

**SYNOPSIS**

In the presence of his friend Paul, 15-year-old Andy Zadinski answers the kitchen phone and hears an anonymous voice admit to a killing. Cool in the face of the alarming confession, Andy elicits from the person his name — Zeke — and the fact that he loved a local college student, Nina Klemmer, and had just stabbed her because she refused to date him. Andy scribbles a note to Paul to have the police trace the call to his number. Zeke gives memorable details, including Nina's red Ford Escort, his background in the mountains, and the fact that Nina had black hair, stood five feet six, and wore red on her lips and nails. To Zeke's question, Andy claims to be Pete Smith. The conversation ends abruptly because of a series of clicks on the line.

Andy makes notes on the incident and learns from Paul that the police ridiculed the call as the result of "a full moon, Friday night, and welfare checks just out." Andy calls the Madison police and speaks with Officer Seneto, reporting that he lives with his father, Dr. Bob Zadinski, a college teacher. Paul and Andy attend a party, where Andy tells Sally of the events.

At 1:00 A.M., Andy returns to the apartment and checks the answering machine for messages. His father's voice promises that he will return late. It is a year after Andy's mother was killed by a drunken driver and a few days after moving to a new home, and Andy feels lonely. Later that morning, he finds no notice of a murder in the newspaper. He tells his father about Zeke's call. Dr. Zadinski notes that the phone has been installed only two days and that the new number went unreported to the secretary, but that he left it on a slip of paper on her desk Friday. Andy telephones the police and talks with Officer Martins, who believes that Andy did the right thing by reporting the unsettling call.

His father suggests that the family stop mourning their dead and become more socially active. On Sunday, Andy and his father attend a party. On Monday Andy leaves school and rides his bike to his father's office at the math department of Madison State College and looks up Nina's name in the directory. He calls her number at Whig Hall and tells her about the disturbing call. Nina takes offense and orders him to leave her alone.

At the library, Andy reports an emergency to the clerk and has Nina paged. From afar, he identifies her as the woman Zeke described and, fearful that she is in jeopardy, follows her. At the apartment, Dr. Zadinski reports that he has a date with Peggy Anderson. Andy is not pleased but pretends that dating is good for his father. Dr. Zadinski disapproves of Andy's method of tracking Nina.

On Tuesday, Andy avoids baseball tryouts and pedals to the police department. He speaks to Officer Dorfman, who offers the same advice as Dr. Zadinski — leave it alone.

Dorfman hypothesizes that Paul got another friend to make the crank call and notes that Andy is the only person who actually heard the voice.

By the next morning, Andy is ready to forget the call. That afternoon, Mrs. Baskin, a school counselor, speaks in private with Andy and implies that he is upset by the move and the anniversary of his mother's death. She repeats the story of the boy who cried Wolf. Although Andy insists that the call was not imaginary, Mrs. Baskin schedules weekly counseling sessions on Mondays during eighth period.

Dr. Zadinski offers to cancel his date if Andy will feel less jittery. Andy goes for a walk and follows Nina to the student center. He introduces himself and warns Nina of the caller's intent. Nina is furious that Andy paged her at the library and reports him for harassment. At home, Andy informs his father of his involvement in warning Nina. Dr. Zadinski explains that harassment is a serious problem on campus. He implies that Andy made up the call.

The next morning, Dr. Zadinski and Andy visit Officer Dorfman at Mrs. Baskin's office. Dorfman reports that Sgt. Evans, the college security coordinator, informed the police of Nina's complaint against Andy. Dr. Zadinski fears a lawsuit and decides to contact attorney George Perbeck. That night, Dr. Zadinski invites Peggy to the house and takes Andy along on the date.

Father and son spend Saturday morning biking around the lake in pleasant April weather. Andy pulls ahead and stops for a drink of water from the fountain. In the distance, he sees Nina dancing barefoot in a white cape. On Sunday, Andy thinks over the placement of the telephone number on the secretary's desk. Angrily, Dr. Zadinski retorts that a potential morals charge is more serious than the crank call and insists that Andy is imagining the incident. The next Monday, Mrs. Baskin emphasizes that Andy must give up his sleuthing.

That afternoon, pretending to be a newspaper reporter, Andy telephones the male math department members who would have had access to the slip of paper on the secretary's desk. The fifteenth call is to Dr. Philip Lucas; the voice is Zeke's. At dinner, Andy weeps as he tells his father his discovery, then flees to his room in frustration. Dr. Zadinski talks to Peggy about Andy's obsession.

On Tuesday, Andy returns to campus and locates Lucas's classroom in Minkoff Hall. Andy pretends to be taking notes for another student. Lucas sees through his meager lie; Andy tries to cover up by saying that he meant to visit Dr. Zadinski's class. At the apartment, Andy and his father quarrel over trust and broken promises. Andy tries to explain what he saw at the lake and his identification of Lucas's voice. Andy's father fears that his son is insane and orders him to stop investigating the call.

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By Wednesday, the two are barely speaking. Andy disobeys by biking to the library and revealing to Nina that he has identified the voice. She accuses him of stalking her. At dinner, Dr. Zadinski suggests that Andy visit his Aunt Mary's farm on Tuesday. The next day, Andy tells Paul that he is being sent away. After school Andy telephones Lucas and asks for Zeke. Lucas sucks in his breath and hangs up. The reaction proves that Andy is correct in his assumptions about Lucas.

To solidify his plan to bring Lucas and Nina together, Andy learns that Nina works weekdays from four until eight except for Monday, when she attends a 6:00 class at the Old Chapel. That night, Andy confides to Sally that he may not have to leave town. On Friday morning, Andy pretends to behave normally and parts amicably with his father. At the campus, Nina sets out for class before nine. Andy notes her daily schedule, including Lucas's class in the afternoon. Andy phones Lucas and says that Nina wants to meet him. Lucas bashes his phone into the wall.

