay by her side and turns herself in to a warden, asking to be made pretty.

part 3, Into the Fire: Chapters 45-50 Analysis

Tally and David are able to rescue Maddy and three other Smoke survivors as well as Shay. However, Az has been killed in an medical experiment. Tally worries about David, never once thinking of herself as she realizes that Maddy must know that she is the one who betrayed them. Maddy, who has been obsessed with finding a cure for the intentionally inflicted brain lesion given to new pretties, finds the cure, Tally finds a way to redeem herself.



Although Tally has been surviving on lies for so long now, she finally finds a way to be honest with David, with herself, and with Maddy. Not only this, but in a final act of selflessness, Tally gives herself up to experimentation by agreeing to be turned pretty so that Maddy might try the cure on her. This shows the reader that not only has Tally finally accepted the dangers of the operation and of a society that is so controlled, but that she has matured in such a way that she is willing to give up her own safety, and possibly her life, for the good of others.

Now the reader is left wondering what will happen to Tally when Maddy experiments on her and what the next step will be for the people of the Smoke who are now homeless, but not without a desire to continue their rebellious ways.



Characters

Tally Youngblood

Tally Youngblood is a fifteen-year-old girl when the novel begins. Tally lives in a futuristic society in which everyone is given surgery on their sixteenth birthday to become what they call pretties. These people are surgically altered to look similar to one another in order to reduce the amount of discrimination present in society. After the initial surgery, there are several other surgeries that maintain this uniform look throughout a person's lifetime, preventing the marks of aging.

Tally looks forward to her surgery not only because she personally wants to be pretty, but because her childhood best friend, Peris, has already turned sixteen and gotten the surgery. Tally is lonesome and wants to be with her friends. However, Tally meets Shay and becomes friends with her only to learn that Shay has doubts about the surgery and has decided to run away.

Tally is prevented from having her surgery by the Special Circumstances department in the city where she lives. In order to get her surgery, Tally must help them find a community of uglies called the Smoke, where it is believed that Shay has gone. Tally follows Shay's directions and goes to this community only to discover that there is good reason for everyone to avoid the surgery. Tally unwittingly sets off the locator that brings Special Circumstances to the Smoke, forcing her to sacrifice her own safety and possibly her life to make up for her mistakes.

Shay

Shay is a fifteen year old girl at the beginning of the novel who is about to turn sixteen and face her own operation. Shay expresses some doubts about the operation to her friend, Tally. A week before she is to turn sixteen, Shay decides to run away to a place known as the Smoke. Shay leaves instructions behind for Tally to follow if she changes her mind about joining Shay in the Smoke.

When the Smoke is invaded by Special Circumstances just a short time after Tally joins the community, Shay immediately guesses that Tally is responsible for it. However, Shay has no proof. Angry at her forced confinement, Shay fights Special Circumstances until they have no choice but to turn her pretty. The operation leaves a lesion on Shay's brain that leaves her gentler and less argumentative. This makes Shay a perfect patient to test a new cure for the lesions that Maddy has developed, but Shay refuses to understand that she has a mental problem, therefore she feels no need to take a potentially dangerous pill that will fix it.



David

David is a young man who lives in the Smoke and actively recruits uglies from the cities. David's parents founded the Smoke after they learned, as doctors in the same city where Tally lived, that the initial operations left a lesion on the patient's brain that made them more docile. David falls in love with Tally almost immediately upon meeting her because he believes her to be a very brave and strong young woman. David tells Tally all the secrets of the Smoke, unaware that she is a potential threat to the community.

Maddy

Maddy is David's mother. Maddy was a doctor in the city where Tally lives, one responsible for turning young uglies into pretties. While researching a possible anesthesia side effect, Maddy and her husband, Az, discovered that many patients who underwent the pretty operation came out of it with lesions on their brains. As they continued to investigate, Maddy and Az realized that these lesions were intentionally inflicted on patients as part of the operation to make the patients more docile. Maddy and Az's research was confiscated before they could figure out how the lesions were made and how some of them were healed in patients who chose jobs that required them to be quick thinkers. For this reason, Maddy and Az left the city and founded the Smoke, a safe place where they could continue their research in secret.

