

# **When I Found You Study Guide**

**When I Found You by Catherine Ryan Hyde**

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# Contents

<a href="#">When I Found You Study Guide.....</a>	<a href="#">1</a>
<a href="#">Contents.....</a>	<a href="#">2</a>
<a href="#">Plot Summary.....</a>	<a href="#">3</a>
<a href="#">Part 1: Nathan McCann.....</a>	<a href="#">4</a>
<a href="#">Part 2: Nathan Bates.....</a>	<a href="#">7</a>
<a href="#">Part 3: Nathan McCann.....</a>	<a href="#">10</a>
<a href="#">Part 4: Nathan Bates.....</a>	<a href="#">13</a>
<a href="#">Part 5: Nathan McCann.....</a>	<a href="#">16</a>
<a href="#">Part 6: Nathan Bates.....</a>	<a href="#">20</a>
<a href="#">Part 7: Nathan McCann.....</a>	<a href="#">23</a>
<a href="#">Part 8: Nathan Bates.....</a>	<a href="#">26</a>
<a href="#">Characters.....</a>	<a href="#">30</a>
<a href="#">Symbols and Symbolism.....</a>	<a href="#">34</a>
<a href="#">Settings.....</a>	<a href="#">36</a>
<a href="#">Themes and Motifs.....</a>	<a href="#">38</a>
<a href="#">Styles.....</a>	<a href="#">41</a>
<a href="#">Quotes.....</a>	<a href="#">43</a>

## Plot Summary

“When I Found You” by Catherine Ryan Hyde is a touching novel about a middle-aged man who finds an abandoned infant in the woods. When Nat reaches his teens, his misbehavior causes his grandmother to send him to Nathan McCann, the man who rescued him, and Nathan takes on a mentoring, almost paternal, role in the young man’s life. “When I Found You” is an enjoyable narrative that explores how one young man’s life is shaped by the adults who surround him. The novel's pace is fairly slow and linear, and it is quite easy to read, though the changing viewpoints require some focus. Overall, the narrative is entertaining and enjoyable with a heartwarming account of the bond between an abandoned baby named Nat and the man who saved his life.



# Part 1: Nathan McCann

## Summary

### Part 1: Nathan McCann

At the beginning of *The Day I Found You*, the date is October 2, 1960. Nathan McCann prepares breakfast quietly to avoid waking his wife Flora. He goes hunting with Sadie, his reliable retriever. Nathan grows cross when Sadie disobeys him for the first time ever. However, he follows her to a tree where he finds a newborn infant in the leaves. Shocked that the child is still breathing, Nathan rushes the baby to the hospital where the doctor says that the infant is in bad shape, but he may survive since he is obviously a fighter. Nathan feels that something has been set in motion, and as he shows the police where he found the baby, he is relieved to learn the mother will be imprisoned if she is found.

At home, he tells Flora that he wants to adopt the infant, but she objects because they are old and had decided not to have children. Also, she suspects that one of the boy's relatives will adopt him. Before bed, Nathan calls the hospital and learns the baby is still doing well. He plans to call the social worker to inquire about adoption after his appointment with the recently widowed Mrs. MacElroy in the morning.

The next morning, Nathan calls the hospital to find the baby is still alive. He goes to see Mrs. MacElroy who shows him a newspaper article which names the child's mother as Leonora Bates. She and her boyfriend, Richard A. Ford, are in custody. The article also states that the baby, if he survives, will be given to his grandmother, Mrs. Ertha Bates. When Nathan returns home and tells Flora, she reminds him that she told him that a relative would adopt the baby. However, Nathan researches Mrs. Bates' address, deciding to wait a few days to ensure the baby survives before contacting her even as he wonders why Leonora did not leave the baby with her mother instead of in the woods.

On October 5, 1960, Nathan is fearful as he visits Mrs. Bates' home; "it was as though only in the last few days had he had anything too important to risk losing" (page 24). Nathan knocks and introduces himself as the man who found the baby. Though he admits it is right for the baby's blood relation to adopt him, he has a reasonable request: to meet the boy when he's older because Nathan wants to exist for him. Mrs. Bates takes Nathan's card, warning that she does not want him to know that his mother threw him out like trash, but she agrees to let him meet Nathan when he is old enough. When Nathan asks if the baby has a name, Mrs. Bates looks at the business card he gave her and names the baby Nathan. Nathan learns that her daughter knits, explaining the knit cap the baby wore. As he drives home, he longs for one unchanged aspect of his life, but there is nothing as far as he can see.



In *The Day He Tried and Failed to Find Out Why*, on October 7, 1960, Nathan drives to the county jail and asks to see Leonora Bates, only to learn she died from sepsis related to childbirth. The police beg him to keep the news quiet as they only told him because they thought he was her father. They ask what he wanted to say to her. Nathan admits he wanted to know why she abandoned her baby, they tell him she had no response when people asked her that question. The police doubt she knew the reason herself. Nathan sends a condolence card to Mrs. Bates on his way home.

Seven years later, on October 2, 1967, in *The Day He Watched You to See How You Had Grown*, Nathan pretends to go hunting. However, he drives to the Bates' home and waits quietly at the curb until Mrs. Bates, looking much older, appears with a young boy. Noting how tiny the child is, Nathan worries he is too small to hold the baseball mitt he left two days earlier. As the school bus collects the child, Nathan promises himself that he will not do this again. Flora is shocked when Nathan returns home from hunting without any game. She notes that the only other time that happened was when he found the baby, and she suggests he should not hunt on October 2 anymore. Nathan agrees.

## Analysis

As the novel begins, protagonist Nathan McCann is introduced as he prepares to go hunting with his dog Sadie. Sadie's odd behavior alerts him to a newborn infant, abandoned in the leaves, and Nathan rushes the baby to the hospital. The doctor's prognosis that the baby may survive because he is a fighter foreshadows the infant's personality and his desire to become a professional boxer. Nathan's devotion to the child is instantaneous as he feels a connection to the abandoned infant, and he is intent on adopting him, despite his wife's protests. His interest in the child's well being is obvious through his many calls to the hospital, and this foreshadows his continued concern regarding the child's welfare. The introduction of Mrs. MacElroy foreshadows her role later in the novel. Nathan is appalled by the mother who abandoned the baby as demonstrated by his interest in why she committed such a horrendous act. He is confused by the knit cap on the baby's head which seems to be some indication that his mother wanted him to survive on some level, and this symbolizes Nat's abandonment.

Upon learning that the child will be relinquished to his grandmother's care, Nathan introduces himself to Mrs. Ertha Bates, the child's grandmother, and requests that she introduce him at some point in the child's life. Mrs. Bates agrees, foreshadowing the role that Nathan will later play in Nat's life. She also names the infant after Nathan as recognition of Nathan's role in the child's survival. Nathan feels like every aspect of his life has been changed by the introduction to this boy, again foreshadowing his future involvement in Nat's life. Nathan's concern even leads him to jail to confront the child's mother, only to learn that she died from sepsis related to childbirth. The final chapter in Part 1 jumps ahead to seven years in the future and shows Nathan discreetly watching Nat from his car. This chapter also reveals that Nathan leaves birthday gifts for Nat every year, suggesting this may lead to their reunion. Nathan's distress at his actions indicates his continued concern which, in turn, further foreshadows his role in Nat's future.



## **Discussion Question 1**

Describe how Nathan finds the baby in the woods.

## **Discussion Question 2**

What request does Nathan make of Mrs. Bates?

## **Discussion Question 3**

Why is Nathan so intrigued by the baby's knit cap?

## **Vocabulary**

Percolating, indicative, instinctive, ambivalence, demur, intimidated, berate, inordinately, condescension, derision, brusque, arraigned, notation, preposterously.



## Part 2: Nathan Bates

### Summary

#### Part 2: Nathan Bates

In *Feathers*, dated September 2, 1965, Nat Bates finds a baby bird in his yard on the first day of kindergarten. When Gamma says its mother will not care for it now, he decides to feed it, naming it Feathers though Gamma insists he cannot keep it.

In *Different*, on September 3, 1965, Nat has sixteen kids in his class, but the teacher obviously likes him, though she smiles sadly as she hugs him, causing Nat to ponder what is different when she tells him to take his painting to his grandmother while the other children are instructed to give their art to their mothers. At home, Feathers is gone, and Gamma insists he flew away. Though Nat has questions, he refrains from asking. As he gives Gamma his painting, he asks what about her is grand, so she explains that she is his mother's mother, raising the simple question "why don't we see mother" which Nat cannot frame into words.

In *Cold*, on December 24, 1967, as Gamma tucks Nat into bed early, he asks if his mother will visit like Jacob's father does every Christmas, but Gamma says his mother is a different case, as tears pool in her eyes. Nat wants to ask about his father but fears making her cry again. In *Openings*, the next day, Gamma gives Nat his gifts. Then, she presents a big box from the Man in the woods. The box contains a chemistry set, which is a disappointment since the Man usually gives great gifts. Gamma reminds Nat that the Man does not know him, but Nat does not ask any questions because he knows the answers will not settle anything since adults do not make sense. In *Trades*, the day after Christmas, Jacob spends the night with Nat, but he is confused by the Man's gift. Nat thought the Man sent gifts to everyone, and when he asks Gamma, she tells him that the stork drops all babies in the woods and only one person knows how to find them.

A few days later, in *The Issue*, on January 4, 1968, Jacob informs Nat that he was really left in the woods, but Gamma already told him that. So, the conversation ends.

In *Where*, March 20, 1973, Gamma goes to visit Uncle Mick in the hospital so Nat stays with Jacob, but when he goes downstairs to find the cat, he overhears Jacob's mother talking to her friend about his mother abandoning him. Nat sneaks home and digs through Gamma's bedroom until he finds newspaper clippings about being found. He packs his most important possessions and flees to the train yard where he tells the men there that he is nobody; he does not have any family and has been living with a stranger which he no longer believes is better than nothing.

In *The World*, Nat watches the world pass by as he rides in a train car the next day, assuring himself that he'll get by, but it's Over on March 22 when he is retrieved and told



his vagabond days are over. The next day, Gamma yells at Nat for scaring her, but he says nothing the whole way home.

While Gamma yells about Nat's grades on September 30, 1974, he asks if he will still get a gift from The Man, becoming intrigued when he learns the Man drops them off on the porch instead of mailing them. He watches all night, but he cannot see the Man's face when he drops off boxing gloves and a punching bag for Nat.

In Nope, on October 1, 1974, Nat is caught cheating on a math test, but when the teacher sends him to the principal's office, he leaves and finds a gym where he asks an old man, Manny, how to use his gloves. Manny directs him to Jack who agrees to train Nat, leaving Nat with the idea of finding a man he can relate to and model himself after. That night, Gamma questions Nat about skipping school, calling him a liar when he denies it, to which Nat replies "I guess it runs in the family" (page 87). Nat pushes her and runs to the train yard where he is promptly arrested for assault. Nat wakes up the next day in a holding cell and learns he gave Gamma a concussion. Gamma refuses to press charges, but she does not retrieve his boxing gloves with the rest of his belongings. On the way home, Nat apologizes for hurting her, but she does not respond.

In Mules, on October 4, 1974, Nat admires Jack as he watches him sparring with another man. Nat admits he does not have his gloves anymore, but Jack says he can borrow a pair while at the gym. Nat hurts when he starts practicing, but he keeps on going, knowing he can do anything while Jack watches him.

In Oh, on January 17, 1975, Nat hitchhikes to the mall to look at the gloves that were taken from him, but when he tries to steal them, he is arrested. Gamma picks him up but says she cannot take much more, to which Nat points out that he is too old to dump in the woods now. Gamma says nothing, but Nat knows it is only a matter of time before the last straw.

## Analysis

Changing viewpoints to that of five-year-old Nathan Bates, Nat begins kindergarten and adopts a motherless bird, creating a parallel between Nat and the bird as both were abandoned. Gamma insists the bird flew away while Nat is at school, indicating her dishonesty, while Nat's disbelief foreshadows his distrust in Gamma later on. Nat's teacher obviously knows his sad tale because she treats him differently. The fact that it is public knowledge foreshadows Nat's discovery. Nat begins to wonder why his mother does not visit at this point, but since Gamma cries when he asks about his mother, he does not pursue the topic. When Nat is seven years old, he receives his gift, as usual, from the Man in the Woods which is what he knows Nathan as, but he questions Gamma about the Man, and she again lies by stating that everyone has a Man. Nat's matter-of-fact attitude when Jacob broaches the topic leads everyone to believe that Nat knows about his mother's abandonment. Foreshadowing is fulfilled when Nat stays with Jacob while Gamma goes out of town six years later as he overhears Jacob's mother talking about how his mother abandoned him. After confirming the story with newspaper





clippings found in Gamma's room, Nat runs away, foreshadowing the trouble he now starts to get into. His claim that he has been living with a complete stranger, combined with his silence toward Gamma, demonstrates his lack of trust in her now because she has lied to him for his entire life.