On Saturday, Andy phones a second time. The third call forces Lucas to consider resigning from the faculty. He thinks about the slip of paper with the phone number on it and concludes that it belongs to a staff member. Meanwhile, Andy slips into the bleachers to try to fool his father, but Dr. Zadinski, who has followed him, knows that Andy lied about attending with Paul. To keep Andy out of trouble, he plans to keep him under close watch until departure to Aunt Mary's.

That evening, Andy sulks in his room. After his father goes to bed, Andy sneaks out to telephone Lucas and pretends that Nina wants to speak to Zeke. Lucas contemplates how to outwit his stalker. On Sunday morning, Andy sneaks out for another call. At breakfast, he disarms his father by apologizing for rudeness and asking to join Peggy and his dad at Hardy Park. At the same time, Lucas deduces that the phone number he had called belonged to Bob Zadinski and recalls having seen Bob's son at the funeral for Mrs. Zadinski. At the park, Andy climbs on the carousel and mounts the wolf. The ride reminds him of his twelfth birthday. That night, Andy sets up the meeting at Old Chapel Monday night at 9:00 P. M.

Lucas calls Dr. Zadinski and mentions a future dinner invitation. Lucas selects a steak knife and puts it in his briefcase. Andy attends Monday classes and nearly misses his appointment with Mrs. Baskin, who warns him that an enforcer may harm himself more than he harms a lawbreaker. Andy closes his eyes and refuses to confide in her. He departs with an envelope of assignments to cover the time he will spend with his aunt.

The enormity of his plans terrorizes Andy. He packs his suitcase and wishes that he could talk with someone. Andy calls Officer Dorfman, Mrs. Baskin, Paul, but no one is available. Andy tries to call Lucas and cancel the meeting, but Lucas doesn't answer. At the same time, Lucas sets a tape recorder to emit typing sounds and goes to teach Nina's class, Math 302. He looks forward to seeing his tormentor and deduces that Nina has no part in the set-up.

Andy returns to the house he had lived in at the same time that Lucas reports to the secretary that he doesn't want to be disturbed while he works on a report for the college president. At 5:30, Andy goes to the student center and

buys a candy bar. An hour later, he looks toward Old Chapel, identifies the people who enter, and waits in a thicket until Lucas arrives. Andy fantasizes that he will be famous for his role in stopping the crime.

At 8:45, Lucas sneaks up and holds Andy at knifepoint. Lucas forces him into a car, ties his hands, and drives out of Madison. Andy gives his correct name and says that his father believes Zeke is crazy. Andy sobs as the car moves from flat land to the mountains and Gammon State Forest. In a frantic struggle to save himself, Andy kicks his way out of the car; Lucas fails to open his seat belt as the car plunges over a cliff.

Safe in his bed, Andy sleeps until time to leave for the airport. His father goes to the closet to get Andy's ball glove and spies a cufflink monogrammed P. L. On the ride to catch Andy's flight, Dr. Zadinski tries to elicit the truth about Phil Lucas's supposed suicide. Andy confides nothing and believes that his father will never know the truth. After Andy's plane departs, Dr. Zadinski, weeping, drops the cufflink in the trash.

## BIOGRAPHICAL SKETCH

A native of Brooklyn, New York, Avi Wortis comes from a family of artists, composers, and writers, including a grandmother and two great-grandfathers, as well as activists for the rights of women, labor, and minority races. The twin of poet Emily Leider and brother of scientist Henry Wortis, Avi was born December 23, 1937, the son of social worker Helen Zuser Wortis and Dr. Joseph Wortis, a psychiatrist. Avi, who loved reading, history, and imaginative games, decided in his teens to become a writer, although he required special tutoring in composition and spelling to counter dysgraphia, a learning disability. After graduating from Elisabeth Irwin High School, he majored in history at the University of Wisconsin, from which he holds a B. A. and an M. A. in drama, and obtained an M. S. in library science from Columbia University in 1964. He married Joan Gabriner, a weaver, in 1963, and fathered sons Shaun and Kevin, who became rock musicians. His second marriage, to Coppelia Kahn, added a stepson, Gabriel. The Wortis family currently lives in Princeton, Rhode Island.

Avi's career brought him to the New York Public Library Performing Arts Research Center in 1962 as librarian for the theater collection, where he nurtured his interest in the history of children's literature. Two years after serving as exchange librarian at the Lambeth Public Library in London, he took a post as librarian for the theater collection, where he nurtured his interest in the history of children's literature. In 1970, he took a post as assistant professor and humanities librarian for Trenton State College, where he taught research. Publishing under the name Avi, he began a successful stint of writing young adult literature after the birth of his own children and produced 30 books in 24 years. His method includes extensive revisions after consultations with his family and readings in schoolrooms. In addition to fiction, he contributes to publications, including the *New York Public Library Bulletin*, *Children's Literature in Education*, *Top of the News*, and *Writer*. From 1965-1973, he reviewed for *Previews*, *Library Journal*, and *School Library Journal*.

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### CRITIC'S CORNER

Because his attempts at writing plays brought frustration and failure, Avi worked as a sign painter, carpenter, and drama coach before becoming a significant name in young adult mysteries, fantasy, and historical fiction. He admits that the challenge of a new genre inspires some of his best work, especially when suggested by his sons. Adept at irony, contradiction, moral dilemma, and complex plot resolutions, he often depicts characters caught up in realistic quandaries and frustrated enough to apply extremes of logic and emotion to extricate themselves, as demonstrated by *Wolf Rider*. These are the qualities, he insists, that keep young readers alert and interactive with the plot.

His honors include a best book by the British Book Council, the Scott O'Dell award, three grants from the New Jersey Council on the Arts, three second places for Best Mystery of the Year, two Library of Congress citations, nominations for the Young Hoosier, William Allen White, Mark Twain, and Dorothy Canfield Fisher awards, a Christopher Book award, a Society of Children's Book Authors award, a Golden Kite award, and an IRA Children's Choice award. *The True Confessions of Charlotte Doyle* won Avi a Newbery Medal and the Boston *Globe-Horn Book* award. *Wolf Rider* has won a Virginia Young Readers award and one of three Best Books of the Year from *School Library Journal*. His books have been translated into eight languages, five of which are available on radio scripts and one — *Fighting Ground* — is available on tape from Listening Library.

