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Synopsis

Chapter 1: The Runaway

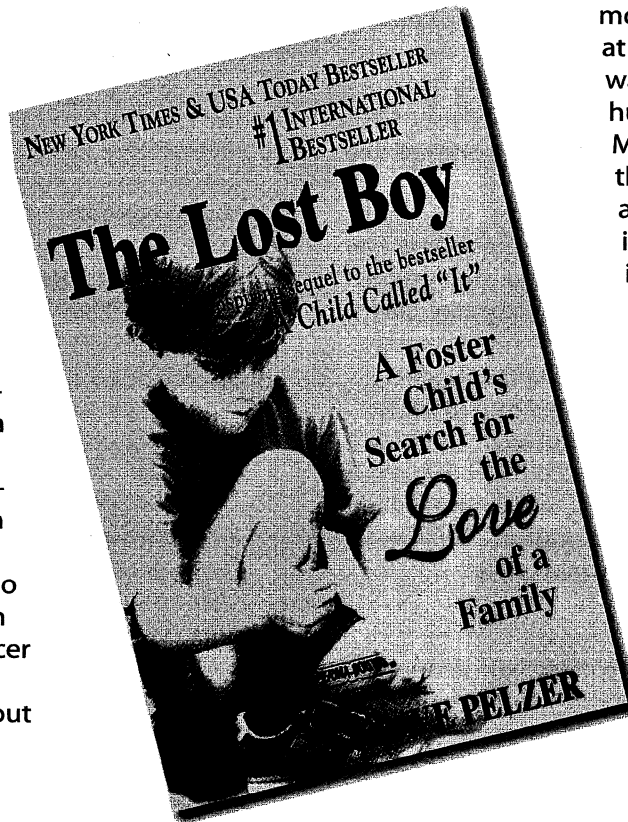
At age nine, David James Pelzer resides in the unheated garage of the family home in Daly City, California. He sleeps on a cot and sits at attention while trying to keep his hands warm. Because his mother denies and punishes him relentlessly, he must steal food and perform grueling chores. His only escape is through dreams. He blames alcoholism for the neglect and cruelty.

Dave's mother claims never to have loved Dave and forces him out of the house. He intends to walk to Johnson's Beach, a vacation spot on the Russian River in Guerneville. At a pizza bar, he steals a quarter. Mark, the counterman, retrieves the stolen coin and treats Dave to a Coke. A policeman collects the child, who clutches a boxed pizza. Stephen Pelzer picks up his son. The officer scolds Dave for misbehavior. Stephen implores Dave to stay out of trouble.

Chapter 2: An Angel Named Ms. Gold

On March 5, 1973, teachers at Thomas Edison Elementary School intervene in Dave's behalf and notify police. Mr. Ziegler, the homeroom teacher, promises to tell the rest of the students Dave's plight. The boy is particularly grateful to Mrs. Woodworth, an English teacher who provides him with adventure books. The police take Dave to the county hospital, where a nurse bathes him and a doctor examines his bruises and dry fingers reddened by harsh cleaning products. The doctor instructs the police to assure the boy plenty of sunshine and food.

At the foster home of Aunt Mary, Dave learns that there are other unwanted children. He responds to freedom with hyperactivity. In his dreams, his mother stalks him with a knife. Pam Gold of the Child Protective Service conducts a five-hour interview and holds Dave as he weeps. He fears that revealing the family secrets will result in his mother's vengeance.



Days later, when Dave's mother and brothers arrive at the home, Roerva Pelzer warns Mary that Dave hurts other children. When Mary withdraws to answer the phone, Dave's mother accuses him of embarrassing the family and promises to regain custody of him. Facing a court appearance, he dreads seeing his wrathful mother and fears that Pam Gold will lose the case. Gold sobs for Dave.

Chapter 3: The Trial

At the county courthouse, Pam Gold explains to Dave the concept of being a ward of the court. She states that Roerva Pelzer is mentally ill. With genuine

love, Gold escorts Dave to the waiting area, where Roerva sits with her other sons. Dave passes his mother a note asking her forgiveness for divulging family secrets. Roerva destroys the note. During the hearing, she refuses to speak. Dave begs to live with the judge. Roerva Pelzer weeps and offers Dave new clothes and toys.

Chapter 4: New Beginnings

Dave's emotions numb as he contemplates never seeing his family again. He learns from Aunt Mary's other wards that people dislike foster

children. His learning skills deteriorate. On outings from the home, he steals candy bars from the grocery store to impress the other boys. He hoards food until Aunt Mary realizes the cause of his actions.

At the first permanent foster home with Lilian and Rudy Catanze, Dave arrives with only one brown bag of belongings. Pam Gold reports that the Pelzer family has made no effort to contact Dave. The house rules require a clean room, help with chores, respect for the other children's rooms, no lying or stealing, and permission to venture beyond the yard. He meets Connie and Larry Junior, a troubled boy who ridicules Dave's small stature. Big Larry takes Dave to see *Live and Let Die*, a James Bond movie. The next day, the Catanzes meet with other foster families for a Fourth of July picnic at Junipero Serra Park. Kathy, who once lived with the Catanzes, introduces her new baby.

Dave longs to talk to his foster mother about the past. The next morning, Larry Junior denigrates Dave for being a wimp. The following day, Lilian Catanze explains that Larry Junior has his own problems. She spends \$127 at Sears for new clothes for Dave. A few days later, Roerva Pelzer brings Dave's bike, which his brothers vandalized. He weeps that she doesn't love him. Dave begins earning money to pay for bike repairs and collects over four dollars in less than a month. On August 21, he rides his bike like a normal child.

Chapter 5: Adrift

Dave enjoys free play, but regrets that he doesn't fit in with other kids. When Larry Junior seizes Dave, Chris insists that Larry let go. Dave insults and threatens Larry Junior, then apologizes to Chris for the encounter. Chris, who has cerebral palsy, fears the next year, when he will age out of foster care on his 18th birthday. Lilian arranges psychological counseling with a doctor who calls the boy "Daniel" and impersonally analyzes his responses to hurtful questions. At the second session, Dave relives the day that his mother burned his arm. Dave declares an end to the treatment and faints.

A few days later while biking with Big Larry, Dave ventures toward his old neighborhood. His brothers spy his antics. Roerva Pelzer phones Lilian

Catanze, who warns Dave to stay away from his family. He discovers that the Pelzer phone is unlisted. At 7:00 A.M. the next day, Dave awaits a visit from his father, who never comes. Dave strikes Rudy Catanze in the arm. Rudy realizes that the boy is seriously disturbed.

Chapter 6: The Defiant One

In late summer before Dave enters sixth grade, he conceals his emotions. He steals for thrills and for attention from admiring kids. At Wal-Mart, he swipes a model airplane for Johnny Jones, whose father is the store manager. Dave realizes that Johnny set him up. Lilian Catanze grounds Dave. Rudy scolds him for violent and unacceptable behavior and threatens to send him to "The Hill," a reference to a home for juvenile delinquents.

On Saturday, Dave takes his savings and runs away. He watches James Bond movies at the Serramonte-6 theater and rides his bike back to the old neighborhood. He watches movies the next day and eats at Denny's Restaurant. At Dave's request, the manager summons Rudy Catanze. Pam Gold visits the next day and questions Dave's many misbehaviors. He tries to understand why he can't contact his parents.

In sixth grade, kids ridicule Dave's efforts to throw a football. He draws pictures reflecting his separation from his brothers. The next day, he meets John, who plans to initiate Dave into a gang. The first task is to flatten two tires of Mr. Smith's car. Dave manages to deflate only one tire. Weeks later, Dave apologizes to John's gang.

John starts a fire in Mr. Smith's classroom module at Monte Cristo Elementary School. Dave extinguishes the fire. The next day, Mr. Smith and the principal accuse Dave of arson. The school secretary sneers at Dave. He runs away and hides at John's house. John claims that Dave is the arsonist and forces him out of the house. When Dave returns to the Catanzes, he finds Rudy irate at phone calls from the school, police, the Pelzers, and juvenile authorities. Rudy overrules Lilian and vows to remand Dave to a juvenile hall.

Chapter 7: Mother's Love

At San Mateo County Juvenile Hall, Dave endures a strip search. He remains as invisible as possible and is transferred to C-Wing for hyperactive kids.