Nat's poor behavior continues as he skips school to use the boxing gloves the Man gave him. This venture foreshadows his dream of becoming a professional boxer, especially in correlation with his admiration of Jack who agrees to train him. Nat's devotion to fighting foreshadows his focus when he is older as well. Nat's fights with Gamma continue, peaking when he gives her a concussion. This marks a change in their relationship as Gamma now ignores Nat as studiously as he ignores her. Nat eventually tries to steal boxing gloves from the mall, and he is arrested. Gamma warns him that she cannot take much more, and Nat knows it is only a matter of time before the last straw, foreshadowing Nathan's reintroduction into the boy's life.

## **Discussion Question 1**

How does Gamma explain Nathan to Nat when he's a child?

## **Discussion Question 2**

What does Nat do after finding the newspaper clipping about his mother abandoning him?

## **Discussion Question 3**

Why does Nat have several police encounters during his early teen years?

## **Vocabulary**

Translucent, encompassing, inevitable, medicinally, semester, recall, taunting, sentimental, undergarments, discarded.



## Part 3: Nathan McCann

### Summary

#### Part 3: Nathan McCann

In *He Still Feels That Same Way Now*, on September 23, 1975, Nathan is disappointed when he opens his door to Mrs. Bates and Nat as he expected to feel a bond with the boy who is only a stranger. Ertha asks if Nathan still wants Nat, and he agrees. Nathan gives Nat the room that used to belong to Flora and introduces the boy to his dog, Maggie, explaining that the dog that found Nat has been gone for a long time. When Nathan explains that Nat was named after him because he found him in the woods, Nat says Nathan did not do him a big favor, questioning the value of his life, to which Nathan responds "the value of your life is your own choosing" (page 109). Nathan tells Nat to go to bed because they are going hunting in the morning, and though Nat objects at first, he agrees when Nathan offers to show where he was found. Nat questions how he is supposed to live with a stranger, and Nathan suggests taking it a few minutes at a time, recognizing that it is a problem for Nat, though he is happy to have the boy. The next day, in *He Is Willing to Die to Make It Happen*, Nat bonds with Maggie as they drive to the woods. Nathan points out the spot where he found Nat, giving him a moment. Nat follows Nathan to the lake as though he is too tired to continue fighting, but he refuses to hunt, saying it is not civilized to kill things. He points the gun at Nathan, saying Nathan cannot make him something he is not, but Nathan wants him to be who he is, only civilized, suggesting "all you've probably needed all this time was someone who cared enough to insist you behave" (page 117). Nat drops the gun and runs away, but he is waiting at the car to complain about how his mother's abandonment makes him feel and the fact that Gamma abandoned him too. Nathan reminds Nat that Gamma's abandonment was his fault, but he promises that he will never wash his hands of Nat. Later, Nat asks about his mother and father, explaining the lies Gamma told him about his mother having a big career in California. Nat is glad that he knows the truth. Nathan apologizes if any of his gifts were inappropriate as he did not know what Nat might like, but Nat says the important thing is that Nathan never forgot, making Nathan feel that things may turn out alright between them after all.

In *He Will Not Wash His Hands of You*, on September 25, 1975, Nathan leaves Nat in bed and drives to a nearby dog breeder to get a puppy for Nat. On his way home, he runs into Mrs. MacElroy who invites him to dinner. At home, Nathan is worried to find Nat missing, but then he receives a call from Nat asking for bail. At the police station, Nathan learns that Nat shot a cashier while robbing a gas station, but he refuses to post bail, telling Nat that he will visit but Nat must pay for his crime, reiterating his promise that he will not wash his hands of Nat. At home, he calls Eleanor MacElroy and apologizes.

In *He Still Doesn't Really Know You*, dated October 1, 1975, Nathan takes a cupcake, gift and picture of the puppy to Nat, visiting him at jail as he does every day. Detective



Frawley notes that no one else visits daily and asks why Nathan is different, but Nathan has no answer. Nat is thrilled with the puppy, but his gift is the knit cap he wore when Nathan found him; Nathan gives it to him as evidence that on some level, his mother wanted him to live. Naming his puppy Feathers, Nat asks if a bird without feathers can fly, and when Nathan says it is impossible, that is exactly what Nat thought.

In *He Tries to Answer Why*, on October 2, 1976, Nat is sentenced to a juvenile detention center far away, but Nathan still visits every day possible. Roger, the guard who supervises their visits, is civil to Nathan. As usual over the past year, Nat will not talk, so Nathan reads to him, refusing to miss a single visit. He thinks that this environment teaches Nat that he is not as tough as he thought, but Nat does not want to discuss it and Nathan refuses to pry. Though Nat mocks his selection, Nathan reads until the end of his visit. As he leaves, Roger remarks on the oddity of Nathan's regular visits, especially since he met Nat only three days before his incarceration. He knows Nat's entire story, yet he still does not understand Nathan's remarkable commitment. Nathan replies, "why not? What else have I done with my life that's remarkable" (page 147)?

## Analysis

Foreshadowing is fulfilled on multiple levels as Part 3 opens with Gamma bringing Nat to Nathan's house and asking if he still wants the boy. Nathan's acquiescence fulfills foreshadowing as well, regarding his future involvement in Nat's life. Na's claim that Nathan did not do him any favors by rescuing him as an infant indicates the value that Nat places on his life, and Nathan's advice, that the value of his life is his own choosing, foreshadows a change in Nat's viewpoint on the value of his life. While hunting with Nathan, Nat refuses to kill anything, even turning his gun on Nathan who insists he will not stop trying to make Nat into a more civilized human being, again foreshadowing the role that Nathan will play in Nat's development. After the hunting trip, Nat questions Nathan about his mother, gathering evidence of his grandmother's many lies but also showing that he can trust Nathan who believes in absolute candor. Nat also mentions how important it was that Nathan never forgot his birthday, again foreshadowing the relationship between the two men. Nathan also promises that he will never wash his hands of Nat which becomes a recurring theme throughout the novel; though Nat does not believe him at first, by the end of the novel, he comes to count on this promise.

Nathan's encounter with Mrs. MacElroy and her invitation to dinner foreshadows their future romance, but when Nathan returns home to find Nat missing, this parallels several of Gamma's experiences, especially when Nathan learns that Nat has been arrested for armed robbery; however, in contrast to Gamma who bailed Nat out of trouble several times, Nathan insists that Nat will pay for his crimes, so Nat is sentenced to three years in a juvenile detention center. Despite the fact that the center is several hours drive from Nathan's home, he visits several times each week, on every allotted visiting day. This sparks the guard, Roger's, curiosity as he notes that Nathan is different from other visitors because of his loyalty and consistency, a fact he finds remarkable given Nathan's recent introduction to Nat. Nathan explains his remarkable



commitment by asking what else he has done in his life that was remarkable, indicating that his desire to help Nat stems from a need to do something positive with his life.

## **Discussion Question 1**

What is Nathan's opinion of Nat after Mrs. Bates abandons her grandson?

## **Discussion Question 2**

Why is Nat sent to a juvenile detention facility?

## **Discussion Question 3**

How does Nathan amaze Roger, the prison guard?

## **Vocabulary**

Disdain, fraying, initially, unkempt, discipline, linger, accelerated, unmercifully, luxury, histrionics, perceptibly.



## Part 4: Nathan Bates

### Summary

#### Part 4: Nathan Bates

In Gross, on May 8, 1978, Nat is surprised when Roger informs him that he has visitors, plural, and when he reaches the room, Nathan introduces him to Eleanor, his future wife. Nat does not say anything. On the way back to the cell, Roger chides him for begrudging Nathan his share of happiness when he is willing to do so much for Nat. He offers Nat \$10 for the truth about why he is so disgusted with Nathan's marriage.

On August 10, in Weird, Nat tells Roger that he kind of knows Nat, but now that Eleanor will live there too, he does not know what to expect so he is a bit scared. Roger pays Nat \$10, explaining that people never seem to know why they do anything, but he wanted to see if Nat could figure it out.

In Happy To, Nat is surprised during his visit on September 27, 1978 to see Gamma who convinced Nathan to give her a few moments with her grandson. First, she asks if it would have been right to tell Nat the truth when he was younger, and he says yes because he would have known his mother was worthless, but at least he could trust Gamma. After apologizing, Gamma notes that Nat will be released next week when he turns 18, and she offers to let him come home if he promises to behave. Nat rejects her offer because he wants to return to Nathan because "he will never wash his hands of me" (page 161)! Nat tells her to leave and never come back. Nathan enters and asks how the visit went, informing Nat that Gamma calls every week to check on him.

In Inherent, on October 3, 1978, Nat waits outside of Nathan's station wagon as everything changes after three years of incarceration, and he feels overwhelmed but excited to go home. He asks what to call Eleanor, and Nathan admits that there are some complications inherent in their odd situation, but he assures Nat that he will have the same room. At home, Nat plays with the dogs, but he is disappointed that Feathers does not take to him immediately. Feathers knocks a vase over, causing Eleanor to cry through dinner though Nat apologizes. Nat feels uncomfortable and hopeless, and when Nathan tells him goodnight, he explains that the vase belonged to Eleanor's late grandmother so she needs time to have her feelings. Nat objects that she does not like him, but Nathan insists she does not know him. Nathan sees value in Nat though, but it is bedtime since Nat needs to look for a job in the morning. The next morning, Nat notices that the vase has been glued together and apologizes again. He takes Feathers with him to look for a job, and as he runs downtown, he realizes, "this is freedom" (page 178). On Main Street, a girl smiles at Nat so he joins her, and they talk about his dog. She notes that Nat is strange, but when he asks for her number, she insists she is not the type of girl to meet boys on the street, and though she tells him that she works at Frosty Freeze, she catches the bus without revealing her name. Nat continues to the gym, hoping to see Jack, but upon arriving, he learns that Jack is dead and someone



new owns the gym. As Nat talks to Feathers about finding a job in the alley, he wants to visit Frosty Freeze, but since he has no money, he must find a job first. Manny appears and recognizes Nat, and he agrees to train Nat in Jack's stead. When Nat returns home later that evening, Nathan assumes he had a successful day since he was gone so long, but Nat says he looks so Nathan wishes him better luck tomorrow. He borrows an alarm clock from Nathan and sets it for 6AM.

On October 5, 1978, in Late, when Nat gets home, Nathan informs him that his friend, Marvin LaPlante, who owns a dairy farm agreed to give Nat an interview for a position on the loading docks. Nat tries to feign excitement, but he worries Manny will give up on him when he is late. Nathan drives Nat to the dairy farm where Marvin tells him that he is giving Nat one chance because he owes Nathan a lot, but he must start work now. The foreman, Mr. Merino, orders Nat to work and grows annoyed when Nat asks for his schedule. It is after 6PM when Nat finally reaches Manny's apartment, and when Manny claims that Nat does not want it enough, Nat points out that he needs to work, convincing Manny to train him on the weekends.

In Pro, on October 7, Nat's training is pathetic because he is exhausted from work, yet Manny encourages him not to stop; "you're doing lousy but at least you were doing" (page 199). Nat admits that he thinks about going pro on the bus ride to and from work, but Manny never said he thought Nat could go pro, yet he never said Nat couldn't either. He tells Nat not to get ahead of himself, instructing him how to channel his anger to be useful in the ring.

In Payday, on October 14, 1978, Nat complains about how much tax was taken out of his first payday as he trains with Manny. He takes a break to go to Frosty Freeze for a chocolate milkshake, and though the girl he met is not working, he learns that her name is Carol and she starts work at 2 p.m. on Saturdays. Back at the gym, Nat mentions that he will need another milkshake later, admitting that it has to do with a girl. Manny replies, "nothing's more dangerous than a girl!" (page 204). Later, Nat finds Carol behind the counter at Frosty Freeze, and they talk about boxing and Nat King Cole, her favorite musician. Nat is sure that Carol likes him when she pays for his shake, but when he asks for her number, insisting they just met since they just exchanged names, she refuses, though she does not mind if he visits her at work again. That night, while Nat lies in bed thinking of Carol, Nathan asks about his job. Nat says it is hard and the foreman hates him. Nathan asks why Nat went out today, encouraging him to be forthcoming, and Nat tells him about Carol. He also confides that he has wanted to be a professional boxer since Nathan gave him gloves so long ago, though Gamma took them away, a fact Nathan files away for Christmas. Nathan tells Nat that it is good to have a dream, but it is just a dream until he does it, evading Nat's question about whether Nathan ever had a dream.