### GENERAL OBJECTIVES

1. To locate the exposition, rising action, conflict, falling action, and resolution of a work of fiction
2. To comment on the psychological aspects of foreboding, loss, fear, treachery, and violence that accompany a thriller novel
3. To evaluate behaviors and attitudes that reveal characters' inner thoughts, compulsions, and needs
4. To typify contrasting methods of logic and detective work
5. To express a need for counseling and understanding for troubled people, especially children and teens
6. To explain why varied settings benefit the plot
7. To note the estrangement of father and son in a time that demands trust
8. To validate the compulsion of conscience to save a life
9. To assess the conclusion in terms of justice
10. To comment on the burden of morality and sacrifice of self for others.

### SPECIFIC OBJECTIVES

1. To explain why Andy continues to lie and deceive

2. To contrast Dr. Zadinski and Andy in terms of mutual communication
3. To detail how Lucas sets up an alibi at his office
4. To characterize Nina's response to danger
5. To determine the reason for Zeke's first call
6. To credit Andy for persistence
7. To evaluate Mrs. Baskin's concern for "the punisher"
8. To recount Andy's terror at meeting a psychopath, facing a nameless punishment, and escaping from the car
9. To express the dramatic alienation between father and son at the airport
10. To explain the title as it applies to Andy's childhood and teen years

### MEANING STUDY

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

1. Gathering his books, he returned quickly to the library lobby, a wide, open space with a threadbare red carpet. At the entrance, thirty feet from the long checkout counter, were turnstiles and, nearby, phone booths. (Part 1, p. 30)  
(*Security is an important consideration at the Madison State College library. The use of checkout stations and turnstiles helps staff members keep check on items brought in and removed from the building. The turnstiles allow only a single patron to exit at a time. Some checkout systems are automatic or operated by patrons, who drag a wand over the magnetic card in the pocket to credit the item to the borrower's account. The database stores names and locations of the regular collection and itemizes those works that are overdue or returned in poor condition. If a patron attempts to exit through the turnstile without an electronic okay for each book, the gate shuts to halt the user from removing the work.*)
2. Mrs. Baskin said, "Andy, do you know the story about the boy who cried 'Wolf! Remember?'" (Part 2, p. 49)  
(*The story of the boy who cried wolf appears in Aesop's fables, a set of beast stories that involves animals interacting with animals or with people. The boy who cried wolf too often caused people to doubt his word. When a wolf actually menaced him, no one answered the real cry for help. Mrs. Baskin's application of Aesop's moral indicates that she doubts Andy's truthfulness and suspects he is seeking attention by pressing for a resolution to the threat he heard on the telephone.*)
3. You driving to where she lives, picking her up, paying

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for dinner . . . the whole fifties bit? (Part 2, p. 53)  
*(Andy disconcerts Dr. Zadinski, who is new at the dating game after the death of his wife a year earlier. The reference to "the whole fifties bit" refers to a time when men took complete responsibility for dates, including invitation, selection and financing of amusements and refreshments or meals, and appropriate transportation. Andy's astute summation of his father's situation indicates that Dr. Zadinski has entered unfamiliar social territory with Peggy Anderson and that he is not so suave or cool as he appears to be.)*

4. In the second [place], if there really is such a person, he's crazy. A psychopath. Dangerous. (Part 2, p. 84)  
*(Dr. Zadinski is correct in fearing the behavior of a psychopath, whose erratic behavior, unstable motivation, and inadequate self-control could lead to the satisfaction of an urge that results in injury or death. In Freudian terms, a psychopath acts impulsively on illogical conclusions. Without the direction of a conscience or concern for public or moral standards of behavior, a crazed deviate like Phil Lucas could carry out a heinous plot that bears little connection with reality, e. g. making an impression on Nina Kremmer, who obviously has no amorous interest in her math professor.)*
5. I have known him for as long as I've been at Madison. He helped hire me. Get me tenure. (Part 3, p. 102)  
*(Phil Lucas has served a significant role in Dr. Bob Zadinski's career. In educational parlance, getting tenure means working under full or partial supervision for a trial period of one to three years or more before being accepted in a contractual relationship that insures employment as associate or full professor, department head, or dean. During the non-tenured period, the teacher must attain respect from students and faculty and often has to perform for academic societies by giving speeches, conducting seminars, or publishing articles or research that prove sincere and worthy scholarship on a par with the school's — and society's — expectations.)*
6. What . . . what if he could . . . force . . . Lucas into the open . . . by letting him know . . . someone . . . had discovered the truth. A kind of . . . blackmail. (Part 3, p. 115)  
*(Haltingly, Andy ponders a form of extortion. Blackmail is forced payment of money, privilege, or other remuneration in exchange for the blackmailer's withholding incriminating information, photographs, or other documents or proofs of guilt or embarrassment. Andy actually has no written proof that Phil Lucas plans to do anything illegal.)*
7. He thought of his father calling him "Sherlock," and rather liked the idea now. (Part 3, p. 124)  
*(Sherlock Holmes, the fictional detective and logician of Sir Arthur Conan Doyle's thrillers, appeared in 1887 in "A Study in Scarlet" in Beeton's Christmas Annual, and extended through a long run of four novels and 56 short stories published in collections and in Strand Magazine.*

*The collected stories filled The Adventures of Sherlock Holmes in 1892 and The Memoirs of Sherlock Holmes two years later. In 1902, Doyle's bestselling The Hound of the Baskervilles represented the height of Doyle's tales of ratiocination or application of logic to solving peculiar or repulsive crimes involving bizarre clues, such as a trained snake and a glowing dog. A final volume, The Casebook of Sherlock Holmes, appeared in 1927, three years before Doyle's death. The popularity of Holmesian fiction continued in imitations, fan clubs, movie versions, and the inclusion in the language of "Sherlock," a term indicating a person possessing the ability to figure out a tangled web of intrigue or a dire plot.)*

