

AFTER THE FIRST DEATH

ROBERT CORMIER

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TEACHER'S GUIDE

GUIDE WRITTEN BY MARY ELLEN SNODGRASS

SYNOPSIS

Marcus L. Marchand sits at the typewriter in his room at a mental hospital and types a lengthy suicide note. Following the traumatic seizure of a bus and the subsequent death of his son Ben, Mark speaks the story from Ben's point of view. A former general of Inner Delta, a hush-hush government bureau that deals with Middle Eastern terrorism, Mark functioned under the pseudonym of General Rufus L. Briggs. Now he tries to cope with his decision to send fifteen-year-old Ben as go-between during the negotiations to release sixteen five-year-olds from four professional terrorists.

The story blends information from three additional characters—Kate Forrester, teen-aged driver of the bus; Miro Shantas, sixteen-year-old neophyte terrorist; and Ben, who lies buried in the military cemetery of Fort Delta Massachusetts, near Boston, about twenty miles from the American Revolutionary War battlegrounds of Lexington and Concord. Miro, an orphan from a refugee camp who was taken in by Artkin, a seasoned terrorist, and schooled in weaponry, explosives, tactics, and strategy, looks forward to proving himself to his surrogate father on this mission.

Kate, who replaces her uncle as driver and drives the bus toward Kris Kringle Kamp, is hijacked along Route 131 and redirected toward a wooded area on the Hallowell-Crenshaw line, where she is forced to guide the vehicle onto an abandoned railroad bridge 150 feet over the Moosock River. Cut off from escape by the hijackers' van, she fears for her life. The kidnapers originally plan to kill her, but Artkin allows her to live so that she can assist with the supervision of the children after one little boy, Kevin McMann, is accidentally overdosed on drugged chocolate candy.

The hijacking is planned to the minute, yet runs into unforeseen difficulties. After the bus is maneuvered into place, the terrorists intend to make radio contact with their leader, Sedeete, at midnight to learn how negotiations are proceeding. They hope to conclude their mission by nine o'clock the next morning, when their demands for the release of fifteen political prisoners, ten million dollars in cash, and the dismantling of Inner Delta are met. Their intent to bring freedom to their unnamed country leads them to cruel, senseless acts, such as Artkin's macabre dance with the lifeless body of Kevin.

Kate steels herself against terror and befriends Miro, whom she determines to be the weak link in the plot. She asks personal questions about his family and his future plans. At one point, he sees her remove her pants and flashes her a lustful glance. He tries to imitate Artkin's

impersonal cruelty, but fails to convince Kate that he lacks emotions. After maneuvering Miro from the bus, she uses a spare key and attempts to back off the bridge. The bus stalls, and she is apprehended and threatened to cooperate or else. Later, an overzealous sniper accidentally shoots Antebbe. Artkin retaliates by shooting Raymond, the child that Kate counted on for support and assistance.

At Mark Marchand's office, the military finalizes their plans to rescue the children. They go through the motions of negotiating with the terrorists; place snipers, helicopters, and back-up forces in an abandoned pavilion and the surrounding woods; and hide a bugging device beneath the van. When plans are complete, they inform Artkin that Sedeete has been captured. Artkin demands to meet with Sedeete, who lies wounded in a Boston hospital. As proof that the leader is indeed in custody, Artkin requests a stone from a cup in Sedeete's room.

Mark suggests several messengers to deliver the stone, and settles on Ben, believing that the selection of his own son will prove his sincerity and cooperation. Mark arranges a phony telephone call and written message to convince Ben that the military will attack the terrorists' van by 9:30 A. M. Ben arrives at the van at 7:30 and is strip-searched. Artkin receives the stone, realizes that Sedeete has been taken, and tortures Ben for further information. The boy capitulates, pouring out facts that he saw and overheard in his father's office. Ben's screams echo through the listening device.

Unknown to Ben, the scheduled attack takes place at 8:35, just as the military planned it. Before falling dead from a gunshot wound to the head, Artkin shoots Ben through the arm and chest. Stroll is killed. In the fog created by the grenade, Miro forces Kate at gunpoint into the woods. Kate pleads for her freedom and reveals to Miro that Artkin was his father. Miro, crushed that he chose to leave with Kate rather than warn Artkin of approaching soldiers, shoots Kate through the heart and struggles on alone. Despite a wound in his leg, he swims a river and continues toward Boston by commandeering a car stopped by the highway.

