

## SYNOPSIS

Ben Ross, a history teacher at Gordon High, muddles through loading the film projector with a documentary meant to jar his students with the practical, relevant aspects of history. He is an iconoclast whom some teachers admire and others wonder about. He takes a special interest in all levels of student attainment, particularly the underachievement of Robert Billings, the class loser. David Collins enters the room and completes Ross's bungled attempt to thread the film, a description of Nazi atrocities against Jews and other victims from 1934 to 1945. As Ross explains, Adolf Hitler rose to power during hard times for Germans when inflation, homelessness, hunger, and underemployment depleted the nation's spirit. To focus citizens on a single enemy, Hitler chose the Jews as scapegoats.

A psychopath, Hitler, who had worked as a house painter and served time in prison in 1923, managed to gain control. To achieve a "final solution" for the Jewish problem, he created death camps, where ten million victims were worked, starved, tortured, and gassed with lethal vapors. At the end of the film, students were visibly moved by the skeletal remains of extermination camp inmates. Ross admits that no one has proposed a plausible explanation of national inaction. Students move to the cafeteria for lunch, where Robert eats alone after tablemates depart to avoid contact with the school nerd.

That night, Ross discusses with his wife, music teacher Christy Ross, the stack of books he has accumulated for lesson preparation. Intrigued by Amy's question about group behavior, he evolves a plan. The next day's history class finds STRENGTH THROUGH DISCIPLINE written on the chalkboard. He attempts through examples of posture, obedience commands, and rigid classroom protocol to illustrate how Hitler built his National Socialist German Workers Party into a lethal killing machine.

The class responds favorably to the contrast between their former apathetic selves and their current sharp, cohesive unit. In the restroom, David notes that Robert stands at attention before the mirror. Christy warns her husband that he's "created a monster." The next day, the students return to the discipline of the preceding day. Ross introduces a second motto, STRENGTH THROUGH COMMUNITY, and creates a symbol, a wavy line inside a circle. The class demonstrates their willingness to be indoctrinated and regimented by giving the class salute.

At football practice, David and Eric discuss how Ross's classroom model might help the Gladiators, Coach Norm Schiller's losing team. David, a senior quarterback, quarrels with his rival, Deutsch. In anticipation of a game against Clarkstown, David encourages the team to learn wave mottoes. That night, Laurie explains the wave to her parents.

Her mother condemns it as too militaristic; Laurie's father disagrees and justifies his support by comparing the wave to the Pilgrims. At the Ross house, Ben admits to Christy that he enjoys teaching disciplined students and feels himself getting caught up in the spirit of the wave.

On the third day of history class, Ross, dressed in blue suit and tie, displays a wave poster. He hands out yellow cards, some marked with a red X to indicate monitors, including Robert and Brian. Laurie, who is not chosen, raises questions about the procedure. She grows more skeptical about the group's intensity after Ross introduces the third precept, strength through action.

At lunch, Laurie continues to question the growing power of the wave. Brad exults that there is no longer an in-crowd. Brian holds up his yellow card and reminds Laurie that he must report to Ross any class member who breaks the rules. Robert surprises the group by supporting the wave. In class, participation remains at an all-time high, but answers grow shorter. The coach thanks Ross for raising team spirit. Ross realizes three student attitudes toward the wave: an awareness of something new and different, the breakup of cliques, and an enjoyment of firmer discipline.

At an editorial meeting of *The Grapevine*, Laurie tries to inspire articles for the next edition. Carl proposes a report on the wave. Laurie hesitates to write about the phenomenon, which her mother distrusts as a cult. She fears a wave rally on Friday, where 200 students will be indoctrinated into the fad.

Principal Owens confers with Ross about the good and bad elements of the wave. That same morning, Laurie discovers an unsigned essay from a junior to *The Grapevine* describing a chilling run-in with a senior who tried to coerce others to join the wave before it's "too late." Enthusiasm grows as time for the pep rally nears. More students salute Ross; Robert follows him as bodyguard. Ross worries about the faddishness of the wave, yet allows Robert to protect him.

As Laurie mulls over the problem of the wave's appeal, she observes Brian fighting with Deutsch and yelling wave slogans. She quarrels with David over her refusal to take part in the rally. Laurie insists that students must think like individuals and not depend on her as a role model. He accuses her of feeling left out of her former clique. She denies his accusation and retreats to the publication room, from which she overhears shouts from the rally. Alex reminds her that "nothing is above ridicule." With Carl's help, Laurie decides to meet with non-wave members at her house on Sunday.

As Laurie weeps in her room, her father barges in and divulges secondhand information about a Jewish boy who refused to join the wave. Laurie promises to expose the

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wave with the next issue of the paper. On Saturday at the football game, Brad bars Laurie from the stands because she fails to give the salute. Laurie discovers that Brad is afraid of bucking the power behind the wave.

On Monday, opposition grows. Laurie's condemnation brands the movement dangerous, mindless, and repressive. Before the paper is distributed, Laurie quarrels with Amy, who is glad the wave frees her from competing with Laurie. In the teachers' lounge, Ross hears himself labeled a brain-washer of students; he sees himself as dictatorial. Outside, a meeting of wave members contemplates Laurie's denunciation. Robert offers to punish her.

Late that day, as Christy warns Ross about repercussions of the wave, Laurie finds "enemy" scrawled on her locker. David intercepts her as she runs past the tennis court and tries to alter her thinking about the wave. After throwing her on the ground, he acknowledges that the fad has gone too far. They visit Ross, who asks them to help with an experiment to end the wave.