Croy

Croy is a friend of Shay's who was part of a group of kids who left for the Smoke in the months before their sixteenth birthday. Shay was supposed to leave with Croy's group, but she chickened out at the last minute. Croy is suspicious of Tally from the moment she arrives, often questioning her claims of having made the trip in an exceedingly long nine days rather than five. When Croy sees that Tally has tried to escape the Special Circumstances agents on the day they invade the Smoke, he begins to believe in Tally's innocence until she admits her guilt to David weeks later.

Dr. Cable

Dr. Cable is one of the leaders of Special Circumstances. Dr. Cable contacts Tally on her birthday and asks her to help them find the Smoke with the instructions that Shay left for Tally. When Tally refuses, Dr. Cable threatens to leave her an ugly for all her life. After making a promise to her friend Peris, Tally agrees to Dr. Cable's plan to go to the Smoke and to set off a secret locator to alert Special Circumstances to the location.



The Boss

The Boss is an older man living in the Smoke. The Boss is in his forties or fifties and has aged naturally, presenting a face to Tally like nothing she has ever seen before. The Boss is also the librarian at the Smoke. The Boss has a collection of magazines from the past that has pictures of people as they lived during what Tally refers to as the time of the Rusties. The Boss is killed attempting to save these magazines from the Special Circumstances invaders.

The Rangers

Tally meets a group of Rangers on her trip to the Smoke. These Rangers are pretties whose job it is to control the growth of a certain species of orchids that have been genetically engineered to live anywhere. The Rangers burn these flowers in an attempt to keep them from crowding out other indigenous plant life. The Rangers fly helicopters taken from ruins of Rusties' cities and repaired with replicated parts.

Ellie and Sol

Ellie and Sol are Tally's parents. Sol is a woodworker. Ellie is a bright, energetic woman who clearly has no independent thoughts. Sol also seems confused by anything that forces him to think outside of what he has always been taught by the city leaders. The lesions described to Tally by Maddy and Az are clearly a part of the equation when Tally thinks back on her childhood with Ellie and Sol.

Peris

Peris has been Tally's constant companion since childhood until he turned sixteen three months before her. Peris has always questioned the operation and the rules of the city, but underwent the surgery because there was no other option. When Tally sneaks into New Pretty City and later when Peris comes to see her, she notices differences in Peris' behavior that also points toward the brain lesions that Maddy and Az describe to her later in the novel.



Objects/Places

Hoverboards

Hoverboards are a means of travel in Tally's time. The hoverboards work with magnets, requiring some sort of metal beneath them in order to continue hovering. Tally and Shay often use mineral deposits in rivers and ancient railroads to travel outside of the grids of the city.

Crash Bracelets

Crash bracelets are bracelets that Tally and others wear while traveling on hoverboards that are designed to catch a rider before they can fall off their hoverboard.

Belly Sensors

Hoverboard riders use belly sensors clipped to their belly rings in order to tell the hoverboard where their center of gravity is located.

Interface Rings

People living in the city wear interface rings to help them interact with the many computers that operate everything from elevators to wallscreens.

Pretties

Pretties are a group of people who have had a special operation to change their looks to one specific set of characteristics. The idea is to make everyone look basically the same to reduce racial, age, and fat discrimination. There are three categories of pretties: new pretties, middle pretties, and late pretties.

Uglies

Uglies are children who are too young to have the operation to make them pretty. Uglies all live together in one section of town, known as Uglyville, where they are educated and prepared for their lives as pretties.

Littlies

Littlies are small children who are too young to leave their parents and live in Uglyville. Littlies lives in the suburbs with their parents, who are often middle pretties.



Special Circumstances

Special Circumstances is a special group of pretties whose looks are harsher than other pretties. These pretties are similar to modern day FBI or CIA agents in that they handle important criminal cases and problems with the pretty operation.

