

The Body, Stephen King: Part 1

Name: _____

Background on the author:

The Body is considered a **novella** (longer than a short story, shorter than a typical novel), and Stephen King admits that parts of the story are fairly autobiographical. Stephen Edwin King was born on September 21, 1947 in Portland, Maine. His parents were Donald Edwin King and Ruth Pillsbury King. Stephen was their only biological child: his older brother, David, was adopted at birth two years earlier.

The Kings were the typical family until one night when Stephen's father said he was stepping out for cigarettes and he was never heard from again. At this point Ruth took over raising the family with help from other relatives. They traveled throughout many states over several years, finally moving back to Durham, Maine in 1958.

As a child, King apparently witnessed one of his friends being struck and killed by a train, though he has no memory of the event. His family told him that after leaving home to play with the boy, King returned, speechless and seemingly in shock. Only later did the family learn of the friend's death. Some commentators have suggested that this event may have psychologically inspired King's dark, disturbing creations, but King himself has dismissed the idea.

Stephen King began his actual writing career in January of 1959 when he and his brother decided to publish their own local town newspaper named *Dave's Rag*. David bought a mimeograph and they created a paper that sold for five cents an issue. King attended Lisbon High School, in Lisbon, Maine in 1962. Collaborating with his best friend, Chris Chesley, in 1963 they published a collection of 18 short stories called *People, Places, and Things-Volume I*. King made his first actual published appearance in 1965 in the magazine *Comics Review* with his story "I Was a Teenage Grave Robber." The story ran about 6,000 words in length.

In 1966, King graduated from high school and took a scholarship to attend the University of Maine. Looking back on his high school days, King recalled, "My high school career was totally undistinguished. I was not at the top of my class, nor at the bottom." During his first year at college, King completed his first full-length novel, *The Long Walk*. He submitted the novel to Bennett Cerf/Random House only to have it rejected. King took the rejection badly and filed the book away. He made his first small sale with his story "The Glass Floor" for \$35. In June 1970, he graduated from the University of Maine with a Bachelor of Arts degree in English and a certificate to teach high school. A draft board examination immediately post-graduation found him 4-F on grounds of high blood pressure, limited vision, flat feet, and punctured lungs.

King's next idea came from the poem by Robert Browning, "Childe Roland to the Dark Tower Came." He began work on *The Dark Tower* saga, but with no income he was unable to pursue the novel further and it, too, was filed away. King took a job pumping gas earning \$1.25 an hour. He finally began to earn money for his writings submitting his short stories to men's magazines such as *Cavalier*.

On January 2, 1971, King married Tabitha Jane Spruce, and in the fall of 1971, King took a teaching job at Hampden Academy earning \$6,400 a year. The Kings then moved to Hermon, a town west of Bangor, Maine. Stephen King then began work on a short story about a teenage girl named Carrie White. After completing a few pages, King decided it was not a worthy story and crumpled the pages up and tossed them into the trash. Fortunately for him, his wife took the pages out and read them. She encouraged her husband to continue the story. He did. In January 1973, King submitted *Carrie* to Doubleday. In March, Doubleday bought the book. On May 12, Doubleday sold the paperback rights of *Carrie* to New American Library for \$400,000. Based on the book contract, King would get half of that. King quit his teaching job to pursue writing full time. At this time, he began writing a book titled *Second Coming*, later titled *Jerusalem's Lot*, before finally changing the title to *Salem's Lot* (published 1975). Soon after the release of *Carrie* in 1974, his mother died of uterine cancer. His Aunt Emrine read the novel to her before she died. King has written of his severe drinking problem at this time, stating that he was drunk while delivering the eulogy at his mother's funeral. After his mother's death, King and his family moved to Boulder, Colorado, where King wrote *The Shining* (published 1977). The family returned to western Maine in 1975, where King completed his fourth novel, *The Stand* (published 1978).

Since then, King has had numerous short stories and novels published and movies have been created from his work. He is called the "Master of Horror." His books have been translated into 33 different languages, published in over 35 different countries. There are over 300 million copies of his novels in publication. He continues to live in Bangor, Maine with his wife where he writes at home.