8. The entrance to Hardy Amusement Park was a castle with a drawbridge. (Part 4, p. 147)  
*(Avi plays with words by setting in an amusement park a respite from the puzzle of Zeke's identity. Accompanied by his father and Peggy Anderson, Bob Zadinski's date, Andy passes through a drawbridge into a never-never land that he loved as a child. Like Frank Hardy of the Hardy Boys mystery stories, he attempts to outwit Phil Lucas by plotting and laying out an elaborate scheme to resolve the puzzle of the crank call from Zeke. The drawbridge suggests an escape from outside enemies within the keep or stronghold of the castle. After the bridge rises into place in the outer rampart, Andy is ostensibly safe. However, he deliberately chooses to ride the wolf, a connection with the title that places him in imminent danger from a wild ride or an attempt to dismount.)*
9. Directly in front of them was the carousel, spinning to the tune of a bouncy waltz. (Part 4, p. 147)  
*(The circular direction of the carousel symbolizes the spin of Andy's efforts about the perplexing facts in the case of Nina and Zeke. While riding the childish ride and moving up and down to the waltz, Andy pictures himself in the same setting with his mother and father. The effect of a pleasant day is an abrupt encounter with sorrow: "Recalling it all with unexpected vividness. Andy felt a deep and sudden grief." As in real life, Andy leans into the neck of the model wolf, clings to it, and "[lets] himself be carried on.")*
10. All he needed was a simple loop of sound. (Part 5, p. 166)  
*(Phil Lucas plots a continuous stream of typing sounds to emit from his office to create an alibi for the night he is set to meet Peter Smith and Nina. The "simple loop of sound" requires additional lies to the cleaning staff and campus security to assure that Lucas's whereabouts remain a secret. This elaborate cover-up may have alerted the secretary to Lucas's situation and his intention of stabbing Smith.)*

### 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

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passages in the book.

### Questions 1 - 4 Literal Level

1. What are the events that set the story in motion?  
*(In the spring of his 15th year, Andy Zadinski is in the kitchen of an apartment in Madison that he has moved into with his father only two days before. In the presence of Andy's friend Paul, Andy answers the telephone and hears a clear, uninhibited confession of stabbing Nina because she refuses to date him. The killer, identifying himself as Zeke, claims to be in the room with the corpse and does not know what to do. Zeke describes Nina's red nails and lips, height of five feet seven inches, and black hair; he claims that she drives a red Ford Escort. Andy tries to keep Zeke talking and identifies himself as Peter Smith.)*
2. How does Paul take part in the opening scene?  
*(Although he is in the kitchen with Andy, Paul never hears Zeke's confession. Andy sends Paul to get the police to trace the call, who hurries to a fire station. After contacting the Madison police, he receives an inappropriate brush-off and ridicule of "a full moon, Friday night, and welfare checks just out." Andy makes notes of the incident and telephones police to prove that the call was in earnest and that the authorities should take action against a killer. Andy later tells the whole story to Sally.)*
3. What events on the previous Thursday precipitate the opening scene?  
*(At a called meeting of the math department, Dr. Bob Zadinski leaves his new telephone number on a slip of paper and places it on the secretary's desk. Because of her absence, Dr. Philip Lucas, who also teaches in the math department and attends the same meeting, has an opportunity to pick up the paper and dial the number. As Andy thinks over the people who might be suspects, he decides that only a male member of the math department is a likely candidate. He systematically dials each person and, under cover of a survey taker for the Madison newspaper, hears enough of each voice to determine that the fifteenth name, Dr. Philip Lucas, is Zeke.)*
4. How does Andy lure Lucas into the open?  
*(By studying Nina's schedule and setting up a meeting with Nina at Old Chapel on Monday night at 9:00 P. M., Andy is certain that Zeke will appear. Implying that he knows Zeke's identity and can bring about a meeting between him and Nina, Andy, disguising himself as Peter Smith, presses Dr. Lucas with repeated phone calls. The bait seems to work in that Dr. Lucas stays on the line and audibly gasps at Andy's brash confrontation.  
*On the night of the meeting, Andy leaves home hours before the meeting and hides near the building to watch the entrance. As planned, Nina and other students appear to attend class. The flaw in his plan is that Dr. Lucas is more concerned with Andy's blackmail than his desire to harm Nina. In the dark, Lucas approaches**

*from the rear, takes Andy hostage, and drives to Gammon State Park, ostensibly to kill him.)*

### Questions 5-8 Interpretive Level

5. How are Andy/Peter Smith and Dr. Lucas/Zeke similar and different?  
*(Both Andy and Dr. Lucas resort to deception to achieve their aims. Andy, who is motivated by good intentions, introduces himself to Dr. Lucas as Peter Smith to cover Andy's ongoing detective work. Likewise, Dr. Lucas identifies himself as Zeke, a mountain native who has been tossed aside by a tempting and lovely college student. The difference between these alter egos is the loss of reality. Andy never becomes Peter Smith; the name serves only as cover. Dr. Lucas, on the other hand, submerges his polished, scholarly pose in the yearning of a pathetic mountaineer for release from the flat lands and return to hill country and for vengeance on a woman he feels has spurned him.)*
6. Why does Andy fly to his aunt's farm?  
*(Repeated lies and deceptions to his father cause Andy to receive stiffer and stiffer punishments, from scolding to humiliation to surveillance to banishment to his Aunt Mary's farm. After Dr. Lucas's death, Andy collapses in sleep and lets relief wash over him. As his father planned, Andy collects his school assignments and suitcase in preparation for the trip. The news of Dr. Lucas's alleged suicide opens a channel of belief in Dr. Zadinski that had previously been blocked by doubt and suspicion of his son's motives.  
*At the airport, Dr. Zadinski hugs his son and professes his love. Andy, in a state of suspended animation, says nothing. On the plane, he determines to keep to himself the events of the previous weeks. He doubts that his father could suspect the truth about Dr. Lucas's death. Andy concludes that "he would never tell because it would kill his father and Andy knew how much he needed him and loved him." Andy accepts the separation as a necessary closure of a trying time in his relationship with his father.)**
7. What ambiguities are left for the reader to ponder?  
*(There are numerous unanswered questions at the conclusion of Avi's thriller novel. How does Andy get home from Gammon State Park? What happens to the knife and rope? Why does Lucas's death pass for suicide? What explanation do the police make of the steak knife and rope or of the missing cufflink? Does Dr. Zadinski think that Andy murdered Dr. Lucas or does he weep because he has failed his son by not trusting him or assisting him with a deeply moral conflict? The alienation that prevents Andy from expressing love and need at departure time suggests that the family relationship is forever damaged.)*
8. Why are insecurity and treachery significant themes in the novel?  
*(Andy, who is recovering from the death of his mother a year before the story opens, is also getting used to liv-*

