



Shooter

by Walter Dean Myers

Teacher's Guide

Written By Mary Ellen Snodgrass

PERMA-BOUND
THE STRONGEST BOOKS YOU CAN BUY

**LIVING
LITERATURE
SERIES**

A Perma-Bound Production

This guide was prepared using the HarperCollins edition, © 2004. Other editions may differ.

Synopsis

Harrison County School Safety Committee: Threat Analysis Report

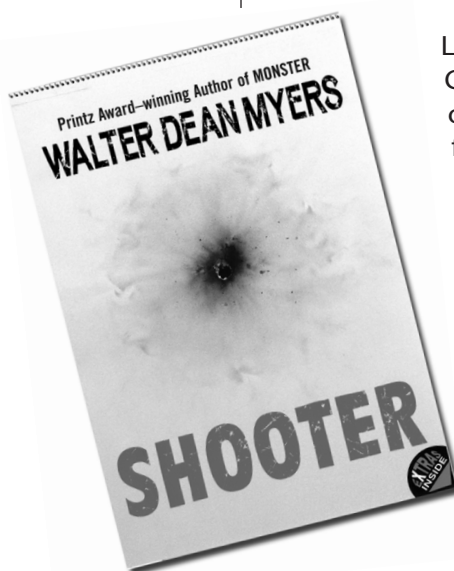
The committee, led by superintendent Jonathan Margolies, compiles interviews and data on the Madison High School shooting the previous April and an evaluation of potential danger to the school and community.

Madison High School Incident Analysis Report I

In an interview with a black 17-year-old, Cameron Porter, psychologist Richard Ewings notes that the subject is an only child living with upper-middle class parents, Elizabeth and Norman Porter, both upwardly mobile. Cameron portrays himself as normal and not obsessed by teen music. He describes his father's intense competition on the basketball court and rude comments about Cameron playing like a girl. Norman gets Cameron a spot that Boyd had on the team and costs his son friends. Cameron is aware of a clique of athletes and accepts friendship from 16-year-old Leonard Gray, another loner. Len invites Cameron to Mr. Gray's shooting club, the Patriots, where a picture of Martin Luther King, Jr., is one of the pop-up targets.

After a Catholic church break-in and vandalism around Christmas, Len, expresses hostility toward a creche with Caucasian Bible characters by scrawling on the church walls in Magic Marker, "GOD DOES NOT LIVE HERE!" Cameron and Len receive anti-depressants from Dr. Brendel. Norman threatens to hit his son with his fist. Len thinks of the event as symbolic. Michelle Garcia, a reporter for the *Herald*, describes the vandalism as cultic in origin. Cameron thinks of suicide as a way to end his troubles. He recalls a lunchroom incident in

which Len accidentally spits on a girl from the privileged set and gets in a fight with her 17-year-old boyfriend, Brad Williams. Cameron accuses Coach Anders of allowing jocks to torment other students. Len returns to school to obtain a prescription for a sedative from a student. Authorities suspend him for a week for buying pharmacy drugs illegally. Brad intensifies the bullying after school by bringing eight more jocks to intimidate Len and Cameron. Len returns to his car and displays to Cameron a Ruger under his coat.



Len begins dressing in all black. Cameron describes the targeting of outsiders at school. Len organizes a five-member club called Ordo Saggiatae (order of the arrow). One of the members is 17-year-old Carla Evans, who dates Len until he organizes the shooting of turtles at Curry Woods near Easter. She denounces Cameron as Len's lackey. Len keeps an enemies list. Mr. Gray, who trained as a Ranger, brags about killing a man in under four seconds. Len weeps at seeing the boss chastise his father publicly at the dispatch shed behind the company garage. Before the

shooting on April 22, Cameron has mixed feelings about Len, who retaliates against Carla by posting her therapy records on a school email chain. Cameron's father ridicules and pummels him at basketball. Len vows to breach the wall of silence about school violence.

Madison High School Incident Analysis, Report II

An interview with FBI agent Victoria Lash begins with questions about Ordo Saggiatae, which she connects to the Patriots. She implies that Cameron is easily led into gun use. Cameron recalls that Len was angry at a Jewish teacher for stating that he was not the type to play the lead in a school play. The agent charges that Cameron softens the violent thoughts and behaviors that testify to Len's menace.

Cameron admits to having a savings account of \$2,000 and unlimited access to meals at a restaurant. He admits to seeing Len buy an Israeli Galil for around \$500 from a member of the Patriots. The agent questions Cameron's coping skills and notes that he is unremorseful about his friendship with a psychopathic murderer.

Madison High School Incident Analysis, Report III

Psychologist Franklyn Bonner, identifies 18-year-old Carla Evans as an emotionally troubled prescription drug user. She has below average achievement and waits tables at the V. I. P. Diner. After her parents separate in Saginaw, Michigan, she lives with an aunt before entering foster care. Carla likes Len for being sincere and Cameron for being himself. To deal with emotional turmoil, she takes tranquilizers, some legitimate and some not. She recalls that Len wanted to write "Stop the Violence" at the school in blood.

Carla's part in the incident is to bring red paint and unlock a back door to admit the two boys. Before she can ask about Len's ammunition, a glass window breaks and she falls downstairs. She hears shots; Cameron shoves her into a closet of the audiovisual room. When a SWAT team member opens the door, he handcuffs Cameron and Carla. Carla is unable to explain the logic of the shooting.

Madison High School Incident Analysis, Report IV

Sheriff William Beach Mosley learns from Cameron that Carla was molested by a stepbrother. On April 15, 2003, Cameron and Len leave to buy fuses to blow up a dumpster. When they see Mr. Gray's boss screaming at Mr. Gray, the boys leave without getting money for the fuses. After missing school the next day, Len calls Cameron, claims to have joined the army, and denigrates Carla as a slut. Cameron tries to steer clear of Len. After arguing with Norman, Cameron retreats to the library for most of Saturday. After talking with Carla for two hours, Cameron confirms his part in Len's plot.

On Monday, April 22, Cameron joins Len at the school Library. Len displays the Kalashnikov and aims it at Cameron. Cameron takes the AR-18 and blue paint and inscribes "Stop the Violence" in the hall. Len's arms are bleeding badly. He writes "Amos 8:3" on the media board. Cameron leaves, grabs Carla, and flees from Len's shot. Cameron turns on a fire alarm and shoots at Len. From a

classroom, Cameron hears screaming and police sirens and sees a SWAT team.

Madison High School Incident Analysis, Appendix 1: Final Report and Dissent

Jonathan Margolies, Franklyn Bonner, Richard Ewings, and William Beach Mosley issue a three-paragraph disclaimer exonerating them from negligence. The text credits Cameron with the fire alarm, which apparently saved lives. The document blames Len alone for injury and murder. In a counterclaim, FBI agent Victoria Lash blames the school faculty for failing to realize that Len posed a danger.

Madison High School Incident Analysis Appendix 2: Newspaper Reports

To report the shooting and its aftermath, newspaper articles appear in subsequent days:

- April 22** The *Harrison Courier* reports two deaths and six students wounded at a shooting at Madison High School.
- April 25** The *Westword* credits Len's perverse behavior to underground rock groups.
- April 26** The *Daily Press* identifies the shootings as cultic in origin.
- April 28** The *Courier* contrasts a simple private interment for Len and an extravagant eulogy for Brad.
- July 7** The *Companion* reports that a grand jury exonerates Carla and Cameron of being accomplices to murder. Mr. Williams vows to continue searching for a full explanation of Brad's death.

Madison High School Incident Analysis, Appendix 3: Police Report

The district attorney's office releases an account of the minute-by-minute events leading to wounds and a murder/suicide. Police determine that Len shot himself in the mouth with a Ruger. Cameron and Carla are handcuffed and taken into custody. Cameron goes to a police holding pen. At a hospital, Carla receives medical attention for trauma.

Madison High School Incident Analysis: Miranda

On October 24, 2003, Cameron waives Miranda rights before his psychological examination. Three days later, Carla signs the same waiver.

Madison High School Incident Analysis: Diary or Journal Found in the Home of Leonard Gray

On December 25, 2002, Len writes in his dairy at his mother’s request. He ridicules people in his life and chooses the role of Quasimodo for himself. He reports on hatred for Brad and the jocks who victimize himself and Cameron in the parking lot. In the days preceding the shooting, Len’s mind degenerates into puns and self-serving gabble about vengeance.

Madison High School Incident Analysis: Medical Examiner’s Report

Esther Balducci submits a physician’s report two days after Len’s death. She finds that he shot himself in the mouth. Cuts on his wrists and forearms indicate the source of blood with which he wrote “Stop the Violence” on the school wall.