On Tuesday, Ross announces to his class that a meeting of waves will feature a cable TV appearance of the founder of a National Wave Youth Movement. David and Laurie protest and are escorted to Mr. Owens's office. At the meeting in the locked auditorium, Ross reveals the leader — a film clip of Adolf Hitler. Students realize how close they have come to Nazism and file out of the auditorium. Robert remains behind and weeps.

### BIOGRAPHICAL SKETCH

Todd Strasser, the son of legal assistant Sheila Reisner and executive Charles S. Strasser, was born May 5, 1950, in New York City and grew up on Long Island. His scholastic performance, hampered by lack of interest, was mediocre; his interest in the rock music of the 1970s allied him with teen rebels. A two-year stint at New York University led nowhere, so he began hitchhiking around the United States and Europe and earning his way as a busker.

A graduate of Beloit College in 1974, for two years Strasser worked in public relations and reported for the *Times Herald Record* of Middletown, New York. Repulsed by family pressures toward law or medicine, he initiated his freelance career. In 1976, he worked as a copywriter for Compton Advertising; the next year he served as a researcher for *Esquire*. In 1978 he founded the Toggle fortune cookie company as a successful means of investing his royalty income.

On July 2, 1981, Strasser, who had by then published three young adult novels, married Pamela Older, a production manager. They have a daughter, Lia, and a son, Geoff, both of whom provide the author with youth-oriented material. Strasser's career quickly burgeoned with a steady outpouring of fiction, occasionally publishing three new titles in a single year. In addition, he writes and adapts screenplays and publishes articles and fiction in the *New Yorker*, *Village Voice*, and *New York Times*. He speaks at schools throughout the United States, addresses professional conferences, and leads creative writing workshops.

### CRITIC'S CORNER

Strasser's work began to receive serious notice in the early 1980s, when the American Library Association named

both *Friends Till the End* and *Rock 'n' Roll Nights* as "Best Books for Young Adults." In addition, he has won awards from the Children's Book Council, a New York Public Library's Books for the Teen Age award, a National Council for Social Studies and the Children's Book Council notable trade book, the Acton Public Library Crabberly Award List, an Iowa Books for Young Adults Program award, and a Colorado Blue Spruce Award. In addition, he was nominated for the California Young Reader Medal and an Edgar Award from Mystery Writers of America.

Strasser's themes tend toward choices faced by young people concerning sex, drugs, alcohol, and peer pressures. *Workin' for Peanuts* and *A Very Touchy Subject* have been adapted for television. *The Wave*, published under the pen name Morton Rhue, received a Book Award from the Federation of Children's Books.

### GENERAL OBJECTIVES

1. To assess the value of individualism
2. To compare group mentality and group aggression
3. To evaluate the goals and purpose of classroom enactments
4. To account for cliques and in-groups
5. To relate the difficulties of being rejected by the majority
6. To discuss methods of motivating apathetic students
7. To comment on the difference between pride and arrogance
8. To express the importance of school journalism and freedom of speech
9. To characterize how a novel can recreate an actual event

### SPECIFIC OBJECTIVES

1. To explain why Ben and Christy Ross differ in attitudes toward the wave
2. To assess how Laurie reacts toward violence, alienation, ostracism, jealousy, and mistrust
3. To account for shifting attitudes toward Ben Ross
4. To order events that lead up to the final assembly
5. To describe turning points in the growth of the wave movement, particularly the attack on the Jewish sophomore
6. To account for student enthusiasm for exaggerated posture, salutes, and discipline
7. To predict how Robert will fit in after the wave dissolves
8. To explain why Mr. Owens threatens Ben Ross with firing
9. To evaluate the strength of student rivalries and loyalties

### MEANING STUDY

Below are words, phrases, sentences, or thought units that have a particular meaning in the novel. Explain each. Chapter and page numbers are given so that you can note the context from which each item is taken.

1. They were studying World War Two, and the film Ben Ross was showing his class that day was a documentary depicting the atrocities the Nazis committed in their concentration camps. (Chapter 2, p. 15)  
(During Hitler's twelve years of power, he had death camps constructed to execute prisoners immediately

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after arrival, stripping, and processing. Their bodies were combed for valuables, including gold teeth and hair, and they were incinerated in an efficient manner, usually employing trustees as oven operators and disposal crews. Other camps kept a body of inmates on extremely short rations and worked them in war industries, such as electronics and weapon manufacture. At Auschwitz/Birkenau in Oswiecim, Poland, Dr. Josef Mengele made frequent medical inspections and separated inmates into two groups — those well enough to continue working and those to be exterminated. Certain victims, particularly twins, were sequestered in medical clinics and subjected to inhuman experimentation, such as the effect of anthrax or botulin on the body.)