The Body was originally published in the 1982 collection *Different Seasons*. It is subtitled "Fall from Innocence." It was adapted into the acclaimed film *Stand by Me* in 1986.

- This story is a **bildungsroman** (a novel about the moral and psychological growth of the main [and usually young] character). The characters are the perfect age, 12 going on 13, and the setting is the hottest days of the year, right before school starts. Everything is poised for change, and we watch as the boys "lose their innocence" and leave childhood behind (notice the sub-title).
- *The Body* is considered a **novella** – longer than a short story but shorter than a typical novel – and it is also a **frame narrative** in that it begins with the narrator as an adult looking back to when he was 12 years old, and it ends with him as an adult, and what is in between is the flashback. In *The Body*, the time shifts often from past to present, because the narrator wants to share what he has learned about life. "*Never write about a place until you're away from it, because that gives you perspective.*" Ernest Hemingway

Central Questions:

- How does the death of a family member impact a family?
- How do parents impact their children?
- Is it possible to escape one's circumstances through the bond of friendship?
- Can friends truly influence and inspire people more than their family members?

Chapter 1

React the the quotes from theis brief chapter:

"The most important things are the hardest things to say ...words diminish them – words shrink things that seemed limitless when they were in your head to no more than living size when they're brought out... And you may make revelations that cost you dearly only to have people look at you in a funny way, not understanding what you've said at all..."

Student reactions will, of course, vary—but most seem to agree that saying important things can be difficult...

Chapter 2

1. In this chapter we meet our four main characters. Identify them below and include a brief description of each:

Teddy Duchamp: Teddy is mentioned first; the narrator (Gordie) focuses on how "crazy" Teddy is—and how abusive his father has been (when Teddy was 8 he broke a plate; his father burned both of Teddy's ears on a woodstove).

Vern Tessio: Vern isn't described very fully at first, but he is in chapter 4; readers only find out that he is "sweating buckets" because he runs all the way from his house to their clubhouse (and that his hair is messy, which apparently is unusual for Vern). Vern is most important in this chapter because he is the one who asks, "You guys want to go see a dead body?" (342), which begins their adventure.

Chris Chambers: Like Vern, Chris isn't described fully at first (but readers soon come to realize how close Chris and Gordie are—and how much Gordie admires Chris).

Gordie (Gordon) LaChance: Gordie is the narrator of the story; he is the central consciousness. It is apparent from the very first chapter that Gordie is looking back upon the story (FRAME NARRATIVE, it stops and starts in the same place). In chapter 2 readers find that Gordie's older brother Dennis had been killed in a Jeep accident that April (he would be turning 22).

2. How is it made clear that the narrator is looking back when telling the story?

In the first chapter, Gordie tells readers that these events happened a long time ago; in chapter 2 he says, "it took me a long time after that to realize" some of the events that occurred after Denny died (342).

3. In the space below, describe how/why each of the following is significant:

- The boys spend time in their tree house smoking cigarettes and looking at "girly magazines."

They are “close to thirteen” (337).

- The setting: Labor Day Weekend; it is the driest, hottest summer in decades

The really hot, dry weather and the fact that it is Labor Day weekend give the story a melancholy feeling—it sets the tone for their adventure (none of them are excited about school starting, etc.).

- Truck-dodging

Teddy takes some crazy chances...much like the boys do in starting their adventure...

4. This chapter describes some of the impact a father can have on his child, specifically his son. To prepare to discuss the impact of parenting, please read the passage below (this passage is not from the story):

“As children, sons idolize their dads and think they can do anything. This identification is most often demonstrated by a son’s imitation of his father’s behavior by walking like him, talking like him or wearing his clothes or shoes. At this age, a son wants so much to please his father and receive his approval and acceptance. As teens, sons experience a period of discord in which conflict is the central theme they share. They often reject the expectations, values and directions their fathers have embraced and take on more non-traditional philosophies, placing them regularly at odds with one other. The teen may resent or even fear his father depending on the intensity of their differences, at times, carrying over into the son’s early twenties.