Timeline of Fictional Events

first grade	Cameron Porter enters school at age five.
third grade	Cameron meets Leonard Gray.
sixth grade	Carla Evans lives with her mother in Saginaw, Michigan.
seventh grade	Carla lives in her father’s trailer.
tenth grade	Leonard berates Cameron for not making the basketball team.
twelfth grade	
around Christmas	Len buys an AR-18.
Dec. 25, 2002	Len begins writing in his diary. Cousins visit Cameron.
after Christmas	Len and Cameron vandalize a Catholic church.
January 1, 2003	Norman berates Len for involvement in juvenile crime.
January 5	Carla attends a group session.
February 9	Len carries the Ruger to school and takes a test at the army recruiting office.
February 14	Len visits the Porter house.
March 12	At the Patriots’ Club, Len and Cameron fire at the Martin Luther King image.
March 15	Len and Cameron discuss suicide.

April before Easter	Len coordinates the shooting of turtles.
April 16	Cameron withdraws from Len after Len scans Carla’s therapy records into the school e-mail loop. The two boys observe Mr. Gray’s employer berating Mr. Gray.
April 17	Len claims to have joined the army’s special forces.
April 18	He is depressed.
April 19	He makes up with Carla.
April 20	Needing to talk to Cameron, Len is not ready to commit suicide.
April 21	Len believes he can count on Cameron.
April 22 at 4:00 A. M.	Len checks with Carla to warn that Cameron is backing out.
6:30 A. M.	Len eats breakfast before setting out.
7:40 A. M.	Cameron enters the school through the basement.
7:50 A. M.	Carla arrives late because her Chevy Cavalier overheats.
7:57 A. M.	A fire alarm sounds after Len shoots from a third-floor window and kills Brad.
8:03 A. M.	Police receive a 911 call about gunfire and dispatch three officers in separate squad cars.
8:33 A. M.	A SWAT team enters the school.
around 9:00 A. M.	Cameron talks to his parents.
9:03 A. M.	Len is declared dead of a gunshot wound to the head.
11:00 A. M. later	Police clear the school. The <i>Harrison Courier</i> reports two deaths and six students wounded at a shooting at Madison High School.
April 25	The <i>Westword</i> credits Len’s perverse behavior to underground rock groups.
April 26	The <i>Daily Press</i> identifies the shootings as cultic in origin.
April 28	The <i>Courier</i> contrasts a simple private interment for Len and an extravagant eulogy for Brad.
July 7	The <i>Companion</i> reports that a grand jury exonerates Carla and Cameron of being accomplices to murder.
October 24	At 10:30 A. M., Dr. Richard Ewings begins questioning Cameron Porter.
afterward	Cameron goes to night school and works at the mall.

Author Sketch

Walter Dean Myers' personal history is complicated by faulty facts about the Green side of the family, his numerous step-siblings, and his three brothers' violent deaths. Born August 12, 1937, in Martinsburg, West Virginia, Walter Milton Myers, the grandson of a slave and great-grandson of a woman owned by the prestigious Dandrighes of Virginia, was the natural son of George Ambrose and Mary Green Myers, who died giving birth to Imogene. George Myers was hard pressed to care for eight children and passed Myers and two of his sisters into the care of family friends, Herbert Julius Dean, a shipping clerk and stevedore, and factory worker Florence Dean, who lived in Harlem. These parents provided well for Myers, taught him to read at age five, and entertained him with impromptu scary stories.



Myers recalls a strong bond with Harlem, where he attended church and school and played stoopball and Chinese handball with his pals. He recalled: "The George Bruce Branch of the public library was my most treasured place. I couldn't believe my luck in discovering what I enjoyed most—reading—was free. And I was tough enough to carry the books home through the streets without too many incidents." His speech problems dissipated after he began reading children's classics and writing his own versions. He excelled in language studies, yet hated prejudicial treatment of colored children. After discarding early ambitions to join one the professions, Myers worked for a jewelry distributor, read voraciously from sophisticated classics suggested by his teacher, and began to write short stories.

At age 17, Myers joined the army and studied radio repair. In 1957, he settled in Morristown, New Jersey, worked in a factory, and read Camus, Sartre, Nietzsche, and Gide. Boredom drove him back to Harlem, where he lived in the Cort Hotel. He entered City University of New York and completed a B. A. from Empire State College. After landing a job as a postal clerk in 1959, he married and sired daughter Karen Elaine and son Walter Dean. While playing percussion in a band and hanging out with

heavy drug users, Myers published verse and stories in *Negro Digest*, *Black World*, and *The Liberator*.

Irreconcilable differences ended Myers' marriage. He left his work as an interviewer and employment supervisor for the State of New York and from 1970-1977 worked as senior trade book editor at Bobbs-Merrill. In 1971, he altered his middle name to Dean. With second wife Constance Brendell Myers, he fathered Christopher and published a first young adult novel, first nonfiction, and short pieces in men's magazines, *McCall's*, *Sunday News Magazine*, and *Alfred Hitchcock Mystery Magazine*. His success with white audiences led to his serious doubts about his aim and purpose; to add to his insecurities, in 1977 he was fired from Bobbs-Merrill. On a spiritual quest to Hong Kong, Myers determined to return home to Jersey City, write full-time, and teach creative writing and black history. His outpouring of biography, history, and coming-of-age, fantasy, science fiction, and mystery novels and stories for *Ebony*, *Jr.*, *Essence*, *Boy's Life*, *Espionage*, *Black World*, *Scholastic*, and *Black Creation* has eased his earlier doubts that being a writer is a worthwhile profession.

Myers and the Critics

In the tradition of his father, grandfather, and generations of black griots, Myers has established a reputation for masterly, innovative storytelling. He won the Council on Interracial Books for Children writing contest and was published in *Parents Magazine*. After his confidence improved, he received the Woodward Park School award, Child Study Association of America book of the year, Edgar Allan Poe runner-up, *Parents Choice* award, New Jersey Institute of Technology Authors award, five ALA citations, five Coretta Scott King awards, a *Parenting Magazine* award, a Notable Children's Trade Book in Social Studies citation, and a Newbery honor listing. Topol Productions filmed his humorous novel *The Young Landlords*.

In 1994, Myers reached a pinnacle of writing success. He earned a Margaret A. Edwards Award for lifetime achievement and received a sixth Coretta Scott King award, ALA Notable Children's Book, and a New York Public Library Books for the Teen Age citation. In 1997, the string of honors continued with a *Boston Globe-Horn Book* citation and a seventh Coretta Scott King award. The next year, he wrote

Amistad after researching details of the first major slave court battle. By early 2000, he had added four more titles to his lengthy canon and written respected works that appear on school and library reading lists in the United States and Europe. He received the dubious honor of becoming a frequently censored author.

After thirty years of producing quality young adult literature, Myers' *Monster* won him a Michael L. Printz Award for Excellence in Young Adult Literature. For the audio version from Listening Library, he received the 2000 Audio Earphones Award. He also won a *Boston Globe-Horn Book* Award for Excellence in Children's Literature for *145th Street*. He continued to refine his views on the changing teen scene with *Shooter*, a fictional reprise of the Columbine High School shootings in Littleton, Colorado, on April 20, 1999. He explained his perspective: "For too many teenagers, especially in urban areas, learning to cope with the threat of violence is as important as learning English or math." At the heart of Myers' fictional version of teen crime is his concern for the immaturity and malleability of perpetrators. In an interview with Hazel Rochman for *Booklist*, he stressed, "It's incredible that these kids could go from being in high school now and not much later be faced with a life sentence." Against the minority of parents, teachers, and librarians who question fictional realism, teens read Myers' works for their candor and compassion.

