

Unwind by Neal Shusterman

GT Novel Guide

Four Big Essential Questions:

(We'll always talk about these during class discussions! Come to class with ideas for answers!)



How much latitude should be included in the idea of freedom?



How would the narrative change if the story were told through an omniscient narrator?



How do you determine a person's worth?



Thinking like a writer: Neal Shusterman wants to give the audience different voices. How do different first person narrators expand or limit the story? How does the change of characters between being protagonist and being antagonist affect the story?



High-Level Vocabulary Challenges:

endurance
elitism
discretion
determinism
carpe diem

morality
logos
ethos
pathos
vitality



Academic Vocabulary:

(be able to apply these vocabulary words to this novel)

first person narrator
allusion
antagonist
protagonist

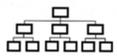
mood
character
theme
tone

Quotes to apply to this story:



Life moves pretty fast. If you don't stop and look around once in awhile, you , could miss it.

– Ferris Bueller



And this stone a pillar, which I have set for shall be God's house: and of all that thou shalt give me I will surely give the tenth unto thee.

–Genesis 28:22



When you receive from the Israelites the tithe I give you as your inheritance, you must present a tenth of that tithe as the LORD's offering.

–Numbers 18:26

Unwind Discussion Questions

PROLOGUE: THE BILL OF LIFE

1. What do you think it means that a person can be simultaneously terminated yet kept alive?

PART ONE: TRIPLICATE (Pages 1-50)

Chapter 1: *Meet Connor*

1. Based on information from the whole first chapter, speculate on what you think Connor has done in order to have his parents sign the “unwind” forms in triplicate?
2. Some might see the trucker’s new arm’s new abilities as amazing. Others might see this is very off-putting. Where do you fall and why?
3. Cel phone technology helped to catch Connor. In the future, do you believe cel phones might actually be used in this way?

Chapter 2: *Meet Risa*

1. Risa’s performance at the piano recital ultimately served as a death sentence in her eyes. What do the authorities running the state home say and do to show they don’t see it this way?
2. Compare and contrast Connor and Risa’s situations. Both will be unwound for very different reasons. Which character’s situation seems more unfair?

Chapter 3: *Meet Lev (Levi)*

1. Look up the word “tithe” or “tithing.” Think about what’s happening to Liev. What’s your opinion of a future where a religious tithing can be based on something other than a monetary obligation to the church?
2. Compare Pastor Dan’s devotion to Liev well-being to Marcus’s. Which character do you believe truly has Liev’s best interest in mind?
3. Compare and contrast Connor and Risa’s situations to Live’s. All will be unwound for very different reasons. Now which character’s situation seems more unfair?

Chapters 5-8:

1. Clearly, the teaming up of these three main characters was supposed to happen. If this trio is on the run together, what roles do you predict each will play in the group as they continue their attempt to escape as AWOL unwinds?
2. Lev does not consider himself to be “an unwind” like the others. Why not?
3. Who is Humphrey Dunfee? Does it seem like a real story or more of a “ghost story” that teen-agers might tell?
4. Why do you think Lev has decided to stay with the group at the end of chapter 8?
5. Before moving to Part 2, revisit the quote by Samson Ward on page 1. Why do you think this quote began this section of the book?

PART TWO: STORKED (Pages 51-117)

Chapter 9:

1. How do you feel about the girl’s abandonment of her baby? Why do you think she decided to abandon it on the doorstep?

Chapters 10-13:

1. How does Connor’s impulsively taking the baby annoy Risa? Does his explanation help her forgive him?
2. Which is the truer statement about Lev? A) The fact that Lev really wants to be unwound shows immaturity; or B) The fact that Lev is not really a “captive” and could just walk away at any time shows his immaturity.

Chapters 14-18:

1. What finally convinces Lev to take matters into his own hands and escape?
2. Why do you think Hannah takes a risk in helping Risa and Connor? Why do you think Pastor Dan tells Lev to run?
3. “Clappers” are just one piece of “futuristic slang” this book has given us. What is a Clapper? What other futuristic slang can you recall from the book so far? Make a list.