As young adults, the father-son relationship enters into a period of evolving. Distance may still exist emotionally and they may even ignore each other. The conscious attempts at being different than one’s father so characteristic in the discord stage begin to appear more like competition. Competition with another can be viewed as one of the most indirect but highest forms of flattery that exists. Mark Twain once said, “When I was a boy of fourteen, my father was so ignorant I could hardly stand to have the old man around. But when I got to be twenty-one, I was astonished at how much he had learned in seven years.” As adults in their 30’s and 40’s, sons begin to move into the stage of acceptance toward their fathers. They have begun to forgive, recognize strengths and even admire the qualities that once seemed so out of step with their previous “know it all” manner of thinking. They begin to accept each other’s differences. Fathers and sons often become friends during this time, share common interests and express opinions without heated exchanges. The son may even experience challenges as a father with his own son. Charles Wadsworth once said, “By the time a man realizes that maybe his father was right, he usually has a son who thinks he’s wrong.”

—D. Charles Williams, Ph.D.

The passage above seems to presume that the father is a caring and responsible person and role model. What happens when that isn’t the case or when there is no father? In the space below, describe the father son relationships described so far in the novel:

None of the father-son relationships described in the novel are healthy—their world is quite sad and rather scary. Teddy’s dad almost burned both of his ears off; Chris is beaten by his abusive alcoholic father, Vern’s father isn’t mentioned (but his older brother is described later in the novel and he is no picnic), and Gordie (as readers later hear) is basically ignored by his father (Gordie even compares himself to “the Invisible Man” in chapter 6, p. 356).

Chapter 3

When Gordie hears about death of Ray Brower, he thinks, “*Nothing like that could happen in southwestern Maine today; most of the area has become suburbanized... But in 1960 the whole area between Chamberlain and Castle Rock was undeveloped, and there were places that hadn’t even been logged since before World War II. In those days it was still possible to walk into the woods and lose your direction there and die there.*”

1. What **connotations** do you have for “woods,” what images/ideas come to mind?

The woods can be scary, especially for young kids (with active imaginations), the darkness, the isolation (from other people), wild animals...think, for example, about all the scary things that happen in the woods in fairy tales (Hansel and Gretel, etc.).

2. The the name of Gordie’s town, Castle Rock, has a different **connotation** from the woods—what might this name **symbolize**?

Castle: again, fairy tales (so ironic that so many of them are sad/scary/unhappy, like Cinderella...)
Rock: hard, immobile...

Chapter 4

1. Why is Vern Tessio's nickname "Penny Tessio"?
When Vern was 8, he buried a jar of pennies underneath his front porch—but his mother later threw away his "treasure map" to the pennies when she was cleaning his room—so the jar of pennies is still buried. Apparently Vern occasionally tries to look for the pennies, digging in random places in the ground under the porch, poor kid....
Ⓢ
2. While he was under the porch, what did Vern overhear his brother, Billy, and Charlie Hogan talking about?
Billy Tessio and Charlie Hogan are talking about a car they stole (to joyride with some girls); they had come across Ray Brower's body—and Charlie Hogan (who is a tough kid) vomited when he saw the body. Charlie is very upset, almost crying when he asks, "What are we going to do?" (346). Billy insists that they aren't going to do anything, but it is clear that both Billy and Charlie are confused/upset because they can't report it (how would they explain how they got to "the Back Harlow Road"?).

Chapter 5

A **catalyst** in literature is a person or an event that causes things to change (a stimulus in bringing about a result). How might Vern and the news he brings to the boys be seen as a **catalyst** in this story?

Vern's story starts the ball rolling—without Vern telling the boys about Ray Brower's body, there would be no story...

1. The clubhouse boys make a plan—describe their plan.
They make a plan to find the body and report it.
2. Why do they want to tell the police about the body?
As Chris stays, "I bet you anything we get our pictures in the paper!....We'll be on the news!" (349).
3. Why do they think that those who found the body won't get angry at their telling the police?
It takes the heat off of them—Charlie and Billy are confused and upset (so apparently they have some sort of moral compass, although they did steal a car and go joyriding...). Now they don't have to feel worried/confused at what to do; Ray Brower's body will be reported.
4. What do we know about Chris's family?
Chris's dad is an abusive alcoholic; he has hurt Chris so badly in the past that Chris was hospitalized (he broke his nose and his right wrist).