## Analysis

As time for his release draws near, Nat is uncomfortable when he is informed that Nathan will be marrying Eleanor MacElroy, which also fulfills earlier foreshadowing



regarding her romantic relationship with Nathan. Roger bribes Nat to explore why he is so opposed to the idea, and Nat realizes it is because he does not know her and no longer knows what to expect when he returns to Nathan's house. This shows the first of several instances where Nat is forced to explore the reasons behind his feelings. Before Nat is released, Gamma also visits and even offers to allow him to come home to her, but Nat refuses, citing his distrust which results from her lies about his mother and her abandonment. When Gamma suggests that Nathan may be sick of him, Nat insists that Nathan will never wash his hands of him, reiterating Nathan's earlier promise and showing that Nat has begun to trust the man. Nat is finally released on his eighteenth birthday, and as he feared, things are strange at Nathan's house because of Eleanor's presence. The first night, Nat's dog breaks Eleanor's vase, and her reaction foreshadows her feelings about Nat.

During his first day searching for a job, Nat meets an attractive girl on Main Street, foreshadowing this girl's role in his life. He goes to the gym, indicating his continued dream to become a professional boxer, and though Jack is dead, Manny agrees to resume Nat's training. The next day, Nat is somewhat disappointed to learn that Nathan has acquired a job for him, but he dutifully reports to the dairy farm. Nat continues to work though it affects his training, and he even convinces Manny to train him on the weekends. Upon receiving his first paycheck, Nat visits Frosty Freeze, where the girl he met works, and learns that her name is Carol. Her agreement that he can visit her at work again foreshadows their romance and eventual marriage. Nat confides that he has always wanted to be a professional boxer, and Nathan's belief that it is good to have a dream foreshadows his support of Nat's boxing aspirations.

## Discussion Question 1

How does Nat treat his two surprise visitors, Eleanor and Gamma?

## Discussion Question 2

Who is Manny? What role does he play in Nat's life?

## Discussion Question 3

How does Nathan react to Nat's boxing aspirations?

## Vocabulary

Negativity, eavesdrop, riveted, vacuum, misjudged, constructed, riot, incentive, peripheral, patronizing, agitated.





## Part 5: Nathan McCann

### Summary

#### Part 5: Nathan McCann

In *You Would Think So, Wouldn't You?*, on November 25, 1978, Nat asks to use Eleanor's record player, and though she nervously agrees provided he keeps the volume down, she and Nathan are both pleasantly surprised to hear Nat King Cole, and they dance together. Later, Marvin LaPlante calls Nathan to inform him that Nat was fired two weeks ago for calling out every Wednesday, but Nathan refrains from discussing it with Eleanor until he hears Nat's version. Nathan leaves a business card on Nat's pillow with the word "forthcoming" and its definition written on the back. That night, Nat asks to speak to Nathan and admits he was fired, explaining that he planned to tell Nathan when he got another job, but he has been unsuccessful. When Nathan asks him about missing Wednesdays, Nat admits to training, and Nathan needs time to consider how to handle the situation, though he forbids Nat to ever lie to him again. Nathan fills Eleanor in, admitting he did not know how to threaten Nat since he promised to never throw him away. Eleanor suggests there may be a reason people throw Nat away, but the conversation ends when Nathan insists that Nat will always have his support, no matter what. In *A World without Boundaries*, Nathan wakes the next day to snow and to find Nat nervously waiting in the kitchen, and when Nathan says he thought about how to react, Nat nearly vomits. Nathan informs him that he decided to give him six months to train since his goal in Nat working was to make him accomplish something and that is exactly what Nat is doing through his training; however, he points out that Nat will need money and suggests that Nat can shovel driveways. Nat hugs him. He's shocked that Nathan isn't throwing him out. Nat goes to get dressed.

Eleanor mocks Nathan's decision to go back on his one condition for Nat living with them, and noticing that Nat is shoveling their driveway, she suspects he will ask Nathan for money. Nathan tells her that she has a chip on her shoulder regarding Nat which is causing unrest in their household, to which she responds that Nat is like a nail in her foot and she minds it. When Nat enters the kitchen, Eleanor complains that he is dripping on her floor. He apologizes and says he shoveled their driveway for free so now he is going to try to make money.

On March 4, 1979, in *Like, Pretty Much Any Minute Now*, Nat comes home for dinner for the first time in months, accompanied by Carol. Nat tells Nathan and Eleanor that he is going to marry Carol soon and get an apartment, but her father wants to meet his folks because they want his blessing. Eleanor agrees to invite Carol's father to dinner, but Nat also tells them that he lied and said Nathan is his grandfather. Though Nathan will not lie, he will not point out Nat's lie either. While Carol helps Eleanor wash the dishes, Nat tells Nathan that he loves her and that she is one of the best things to ever happen to him. After Nat and Carol leave, Eleanor wonders what Carol sees in him, noting that





Carol seems to think her love will change everything for him which Nathan agrees is problematic.

In *Or Did You Used to Be Like Me?*, on March 7, 1979, Reginald Farrelly, Carol's father, orders Nathan to convince him that Nat is good enough for his daughter, but when Nathan insists he is not in the business of selling young men, Mr. Farrelly directs his question to Nat, mocking his decision to get a GED instead of a diploma. As his questions grow increasingly insulting, Nat tells him it is none of his business why he does what he does; Mr. Farrelly should be asking if he loves Carol and will take care of her since she is 18 and can do what she wants. In fact, they got married at town hall two days ago! Mr. Farrelly furiously claims that Nat is nothing but trouble, and he kicks Carol out of his house. Later, Nat bemoans Mr. Farrelly's words and how he tried to make a fool of Nat. Nathan agrees but suggests he would have failed if Nat had behaved civilly, yet his behavior seems to validate Mr. Farrelly's opinion, plus it hurt Carol. Nat asks if Nathan has always been so reasonable, and when Nathan says it is part of who he is, Nat suggests that maybe he cannot change, but Nathan insists he has to want to change. When Nat asks to stay the night, Nathan says that Nat and Carol will need a month realistically, granting his approval.

In *A Very Good Question, Actually*, on August 6, 1979, while Nat is at work, Carol tells Nathan and Eleanor that she is surprised they are still there, and when Eleanor says she is not surprised, Carol knows that she is tired of Nat. After Carol leaves, Eleanor protests that she never says anything bad about Nat in front of his wife, but Nathan doubts she has to. Eleanor points out that it has been eight months so it is time for Nat to get a job, but Nathan says he will talk to Nat about getting a fight so his training is not pointless, and he leaves a note on Nat's pillow asking to talk. That night, Nat tells Nathan that he knows his time is up, but he needs to fight as an amateur for a year which requires money to keep afloat as does launching a professional boxing career. When Nathan suggests Nat find an investor, Nat points out that no one believes in him except Nathan and Carol. Nathan asks how much money is needed and how Nat would pay him back if he loses the fights. Nat says he would get a job and pay Nathan back little by little, so Nathan asks to talk to Manny. Eleanor is upset that Nathan would make a decision about their retirement without talking to her, but he assures her that he has not made a decision yet, though he hopes she will not try to stop him without considering his feelings on the matter. A while later, Eleanor asks if it will always be like this; she thought Nathan's relationship with Nat would be like her relationship with her grown son, yet she now doubts that Nat will ever move out. She wants what she thought she was getting when she married Nathan! When Nathan asks what would fix things for her, Eleanor admits that she is losing hope that it is fixable.

## Analysis

Nat's desire to listen to Nat King Cole, Carol's favorite singer, again foreshadows their romantic relationship. Later, Nathan confronts Nat after learning he has been fired, and he insists that Nat be more forthcoming, introducing another theme in this novel. When Nat admits to missing work in order to train as a boxer, Nathan decides to think about it,



but Nat still fears being kicked out of Nathan's house at this point since holding a job was the one condition upon which Nathan agreed for him to live there. When Nathan tells Eleanor about Nat being fired, she suggests that there is a reason so many people throw Nat away, again indicating her dislike of the boy and simultaneously foreshadowing the rift that her dislike will cause between her and Nathan who insists he will never withdraw his support from Nat, no matter what, because he is true to his promises. The next day, foreshadowing is fulfilled as Nathan agrees to grant Nat eight months to train without having a job since Nat is trying to accomplish something with his training which is the very reason Nathan insisted on him keeping a job. Eleanor shares her opinion of Nat yet again after hearing Nathan's decision which she criticizes, and this again foreshadows the problems this will cause in her marriage.

Several months later, Nat introduces Carol to Nathan and Eleanor, telling them that he wants to marry her but first, her father wants to meet them. They agree, though Eleanor expresses her shock at what Carol sees in him after they leave. The dinner with Mr. Farrelly, Carol's father, does not go well; his criticism and belittlement sparks Nat's temper, causing him to angrily confess that he and Carol are already married. Mr. Farrelly kicks his daughter out of their home, so Nathan agrees to let her stay with them. Carol quickly realizes how Eleanor feels about Nat, though Eleanor never says anything negative about him in front of his wife. Eleanor is also eager to point out when Nat's eight months of training are over, and when Nathan questions Nat, Nat admits that he was not prepared for how much money he would need to become a professional boxer. Nathan questions the expenses, obviously considering financing the boy's career, a fact that grates Eleanor who admits that she does not know whether the situation can be rectified at this point, foreshadowing the dissolution of her marriage with Nathan. Nathan talks to Manny about the financial support Nat will need for his career, and Manny fears he has dissuaded Nathan when he claims Nat is not good enough to win professional fights. Manny claims Nat would never believe him if he told the boy because Nat insists on fighting with life. This actually convinces Nathan to lend his financial support, showing that he recognizes and appreciates Nat's fighting spirit which makes sense given that Nat would have died as an infant if he did not fight against what he had been dealt. Eleanor is furious at Nathan's decision because he does not consider her feelings on the matter, and when she asks if he would choose her over Nat, he does not answer, simply pointing out that Nat would never ask him to choose. This again foreshadows Eleanor's imminent departure from Nathan's household.

## Discussion Question 1

Why does Nathan tell Nat to never lie to him again?

## Discussion Question 2

How does Eleanor feel about Nat?



## Discussion Question 3

Describe Nat's behavior during dinner with Carol's father, as well as what Nathan says he did wrong.

## Vocabulary

Stiffen, wager, anticipation, notches, ballad, pessimistic, remiss, diplomatic, deferential, estimation, proportion, figuratively, preposterously, barbaric, candid, forthcoming.



## Part 6: Nathan Bates

### Summary

#### Part 6: Nathan Bates

In *Fragile*, on August 9, 1979, Nat considers buying an antique white vase that seems to be a duplicate of Eleanor's vase that was broken, and Carol encourages the purchase, insisting it would be good to do something nice for Eleanor and that she can wait for a ring. Nat purchases the vase, but at home, he finds Eleanor packing as she waits for her son to pick her up. She cries when she opens the vase, but she refuses to answer whether or not she likes it. When Nat asks when she will be home, she tells him to ask Nathan and surprises Nat by kissing him on the forehead. Nat does not bother Nathan until Carol gets home and checks on him. During dinner, Nathan stares at his plate, and Nat is relieved when Carol goes to bed since he does not feel like he can talk to her and Nathan at the same time. Nat asks if Eleanor left because of him, but Nathan insists it was because of her. Nat offers to leave immediately, but Nathan objects. Later, Nat explains to Carol that this is so hard because Nathan is like the ground, and now it is his job to hold him up. In *Business*, two days later, Nat resumes training with Manny who insists on managing the money Nathan sends. They plan to go to Philadelphia in two weeks for Nat's first amateur fight, but first, they need to buy equipment, and Nat needs to go to a doctor for a physical since he needs to be insured as part of Nathan's condition for backing. Manny notes that Nat is snarkier than usual, and Nat admits that he blames himself for Eleanor leaving.