2. It was the work of a man named Adolf Hitler, originally a menial laborer, porter, and house painter, who turned to politics after World War One. . . . For Hitler it was an opportunity to rise quickly through the political ranks of the Nazi Party. (Chapter 2, p. 15-16)

*(Adolf Hitler was born in Braunau, Austria, on April 20, 1889, to Klara Hitler and her lover, Alois Schicklgruber. An abused child until 1903, when his cruel father died, Hitler did poorly in school and dreamed of promoting the Aryan race. He moved to Munich in 1913 to evade military service in Austria, but on the outbreak of World War I joined the German army and earned the Iron Cross for bravery.*

*After the war, the eclipse of the Weimar Republic placed great tensions on Germans. At the age of 30, Hitler formed the National Socialist German Workers' Party, whose fanatic members obeyed Hitler's monstrous whims. In 1923, their illegal activities led to Hitler's prison sentence, which he served at Landsberg. He used inactivity and solitude as an opportunity to compose a rabid biography, Mein Kampf. By the time he was released, Hitler was certain that civilization's key enemy was Jewry and the only means of defeating it, an enforced nationalism on Germans and extermination for Jews and other threats to Aryan purity, particularly homosexuals, Jehovah's Witnesses, gypsies, and retardates.)*

3. Today we know that Hitler was a paranoid, a psychopath, literally a madman. (Chapter 2, p. 6)  
*(Paranoia, which is an extreme form of psychosis, creates delusions ranging from persecution to superiority. Exacerbated by hostility and misguided anger, the paranoid tends to interpret other people's motives as reflecting the animosity already lurking in the victim's mind. Behaving in what appears to be a logical, rational manner, the paranoid may exhibit a blend of unusual behaviors, such as explosive anger, mercurial moods, scapegoating, remorselessness, and amorality. With no conscience to guide behavior, the psychopath is capable of committing heinous crimes without hesitation.)*
4. Jeff Billings had been an all-conference pitcher in high school and was now in the Baltimore Orioles farm system while he studied medicine in the off-season. (Chapter 2, p. 21)  
*(For Robert Billings, the sibling rivalry wrought by Robert's "wallowing in the shadow of an older brother who had been the quintessential model student and big*

*man on campus" leads to an inappropriate comparison with Jeff, "a straight-A student who excelled at everything he did." Such a disparity between brothers produces anguish and withdrawal, as demonstrated by Robert's withdrawal and his absorption in a Spiderman comic book.)*

5. "The Rise and Fall of the Third Reich? Hitler's Youth?" She frowned. "What are you doing, cramming for a degree in dictatorship?" (Chapter 4, p. 34)  
*(At the beginning of Ben Ross's experiment in reducing student apathy and expressing the horror of the Hitler years, he studies William L. Shirer's historical treatise and ponders the strategy of turning malleable young followers into political pawns. Shirer, a journalist and war correspondent, spent much of his life and career analyzing the events and attitudes that brought Hitler to power.)*
6. Oh, right. She stood up again. "Mr. Ross, the National Socialist German Workers Party." (Chapter 5, p. 41)  
*(While attempting to answer a question in class, Laurie demonstrates the rigid protocol Ben Ross creates for his students to follow. Laurie correctly identifies the Nationalsozialistische Deutsche Arbeiterpartei, which grew from a fledgling political caucus in 1921 to a crushing juggernaut, which was forcibly ended in 1945 by the combined efforts of England, France, Russia, and the United States. Central to the Nazi cause was a union of all German-speaking countries, including Austria and a small segment of Czechoslovakia.)*
7. "Peter, who proposed the Lend-Lease Act?"  
"Mr. Ross, Roosevelt." (Chapter 5, p. 42)  
*(On March 11, 1941, eight months before the United States was plunged into the world war, Franklin Delano Roosevelt pledged military assistance to "any country whose defense the President deems vital to the defense of the United States." Without expectation of payment, U. S. sources sent material support to England, where the British government fought the devastating air raids of the German Luftwaffe.)*
8. From now on, our two mottos will be 'Strength Through Discipline' and 'Strength Through Community.' Everyone, repeat our mottos. (Chapter 6, pp. 48-49)  
*(A motto is a verbal embodiment of beliefs and aims, e.g. "Putting people first" or "Be prepared." Used by product manufacturers, social action committees, political candidates, religious and altruistic clubs and groups, educators, and others seeking support or a change in behavior, mottos may appear innocent while masking a strong form of propaganda by overly simplifying an agenda or concept.)*
9. So how is your experiment going, Dr. Frankenstein? Have your monsters turned on you yet? (Chapter 7, p. 58)  
*(In a light vein, Christy refers to Ben-Ross's obsession with lesson preparation. By comparing him to Mary Shelley's fictional mad scientist, Dr. Frankenstein, a brilliant but misguided researcher and idealist who builds a humanoid monster from parts acquired from grave robbery, Christy foreshadows the uncontrollable urge of Gordon's student wave to harass and overpower others.)*

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10. Using the rapid question and answer style that The Wave had inspired, they had quickly covered Japan's entrance into World War Two. (Chapter 9, pp. 71-72) *(Bolstered by rapid modernization, in the 1930s, Japan entered a period of overconfidence. During the world depression, the Japanese pushed into Manchuria in northern China in a power grab that resulted in the Sino-Japanese War of 1937. Imperialism fed Japanese desire for Indochina and more illegal occupation, which led to a British and American trade embargo. After the Emperor Hirohito's army pushed into much of the Orient, including Korea, General Tojo Hideki conceived of a surprise air attack on the United States, which occurred in Honolulu, Hawaii, December 7, 1941.)*

### COMPREHENSION STUDY

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

#### Questions 1 - 4 Literal Level

1. What is Ben Ross's reason for introducing the wave?  
*(In the opening chapters, Gordon High suffers from an apathetic student body who are too interested in their abysmal football record, cliques, and social life to take full advantage of classes and homework. The first glimmer of student appreciation for history comes with Ben Ross's film, which details Nazi atrocities leading to the killing of 10 million people, mostly Jews. To capitalize on questions about how citizens fall for Hitler's power grab, Ben introduces the wave, a discipline-centered classroom protocol demanding rigid posture, prescribed style of answering questions, and loyalty to the concepts of strength through discipline, community, and action.*