Stephen Pelzer visits and accuses Dave of lying and deceiving. Stephen reveals that Roerva wants to have Dave placed in a mental institution. When Lilian visits, she informs Dave that he need not receive unwanted visitors. She warns that Roerva is manipulating Dave's case to rid herself of him permanently.

Gordon Hutchenson becomes Dave's probation officer. Lilian surprises Dave with a small box containing his pet red-ear turtle. Dave's behavior becomes exemplary and impresses Carl Miguel, the supervisor. At Dave's trial, his attorney declares that the boy extinguished the fire rather than start it. Within 34 days, Dave returns to his foster parents.

Chapter 8: Estranged

Dave realizes that extreme behavior has cost him the Catanze family's trust. In July 1974, Gordon Hutchenson transfers Dave to a new foster home. Dave regrets getting too attached to Lilian and Rudy. Because of a shortage of foster homes, Gordon must return Dave to the juvenile hall. He makes a sly attempt to get Alice and Harold Turnbough to take Dave. Alice agrees to take Dave temporarily. He sleeps on the couch rather than share a room with 17-year-old Michelle.

A week later, Gordon leaves Dave with Joanne and Michael Nulls. Joanne exults at having a foster son. Dave watches cartoons and colors in a coloring book. Michael resents the boy. At Parkside Junior High, Dave insults a girl whose brother retaliates by smashing him in the face and bending the frames of his glasses. Weeks afterward, Joanne anticipates a divorce from Michael, who is having an affair. Two days later, when Gordon collects Dave and his belongings, the boy tries to rid himself of affection for foster parents. He moves in with Jody and Vera Jones, a black foster family, but longs for the Catanzes.

Dave attends Fernando Riviera Junior High and makes friends with Carlos. On a ramble through Thomas Edison Elementary School, Dave encounters his brother Russell, who is thin and bruised from Roerva's mistreatment. Dave ponders rescuing Russell. When Dave returns to the school to talk to Russell, Roerva terrifies Dave. He lurches into the path of a car. Carlos and Dave flee Roerva's station wagon. At the Jones house, Dave learns from Bobby, another foster child, that a

female foster child is accusing Jody Jones of raping her. Alice Turnbough accepts Dave temporarily.

Chapter 9: Coming Around

Dave re-enrolls in Parkside Junior High and begins seeing Dr. Robertson, who offers psychology books to help Dave adjust. Alice indulges Dave with gifts and movies. Like Chris, he fears reaching age 18 and being on his own. He earns money shining shoes and working at a watch repair shop. Before reaching 16, he learns to cook. In July 1976, two older foster boys move in with the Turnboughs. The newcomers steal Dave's money and possessions.

Dave returns to juvenile hall with a new probation officer, Mrs. O'Ryan. At the home of John and Linda Walsh, Dave owns a BB gun. When the Walshes move to an upscale neighborhood, Dave makes friends with Paul Brazell and Dave Howard and races them on a minibike. The trio shoots home movies of Dave Pelzer's stunts. He meets a girl whose mother complains that he doesn't belong in the neighborhood. Michael and Sandra Marsh befriend Dave, who reads books at their home and fantasizes about being Superman. Dave reports to Mrs. O'Ryan that the Walshes fight constantly. As Dave says goodbyes, the Marshes promise to stay in touch. He returns to the Turnboughs.

Chapter 10: Break Away

School bores Dave, who prefers working at a plastic factory and fast-food restaurant to studying. Messages to Stephen Pelzer net no returned phone calls. Dave visits his father's old station and encounters Uncle Lee, who reports that Stephen was asked to retire early. Two weeks later, Dave finds Stephen at a bar in the Mission district of San Francisco. Stephen reports that Ronald Pelzer has joined the military.

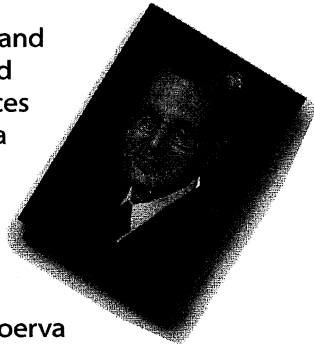
Dave sells cars and dreams of being a movie stuntman. He treasures his friendship with Dan Brazell and the Marshes. He quits school at age 17 and returns to Johnson's Beach. With a G.E.D. diploma, he enlists in the U.S. Air Force. In search of motherly love, he calls Roerva. The Turnboughs consider him their son. Dave leaves home by plane on his next adventure.

Epilogue

In 1993, Pelzer continues to wrestle with low self-esteem, but enjoys the love and trust of his son.

Pelzer's Life

Confessional memoirist and inspirational writer David James Pelzer's experiences in early childhood with a deranged alcoholic mother and weak-willed father form the core of his writing career. Born in 1961 in Daly City, California, to Roerva and Stephen Pelzer, a fireman in San Francisco, the author enjoyed a normal childhood with his brothers until age four, when his mother singled him out for torturous punishments. He slept in the cold garage, ate the scraps he could scavenge, and looked forward to meals at school only five days a week. He tried to run away at age nine, but didn't succeed until age twelve, when his teachers helped him make a new start. As a ward of the court, he lived in a series of foster homes, became willful and unruly, and dropped out of high school.



After joining the Air Force at age 18, Pelzer took on difficult missions with the SR-71 Blackbird and the F-117 Stealth Fighter. He refueled planes in flight during conflicts in Afghanistan and Iraq. During free time, in 1990, he became an activist and earned the J. C. Penney Golden Rule award as California Volunteer of the Year award. After retiring from the military in 1991, he began his career in public speaking on the subject of child abuse. In 1994, he wrote his first book, the first of a trilogy that exposed his childhood under the hand of a crazed mother. He lives in Rancho Mirage, California, with his second wife, Marsha Donohoe Pelzer, and his son Stephen. Marsha Pelzer manages their company, D-Esprit.

Pelzer and the Critics

Dave Pelzer's works have maintained a place among bestsellers on the *New York Times* and international lists for a total of 448 weeks. Covering his life from age four to twelve, his initial memoir, *A Child Called "It,"* received a Pulitzer Prize nomination. The second of the trilogy, *The Lost Boy*, recaps the early years and follows his reshaping in the late

teens. *A Man Named Dave* completes the three-stage autobiography. His honors for selflessness include listing as one of the Ten Outstanding Young Americans, citations from four U.S. presidents, nomination as the American candidate for the Outstanding Young Person of the World award, participation as flame carrier in the 1996 Olympics, and the National Jefferson Award. For all his acclaim, reviewers remain dubious about the authenticity of his memoirs and question his drive to sell his misery in repeated tellings and writings.

Pelzer's Published Works

A Child Called "It" (1995)
The Lost Boy (1997)
A Man Named Dave (2000)
Help Yourself (2001)
Life Lessons (2002)
The Privilege of Youth (2004)
Help Yourself for Teens (2005)
A Brother's Journey (2005)

Bibliography

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Garner, Dwight. "TBR: Inside the List," *New York Times Book Review* (30 January 2005): 22.
Jordan, Pat. "A Professional Victim Called Dave," *London Times* (7 August 2002).
Kellaway, Kate. "No Pain, No Gain," *Manchester Guardian* (15 February 2004).
Maryles, Daisy. "A Triumphant Finale," *Publishers Weekly* 246, no. 43 (25 October 1999): 19.
Neumark, Victoria. "Beaten But Not Defeated," *Times Educational Supplement* (6 February 2004): 17.
Perrick, Penny. "Shrugs Don't Work," *London Times* (17 February 2001).
Singh, Subhashni D. "A Child Called 'It,'" *Journal of Child & Family Studies* 7, no. 2 (June 1998): 257-260.
Wavell, Stuart. "London Calling," *Toronto Star* (28 January 2001).
Williams, Zoe. "The Price of Pain," *New Statesman* (9 February 2004): 50.