The novel closes with an imaginary conversation between Ben and Mark. Obsessed with the knowledge that he spied on his own son, sized up his breaking point, and engineered a military maneuver that depended on Ben's weakness, Mark faces the fact that Ben jumped from Brimmer's Bridge because he perceived himself as a coward and a traitor. In his delusion, Mark merges his own childhood with Ben's and imagines that the hospital is Castleton, his alma mater, and that the doctor is Dean Albertson. Mark is unable to return to reality and assumes the personality of his dead son.

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BIOGRAPHICAL SKETCH

Like many famous authors, Robert Edmund Cormier (1925-) evolved his skills from journalism. A lifelong native of Leominster, a French-Canadian neighborhood in Massachusetts, Cormier studied at Fitchberg State College for one year before taking a three-year writing job at radio station WTAG in Worcester. From there he graduated to reporting for the Worcester *Telegram and Gazette* from 1948-1955 and the Fitchberg *Sentinel* from 1955-1959.

Reporting led to the post of wire editor from 1959-1966 and associate editor and columnist under John Fitch IV in 1969, for which he won "Best Column" in 1974. Since 1966, Cormier has free-lanced, producing a string of successful young adult novels. His published works include *Now and At the Hour* (1960), *A Little Raw on Monday Mornings* (1963), *Take Me Where the Good Times Are* (1965), *The Chocolate War* (1974), *I Am the Cheese* (1977), *After the First Death* (1979), *Eight Plus One* (1980), *The Bumblebee Flies Anyway* (1983), "In the Heat" in *Sixteen: Short Stories by Outstanding Writers for Young Adults* (1984), and *Beyond the Chocolate War* (1985).

Cormier credits his interest in writing to several influences. An early reader of Thomas Wolfe's *The Web and the Rock*, Cormier realized "there was someone else like me, who felt the same way." He patterned his style, not on Wolfe, but on Ernest Hemingway, Nobel-winning author and journalist, and on William Saroyan. Cormier's college art teacher helped him into print by submitting "The Little Things That Count" to a Catholic magazine.

CRITIC'S CORNER

Often compared to J. D. Salinger, whom he admires, Cormier has established himself as a leading writer of young adult fiction. His creation of Kate, his first full-scale female character, inspires girls to telephone and write in questions about *After the First Death*. His novel, *I Am the Cheese*, which deals with a similar subject, was filmed by Almi in 1983 and stars Robert Wagner and Hope Lange.

Cormier's accomplishments include the New York Times Book of the Year Award (1974), ALA Best Book for Young Adults, Media and Methods Maxi Award (1976), Lewis Carroll Shelf Award (1979), *School Library Journal's* "Best of the Best" list (1979), Woodward Park School Annual Book Award (1978), Notable Children's Trade Book (1980), ALAN award from NCTE (1982), and ALA best book (1983). In addition, Cormier received an honorary doctor of letters degree from his alma mater in 1977.

GENERAL OBJECTIVES

1. To discuss methods of sustaining suspense
2. To explain the effect of multiple narrators
3. To discuss the theme of parenthood
4. To explain the workings of a psychological novel
5. To define terrorism

6. To characterize mental breakdown
7. To locate examples of bravery and selflessness
8. To characterize the military setting

SPECIFIC OBJECTIVES

1. To contrast Miro, Kate, Raymond, and Ben in terms of physical and emotional weakness and strength
2. To describe Miro's misgivings and his methods of countering them
3. To characterize the fusion of Mark and Ben as characters
4. To explain the author's attitude toward covert governmental affairs
5. To analyze Miro's response to Aniel's death
6. To account for the scenario in which Miro shoots Kate
7. To detail the hijackers' plans
8. To explain the importance of the stone
9. To discuss the multiple symbolic meanings of the bridge

MEANING STUDY

Below are words, phrases, or sentences that have a particular meaning in the story. Explain the meaning each has in this novel. Page numbers are provided so that you can re-read the passages from which the item is taken.