*To illustrate how easily students can be swayed from individual thinking, Ben distributes yellow membership cards and posts banners displaying the regime's symbol — a blue circle around a wave. A few members of the class are designated monitors to enforce rules. Ben chooses Robert and Brian as leaders, but deliberately excludes Laurie, a bright editor-in-chief of the school newspaper, from a leadership role. Both boys prove Ross's suspicions that the aimless and aggressive personalities make good storm troopers.)*

2. How do students demonstrate loyalty to the wave?  
*(In order to feel the camaraderie of the wave, students are expected to follow classroom protocol, particularly in their responses to questions by standing and saying "Mr. Ross" before making a brief reply. Among themselves, Ross's pupils give the wave salute and band together against those dissenters who disagree with the group's tight bond. These differences of opinion with a rigid authority lead to fights, character assassination of Laurie, and scapegoating against a Jewish sophomore who is new in town.*

*At the game between Gordon High and Clarkstown, student members of the wave sit together and post guards to keep out those who disagree with their political movement. This ostracism results in hurt feelings*

*and a hate message — "enemy" — scrawled across Laurie's locker. Laurie comes close to suffering assault on the day she leaves the publications room, flees the empty building, and is confronted by David, who throws her to the ground.)*

3. At what point does the wave get out of hand?  
*(After a week of growing popularity, the wave begins to concern adults. Teachers, parents, and a rabbi question student loyalties to Ben Ross. Christy Ross complains that students skip choir so they can sit in on her husband's history class. Rumors, fights, and challenges of adult authority lead Mr. Owens to an ultimatum — Ben Ross must end the wave or lose his job.*

*David and Laurie visit Ben's home to express their concern that Gordon High's version of Hitler youth has gotten out of control. Ben asks that they support him in an experiment, but he conceals his plan from them. The teenagers are reluctant to trust the man who invented the wave. On the day that Ben invites wave members to a closed assembly, he escorts David and Laurie to the principal's office for insubordination.)*

4. What is the student response to the assembly?  
*(As Ben exploits student solidarity to rigid enforcement of ideals, he prepares them to view their real focal point — their leader. Students call out their mottos of "Strength Through Discipline," "Strength Through Community," and "Strength Through Action." There is a spontaneous salute. A quiet moment spurs one voice to challenge, "There is no leader, is there!"*

*Via two large television monitors, Ben Ross pauses, then reveals "our national leader." Carl pulls back the curtain as Alex projects the "gigantic image of Adolf Hitler." The audience is appalled. In response to Ben's challenge, "How far would you have gone?," students slump out of their rigid postures, discard posters, banners, and membership cards, and slink out of the auditorium.)*

#### Questions 5 - 8 Interpretive Level

5. What does Ben Ross expect students to learn from their experience with the wave?

*(After the audience views the film, Ross explains how the wave seduced them from individualism. "You thought you were so special!" Ross tells them. "Better than everyone outside this room. You traded your freedom for what you said was equality. But you turned your equality into superiority over non-Wave members." In simple, logical statements, Ross explains that members abandoned their rights by accepting the group's will. He makes a significant point that members deluded themselves into believing that they could quit the group at any time, but that no one actually tried to rebel. His most lethal statement jolts them into reality — "you all would have made good Nazis.")*

6. What does the author indicate about freedom of speech under a dictatorial regime?

*(Laurie Saunders becomes the focal point of dissent because she represents the power of the press. Because she is intelligent, compassionate, and well-disciplined, she quickly recognizes that the wave suppresses individuality and endangers dissenters.*

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Students are hesitant to question rigid authority figures. Loss of freedom of speech results in fights, suspicion, rumors, and hate crimes.

By the time that *The Grapevine* is distributed, student involvement in the wave has grown to monstrous proportions. Old friends — David and Amy — challenge Laurie's right to question the wave. Her experience with suppression of free thought brings her to the brink of a violent confrontation with David, who lurks outside the school in an effort to force Laurie to recant. Their confrontation reveals the core of repression that bonds the wave. Together, she and David go to the source of the controversy — Ben Ross, creator of an experimental Third Reich.)

7. Why does Ross go to such extremes to end his experiment?

(Rather than abruptly eradicate the disciplined structure of the wave, Ross feels it is important to shock students into viewing their destructive attitudes and brutal behaviors. By locking out dissenters, he brings wave members face to face with themselves and their leader, whom they failed to recognize during their week of fanaticism. The experiment is an act of faith that people who recognize and value rights to individuality will return to their former state of tolerance and will recognize malleability in their naive, inexperienced, trusting personalities.)

8. Why is the story of Ben Ross's experiment pertinent to readers?

(By reading Strasser's novel, young people can ponder how a whole high school fell under the sway of pseudo-Nazism. As Ben Ross so graphically illustrates, people who read history as a separate entity from real life are easily drawn into illogic, mob rule, and demagoguery. By failing to apply Hitler's appeal to Germans to their own situation, Ross's students are vulnerable to a dictator's deception and manipulation. Without examining the ramifications of a disciplined history class, students assume that the positive results of good posture and paying attention applies to all aspects of school life. They embrace the concept without scrutinizing the negative side of rigid behavior and thought control.)

### Questions 9 and 10 Critical Level

9. How does this novel relate to current history?

(As Ben Ross indicates, Hitler's power over Germany grew during hard times, the post-World War I era, when hunger, joblessness, and inflation caused people to look for a universal scapegoat. In similar fashion, nations continue to victimize their poorest, most ignorant, and least enfranchised citizens and accuse them of weakening the political fiber through blatant examples of laziness, addiction to drugs and alcohol, lawlessness, and disloyalty. Whether the subject is Bosnian rebels, Chinese oppression of families, Irish revolt against British overlords, women and minorities pressing for equal rights, or the American underclass selling drugs to alleviate poverty and compensate for prejudice, the lesson applies. So long as someone is left out of a stable life and denied opportunities for jobs and education, there is agitation for empowerment.)