Timeline of Events

1961	David Pelzer is born.
1966	He races home to parental hugs on the last day of kindergarten.
winter 1970	After his mother turns against him, he tries to run away to Johnson's Beach.
March 5, 1973	Teachers at Thomas Edison Elementary School intervene on Dave's behalf and notify police.
later that day	After a physical examination, Dave enters Aunt Mary's foster home.
days later	Roerva Pelzer arrives at the home and accuses Dave of embarrassing the family.
that night	He weeps and cringes.
next day	He learns that he must face his mother in court.
two days later	The judge establishes permanent custody by the state.
ca. July 2	Dave lives with Lilian and Rudy Catanze.
July 3	Big Larry takes Dave to the movies.
July 4	The Catanzes meet with other foster families for a Fourth of July picnic at Junipero Serra Park.
next morning	Larry Junior degrades Dave for being a wimp.
July 6	Lilian Catanze takes Dave shopping for clothes.
few days later	Roerva Pelzer brings Dave's bike to the foster home.
end of July	He earns over four dollars by doing chores.
August 21	He rides his refurbished bike and embraces normality.
a few days later	An impersonal psychiatrist questions Dave.
a week later	Dave returns to the doctor for a second session and refuses any more treatment.
late summer	Dave conceals his emotions.
January 10, 1974	John sets fire to a classroom module and blames Dave.
ca. March	Rudy surrenders Dave to San Mateo Juvenile Hall.
July 1974	Gordon Hutchenson transfers Dave to a new foster home with Alice and Harold Turnbough.
a week later	Gordon leaves Dave with Joanne and Michael Nulls.

fall	At Parkside Junior High, Dave unintentionally insults a girl and endures a beating from her brother.
weeks later	Joanne anticipates a divorce from Michael.
days later	Dave moves in with Jody and Vera Jones.
later	Carlos and Dave encounter Russell Pelzer and Roerva, who observes Dave's collision with a moving car.
age 15	Dave earns money shining shoes and working at a watch repair shop.
freshman year	During his placement with John and Linda Walsh, Dave makes real friends.
sophomore year	Dave works harder outside school and reunites with Stephen.
summer 1978	He begins selling cars.
later	He joins the Air Force and is stationed at Beale Air Force Base in Yuba County, California.
January 1993	Dave is named one of the Ten Outstanding Young Americans.
December	He reflects on his love for his son Stephen.

Related Reading

Toni Cade Bambara, "Blue Ain't No Mockin' Bird"
 Judith Berck, *No Place to Be*
 Forrest Carter, *The Education of Little Tree*
 Willa Cather, "Paul's Case"
 Marjorie Kinnan Rawlings, "A Mother in Manville"
 Pat Conroy, *The Water is Wide*
 Robert Cormier, *I Am the Cheese*
 Michael Dorris, *Yellow Raft in Blue Water*
 Kaye Gibbons, *Ellen Foster*
 Judith Guest, *Ordinary People*
 Khaled Hosseini, *The Kite Runner*
 Barbara Kingsolver, *The Bean Trees*
 Harper Lee, *To Kill a Mockingbird*
 Carson McCullers, *The Member of the Wedding*
 and "Sucker"
 Terry McMillan, *Mama*
 Toni Morrison, *The Bluest Eye*
 Alice Walker, *The Color Purple*
 Paul Zindel, *The Effects of Gamma Rays on Man-in-the-Moon Marigolds*

Literary Terms and Applications

For a better understanding of Dave Pelzer's memoir, present the following terms and applications:

anti-hero a protagonist or central figure who lacks the usual heroic qualities of an admirable person or leader, particularly skill, grace, honesty, courage, and truth. Pelzer recreates his childhood with an array of good and bad characteristics, especially young Dave's lack of parental love and his replacement of normal emotion with hyperactivity, fights, arguments, stunts, gang membership, petty thievery, and crime. The catalog of failures exhibits the emotional turmoil that won't let him forget the past.

confessional memoir revealing recollections of personal experience and observations. Dave Pelzer gathers the most crucial elements of his late childhood and teen years into an exposé of child neglect, rejection, and abuse. By divulging his misgivings and fears to the police, Pam Gold, and the judge, Dave bares his vulnerable psyche at a time in his youth when he needs strong parental affection and guidance.

sociological treatise analytic non-fiction that uses character actions to delineate a social problem. *The Lost Boy* presents Dave Pelzer's late childhood as an example of extreme child abuse. At the same time, he inserts events and commentary that examine the status of social services and the foster care system, including the lack of willing parents and the brusqueness and impersonality of professional treatment by a school secretary and psychiatrist.

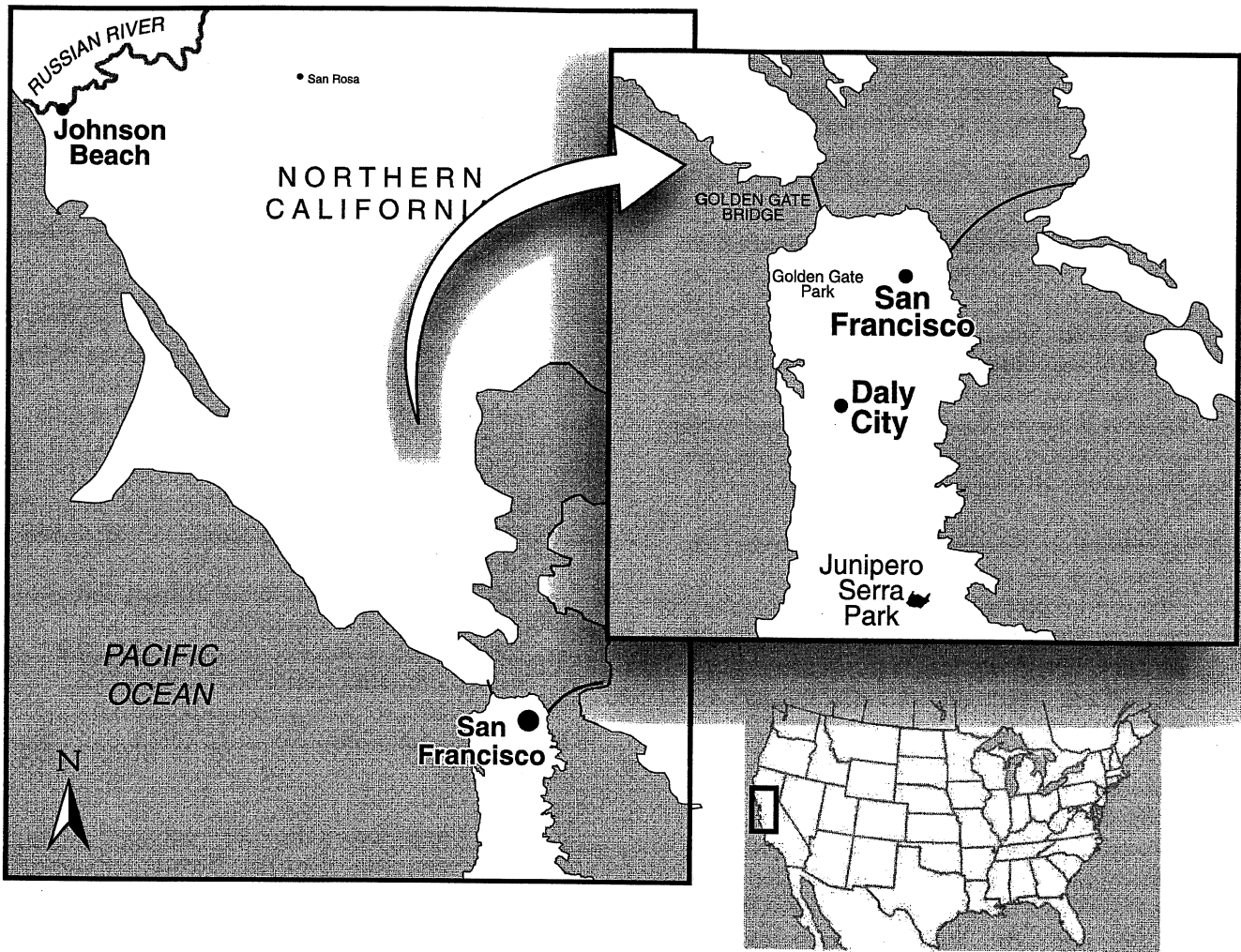
The Importance of Setting

The milieu of Dave Pelzer's *The Lost Boy* picks up his memoir at a point of torture, on the stairs of the unheated garage of the family home on Crestline Avenue in Daly City, California. He describes grueling chores that require hand-scrubbing with harsh chemical cleansers. After his mother forces him out of the house, he tries to flee to a spot where he once knew happiness with his family—Johnson's Beach, a vacation spot on the Russian River in Guerneville. At a pizza bar, he encounters Mark, a counter clerk who takes pity on his hunger and who turns him over to police. The rapid return to the original setting leaves Dave desperate for a way to escape his crazed mother before she kills him.