Bibliography

- Adams, Lauren. "Review: *Shooter*," *Horn Book* 80, no. 3 (May-June 2004): 335.
 "Author: Teen Problems Start at Home," (Santa Rosa, California) *Press Democrat* (22 June 2004).
 "Bully Business," *Scholastic Choices* 20, no. 3 (November-December 2004): 5.
 Chaplin, Nancy. "Review: *Shooter*," *Kliatt* 38, no. 6 (November 2004): 50-51.
 Cox, Ruth. "Extreme Measures," *Teacher Librarian* 31, no. 4 (April 2004): 68.
 Feder-Feitel, Lisa. "Writing About What's Real," *Scholastic Scope* 52, no. 12 (9 February 2004): 14.
 Gallo, Donald R. "A Man of Many Ideas: Walter Dean Myers," *Writing* 26, no. 5 (February/March 2004): 10-11.
 Gepson, Lolly. "Review: *Shooter*," *Booklist* 101, no. 6 (15 November 2004): 608.
 Goldsmith, Francisca. "Review: *Shooter*," *School Library*

- Journal* 50, no. 5 (May 2004): 154-155.
 MacDonald, Sandy. "Review: *Shooter*," *Publishers Weekly* 252, no. 19 (9 May 2005): 73.
 Myers, Walter Dean. "The Intimidating Foe of Bullying," *Newark Star-Ledger* (23 April 2004): 21.
 _____. "Walter Dean Myers," *Read* 54, no. 13 (25 February 2005): 14-15.
 Perren, Susan. "Children's Books: *Shooter*," *Globe & Mail* (31 July 2004), D11.
 Pierleoni, Allen O. "Wrongs and the Writer," *Sacramento Bee* (29 March 2005).
 Ralston, Jenniver. "Review: *Shooter*," *School Library Journal* 51, no. 5 (May 2005): 52.
 "Review: *Shooter*," *Kirkus Reviews* 72, no. 8 (15 April 2004): 398.
 "Review: *Shooter*," *Publishers Weekly* 251, no. 12 (22 March 2004): 87.
 Richards, Chris. "African American Authors Offer a Peek at the Write Stuff," *Washington Post* (8 July 2004): C5.
 Rochman, Hazel. "Review: *Shooter*," *Booklist* 100, no. 12 (15 February 2004): 1070.
 Rohrluck, Paula. "Review: *Shooter*," *Kliatt* 38, no. 3 (May 2004): 11.
 Rust, Suzanne. "Review: *Shooter*," *Black Issues Book Review* 6, no. 3 (May/June 2004): 60.
 Snodgrass, Mary Ellen. *Walter Dean Myers, A Literary Companion*. Jefferson, N. C.: McFarland, 2005.
 Stevenson, Deborah. "Review: *Shooter*," *Bulletin of the Center for Children's Books* 57, no. 10 (June 2004): 429.
 Trice, Linda. "A Writer's Life," *Footsteps* 7, no. 2 (March/April 2005): 24-26.
 Tuccillo, Diane. "Review: *Shooter*," *Voice of Youth Advocates* 27, no. 2 (June 2004): 133.
 Ward, Elise Virginia. "Review: *Shooter*," *Black Issues Book Review* 6, no. 4 (August 2004): 60.
 "Writer Tells Kids: Future Is in Books, Not on the Streets," *Bergen (N. J.) Record* (9 March 2005).
 Zaleski, Jeff. "Review: *Shooter*," *Publishers Weekly* 251, no. 12 (22 March 2004): 87.

Other Works by Walter Dean Myers

- 145th Street: Short Stories* (2000)
Adventure in Granada (1985)
Ambush in the Amazon (1986)
Amistad: A Long Road to Freedom (1998)
Angel to Angel: A Mother's Gift of Love (1998)
At Her Majesty's Request (1999)
Autobiography of My Dead Brother (2005)
Bad Boy: A Memoir (2001)
The Beast (2003)

The Black Pearl and the Ghost; or, One Mystery after Another (1980)
Brainstorm (1977)
Brown Angels (1993)
Crystal (1987)
The Dancers (1972)
Dangerous Games (1993)
The Dragon Takes a Wife (1972)
The Dream Bearer (2003)
Duel in the Desert (1986)
Fashion by Tasha (1993)
Fly, Jimmy, Fly (1974)
Fallen Angels (1988)
Fast Sam, Cool Clyde, and Stuff (1975)
Glorious Angels: A Celebration of Children (1995)
The Golden Serpent (1980)
The Greatest: Muhammad Ali (2001)
Handbook for Boys: A Novel (2002)
Harlem (1997)
Harlem Hellfighters (2006)
Harlem Summer (2007)
The Hidden Shrine (1985)
Hoops (1981)
How Mr. Monkey Saw the Whole World (1996)
Intensive Care (1993)
It Ain't All for Nothin' (1978)
Jazz (2006)
The Journal of Biddy Owens, the Negro Leagues (2000)
Journal of Joshua Loper, A Black Cowboy (1999)
Journal of Scott Pendleton Collins, a WWII Soldier (1999)
The Legend of Tarik (1981)
Malcolm X: By Any Means Necessary (1993)
Me, Mop, and the Moondance Kid (1988)
Mojo and the Russians (1977)
Mop, Moondance, and the Nagasaki Knights (1992)
Motown and Didi: A Love Story (1984)
Mr. Monkey and the Gotcha Bird (1984)
Monster (1999)
The Nicholas Factor (1983)
Now Is Your Time (1991)
One More River to Cross (1995)
The Outside Shot (1984)
Patrol: An American Soldier in Vietnam (2002)
A Place Called Heartbreak: A Story of Vietnam (1992)
Remember Us Well (1993)
The Righteous Revenge of Artemis Bonner (1992)
Scorpions (1988)
The Shadow of Red Moon (1987)
Shooter (2004)
Slam! (1996)
Smiffy Blue: Ace Crime Detective (1996)
Social Welfare (1976)
Somewhere in the Darkness (1992)

The Story of the Three Kingdoms (1995)
Street Love (2006)
Sweet Illusions (1986)
Tales of a Dead King (1983)
The Test (1993)
Three Swords for Granada (2002)
Toussaint L'Ouverture: The Fight for Haiti's Freedom (1996)
Victory for Jamie (1977)
Where Does the Day Go? (1969)
Won't Know Till I Get There (1982)
The Young Landlords (1979)
Young Martin's Promise (1993)

Media Versions of *Shooter*

Audiocassette

Shooter [abridged], Harper Children's Audio, 2004

Audio CD

Shooter [unabridged], Harper Children's Audio, 2004

Audio Download

Shooter [unabridged], audible.com

Large Print

Shooter, Thorndike, 2004

General Objectives

1. To comprehend the impact of manipulators
2. To isolate incidents of victimization and bullying
3. To account for criminal behavior in a church
4. To analyze family members' religious and moral point of view
5. To connect the themes of isolation and self-doubt
6. To list causes of regret
7. To summarize events that lead to social isolation
8. To discuss the implications of money consciousness and status symbols
9. To enumerate incidents that reflect character development
10. To list examples of cruelty, callousness, intimidation, and vengeance

Specific Objectives

1. To summarize the roles of Elizabeth and Norman Porter, Mr. Gray, and Victoria Lash
2. To compare Carla and Cameron in terms of abetting vandalism and murder

3. To cite examples of Cameron's illogical thinking
4. To analyze details, particularly 88, turtles, fuses, and an image of Martin Luther King, Jr.
5. To account for the targeting of a respected athlete
6. To explain why Len describes rats in his brain
7. To justify the arrest of Carla and Cameron as possible accomplices to murder
8. To note how Cameron reflects on his friendship with Len
9. To evaluate elements of police work
10. To contrast examples of clear thinking and logic among interviewers
11. To project how Cameron and Carla will cope with community suspicion
12. To analyze the effects of church vandalism and a school shooting on the community

Literary Terms and Applications

For a better understanding of Walter Dean Myers' fiction, present the following terms and applications:

episode: a coherent event, digression, or incident in a narrative or serial that stands out on its own merit, in particular, the extended confrontation between Mr. Gray and his boss at the dispatch shed that dismays and enrages Len. Because Cameron witnesses his hero-father's humiliation, Cameron has some understanding of Len's overreaction at seeing a former army Ranger reduced to a cowering yes-man. The discrediting of a male hero threatens Len's self-perception and triggers his manic journal outburst against the jocks who reject him.

characterization: the creation of full-fledged human motivation, behavior, and response in fictional people. Myers insinuates ambiguity in the description of Carla and Cameron, the accomplices to Len's crime. By picturing the two teens as tools of a master manipulator, the text justifies the lack of logic that causes both followers to accept Len as a friend and to lend credence to his insane plotting. The appended journal reveals Len's joy in perverting friendship into a form of brainwashing and control of his puppet accomplices.

first person narrative: a story or a series of actions told from the vantage point of a single observer inside the action. By limiting the point of view to teens, their interrogators, and the media, the author excludes from the novel the reactions of basketball team members, the Grays, the Porters, Carla's parents, Coach Anders, and the faculty of Madison High School. As Cameron limps through re-creations of the shootings, adult interviewers disclose his inability to form sound opinions and to decide for himself how to end his alienation from school peers. Carla's brief self-revelation suggests a deeply disturbed teen who represses the effects of sexual molestation. Len's journal characterizes the twisted thinking of an intelligent, but disaffected youth who is better at word-play and gun-play than at working out personal failings.