10. How are students likely to apply this novel to their own schools?

(Any high school student who reads Todd Strasser's *The Wave* will recognize the social situations that permeate teen society. There are always the Lauries and Amys, the pretty, smart, and popular girls who become the focal points of cliques. Competitors like Brian and David exist wherever there are teams that demand top performance in exchange for prestige. More to the point, the intense rivalry for grades and attention result in a substructure of students who lack the emotional strength, self-esteem, intelligence, or skills to rank above the level of "class nerd."

A thorough reading and discussion of this novel can open the eyes of students to the inequalities of a rigid class structure. By focusing on the extremes of historical backlash, readers may recognize the need for humanism and tolerance, especially toward those who fail and those who choose aggrandizement as a means of gaining attention. Teachers, too, may summon the courage to try new classroom procedures as a method of coaxing from the shadows the Roberts of their school.)

### Questions 11-13 Creative Level

11. Compose a guideline for teachers who want to increase student interest in study, homework, and class participation. Spread your suggestions across the curriculum by including choir, sports, and publications.
12. Using a cause-and-effect chart, follow the plot of the novel from beginning to end. Stress interlocking relationships, such as David's interest in Laurie and his loyalty to the football team. Indicate the breakdown of the wave and the role of student journalism in questioning so rigid a system.
13. Create a scene in which students study other examples of atrocities, especially the Bataan death march, Japanese invasion of Manchuria, prison conditions at the Hanoi Hilton, Idi Amin's breach of human rights, the bombing of Hiroshima and Nagasaki, Russian attacks on Hungary and Afghanistan, and the Serbian assault on Muslims in Sarajevo.

## ACROSS THE CURRICULUM

### Math and Economics

1. Explain how economic factors — hunger, unemployment, homelessness — can result in political and social unrest. Graph figures from the Germany of 1934 that indicate how Hitler gained supremacy.
2. To chart the ebb and flow of inflation and the political situations it creates.

### Social Studies

1. Compile an annotated glossary of pertinent terms from Hitler's era. List SS, Third Reich, Aryan race, Hitler Youth, *Mein Kampf*, V-2 rocket, *Hindenburg*, Axis powers, extermination camp, Zyklon-B, Nazis, and Luftwaffe. Include biographical information about Heinrich Himmler, Dr. Josef Mengele, and Eva Braun.

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2. Compose a paragraph in which you define brainwashing. Discuss how Ben Ross utilizes group pressures to create the wave.

### Psychology

1. Lead a panel discussion of identifiable examples of faulty logic. For instance, how does sloganeering decrease individual thinking and increase bullying and oppression?
2. Discuss why David attacks Laurie and why Brian fights with Deutsch. Explain how aggressive words can lead to violence.
3. Account for the need for anonymity in the letter to *The Grapevine* and the scrawling of "enemy" on Laurie's locker.

### Science and Health

1. Make an oral report on teenage behaviors as they relate to self-esteem and mental health. Stress the role of cliques within the school power structure. What does it mean to be a princess, scholar, big man on campus, second string quarterback, or class loser?
2. Compose a paragraph on diseases that killed residents of concentration camps, particularly diarrhea, typhus, tuberculosis, and pneumonia. How did filth, despair, hunger, poor medical care, overwork, and overcrowding lead to death?

### Language and Literature

1. Write a challenge to sloganeering, for example, "Strength Through Discipline." Discuss how short mottoes and clichés trivialize a complex problem.
2. Work with a partner to create a series of analogies based on terms from the novel. For example: Norm Schiller : team :: Ben Ross : class.
3. Compose an extended explanation of the role of school newspaper in providing a forum for dissent.
4. Read aloud from Frank Bonham's *Durango Street*, S. E. Hinton's *Outsiders* and Robert Cormier's *The Chocolate War*. Contrast the differences in the concepts of leadership and group behavior as they apply to the wave, gang warfare, and group projects.
5. Summarize the mottoes in George Orwell's *Animal Farm*. How do they reflect the mind control in Ben Ross's history class?

### Art

1. Draw a cartoon strip depicting the group solidarity expressed by the first rally. Indicate extreme postures and behaviors, such as checking membership cards, standing at attention, and giving the wave salute.
2. Make a mural of significant scenes from the novel, particularly the distribution of *The Gordon Grapevine*, Laurie's discovery of "enemy" scrawled on her locker, Robert's reading of Spiderman comic books, the principal's threat to fire Ben Ross, Brian's supervision of seating at the Saturday football game, Laurie's fight with David, and the revelation of Adolf Hitler on the screen.

### Music

1. Listen to recorded music that suggests the conflict of standards and emotions at Gordon High, especially apprehension, group solidarity, individualism, courage, frustration, doubt, belonging, competition, control, and pride.
2. Compose a school song to unite all parties who have been harmed by the wave incident.