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ing in an apartment and spending time apart from his father, who tends to career and social demands on his own. The emergence of his father's social life and interest in dates also unsettles Andy, although he attempts to conceal his real distaste for transition from the three-story blue and white house and a real mother to an apartment and a potential stepmother. When Andy overhears his father telling Peggy about Andy's troubled reaction to a crank call, the boy feels betrayed. The meeting with the counselor and Officer Dorfman intensifies the feeling that adults are not to be trusted.)

### Questions 9 and 10 - Critical Level

9. Why does Andy's obsession with the crank call lead him to such extravagant and unpredictable behaviors? (Andy is idealistic in that he willingly takes responsibility for Nina, a lovely girl who is jeopardized by a potential killer so cleverly disguised that the police never make the connection between Dr. Lucas and Andy's description of Zeke. The callous authorities put little stock in Andy's evidence; the school counselor feels more at home in the thwarted child/mother scenario than in a real examination of Andy's fearful experience.

When Andy's father moves from a father/son bond to dates with Peggy Anderson and daily scraps with Andy about disobedience, Andy begins to feel more isolated, less able to communicate the terrible fact that Dr. Lucas is Zeke. When Andy faces a temporary banishment to Aunt Mary's farm to recover from emotional trauma, he determines that he must bring together the principles in Zeke's proposed killing and halt the crime that Zeke may yet commit. The chivalric daring demonstrates teen fantasy, a lack of touch with reality that is indigenous to Andy's age group. Andy fails to perceive that the stalker has turned from Nina to Peter Smith and that Andy himself is now a potential victim.)

10. How does Avi's handling of the thriller mode compare with that of Robert Cormier, author of *The Chocolate War*, *I Am the Cheese*, *Fade*, and *After the First Death*? (Avi's skill with teen fiction impresses the reader with an adult's tenderness and understanding of the terror of rites of passage complicated by adult moral burdens. Avi clearly perceives the open land that separates adults from teens and capitalizes on the doubts that Dr. Zadinski harbors concerning his son's veracity and mental stability. In contrast to this rather simple plot, Robert Cormier's work plunges more deeply into treachery and manipulation. *The Chocolate War*, which brings children perilously close to the role of killers, has earned its place as a classic young adult thriller. More poignant is *I Am the Cheese*, a pathetic mental odyssey in the mind of Adam Farmer, a child whose parents were killed by criminals and whose survival hinges on the witness protection program, which divests him of his real identity and renders him powerless to rescue himself from treachery and possible extermination.

Avi's work never approaches the intricacy of feeling and potential evil that menace Cormier's characters. Andy's dilemma never reaches the extent of terror that

Cormier's protagonists face because Avi fails to flesh out the characters with a full range of human dimensions — Andy and his friends are never real enough, Dr. Lucas and Dr. Zadinski never approach believable behaviors, and Nina is a mere shadow of a female. In contrast with Cormier's fiction and with Avi's *The True Confessions of Charlotte Doyle*, *Wolf Rider* falls short of the intensity of emotion and characterization that makes a thriller believable.)

### Questions 11-13 Creative Level

11. Using evidence from one of the Sherlock Holmes mysteries, make a list of methods of solving crime by applying knowledge and deductive logic. Compose a parallel list of Andy's methods of studying the evidence and preventing Dr. Lucas from killing Nina.
12. Summarize pictorial scenes from the novel. Mention how Andy's hands are tied, Nina's dance by the lake, Andy's ride on the wolf, dinner with Peggy and Dr. Zadinski, Dr. Lucas's sudden appearance at Old Chapel, the telephone smashed against the wall, and Nina's rejection of Andy's warning at the library.
13. Suggest better, safer ways of luring a potential killer into the open or of exposing Zeke, Dr. Lucas's alter ego.

## ACROSS THE CURRICULUM

### Business and Economics

1. Describe the change in lifestyle from a nuclear family to a single-parent home. Why is an apartment an economically sound move for Dr. Zadinski and his son? What other alternatives would serve? Why does Andy notice that the grass at his old house needs mowing?
2. Explain to a small group why after-school care is a significant national issue. How do latchkey children present an economic problem to working families?

### Geography

1. In a brief chalk talk, explain why the drive from Madison's flat terrain to the mountains is significant to Zeke. What does flat land signify to Zeke?
2. What does the visit to the park signify about Nina's appearance and behavior? How does the shift of setting to a lake and bike path amplify Andy's dilemma about the potential for murder?

### Social Studies

1. Explain in a long theme or taped report the role of police, father, friends, and counselors in Andy's search for someone to believe him. How do adults fail him?
2. Discuss with a small group the difference between stalking and harassment. Why have these issues received national concern? Why are they particularly significant on a college campus?
3. Select a panel to research and report on these ques-

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tions: What is a morals charge? A juvenile delinquent? A psychopath?

4. What laws protect citizens' rights to private telephone communication?

### Psychology

1. Discuss in a short speech the effects of poverty and isolation on Phil Lucas. How does Dr. Zadinski typify his colleague's past difficulties? Account for Lucas's choice of Zeke as an alias and for his dual personality. How can Lucas be both Zeke and a distinguished college faculty member?
2. What forms of relaxation ease Andy's fearful weeks of pursuit? How do the clandestine telephone calls to Zeke reaffirm his intention to halt a murder?
3. Describe in a brief report the psychological reactions to sorrow and loss. Is Mrs. Baskin correct in assuming that Andy still grieves for his mother? Does the move to an apartment help or hinder Andy's healing process?
4. Define mental health. What behaviors and reactions suggest that Phil Lucas is dangerous and that Andy is approaching the limits of his sanity?
5. How do dates with Peggy Anderson help Bob Zadinski return to normal life? Why must the dates meet with Andy's approval if Zadinski is going to feel comfortable with new women in his life?