Related Reading

Gwendolyn Brooks, "We Real Cool"
 Anthony Burgess, *A Clockwork Orange*
 Walter Van Tilburg Clark, *The Ox-Bow Incident*
 Robert Cormier, *The Chocolate War* and *I Am the Cheese*
 Lois Duncan, *Killing Mr. Griffin*
 Ralph Ellison, *Invisible Man*
 Nawal El Saadawi, *Woman at Point Zero*
 Ernest Gaines, *A Lesson before Dying*
 Susan Glaspell, *Trifles*
 David Guterson, *Snow Falling on Cedars*
 Alex Haley, *Malcolm X*
 Lorraine Hansberry, *A Raisin in the Sun*
 Ring Lardner, "Haircut"
 Harper Lee, *To Kill a Mockingbird*
 Benjamin John Mikaelson, *Touching Spirit Bear*
 Joyce Carol Oates, "Where Are You Going? Where Have You Been?"
 Irving Shulman, *West Side Story*
 Jane Wagner, *J. T.*
 Richard Wright, *Native Son*
 Paul Zindel, *The Pigman* and *The Pigman's Legacy*

The Importance of Setting

The milieu of Walter Dean Myers' *Shooter* contrasts the normal high school scene with the inner turmoil and resentments of disaffected teens. By picturing the alienation of Carla, Cameron, and Len in an English class, at the gym among basketball team members, among tormentors during lunch, while driving, and in the parking lot, the author

presents daily experiences from two points of view—of those who excel and those who exist on the outskirts of acceptance. The text focuses on the lure of the Patriots' shooting range and the barbarity of tying pet turtles in orange bags to serve as outdoor targets for Cameron and Carla. Len's obsession with powerful weapons and with his father's experience as an army Ranger accounts for Len's attempt at displacement of failure at school with success at journal-keeping, mockery, and violent sports.

The brief glimpses of home and community picture Cameron, Carla, and Len living in family settings that neither nourish character nor inspire human trust. Cameron's parents surround themselves with creature comforts, including a pool in the garage, as means of social climbing. Norman Porter initiates one-on-one basketball games with his son to intimidate and humiliate rather than to share a common interest in sports. At a pivotal moment in the action, Len and Cameron observe Mr. Gray's diminution by an angry boss at the dispatch shed behind the company garage. Carla's disagreements with her mother in Saginaw, Michigan, and at her father's trailer are so horrific that Carla refuses to discuss with the interviewer the details of her molestation. Like background flickers, these scenarios build reader understanding of faulty decisions.

At the height of a riveting novel, Myers situates the early morning shooting incident among innocent teens and faculty arriving at school. The presentation mimics the sketchy perceptions of Carla and Cameron on April 22 when Len actualizes his plan to paint "Stop the Violence" on school walls. Like a film montage, the scenes rush by out of focus and lacking in detail—the firing of a rifle down an open stairwell, the scrawl of paint on a media bulletin board, the removal of a rifle from a carry bag, and the immuring of Carla to the relative safety of an audiovisual room closet. Len's reversion from school prankster to lethal shooter builds on the events at the Patriots' Club by transferring his expertise with firearms to bullets directed at Cameron, Carla, Brad, and others. Cameron's quick reach for the fire alarm shortens the time span in which Len can create mayhem. As firefighters arrive and the SWAT team takes positions, a brief glimpse of Len at the third-story window reduces him to the title figure, a crazed shooter.

Cross-Curricular Sources

For more information about bullying, the shooting at Columbine High School, racism, teen violence, guns, drug abuse, unhealthy fantasies, criminality, and other subjects and issues deriving from the novel, consult these sources:

Articles

- Austin, April, and Teresa Mendez. "Life after Columbine," *Christian Science Monitor* (20 April 2004): 11.
- Bitman, Terry. "Schools Teaching Students Not to Tolerate Bullies," *Philadelphia Inquirer* (21 November 2003).
- "Columbine Questions: Parents, Schools and Bullies," *New York Times* (18 May 2004): A22.
- Ralston, Jennifer. "Bullies and Bullying," *School Library Journal* 51, no. 5 (May 2005): 49.
- "Teen Killers Had Violent Fantasies," *Toronto Star* (27 March 2002).

Audiobooks

- Monster*, Listening Library
- MrNICE@XXX.COM*, Recorded Books
- The Shoestring Murders*, Recorded Books

Books

- The Chocolate War*
- The Face on the Milk Carton*
- I Am the Cheese*
- Killing Mr. Griffin*
- Monster*
- The Pigman*
- The Pigman's Legacy*
- Touching Spirit Bear*

Internet

- "Counseling Services for Families,"
<http://www.nire.org/famcou63.htm>.
- "Guns and Kids,"
<http://www.metroactive.com/papers/sonoma/07.29.99/guns-9930.html>
- "Teen Firearm Violence,"
<http://www.safeyouth.org/scripts/teens/firearm.asp>

Kits & Pamphlets

- Everyday Law for Young Citizens*, Social Studies School Service
- Putting on Mock Trials*, Social Studies School Service

Poems*The Prisoner of Chillon*

"We Real Cool," Gwendolyn Brooks

Reference*The Plain Language Law Dictionary*, Social Studies School Service
Violence, Greenhaven**Videos/films***The Castle**Dead Man Walking**The Green Mile**I Am the Cheese**I Know What You Did Last Summer**Ragtime**The Shawshank Redemption**The Thin Green Line**West Side Story***Themes and Motifs**

A study of the central issues and situations in *Shooter* should include these aspects:

Themes

- immaturity
- amorality
- alienation
- questioning
- regret
- threats
- elitism
- bullying and harassment
- petty crime
- family dysfunction
- exoneration

Motifs

- coping with a psychopath
- seeking self-esteem
- studying life through journal-keeping
- comprehending the need for acceptance
- longing for acceptance

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. He does quality control for Dyna-Rod Industries (Madison High School Incident Analysis Report I, p. 11).
(Myers' depiction of Norman Porter portrays him in a masculine environment. His job implies critical skills that he appears to apply to father-son relationships at home with Cameron. The introduction of Norman's job sets a motif of the boy's competition with a father who has already achieved gender status.)
2. Len had this theory that if something is supposed to be good, it should be righteous. (Madison High School Incident Analysis Report I, p. 27)
(Cameron reveals the impossible standards of right and wrong that confuse Len's understanding of reality. Len fails to see the Catholic church as a gathering of people. He focuses on a perfection that human institutions never attain.)
3. They travel in packs. You see one jock, you see a pack of them. (Madison High School Incident Analysis Report I, p. 40)
(Cameron generalizes a major difference between players of team sports and loners. Outsiders like Cameron, Len, and Carla function poorly in school settings because they think of themselves as separate, apart from group endeavors. The view of Brad Williams and his teammates as a pack suggests the predatory nature of wolves converging on a helpless victim.)
4. Mr. Porter, please tell me as much as you can about Ordo Saggitae. (Madison High School Incident Analysis Report II, 71)
(FBI agent Victoria Lash investigates the source and purpose of a club that chooses the Latin title "Order of the Arrow," a metaphor of a single weapon aimed at a single enemy. The image implies tunnel vision in Len, who fantasizes that killing Brad Williams will retaliate for a host of failures at school.)
5. Her physical presentation is one of "rebellion." (Madison High School Incident Analysis Report III, p. 105)
(Carla Evans bears the outward signs common to belligerent teens. She rebels against authority through exhibitionism, a stark individuality of appearance created by streaking blue dye in her brown hair, piercing her ears multiple times, dressing in sloppy clothing, wearing one lace glove on her left hand, painting her eyebrows black, and smirking with her head tilted to one side.)
6. He said he heard that what was really going down in Afghanistan and Pakistan was that the special forces were on the ground and going from door to door, killing anybody who

even looked like they might be a terrorist. (Madison High School Incident Analysis Report IV, p. 126)

(Len's interest in the military is an illusion that special forces spend their time intimidating and arbitrarily murdering people. The fantasy bodes ill for his self-image as a shooter and avenger of wrongs. Len appears to use firepower as a substitute for sexual release by describing his gun as "a fair and deadly maiden" and as "a secret lover, quiet, powerful, waiting to work its magic.")

7. It is therefore reasonable to conclude that the unfortunate death of one student and the several injuries were the work of one individual and that the responsibility for that death and those injuries were his and his alone and were not aided in any way by negligence, errant school policies, deficient procedures, or lack of adequate safety conditions. (Madison High School Incident Analysis, Appendix 1: Final Report and Dissent, p. 146)

(The appalling response of adults to school violence is a self-exoneration of the school and personnel. Obviously, the four—Jonathan Margolies, Frnaklyn Bonner, Richard Ewings, and William Beach Mosley—care more about community attitude toward officials than about the plight of three confused teens faced by daily bullying and rejection).