### STUDENT INVOLVEMENT ACTIVITIES

1. Relate the following literary terms to *The Wave*: simile, contrast, milieu, flat and round characters, setting, dialogue, conflict, atmosphere, mood, motivation, rising action, climax, falling action, faulty logic, confession, hidden agenda, theme, motto, harangue, and tone.
2. Lead a discussion of adult responsibilities to teenagers, particularly underachievers and misbehavers. Determine why Ross asks Robert to dinner and why Midge Saunders warns Laurie of the dangers of militarism. How do Mr. Saunders, Elaine Billings, Norm Schiller, Mr. Owens, and Christy Ross react to a potentially dangerous situation?
3. Contrast Laurie and Robert's unhappiness at school with similar situations in other young adult novels, particularly S. E. Hinton's *Tex*, Paul Zindel's *Pigman*, Cynthia Rylant's *Missing May*, Susan Pfeffer's *Year Without Michael*, William Sleator's *Oddballs*, Judy Blume's *Tiger Eyes*, Paula Danziger's *Divorce Express*, Avi's *Nothing But the Truth*, Harry Mazer's *Snowbound*, Lois Duncan's *Killing Mr. Griffin*, and Robert Cormier's *Chocolate War*.
4. Record student reactions to the novel. Use these personal reflections as a springboard to a class discussion of rationalization, victimizing, mob rule, regimentation, bullying, and overreaction.
5. List and clarify terms significant to an understanding of the story, particularly Lend-Lease Act, manual dexterity, charismatic, atrocities, paranoid, naive and sheltered, Baltimore Orioles farm system, quintessential model student, untouchable, Chamberlain, Japanese campaign, regiment, motto, League of Women Voters, Dr. Frankenstein, manipulating, testimonials, sabbatical, Heisman Trophy, cult, impressionable, utopian, Kung Fu, Anne Frank's attic, amoebas, Auschwitz, brigade, idealistic, deprogramming, and *Night of the Living Dead*.
6. Write a televised interview with Mr. Owens that explains how and why the wave became so powerful. Cite comments by Laurie, David, Robert, Ben and Christy Ross, Coach Norm Schiller, and the unnamed writer of the letter to *The Grapevine*.
7. Role-play Robert's meal with other students. Express his delight in being accepted.
8. Lead a debate concerning the value of Ben Ross's experiment. What other historical events might he enact, for instance, the Salem Witch Trials, the My Lai massacre, or the McCarthy hearings?
9. Explain the symbolism in the wave salute, posture, protocol, and emblem. Contrast each to the Boy Scout equivalent.

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10. Compose a follow-up article for *The Grapevine* in which you discuss the aftermath of Ross's introduction of wave members to their historical leader.

### ALTERNATE ASSESSMENT

1. Make a list of scenes from the novel that express contrasting attitudes toward guilt, fanaticism, friendship, self-esteem, loss, patriotism, responsibility, understanding, justice, professionalism, discipline, political power, and individuality. Next to each, indicate what you think is the author's personal philosophy.
2. Compose brief definitions of discipline as they apply to Adolf Hitler, Robert, Ben Ross, Mr. Owens, Midge Saunders, Coach Schiller, David, Brian, Laurie, and Alex.
3. List and describe scenes that depict conflict, particularly student response to *The Grapevine*, the pep rally, the Saturday game against Clarkstown, meetings in the publications room, Laurie's breakup with David, fights between members of the wave and non-joiners, Ben and Christy at home, and Mr. Owens's confrontation with Ben Ross.
4. Compose a scene in which students hold an assembly to restore Gordon High to normalcy. Express the opinions of Robert, Laurie, Amy, David, and the sophomore who was beaten.
5. Make a thorough list of items essential to a movie version of the novel, for instance newspapers, football, film projector, screen, research materials, pencils and notebooks, wave banners and posters, locker, Spiderman comic book, headset, roller skates, telephone, and lunch trays.

### STRASSER'S PUBLISHED WORKS

*Angel Dust Blues*, 1979  
*Friends Till the End*, 1981  
*The Wave*, 1981  
*Rock 'n' Roll Nights*, 1982  
*Workin' for Peanuts*, 1983  
*Turn It Up!*, 1984  
*The Complete Computer Popularity Program*, 1984  
*A Very Touchy Subject*, 1985  
*Ferris Bueller's Day Off*, 1986  
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*Wildlife*, 1987  
*The Mall from Outer Space*, 1987  
*Rock It to the Top*, 1987  
*The Family Man*, 1988  
*Beyond the Reef*, 1989  
*Cookie*, 1989  
*Moving Target*, 1989  
*The Accident*, 1990  
*Over the Limit*, 1990  
*Home Alone*, 1991  
*The Diving Bell*, 1992  
*Honey I Blew up the Kid*, 1992

### RELATED READING

*Avi's Nothing But the Truth*  
Judy Blume's *Tiger Eyes*  
Robert Cormier's *Chocolate War*  
Lois Duncan's *Killing Mr. Griffin*  
*Anne Frank: Diary of a Young Girl*  
William Golding's *Lord of the Flies*  
Bette Greene's *Summer of My German Soldier*  
S. E. Hinton's *Tex* and *The Outsiders*  
Jim and Jeanne Wakatsuki Houston's *Farewell to Manzanar*  
M. E. Kerr's *Gentlehands*  
Jack London's *Call of the Wild*  
Harry Mazer's *Snowbound*  
William Sleator's *Oddballs*  
Elie Wiesel's *Night*  
Paul Zindel's *Pigman*

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## THE WAVE

### VOCABULARY TEST

From the list that follows, select a word to fill in the blank. You will have answers left over when you finish:

atrocities	espoused	functioning	minority	scowling
civilization	excelled	herded	naive	seized
convictions	expectancy	inflation	psychopath	solution
deemed	exterminated	intrigued	ranks	unfit
ebb	fascism	menial	remains	untouchable

What you are watching took place in Germany between 1934 and 1945. It was the work of a man named Adolf Hitler, originally a (1) \_\_\_\_\_ laborer, porter, and house painter, who turned to politics after World War One. Germany had been defeated in that war, its leadership was at a low (2) \_\_\_\_\_, (3) \_\_\_\_\_ was high, and thousands were homeless, hungry, and jobless.