### Science and Logic

1. Explain how telephone calls are traced. Why do the police fail to locate the caller? What causes the clicks? How can an oscilloscope evaluate voice texture? Why might this device have helped Andy prove his innocence?
2. Discuss methods of forensic investigation. What evidence from the crime scene suggests that Lucas committed suicide? What details might connect Andy with the car and with Lucas?
3. Contrast the logic of Lucas and Andy in locating each other. What other methods might have tipped Lucas to Andy's identity and plan to reveal the identity of the crank caller?

### Language

1. Explain in a short written report how brief vignettes of Lucas parallel Andy's preparations for the meeting. What dramatic purpose does brevity serve?
2. Discuss the symbolism in the choice of a wolf and in the name of Gammon State Park. Why is the cufflink a tip-off to Lucas's invented role as stable college professor?
3. What does Aesop's fable about the boy who cried wolf say about the wall of disbelief that keeps Andy from finding an adult to help him halt a potential murder? Explain

why no one takes into account Andy's past blameless behavior or his early attempt at complete disclosure. How might the story change if both Andy and Paul were questioned at the same time?

### Arts

1. Design a mural to contrast Andy as a detective and Andy as a child who still likes to ride the animal shapes on the carousel. Make a similar contrast between Andy's old house and the apartment.
2. Describe how Andy's black and purple outfit mimics funeral dress.

### Journalism

Compose a list of questions to accompany a televised interview with Andy and Nina. What might a journalist want to know about the recent weeks of hostility and accusations that Andy is stalking Nina? Why would they be interested in Andy's bizarre phone call from Zeke? How could an outsider shed light on the difficulties children face when they aren't believed?

### STUDENT INVOLVEMENT ACTIVITIES

1. Compose a scene in which Andy tells Paul about the drive to the mountains and his attempt to save Dr. Lucas from certain death. Account for Andy's feelings of inadequacy and powerlessness.
2. Read or listen to an audio cassette of Lois Duncan's *Killing Mr. Griffin*. Compare the criminal element of the plot to that of *Wolf Rider*. Why might the police be suspicious of Andy's obsession with crime?
3. Draw a picture of Andy and his family the previous year. How does the presence of Andy's mother cement a stronger family relationship than Andy shares with Dr. Zadinski? Why is Peggy an outsider in the trio?
4. Lead a discussion of the difficulties children face when their parents remarry. Include these topics: differences in ages between the stepparents, stepchildren, a move to new quarters, a significant change in family finances, and serious events in the family's history, such as Andy's pursuit of the caller. How will remarriage alter Andy's relationship with his dad? How might remarriage improve the situation?
5. Read aloud passages that capture a single negative feeling, especially fear, hesitation, anger, terror, loss, or grief. Add details that express how Andy copes with being alone and trying to outwit his father's suspicions. Make a short speech on Andy's moral courage.
6. Invite a fellow student to walk over the college grounds. Point out the good qualities of going to a small school, especially camaraderie with most of the staff and student body. Introduce the potential student to gathering places, particularly the student center.
7. Explain why suspense draws some readers to mysteries

## WOLF RIDER

and/or thrillers. At what points in this novel does the writer create the greatest tension in the reader? How is that tension sustained and resolved?

8. Rewrite the airport scene from Dr. Zadinski's point of view. Why does the cufflink bring him to tears? What does he suspect about his son? About Dr. Lucas's death? About the threatening telephone calls?
9. Write a theme describing the school counselor's job. Suggest ways that she can make herself more available and more helpful to students like Andy who carry a great moral burden. Explain the best ways to keep student confessions confidential.
10. Make an oral report on post-traumatic shock syndrome. Why does Andy pull away from his father's love? How will he respond to time at the farm? What problems will he have to face when he returns home?

### ALTERNATE ASSESSMENT

1. List experiences that demonstrate Andy's vulnerability, naivete, loneliness, fantasies, courage, intelligence, and fears.
2. Describe places in the story where Andy uses deception or lies to obtain information.
3. Compose a letter to Avi expressing your response to *Wolf Rider*. Name specific places you admire and others where you would have altered the evidence, events, dialogue, or characters. Suggest other characters who might have played a greater role, for example, Sally or the secretary of the math department.
4. Explain the types of crime that take place in the story, especially kidnapping, blackmail, communicating threats, and concealing evidence.

### AVI'S PUBLISHED WORKS

*Things That Sometimes Happened*, 1970  
*Snail Tale*, 1972  
*Performing Arts Resources*, 1974  
*No More Magic*, 1975  
*Captain Grey*, 1977  
*Emily Upham's Revenge*, 1978  
*Night Journeys*, 1979  
*Encounter at Easton*, 1980  
*The History of Helpless Harry*, 1980  
*Man from the Sky*, 1980  
*A Place Called Ugly*, 1981  
*Who Stole the Wizard of Oz?*, 1981  
*Sometimes I Think I Hear My Name*, 1982  
*Shadrach's Crossing*, 1983  
*The Fighting Ground*, 1984  
*Devil's Race*, 1984  
*S. O. R. Losers*, 1984  
*Bright Shadow*, 1985  
*Wolf Rider: A Tale of Terror*, 1986  
*Romeo and Juliet — Together (and Alive!) — at Last*, 1987  
*Something Upstairs: A Tale of Ghosts*, 1988  
*The Man Who Was Poe*, 1989

*Seahawk*, 1990  
*The True Confessions of Charlotte Doyle*, 1990  
*Nothing But the Truth: A Documentary Novel*, 1991  
*Blue Heron*, 1992  
*"Who Was That Masked Man, Anyway?"*, 1992  
*Windcatcher*, 1992  
*Punch with Judy*, 1993  
*Shortest Day*, 1994