1. . . . he professes to forecast weather by the phantom pains and throbbings in his arms and legs. (p. 11)
(*When the body has lost tissue, corresponding nerve cells in the brain, which are still alive, continue to send signals of itching, warmth, cold, and pain. Because the body part is gone, the pain is referred to as a phantom or ghost pain.*)
2. . . . he did this now, an old Presley song without the sneer in it, "Love Me Tender," not like some of Presley's more raucous songs. (p. 24)
(*Miro compares the expression on Artkin's face to Elvis Presley's famous curling lip. Miro recalls the title song of one of Elvis's early movies in which he revives a Civil War love tune, "Aura Lee," with new words, "Love Me Tender." Miro makes other comments about Elvis on pages 126 and 175. Music, particularly that of Elvis and the Bee Gees, soothes Miro when violence threatens or when he is lonely.*)
3. On the Monday morning after December 7, 1941, we joined up together . . . (page 132)
(*Mark Marchand and Jack Harkness, his best friend, joined the Army the day after the bombing of Pearl Harbor. They were sent to islands of the Pacific theater, the area of conflict in which Americans*

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became more personally involved. Jack died at Iwo Jima, one of the Volcano Islands south of Tokyo and the scene of bloody fighting after American forces invaded on February 19, 1945, in order to establish a landing point for B-29 bombers. One of the most famous photographs of World War II is Joe Rosenthal's depiction of the flag-raising ceremony on Iwo Jima.)

4. . . . not the same old streets named for famous battles (Tarawa Road, Chateau Thierry Avenue), not the same old barracks buildings. (p. 53)

(Streets at Fort Delta are named for battles of World War I and II, such as Tarawa Road, named for a tiny Pacific atoll of the Gilbert Islands which American marines captured from the Japanese during World War II, and Chateau Thierry, a French town northeast of Paris where American troops won their first important battle against the Germans in World War I.)

5. . . . the child held aloft, above his head, as if the child were a sacrificial lamb being offered to a mercenary god. (p. 77)

(Artkin displays his depravity in a grotesque imitation of religious fervor by holding Kevin McMann's corpse above his head as he twirls in a solo dance. Kate declares, "He's a madman." Miro, quick to defend his hero, notes, "No miss. Not a madman. He knows exactly what he is doing. He is showing them that we do not go by the rules of others, the laws of others, and that life is not precious to us. Not a child's, not our own." (p. 79))

6. Do not seek to own anything, do not try to make anything belong to you, do not look for pleasure in anything. (p. 63)

(The episode of the stolen elephant illustrates to the impressionable Miro, who was orphaned when his parents were supposedly blown up and was deposited in a wretched refugee camp with his brother, that he should not expect too much of life. Because Miro's life, like that of many Middle Easterners, has been one loss after another, he attempts to cut himself off from human involvement with Kate and the children. His detachment makes sense in light of his conclusion: "It will be taken from you sooner or later just as you must take from other people.")

7. If the attempt at rescue failed and more children were sacrificed than were saved, scapegoats had been set up to absorb the blame. (p. 183)

(Military officials try to manipulate all possible outcomes of the kidnapping. If their rescue attempt leads to many deaths, they have preselected people who can be blamed for the loss just as the high priest of the Hebrews held a goat over his head when worshippers confessed their sins on Yom Kippur, the Day of Atonement. (Leviticus 16:29-34)

8. An eye for an eye. (p. 175)

(The terrorists set up a reciprocal arrangement by which each death they suffer is offset by the death of one of the children. Kate understands the ancient law of retribution, which is found in Exodus 21:23-25: "And if any mischief follow, then thou shalt give life for life, eye for eye, tooth for tooth, hand for hand, foot for foot, burning for burning, wound for wound, stripe for stripe.")

This concept, a measure of the degree of civilization attained by the nomadic peoples of the Old Testament, is mentioned again in Leviticus 24:19-21 and Deuteronomy 19:21. The revolutionary teachings of Jesus in the New Testament exemplify a more forgiving attitude in Matthew 5:38-42 (the Sermon on the Mount), in which Jesus commands his followers to turn the other cheek.)

9. He was the original on which the cliché was based. (p. 52)

(Ben's bodyguard during the kidnapping incident is big and unattractive; "He looked like a former football player, or maybe a boxer. His ears were smashed and his nose was twisted." As Ben describes him, the man fits the stereotyped image of the brutalized athlete. To Ben, the bodyguard could have been the prototype.)

10. . . . I would have called it a Freudian slip. (p. 14)

(Cormier gives a clue to Mark's mental state in this scene in which Mrs. Marchand asks, "Do you want to talk about it, Mark?" Mark, who has assumed the identity of Ben, refers to her error as a Freudian slip, a mental mix-up characterized by Sigmund Freud (1856-1939), Viennese psychologist, as an intentional, but subconscious mistake.)

COMPREHENSION STUDY

Answer the following questions in your own words. There is not always a right answer. Your judgment is important and you should be ready to defend your answers by referring to passages in the book.