Rusty Ruins

Rusty Ruins is the ruin of a city once occupied by a group of people known as Rusties to Tally and her generation. The Rusties are a civilization that died out and disappeared after a new organism created in a lab destroyed all the oil in the world.

New Pretty Town

New Pretty Town is a section of the city where Tally lives. New Pretty Town is set on an island in the middle of a river and is filled with tall towers that are known as party towers. This is where new pretties live immediately after the initial operation.

The Smoke

The Smoke is a rebel community of uglies who have chosen to leave the cities rather than undergo the operation to become pretties.

The City

Tally lives in a large, unnamed city. This city is divided into sections that include Uglyville, New Pretty Town, and the Suburbs where middle and late pretties live. The city also includes a squat and undistinguished building that houses Special Circumstances.



Themes

Conformity

In this novel, the leaders of the current civilization have analyzed the people of the past and decided that discrimination had a great deal to do with the downfall of those people. For that reason, this new civilization has created a surgery that turns everyone's appearance into a pleasing sort of look that appeals to the basic biology of individuals. The idea is that if everyone is pretty, there will be no discrimination and no one will be overlooked by a potential mate, for a potential job, or discarded because of age.

Tally looks forward to the day when she will become a pretty. Tally has often played with pictures of herself on the computer, using programs to get an idea of what she will look like when the doctors have altered her appearance. Tally has been taught that her natural appearance is ugly and that only conformity will make her appealing to those around her. For this reason, Tally never considers not having the surgery or not believing in the things she has been taught all her life.

As the novel continues, Tally begins to learn things about the operation that she could not have known before. Tally learns that the surgery does not only change the appearance of a person, but it also leaves a lesion on the brain that makes the person more docile, more willing to believe anything society tells them. This society has not only created a race of people who all look alike, but it has created a society in which the majority of the people think alike as well. It is this that makes conformity a theme of the novel.

Rebellion

Rebellion is not encouraged in a society where conformity is the norm. Therefore, when Maddy and Az learn that the people in charge of society, their leaders, are creating a race of people who all think the same, they are not encouraged to pursue the idea. Maddy and Az run away, founding a community of uglies who choose not to have the operation and to conform to societies standards.

As the novel progresses, Tally begins to learn little things about the rebellion that has been taking place for many years, perhaps ever before her own birth. It never occurred to tally to question the operation or the things her leaders have been telling her despite the doubts expressed by her friend Peris or the things Shay has told her about the Smoke. It is not until Special Circumstances sends Tally to the Smoke to betray her friend that she finally realizes how much her leaders have been hiding from her and what lengths they are willing to go to to protect their ideal society.

Tally joins the rebellion and unwittingly betrays it. Tally then helps David rescue a few of their friends, including his mother, from Special Circumstances. Tally has become



defiant, refusing to allow this conformity to continue. In this way Tally has rebelled against society, making rebellion a theme of the novel.

Individuality

This novel is about conformity, about one society attempting to rid itself of hatred and discrimination by creating a society of peoples who all look the same and think the same. However, by doing this, this society creates in one young woman a desire to be an individual, to embrace her own thoughts, her own opinions, and her own appearance.

Tally has always been told she is ugly and that she will remain ugly if she never has the operation that will change her appearance into something that resembles all the other people in her society. It is not until Tally escapes this city and enters into a community of people who encourage individuality that she discovers the potential in herself.

By promoting a theme of conformity, this novel embraces the individual. This novel suggests that conforming to other people's standards is just another form of discrimination or a way of squashing the true nature of an individual. In this way, the true theme of this novel is not conformity but individuality.



Style

Point of View

The novel is written in the third-person point of view. This novel tells the story completely through the eyes of one character, Tally Youngblood. Tally's thoughts and emotions are presented to the reader throughout the novel, but the novel never moves from Tally's mind into the mind of another character. In this way, the point of view is a limited third person point of view.