### RELATED READING

William Armstrong's *Sounder*  
Vera and Bill Cleaver's *Where the Lilies Bloom*  
Robert Cormier's *I Am the Cheese* and *After the First Death*  
Sir Arthur Conan Doyle's *The Hound of the Baskervilles*  
Lois Duncan's *Killing Mr. Griffin*  
Esther Forbes's *Johnny Tremain*  
Paula Fox's *Slave Dancer*  
Will Hobbs's *Downriver*  
Lois Lowry's *The Giver*  
Scott O'Dell's *Sarah Bishop*  
Gary Paulsen's *Hatchet* and *Nightjohn*  
Ellen Raskins's *The Westing Game*  
Elizabeth George Speare's *The Witch of Blackbird Pond*  
Robert Louis Stevenson's *Treasure Island* and *Kidnapped*  
Theodore Taylor's *The Cay*  
Robb White's *Deathwatch*

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*Horn Book*, Jan./Feb. 1992, 24; Sept./Oct. 1987, 569-576.  
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*New York Times Book Review*, September 11, 1977; March 1, 1981.  
*Publishers Weekly*, December 26, 1986, 61.  
Roginski, Jim. *Behind the Covers: Interviews with Authors and Illustrators of Books for Children and Young Adults*. Englewood, Colo.: Libraries Unlimited, 1985.  
*School Library Journal*, January 1973, 116; December 1986, 111-112.  
*Something About the Author*. Volume 14. Detroit: Gale Research, 1978.  
*Twentieth-Century Children's Writers*. Third Edition. Detroit: St. James Press, 1989.  
*VOYA*, December 1989, 293.  
*Writer*, March 1982, 18.



**WOLF RIDER**

**VOCABULARY TEST**

Supply a word from the list below to complete each sentence.

colleague	grovel	mugged	stammered
deliberation	indication	multiplaned	survey
discounted	lunged	notion	tenure
elongated	milling	potential	threadbare
eluded	momentarily	scrutiny	tryouts

1. Kids were \_\_\_\_\_ about, shouting, laughing, reluctant to leave.
2. Women have been assaulted. \_\_\_\_\_.
3. Leaning from the couch he said, "May I ask you . . . what you intend to do with this . . . this . . . \_\_\_\_\_?"
4. The \_\_\_\_\_ bay window overlooked a smooth green lawn.
5. "I thought . . .," his father began, only to stop and look at Andy more closely than before. Andy was aware of the \_\_\_\_\_.
6. Though his name \_\_\_\_\_ him, he remembered him from the morning he attended the funeral service for Mrs. Zadinski.
7. He couldn't just go and \_\_\_\_\_.
8. Andy \_\_\_\_\_ over, trying to pluck the knife from Lucas's lap.
9. It seemed an \_\_\_\_\_ of normality.
10. He went into his room and put music on, thinking about the various conversations he had had with other people, until something his father had mentioned \_\_\_\_\_ grew large, only to fade.
11. Zeke's was a male voice, so Andy \_\_\_\_\_ the four women in the department.
12. This is Peter Smith, and I'm doing a \_\_\_\_\_ for the *Madison Times*.
13. The letters were \_\_\_\_\_, twisted, endlessly linked to one another.
14. "How many times have you promised me that you'd drop this?" he said, speaking with great \_\_\_\_\_.
15. If his father said what people believed, then he, Andy, was the only person who knew Lucas for what he was, a \_\_\_\_\_ killer.

**WOLF RIDER**

**COMPREHENSION TEST A**

**Part I: Character Identification (20 points)**

Name the characters described below.

- \_\_\_\_\_ 1. tells Andy the perils of the punisher.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 2. encourages Andy to come to the baseball tryouts.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 3. helps Bob Zadinski get tenure.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 4. believes that Andy did the right thing by calling the station.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 5. offers to leave the room while father and son argue.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 6. was absent when Dr. Zadinski left the slip of paper on the desk.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 7. works weekdays at the library.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 8. requests an emergency call be made over the library paging system.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 9. was killed by a drunken driver.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 10. relates to Andy that Nina has complained to the campus security coordinator.

**Part II: Fill-in (20 points)**

Complete each of the following lines with a term.

1. The tape recorder's \_\_\_\_\_ of sound gives the impression that someone is typing.
2. Dr. Lucas hopes that the student does not see the \_\_\_\_\_ in his brief case.
3. Andy pretends to make a \_\_\_\_\_ for the Madison newspaper.
4. Andy sees Nina dancing at the lake edge in a white \_\_\_\_\_.
5. Lucas knows that Andy's visit to the \_\_\_\_\_ class was a lie.
6. To pass the time before the meeting at \_\_\_\_\_, Andy packs a suitcase.
7. Near Andy's \_\_\_\_\_ lies the cufflink.
8. The visit to \_\_\_\_\_'s farm will require assignments from Andy's teachers.
9. In the parking lot, Andy spies the red Ford \_\_\_\_\_.
10. As the plane departs, Dr. Zadinski sheds tears on the \_\_\_\_\_.

## WOLF RIDER

### Part III: True/False (30 points)

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

- \_\_\_\_\_ 1. Zeke reverts to the security of the mountains as he drives toward Gammon State Park.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 2. Dr. Zadinski must have Dr. Lucas's backing in order to stay on the college faculty.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 3. Nina listens to all of Andy's evidence before making up her mind about the danger.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 4. The campus security patrol hears the typing in Dr. Zadinski's office.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 5. The directory lists Nina's residence at Whig Hall.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 6. Mrs. Baskin insists on weekly counseling sessions for Andy.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 7. Dr. Zadinski asks his son for advice on selecting a good restaurant.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 8. Because a morals charge threatens Andy, Dr. Zadinski asks George Perbeck to attend the counseling session.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 9. Dr. Zadinski accuses Andy of insanity.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 10. In the bleachers, Andy sits with Paul and pretends to have been at the ball game all along.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 11. Before leaving for Old Chapel, Andy tries to contact Mrs. Baskin and Paul.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 12. Dr. Lucas does not believe that Nina is a part of the plot.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 13. Zeke dies because he can't free himself from his safety belt and escape the car.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 14. Peter Smith gets into trouble for sitting in class doodling names on paper.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 15. The cufflink is monogrammed with a Z.