Chapters 19-20:

1. Compare Sonia to Hannah. How does each character help Connor and Risa in their own unique way?
2. Why do you think the "Graveyard" is called the "Graveyard"?

PART THREE: TRANSIT (Pages 119-153)

Chapter 21:

1. Some people "play up" their own personalities in order to hide some inner turmoil? CyFi seems to be one of these people. What do you think his inner turmoil might be?

Chapter 22-25:

1. Why do you think Roland is so determined to rile Connor and make him fight? What does that say about him as a character? Have you ever met (or read about) someone like Roland before?
2. How does Risa feel about Conner after the incident in the bathroom? Are her feelings mixed, or has she made a decision about him as a person?

PART FOUR: DESTINATIONS (Pages 155-194)

Chapter 26:

1. What happens in the pawn shop that shocks you? To what would you credit the change that has obviously overtaken Lev?

Chapter 27:

1. In the crate, the four boys find out information about each other. How do the four boys' opinions on the purpose of unwinding differ? They also talk about the existence of the soul. Whose opinion strikes you as the most surprising or interesting?

Chapter 28:

1. Create a list of thoughtful adjectives or nouns that could be applied to the "Admiral." Predict how Conner will respond to the Admiral's self-proclaimed dictatorship. How about Roland?

Chapters 29-31:

1. At what point did you understand why did Cy-Fi needed to return to Joplin? What do we learn about Tyler? How does this experience change Lev and his beliefs about unwinding?
2. Where do you think Lev will go now? Why?

PART FIVE: GRAVEYARD (Pages 195-261)

Chapters 32-34:

1. Compare the Admiral's "10 Demandments" to what you remember from Animal Farm's "7 Commandments." Does the Admiral remind you of Napoleon at all?
2. How do you imagine the five kids known as the "Goldens" earned their right to sit on that tribunal? How do you feel about their responsibilities?
3. Describe the changing relationship that develops between Connor, Risa, and Roland. If it is a "game," as Connor suggests, who is truly playing "the game" best?
4. Do you feel Connor and Lev can ever trust each other again? Why or why not?
5. Explain why Connor was so stunned by the Admiral's false teeth. Do you believe the Admiral's explanation of what he's doing with the money? Do you believe his story about Harlan? Why or why not?

Chapters 35-36:

1. To what to you credit the dramatic change in Lev? What do you think will happen now that he has joined Cleaver and his group?
2. Do you believe Lev and Mai are really headed for the pipeline? If not, what do you think is really happening?

Chapters 37-46:

1. Why is it important to learn the Admiral's last name?
2. How does Roland contribute to the mob's actions?
3. With Cleaver's confession, how should we feel about Roland? Is he forgivable? Could he ever be likeable?

Chapters 48-50:

1. According to the Juvey-cop, why have they allowed the graveyard to stay up and functioning?

PART SIX: UNWOUND (Pages 263-313)

Chapters 51-56:

1. Do you think Connor's reputation as the Akron AWOL will help him or hurt him at Happy Jack?
2. Why do you think Risa's counselor treats her as though she is an imbecile?
3. Explain how and why you think the tithes are treated differently at Happy Jack?
4. At the end of the fight, why do you think Roland can't go through with really hurting Connor?

Chapters 57-61:

1. Do you believe Lev will be able to go through with the plan he, Blaine, and Mai have come here to complete? Why or why not?
2. What has become of Risa and Connor's relationship at Happy Jack?
3. How did you feel when you read about the actual unwinding from an Unwind's point-of-view? If you were the author, would you have described the process differently? Why or why not?

Chapters 62-65:

1. What has Lev done to seem suspicious to the staff of Happy Jack? What do you think is going to happen to him?
2. What does Connor's reaction to the news that Lev is about to be unwound tell us about his and Lev's relationship?
3. How did you feel about the dramatic happenings in chapter 65? Was this a satisfying climax to the story? Why or why not?

PART SEVEN: CONSCIOUSNESS (Pages 315--335)

Chapters 66-69:

1. Prepare to comment on where/how the three main characters ended up after Happy Jack.
2. How do you feel about what Pastor Dan says happened with CyFi?
3. In your own words, explain what happens when Harlan is brought back together at the Admiral's ranch.