Questions 1-5 Literal Level

1. Describe the hijacking.

(On a late August morning, Kate Forrester, the substitute bus driver, approaches the intersection of Water Street and Vinton Avenue a little late in the old orange, forty-passenger bus bound for Kris Kringle Kamp outside Hallowell, Massachusetts. She picks up the last of the passengers, all of whom are under six years of age.

Seven minutes later, the hijackers' van overtakes the bus "on a deserted stretch of road outside the town." Antebbe forces the door open with a crowbar; Artkin and Miro climb aboard. There is no outcry from the occupants. Kate is shocked, but immobile as Artkin passes down the aisle, offering drugged

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chocolate candy and lollipops to the children from a brown grocery bag. When Kate notices Miro's gun, she is gripped by terror.

Artkin asks why the regular driver is absent; Kate explains that the driver, her uncle, is sick. At Miro's direction, Kate drives to an "old rickety railroad bridge off to the right, abandoned, closed off." About 150 feet above the Moosock River, Kate halts the bus behind the van. At this point, Artkin notices that one of the children is not breathing.)

2. How does Kevin McMann's death alter the hijackers' plans?

(Artkin planned to have Miro kill the driver soon after the hijacking to shock the community into taking him seriously. After Kevin's death is discovered, Miro becomes panicky. Artkin swears "in the old language, demonstrating his response to a change in the original plan. Fearing that the drug was too strong, he sends Miro to check the condition of the other children.

Miro has mixed feelings about the child's death. He looks forward to "carrying out his assignment" in order to prove his manhood. Yet, the innocence of the children touches his heart. Miro notes that "Artkin did not like unexpected happenings, unplanned developments." As Miro considers the situation, Artkin interrupts his thoughts with an observation: "This may be more effective than the girl's death. It will shock them, the death of a child, but it will also show them that we are not bluffing, that we are adamant.")

3. How is Ben treated during the interrogation?

(Ben, who serves as voluntary go-between, brings the stone to the hijackers at 7:30 A. M. At Artkin's insistence, he wears "no jacket or garment under which anything could be concealed." He carries the stone in a "small box, half the size of a shoebox." At the van, Ben is strip-searched and sits huddled and uncomfortable with his hands over his genitals. Artkin tosses him his clothes after searching them.

Under the surveillance of Artkin and Miro, Ben dresses and answers Artkin's questions. He identifies himself, his relationship to General Marchand, and the purpose of his mission. As Artkin presses for more information, Ben comes close to tears. Artkin raises his "maimed left hand" and threatens Ben with unnamed cruelties.

Miro and Artkin step outside the van to discuss the situation. Artkin returns to apply "the fingers." In thirty-two seconds, Ben, pushed beyond his capacity to endure pain, begins to talk. When he has spilled all the information he knows, Artkin apologizes for torturing Ben. Then Artkin begins the process a second time. At the end of sixteen seconds, Ben sags to Artkin's knees. He has no more information to tell. Artkin releases Ben, leaving the boy to contemplate his betrayal.)

4. Describe the attack.

(At 8:35, the attack begins without warning. A whoosh indicates the fall of a weapon; then there is silence. A second whoosh seems to envelop the bus, which lurches slightly. Fog swirls around Miro, who rushes outside with pistol drawn. Chemicals burn his eyes.

A furor of noise replaces the silence. Guns, explosions, machine guns, sirens, helicopter throbs, detonations deafen all ears. Miro, realizing that he needs a shield, pushes his gun into Kate's side and shoves her out the door of the bus. Stroll lies dead on the tracks. A soldier approaches through the fog; Artkin shoots him before he can hurl the stun grenade. In the confusion of the moment, Miro and Artkin face each other.

Before Miro can shout a warning that soldiers are approaching at the end of the bridge, Kate tries to escape. Miro grabs for his "ticket to freedom" and turns in time to see Artkin crumple, loosening his grip on Ben. In a final violent gesture, Artkin shoots Ben: "Miro saw the bullet penetrate the boy's flesh, saw the crimson badge appear on the boy's chest."

After the helicopter strikes the van, Miro seizes an unguarded moment and pushes Kate toward the woods. Because the soldiers do not know the exact number of hijackers, he escapes their attention. Miro realizes that a bullet struck his left calf, but they struggle on toward a "small nestlike enclosure Miro had spotted in the woods, a haven of bushes and fallen branches, probably some child's abandoned fort.")