Chapter 6

1. Discuss how Gordie views his parents and why. Why does he say that he is an "invisible man"?
Gordie describes his parents rather harshly because he feels ignored by them; he thinks they only loved/appreciated his brother Denny. His parents are quite old (55 and 63), which doesn't help their relationship...
2. Discuss how Gordie views his brother and why:
There was a ten-year gap in between Denny and Gordie. Denny had been desired/wanted/planned for—but Gordie was a surprise (and not an altogether happy one). Gordie says he didn't hate Denny and he didn't idolize him, but that "when Denny took me with him somewhere, it was of his own free will, and those were some of the happiest times I can remember" (357).
3. Why does Gordie become a writer?
The response to this question isn't overtly spelled out, but it is hinted at. After describing Denny (and the fact that Denny's room is still the way he left it), Gordie says, following Denny's death, he is afraid to go in Denny's room because he imagines Denny's animated corpse reaching for him and saying, "It should have been you, Gordon. It should have been you" (359).

Chapter 7

This chapter is a story within a story – *Stud City*, one of Gordie's stories that he writes in college. This is still part of the narrator's past, but it's a "future past." Why do you think the story is included here?

Gordie becomes a writer—and this story, *Stud City*, is a story he writes in college (note the citation given right before the story). Yet some people who read this story-within-a-story claim that this story (chapter 7) reveals a rather different Gordie...

The Gordie who has been speaking to the readers in chapters 1-6 is clearly a kind and sensitive young man. The main character of *Stud City* (Chico), on the other hand, is harsh—even cruel. For example, the three women described in the story are each described with a cruel, harsh tone. The first is Jane, the girl Chico has sex with, is beyond fragile and insecure; she is dog-like and servile in her relationship with Chico (Jane tells Chico she loves him and he is barely even listening to her. Even then, rather than getting upset with him, she thanks him "for the most wonderful time of [her] life" (366).

Next is Sally Morrison, who basically sleeps with every man in their town (she is described very disrespectfully).

Last is Virginia, Chico's new stepmother, who has had an affair with Chico's brother Johnny (and who is even the reason why Johnny has died). *Chico is called Eddie by his father.

Why is this included here? Some say to illustrate the anger Gordie has about Denny's death (it clearly is an angry story—and the death of a brother is the only thing Gordie and Chico have in common).

Chapter 8

In this chapter, the narrator comments on *Stud City*. Why do you think the short story is included in the novella, and why does it come at this point in the story?

Gordie even says he finds the story "quite embarrassing now" (373) because it is so melodramatic; he knows it is not a very good story, but he says it was the first story that felt like his own; he never showed it to his parents because "There was too much Denny in it" (374).

Chapter 9

1. Why does Gordie go down the back stairs?

To avoid his father; their relationship clearly makes Gordie quite uncomfortable.

2. Discuss the gun, what it might signify, and what it might foreshadow:

Chris has brought a gun with him on their journey; he asks Gordie, "You wanna be the Lone Ranger or the Cisco Kid?" as if it is all a game (375). This foreshadows the danger they may face in the woods...

3. How does Gordie feel when he takes the gun—and how does he feel after the shot?

He feels powerful, like a tough guy.

4. What is Chris's reaction?

Chris has insisted that the gun is not loaded—but it goes off. After Gordie is frightened, he becomes angry, but Chris is a peacemaker, he swears to Gordie that he didn't know it was loaded. It is important that Chris wants to make peace with Gordie; it reveals that Chris is mature, and that he truly values his friendship with Gordie.

Chapter 10

1. On p. 332, the boys are poised at the beginning of their quest. What is some of the **imagery** that points to this? (Be specific: describe Castle Rock and the Castle River.)

For one, it is exactly noon. Another important detail is that the boys stop—just as they are beginning their journey. They have just crossed a big field and climbed a big embankment as they are leaving their town of Castle Rock. From their view, atop this embankment, they can see their town and the river; Gordie says, "I'll never forget that moment, no matter how old I get" 379). But it isn't a particularly nice view or a particularly happy moment. They are sweating in the noonday sun ("sweating like pigs") and "the stacks of the woollen mill [are] spewing smoke into a sky the color of gunmetal and spewing waste into the water" (379).