For Hitler it was an opportunity to rise quickly through the political (4) \_\_\_\_\_ of the Nazi Party. He (5) \_\_\_\_\_ the theory that the Jews were the destroyers of (6) \_\_\_\_\_ and that the Germans were a superior race. Today we know that Hitler was a paranoid, a (7) \_\_\_\_\_, literally a madman. In 1923 he was thrown in jail for his political activities, but by 1934 he and his party had (8) \_\_\_\_\_ control of the German government. . . .

The death camps were what Hitler called his "Final (9) \_\_\_\_\_ to the Jewish problem." But anyone — not just Jews — (10) \_\_\_\_\_ by the Nazis as (11) \_\_\_\_\_ for their superior race was sent there. They were (12) \_\_\_\_\_ into camps all over Eastern Europe, and once there they were worked, starved, and tortured, and when they couldn't work anymore, they were (13) \_\_\_\_\_ in the gas chambers. Their (14) \_\_\_\_\_ were disposed of in ovens. . . . The life (15) \_\_\_\_\_ of the prisoners in the camps was two hundred and seventy days. But many did not survive a week.



## THE WAVE

### COMPREHENSION TEST A

#### Part I: Character Identification (30 points)

Identify the characters described below.

- \_\_\_\_\_ 1. is a leader in the League of Women Voters.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 2. is interested in Indians, bridge, astronomy, and killer whales.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 3. threatens to fire Ben.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 4. beats Betty Lewis in tennis.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 5. grabs Laurie and throws her to the ground.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 6. reads Spiderman comic books.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 7. is jealous of Laurie's grades and looks.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 8. likes jokes and listens to music through a headset.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 9. invites *The Grapevine* staff to a Sunday meeting.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 10. bores French students.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 11. was jailed for illegal political activities.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 12. refuses to let Laurie sit with members of the wave.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 13. was the British prime minister before Churchill.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 14. competes with David for position of quarterback.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 15. reports on the sophomore who was beaten up.

#### Part II: True/False (20 points)

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

- \_\_\_\_\_ 1. Ben Ross comforts Robert, who weeps at the end of the assembly.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 2. The boosters in the wave help the team defeat Clarkstown.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 3. Alex pledges to fight the wave with the cry "Give me liberty, or give me acne!"
- \_\_\_\_\_ 4. Concealed in the lounge, Ben Ross overhears the coach and another teacher praising the wave for increasing student participation.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 5. Midge Saunders reports that a Jewish boy wrote an anonymous letter to *The Grapevine*.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 6. Ben Ross tries to stimulate his class from its apathy by encouraging strict discipline.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 7. Adolf Hitler blamed the Jews for Germany's problems with inflation, unemployment, and hunger.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 8. Ben Ross is unable to explain how atrocities continued without causing strong opposition from German citizens.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 9. Principal Owens thinks Ben's plans to end the wave will lead to more violence.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 10. Classroom procedure requires that students call Mr. Ross's name at the end of each question and answer.

## THE WAVE

### Part III: Completion (20 points)

Complete each quotation below with a word or phrase.

1. Jeff, who pitches for the \_\_\_\_\_, is more successful than Robert.
2. Ben Ross explains that \_\_\_\_\_ tried to excuse cruelty by claiming that they were just following orders.
3. Mrs. Billings once said that Robert has a normal \_\_\_\_\_.
4. Distribution of \_\_\_\_\_ is followed by rumors and a buzz of excitement.
5. Christy complains that students from her music classes have been attending Ben's \_\_\_\_\_ class.
6. The two students who receive an A on their papers are Laurie and \_\_\_\_\_.
7. Hitler's power extended from 1934 to \_\_\_\_\_.
8. Victims of Nazis were killed in \_\_\_\_\_ chambers.
9. Hitler considered death camps a "final \_\_\_\_\_ to the Jewish problem."
10. \_\_\_\_\_ weeps after the film and asks why no one stopped the Nazis from killing 10 million people.

### Part IV: Essay (30 points)

Select two to answer in paragraph form.

1. Explain why Robert's attitude improves with the introduction of the wave.
2. Discuss family, administration, and peer reaction to the wave.
3. Describe Ben Ross's statement of the facts about Nazism.
4. Compare apathy to fanaticism.

**THE WAVE**

**COMPREHENSION TEST B**

**Part I: Short Answer (30 points)**

Supply a word or phrase in answer to the following questions.

- \_\_\_\_\_ 1. Who has difficulty threading a projector?
- \_\_\_\_\_ 2. How many people did Hitler's regime exterminate?
- \_\_\_\_\_ 3. Who is editor-in-chief of *The Grapevine*?
- \_\_\_\_\_ 4. What does Robert read during lunch?
- \_\_\_\_\_ 5. What geometric shape contains the wave symbol?
- \_\_\_\_\_ 6. Who is Gordon High's quarterback?
- \_\_\_\_\_ 7. What is scrawled on Laurie's locker?
- \_\_\_\_\_ 8. What does Jeff Billings study while playing for the Orioles?
- \_\_\_\_\_ 9. Who refuses to give the official salute in the stands?
- \_\_\_\_\_ 10. Who believes Ben is learning to be a dictator?
- \_\_\_\_\_ 11. What face appears on the screen?
- \_\_\_\_\_ 12. Who is the class nerd?
- \_\_\_\_\_ 13. When does *The Grapevine* staff meet to finalize the next issue?
- \_\_\_\_\_ 14. Who grabs Laurie and shoves her to the ground?
- \_\_\_\_\_ 15. Who shouts slogans as he is being taken to Mr. Owens's office?