5. Describe Miro's memories of the refugee camps.

(When Kate asks about Miro's homeland, she stirs memories of the "old men talking in the camps," who describe the beauty and richness of the country that Miro has never seen. His thoughts are too diffuse to explain. He remembers "that endless string of filthy crowded places he and Aniel had drifted through in the early years of their lives, unknown and unwanted in a terrible kind of anonymity."

Prominent among his recollections is the need to steal. Miro learns from Aniel, his older brother, whose "swift hands grabbed and clutched whatever was at hand. Nothing was ever useless. You made use of whatever came your way." Instead of describing to Kate how he and Aniel barter for spoiled food in exchange for a useless truck battery, Miro says, "My people are outcasts, our homeland occupied by others.")

Questions 6-8 Interpretive Level

6. Why does Miro shoot Kate?

("Locked together, legs entwined, faces only inches apart, mouths almost exhaling into each other and the gun still wedged between them, below her left

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breast," Miro and Kate halt their flight from the bridge in the woods. Kate tries to manipulate the situation, warning Miro that he cannot escape the troops, fabricating that she has twisted her ankle. Miro replies, "I will shoot you if I have to, Kate. My orders from the beginning were to shoot you. Kill you. I would not hesitate now."

Kate pushes her luck by forcing Miro to discuss the hijacking. She asks about his emotional needs, demanding, "what's wrong with a little love? Instead of death and fighting, and that war you're always talking about." She forces the issue by declaring, "Your brother's dead. And now your father."

The words sear Miro's brain, forcing him to turn aside and sort through painful mental pictures of his dead family. Without explaining his dismay to Kate, he "waited at the air the way an animal mortally wounded must announce its final desperate moments." Kate soothes him with maternal gestures, rocking him gently and closing her eyes. Miro squeezes the trigger, sending a bullet through her heart and killing her within seconds.)

7. Explain Mark's final conversation with Ben.

(Within Mark's fevered anguish, Ben reappears after his death. He converses with Mark, forcing him to face the truth of his betrayal of his only son. Ben's comments are short and incisive, even cruel. "I was always here. Didn't you know that, Dad? . . . Did you really want to bring me back? . . . Maybe you were fooling yourself.")

Ben prods his father to divulge "Where I've come back from." He thrusts and parries in his debate with his father, scoring points with his comment that "even the pills didn't put you to sleep." Finally, Mark admits that Ben has come from inside Mark's psyche and that Mark chose between love of country and love of son.

After Mark describes the ruse that tricked Ben into believing that the attack would come at 9:30, Ben forces his father to acknowledge that his son is dead, a victim of "Another bridge, another day." Now Ben exists deep inside his father's mind. He forgives his father, but insists on replacing his father's psyche with his own. His chilling farewell destroys Mark: "I'm here to stay . . . Good-bye, Dad.")

8. Discuss the theme of weakness as revealed in the novel.

(The major characters struggle against human weaknesses. Kate, a victim of migraine headaches and a weak bladder, refuses to give in to her physical frailties. Pushing herself to attempt an escape, offering her life in exchange for Raymond's, and reaching out to the perverse hijacker, Kate triumphs over weakness and dies a heroine. In contrast, Miro, lover of Elvis Presley's music, struggles against

natural human emotions, particularly insecurity and love. He lacks the physical weaknesses that Kate battles, but his dependence on a corrupt, depraved revolutionary for a father figure leads him to violent acts. For Miro, weakness is imposed by the outside forces that deprive him of Aniel, his homeland, and a normal childhood.

Ben, who is about the age of both Miro and Kate, also strives to please a father figure. To Ben, Mark is a "phantom father," a man who divests himself of his identity at work, where he values Inner Delta above his son. Ben's selfless act of bravery leads to tragedy. Like Miro, Ben loses himself in trying to become the ideal son. Although Miro does not die, he is as doomed as Ben, who finds release in jumping from a bridge.)

Questions 9 and 10 Critical Level

9. Discuss Robert Cormier's use of similes.

(Cormier fills his work with similes to flesh out the images. Many force graphic pictures of evil, death, and destruction in order to typify the virulence of evil in the novel. For example, Miro's gun is "like a tumor," he looks at Kate "as though he were measuring her for a coffin," his experiences as a terrorist are "like a game but he had taken no pleasure in it.")

Some of the similes express an identifiable feeling, as when Kate's legs feel heavy, "as if huge weights rested on them, as if she had been running a long long time." When she screams, the sound is "like a big fire coming out of her mouth." One of more compelling comparisons describes Miro's shame "like a piece of baggage he had not meant to pick up and then found that he could not put down." Equally stark is Ben's last revelation to Artkin, "as if torn from his insides.")