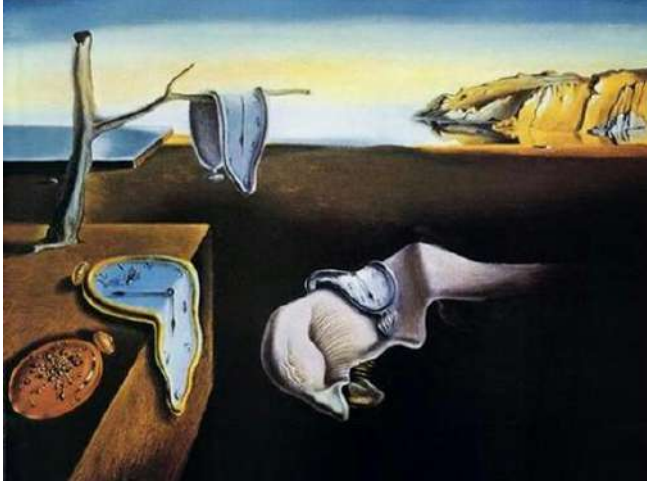
2. Why does Teddy want to dodge the train?

Well, it does get him some attention from the other boys—and he does get to act like a daredevil...

3. What did the boys forget to do?
They brought canteens to fill with water, but no food...
4. What do they decide to do?
They pool their money (\$2.37) and they decide to stop to get some food at the little store at the end of the road that goes to the dump.

Chapter 11

1. The dump is one of Gordie's most vivid memories of Castle Rock. Why does he compare it to some surrealist paintings on p.336 (two of which you can see below)? What might be significant about the paintings' titles?



Salvadore Dali "The Persistence of Memory"

René Magritte "Time Transfixed"

In surrealist work, everything seems strange; yes, they are ordinary items (a clock, a train), but they are put in strange places, in strange perspectives.

1. What's the name of the dump's manager?
Milo Pressman
2. What kind of dog is Chopper?
"Kids whispered about Chopper's meanness"; according to the kids, "he is the meanest dog for forty miles around" (385).
3. Describe Chris's dream and what it may reveal about Chris.

The year before, Teddy and Chris had been climbing a tree; Teddy climbed too high and fell—yet Chris was able to save him. However, this moment haunts Chris—in his dream Chris is only able to hold onto a few of Teddy’s hairs...so scary!

4. React to the quote on page 388: *“Everything was there and around us. We knew exactly who we were and exactly where we were going. It was grand”*
Some moments are so real, so memorable, no matter how much time passes. So many theories about this very human experience. The writer Virginia Woolf called these moments of clarity “moments of being.”
5. On p. 389, there is a reference to a “goocher.” What do you think that means and why might it be significant? Examine the **imagery** surrounding it.
The boys each flip a coin to see who has to walk to the store (no one wants to; they are already quite tired, walking in the heat); they all get tails—a “goocher,” bad luck. When they flip again, Gordie has heads, and the other boys all have tails. The chapter ends with a significant quote:

“I never had any friends later on like the ones I had when I was twelve. Jesus, did you?” (390)

Chapter 12

1. Part of growing up is pondering one’s own mortality. What events in chapter 12 make Gordie more aware of death?
Gordie begins this chapter with so many real-life events from the summer of 1960—all of these things (and each of these people) are gone now...times change, people die. He mentions Whitey Ford and Ted Williams (baseball stars); he mentions the terrible car accident of Roy Campanella (who was in a wheelchair afterward); he mentions Thurman Munson, who died in an airplane crash....eeeeek.

2. Notice that the two adults in this chapter act like children. The adults in the boys’ lives have “fallen off their pedestals”—and realizing that is part of growing up, too. Besides the vicious fathers in the novel, discuss these two men:

George Dusset: The owner of the small store is terribly childish. He had clearly idolized Denny, but he acts offended when Gordie points out that Dusset’s thumb is on the scale when he measures out the hamburger meat AND he adds up the order wrong (he is trying to cheat a kid—yikes!).