Dave's rescue begins in 1973 at Thomas Edison Elementary School, where suspicious teachers summon police. At the county hospital, he receives a bath from a kind nurse and a doctor's examination and prescribed treatment of more food and more time in the sun. Passed on to the group home of Aunt Mary and the supervision of social worker Pam Gold, he completes the bureaucratic maze at the county courthouse, where he can't avoid his mother and brothers in the waiting area. Living with Lillian and Rudy Catanze is Dave's first experience with a foster family. The setting ranges to playing in the yard, a James Bond movie, shopping at the mall, repairing a bike to ride on the street, and attending a foster family Fourth of July picnic at Junipero Serra Park. Two sessions of psychological counseling in a dark room imply the damage that an unsympathetic doctor does to Dave.

Scenes of Dave's disruptive behaviors occur at school, the grocery store, and Wal-Mart, where he shoplifts a model airplane to impress Johnny Jones. After running away, Dave discovers that James Bond movies at the Serramonte-6 theater, dinner at Denny's Restaurant, and bike rides to the old neighborhood are all he can afford. Relegated to San Mateo County Juvenile Hall, Dave lives like a prisoner who receives supervised visitation from his father and from Lillian Catanze. In the next phase of foster care, the author includes details of sleeping on the couch at the Turnbough home, watching cartoons and coloring in a coloring book at the Nulls's house, and encounters at Parkside Junior High, Fernando Riviera Junior High, and the school yard at Thomas Edison Elementary School. The latter adventure results in Dave's reuniting with his brother Russell and lurching into the path of an oncoming car.

The settings grow less threatening as Dave enters counseling with Dr. Robertson, but a return to juvenile hall is unavoidable because of the lack of foster homes. Life with John and Linda Walsh places Dave in the neighborhood of Michael and Sandra Marsh, whose home becomes a refuge. A grueling encounter with Stephen Pelzer at a bar and at the bus station in the Mission district of San Francisco helps Dave perceive the reality of his father's decline. The epilogue pictures Dave at age 32 at Johnson's Beach with his son Stephen, with whom he establishes a loving relationship.



Themes and Motifs

A study of the central issues and situations in *The Lost Boy* should include these aspects:

Themes

- mother hunger
- rescue
- ostracism
- bullying
- escapism
- guilt
- reclamation
- justice
- sanctuary
- independence

Motifs

- coping with family trauma
- understanding the child's need for mothering
- loving and losing
- assuming the role of rescuer
- comprehending the gang mindset

Meaning Study

Below are significant words, phrases, or sentences from the memoir. Explain each in context. Chapter and page numbers pinpoint each entry so that you can re-read the passage in which it appears.

1. In a flash I grabbed the can of lighter fluid that John had left and pulled it out from the vent. As I withdrew the can, I squeezed it so hard that a stream of fluid ignited. (Chapter 6, p. 177)
(Dave endangers himself by grasping the can, which is easily squeezed forcing liquid out the top. Because of the high volatility and speed of ignition in lighter fluid, the flame follows the liquid and vapors toward his hand. An explosion could maim or kill him.)
2. I gazed at my tiny red-ear turtle, twisting its neck up at me. (Chapter 7, p. 207)
(The red-ear turtle, a green reptile with red ovals on each side of the head, is an appropriate pet for Dave. The choice suggests his own retreat into fantasy and escapism and allows him a chance to care for a vulnerable animal.)
3. "Rebuttal?" the judge, sounding bored, asked in my direction. (Chapter 7, p. 211)
(The court hearing is based on a give and take between prosecution and defense. After hearing the charges of arson and disruptive behavior, the judge offers Dave's lawyer an opportunity to discredit or disprove the allegations or Roerva Pelzer's attorney.)
4. Pending no further verification on the charge of arson . . . the court recommends sentencing of . . . 100 days in juvenile detention, honoring time already served. (Chapter 7, p. 213)
(The judge agrees with Gordon Hutchenson's evaluation of the case and sentences Dave to a short period in the San Mateo Juvenile Hall. Because Dave has already served 66 days, he has only 34 more before gaining his freedom.)
5. Jody's been accused of statutory rape. (Chapter 8, p. 250)
(One of the dangers of voluntary parenthood is the vulnerability to spiteful or disturbed children who manipulate the system. When a female foster child accuses Jody Jones of raping her, social workers must close the home to future placements.)
6. I found myself intrigued with the basic theories of survival traits, as written by Dr. Abraham Maslow. (Chapter 9, p. 259)
(In the mid-20th Century, Dr. Abraham Harold Maslow, a teacher at Brandeis University, established a humanistic psychology based on human need for love, esteem, and self-actualization.)
7. Dave doubled as my stunt coordinator, which entailed keeping the street clear of all traffic under the age of 10 and having a set of Band-Aids at the ready whenever my gag was completed. (Chapter 9, p. 269)
(Dave's need to impress his peers with daredevil antics attests to his insecurity among other children. He hopes that, by establishing his courage as a stuntman, he will acquire true friends.)
8. Sometimes during the daily gatherings, a few of the men from the neighborhood frowned at me, as they complained about the fear of "plummeting real estate values in the local area." (Chapter 9, p. 277)
(Settled upper-middle-class families at Duinsmoore resent foster homes because of the seedy backgrounds of troubled children and the potential for juvenile vandalism and crime. These fears are based on unfounded judgments that all foster children cause trouble.)
9. Two weekends later, I rode on a Greyhound bus to the Mission district of San Francisco. (Chapter 10, p. 288)
(Dating to 1776, the settlement of the Mission district connects to scenes of Catholic missionary mistreatment of Costanoan Indians as laborers and forced converts to Catholicism. The site is significant to Dave's intent to locate his father.)

10. Months later, after obtaining my high school G.E.D. and completing a series of tests and background checks, I proudly enlisted into the United States Air Force. (Chapter 10, p. 296)
(*General Educational Development is a test that offers dropouts a chance at an equivalent high school diploma. Initiated in 1942 at the beginning of World War II, the system allowed veterans to complete interrupted high school training and to enter a college or technical school.*)

Cross-Curricular Sources

For more information about the court system, family dysfunction, the G.E.D., military careers, child abuse, and other subjects and issues deriving from the memoir, consult these sources:

Articles

- "Aged-Out Foster Kids Facing Bleak Futures,"
Greensboro (N. C.) Daily News (5 July 2005):
A6.
Snodgrass, Mary Ellen. "Motherhood or Bust," *On the Issues* 16 (fall 1990): 7-9, 34.

Audiocassette

Ordinary People, Recorded Books

Books

The Bluest Eye, Toni Morrison
Dacey's Song, Cynthia Voigt
Ellen Foster, Kaye Gibbons
No Place to Be, Judith Berck
Touching Spirit Bear, Ben Mikaelson

Fable

"The Little Match Girl," Hans Christian Andersen

Filmstrip

Self-Fulfillment, Guidance Associates

Internet

An Evolving Juvenile Court
[http://www.ncjrs.org/html/ojjdp/
jjjournal1299/](http://www.ncjrs.org/html/ojjdp/jjjournal1299/)
G. E. D. Online
<http://www.gedonline.org/>
Military CareerGuide
<http://www.todaysmilitary.com/>

Reference Books

Maybe Days
On Their Own
Orphans of the Living
Practical Tools for Foster Parents
Rebuilding Children's Lives

Short Stories

"A Mother in Manville," Marjorie Kinnan Rawlings
"Paul's Case," Willa Cather
"Sucker," Carson McCullers

Slides

Characters in Crisis, Center for Humanities
*An Inquiry into the Nature of Man: His Inhumanity
and His Humanity*, Center for the Humanities
No Man Is an Island, Center for the Humanities

Video

Conrack
Ellen Foster
The Heart Is a Lonely Hunter
The Member of the Wedding
Oliver Twist
Queen
To Kill a Mockingbird

Media Versions of Pelzer's Works

Audio Cassette (unabridged)

The Lost Boy, Audiobook, 2000

Memoir and Sequel

A Child Called "It" and *The Lost Boy*, Health
Communications, 1995

Spanish

El Niño Perdido, HCI, 2004

Trilogy

My Story, Orion, 2002

General Objectives

1. To understand the impact of a mother's rejection
2. To account for removal of children from their parents
3. To interpret the causes of hyperactivity and delinquency
4. To contrast family settings
5. To discuss the themes of rescue and reformation
6. To explain the harm of family secrets
7. To analyze mother-son relationships
8. To describe attitudes toward foster homes
9. To describe the effects of acceptance by friends
10. To analyze the roles of foster mother, social worker, juvenile court judge, child psychiatrist, and probation officer

Specific Objectives

1. To explain why Dave reveals the Pelzers' family secret
2. To analyze cartoons, dreams, *Superman*, James Bond, drawing pictures, and biking as escapism
3. To summarize Pam Gold's importance to Dave's rescue
4. To account for the draw of the old neighborhood on Dave
5. To justify Dave's attempt to rescue Russell and their father
6. To predict how Dave will survive basic training in the Air Force
7. To summarize the legalities of Dave's misbehaviors
8. To discuss long-term implications of child torture
9. To describe the roles of Gordon Hutchenson and Lilian Catanze
10. To list events caused by madness, alcoholism, and spite

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 with quotations from the memoir.