### Part IV: Essay (30 points)

Discuss the significance of two of the following passages.

- 1. Andy spent the day at home sleeping mostly, then packing. Time and again he stopped to think of what had happened, as if he had to live through it repeatedly to be sure it even occurred. Some of it seemed blurry, incomplete, too horrible to be real. He felt numb.
- 2. Andy wondered if his father would ever guess what had happened. No, he could not. And to himself, he swore that he would never tell because it would kill his father and Andy knew how much he needed him and loved him. No, he would never tell.
- 3. It was then he was struck with an odd thought: The only one who believed him was Lucas. And Lucas was the one person he had lied to.
- 4. He kept thinking about Mrs. Baskin's story, about the boy who cried "Wolf!" As he saw it, his situation was just the opposite. He was crying, but about a *real* wolf.

COMPREHENSION TEST B

**Part I: Identifying Terms (20 points)**

Select terms to fit each description that follows.

- \_\_\_\_\_ 1. Lucas's weapon
- \_\_\_\_\_ 2. jewelry near the ball glove
- \_\_\_\_\_ 3. animal Andy selects on the carousel
- \_\_\_\_\_ 4. Nina's car
- \_\_\_\_\_ 5. place with overgrown yard
- \_\_\_\_\_ 6. item left on the secretary's desk
- \_\_\_\_\_ 7. location of the carousel
- \_\_\_\_\_ 8. money Andy has with him at the student center
- \_\_\_\_\_ 9. item linked with full moon and Friday night
- \_\_\_\_\_ 10. Andy's alias

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

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

- \_\_\_\_\_ 1. Who killed Mrs. Zadinski?
- \_\_\_\_\_ 2. What sport does Paul encourage Andy to try out for?
- \_\_\_\_\_ 3. Who lives in Whig Hall?
- \_\_\_\_\_ 4. Who confesses to a stabbing?
- \_\_\_\_\_ 5. Where does Paul go for help?
- \_\_\_\_\_ 6. Where does Nina receive an emergency page?
- \_\_\_\_\_ 7. At what college does Dr. Lucas teach?
- \_\_\_\_\_ 8. In what girl does Andy confide at the party?
- \_\_\_\_\_ 9. What does Andy pretend to take in the math class?
- \_\_\_\_\_ 10. To whose farm is Andy going?
- \_\_\_\_\_ 11. Who apologizes for being rude to Peggy?
- \_\_\_\_\_ 12. What does Dr. Zadinski drop in the trash?
- \_\_\_\_\_ 13. What class does Nina take at Old Chapel?
- \_\_\_\_\_ 14. What does Dr. Lucas bash into the wall?
- \_\_\_\_\_ 15. What does Andy request so he can use the library?

## WOLF RIDER

### Part III: Selecting Details (20 points)

Place an X beside any statement that is true of Andy:

- 1. misses his mother
- 2. is annoyed by Mrs. Baskin
- 3. sneaks out to the ball park to meet Paul
- 4. keeps secret his part in Dr. Lucas's death
- 5. is involved in a morals charge
- 6. telephones fifteen math department members
- 7. goes out with Peggy and Dr. Zadinski to the Lobster Place on their first date.
- 8. adopts Sherlock as a nickname
- 9. has nightmares of a boy riding a wolf
- 10. returns to his old home

### Part IV: Essay (30 points)

Choose two and answer in essay form.

1. List and explain Zeke's physical and mental characteristics.
2. Summarize why Andy feels friendless.
3. Discuss how Andy himself becomes a stalker.
4. Justify Andy's refusal to give up the search for Zeke.

**WOLF RIDER**

**ANSWER KEY**

**VOCABULARY TEST**

- |                |                  |
|----------------|------------------|
| 1. milling     | 9. indication    |
| 2. mugged      | 10. momentarily  |
| 3. notion      | 11. discounted   |
| 4. multiplaned | 12. survey       |
| 5. scrutiny    | 13. elongated    |
| 6. eluded      | 14. deliberation |
| 7. grovel      | 15. potential    |
| 8. lunged      |                  |

**COMPREHENSION TEST A**

**Part I: Character Identification (20 points)**

- |                    |                     |
|--------------------|---------------------|
| 1. Mrs. Baskin     | 6. secretary        |
| 2. Paul            | 7. Nina             |
| 3. Phil Lucas      | 8. Andy             |
| 4. Officer Martins | 9. Andy's mother    |
| 5. Peggy Anderson  | 10. Officer Dorfman |

**Part II: Fill-In (20 points)**

- |                |               |
|----------------|---------------|
| 1. loop        | 6. Old Chapel |
| 2. steak knife | 7. ball glove |
| 3. survey      | 8. Aunt Mary  |
| 4. cape        | 9. Escort     |
| 5. math        | 10. cufflink  |

**Part III: True or False (30 points)**

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

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

Answers will vary.

**COMPREHENSION TEST B**

**Part I: Identifying Terms**

- |                     |                  |
|---------------------|------------------|
| 1. steak knife      | 6. slip of paper |
| 2. cufflink         | 7. Hardy Park    |
| 3. wolf             | 8. 75¢           |
| 4. Ford Escort      | 9. welfare check |
| 5. Andy's old house | 10. Peter Smith  |

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

- |                  |                       |
|------------------|-----------------------|
| 1. drunk driver  | 9. notes              |
| 2. baseball      | 10. Aunt Mary         |
| 3. Nina          | 11. Andy              |
| 4. Zeke          | 12. cufflink          |
| 5. fire station  | 13. art               |
| 6. library       | 14. telephone         |
| 7. Madison State | 15. his father's card |
| 8. Sally         |                       |

**Part III: Selecting Details (20 points)**

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

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

Answers will vary.

**TEACHER'S NOTES**



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