On March 6, 1980, Nat waits anxiously for the next event, lamenting how stupid he looks in his head protector, plus he is nervous since he was unable to convince Carol and Nathan to stay at home. As Nat's fight comes up next, Manny tells him to make his wife proud, and Nat decides to do his best for Carol. After landing a perfect first blow, Nat can do nothing wrong, landing a knockout punch as Carol cheers. In the bathroom, another fighter asks if Nat is fighting in the Bronx since he heard the promoter talking to Manny about the professional fight. Nat finds Manny, but Manny refuses to agree to the non-regulated fight because it is too dangerous. Nat does not care; he wants to win the prize money so he can finally buy a real wedding ring for Carol. Since Manny cannot stop him, he will not let him do it alone. Nat feels guilty lying to Nathan as he says they are going to spar with some of Manny's friends. He almost tells the truth when Nathan expresses his pride in Nat for doing this right and training properly, but when Carol kisses him and tells him to do well sparring, he glances at her cheap ring and promises to do his best.

In *Tremble*, dated March 7, 1980, Nat is stunned by the shady warehouse, despite Manny's warning about the blood bath this fight would be. He is eager to get his turn over with, and Manny instructs him to guard himself with the goal of holding in for a few rounds. Nat dances and evades his opponent's punches, but the round lasts longer than normal since it is an unregulated fight. His monstrous opponent lands a rib-breaking



blow followed by pounding to Nat's skull. When Nat finally gets to his feet, he is ready to go home, so Manny retrieves his clothes while Nat fights back tears. The next day, in Seconds, Nat's head and neck hurts on the train ride home, and all he wants is to be next to Carol. Nat admits that the fight was the most humiliating thing to ever happen to him, but Manny promises there will be worse. Manny also tries to convince Nat to visit a doctor tomorrow, though he promises to keep the unregulated fight a secret from Nathan and Carol. That evening, Nat howls in pain when Carol turns the light on, but she is surprised when he tells her how much he missed her since he does not usually talk like he needs her.

In Worse, on March 9, 1980, Nat's headache is still pounding, plus he is dizzy and his arm is not working properly. Nathan is alarmed. Feeling like he is going to vomit, Nat lurches toward the sink only to collapse, unconscious, on the kitchen floor. Two days later, in White, Nat awakes in a hospital room with a nurse, and the next day, in No, he opens his eyes to see Nathan who tells Nat that he will have speech problems and may need a therapist. Nat asks when he can box again, causing Nathan's face to fall as he is forced to tell Nat that he was lucky to survive the craniotomy. They had to replace a piece of his skull, and he will have muscle weakness, speech and motor-skill difficulties. Nat holds his hand to Nathan's mouth, so Nathan says they can talk about it another time, and since Nat starts to cry when Nathan asks what happened in New York, Nathan agrees to talk about that at another time also.

## Analysis

Nearly a year after returning to Nathan's house, Nat shows his caring nature as he shops for a vase to replace the sentimental vase that his dog broke, and Carol shows understanding of Eleanor's feelings toward Nat by insisting that the vase is more important than her wedding ring. Though Eleanor is receptive to the gift, shown by her lack of coldness toward Nat, she still leaves Nathan, fulfilling earlier foreshadowing. Nat feels guilty and blames himself, but Nathan insists it was not Nat's fault. Meanwhile, Nat continues training with Manny who begins planning for Nat's first amateur fight. About nine months later, Nat fights in New York, growing nervous because Nathan and Carol are attending, but he follows Manny's advice and makes his wife proud by demolishing his opponent. Nat learns about an unregulated fight that he has been invited to participate in, but Manny refuses to let Nat fight. True to his stubborn nature, Nat will not be deterred because, if he wins, the prize money would allow him to buy Carol's wedding ring. He feels guilty about lying to Nathan as he claims that he is staying another night to spar with some of Manny's friends. Manny's objection to Nat fighting combined with Nat's observations of the blood bath that the unregulated fight turns out to be foreshadow Nat's injury during the fight. When Nat steps into the ring, he is quickly defeated, and the fact that he refused to wear headgear further complicates matters as he suffers a severe headache for several days, culminating when he faints in Nathan's kitchen. Nat wakes in the hospital to learn he suffered a major head injury, and Nathan's evasive conversation tactics foreshadows the discovery that Nat will no longer be able to fight.



## **Discussion Question 1**

Why does Eleanor leave Nathan? How does Nat feel about it?

## **Discussion Question 2**

Describe Nat's first amateur fight in Philadelphia.

## **Discussion Question 3**

How does Nat's boxing career end?

## **Vocabulary**

Gingerly, fragile, resurrection, whimpering, parcel, meticulously, exaggerated, paralyzed, amateur, inconsolable.



# Part 7: Nathan McCann

## Summary

### Part 7: Nathan McCann

In *Various Forms of Resistance*, on August 11, 1980, Nathan comes home to a dark house and finds Carol crying on the couch. He comforts her, learning that Nat refuses to do physical therapy with her any longer, and she does not understand why he does not want her anymore and will not talk to her. Nathan checks on Nat, asking what is wrong. Nat says he is a cripple and sounds like a retard, and after assuring Nat that Carol loves him despite his injury, Nathan asks why tonight is different, so Nat admits that he just realized he will not be able to make the doctors eat their words. Nathan insists Nat just needs to work harder, but when he asks if Nat does not want Carol to see him like this, Nat does not answer, so Nathan leaves.

In *Almost Any Idea Will Do*, on March 4, 1981, Nathan visits Manny and notes that the gym is for lease. Manny will not answer Nathan's questions about New York because he promised Nat that he would keep it secret, so Nathan turns the conversation to the gym, explaining that he thought it might be a different way for Nat to stay connected to the sport he loves. Nathan has tried to encourage Nat to find a new dream, but Nat insists he cannot, so this is the only solution Nathan can think of. Manny agrees to get some figures together for Nathan. At home, Nathan finds Nat alone on the couch, and going to Nat's room, he discovers all of Carol's clothes are gone.

In *Other People Do This So Easily*, on March 6, 1981, Nathan drives to Carol's grandparents' house and offers her a ride to work. When he asks why she left, she explains that Nat left her a note telling her to go because this is not what she signed up for, plus he wants her admiration, not her pity. Carol admits it is hard to admire Nat now because he has given up fighting in life. Nathan claims to have an idea, but he will need more time. Carol is sure that Nat will come around, but she needs to convince him of her love. Nathan says there is nothing she can do; it is Nat's job to believe in her love. When Carol asks Nathan to promise to always be her friend regardless of what happens between Nat and her since she does not want to lose the steady influence Nathan has been in her life since she met him, Nathan is surprised, but he agrees.

In *A Semi-Voluntary Occasion*, on January 21, 1982, Nat refuses to go, but Nathan reminds him that he has done much for him and asked for little in return, but now he is asking Nat to accompany him to the gym. Manny excitedly introduces Nat to the young men in the gym, noting it would not exist without Nat, but Nat walks outside, and when Nathan joins him, he asks what Manny meant, though Nathan does not answer. Nat objects to working in the gym, but Nathan insists it is not helping him to lie around all day. On the way home, Nat surprises Nathan by suggesting they go hunting together sometime.





In *Mandatory Emotion Responses*, on October 11, 1982, Nathan picks Nat up from his apartment over the gym. Nathan admits that he went to lunch with Carol yesterday, as he does about once a month, and she is waiting for Nat to come to his senses. Nathan also admits that he talks to Mrs. Bates monthly, and when Nat asks if Nathan shares private things about him, Nathan asks how he could possibly know anything private about Nat. That evening when Nathan asks Nat about his job at the gym, Nat admits that he is jealous of the guys who can still fight, so Nathan suggests he just needs more time.

In *But How Can I When They're So Beautiful*, on October 12, 1982, Nathan and Nat go hunting together, and though Nat is unable to shoot any living creature, he is still glad he got to hunt with Nathan. He apologizes for everything he put Nathan through, noting that he understands how he could do it to himself but not to Nathan. After dinner, Nat dreads going back to his apartment, but he rejects Nathan's offer to stay another night because it would be too easy to fall back into old habits at Nathan's house.

In *The Code You Don't Ever Break*, on June 1, 1988, Manny visits Nathan with good news, and Nathan is eager to hear good news about Nat, but instead, Manny passes off his loan, his face falling when Nathan asks about Nat. He says that a young kid who reminds him of Nat when he was younger has been coming to the gym, but when Manny asked if Nat had time to train the kid, Nat said no. He thinks Nat has packed it in; however, he assures Nathan that he did everything possible for Nat and asks why. Nathan replies that he has not done anything else special with his life.

## Analysis

Five months after Nat's injury, he tells Carol that he will only complete his physical therapy with Nathan, and his conversation with Nathan afterward shows his shame regarding his injury and foreshadows the rift it will cause in his marriage. Nat's belief that he cannot make the doctors eat their words shows that the fight within him has diminished, foreshadowing the belief of those closest to him that he has given up. This fear leads Nathan to approach Manny in search for a solution, but upon reaching his apartment, Nathan learns that the gym is for lease, so he begins considering that option, foreshadowing his eventual decision to loan the money to Manny. At home, Nathan finds that Carol is gone, and when he visits her a few days later, he learns that Nat told her to leave, fulfilling earlier foreshadowing concerning the rift in Nat's marriage. Still, Carol is convinced that Nat will come around, foreshadowing their reconciliation.

In January 1982, Nathan insists on Nat accompanying him to the gym, and though Nat does not want to work in the gym, Nathan insists on it. At Nat's suggestion, he goes hunting with Nathan, and during this venture, Nathan informs Nat that Carol and Mrs. Bates still call him regularly to check on Nat, foreshadowing Nat's decision to resume contact with his wife and grandmother. Nat admits that he is jealous of the trainees at the gym since they can still fight, and he also apologizes for all that he has put Nathan through, indicating that Nat has gained some perspective and maturity from his injury. Another indication of this is his refusal to stay with Nathan for fear that he will fall into





old habits. Nearly six years later, Manny repays his debt to Nathan, but he mentions that Nat refused to train Danny, a kid that reminds Manny of a younger Nat, foreshadowing Nathan's intervention in this refusal. When Manny questions Nathan's loyalty to Nat, it parallels Roger's earlier surprise, and Nathan reiterates his answer: he has not done anything else special with his life.

## **Discussion Question 1**

How and why does Nat push Carol away?

## **Discussion Question 2**

What does Nathan do to try to help Nat after his injury, and what role does Manny play in this scheme?

## **Discussion Question 3**

How does Nat feel about his job at the gym?

## **Vocabulary**

Resistance, fetal, temptation, elaborate, drone, paralleled, circumference, indecipherable, repetitious, recoiled, invincible.



## Part 8: Nathan Bates

### Summary

#### Part 8: Nathan Bates

In *Home*, dated January 3, 1990, Nat sprints down the hospital hallway, impatient to find Nathan. He cannot believe how unkempt and helpless Nathan looks since he looked fine when they had lunch six days ago. Nathan did not tell Nat about his surgery because he did not want to worry him, plus he was hoping they would remove all the cancer so he could tell Nat he was better; unfortunately, the cancer was everywhere so they could not remove it, and though chemo and radiation was an option, they would only double the month or so that Nathan has left. Nat does not know what to say, so he asks how to help Nathan. Nathan wants to go home, but as Nat goes to hail a cab, Carol arrives and offers them a ride. At home, Carol makes dinner while Nat sits with Nathan who asks if he is sitting there from devotion or to avoid Carol, to which Nat responds “yes”. Nat admits he is frightened of her, and when Nathan asks what he would say, Nat suggests saying he was stupid and he is sorry. Nathan says that’s a good start, suggesting this may be Nat’s last chance to apologize to her. Nat enters the kitchen and thanks Carol for cooking, but when she offers to stay and help him care for Nathan, he agrees. Nat tells Nathan he will have to start someplace easier, but he has more time since Carol is staying.

In *Exceptions*, the next day, Nat is still shocked, so Nathan points out that he is nearly 79 years old and Nat must have known he would die sometime. Nat never really thought about it, and he somewhat thought that Nathan would be the exception to the rule that everyone dies.

In *Cake*, on January 15, Nat asks Nathan’s favorite kind of cake since Carol wants to make a cake for his birthday, but he gets upset when Nathan says she should not buy the ingredients just yet.

In *Stories*, on January 19, as Nat bathes Nathan, he expresses his thoughts about how people enter and leave the world the same: helpless and fragile. He asks for the story of Nathan finding him in the woods which Nathan eagerly tells, explaining “I knew that our paths had crossed in that moment, and that they would never uncross again” (page 371). Nat admits that he was wrong when he said Nathan did not do him a favor by saving him. Nathan asks Nat to tell him how he sustained his brain injury, and Nat confesses to the unregulated fight. Nathan agrees to forgive Nat’s lie if Nat forgives his secrecy about the cancer, and they shake hands on it. When Nathan asks if Nat ever tried to find his father, Nat says no because he knew Nathan was right that he would only be disappointed; “I just knew I couldn’t take that. So I decided to stick with you” (page 373). In *Reasons*, on January 28, Nathan’s voice is quiet and weak as he asks why Nat will not train Danny, the boy Manny told him about, asking if Nat is still jealous. Nat admits that he is still jealous, but he does not like something about Danny. Nathan



asks him to share the reasons if he can figure it out. He also tells Nat that his grandmother calls monthly still, pointing out that she is only four years younger than Nathan and that Nat may not have many more chances to reach her.