Milo Pressman: The manager of the dump is really mean, especially to Teddy. Sure, he does see Gordie (and the boys) trespassing, but they are kids. When he thinks the boys (especially Teddy) have teased his dog, he calls Teddy a “loony’s son” (398).

3. What does Milo say that makes Teddy so upset?
When Milo calls Teddy a “loony’s son,” Teddy is ready to physically attack Milo, until the boys hold him back (398). It is so curious that Teddy feels the need to stick up for his father, who has been so incredibly cruel to him...

Chapter 13

Bridges are often **symbols** in literature and in film. Examine what Teddy does and what Vern shares before they cross the trestle:

A rather intense moment, before they cross the train trestle bridge. First, Teddy bursts into tears (after his interaction with Milo at the dump) and the boys do not know what to do. Finally Chris is the one who calms him down (see below). Vern talks about his nightmares—and he states the quote below in question 2 (he says, “I ain’t sure I want it to be a good time” [405]).

1. What does Chris tell Teddy to make him stop crying??
Chris tells Teddy that he shouldn’t care about what Milo says—he isn’t anyone—he never stormed the beach at Normandy.

2. Why does Vern say he doesn’t want their journey to be a “good time”?
Vern recognizes that going to see a dead body (especially that of a young boy) shouldn’t be a good time; it “shouldn’t be a party” (405).

3. Describe Vern's nightmares.

Vern is quite worried about what Ray Brower's body will look like (after all, Charlie vomited—and Charlie is known for being a tough guy...); he confides in the boys that he has nightmares already, but he also says they "hafta see him" (406).

Chapter 14

1. Describe Gordie's "first and last psychic flash" (411).

As the boys are crossing the train trestle (Chris and Teddy have already crossed, but Gordie and Vern are only halfway through), Gordie has a psychic flash that tells him to feel one of the rails of the train tracks (if it is humming, it means a train is coming).

2. Describe what happens on the train trestle.

Gordie, at first, is so terrified that he can't even move—he screams, "TRAIN!" to alert the boys (especially Vern)—they run (terrified, of course)—and at one point Gordie realizes he is almost enjoying the feeling, the adrenaline rush...the train whistles loudly and Gordie and Vern jump into the weeds, safely on the other side.

Chapter 15

1. According to Gordie, what makes men daredevils?

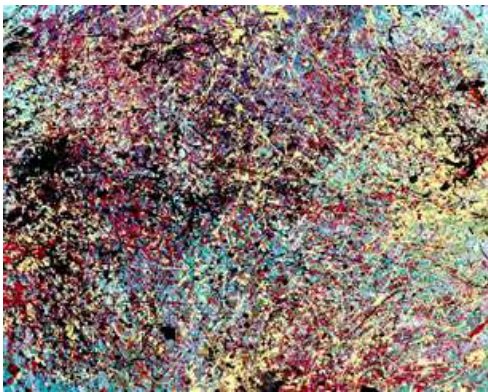
Gordie realizes that the adrenaline rush—and the feeling afterward ("I was alive and glad to be, 417) is why men become daredevils (and why other people want to watch these daredevil acts).

2. How do Gordie's friends react to his ability and desire to write stories? Does their reaction surprise you?

Richie Jenner (a boy who has since moved from Castle Rock) was the first boy who found Gordie's stories; he liked them a lot and even asked Gordie why he didn't tell other people about them. For Gordie, this is a mixed feeling—he wants to show the stories and he doesn't—but the other boys definitely like the stories, which are about things that boys 12/13 years old would like, gore and war...

Chapter 16

Allusions and vocabulary from the chapter:



A painting by **Jackson Pollock**

Castor oil: a vegetable oil product that, upon ingestion, acts as a laxative. It may lead to diarrhea and/or vomiting.

Apogee: the highest point; the peak; the climax.

1. Discuss Gordie's second **story within a story**:

It is the perfect time for the boys to relax with a story—they have just had the scary experience with the train....

2. Does the pie-eating contest story connect to the novella in any way that you can see?

The story of Lard Ass Hogan is the perfect story for the boys—it is really gross/disgusting AND it entails revenge. The four boys each feel powerless in different ways (as well as in shared ways...) and when people feel powerless, the draw toward revenge is powerful...