8. The "tragedy" is not only the death of two students and the multiple injuries of other students, but that any chances of prevention were lost in the morass of shifting responsibilities and legal considerations. (Madison High School Incident Analysis, Appendix 1: Final Report and Dissent, p. 147)

(Through juxtaposition, Myers indicates that Victoria Lash is the only adult who perceives the faults of a school system that ignores bullying while shielding personnel from culpability.)

9. Two teenagers, one a cult member, were named today in the shootings at Madison High over the objections of their parents and the attorney for Porter, Frank Maffei. (Madison High School Incident Analysis Appendix 2: Newspaper Reports, p. 154)

(The reporter for Westword strays from journalistic objectivity by using a charged term like "cult" to typify a violent rampage. A sketchy implication of underground rock groups in the final sentence suggests that the reporter did little investigation to alleviate prejudice and misinformation.)

10. Pyramus is in the house! (Madison High School Incident Analysis: Diary or Journal Found in the Home of Leonard Gray, p. 218)
(Len's alternating views of Cameron as Judas and as Pyramus, a country bumpkin and fool in a play-within-the-play in William Shakespeare's Midsummer Night's Dream, indicates the unsubstantiated premises of Len's judgment. Because he labels people with extreme titles and images, he can more easily romanticize his actions as a heroic response to traitors.)

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 novel.

Motivation

1. What causes youths to feel isolated?
(Teens like Len, Carla, and Cameron begin feeling separate from the group in early childhood. In the evaluation of reviewer Francisca Goldsmith of School Library Journal: the causes of mayhem "[range] from 'typical' bullying to parental psychological abuse to wasting the intelligence of some students because they lacked the social skills to take part of their own accord in the standard menu of institutional reputation-building activities." Cameron stands out for his brilliance in learning to read at age four and for entering school at age five. Carla is different from others because of her unstable home, an unreported sexual attack by her stepbrother, her mother's failure as a parent, and her father's dissolute life. Len becomes a loner because his thinking is distorted and his aims directed at self-satisfaction for real and imagined slights by his peers. As described by Nancy Chaplin in a critique for Kliatt, Len bears the emotional scars of the "bullied outsider with a taste for nihilistic, alternative music.")

The three teens form a dysfunctional friendship because they exist on the perimeter of more normal high school activities. A passive sufferer, Cameron needs Len to compensate for the damage Norman Porter does in getting Boyd removed from the basketball team and Cameron chosen for Boyd's place. Len, a manic, self-aggrandizing psychopath, uses Cameron and Carla as sounding boards for his rationalizations and as supports for his manipulative behavior. As the trio strays farther from the mainstream through "dark" behaviors and dress, they experience more alienation and more reason to strike back.)

Setting

2. Describe the location of the shooting.
(The shooting at Madison High School takes place on April 22, 2003, before the doors open officially for the first class. Cameron arrives to find Len already laden with guns and ammunition in a duffel bag. The two begin scribbling "Stop the Violence" on the media board in the library. As Len begins firing his weapon, Cameron runs toward Carla and shoves her into an audiovisual room closet. Len herds Cameron toward an open stairwell, forcing Cameron to flee down a long corridor. SWAT team members see Len's weapon protruding from a third-floor window. By the time the incident concludes, Carla and Cameron are apprehended; Len lies dead on the floor with a bullet through his skull.)

Character Development

3. How does Len justify his spite?
(According to Lauren Adams, a critic for Horn Book, Leonard Gray is "a disturbed mind about to go over the edge." His mental aberrations nurture dangerous mental pictures of himself as a murderous avenger. By romanticizing himself as an outlaw, Len recedes behind the outsider's mask, a form of distancing that separates him from rules and morals. He explains to Cameron the need to retaliate against Jewish teachers and against self-important jocks like Brad Williams. Len's diary describes extremes of hostility toward his parents, particularly Mr. Gray, whom the text identifies with the depersonalized all-caps pronouns HE and HIM. As the pressure increases on Len's diseased mind, he feels rats skittering in his brain. He vilifies Carla and Cameron as necessary tools and questions Cameron's loyalty by labeling him as a Judas. His fantasies extend to battlefields in Afghanistan and Pakistan, where he sees himself as a valiant warrior against America's enemies.)

Historical Milieu

4. How does the novel draw on the shootings at Columbine High School?
(The distorted logic of Cameron and Len reflect the plotting of Dylan Klebold and Eric Harris. In early 1998, the real shooters advanced from petty vandalism, similar to the fictional desecration of the Catholic church, to verbal threats, another characteristic of the novel. In June 1998, Harris and Klebold armed themselves with pipe bombs that their families failed to notice, much as the Porters and Mr. Gray ignore signs of hostility and gun obsession in Cameron and Len. The next month, Harris involved himself in a game of Doom, just as Len begins to wear black and cultivate a dark persona. The real shooters joined other ostracized youth in the Trenchcoat Mafia, a parallel to the Ordo Sagittae, a confederacy of misfits that includes Paul and Walter Klubenspies.

In both historical and fictional cases, the final blowup occurs in the senior year, the jumping-off point between fantasy and the realities of adult life. Harris took a psychotropic drug and bought a weapon, which he practiced shooting, just as Len tries out his automatic rifle with a sling. On April 20, 1999, Harris and Klebold murdered a teacher and 12 students and wounded 23 others. Len and Cameron choose the same time frame to carry out Len's plans to vandalize the school. Unlike the historical model, Cameron is not actively involved in a murder plot, which Len carries out on his own.)

Theme

5. Why is vengeance a controlling theme?
(Because of the repressive nature of cliques at Madison High School, alienated students like Carla, Cameron, and Len struggle to control the urge to strike back at their tormentors, a mounting animosity that flourishes best in the dark outside the purview of parents, teachers, and authorities. Len displays unusual restraint in facing Brad Williams and his jock friend while concealing a Ruger in a coat. The diary reveals how Len's fantasies of retaliation grow from additional psychological battery from Mr. Gray and from foes at school. The urge to diminish strutters like Brad Williams and his jock pals reaches its zenith in the plan to vandalize the school within weeks of the boys' graduation from Madison High School. Len fools his accomplices by altering the plot from painting walls to assault, murder, and suicide.)

Interpretation

6. Why is the novel believable?
(Myers has a reputation for verisimilitude. His perception of teen motivation and frailties emerges in believable dialogue and the thought processes by which he builds immature fantasies and arbitrary standards of heroism into dangerous intent. The patterning of the shooting at Madison High School also draws realism from its similarity to the Columbine High School shooting on April 22, 1999. Readers who study the fictional personalities of Carla, Cameron, and Len, can learn from Myers' surmise the types of rationalism and false bravado that a stunted personality might use to further the urge for vengeance. Contributing to the illusion of reality are variations in typeface, handwriting, and interrogation style. The inclusion of statements of Miranda rights, a medical examiner's report, and news clippings broadens the scope of details, misinformation, and guesswork. Myers concludes his novel with an irony: the investigation of a teen tragedy that builds on a media stereotype of the disaffected sociopath.)

Conflict

7. How does conflict grow into monstrosity?
(Cameron's inability to make the basketball team broadens conflict in multiple directions. He acquires more self-loathing for being a failure at sports. He alienates his father, who equates

team sports with manliness and achievement. Norman Porter's behind-the-scenes removal of Boyd from the team earns Cameron an ill-gotten place, but no respect from teammates. Conflict worsens after Brad Williams and his boorish "pack" of jock pals target Cameron and his friend Len for bullying, ridicule, and intimidation. Contributing to a debilitating emotional scenario is the commentary of a school counselor that students must work these things out for themselves. Len's inability to propose a workable solution results in explosive epithets in his diary, the purchase of firearms and drugs, and the eventual confrontation by which a spoiler mows down his attacker with sniper fire and ghoulishly continues pumping bullets into the corpse.)

Atmosphere

8. How does the text indicate internal battles? (The interviews reveal constant struggle in the lives of Carla, Cameron, and Len. Carla refuses to address with her interrogator the issue of sexual molestation by a stepbrother. She clings to the illusion that the *Ordo Sagittae* elevates her social stature: "I was part of something—a little group—and maybe that's better than liking somebody." Cameron, with his attitude of "whatever," poses as the innocent, well-meaning friend of Len Gray. Cameron shields himself while revealing paranoia: "And if you get a label—that you're easy—then they're going to find you." By stripping himself of culpability, he implies that the bulk of malice was Len's. Because Len dies and has no interrogation, authorities must rely on his tortuous diary entries to evaluate his internal misery. The excesses of his ego-puffery and the labeling and reviling of the Grays, Brad, Len, and Cameron explain why powerful weapons are Len's only defense against a world in which he cannot thrive.)