Motivation

1. What causes Roerva Pelzer to mistreat Dave? *(In 1965, when Dave Pelzer is four years old, the combination of insanity and alcoholism causes Roerva to select him as whipping boy for her bizarre cruelties. She pressures him to complete exacting chores and punishes him relentlessly by sending him to a cold garage, forcing him to breathe bleach and ammonia, and denying him food. After Dave escapes from her in 1973, her behaviors become more cunning. She attempts to justify her former charges that Dave is disruptive and dishonest by having him committed to a mental institution. For her own twisted enjoyment, she continues to stalk him after he reunites with Russell at the school yard, when Dave barely escapes being killed by an oncoming car.)*

Atmosphere

2. Describe the life of a foster child. *(Dave learns from other unwanted children that living in a foster home requires some inside knowledge. He quickly learns that residents scour the room of a departing child for abandoned belongings. He weighs the words, gestures, and encounters with foster parents for any sign of negative attitude toward him or unwarranted favoritism or discipline. Constant worry about his past and future cause him to hoard food, suffer bad dreams, toss and turn in his bed, conceal his emotions, escape into cartoons and drawing, and weep. The pressures of wondering how long he will stay in a placement and what will happen if he leaves causes him to shut down his emotions and withhold love for his foster parents.)*

Character Development

3. Why does Dave frequently revert to longing for his family?
(The loss of the mother Dave knew in his first four years haunts him with memories of a hug on the last day of kindergarten. He wishes he could live at Johnson's Beach, where he enjoyed a real family vacation. After periods of stability and happiness, he wants to visit the old neighborhood, spy on the Pelzer house, and telephone his parents. He reunites with his father at a bar in the Mission district of San Francisco to help Stephen recover from aimlessness and alcoholism. Mother hunger for Roerva retains its hold on him after he enlists in the Air Force. His final phone call to her fills him with ambivalence that her pretensions of love are part of her crazed mental state.)

Social Milieu

4. Why do foster children experience prejudice?
(Contributing to character suffering are judgments from outsiders of the foster care system and the people being fostered. At Duinsmoore, a gated community, Dave approaches the house of a girl he wants to meet and encounters a snarling mother. She complains about crime and youthful misbehaviors and blames them on Dave's foster family, the Walshes. Similar reactions from the principal's secretary and from classmates indicate that "F. Children" are substandard human beings capable only of delinquency, trespassing, and unacceptable behavior.)

Theme

5. How does ambivalence affect the plot?
(Dave's vacillations between emotion and stolid behavior indicate unsettled issues in his subconscious. He rejoices that he is no longer his mother's victim, yet he longs to hear her voice on the phone and to know that she loves him. At school, he is undersized and unwelcome among strangers. He vows to keep a low profile, yet gradually involves himself in flagrant misbehavior. The false friends that he makes press him to steal more candy and toys and to attempt more daring stunts on his bike. At San Mateo Juvenile Hall, he astounds the supervisor, Carl Miguel, by producing exemplary deportment. The rise in self-esteem precedes more assaults to Dave's ego as he journeys through other foster homes until he reaches manhood at age eighteen.)

Interpretation

6. In what way is Dave lost?
(The normal progression of childhood experience is lacking in Dave. Because he grew up with an inhumane mother and spineless father, he is unable to develop trust, even of his four brothers. He blames himself for causing trouble. Complicating a perverse family alliance are memories of his first four years, when his parents lived normally. After fleeing into the care of teachers at Thomas Edison Elementary School, police, Pam Gold, a gentle nurse and doctor, and Aunt Mary, he begins building his hopes of adjusting to normality.

Inner demons endanger Dave's recovery. Emerging hyperactivity and rude remarks threaten his foster home placements, creating self-doubt and alienation from the people who genuinely love him, like Big Larry and Lilian and Rudy Catanze. The blame-the-victim syndrome isolates him as an "F Child," a second-rate citizen. Until he channels his intelligence and energies into part-time jobs, his bike, car sales, and enlistment in the military, he has reason to feel lost from the human family.)

Conflict

7. How do lying and deception jeopardize Dave's standing among adults?
(Because Dave has a history of lying, stealing and hoarding food, fighting, and shoplifting, adults lose their patience with him. Pam Gold and Gordon Hutchenson warn Dave that he must control his behavior if he wants to succeed in foster care and avoid his mother's plot to have him institutionalized. The culmination of years of failures and new starts occurs after the fire at Mr. Smith's modular classroom. Because arson at a public building breaches community standards and endangers children, Dave finds himself condemned for something he didn't do. People like the Catanzes are willing to believe that a boy who lies and disrupts is capable of a serious crime. The incident becomes the climactic point in his reclamation.)

Style

8. How does first-person narrative enhance the book?

(From the beginning, Dave speaks honestly of his childhood and the long road to recovery from child abuse. At times, his ingenuous nature bursts out, for example, when he declares to the judge, "You, sir! I want to live with you! I'm Sorry! I'm so sorry! I didn't mean to tell!" The naiveté of his confession reveals serious emotional pressures much too volatile and complex for a 12-year-old to suppress. Other statements bear heavy implications, especially the falling action, in which Dave and Alice and Harold Turnbough commune as a family. With simplicity, Dave exults, "I pocketed the key to my home." The symbolic nature of "key" and "home" suggests that the key in the pocket represents security and love in the heart.)

Author Purpose

9. Why does the novel appeal to readers?
(One of the fundamentals of good writing is to create empathetic characters. From the age of four, Dave suffers Roerva's savage treatment and food deprivation at a time when he should be growing and developing emotions. His difficulty in letting go of past hurt exemplifies a truth of human nature—that early childhood experiences prepare the way for a satisfying adulthood.)

Readers root for Dave throughout his faulty choices and haphazard responses. They hope that Gordon Hutchenson can find a suitable environment in which the boy can thrive. As Dave begins earning his own money and cultivating friendships with the Walshes and Dan Brazell, the atmosphere lightens. His mastery of the work ethic and normal camaraderie preface more challenges, but bode well for his future.)

Structure

10. What do chapter headings reveal about the structure of the memoir?
(The balance of negative with positive establishes a rhythm that parallels Dave's experience. From running away, he acquires the love of Pam Gold, his "angel." She grooms him for "the trial," an ominous introit to the next phase of his life,

which he calls "New Beginnings." The next two chapters overbalance the one-to-one ratio of good to bad with emotional drifting and defiance, in part because social workers and probation officers like Pam Gold and Gordon Hutchenson must move on to help other children. The reason for Dave's weak hold on happiness is a lack of "mother's love," the crux of his inability to forgive and accept himself. After a period of estrangement, he rises above a miserable past with a steady positive—"Coming Around" and breaking away. The upward thrust of his fortunes is exemplified in his choice of the Air Force as a career goal.)

How Language Works

Dave's commentary provides the reader with a window on dysfunctional logic developed over years of parental rejection, neglect, and inhumane treatment.

1. In the first chapter, the shattered foundations of personality emerge in Dave's ambivalence toward redress of his home situation: "Besides, I tell myself, I do lie and steal food. Maybe I do deserve to be punished." He concludes the section with recognition of his status as a family refugee: "I have no home."
2. Rescue by Pam Gold must contend with Dave's internal demons, which continue to punish him for divulging adult secrets: "She would then bend down and assure me that I did not deserve to be treated the way I was and that what my mother did to me was not my fault. I had heard Ms. Gold's words before, but after years of brainwashing I wasn't so sure."
3. A face-off against Roerva Pelzer at the trial shrivels Dave's resolve, causing him to cower from certain punishment: "I lost track of time as the judge began to ramble. I felt myself shrinking inside. I knew in a matter of minutes the proceedings would be over and I would be back with Mother."
4. Glimmers of humanity predict that Dave is capable of change. After he meets Carlos at Fernando Riviera Junior High, Dave perceives intuitive love for a friend: "Because Carlos

could not speak English very well, we did not feel a need to talk to each other that much. In an odd sense Carlos and I had a way of knowing what the other was thinking, just by our expressions."