10. What does Robert Cormier suggest about situations which pit soldiers against terrorists?

(By means of intense physical and emotional images, Cormier convinces the reader that terrorists will stop at nothing to achieve a small gesture for the sake of the homeland. To Artkin and his gang, death is a minor consideration. Another important consideration is that the terrorists value no human life, even those of children, as demonstrated in Artkin's surreal dance with Kevin's body. Whatever stands in the way is subject to insane acts of violence.

Unfortunately, the confrontation of Americans and terrorists brings out qualities which destroy the decency and trust of ordinary citizens. Mark, far too dedicated to the counter-terrorist division of Fort Delta, perceives his own fanaticism too late to save his son or himself. His experiment with Ben proves that Mark was correct—that Ben did have a definable breaking point. However, the experiment

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also proves that Mark must pay an even higher price for sacrificing Ben to save Inner Delta.)

Question 11 Creative Level

11. Read an analysis of Dylan Thomas's poem, "A Refusal to Mourn the death, by Fire, of a Child in London." Explain the connection between the last line of the poem and the title of Cormier's novel. Suggest other titles that capture the implications of sacrifice and innocence.

STUDENT INVOLVEMENT ACTIVITIES

1. Compare the father/son relationship in the novel with that of Robert Cormier's short story, "In the Heat," anthologized in *Sixteen: Short Stories by Outstanding Writers for Young Adults*, edited by Donald Gallo.
2. Suggest ways that parents can train young children to protect themselves in threatening situations, such as abduction, poisoning, robbery, or assault.
3. With a small group, brainstorm some alternate methods by which the children could have been rescued. Suggest how the military could have lured Artkin and his gang away from the bus or how the whole group could have been rendered helpless.
4. Write a friendly letter to Mark Marchand in which you encourage him to put the incident behind him and go on with his life. Name some activities that might bring him back to community involvement through volunteer youth activities, such as scouting or foster parenting.
5. Propose a memorial for Hallowell, Massachusetts, that commemorates the bravery of Ben, Kate, Raymond, and the others. Compose an appropriate plaque to accompany the memorial. Compare the message on your plaque with phrases that decorate other monuments, such as the Vietnam War Memorial, Washington Monument, Lincoln Memorial, Tomb of the Unknown Soldier, and Statue of Liberty.
6. Give an oral report about the situation of refugees around the world. Illustrate your support with magazine photographs. Name charities and action organizations that provide assistance to homeless people.
7. Write a chapter describing Miro's arrival in Boston. Explain how he gets there, what he does to heal his leg, and how he contacts other members of his organization. Do you think he will survive to adulthood?
8. Collect newspaper clippings describing situations in which people are held hostage. Underline sentences that describe courageous acts similar to Kate's attempted escape.
9. Outline the life and accomplishments of Sigmund Freud. Include the names of his most famous books and concepts as well as a chart of the mind as he described it.
10. Find art works, poems, and songs that capture the sense of alienation that afflicts Ben's relationship with Mark.

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VOCABULARY TEST

Part A:

Find **nouns** from the list below that are synonyms for the words that follow. Place your answers in the blanks.

patina, expediency, verbiage, ploy, reprisal, malevolence, momentum, ally, periphery, enlistee, gibberish, onyx, ecstasy, impertinence, ingenuity, hue, escalation, arsenal, tempo, precedent, prologue, tentativeness, fragility, terrain, taunt, cacophony, manipulator, stupor, parapet, chasm, kilter, kismet, cliché, pallor, ravine, pavilion, consolation, diversion, masochist, amber, sinew, premonition, surveillance, liaison

- | | |
|-------------------|-------------------|
| 1. _____ increase | 7. _____ delicacy |
| 2. _____ fate | 8. _____ edge |
| 3. _____ tendon | 9. _____ tactic |
| 4. _____ rhythm | 10. _____ friend |
| 5. _____ color | 11. _____ ledge |
| 6. _____ evil | 12. _____ noise |

Part B:

Find **verbs** from the list below that are synonyms for the words that follow. Place your answers in the blanks.

elude, prod, elicit, avert, capitulate, digress, accede, seduce, grimace, correlate, divert, rebuke, jostle, feign, rivet, mesmerize, reassert, acquiesce, imbed, cajole, render, careen, plummet, disperse, retch, dissipate, subdue, immobilize, contemplate, exhilarate, repose, loll, procure, constrict, curtail, quaff, menace