In *Still*, on February 3, 1990, Nat apologizes to Carol for being stupid and unable to believe she still loved him, but when she asks if he believes it now, he says not entirely. Carol is sorry to hear that, but she thanks him for the apology.

On February 20, Nat feeds Nathan in *Support*. Nathan says he is going to bring a hospice woman in once a week to try a new pain management system, but when he notes that it is obviously too hard for Nat to support his head as he can feel the younger man's arm trembling, Nat reminds Nathan that he supported Nat's head as an infant, even when he thought the baby was dead. After a moment of silence, Nat admits that he dislikes Danny because the boy is better than him, but he is not grateful to Nathan for making him figure it out.

On March 4, Nat wakes and asks Nathan why he saved him, took him in and cared for him, but Nathan does not answer. Nat is relieved when the hospice lady arrives, but after checking Nathan's pulse, she tells Nat that she doubts Nathan will ever regain consciousness. The next day, in *Call*, Nat tells Carol that Nathan left during the night, and when she suggests calling the hospice lady, he asks her to call from the kitchen because he needs a little more time with Nathan.

On March 7, 1990, Nat lies curled up in Nathan's bed, causing Carol to worry about him. She asks if he wants her to go home, but he says no. Nat will live here now since Nathan left everything to him because he did not have any living relatives. Nat wonders why Nathan did so much for him, and Carol offers her theories: Nathan's grandfather raised him after his father died when he was only 12 years old, so she believes Nathan helped Nat because he knew what it was like to really need help. Also, he was 50 years old and in an unhappy marriage when he met Nat; "I think maybe he just wanted his life to be more" (page 386). Nat tells Carol to think about whether she wants to stay, promising that he will get up soon and do something to make Nathan proud. A little while later, Nathan calls a number he still knows by heart and greets his Gamma for the first time in many years.

In *Mad*, on March 8, 1990, Nat goes to the gym when he knows that Danny will be the only person there. He corrects Danny when he calls him Nat, explaining that he goes by Nathan now. Nat orders Danny into the ring, but Danny objects because Nat has paid him no attention in the two years he has been here. As they spar, Danny is gentle, and Nat claims he is missing passion and anger. Danny is not the type to get mad, but if he was, he would be mad at his father for leaving before he was born. Nat shares his story, and though Danny admits that Nat's story is sadder, what he got was bad enough. Nat tells him to get mad, and Danny's next punch knocks Nat on his back. Danny apologizes, fearing he has hurt Nat, but Nat tells him to never be sorry for showing anger in the ring. He praises Danny and tells him to show him more.



In Epilogue, dated December 31, 1999, Nat joins Danny outside the hotel lobby where Danny stands with a group of managers, trainers and promoters. Danny insists the others share a limo so he can ride alone with Nat who he still sees as his trainer. Both Nat and Danny are amazed by Las Vegas and wish their lost loved ones were there to see Danny fight in the big-time matches. As Danny prepares to enter the ring, he asks Nat for last-minute advice. Nat admits he is jealous of Danny, but he is also happy for him and proud of him, regardless of whether he wins. Nat promises to be right behind him. Danny does not know why Nat did so much for him, but he thanks his mentor. As Danny's trainer prepares him for the match, Nat pulls out his good luck charm from his wallet, a laminated picture that he has carried to every match Danny has ever fought, and he says the same words he always says, "If you've got any kind of influence where you are, Nathan, this would be a good moment to use it" (page 397). Nat slides the picture back into his wallet as the bell rings to announce the beginning of Danny's fight.

## Analysis

The final part of this novel takes place in January, 1990 as Nat rushes to the hospital after learning that Nathan has had surgery. Nathan reveals that he has an incurable case of cancer, foreshadowing his imminent death. Carol also arrives in the hospital, showing her loyalty to Nathan and foreshadowing her reconciliation with Nat. Nathan and Carol both move into Nathan's house to take care of him, and they do their best to make Nathan comfortable in his last weeks. Nathan encourages Nat to apologize to Carol, foreshadowing the apology. Nat shows his childlike reliance on Nathan by his admission that he thought Nathan would be the exception to the rule that everyone dies. Nat and Nathan also have an intense conversation about how Nathan found Nat, and Nat admits to sustaining his brain injury by engaging in an unregulated fight. Fulfilling foreshadowing, Nathan questions the reasons that Nat dislikes Danny, and eventually, Nat realizes that he is jealous because Danny is more talented than he ever was. Nathan also suggests that Nat does not have much time to reconcile with Gamma since she is only four years older than Nathan, foreshadowing Nat's decision to call her. Fulfilling foreshadowing, Nat apologizes to Carol whose reception foreshadows their reconciliation. As Nathan's body weakens, the tables are turned with Nat caring for Nathan as the man once cared for him. On March 4, Nat finally gathers the nerve to ask why Nathan saved him, but Nathan does not reply; he has slipped into a comatose state, further foreshadowing his imminent death which is soon fulfilled. While mourning Nathan, Nat poses his question to Carol who offers Nathan's answer that he did not do anything else special with his life, though she shares several aspects of Nathan's past that neither Nat nor the reader were previously aware of. Nat promises to do something to make Nathan proud, showing his appreciation for all Nathan did for him. Fulfilling foreshadowing, Nat calls Gamma. Nat also goes to the gym and begins training Danny, another thing that would make Nathan proud which also foreshadows Nat's involvement in Danny's future. Nat also begins going by his full name, Nathan, after Nathan's death which can be seen as a way of honoring his mentor. Nine years later, Nat accompanies Danny to a big fight in Las Vegas, fulfilling the foreshadowing of his involvement with the boy. His mention of Carol also serves to fulfill foreshadowing regarding their reconciliation. Before the fight, Nat tells Danny how proud he is, paralleling Nathan's



expression of pride before Nat's amateur fight nearly two decades earlier. As Danny's turn approaches, Nat withdraws a laminated photo of Nathan and appeals to him to use whatever influence he has, as he has done before each of Danny's matches. Through this and his new name, Nathan, Nat manages to keep alive the memory of the Man in the woods, the man who saved his life several times, Nathan McCann.

## **Discussion Question 1**

How does Nathan bring Nat and Carol back together after his hospital visit?

## **Discussion Question 2**

How does Nat express his appreciation for Nathan before Nathan's death?

## **Discussion Question 3**

Compare and contrast Nathan's relationship with Nat to Nat's relationship with Danny.

## **Vocabulary**

Scolded, juncture, chastised, acoustic, ricocheted, radiation, transport, devotion, threshold, hospice, complex, impenetrable, forfeited, reflexively, diversity, averted.



# Characters

## Richard A. Ford

Richard A. Ford is Nat's father who flees with his Nat's mother and is arrested. Nat never searches for his father because he believes Nathan's fear that he will just be disappointed.

## Nat Bates

Nathan Bates, also known as Nat, is one of this novel's protagonists and main characters. Born in 1960, Nat's mother abandoned him in the woods, and this largely shapes his self-perception throughout the novel. While hunting in 1960, Nathan McCann finds an abandoned infant who he rushes to the hospital, and though Nathan hopes to adopt the baby, the infant's grandmother takes custody, naming him after Nathan and promising to introduce the two once the child is older. Nat is generally a happy child, and though he wonders about his parents, he refrains from questioning Gamma since it makes her sad. While spending the night with a friend, Nat overhears adults talking about his mother's abandonment, leading him to run away after he finds newspaper clippings under Gamma's bed which confirm the rumor. After being returned to his home, Nat receives boxing gloves as a birthday gift from Nathan, so he convinces Jack to train him, but his continual behavioral problems, including hitting Gamma and stealing, leads Gamma to drop Nat off at Nathan's house.

Nathan welcomes Nat into his home, promising to never wash his hands of the boy; however, within a couple days, Nathan receives a call that Nat has been arrested for armed robbery, and to Nat's dismay, Nathan insists the boy pay for his crime. Still, Nathan visits on every available day, though Nat says little. Several months before Nat's release, Nathan introduces Eleanor, his future wife. Nat does not know what to expect upon his return since another person whom he does not know will also be living with Nathan. Finally released, Nat returns to Nathan's house with the sole condition that he must maintain a job which Nathan helps him acquire. Nat resumes his boxing lessons with Manny, Jack's trainer, and he even begins dating Carol, a nice local girl. When Nat gets fired, he worries about Nathan's reaction, but Nathan grants him eight months to pursue his dreams of becoming a professional boxer, a fact that Eleanor disapproves of as much as she disapproves of Nat overall. Nat secretly marries Carol, and they both live at Nathan's since her father kicks her out after finding out they married, but when Nathan considers financing Nat's boxing career, Eleanor leaves him because he does not choose her over Nat.

Nat continues training, doing quite well in the amateur circuit, but when he agrees to an unregulated fight in the Bronx, hoping to buy a real wedding ring for his wife, he suffers a craniotomy which impairs his speech and motor skills. Nat's depression grows, resulting in alienating Carol and even telling her to leave because he cannot believe she



loves what he has become, but Nathan continues his friendship with Carol. Desperate to help Nat, Nathan loans Manny enough money to buy the gym, and Manny hires Nat, though Nat is jealous of the boys who train at the gym. Jumping forward a year and a half, Nat visits Nathan in the hospital after surgery, learning Nathan has terminal cancer. Nat and Carol move into Nathan's house to care for him during his last weeks, and both grieve his death, but Nat decides to make Nathan proud. He begins training Danny, a young man at the gym who he was jealous of, and he starts going by his full name, Nathan. As the novel concludes, Nat accompanies Danny to a professional fight in Las Vegas where he withdraws his good luck charm, a laminated photograph of Nathan, and asks Nathan to use any influence he may have to help Danny win the match.

## Nathan McCann

Nathan McCann is the protagonist and one of the main characters in this novel. Parts 1, 3, 5, and 7 are told from his viewpoint. Nathan is a middle-aged man who feels he has not done anything particularly amazing with his life, and he finds a way to do something special after Nat comes into his life. While hunting in 1960, Nathan McCann finds an abandoned infant whom he rushes to the hospital. Though Nathan hopes to adopt the baby, the infant's grandmother takes custody, naming him after Nathan and promising to introduce the two once the child is older. After Nat's misbehavior leaves his grandmother at her wits' end, Nathan welcomes Nat into his home, promising to never wash his hands of the boy. However, within a couple days, Nathan receives a call that Nat has been arrested for armed robbery. To Nat's dismay, Nathan insists the boy pay for his crime. Still, Nathan visits on every available day, though Nat says little. Several months before Nat's release, Nathan introduces Eleanor, his future wife.

Nathan accepts Nat back into his home and even finds a job for the boy. When Nat gets fired, he worries about Nathan's reaction, but Nathan grants him eight months to pursue his dreams of becoming a professional boxer, a fact that Eleanor disapproves of as much as she disapproves of Nat overall. When Nathan considers financing Nat's boxing career, Eleanor leaves him because he does not choose her over Nat. Nathan continues to support Nat's dream to be a professional boxer until Nat suffers a brain injury that prevents him from fighting. Desperate to help Nat, Nathan loans Manny enough money to buy the gym, and Manny hires Nat, though Nat is jealous of the boys who train at the gym. A year and a half later, Nathan suffers from terminal cancer, so Nat and Carol move in to take care of him until he passes. After Nathan's death, Nat does his best to make the only father he has ever known proud of him. He trains Danny and uses a photo of Nathan as a good luck charm.

## Carol

Carol is Nat's wife whom he meets on Main Street shortly after his release from the juvenile detention center. After his injury, Nat alienates Carol because he is ashamed of his weakness, but they reconcile after Nathan's death.





## **Mrs. Eleanor MacElroy**

Eleanor is the widow whom Nathan takes as a second wife. She dislikes Nat and ultimately leaves Nathan because he will not choose her over Nat.

## **Mrs. Ertha Bates**

Mrs. Ertha Bates is Nat's Gamma who raises him until age 15 when he learns the truth about his mother abandoning him and begins acting out. Nat does not trust Gamma because she lied to him for so long, but they reconcile after Nathan's death.