5. In 1993, Dave is able to weep for the tragic Pelzer family, himself included. With his own son, named for Dave's father, Dave discovers the boy's sensitivity to inner turmoil. Dave marvels, "Today, as I stand in my utopia, I have what any person could wish for—a life and the love of my son. Stephen and I are a family."

Across the Curriculum

Science and Health

1. Compose a lecture on the dangers of leaving a car accident without seeking a medical examination or treatment for injuries. List first aid, treatment, and complications for trauma upon impact with a moving vehicle. Contrast Dave's accident with his daring bike stunts.
2. Discuss immediate needs of a victim of child abuse, particularly gentle handling, rest, nourishment, exercise in the sun, and counseling. Explain why Pam Gold reassures Dave that his mother can't reclaim him. Account for his nightmares and his need to win his mother's love.
3. Write an encyclopedia entry on cerebral palsy. Using Chris's experiences as a model, develop government plans to ease handicapped foster children out of full-time care into independent living.
4. List and describe avoidable health hazards in the characters' lives. Include malnutrition, harsh discipline and physical abuse, cold, lack of sleep, alcohol dependence, smoking, overwork, reckless driving and biking, infidelity, out-of-control quarreling, lying, deceiving, and emotional upheaval.

Drama

1. Draw stage settings for a dramatization of Dave striking Rudy Catanze on the arm, tinkering with a minibike, clasping a boxed pizza

at the police station, being hit by a car, fighting with Larry Junior, leaving the Turnboughs for a juvenile hall, slamming the door at the psychiatrist's office, joining the U.S. Air Force, seeing his brothers peering from their home windows, racing minibikes, visiting Johnson's Beach with Stephen, asking to live with the judge, encountering Uncle Lee, watching a can of lighter fluid ignite, hiding from Roerva's station wagon, punching a pencil into Mr. Smith's tire, and walking with Stephen Pelzer to the bus station. Supply sketches of costumes and props, such as a BB gun, minibike, pillowcase filled with belongings, brown paper bag, station wagon, money stash, pizza, adventure books, judge's gavel, lighter fluid, air vent, notepad, pencil, police uniforms, tires, telephone, scrap of paper, and classroom module.

2. Create a storyboard account of the lure of gang membership to Dave, treachery by John, and the charge of arson. Indicate why the other gang members victimize Dave and why John turns Dave out of the house. Include the consequences of friendship with gang members.

Education

1. Role-play the job of a foster parent or probation officer giving advice to Dave about settling in with a new family, appearing in court, meeting his mother on neutral ground, entering San Mateo Juvenile Hall, or receiving parental visits at the juvenile hall. Balance stern warnings with praise, understanding, and encouragement.
2. Propose curriculum for a class of potential foster parents. List lessons in daily life that help smooth the way for children encountering a new setting, particularly courtesy, hygiene, table manners, responsibility for chores, earning money, sharing, telling the truth, and maintaining a neat bed and a clean room and bathroom.
3. Compose a newspaper feature on the need for more and better foster homes. Educate the public on the challenges of taking unwanted or troubled children and the rewards of helping youngsters adapt to rough times.

The Lost Boy

Dave Pelzer

Speech

1. Organize a discussion of social exclusion. Answer these basic questions: What makes people belittle or demonize identifiable groups, especially foster children and juvenile delinquents? How does Dave abuse his talents to win friends? Why does he consider becoming a movie stuntman?
2. Compose a tape introducing newcomers to San Mateo Juvenile Hall. Explain the difference between living on A-Wing and C-Wing. Propose rules to prevent fights and arguments.

Cinema

1. View films about troubled children, such as *Ordinary People*, *Dacey's Song*, *Ellen Foster*, *Oliver Twist*, *Souder*, *Daughters of the Dust*, *I Am the Cheese*, *The Education of Little Tree*, *Queen*, and *The Member of the Wedding*. Compare the movies' settings, themes, character interaction, and dialogue to those of *The Lost Boy*. Comment on the interplay of parents, foster parents, schoolmates, authorities, social workers, probation officers, neighbors, psychiatrists, and educators with Dave. Determine which relationships make the greatest impact on him.

Geography and Culture

1. Create a mural or web site revealing a map of California and picturing the various neighborhoods in which Dave resides. Use color-coding to indicate the Mission district, where he encounters Stephen Pelzer at a bar. Locate the bus station, San Mateo courthouse, Johnson's Beach, Russian River, Guerneville, the Golden Gate Bridge, Junipero Serra Park, Daly City, and Beale Air Force Base in Yuba County, California.

Art

1. Make an illustrated notebook of good days in Dave's life. Include his freedom on a bike, leaving the courthouse with Pam Gold, returning to Alice Turnbough, completing a G.E.D., reading adventure books chosen by Mrs. Woodworth, reading about Superman at the Marsh residence, joining the military, receiving kindness from Mr. Ziegler, buying new clothes at Sears, discovering his red-ear

turtle in the chocolate box, picnicking with other foster families, holding his son's hand, and racing minibikes.

2. Design a brochure featuring a Fourth of July picnic at Junipero Serra Park for current and previous foster children. Indicate how Dave will reestablish friendships with Aunt Mary, the Catanzes, the Nulls, the Turnboughs, and the Joneses.

Law

1. Brainstorm ways of preparing children to testify in court against neglectful or abusive parents. Suggest ways of easing the hardships of exposing family secrets, for example, conferring with the judge in chambers, surrounding the child with friends and well-wishers, or testifying via videotape rather than on the stand.
2. Read aloud state laws governing the rights of wards of the court, particularly females, handicapped children, and juvenile delinquents like Dave. Differentiate among the jobs of psychiatrist, probation officer, foster parent, juvenile court judge, group home parent, police officer, physicians and nurses, and social worker.
3. Compile a glossary of useful professional terms from the juvenile court. Include Child Protective Service, verification, prior convictions, statutory rape, premeditation, corroboration, dysfunctional, affidavit, manipulative, rebuttal, argumentative, disruptive, circumstantial evidence, incorrigible, validate, latitude, arsonist, foster parent, ward of the court, signed consent, and legal guardian.

Psychology

1. Explain why Ronald and Dave Pelzer choose the U.S. Air Force and what they gain from structured, sternly disciplined military life. Comment on their youth, when they took pride in their father's uniform and his service to the San Francisco Fire Department.
2. Discuss with a small group Dave's behaviors after serious emotional setbacks, such as weeping and rocking in the dark, reading adventure books, fantasizing about Superman, arguing, using foul language,

writing a note of apology, hoarding food, feeling like a cyborg, blocking out emotions, hyperventilating, attempting to contact parents, hyperactivity, breaking foster care rules, running away, and joining a gang. Comment on his choice of a red-ear turtle as a pet.

3. Report orally on the physical and psychological effects of living with a crazed parent and an enabler. Determine why Stephen Pelzer allows Roerva to victimize Dave and Russell and why he is unable to defeat alcoholism and reclaim his life.
4. Compose an extended definition of social and emotional isolation. Explain why the term describes Dave and other foster children as well as Jody Jones, Chris, Joanne Nulls, Roerva and Stephen Pelzer, and their son Russell.
5. Using incidents from the book, comment on the importance of acceptance to Dave. Contrast the positive experiences with Carlos, Uncle Lee, Alice Turnbough, Aunt Mary, the Marshes, Dan Brazell, Mr. Ziegler, judge, Dr. Robertson, Dave's son Stephen, Carl Miguel, and Mrs. Woodworth with unsettling encounters with Russell in the school yard, with a neighbor who fears foster homes destroy property values, or with Larry Junior at Lilian and Rudy Catanzes' home.
6. Characterize the influence of early maternal memories of Roerva. Why does Dave long for childhood love like the hug he gets on the last day of kindergarten? What images in his dreams suggest that he knows the old mother-son relationship will never return?