- | | |
|------------------|------------------|
| 1. _____ waste | 7. _____ drink |
| 2. _____ bury | 8. _____ scatter |
| 3. _____ halt | 9. _____ pretend |
| 4. _____ tighten | 10. _____ evade |
| 5. _____ frown | 11. _____ plunge |
| 6. _____ wheedle | 12. _____ think |

Part C:

Find **adjectives** from the list below that are synonyms for the words that follow. Place your answers in the blanks.

resolute, archaic, errant, sluggish, naive, fastidious, passe, clandestine, despondent, intact, placid, topsy-turvy, mercenary, vulnerable, askew, abashed, harrowing, depraved, deft, languid, inane, futile, strident, claustrophobic, adamant, wan, passive, docile, sullen, raucous, peripheral, perverse, rueful, haphazard, tentative, indelible, irrevocable, paternal

- | | |
|-------------------|-------------------|
| 1. _____ sorry | 7. _____ twisted |
| 2. _____ silly | 8. _____ crooked |
| 3. _____ noisy | 9. _____ pale |
| 4. _____ harsh | 10. _____ useless |
| 5. _____ whole | 11. _____ neat |
| 6. _____ skillful | 12. _____ gloomy |

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COMPREHENSION TEST A

Part I: Character Identification (20 points)

Name the characters described below.

- _____ 1. brings Miro an orange wooden object.
- _____ 2. suffers migraine headaches and a bladder control problem.
- _____ 3. enjoys taking the bus to Hallowell to get away from Fort Delta.
- _____ 4. overhears Nattie Halversham rejecting Ben's request for a date.
- _____ 5. drives as though conducting a symphony.
- _____ 6. is blond, slender, shapely, with hair like honey or syrup.
- _____ 7. died and was buried on Iwo Jima.
- _____ 8. resembles Miro in the lips and eyes.
- _____ 9. avoids drugs by pretending to be asleep.
- _____ 10. is accidentally shot by a too-alert sniper.

Part II: Matching (20 points)

Complete each of the following phrases with an answer from the list that follows. Place the letter of your response in the blank provided at left.

- _____ 1. Mark's school yearbook
- _____ 2. Monique's "chraff"
- _____ 3. Mark's alma mater
- _____ 4. the "tail that wagged the dog"
- _____ 5. place where Mark taught
- _____ 6. Ben's punishment
- _____ 7. start of the attack
- _____ 8. General Briggs
- _____ 9. head of the terrorists
- _____ 10. Mark's former teacher

- | | | |
|---------------------|---------------------------|-------------------------|
| A. Castle | F. Kate's uncle | K. stun grenade |
| B. Chatham | G. Knights and Dayze | L. the fingers |
| C. Classie | H. Mark | M. Pershing High School |
| D. listening device | I. New England University | N. World War I |
| E. Inner Delta | J. Sedeete | O. Pacific Theater |

AFTER THE FIRST DEATH

COMPREHENSION TEST B

Part I: Matching (20 points)

Match the following events with locations from the list below. Place the letter of your response in the blank provided at left.

- _____ 1. Ben reads the message on the note pad.
- _____ 2. Artkin uses the fingers to break down Ben's resistance.
- _____ 3. Kate strips tape from the windshield.
- _____ 4. A soldier hides a listening device during the night.
- _____ 5. Mrs. Marchand is overtaken during a shopping trip.
- _____ 6. Jack is killed in battle and buried nearby.
- _____ 7. Miro introduces himself to Bonnie.
- _____ 8. The hijackers observe a plump child who is late.
- _____ 9. Nettie boards a bus.
- _____ 10. The Ulysses S. Grant Theater resembles the General John J. Pershing School.

- | | | |
|---------------------|------------------|----------------------|
| A. Boston | F. diner | K. military cemetery |
| B. Brimmer's Bridge | G. Fort Delta | L. pavilion |
| C. bus | H. Inner Delta | M. van |
| D. chasm | I. Iwo Jima | N. Water Street |
| E. Château Thierry | J. Mark's office | O. Y |

Part II: Short Answer (30 points)

Supply a word or phrase in answer to each of the following questions. Place your response in the blank provided at left.