Chapter 17

1. How do Teddy and Vern react to Gordie's story? How does Chris react? Why do you think they feel the way they do about the ending?

Teddy and Vern clearly do not understand the story, so they do not understand the ending. But Chris does. He knows that the revenge that Lard Ass enacts IS the story—everyone vomits on everyone else and HE caused this chain reaction. But his life doesn't change. Kids still tease him. The moment of revenge is all he gets—it is the most anyone can hope for. Lard Ass is at the bottom of the food chain, socially, and that does not change.

2. What advice does Chris give Gordie? And what does he predict will happen if Gordie doesn't listen to him?
Chris seems wise beyond his years in this scene; he knows what will happen to the boys. Gordie will take college prep classes and the other boys will not; this change as they are about to enter junior high will eventually (as Chris predicts, within the next year) end their friendships. Gordie is shocked and insists he will take courses with his friends, but Chris knows this is not in Gordie's best interests. Chris predicts that, if Gordie stays with his friends, that he will be dragged down, that he will never leave Castle Rock and his stories will never go anywhere.
3. Define **situational irony** and explain the ironies in Chris's tale of the lunch money:

IRONY: a term used to describe a contrast between what is expected, or what appears to be, and what really is. There are three main types of irony:

- **VERBAL IRONY:** in verbal irony, the actual meaning of a statement is different from (often the opposite of) what the statement literally says. (Verbal irony is the simplest and the most common type of irony.)
- **SITUATIONAL IRONY:** situational irony refers to an occurrence that is contrary to what is expected.
- **DRAMATIC IRONY:** in dramatic irony, the audience or reader knows events or facts not known to a character. To get really picky, there are two types of dramatic irony: in the first, the irony depends more on the structure of the drama than the words of the characters, for example, when Oedipus seeks throughout the play for the murderer of Laius, the former king of Thebes, when he is actually the guilty one. The second type occurs when a character speaks lines understood in a double sense by the audience.

Chris did steal the lunch money; it is ironic that he (a good kid, a wise young man, a good friend, etc.) did something like that; the further irony is that the teacher "old lady Simons" (438) stole it when Chris returned it...so sad, when Chris felt guilty and tried to do the right thing.

Chapter 18

Allusions and vocabulary from the chapter:

Algernon Henry Blackwood, (1869 – 1951) was an English writer of fiction dealing with the supernatural. Although Blackwood wrote a number of horror stories, his most typical work seeks less to frighten than to induce a sense of awe. He is best known now as one of the foremost authors of ghost stories in the early twentieth century, perhaps one of the best ever (p. 384).

1. Notice that Gordie doesn't want to find Ray Brower's body near nightfall because his ghost might be lingering near the body and he says, "there was no way I wanted to wake up in the night and confront the glowing, disembodied ghost of Ray Brower, moaning and gibbering and floating among the dark and rustling pines." What should this remind you of, and what might that mean?
Denny—and Gordie's fears (for example, going into Denny's room, Gordie is afraid he will see the now-dead Denny (chapter 6))
2. **Setting:** notice Gordie's description of nightfall in the woods: "There's something horrible and fascinating about the way dark comes to the woods, its coming unsoftened by headlights or streetlights or houselights or neon. It comes with no mothers' voices, calling for their kids to leave off and come on in now, to herald it. If you're used to the town, the coming of the dark in the woods seems more like a natural disaster than a natural phenomenon..." For kids, what factors make darkness bearable?

The darkness is made bearable by light (as mentioned here, headlights and streetlights) and by the safety/security of home/family (mothers calling the kids home).

3. Why does Gordie pity Ray Brower (besides his being dead)?

Gordie feels an almost unbearable sense of pity (443) for Ray Brower, who is beyond help: his parents can not help him, Jesus Christ can not help him; Gordie states, "If something wanted to eat on him, it would" (443). Gordie says he will start to cry if he keeps thinking about Ray's vulnerable body.

We are just over halfway through the novel—in the space below, please describe the most memorable idea/scene/line of dialogue (and why it is so memorable). ☺