Mathematics and Computers

1. Using desktop publishing, make a web site or bulletin board that identifies these terms: Abraham Maslow, throttle, sprocket, plumbing real estate values, Mission district of San Francisco, incentives, recession, G.E.D., utopia, aqueduct, rambunctious, Child Protective Service, verification, prior convictions, straitjacket, chameleon-like, time warp, statutory rape, radius, premeditation, corroboration, dysfunctional, affidavit, manipulative, rebuttal, argumentative, disruptive, circum-

stantial evidence, incorrigible, validate, latitude, impact, razzing, arsonist, hyperventilation, modifying behavior, foster parent, piranhas, hyperactivity, pervert, mesmerized, wide berth, cerebral palsy, analyses, legal guardian, bizarre, paramecium, Mother Teresa, and cyborg.

2. Lead a panel discussion of the costs to the taxpayer for hospital staff, probation officers, juvenile hall supervisors, judges, attorneys, foster parents, social workers, and psychiatrists to aid neglected or abused children. Support your opinions with facts from census reports, sociological surveys, and statistics obtained from almanacs and economic and employment surveys. For source material, consult the U.S. Census Bureau at <http://www.census.gov>.

Language and Speech

1. Compose a news story on the encounters between hundreds of children and their foster parents on the Fourth of July at Junipero Serra Park. Stress the bonds that children form with strangers and the help unwanted children obtain from more normal homes and parents.
2. Prepare a dialogue dramatizing Dave's reunion with Russell in adulthood. List questions that will encourage Russell to talk about his abusive mother without feeling interrogated or belittled. Include Ron Pelzer in the reunion for a third point of view.
3. Lead a debate about the effects of Gordon Hutchenson's disappearance from Dave's life. Comment on the bureaucracy that leads children like Dave to think of Gordon, Pam Gold, Aunt Mary, Mrs. Woodworth, Mr. Ziegler, police officers, the judge, Carl Miguel, and Mrs. O'Ryan as friends and family rather than as state employees.

Literature

1. Read aloud from nonfiction, novels, plays, fables, verse, and stories that describe emotionally needy children. Include Hans Christian Andersen's "The Little Match Girl," Paul Zindel's *The Effects of Gamma Rays on Man-in-the-Moon Marigolds*, Judith Guest's

Ordinary People, Robert Cormier's *I Am the Cheese*, Forrest Carter's *The Education of Little Tree*, Carson McCullers's *The Member of the Wedding* and "Sucker," Harper Lee's *To Kill a Mockingbird*, Michael Dorris's *Yellow Raft in Blue Water*, Willa Cather's "Paul's Case," Marjorie Kinnan Rawlings's "A Mother in Manville," Kaye Gibbons's *Ellen Foster*, Pat Conroy's *The Water Is Wide*, Barbara Kingsolver's *The Bean Trees* and *Animal Dreams*, Toni Morrison's *The Bluest Eye*, Khaled Hosseini's *The Kite Runner*, Terry McMillan's *Mama*, and Toni Cade Bambara's "Blues Ain't No Mockingbird."

2. Explain in a theme the significance of the title *The Lost Boy*, particularly as it applies to a series of temporary residences with foster parents and in the San Mateo Juvenile Hall. Propose reasons why Dave feels lost and why he shelters in a movie theater or reads adventure fiction and *Superman* comic books. Define his goals to join the military.
3. Write a theme in which you explain the role of a minor character, such as Carlos, Mr. Ziegler, Mrs. O'Ryan, Connie, Russell, Johnny Jones, Big Larry, Kevin, Mark, the judge, John, Kathy, Carl Miguel, Vera Jones, and Dan Brazell. Determine a role for yourself as one of the many people who help Dave recover his dignity.
4. Explain in an impromptu chalk talk why a neighbor in a gated community humiliates Dave for calling on her daughter. Discuss the ramifications of homeowners' associations and the degree to which they filter out unwanted social elements from their streets.
5. Lead a panel discussion of Dave's urge to rescue his brother Russell. Explain why Dave is still too unstable to take on another police, social services, and court bout with Roerva. Comment on the reliability of Stephen Roerva, the boys' alcoholic father.

Alternate Assessment

1. List examples of distress in the lives of the characters, for example, Dave's crying and bad dreams, Joanne Nulls's divorce from Michael, Chris's fear of living on his own, Russell's bruises, Stephen's forced retirement from the fire department, Dave's need to apologize for divulging the family secret, Pam Gold's fears of losing Dave to his mother, the theft of Dave's money by new foster sons at the Turnbough residence, arguing foster parents, Rudy's accusations of lying and arson, charges of rape against Jody Jones, Mr. Jones's capture of the Wal-Mart shoplifter, and Larry Junior's insults to Dave.
2. Compile a list of actions and statements that demonstrate true concern for Dave's welfare. Include the intervention of Pam Gold, Mrs. Woodworth, Mr. Ziegler, Alice and Rudy Turnbough, Lilian Catanze, Chris, Uncle Lee, Vera and Jody Jones, Carlos, Gordon, Mrs. O'Ryan, Carl Miguel, the Marshes, Aunt Mary, the judge, Big Larry, and Dave's son Stephen.
3. Compose a scene in which Dave settles his parents' estate and examines their personal belongings. Note any clues to Roerva's insanity and his mistreatment.
4. Make a character list and explain the character flaws of each, including Larry Junior's cruelty toward Chris, John's need to manipulate Dave as a gang member, the school secretary's prejudice against foster children, Dave's thievery of candy from the grocery store, Ron's destruction of his brother's bike, Gordon Hutchenson's disappearance from Dave's life, Johnny's connivance to trap Dave at Wal-Mart, Mark's betrayal of Dave to the police at the pizza bar, Stephen Pelzer's spinelessness and alcoholism, Rudy Catanze's hot temper, and Roerva's plot to have Dave institutionalized among the mentally ill.

Vocabulary Test

Complete each of the following sentences with an appropriate term from the list below. You will have answers left over when you finish.

affidavit, aqueduct, arrogant, bogus, cerebral palsy, composure, defiance, dysfunctional, flailing, hyperventilation, impact, incorrigible, initiating, ogre, plummeting, primary, prior, putrid, radius, straitjacket, time warp, validate, ward of the court

1. I felt as if I had stepped into a _____ as the Chevy Nova chugged up streets that were lined with houses of the same style as Mother's on Crestline Avenue.
2. Chris was the first person I had known who had _____.
3. She was so close I caught a whiff of her _____ body odor.
4. They complained about the fear of " _____ real estate values in the local area."
5. I sailed past her in _____.
6. I plotted my _____ and alternate routes of escape.
7. He's been picked up for shoplifting, and his mother's filed _____ police reports against him.
8. Maybe she's right. Maybe you are _____.
9. We think your mother has somehow cooked up this plan—this institution thing—to somehow _____ everything she's ever done to you.
10. The minor has an established pattern of extreme _____ behavior.
11. I have a signed _____.
12. " _____ convictions?" he asked.
13. He warned me that Mother's house was off limits, with a _____ of one mile.
14. My hands slapped the far end of the hood, fingers _____, as I tried to latch onto the wiper blades.
15. I never felt forced to talk about anything, but soon found myself _____ the conversation about my past.

Comprehension Test A

Part I: Character Identification (30 points)

Match each of the following descriptions with a character. Place the letter of your response in the blank provided at left.

- | | | |
|-----------------|--------------|------------|
| A. Larry Junior | F. Jody | K. Connie |
| B. Aunt Mary | G. Gordon | L. Russell |
| C. Chris | H. Big Larry | M. Ron |
| D. Dave | I. Pam Gold | N. Carlos |
| E. Stephen | J. Roerva | O. Johnny |

- ___ 1. sits on his hands on the garage steps
- ___ 2. drives a station wagon past Carlos's house
- ___ 3. accompanies Dave to the schoolyard to meet Russell
- ___ 4. calls Dave "runt"
- ___ 5. sweet-talks unwilling parents to take more foster kids
- ___ 6. appears to have vandalized Dave's bike
- ___ 7. stands accused of rape
- ___ 8. places a phone call for Dave to the Pelzer residence
- ___ 9. is required to retire early
- ___ 10. finds Dave his first foster home
- ___ 11. displays the same signs of abuse as Dave
- ___ 12. sets up Dave's theft in Wal-Mart
- ___ 13. worries about surviving at age 18 with cerebral palsy
- ___ 14. maintains a temporary shelter for foster children
- ___ 15. loses confidence in Dave after his return from "The Hill"

Part II: True/False (20 points)

Mark the following statements either T for true or F if any part is false.