## **Flora**

Flora is Nathan's first wife who mocks his desire to adopt Nat, but she dies before Nat moves in with Nathan at age 15.

## **Manny**

Manny is an old boxing coach who agrees to train Nat after his release from the juvenile detention center. He feels guilty about Nat's head injury, so he eagerly agrees to borrow money from Nathan to buy the gym with the condition of hiring Nat.

## **Danny**

Danny is a kid who trains at Manny's gym. Nat claims he does not have time to train Danny because he is jealous. However, after Nathan's death, Nat trains Danny who makes it to the professional circuit.

## **Jack**

Jack is a boxer who begins training fourteen-year-old Nat. Nat wants to be just like Jack when he grows up. Jack dies while Nat is incarcerated.

## **Roger**

Roger is a guard at the juvenile detention center who questions Nathan's devotion to Nat.

## **Marvin LaPlante**

Marvin LaPlante owns a dairy farm where he employs Nat as a favor to Nathan.





## **Reginald Farrelly**

Reginald Farrelly is Carol's father who is rude to Nat at dinner, causing Nat to explode and to admit that he has already married Carol. Farrelly kicks Carol out of his house.

## **Miss Leonora Bates**

Miss Leonora Bates is Nat's mother who abandons him in the woods. She later dies of sepsis related to childbirth before Nathan can ask why she abandoned her infant.



# Symbols and Symbolism

## Knit Cap

Nat is wearing a knit cap when Nathan finds him as an infant, and this symbolizes Nat's mother's conflict as some part of her obviously wanted her son to survive.

## Tree in Woods

Nathan finds infant Nat next to a tree in the woods. When he is older, Nat asks to see the tree. The tree symbolizes the betrayal of Nat's mother as well as the moment that Nathan took an active role in Nat's life.

## Feathers

As a young child, Nat rescues a young bird which he names Feathers. Gamma lies that it flew away which serves as proof to Nat that he cannot trust her.

## Boxing Gloves

The boxing gloves that Nathan leaves for Nat's birthday inspires and symbolizes Nat's dreams of becoming a professional boxer.

## Gym

The gym where Nat first begins training symbolizes his hope and dreams for the future. Its symbolism does not change after his accident when Nathan buys the gym so that Nat can still work with the sport he so dearly loves.

## Vase

On Nat's first night at Nathan's house after being released from the juvenile detention center, he and his dog break Eleanor's antique vase that was given to her by her grandmother. This symbolizes Eleanor's feelings toward Nat. They are severely broken, and nothing can fix them.

## Carol's Wedding Ring

Carol's wedding ring is plain and unadorned, causing Nat to yearn to buy her a real ring. This leads to his participation in the unregulated fight in the Bronx during which he sustains a brain injury. The ring symbolizes Nat's desire to improve his life.



## **Newspaper Clippings**

Nat finds newspaper clippings about his mother abandoning him under Gamma's bed which symbolizes the rift between the two as he realizes he cannot trust her.

## **Nat's Apartment**

Nat's apartment over the gym symbolizes his independence and his growing sense of relying on himself.

## **Photo of Nathan**

After Nathan's death, Nat carries a laminated photo of Nathan to all of Danny's fights as a good luck charm, symbolizing Nat's continued devotion to and reliance on Nathan.



# Settings

## Woods

Nathan hunts in the woods by his house, and this is where he finds an abandoned baby on October 2, 1960 whom he rescues. Nathan returns with Nat fourteen years later to show him the spot where he was found.

## Gamma's House

Nat lives at Gamma's house from infancy until age fourteen when Gamma sends him to live with Nathan because he is constantly getting into trouble.

## Nathan's House

Nat moves into Nathan's house shortly before his fifteenth birthday. Within several days, he is arrested and sentenced to three years in a juvenile detention center. When he is released, he lives with Nathan and Eleanor. Nat's wife Carol moves in also. After Nathan's death, Nat inherits his house.

## Dairy Farm

Nathan gets Nat a job at Marvin LaPlante's dairy farm after Nat's release from the juvenile detention center. However, Nat is quickly fired because he calls out of work every Wednesday so he can train with Manny.

## Juvenile Detention Center

At age fifteen, Nat is sentenced to spend three years in a juvenile detention center for armed robbery. Nathan visits three times a week, on every possible visiting day, though the center is several hours' drive from his home.

## Frosty Freeze

Carol works at the Frosty Freeze in town, and this is where Nat visits and woos her shortly after his release from the juvenile detention center.

## **Bronx**

Nat fights in an unregulated match in the Bronx against Manny's advice because he wants to buy a real wedding ring for Carol. Unfortunately, he sustains serious brain trauma which prohibits him from continuing his boxing career.



# Themes and Motifs

## Abandonment and Support

“When I Found You” is filled with motifs and themes centered on contrasts. One such theme is that of abandonment versus support which is epitomized in Nat’s life. When Nat is only hours old, his mother abandons him in the woods, but the knit cap she places on his head suggests that some part of her wants him to survive even as she leaves him to his doom. In contrast to this abandonment, Nathan rescues the infant and takes him to the hospital with the hope of adopting him. This hope is quickly dispelled when Nat’s Gamma steps forward to raise her grandson. Her insistence on her role in Nat’s life suggests her support, but as Nat grows older and begins to question his circumstances, Gamma’s lies about his mother come to a point when he learns the truth. Nat’s misbehavior from this point culminates when Gamma abandons him by dropping him off with Nathan since she no longer knows how to handle Nat. Shortly after Nat moves in with Nathan, he is arrested for armed robbery, and it seems that Nathan is abandoning him also as he refuses to post Nat’s bail and insists that Nat pay for his crime; however, Nathan visits Nat on every possible visiting day during his three years of incarceration.

After Nat’s release, he returns to Nathan’s house, showing that Nathan has not ceased to support Nat. Nathan’s unflinching devotion to Nat causes a rupture in his marriage, unfortunately, causing Eleanor to leave him. After Nat’s injury, Carol shows her support as she aids him with his physical therapy, but ultimately, Nat abandons her by insisting she leave because he is ashamed of whom he has become. Nathan’s support is unending, though, as he supports Nat’s boxing career, and after Nat’s injury, he loans Manny enough money to buy the gym under the condition that he hire Nat. When Nathan is diagnosed with terminal cancer, Nat repays his support by caring for him during his last weeks, and after Nathan’s death, Nat is determined to become the type of man that Nathan would be proud of, overcoming his jealousy and supporting Danny’s boxing career.

## Honesty & Deception

An important theme in “When I Found You” is the contrast between honesty and deception, and this is seen most clearly in the rearing styles of Nathan compared to Gamma. Gamma does not believe that Nat is old enough to handle the truth about how his mother abandoned him and died, so she tells comforting lies about how his mother is busy with her big career in California. When Nat learns the truth, this inspires his misbehavior which ultimately ends with Gamma leaving him at Nathan’s house since she cannot deal with him any longer. In contrast, Nathan tells Nat the truth about his mother and everything else within his power because he believes in the truth.



Part of Nathan's faith in the truth, though, leads to his insistence that Nat be forthcoming. The other main instance of this theme is Nat's tendency to lie at first, a habit he obviously learned from his Gamma, as he tells her when she accuses him of lying about skipping school, suggesting it runs in the family. After Nat is released from the juvenile detention center and subsequently loses the job that Nathan got him at LaPlante's dairy farm, he does not tell Nathan about being fired, and when Nathan hears from LaPlante, he confronts Nat, insisting that he be forthcoming from this point forward. Nat makes an effort to be forthcoming after this, mostly telling the truth in his conversations with Nathan. The one exception to this is when he claims to be sparring with Manny's friends after his match in New York, but he actually participates in an unregulated fight and sustains a brain injury which ends his boxing career. Years later, Nat tells Nathan the truth about this event.

## Nathan's Devotion to Nat

From the moment Nathan finds the infant in the woods on October 2, 1960, he is unusually devoted to him, and this encompasses perhaps the most important theme in this novel as the main focus of the novel is the relationship between these two protagonists who are identified as the "he" and the "you" in the novel's title. After rescuing the infant from the woods, Nathan wants to adopt him, but he quickly yields to the child's grandmother, though he asks that she bring the child, who she names Nathan after his rescuer, to him when Nat is older. During Nat's childhood, Nathan plays an invisible role, dropping presents on Mrs. Bates' porch for each of Nat's birthdays and Christmases. When Nat reaches adolescence and his misbehavior becomes too much for his Gamma to handle, she takes him to Nathan's house, and Nathan eagerly accepts the young man. Within a few short days, Nat is arrested for armed robbery, and though Nathan insists that Nat pay for his crime, he visits him every possible day. This intrigues Roger, one of the guards, who questions Nathan's unnatural devotion, but Nathan simply replies, "why not? What else have I done with my life that's remarkable" (page 147)?

After Nat is released from his incarceration, Nathan allows him to move back into his house on the condition that he keeps a job which Nathan helps him acquire. When Nathan learns that Nat was fired, he is upset, but after Nat explains his dream to become a professional boxer, Nathan grants him eight months of training, to the dismay of Nathan's second wife, Eleanor. Nathan allows Carol, Nat's wife, to move into his house also, but Eleanor soon moves out when Nathan decides to finance Nat's boxing career against her wishes, showing her that he will always choose Nat over her, another example of Nathan's extreme devotion to Nat. Nathan accompanies Nat to a boxing match where he expresses his pride in the boy for all his hard work, and after Nat sustains a career-ending head injury, Nathan cares for him and even loans Manny enough money to buy the gym so he can hire Nat which will allow Nat to still participate in the sport he so dearly loves. When Manny also questions Nathan's loyalty to Nat, Nathan replies that he has not done anything else special with his life. Even when Nathan learns that he has cancer, he does not tell Nat until the doctors determine that it is terminal because he does not want to worry Nat. Nat returns Nathan's devotion by

caring for his father figure in his last weeks. After Nathan's death, Nat repays all that Nathan has done to him by striving to be the type of man who would make Nathan proud. Thus, Nathan's presence in Nat's life takes him from a juvenile delinquent to a responsible man who is willing to help others.





# Styles

## Point of View

"When I Found You" is written from a third-person point of view. The narrator is limited, but when it comes to Nathan and Nat, the narrator seems omniscient as he is privy to their thoughts and feelings throughout the text. The point of view is limited because the narrator lacks insight into the inner workings of the rest of the characters whose thoughts and emotions remain elusive. The narrator is an outside source who does not play an actual role in the novel, yet he accesses the minds of Nathan and Nat, proving his role as a limited third-person narrator. His minimal access into the minds of other characters is related only to their involvement with one of the novel's protagonists, and this is important since it allows the narrative to maintain its focus on the relationship between the two main characters.

The novel is comprised of a fairly equal distribution of exposition and dialogue. This is also important to the style and structure of the novel as it adheres to the focus on Nathan and Nat's relationship with both of them contributing to the exposition and dialogue, thus splitting the novel's focus between both protagonists. The viewpoint of the novel alternates between that of Nathan McCann and that of Nathan Bates, AKA Nat, with the eight parts of the novel divided equally between the two. Parts 1, 3, 5, and 7 are told from the perspective of Nathan McCann, while Parts 2, 4, 6, and 8 share the story from Nat's viewpoint.

## Language and Meaning

The language used in this novel tends to be fairly casual and informal, yet sentences are constructed properly. Most syntax and grammar are used correctly. This style of language is used because it is easy to understand. Also, it aids comprehension since the common vernacular is used. The main difference seen in the language is present in the dialogue between Nat and Nathan which mainly results from the generational gap between them; however, by the end of the novel, Nat's dialogue mimics Nathan as he strives to be the type of man that Nathan would be proud of.

The language used mostly characterizes the relationship between Nathan and Nat, emphasizing Nathan's desire to help Nat and Nat's desire, later in life, to be the type of man that Nathan would be proud to know. The novel is comprised of a fairly equal distribution of exposition and dialogue. This is also important to the style and structure of the novel as it adheres to the focus on Nathan and Nat's relationship with both of them contributing to the exposition and dialogue, thus splitting the novel's focus between both protagonists. The language is easy to understand, and though there are several obscure concepts introduced, Nathan takes great care to explain these terms to Nat and the reader. Overall, this novel is easy to understand, and the language used aids comprehension while also allowing the reader to relate to the characters.