The point of view of this novel works well with the plot for several reasons. The point of view of this novel allows the reader to see the plot unfold through the eyes of a young woman who is initially content with conformity and prepared to become a pretty. As the novel continues, this girl soon learns of the rebellion against conformity and slowly comes to her own understanding of society and of an individual's place in it. By telling the story through Tally's eyes, the author allows the reader to see and experience Tally's personal growth. Another reason why this point of view works well with the novel is because it keeps the narration tight and controlled, limiting any confusion that might distract from the story line. Finally, the point of view of this novel works well because it allows a connection between the reader and the main character, leaving the reader anxious to learn the outcome of Tally's decision to become pretty to test Maddy's new pill that is thought to repair the lesions in the brain.

Setting

The novel is set in a future world years after our modern society has become extinct because of an organism designed in a lab that destroyed all the world's oil. This future society blames the destruction of their ancestors on greed and discrimination. For this reason, this future society as created a society in which all persons are surgically altered to become the ideal of pretty, a biological 'pretty' that is thought to appeal to all human beings. The cities of this future society are all designed to cater to each level of this surgical version of pretty.

The setting of this novel is such an important aspect of the plot that the plot would fail if the reader did not believe the premise of the setting. For this reason, the setting of this novel is designed in such a way that it becomes almost like a character in the novel. The author has spent a great deal of time imagining this future world, but he devotes only moderate amounts of space to descriptions of this future world so that the reader might imagine for themselves the exact descriptions of the pretties, their homes, and their cities. In this way, the author has created an authentic world that is easy to believe in and therefore supports the plot of the novel perfectly.



Language and Meaning

Despite being a sci-fi novel, this book does not include a great deal of strange language that was made up in the author's mind in order to describe the indescribable. The author has used simple terms to refer to the surgically altered people of this society as well as the locations and cities that populate the novel. For this reason, the language of the novel is not difficult to understand and is quite friendly to the intended audience, young adults.

The language of this novel works well with the plot. The language includes words that a reader might not associate with people and things that they are used to describe in this novel, but the author has created such an authentic world in his novel that the reader has no trouble understanding the meaning of the words he has chosen to describe his characters and his settings. In fact, some of the words the author has used to describe his settings are almost a tongue-in-cheek joke on some readers who understand some of the more subtle references. For example, the author chooses the name Garbo Mansion as the place in which Peris lives in New Pretty Town. Knowledgeable readers will recognize this as the name of a famous actress known for her great beauty. For this reason and the others mentioned, the language of this novel works well with the plot.

Structure

The novel is told in a linear fashion. The novel is told in scenes that include both narration and dialogue. The novel has that parts that contain altogether fifty chapters. Each chapter is headed by a simple title rather than numbers.

The novel contains one main plot and several subplots. The main plot revolves around Tally Youngblood, a young girl desperately anticipating the day she will get an operation to make her pretty. Unfortunately, Tally's hopes are derailed when she is forced to help Special Circumstances find her missing friend rather than receive her operation. One of the subplots revolves around Tally's relationship with her young friend, Shay. Another subplot follows Tally's budding romance with rebel David. Finally, another subplot follows Maddy's attempts to find a cure for the intentionally inflicted brain lesions that make new pretties more docile. All these plots come to a satisfying conclusion at the end of the novel despite teasers that are designed to lead readers to the next novel in the trilogy.



Quotes

"Tally Youngblood was waiting for darkness." (Part 1, Turning Pretty: New Pretty Town, p. 3).

"Tally thought of Peris, and tried to remember the way he used to look back when he was Nose. Somehow, she couldn't recall his ugly face anymore. As if those few moments of seeing him pretty had wiped out a lifetime of memories." Part 1, Turning Pretty: Wipe Out, p. 38).

"It was creepy being inside, looking out of the empty windows at the ragged shapes of other buildings. Like being a Rusty ghost watching as its city crumbled over the centuries." (Part 1, Turning Pretty: Waiting for David, p. 70).