- ___ 1. Dave plans to make his way back to Johnson's Beach.
- ___ 2. When his money disappears, Dave demands that Alice give up her two recent foster placements.
- ___ 3. The Walsh family offers Dave his first permanent home.
- ___ 4. By returning to his old neighborhood, Dave risks imprisonment.
- ___ 5. The nurse alerts police to Dave's dirty clothes and bruised body.
- ___ 6. Dave chooses to quit high school at age 17.
- ___ 7. Roerva's first visit to the foster home fools Lilian with false courtesy.
- ___ 8. Stephen encourages Dave to join the military.
- ___ 9. Dave's son Stephen admires Dave's shiny silver badge.
- ___ 10. Uncle Lee explains the circumstances of Stephen's departure from the fire department.

Comprehension Test A (Page 2)

Part III: Completion (20 points)

Fill in the blanks below with a word or phrase that completes the sentence.

1. _____ reports that the _____ family has made no effort to contact Dave.
2. The house rules require a clean room, help with _____, respect for the other children's rooms, no lying or _____, and permission to venture beyond the yard.
3. The _____ meet with other foster families for a Fourth of July picnic at Junipero Serra _____, where they admire Kathy's baby.
4. _____ spends \$127 at Sears for new _____ for Dave.
5. To be a member of _____'s gang, Dave must flatten two tires of _____'s car.

Part IV: Essay Questions (30 points)

Choose two and answer in complete sentences on the essay response page.

1. Describe causes of tension in the courtroom scenes.
2. Explain what personal faults Dave confesses.
3. Discuss Dave's need to perform stunts.
4. Account for charges of arson against Dave.
5. Summarize events that precede Dave's enlistment in the U.S. Air Force.

Comprehension Test B

Part I: Matching (20 points)

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

- | | |
|------------------------|------------------|
| A. courthouse | F. schoolyard |
| B. Junipero Serra Park | G. C-Wing |
| C. Robertson's office | H. garage |
| D. Catanze house | I. Russian River |
| E. Mission district | J. pizza bar |

- _____ 1. Kathy shows off her baby.
- _____ 2. Roerva tears up a note.
- _____ 3. Dave warms his hands by sitting on them.
- _____ 4. Stephen sits at a bar.
- _____ 5. The Pelzers enjoy a vacation.
- _____ 6. Russell avoids his brother.
- _____ 7. Mark demands the return of a quarter.
- _____ 8. Chris worries about turning eighteen.
- _____ 9. Dave joins other hyperactive kids.
- _____ 10. Dave receives books on psychology.

Part III: Short Answer (30 points)

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

- _____ 1. What is in the chocolate box?
- _____ 2. Who tries to stop Larry Junior from picking on Dave?
- _____ 3. Where does Dave return money to Mark?
- _____ 4. Who informs Dave of the forced retirement?
- _____ 5. What does the first psychologist call David?
- _____ 6. Who wishes Dave a happy birthday?
- _____ 7. How many days does the court sentence Dave to in juvenile hall?
- _____ 8. What does the doctor prescribe besides food?
- _____ 9. What is the purpose of the \$127 check?
- _____ 10. Who listens for the approach of a VW?
- _____ 11. Who takes Dave to see Live and Let Die?
- _____ 12. How old is Dave when he escapes his mother?
- _____ 13. Where does the fire start?
- _____ 14. What does Dave steal from Wal-Mart?
- _____ 15. Who replaces Gordon as probation officer?

Comprehension Test B

Part III: Multiple Choice (20 points)

Select the phrase that completes each of the following sentences. Place the letter of your response in the blank provided at left.

- _____ 1. Neighbors of foster families
- A. support Mr. Jones in halting shoplifting at Wal-mart.
 - B. testify that Roerva was a good mother.
 - C. help out with placements in crowded residences.
 - D. fear for their property value.
- _____ 2. Stephen fails
- A. to keep his Saturday appointment.
 - B. in the line of duty at a fire.
 - C. to meet Roerva's expectations of husband and father.
 - D. in military service.
- _____ 3. Pam warns Dave about
- A. gang membership.
 - B. the difficulty of finding homes for disruptive children.
 - C. the consent form.
 - D. the judge's temper.
- _____ 4. Alice Turnbough
- A. agrees to visit Dave on his return to the juvenile home.
 - B. seems like a real mom to Dave.
 - C. is Dave's first black foster parent.
 - D. buys Dave a minibike at Sears.
- _____ 5. Dave makes a stable friendship with
- A. Carlos.
 - B. Rudy.
 - C. Russell.
 - D. Johnny Jones.
- _____ 6. Mrs. Woodworth offers Dave
- A. adventure reading.
 - B. a couch for the night.
 - C. a telephone number on a scrap of paper.
 - D. a chance to draw images of family separation.

- _____ 7. Foster children hurry
- A. through the court system during the summer.
 - B. their placements by smiling at prospective parents.
 - C. to cupboards to hoard food.
 - D. to plunder the remains in an empty room.
- _____ 8. The G.E.D. allows
- A. Stephen to counsel his son.
 - B. Dave to enter the Air Force.
 - C. Gordon to bend the rules about temporary placement.
 - D. Dave to stay with a black family.
- _____ 9. Dave is disturbed to learn that
- A. he will be evaluated for mental illness.
 - B. Russell ran away from home.
 - C. the Pelzer number is unlisted.
 - D. the girl he visits hates foster children.
- _____ 10. Working at part-time jobs
- A. allows Dave to buy a shoeshine kit.
 - B. introduces Dave to shoplifting.
 - C. is more important to Dave than school.
 - D. places Dave too close to his old neighborhood.

Part IV: Essay Questions (30 points)

Choose two and answer in complete sentences on the essay response page.

1. Explain why Dave can't rescue Russell or their father.
2. Contrast Roerva, Aunt Mary, Lilian, Alice, and Vera as mother figures.
3. Describe Dave's school behavior.
4. Account for Dave's bad dreams.
5. Describe activities that let Dave be a normal child.

Answer Key

Vocabulary

- | | | |
|-------------------|-------------------|----------------|
| 1. time warp | 6. primary | 11. affidavit |
| 2. cerebral palsy | 7. bogus | 12. prior |
| 3. putrid | 8. incorrigible | 13. radius |
| 4. plummeting | 9. validate | 14. flailing |
| 5. defiance | 10. dysfunctional | 15. initiating |

Comprehension Test A

Part I: Character Identification (30 points)

- | | | |
|------|-------|-------|
| 1. D | 6. M | 11. L |
| 2. J | 7. F | 12. O |
| 3. N | 8. K | 13. C |
| 4. A | 9. E | 14. B |
| 5. G | 10. I | 15. H |

Part II: True/False (20 points)

- | | |
|------|-------|
| 1. T | 6. T |
| 2. T | 7. F |
| 3. F | 8. T |
| 4. F | 9. F |
| 5. F | 10. T |

Part III: Completion (20 points)

1. Pam Gold, Pelzer
2. chores, stealing
3. Catanzes, Park
4. Lilian Catanze, clothes
5. John, Mr. Smith

Part IV: Essay

Answers will vary.

Comprehension Test B

Part I: Matching (20 points)

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

Part II: Short Answer (30 points)

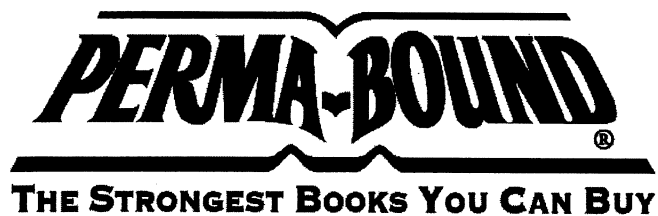
- | | | |
|--------------|--------------------|--------------------|
| 1. turtle | 6. his son | 11. Big Larry |
| 2. Chris | 7. 100 | 12. 12 |
| 3. pizza bar | 8. sunshine | 13. air vent |
| 4. Uncle Lee | 9. year's clothing | 14. model airplane |
| 5. Daniel | 10. Dave | 15. Mrs. O'Ryan |

Part III: Multiple Choice (20 points)

- | | |
|------|-------|
| 1. D | 6. A |
| 2. A | 7. D |
| 3. C | 8. B |
| 4. B | 9. C |
| 5. A | 10. C |

Part IV: Essay

Answers will vary.



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