## Structure

This novel is comprised of 397 pages which are divided into eight parts with viewpoints alternating between Nathan and Nat. Within each part, there are a number of chapters which are titled according to their content and the character whose viewpoint is being expressed. These detailed chapters are fairly short. The length of time presented in each chapter varies from a day up to summaries of a much longer period with long periods of time being skipped in between chapters. Part 1 consists of five chapters, dated between October 2, 1960 and October 2, 1967. Part 2 contains 15 chapters from September 2, 1965 until January 17, 1975, while Part 3 includes five chapters dated September 23, 1975 through October 2, 1976. The eight chapters in Part 4 encompass May 8, 1978 through October 14, 1978, and the events that transpire between November 11, 1978 and August 9, 1979 take place in the seven chapters in Part 5. Parts 6 and 7 each contain seven chapters, dated August 9, 1979 through March 12, 1980 and August 11, 1980 through June 1, 1988, respectively. Part 8 consists of eleven chapters plus the Epilogue with dates ranging from January 3, 1990 through March 8, 1990, but the Epilogue jumps forward to December 31, 1999.

“When I Found You” by Catherine Ryan Hyde is a touching novel about a middle-aged man who finds an abandoned infant in the woods, at which point their paths cross irrevocably. When Nat reaches his teens, his misbehavior causes his grandmother to resign his care to Nathan McCann, the man who rescued him, and Nathan takes on a mentoring, nearly paternal, role in the young man’s life. “When I Found You” is an enjoyable narrative that explores how one young man’s life is shaped by the adults he knows and other various circumstances. The novel's pace is fairly slow and linear, and it is quite easy to read, though the changes in viewpoint between parts require some focus. Overall, the narrative is enjoyable with a heartwarming account of the bond that grew from infancy through adulthood between an abandoned baby named Nat and the man who saved his life.



## Quotes

I'll get up. I just need a little more time... Yeah. I will. He would have wanted me to, so I will. Pretty soon here I'll get up and do something that would make him proud.

-- Nathan Bates (Part 8: Why paragraph 31 & 33)

**Importance:** Nat decides to make Nathan proud by doing more with his life, foreshadowing his growth into a respectable person as Nathan wanted.

That's why I'm telling you now. Because I'm proud of you now. I'm proud of you for getting this far. And for who you are. And how you did this.

-- Nathan Bates (Part 8: Epilogue paragraph 70)

**Importance:** In this quote, Nat expresses his pride in Danny in a manner that is nearly identical to how Nathan expressed pride in Nat years earlier. This shows how Nat has modeled his behavior and his life after Nathan's positive influence.

So maybe she had a reason but wasn't saying. But my theory? My theory is that she didn't know the answer herself. World is full of people so troubled they don't even understand themselves. You could offer them a thousand dollars to explain their motivations, but they can't tell you what they don't know. And most of those miserable creatures find their way through here soon enough. So, I'm sorry, Mr. McCann. If there was a reason, it died with her. But if you ask me, it's a question that never had an answer. Because there's just no explanation that makes a lick of sense.

-- Detective Gross (Part 1: The Day He Tried and Failed to Find Out Why paragraph 77)

**Importance:** This quote offers a theory of why Nat's mother abandoned him, as the detective suggests that she probably did not know the reason herself.

I've just had this feeling. Since I found him. I can't describe it. But it's an emotion... And now that I have it, I don't want it to go away. I just don't feel willing to give it up again. To back to the way things felt before.

-- Nathan McCann (Part 1: The Day He Found You In The Woods paragraph 102 & 104)

**Importance:** This quote demonstrates and foreshadows Nat's importance in Nathan's life.

Now let me tell you something else that also is. That boy would not exist if I had not been in just that place at just that moment. I'm not suggesting there was any special heroism involved, or that anyone else couldn't have done the same thing equally well. Only that it wasn't anyone else; it was me. No one can take that from me, any more than they can deny your claim by blood... Only this, and I think it's reasonable: sometime in the course of that boy's life, I want him to know me. I want you to bring him to me when he's grown. Or half grown. That's up to you. And I want you to introduce me, and say to him, 'This is the man who found you in the woods.' That way he'll know me. I will exist for him.



-- Nathan McCann (Part 1: The Day He Spoke His Piece for You paragraph 23 & 25)

**Importance:** This quote foreshadows Nathan's involvement with Nat when he gets older.

I don't know what he know. His grandmother forbids everyone to talk about it. Jacob says he told him once, and that Nat said he knew, and didn't act like it was any big deal. Denial, maybe. Or maybe he was too young at the time to understand. Jacob says the kids at school sometimes make taunting remarks. And that four or five times Nat's gone home to his grandma and demanded to know what they mean.

-- Jacob's mother (Part 2: Where paragraph 48)

**Importance:** This quote shows the first time that Nat learns about his mother abandoning him, and it leads to and foreshadows his bad behavior as he enters his teenage years.

I don't think you'll have much luck pitching me out in the woods by the lake. I'm older and smarter now. I'd probably find my own way out.

-- Nathan Bates (Part 2: Oh paragraph 35)

**Importance:** This disrespectful quote shows Nat's distrust of Gamma.

The value of your life is your own choosing.

-- Nathan McCann (Part 3: He Still Feels That Same Way Now paragraph 53)

**Importance:** This quote shows Nathan encouraging Nat to rise above his circumstances, stressing that only Nat can decide what to make of his life, and it shows the positive influence that Nathan has on the boy.

I want you to be what you are, only civilized. And the only way you can stop me is to shoot me dead, so if you're set on stopping me, then I suppose you'd best go ahead with that now... All you've probably needed all this time was someone who cared enough to insist you behave.

-- Nathan McCann (Part 3: He Is Willing to Die to Make It Happen paragraph 56 & 58)

**Importance:** This quote shows that Nathan believes in Nat and cares for him.

There's nothing you could do. I will never wash my hands of you.

-- Nathan McCann (Part 3: He Is Willing to Die to Make It Happen paragraph 71)

**Importance:** This quote shows Nathan's promise to never turn his back on Nat, foreshadowing the fulfillment of this promise.

I'm not sure I can speak to that, either. I am the way I am. We all are the way we are and I'm not sure any of us really knows why.

-- Nathan McCann (Part 3: He Still Doesn't Really Know You paragraph 23)



**Importance:** In this quote, Nathan defends his devotion to Nat.

I wasn't going to say they were weird. Just that it's weird... you know... for me. Like, in a few months I'm going to be going back to his house to live. And I was only there for, like, a couple days. So it's all new and strange to me. But I sort of know him now. From all these visits. So I thought it would be OK. But I don't know her. So now it's all new and strange again. It's like... I guess weird isn't the right word, but I can't think what it is.  
-- Nathan Bates (Part 4: Weird paragraph 7 & 9)

**Importance:** In this quote, Nat admits his fear of returning to Nathan's house after Nathan marries Eleanor because he does not know what to expect.

Because then I would have known that my mother was a rotten piece of crap who didn't give a shirt about me... No. I'm not done. I would have known all that about her. But I would have known I could trust you. And then I would have had one person in my life I knew I could trust.

-- Nathan Bates (Part 4: Happy To paragraph 18)

**Importance:** In this quote, Nat explains to Gamma why her deception concerning his mother's abandonment hurt him and made him distrust Gamma.

This was free. No one watching. No one telling him what to do.

-- Narrator (Part 4: Two Somethings paragraph 49 & 50)

**Importance:** This quote shows Nat's first taste of freedom after spending three years in a juvenile detention center.

It's good to have a dream, Nat... Until you do it, it's a dream.

-- Nathan Bates (Part 4: Payday paragraph 152 & 154)

**Importance:** In this quote, Nathan encourages Nat to follow his dreams to become a professional boxer, though he rationally insists on having a backup plan.

The way I see it is this: I wasn't planning on charging you for your room and board anyway. I insisted that you hold a job on principle. I didn't want you lying around the house playing with your dog all day. It's not a wealthy way to live, in my opinion. I wanted to insist that you be working hard. Accomplishing something. Putting your energy into a good direction, to build something. But I was up last night thinking. And I decided, that's exactly what you're trying to do with your training. You're trying to work hard to accomplish something that's important to you. So I withdraw my insistence that you be employed while living under my roof. For as long as eight months.

-- Nathan McCann (Part 5: A World Without Boundaries paragraph 29)

**Importance:** In this quote, Nathan offers Nat an opportunity to pursue his dreams to become a professional boxer.



I know it would sound terrible if I said I wonder what she sees in our Nat... She definitely loves him. There's no doubt in my mind about that. I think she has this idea that her love will be the missing piece in his life. That she's that one needed addition that will change everything for him.

-- Eleanor MacElroy-McCann (Part 5: Like, Pretty Much Any Minute Now paragraph 89 & 93)

**Importance:** This quote demonstrates Eleanor's disapproval of Nat and foreshadows her decision to leave Nathan.

This is not a sales call, Mr. Farrelly. I do people's books and taxes. I don't sell young men. Nat is a grown man. He can speak for himself. If you want to know more about him, why not ask him directly? He's sitting right over there.

-- Nathan McCann (Part 5: Or Did You Used to Be Like Me? paragraph 16)

**Importance:** Here, Nathan politely chides Mr. Farrelly's rudeness while still defending Nat. This foreshadows the imminent conflict between Nat and Mr. Farrelly.

None of your damn business why I do what I do. Why are you asking me questions like that? Why don't you ask me if we love each other? If I'll take good care of her? Why don't you ask me about something that matters? That stuff you asked me is none of your damn business. And it's none of your damn business if I marry your daughter... I'm not finished yet. You've been talking all night, old man. Now it's my turn. Carol's eighteen. She can do what she wants. You can't stop us. As a matter of fact... Carol and I are already married. We went down to city hall the day before yesterday.

-- Nathan Bates (Part 5: Or Did You Used to Be Like Me? paragraph 51, 53 & 59)

**Importance:** Foreshadowing is fulfilled as Nat rudely objects to Mr. Farrelly's offensive questions and admits that he and Carol have already secretly married.

I'd rather have a ring you buy me with your first big prize money. Besides, I think doing something for Eleanor would be really important. She is so not happy.

-- Carol (Part 6: Fragile paragraph 31)

**Importance:** Carol's sacrifice shows her love for Nat and her fear of how Eleanor's dislike may affect him.

Most people prefer to think that their resentment is entirely the fault of the person they resent, and that twisted logic seems to make sense in their minds. But it makes no sense to me at all. It's like saying it's your fault if I shoot you, because the gun is aiming at you. It completely disregards who's doing the aiming. But it's a popular point of view. Probably because it's so much easier. It relieves you of the burden of any and all self-examination. You don't have to understand it now, Nat. Just file it away with everything else I've said that sounds like a foreign language to you. Maybe you'll learn a new language someday. Some people do. It depends how important it is to them to see things differently. I thought Eleanor was... I'm not sure how to finish that sentence. I don't know what I thought Eleanor was. But in any case, I was wrong.



-- Nathan McCann (Part 6: Fragile paragraph 95)

**Importance:** Nathan shows his devotion to Nat as he confesses his disappointment in Eleanor, though he does not blame Nat for her decision to leave.

I just want you to know I'm proud of you tonight... No, not because you won. Partly because you've worked so hard, but mostly because you did this thing right. I know you wanted to rush, and I know there are parts of your trainer's schedule that you don't like, but you exercised patience. Along with everything else you exercised.

-- Nathan McCann (Part 6: What Fight? paragraph 100 & 106)

**Importance:** Nathan expresses pride in Nat for training properly.

Don't you know... I'm a cripple?

-- Nathan Bates (Part 7: Various Forms of Resistance paragraph 38)

**Importance:** This quote demonstrates Nat's disappointment and depression after his injury as well as his own self-deprecation which leads to a riff between him and Carol.

I keep telling him he needs to find another dream. But he says he can't. He says he only ever had that one. So, I thought, if he can't fight anymore, at least he can be involved with the sport in some other way.

-- Nathan McCann (Part 7: Almost Any Idea Will Do paragraph 40)

**Importance:** Again, Nathan demonstrates his devotion to Nat as he continues trying to motivate and save Nat, no matter the cost to himself.

Your house is so comfortable. But that's the problem. It's too comfortable. It's like that magic dreamland where you never have to do anything. No responsibility. Like being a little kid. It's addictive. Now that I tore myself out of that, and kind of pushed myself into the whole life thing... well... I can feel how easy it would be to slide right back again. Now that I'm started, I better keep going. Easier than starting all over again.

-- Nathan Bates (Part 7: But How Can I When They're So Beautiful paragraph 58)

**Importance:** This quote shows Nat taking responsibility for his own life and refusing to lean on Nathan any longer.

I'm not saying I thought you never would. Just that I never thought about it. No. You know what? That's not really the truth. The truth is, I really thought you never would. I mean, not literally, but... I know everybody dies. I just think there was this weird little part of me that sort of... not literally, but... I thought you'd be the exception to the rule.