Author Purpose

9. Why does the novel appeal to readers? (The immediacy of Myers' metafictional layering appears to place readers at the aftermath of a shooting at Madison High School. The plot unfolds piecemeal in a threat analysis report from adult authorities and journalists who wrestle with the sources of student rage. Although the events are fictional, the emergence of a sheriff, FBI agent, and psychologist as interrogators suggests a real investigation of teen violence. Myers mentions significant social concerns that tease the reader's mind, including the availability of illicit prescription drugs at school, free Internet information about explosives, and the ability of teen boys to buy powerful automatic weapons at gun shows. The willingness of authorities to downplay the threat of church vandalism indicates a lapse in society's civic order to respond to early symptoms of mental illness and juvenile crime. Readers also empathize with Cameron and Len for their sufferings from elitists and jocks whose cliques exclude those students who don't measure up to school norms. The totality of horror and

sympathy allows readers to view both the positive and negative aspects of incipient juvenile delinquency. In the end, the novel cuts Cameron loose from his idol and establishes an individuality that is tentatively salvageable.)

Structure

10. Why does the medical examiner's report conclude the novel? (After the inflated self-image in Len's diary, the results of his pathetically short life as a self-proclaimed outlaw come down to a teenage suicide victim shot in the head. He dies on the floor after a bullet pierces his palate and exits from the left quadrant of his cranium. Contributing to the pathos of Len's youth and immaturity are his persecution complex and the idealism of self-inflicted cuts on his wrists and forearms to produce blood. With his own life force as ink, Len makes a reasonable plea to his school—"Stop the Violence," a generalized complaint hurled at institutions that discount the outsider's feelings and worth. The paradox of the final page is Len's inability to halt violence without outdistancing it with his own carnage.)

How Language Works

Manipulation is a major motif of Myers' novel. Characters demonstrate their attempts to shape the thoughts and conclusions of other people through the clever use of words:

1. To Richard Ewings' question about Cameron's relationship with Len, Cameron edges away from a psychologist's word trap: "I wondered when you were going to get to that. It was in one of the papers that we were 'really close.' No, I never thought of kissing him or any other guy. I'm not gay, man."
2. To Victoria Lash's insistence that Cameron not pause before answering questions, he evades the issue of shaping his replies: "You don't want me to think about what I'm going to say?"
3. William Beach Mosley implies answers to his own questions by ending with a tag: "When you play sports, you always want to knock off the big guns, don't you?"
4. In his written ravings, Len manipulates himself by seizing the role of the guidance counselor: "What is the matter with you, Mr. Gray? If you had more spine, you wouldn't whine. Are you gay Gray?"

5. Len exploits Cameron's home difficulties to direct Cameron's choices and behaviors: "His stupid father pushed him once too many times and at the right time and at the time to emit and admit the fact that he is defeated."

Across the Curriculum

Composition

1. Improve a booklet or web site explaining how to cope with apprehension by police as suspects and with questioning by police detectives, an FBI agent, and psychologists. Cite the rights of citizens as stated in the Miranda law.
2. Express in an investigative theme the value of keeping a diary or journal, even of dismaying life episodes like mental disintegration and criminal retaliation against a list of enemies. Cite examples of arrest, family unease, personal fears, anxiety about the future, and unsatisfactory peer relationships.
3. Present opposing views of the shooting from the point of view of a SWAT team member, basketball coach, medical examiner, news reporter, school board member, wounded student, firefighter, or bus driver.
4. Summarize ways that Elizabeth and Norman Porter can spare Cameron involvement in assault and murder, for example, by involving themselves in his friendships and school experiences and by sharing their attention and family goals.

Religion and Ethics

1. Outline a graveside service for Brad Williams or Leonard Gray. Indicate how neighbors can ease the suffering of the families and comfort students at Madison High School, particularly those recovering from gunshot wounds. What obligation do parents, students, coaches, and teachers have to help police investigate the crimes?
2. Divide the class into small groups to study Amos 8:3 and Matthew 19:14, the contrasting biblical passages that Len alludes to. Explain why Len refers to Gethsemane, why a Catholic

crèche angers him, and why he considers Cameron a Judas figure.

Drama

1. Role-play the part of a doctor, detective, interviewer, undertaker, coach, family member, grief counselor, sheriff's deputy, gun dealer, pharmacist, army recruiting officer, witness, member of the Catholic church, or neighbor of the Grays. Explain how the story would change if Len admitted in his diary that he needs help in managing anger and hostility.
2. Act out various views of parenting a high school senior. Pantomime ways that people like the Porters and Grays can support youngsters involved in serious crimes, for example, by involving them in family decision-making, providing moral support, and displaying confidence in their children during interviews with law officers and the media.
3. Pantomime the abnormal personality traits and behaviors of Carla, Cameron, and Len, particularly their tough talk during the planning of the crime and their delusions about going "dark." Determine why verbal posturing makes up for opportunities to fight back against bullying jocks like Brad Williams.
4. Create a storyboard account of the gun purchase, shootings, murder, and suicide. Indicate at what point Len loses control of his original plan. List his crimes and suggest ways they could have been avoided, for example, by careful supervision of family guns and ammunition and restrictions on private firearms deals at gun shows.

Education

1. Summarize rifle range training for teens. Include positive attitudes toward weaponry rather than as a mask for racism, vengeance, or macho exhibitionism. Comment on Len's use of gunfire as a means of tormenting harmless pet turtles.
2. Propose curriculum for a class to help girls like Carla cope with post-rape trauma. Suggest activities that boost morale and ease feelings of guilt and powerlessness, for example, dressing and preparing for a job or scholarship interview, studying the dynamics of

family life, or practicing formal and informal introductions.

3. Compose a newspaper feature on methods of tightening security at a large high school without creating a fortress mentality. Summarize successful school supervision in your area.

Speech

1. Explain orally a character web indicating the need for counseling for troubled teens. Suggest questions that need answers: why Len wants to be tough, what Cameron gains by protecting Len from bullies, how Carla fits into Ordo Sagittae, how membership in the Patriots pleases racists, why the basketball team admires a pompous egotist like Brad, how Len and Cameron investigate their feelings about suicide, and why Len wants to kill Afghans and Pakistanis with his guns.
2. Based on your understanding of the novel, lead a panel discussion of the effects of ostracism, cliques, despair, suspect friends, prescription drug abuse, gun obsessions, petty crime, and violence on family and community life. Discuss reasons why male teens are more likely to become delinquent than females. Support your opinions with statistics obtained from almanacs and economic and health surveys.
3. Explain to a small group the author’s emphasis on self-esteem. Account for personal struggles in Cameron that reduce his effectiveness as a son, brother, student, basketball player, friend, and co-conspirator.

Cinema

1. View films with characters accused of crimes, such as *The Chocolate War*, *The Castle*, *Ragtime*, *True Grit*, *Tell Them Willie Boy Is Here*, *I Know What You Did Last Summer*, *Dead Man Walking*, *I Want to Live*, *The Shawshank Redemption*, *The Birdman of Alcatraz*, *The Big Easy*, *The Thin Green Line*, *The Count of Monte Cristo*, *West Side Story*, *We Were the Mulvaney’s*, and *A Lesson before Dying*. Compare the movies’ settings, themes, and dialogue to those of *Shooter*.

Science and Health

1. Draw a human cranium and explain why a close-range shot to the hard palate and out the left quadrant of the brain causes Leonard little suffering.
2. Discuss immediate needs of rape victims, particularly troubled girls like Carla Evans. Project long-term care that will enable her to recover from on-line revelation to fellow students of her therapy sessions and to accept her role in the school shootings.

Art and Music

1. Using desktop publishing or other media, design contrasting murals or posters to demonstrate these paired actions: buying prescription drugs illegally/shooting turtles in an orange bag, keeping a diary on Christmas Day/murdering Brad from a third-story classroom window, painting obscenities on a Catholic church wall/facing eight bullies in the school parking lot, moving into a trailer with an alcoholic father/receiving unlimited access to a restaurant as a gift, refusing to talk to police/receiving hospital care for trauma, confinement in a secure holding pen at the Harrison County 2nd Precinct/an angry employer-employee confrontation at the dispatch shed behind the garage, and ridiculing an English teacher about interest in Shakespeare’s *Macbeth*/tidying a bedroom in preparation for suicide.
2. Listen to the lyrics of American blues and jail and convict tunes. Summarize themes of false accusations, innocence, regrets for poor choices of friends and activities, and fear of jails and punishment. How can Cameron and Carla identify with characters from folk tunes like “Stag o’ Lee,” “He’s in the Jailhouse Now,” “Down in the Valley,” “Tom Dooley,” and “Frankie and Johnny”? How do blues and folk songs express prejudice toward drifters, loners, and outsiders?