**Part II: Character Analysis (20 points)**

Place an X beside each statement that is true of Laurie.

- \_\_\_\_\_ 1. is jealous of Amy's blond hair and good grades.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 2. confides in her parents.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 3. wants to sit in the stands with her friends.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 4. runs from two unknown pursuers down school hallways and along the tennis court.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 5. believes that individuals should make up their own minds.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 6. leaves the table when Robert sits down.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 7. is a forceful member of the League of Women Voters.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 8. asks Mr. Owens to stop the rally.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 9. reluctantly agrees to trust Ben Ross.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 10. is escorted to the principal's office.

## THE WAVE

### Part III: Multiple Choice (20 points)

Underline the word or phrase which will complete each statement below.

1. Principal Owens consults with (Christy Ross about her husband's obsession with World War II, a rabbi who spent two years in Auschwitz, Midge Saunders about distribution of *The Grapevine*, Mr. Gabondi about a year's sabbatical).
2. Ben Ross (looks different in coat and tie, considers Robert a lost cause, tries to suppress an anonymous letter to *The Grapevine*, prefers that Robert be his bodyguard).
3. Ben Ross is concerned that students (tend to value team spirit over winning games, give the wave salute to Clarkstown's players, are unfamiliar with Chamberlain's role in British politics, are remiss about doing homework).
4. After the film, (Robert awakens from his nap, Jeff leaves for baseball practice, two wave members hide and wait for Laurie outside the tennis courts, Christy asks her husband to do his share by cooking dinner).
5. Coach Schiller (initiates the idea of using the wave at the pep rally, threatens players who don't practice, is Gordon High's most charismatic teacher, expects Robert to play football as well as Jeff did).
6. (Laurie, Amy, Robert, Andrea) weeps at the close of the film about Nazi atrocities.
7. To ease Laurie's fears about the wave, (David agrees to distribute copies of *The Grapevine* on Sunday, Midge Saunders suggests that she quit as editor-in-chief, Alex makes jokes, Carl roller skates down the hallway).
8. As he introduces the wave, Ben Ross equates discipline with (better grades, power and success, loyalty to the Gordon High football team, research).
9. Andrea admits that (she struck a Jewish boy, the wave scares her, ballet takes hard work, the fight started over a sophomore's refusal to join the wave).
10. Although class behavior improves, (history grades fall, students give shorter answers, Christy complains that Ben spends too much time on grading papers, students aren't interested in Japan's role in World War II).

### Part IV: Essay (30 points)

Select two to answer in paragraph form.

1. Explain how the community gets involved in the wave.
2. Describe Robert's peculiarities and failures.
3. Discuss what students learn about the Nazis.
4. Account for the end of the wave.

## THE WAVE

### ANSWER KEY

#### VOCABULARY TEST

- |                 |                  |
|-----------------|------------------|
| 1. menial       | 9. solution      |
| 2. ebb          | 10. deemed       |
| 3. inflation    | 11. unfit        |
| 4. ranks        | 12. herded       |
| 5. espoused     | 13. exterminated |
| 6. civilization | 14. remains      |
| 7. psychopath   | 15. expectancy   |
| 8. seized       |                  |

#### COMPREHENSION TEST A

##### Part I: Identification (30 points)

- |                   |                  |
|-------------------|------------------|
| 1. Midge Saunders | 9. Laurie        |
| 2. Ben Ross       | 10. Mr. Gabondi  |
| 3. Mr. Owens      | 11. Adolf Hitler |
| 4. Christy Ross   | 12. Brad         |
| 5. David          | 13. Chamberlain  |
| 6. Robert         | 14. Brian        |
| 7. Amy            | 15. Carl         |
| 8. Alex           |                  |

##### Part II: True/False (20 points)

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

##### Part III: Completion (20 points)

- |                      |             |
|----------------------|-------------|
| 1. Baltimore Orioles | 6. Amy      |
| 2. Nazis             | 7. 1945     |
| 3. I.Q.              | 8. gas      |
| 4. The Grapevine     | 9. solution |
| 5. history           | 10. Amy     |

##### Part IV: Essay (30 points)

Answers will vary.

#### COMPREHENSION TEST B

##### Part I: Short Answer (30 points)

- |                         |                  |
|-------------------------|------------------|
| 1. Ben Ross             | 9. Laurie        |
| 2. ten million          | 10. Christy      |
| 3. Laurie               | 11. Adolf Hitler |
| 4. Spiderman comic book | 12. Robert       |
| 5. circle               | 13. Sunday       |
| 6. David                | 14. David        |
| 7. enemy                | 15. Brian        |
| 8. medicine             |                  |

##### Part II: Completion (20 points)

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

##### Part III: Multiple Choice (20 points)

1. a rabbi who spent two years in Auschwitz
2. looks different in coat and tie
3. are remiss about doing homework
4. Robert awakens from his nap
5. threatens players who don't practice
6. Amy
7. Alex makes jokes
8. power and success
9. ballet takes hard work
10. students give shorter answers

##### Part IV: Essay (30 points)

Answers will vary.

**TEACHER'S NOTES**

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