-- Nathan Bates (Part 8: Exceptions paragraph 7)

**Importance:** This shows Nat's sorrow at Nathan's imminent death as well as his childlike faith in Nathan's ability to be better than everyone else.





I was an idiot. And I'm sorry. I know sorry doesn't help. But I really mean it. I'm really sorry for being such a complete idiot. I just couldn't do it. I couldn't believe you would love me if I wasn't in shape. If I wasn't a fighter. You know. If I wasn't everything I was when you met me.

-- Nathan Bates (Part 8: Still paragraph 9)

**Importance:** Nat's apology to Carol foreshadows their eventual reunion.

I've just had this feeling. Since I found him. I can't describe it. But it's an emotion... And now that I have it, I don't want it to go away. I just don't feel willing to give it up again. To back to the way things felt before.

-- Nathan McCann (Part 1: The Day He Found You In The Woods paragraph 102 & 104)

**Importance:** This quote demonstrates and foreshadows Nat's importance in Nathan's life.

Now let me tell you something else that also is. That boy would not exist if I had not been in just that place at just that moment. I'm not suggesting there was any special heroism involved, or that anyone else couldn't have done the same thing equally well. Only that it wasn't anyone else; it was me. No one can take that from me, any more than they can deny your claim by blood... Only this, and I think it's reasonable: sometime in the course of that boy's life, I want him to know me. I want you to bring him to me when he's grown. Or half grown. That's up to you. And I want you to introduce me, and say to him, 'This is the man who found you in the woods.' That way he'll know me. I will exist for him.

-- Nathan McCann (Part 1: The Day He Spoke His Piece for You paragraph 23 & 25)

**Importance:** This quote foreshadows Nathan's involvement with Nat when he gets older.

So maybe she had a reason but wasn't saying. But my theory? My theory is that she didn't know the answer herself. World is full of people so troubled they don't even understand themselves. You could offer them a thousand dollars to explain their motivations, but they can't tell you what they don't know. And most of those miserable creatures find their way through here soon enough. So, I'm sorry, Mr. McCann. If there was a reason, it died with her. But if you ask me, it's a question that never had an answer. Because there's just no explanation that makes a lick of sense.

-- Detective Gross (Part 1: The Day He Tried and Failed to Find Out Why paragraph 77)

**Importance:** This quote offers a theory of why Nat's mother abandoned him, as the detective suggests that she probably did not know the reason herself.

I don't know what he know. His grandmother forbids everyone to talk about it. Jacob says he told him once, and that Nat said he knew, and didn't act like it was any big deal. Denial, maybe. Or maybe he was too young at the time to understand. Jacob says the kids at school sometimes make taunting remarks. And that four or five times Nat's gone home to his grandma and demanded to know what they mean.





-- Jacob's mother (Part 2: Where paragraph 48)

**Importance:** This quote shows the first time that Nat learns about his mother abandoning him, and it leads to and foreshadows his bad behavior as he enters his teenage years.

I don't think you'll have much luck pitching me out in the woods by the lake. I'm older and smarter now. I'd probably find my own way out.

-- Nathan Bates (Part 2: Oh paragraph 35)

**Importance:** This disrespectful quote shows Nat's distrust of Gamma.

The value of your life is your own choosing.

-- Nathan McCann (Part 3: He Still Feels That Same Way Now paragraph 53)

**Importance:** This quote shows Nathan encouraging Nat to rise above his circumstances, stressing that only Nat can decide what to make of his life, and it shows the positive influence that Nathan has on the boy.

I want you to be what you are, only civilized. And the only way you can stop me is to shoot me dead, so if you're set on stopping me, then I suppose you'd best go ahead with that now... All you've probably needed all this time was someone who cared enough to insist you behave.

-- Nathan McCann (Part 3: He Is Willing to Die to Make It Happen paragraph 56 & 58)

**Importance:** This quote shows that Nathan believes in Nat and cares for him.

There's nothing you could do. I will never wash my hands of you.

-- Nathan McCann (Part 3: He Is Willing to Die to Make It Happen paragraph 71)

**Importance:** This quote shows Nathan's promise to never turn his back on Nat, foreshadowing the fulfillment of this promise.

I'm not sure I can speak to that, either. I am the way I am. We all are the way we are and I'm not sure any of us really knows why.

-- Nathan McCann (Part 3: He Still Doesn't Really Know You paragraph 23)

**Importance:** In this quote, Nathan defends his devotion to Nat.

I wasn't going to say they were weird. Just that it's weird... you know... for me. Like, in a few months I'm going to be going back to his house to live. And I was only there for, like, a couple days. So it's all new and strange to me. But I sort of know him now. From all these visits. So I thought it would be OK. But I don't know her. So now it's all new and strange again. It's like... I guess weird isn't the right word, but I can't think what it is.

-- Nathan Bates (Part 4: Weird paragraph 7 & 9)



**Importance:** In this quote, Nat admits his fear of returning to Nathan's house after Nathan marries Eleanor because he does not know what to expect.

Because then I would have known that my mother was a rotten piece of crap who didn't give a shit about me... No. I'm not done. I would have known all that about her. But I would have known I could trust you. And then I would have had one person in my life I knew I could trust.

-- Nathan Bates (Part 4: Happy To paragraph 18)

**Importance:** In this quote, Nat explains to Gamma why her deception concerning his mother's abandonment hurt him and made him distrust Gamma.

This was free. No one watching. No one telling him what to do.

-- Narrator (Part 4: Two Somethings paragraph 49 & 50)

**Importance:** This quote shows Nat's first taste of freedom after spending three years in a juvenile detention center.

It's good to have a dream, Nat... Until you do it, it's a dream.

-- Nathan Bates (Part 4: Payday paragraph 152 & 154)

**Importance:** In this quote, Nathan encourages Nat to follow his dreams to become a professional boxer, though he rationally insists on having a backup plan.

The way I see it is this: I wasn't planning on charging you for your room and board anyway. I insisted that you hold a job on principle. I didn't want you lying around the house playing with your dog all day. It's not a wealthy way to live, in my opinion. I wanted to insist that you be working hard. Accomplishing something. Putting your energy into a good direction, to build something. But I was up last night thinking. And I decided, that's exactly what you're trying to do with your training. You're trying to work hard to accomplish something that's important to you. So I withdraw my insistence that you be employed while living under my roof. For as long as eight months.

-- Nathan McCann (Part 5: A World Without Boundaries paragraph 29)

**Importance:** In this quote, Nathan offers Nat an opportunity to pursue his dreams to become a professional boxer.

I know it would sound terrible if I said I wonder what she sees in our Nat... She definitely loves him. There's no doubt in my mind about that. I think she has this idea that her love will be the missing piece in his life. That she's that one needed addition that will change everything for him.

-- Eleanor MacElroy-McCann (Part 5: Like, Pretty Much Any Minute Now paragraph 89 & 93)

**Importance:** This quote demonstrates Eleanor's disapproval of Nat and foreshadows her decision to leave Nathan.



This is not a sales call, Mr. Farrelly. I do people's books and taxes. I don't sell young men. Nat is a grown man. He can speak for himself. If you want to know more about him, why not ask him directly? He's sitting right over there.

-- Nathan McCann (Part 5: Or Did You Used to Be Like Me? paragraph 16)

**Importance:** Here, Nathan politely chides Mr. Farrelly's rudeness while still defending Nat. This foreshadows the imminent conflict between Nat and Mr. Farrelly.

None of your damn business why I do what I do. Why are you asking me questions like that? Why don't you ask me if we love each other? If I'll take good care of her? Why don't you ask me about something that matters? That stuff you asked me is none of your damn business. And it's none of your damn business if I marry your daughter... I'm not finished yet. You've been talking all night, old man. Now it's my turn. Carol's eighteen. She can do what she wants. You can't stop us. As a matter of fact... Carol and I are already married. We went down to city hall the day before yesterday.

-- Nathan Bates (Part 5: Or Did You Used to Be Like Me? paragraph 51, 53 & 59)

**Importance:** Foreshadowing is fulfilled as Nat rudely objects to Mr. Farrelly's offensive questions and admits that he and Carol already married in secret.

I'd rather have a ring you buy me with your first big prize money. Besides, I think doing something for Eleanor would be really important. She is so not happy.

-- Carol (Part 6: Fragile paragraph 31)

**Importance:** Carol's sacrifice shows her love for Nat and her fear of how Eleanor's dislike may affect him.

Most people prefer to think that their resentment is entirely the fault of the person they resent, and that twisted logic seems to make sense in their minds. But it makes no sense to me at all. It's like saying it's your fault if I shoot you, because the gun is aiming at you. It completely disregards who's doing the aiming. But it's a popular point of view. Probably because it's so much easier. It relieves you of the burden of any and all self-examination. You don't have to understand it now, Nat. Just file it away with everything else I've said that sounds like a foreign language to you. Maybe you'll learn a new language someday. Some people do. It depends how important it is to them to see things differently. I thought Eleanor was... I'm not sure how to finish that sentence. I don't know what I thought Eleanor was. But in any case, I was wrong.

-- Nathan McCann (Part 6: Fragile paragraph 96)

**Importance:** Nathan shows his devotion to Nat as he confesses his disappointment in Eleanor, though he does not blame Nat for her decision to leave.

I just want you to know I'm proud of you tonight... No, not because you won. Partly because you've worked so hard, but mostly because you did this thing right. I know you wanted to rush, and I know there are parts of your trainer's schedule that you don't like, but you exercised patience. Along with everything else you exercised.

-- Nathan McCann (Part 6: What Fight? paragraph 100 & 106)



**Importance:** Nathan expresses pride in Nat for training properly.

Don't you know... I'm a cripple?

-- Nathan Bates (Part 7: Various Forms of Resistance paragraph 38)

**Importance:** This quote demonstrates Nat's disappointment and depression after his injury as well as his own self-deprecation which leads to a riff between him and Carol.

I keep telling him he needs to find another dream. But he says he can't. He says he only ever had that one. So, I thought, if he can't fight anymore, at least he can be involved with the sport in some other way.

-- Nathan McCann (Part 7: Almost Any Idea Will Do paragraph 40)

**Importance:** Again, Nathan demonstrates his devotion to Nat as he continues trying to motivate and save Nat, no matter the cost to himself.

Your house is so comfortable. But that's the problem. It's too comfortable. It's like that magic dreamland where you never have to do anything. No responsibility. Like being a little kid. It's addictive. Now that I tore myself out of that, and kind of pushed myself into the whole life thing... well... I can feel how easy it would be to slide right back again. Now that I'm started, I better keep going. Easier than starting all over again.

-- Nathan Bates (Part 7: But How Can I When They're So Beautiful paragraph 58)

**Importance:** This quote shows Nat taking responsibility for his own life and refusing to lean on Nathan any longer.

I'm not saying I thought you never would. Just that I never thought about it. No. You know what? That's not really the truth. The truth is, I really thought you never would. I mean, not literally, but... I know everybody dies. I just think there was this weird little part of me that sort of... not literally, but... I thought you'd be the exception to the rule.

-- Nathan Bates (Part 8: Exceptions paragraph 7)

**Importance:** This shows Nat's sorrow at Nathan's imminent death as well as his childlike faith in Nathan's ability to be better than everyone else.

I was an idiot. And I'm sorry. I know sorry doesn't help. But I really mean it. I'm really sorry for being such a complete idiot. I just couldn't do it. I couldn't believe you would love me if I wasn't in shape. If I wasn't a fighter. You know. If I wasn't everything I was when you met me.

-- Nathan Bates (Part 8: Still paragraph 9)

**Importance:** Nat's apology to Carol foreshadows their eventual reunion.

I'll get up. I just need a little more time... Yeah. I will. He would have wanted me to, so I will. Pretty soon here I'll get up and do something that would make him proud.

-- Nathan Bates (Part 8: Why paragraph 31 & 33)



**Importance:** Nat decides to make Nathan proud by doing more with his life, foreshadowing his growth into a respectable person as Nathan wanted.

That's why I'm telling you now. Because I'm proud of you now. I'm proud of you for getting this far. And for who you are. And how you did this.

-- Nathan Bates (Part 8: Epilogue paragraph 70)

**Importance:** In this quote, Nat expresses his pride in Danny in a manner that is nearly identical to how Nathan expressed pride in Nat years earlier. This shows how Nat has modeled his behavior and his life after Nathan's positive influence.