- _____ 1. Where does Kate hide the key?
- _____ 2. Who observes Kate without her jeans?
- _____ 3. Who volunteers to be shot in Raymond's place?
- _____ 4. What does Artkin describe as the "length of one of your football fields"?
- _____ 5. With what explosive device do the soldiers begin the attack?
- _____ 6. Who gives Miro an orange wooden object in the shape of an elephant?
- _____ 7. Who is accidentally shot by a sniper?
- _____ 8. Which child weeps as he is forced to eat drugged chocolate candy?
- _____ 9. Who asks, "But what about me?"
- _____ 10. Where does Miro plan to go after he escapes?
- _____ 11. Which character is killed by a ricochet bullet?
- _____ 12. What is Mark's identity at Inner Delta?
- _____ 13. What do the hijackers hope to restore?

AFTER THE FIRST DEATH

- _____ 14. What disguises Miro's age?
_____ 15. Who is described as "shy, sensitive . . . a little too thin . . . never fooled around much in class"?

Part III: Quotation Identification (20 points)

Supply the name of the character who makes each of the following statements.

- _____ 1. Do you want to talk about it, Mark?
_____ 2. The children are your concern. Nothing else. See to the children.
_____ 3. I haven't heard of any war.
_____ 4. My mother says [candy] is not good for my teeth
_____ 5. We are forever homesick . . . because our land does not exist anymore, gobbled up and occupied by others.
_____ 6. I thought you said the driver was a man.
_____ 7. We were alone, you and I. You opened your eyes, saw me. And began to cry.
_____ 8. Can we go back and get my Classie?
_____ 9. Those political prisoners could be released without any threat to the public or great uproar.
_____ 10. He wrote something down. Tried to hide it with his hand. But I saw it.

Part IV: Essay Questions (40 points)

1. Describe what happens to Mark after Ben's mission to the hijackers.
2. Discuss the theme of bravery as it applies to three characters in the story.

AFTER THE FIRST DEATH

VOCABULARY TEST ANSWER KEY

Part A:

- | | |
|----------------|---------------|
| 1. escalation | 7. fragility |
| 2. kismet | 8. periphery |
| 3. sinew | 9. ploy |
| 4. tempo | 10. ally |
| 5. hue | 11. parapet |
| 6. malevolence | 12. cacophony |

Part B:

- | | |
|--------------|-----------------|
| 1. dissipate | 7. quaff |
| 2. imbed | 8. disperse |
| 3. curtail | 9. feign |
| 4. constrict | 10. elude |
| 5. grimace | 11. plummet |
| 6. cajole | 12. contemplate |

Part C:

- | | |
|-------------|----------------|
| 1. rueful | 7. perverse |
| 2. inane | 8. askew |
| 3. raucous | 9. wan |
| 4. strident | 10. futile |
| 5. intact | 11. fastidious |
| 6. deft | 12. sullen |

COMPREHENSION TEST A ANSWER KEY

Part I: Character Identification (20 points)

- | | |
|-----------|-------------|
| 1. Aniel | 6. Kate |
| 2. Kate | 7. Jack |
| 3. Ben | 8. Artkin |
| 4. Mark | 9. Raymond |
| 5. Stroll | 10. Antibbe |

Part II: Matching (20 points)

- | | |
|------|-------|
| 1. G | 6. L |
| 2. C | 7. K |
| 3. A | 8. H |
| 4. E | 9. J |
| 5. I | 10. B |

Part III: True/False (30 points)

- | | | |
|------|-------|-------|
| 1. T | 6. F | 11. T |
| 2. F | 7. T | 12. F |
| 3. T | 8. F | 13. F |
| 4. F | 9. T | 14. T |
| 5. F | 10. T | 15. T |

COMPREHENSION TEST B ANSWER KEY

Part I: Matching (20 points)

- | | |
|------|-------|
| 1. J | 6. I |
| 2. N | 7. F |
| 3. C | 8. N |
| 4. B | 9. O |
| 5. A | 10. G |

Part II: Short Answer (30 points)

- | | |
|----------------------|--------------------|
| 1. her shoe | 9. Ben |
| 2. Miro | 10. Boston |
| 3. Kate | 11. Aniel |
| 4. Brimmler's Bridge | 12. General Briggs |
| 5. stun grenade | 13. their homeland |
| 6. Aniel | 14. mask |
| 7. Antibbe | 15. Mark |
| 8. Raymond | |

Part III: Quotation Identification (20 points)

- | | |
|------------------|------------|
| 1. Mrs. Marchand | 6. Miro |
| 2. Artkin | 7. Mark |
| 3. Kate | 8. Monique |
| 4. Raymond | 9. Mark |
| 5. Artkin | 10. Ben |



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