"Tally shivered. Everyone knew about uglies-for-life, the few people for whom the operation wouldn't work. You didn't see them around much. They were allowed in public, but most of them preferred to hide." (Part 1, Turning Pretty: Fight, p. 83).

"They said it didn't hurt, except the new skin, which felt like a killer sunburn for a couple of weeks." (Part 1, Turning Pretty: Operation, p. 97).

"Tally counted forty-one more packets, enough for three SpagBols a day for two weeks." (Part 2, The Smoke: SpagBol, p. 155).

"The Smokies all had lunch together, just like at an ugly dorm." (Part 2, The Smoke: Work, p. 203).

"She tried to imagine Peris coping out here in the Smoke, working with his hands and making his own clothes. The old, ugly Peris would have enjoyed the challenge. But what about pretty Peris?" (Part 2, The Smoke: Pretty Minds, p. 266).

"Tally had never ridden a hoverboard barefoot before. Young Smokies had all kinds of competitions, carrying weights or riding double, but no one was ever that stupid." (Part 3, Into the Fire: Run, p. 313).

"She'd never faced the full force of a hurricane, except from within the solid structures of her inland city. It was another lesson in nature's savage power." (Part 3, Into the Fire: Familiar Sights, p. 349).

"Tally wondered how many uglies had seen the burning letters in New Pretty Town, how many of them knew what the Smoke was, or were coming up with their own stories to explain the mysterious message. What new legends had she and David created with their little diversion?" (Part 3, Into the Fire: Getaway, p. 395).

"'I'm Tally Youngblood,' she said. 'Make me pretty.'" (Part 3, Into the Fire: Down the Fire, p. 425).



Topics for Discussion

What is New Pretty Town? Why does Tally sneak in there? Who does she go to see? Why is Tally not allowed to go into New Pretty Town? When will Tally legally be allowed to enter New Pretty Town? Why does Tally want to go into New Pretty Town? What happens there? What happens to the people who live in New Pretty Town when they get older?

Who is Tally? Why does she have a secret passage into New Pretty Town? Where does Tally live? For what reason? Why does Tally often break the rules? What does she expect to happen to her one day for breaking all these rules? Does Tally fear the operation? What has Tally been told about the operation? Why does Tally believe that she is ugly? What does Tally hope to change about her appearance? What is Tally's nickname? Why?

Who is Shay? What is the first clue in the plot that Shay might not want to have the operation? When does Shay tell Tally that she might not want the operation? How does Tally react to these early suggestions that Shay is unhappy with the operation? How does Tally react when Shay tells her that she plans to run away? Why does Tally do nothing to stop Shay from running away? Why does Tally choose not to go with Shay?

What is Special Circumstances? Why does Special Circumstances stop Tally from getting her surgery? What does Special Circumstances want from Tally? What does this suggest about Shay's story of the Smoke? What does this suggest about Special Circumstances role in society? How does Tally agree to help Special Circumstances? How does Special Circumstances end up finding the Smoke? Is this Tally's fault?

Who is David? How does Shay feel about David? When does the reader first begin to suspect Shay has feelings for David? How does Tally feel about David? When does Tally decide that her feelings for David go deeper than she originally thought? Why does Tally resist when David calls her pretty? Is Tally pretty? Does she think David is handsome? Why or why not? What do looks have to do with interpersonal relationships? How does David and Tally's relationship personify looks in interpersonal relationships?

What are brain lesions? How did Maddy and Az first discover these brain lesions? What did they initially believe they were? What did they come to believe they were? Who stopped them from investigating these lesions? Why did Maddy and Az come to believe the lesions were intentionally inflicted on patients? Why did they begin to think Special Circumstances has a way to heal these lesions? What is the cure that Maddy finally finds for the lesions?

Discuss conformity. In what ways is conformity a good thing in a large society? In what ways do you feel modern society conforms to one idea or ideal? In what ways is individuality preferable to conformity? In what ways do you believe modern society embraces individuality? Do you believe a society like the one in which Tally lives would

be ideal? In what ways would conformity of this kind be a good thing? In what ways would it be a bad thing?