Law

1. Read aloud state laws governing crimes mentioned in the novel, especially abetting, molestation of a minor, prescription drug dealing, unlawful entry, assault, vandalism, theft, sale of weapons to a minor, animal cru-

elty, communicating threats, pointing a weapon at a person, unlawful discharge of a firearm, destroying public property, and murder. Determine whether the judge is wise to let Len and Cameron accept counseling for their vandalism at the Catholic church.

2. Organize a discussion of criminal behavior. Explain why Cameron and Carla deserve some of the blame for encouraging Len's plot and for supplying paint for defacing school property. Determine what part of the guilt belongs to the Grays for not securing weapons and ammunition or to the Porters for allowing Cameron to continue seeing Len after the vandalism of the Catholic church.

Social Studies and Economics

1. Discuss with a small group family patterns of behavior and expectations after financial gain, such as boasting about wealth or flaunting wealth through exhibitionism. Explain why the Porters appear to enjoy money mainly as a boost to their social prominence.
2. Report orally on the physical and psychological effects of rape on Carla. Explain why she conceals her pain during interrogation by refusing to discuss details of molestation by a stepbrother.
3. Divide the class into small groups to brainstorm ways to improve family relations after Cameron returns home. Comment on his job at the mall and enrollment in night school classes.
4. Compose an extended definition of social and emotional isolation. Explain why the term describes Norman, Cameron, Len, and Carla. Explain why alienation contributes to arming, conspiracy, revenge, and suicide.

Psychology

1. Join a research group to determine the causes, symptoms, and prevention of suicide. Emphasize modern methods of protecting depressed teens from killing themselves, including limiting their time alone, providing counseling and group therapy, conducting frequent checks in person and by telephone, offering alternatives to solitude and moping, and surveying day-to-day coping skills.

2. Explain a chart, website, or poster on the theme of the nuclear family. Give reasons for the novel's inclusion of Len as the Grays' only child as well as his fascination for guns and self-glorification. Discuss implications of Carla Evans' lack of family support.

Mathematics and Computers

1. Using desktop publishing, make a web site or bulletin board that identifies these terms: "Heil Hitler," mainstream, diabolical, errant, closet gay, convoluted, moral support, material witness, released on bond, Sebastian, proverbial, Kalashnikov, sinister, Ordo Sagittae, agenda, Viking, capitalist, eulogy, cosmos, compensation, restraint, initiation, parish house, cult, AR-18, skirmish line, Ruger, Miranda rights, social adjustment, sporadic, sacrilegious, privileged, precinct, subpoenaed, dissent, Pyramus, politically incorrect, cryptic, Quasimodo, fascist, cliché, waiver, Bushmaster, transgression, Fourth Reich, M14, righteous, continuum, lackey, morass, psychological evaluation, therapy, molested, measurable intelligence, ATM, Galil, palate, imposing, videocam, vesper.
2. Based on your understanding of the novel, lead a panel discussion of the effects of violence, death, low expectations, psychological abuse, and rejection on family life. 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 www.census.gov.

Language and Journalism

1. Contrast news releases for radio, television, or print announcing the deaths of Len Gray and Brad Williams, the wounding of students, vandalism to a Catholic church and to Madison High School, and the hospitalization of Carla Evans. Typify coverage of the incident via print, photograph, video, and live coverage. Determine which style of coverage is fairer to victims, suspects, community, and assailants.
2. Prepare a dialogue dramatizing the reunion of Carla and Cameron after interrogation. Disclose their unwillingness to admit they were tricked and used to further Len's insane plot.

3. Improve on interrogation methods by restating objectively any questions that imply dislike, mistrust, and pre-judgment of Cameron or Carla.
4. Lead a debate about the revelation of insanity in Len's journal. Describe his skill at exonerating himself of fault and of turning words into weapons against his enemies and accomplices.

Literature

1. Draw a Venn diagram contrasting the behaviors, self-evaluations, and attitudes of Carla, Cameron, and Len. Determine why Cameron and Carla seem immature and vulnerable in the presence of a clever, ruthless manipulator like Len.
2. Compose a web site introducing young readers to other crime fiction, including Walter Dean Myers' *Monster*, Benjamin John Mikaelson's *Touching Spirit Bear*, Harper Lee's *To Kill a Mockingbird*, Paul Zindel's *The Pigman* and *The Pigman's Legacy*, Ellen Raskin's *The Westing Game*, Lois Duncan's *Killing Mr. Griffin*, Ring Lardner's "Haircut," M. E. Kerr's *Gentlehands*, Susan Pfeffer's *The Year Without Michael*, Robert Cormier's *The Chocolate War* and *I Am the Cheese*, Sir Arthur Conan Doyle's "The Hound of the Baskervilles," Joyce Carol Oates' "Where Are You Going? Where Have You Been?," and Susan Glaspell's *Triffles*.
3. Compose a lecture on the differences in community expectations for characters like a law enforcement officer, medical examiner, principal, teen suspect, sheriff, family member, witness, teen psychopath, accomplice, pharmacist, FBI agent, psychologist, school superintendent, gun club member, and juvenile delinquent. Clarify the difference between pre-judgement and objectivity.
4. Using a cause-and-effect chart, follow the plot of the novel from beginning to end. Stress relationships, such as Cameron, Carla, and Len's lack of family support, the use of psychologists to question suspects, a pharmacist's suspicions, outrage among members of the Catholic church, callous advice from a school guidance counselor, and convincing authorities of innocence.

Alternate Assessment

1. List examples of violence and crime in the lives of the characters, for example, rape by a stepbrother, Len's suicide, shooting turtles in orange bags, murdering Brad, seeking money to buy fuses, carrying a concealed Ruger, being threatened by a father's fist, firing down an open stairwell at Cameron, buying automatic weapons at a gun show, obtaining prescription drugs illegally, bullying students in a parking lot, fighting for the army Rangers, aiming a gun at Cameron, cutting wrists and forearms, and using a picture of Martin Luther King, Jr., as a target.
2. Compile a list of actions and statements that demonstrate isolation and anguish at home, in English class, before a school play, at the holding pen of the Harrison County 2nd Precinct, among school counselors and teachers, during basketball try-outs, at a Catholic church around Christmas, at the dispatch shed behind the garage, in the lunchroom, in the library, during rifle practice at the Patriots' Club, and during conversations about Carla.
3. Compose a scene in which Cameron's parents decide to seek family counseling to help them understand their son's involvement in the Ordo Sagittae and with Len and Carla.
4. Make a character list and explain the character flaws of each, including: Victoria Lash's sarcasm, Len's idealism, Mrs. Cliff's enthusiasm for William Shakespeare's *Macbeth*, Coach Anders' discounting of school bullying by jocks, Brad's posturing, Mr. Gray's boast about killing a man in under four seconds, Elizabeth's social climbing, Carla's trust in Len, the school authorities' self-interest, the stepbrother's sexual attack on Carla, Carla's father's alcoholism, and Cameron's denial of Len's influence.
5. Account for the highs and lows in Len's diary.

Vocabulary

Complete the following sentences with appropriate words from the list below. You will have answers left over when you finish.

automatic, civil, cliché, confrontations, consistent, cosmic, deemed, derrick, dispatch, ensuing, generator, gherkin, GPA, indictment, interrogating, Judas, misinterpret, palate, pending, positioning, probability, quadrant, starkly, subpoenaed, vibrates

1. I try to be careful, but it's always a possibility that I might _____ something.
2. If there's no one around, you can get in through the storm doors near the _____ in back.
3. The names of the dead and injured have been withheld _____ further investigation.
4. From the _____ of the wounds it appeared that Gray had placed the muzzle of the rifle in his mouth and self-inflicted a fatal wound.
5. I know that's always the _____ that people want to drag out.
6. The barrel doesn't go up much on _____.
7. A Harrison County grand jury failed to issue an _____ against 17-year-old Cameron Porter, accused of being an accomplice in the April 22 shootings at Madison High School.
8. Number 1 on the list is Brad Williams, a royal jerk. Or maybe a pickle headed _____?
9. An exit wound was found in the left rear _____ of the upper skull, the bullet having traveled through the brain.
10. We went to the garage area, behind the _____ shed, and saw his father being chewed out by his boss.
11. I think her head sort of _____ in different directions about [rape].
12. Two young men who never could get together socially were buried on the same day in _____ contrasting ceremonies.
13. While no charges involving the actual homicide were filed against Cameron Porter, the investigation is _____ to be open in respect to his participation.
14. These statements are made voluntarily and with full knowledge that they may be used against me in either a criminal or _____ prosecution.
15. I'm a psychologist and the president of a company whose job it is to analyze events and make predictions about the _____ of similar events.

Comprehension Test A

Part I: Quotation Identification (30 points)

Identify the speaker of each of the following quotations from the novel and explain the significance.

_____ 1. And you were in the kitchen washing the teacups?

_____ 2. Excuse me. Do you speak English?

_____ 3. Maybe I will go to a gun show and wander through the camouflage forest, trying to guess the name of my fair and deadly maiden.

_____ 4. Now you're talking about "going dark."

_____ 5. I didn't game with him or anything.

Part II: True/False (20 points)

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

_____ 1. The number 88 bears biblical significance.

_____ 2. Cameron conceals from Len a love for Carla Evans.

_____ 3. Elizabeth Porter encourages the choice of the military for a career.

_____ 4. William Beach Mosley admits that he is a poor interviewer.

_____ 5. Students hear Brad Williams calling for help.

_____ 6. Cameron voices his respect for Martin Luther King, Jr.

_____ 7. Church members accept the boys' apology and their payment for cleaning obscenities off the wall.

_____ 8. Earning money is more important to Norman than to Cameron.

_____ 9. The press jumps to conclusions about the source of Len's anger.

_____ 10. The Patriots express overt racism.

Comprehension Test A (Page 2)

Part III: Completion (20 points)

Fill each blank below with a word or phrase that completes the sentence.

1. Cameron describes _____'s intense competition on the basketball court and rude comments about playing like a _____.
2. Len invites Cameron to _____'s shooting club, the Patriots, where a picture of Martin Luther King, Jr., is one of the pop-up _____.
3. After a church break-in and _____, Cameron and Len receive _____ from Dr. Brendel.
4. Len accidentally _____ on a girl from the privileged set and gets in a fight with her 17-year-old boyfriend, _____.
5. _____ accuses _____ of allowing jocks to torment other students.

Part IV: Essay Questions (30 points)

Choose two and answer in complete sentences.

1. Describe the influence of race on Cameron's interaction with others.
2. Explain how drug abuse promotes vengeance and risk-taking.
3. Discuss the complicity of Carla and Cameron in the shootings.
4. Account for Victoria Lash's dissenting report.
5. Summarize events that dominate the diary.

Comprehension Test B

Part I: Matching (30 points)

Match the following descriptions with names of characters from the list below. Place the letter of your response in the blank provided at left. You will use some answers more than once and some not at all.

- | | |
|--|--------------------|
| _____ 1. ignores the bullying of jocks | A. Franklyn Bonner |
| _____ 2. rapes Carla | B. stepbrother |
| _____ 3. cowers from a tongue-lashing behind the dispatch shed | C. Margolies |
| _____ 4. wants a swimming pool in the garage | D. Michele Garcia |
| _____ 5. isn't enthusiastic about the civil rights movement | E. Elizabeth |
| _____ 6. presses Carla for information about molestation | F. Victoria Lash |
| _____ 7. triggers a fire alarm | G. Mrs. Gray |
| _____ 8. bullies loners | H. Mr. Gray |
| _____ 9. considers the outcome of the investigation inadequate | I. Mosley |
| _____ 10. places tea before a troubled girl | J. Brad |
| _____ 11. hears mice twitter | K. Coach Anders |
| _____ 12. buys a diary as a gift | L. Mrs. Clift |
| _____ 13. conceals a Ruger | M. Cameron |
| _____ 14. collapses in the parking lot | N. Norman |
| _____ 15. admires immortal works | O. Len |

Part II: Short Answer (20 points)

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

- _____ 1. What contains turtles?
- _____ 2. Which firearm does Len aim at Cameron?
- _____ 3. What do the boys need money for on April 15?
- _____ 4. Whose death does Carla emphasize in class?
- _____ 5. Who receives a glowing eulogy?
- _____ 6. Who chooses to be Quasimodo?
- _____ 7. Where does Esther Balducci locate cuts?
- _____ 8. Who targets Jewish teachers?
- _____ 9. What branch of the army did Mr. Gray serve?
- _____ 10. Who learns to read at age four?

Comprehension Test B (Page 2)

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. Len uses a poster of a rock group for target practice at a
 A. media board.
 B. rifle range.
 C. Catholic church.
 D. dumpster.
- _____ 2. Cameron conceals
 A. a stolen therapy file.
 B. Carla in a closet.
 C. the \$2,000 in his ATM account.
 D. vermilion paint.
- _____ 3. Cameron dodges bullets in
 A. an open stairwell.
 B. a first-floor library.
 C. a bus parking lot.
 D. the physics lab.
- _____ 4. The Ordo Sagittae
 A. consists of five members.
 B. recruits male loners.
 C. practices shooting with the Patriots.
 D. substitutes archery for riflery.
- _____ 5. Boyd
 A. chastises Mr. Gray in public.
 B. delivers a eulogy for Brad.
 C. loses his place on the team.
 D. gives poor advice to an outsider.
- _____ 6. School email
 A. warns students about loners wearing black.
 B. reveals Carla's molestation.
 C. charges school officials with neglect.
 D. offers an acting part to a leading man.
- _____ 7. The pharmacist recognizes
 A. a pair of troubled teens.
 B. an FBI investigator.
 C. an irregularity with the prescription.
 D. the name of a drug seller at Madison High School.

- _____ 8. Norman ridicules
 A. boys who wear black.
 B. social climbing.
 C. Martin Luther King, Jr.
 D. his son's sports ability.
- _____ 9. The Galil
 A. comes from a gun show.
 B. is concealed in a camouflage duffel bag.
 C. has an unwieldy sling.
 D. belonged to one of the Patriots.
- _____ 10. Len ridicules Carla as
 A. Tulsa.
 B. a foster child.
 C. the resident of a trailer park.
 D. Judas.

Part IV: Essay Questions (30 points)

Choose two and answer in complete sentences.

1. Explain why Brad is the target of a disgruntled loner.
2. Contrast the parenting of the Grays and the Porters.
3. Describe the job of the SWAT team.
4. Account for the sale of illicit drugs and firearms.
5. Determine the extent of Len's mental illness.

Answer Key

VOCABULARY

- | | | |
|-----------------|---------------|-----------------|
| 1. misinterpret | 6. automatic | 11. vibrates |
| 2. generator | 7. indictment | 12. starkly |
| 3. pending | 8. gherkin | 13. deemed |
| 4. positioning | 9. quadrant | 14. civil |
| 5. cliché | 10. dispatch | 15. probability |

COMPREHENSION TEST A

Part I: Quotation Identification (30 points)

1. Victoria Lash's sarcasm implies that Cameron deliberately casts himself as innocent and unaware of Len's malice.
2. Carla Evans sneers at Franklyn Bonner for ignoring her insistence that they not discuss her molestation by a halfbrother.
3. Len describes his weapon of choice in female terms, as though substitution a Kalashnikov for a normal relationship with a girl.
4. Richard Ewings tries to clarify the difference between wearing dark clothes and makeup and cultivating a menacing personality.
5. Cameron indicates that his relationship with Len was straightforward.

Part II: True/False (20 points)

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

Part III: Completion (20 points)

1. Norman, girl
2. Mr. Gray, targets
3. vandalism, anti-depressants
4. spits, Brad Williams
5. Cameron, Coach Anders

Part IV: Essay (30 points)

Answers will vary.

COMPREHENSION TEST B

Part I: Matching (30 points)

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

Part II: Short Answer (20 points)

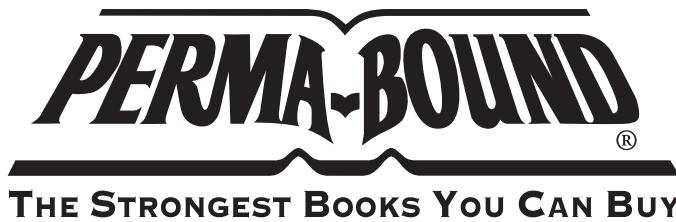
1. orange bags
2. Kalashnikov
3. fuses
4. William Shakespeare
5. Brad
6. Len
7. Len's wrists and forearms
8. Len
9. Rangers
10. Cameron

Part III: Multiple Choice (20 points)

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

Part IV: Essay (30 points)

Answers will vary.



Perma-Bound

617 East Vandalia Road • Jacksonville, Illinois 62650
Toll Free 1-800-637-6581 • Fax 1-800-551-1169
E-Mail: books@perma-bound.com

Perma-Bound Canada

Box 868, Station Main • Peterborough, Ontario K9J 7A2
Toll Free 1-800-461-1999 • Fax 1-888-250-3811
E-Mail: perma-bound.ca@sympatico.ca

Visit us online at www.perma-bound.com