

Hoot

by

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MonkeyNotes Study Guide by Diane Clapsaddle

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LITERARY ELEMENTS

SETTING

The story takes place in Coconut Cove, Florida, in the present day.

CHARACTER LIST

Major Characters

Roy Eberhardt

Around 12 years old, he is the main character of the novel. He has just moved from Bozeman, Montana to Coconut Cove, Florida, where he is the proverbial “new kid.” The novel is a bildungsroman in a small subtle way as it shows Roy’s growing into a young man with integrity and compassion.

Mullet Fingers

Approximately the same age as Roy, Mullet Fingers is a nickname for Napoleon Bridger, a young man who has been rejected by his own mother, has no friends other than his step-sister, Beatrice Leep, and who is the first one to stand up to protect the Burrow Owls.

Beatrice Leep

The step-sister of Mullet Fingers, she, too, is a Trace Middle School student. She is tall and strong and plays soccer. She gives her step-brother his nickname and protects him from anyone who tries to hurt him.

Officer David Delinko

A young police officer who is determined to become a detective someday. He seems to grow up at the same time Roy does and in doing so, discovers what’s really worth pursuing in life.

Dana Matherson

A school bully, he targets Roy, because he is the new kid. He is the first “enemy” Roy must learn to face and conquer.

Minor Characters

Roy’s Parents

Two very astute people, they strive to teach Roy the right way to behave and how to be a young man who exhibits integrity. They understand that they must eventually allow him to decide the right thing to do even if the consequences might be too difficult.

Curly Branitt

The construction foreman at the Mother Paula’s All-American Pancake House site, he is at first cranky and judgmental. However, he, too, will come to understand the corruption behind the building of the Pancake House.

Chuck Muckle

A Vice-President for Mother Paula’s, he is determined to build the Pancake House in Coconut Cove in spite of the presence of an endangered species on the site. His corruption eventually catches up to him, and he’s caught in a bribe.

Kimberly Lou Dixon

The small time actress who plays the role of Mother Paula, she first comes across as crude and rough. It’s only when it’s discovered that the owls are at risk do we see her true nature – a member of the Audubon Society – come out.

Garrett

One of the few kids who will speak to Roy when he first comes to Trace Middle School, he is the son of the school guidance counselor. He feeds Roy information and helps him when he needs to find out Dana Matherson’s address. He is a friend when none of the other kids will even acknowledge Roy.

Lonna and Leon Leep

The parents/steparents of Beatrice and Mullet Fingers, Leon is a former professional basketball player who seems unable to take of himself, and Lonna is his second wife who actually rejects her son at the same time she steals from Beatrice’s mother.

CONFLICT

Protagonist

The protagonist is Roy Eberhardt whose journey towards manhood is the main subject of the novel. He faces the conflict of change in his life which he is not ready for as well as the plight of the Burrow Owls. He has to find a way to balance his head with his heart and make the right choices.

Antagonists

The antagonists include Dana Matherson, the bully who picks on Roy and yet teaches him a lot about himself; adults who lie and behave in corrupt ways; Mullet Fingers who resists Roy's help; and Roy himself who must learn how to adapt and change as part of his growth.

Climax

The climax of the story occurs when Roy, Beatrice, and Mullet Fingers, along with many of the students at Trace Middle School, stand up to the executives of Mother Paula's Pancake House to protect the Burrow Owls.

Outcome

After the truth is revealed about the Pancake House's intent to build within the environment of the owls, the company is forced to back off, and the owls are saved. Also, Mullet Fingers is able to return to his life in the wilderness while Roy comes to accept his life in Florida as being as acceptable as life in Montana had been.

SHORT PLOT SUMMARY (Synopsis)

A young boy named Roy Eberhardt moves to Coconut Cove, Florida where he takes on the burden of helping to save the burrowing owls by stopping the planned construction on the piece of land where they live. Not only does he do so, but he makes friends, helps those friends exposes the dishonesty of the companies involved and their disregard for the environment. Through this, he becomes a mature young man.

THEMES

Growing Up

The theme of growing up is one of the most prevalent themes. It reinforces the idea that life is all about change and how we adapt to it. We are also shown throughout the story that with maturity comes responsibility. It is exemplified in a simplistic form of a bildungsroman or the maturation of a young man.

Corruption

Another theme is corruption. This is especially seen in how the company of Mother Paula's Pancake House is willing to bribe local officials and lie to keep building on the protected lands of an endangered species. It's also seen in how parents and other adults are willing to lie to their children to protect the world they've built around themselves.

Parental Love

A third theme is that of parental love. Mullet Fingers will never be normal, because his mother has rejected him while Roy will grow up to be an outstanding man, because his parents not only love him, but allow him to make decisions from which he will learn and grow.

Integrity

A final important theme is that of integrity. Roy finds out that life is always about learning to adjust to change and still make the best decisions you can make under the circumstances. As Roy says, it's about finding a balance between the head and the heart and then living with the consequences, no matter what they turn out to be.

MOOD

The mood is at times frustrating as we watch Roy try to adjust to a new community and the bully who makes his life miserable. But mostly, it is uplifting as we see several young people make decisions on behalf of what is right and good.

Carl Hiaasen - BIOGRAPHY

Carl Hiaasen was born in Plantation, Florida on March 12, 1953 to Odel and Patricia Hiaasen. He attended Emory University and graduated from the University of Florida in 1974 with a journalism degree. He worked as a newspaper reporter for the Cocoa Today and later he moved to the Miami Herald, where he still works today as a columnist. He has always maintained a focus on environmental issues and the preservation of nature. In the 80s he began writing novels, but he has been writing about Florida since his father gave him a typewriter at age six. Then, it was hunt-and-peck stories about neighborhood kickball and softball games, given away to his friends.

He is the author of many bestselling novels for adults, including *Sick Puppy* (2000) and *Basket Case* (2002). *Hoot* (published in 2002) was Hiaasen's first novel for young readers, was the recipient of numerous awards, including the prestigious Newbery Honor in 2003. The motion picture adaptation of the novel was released in 2006.

HONORS AND AWARDS FOR HOOT

A Newbery Honor Book

The SEBA Book Award for Best Children's Book

An ABC Children's Booksellers Choice

An ALA Notable Book

A YALSA Best Book for Young Adults

A *Child Magazine* 50 Best Children's Books Selection

A New York Public Library 100 Titles for Reading and Sharing Selection

A New York Public Library Book for the Teen Age

A *Book Sense* Book of the Year Finalist

A Bank Street College of Education Best Book of the Year

A *New York Times* Bestseller

A *Book Sense* Bestseller

CHAPTER SUMMARIES WITH NOTES

CHAPTER ONE

Summary

The main character of the novel, Roy Eberhardt, is introduced by way of his curiosity about a boy with strawberry blond hair, wiry build, and nut-brown skin from the sun, who is running along the sidewalk as if to catch the same bus that Roy was riding to Trace Middle School. Instead, he runs on by on bare feet whose soles are as black as barbecue coals. Roy is also introduced at the same time as the victim of a bully named Dana Matherson who is mashing his face against the bus window at the same time the strange boy runs by. Because of Dana, Roy is unable to satisfy his curiosity about the running boy and must instead try to save himself from the bigger kid's grasp. He gives into Dana's demand that he says he's had enough and then immediately opens the bus window to try to see where the runner has gone. He's too late, but that doesn't stop his innate curiosity – who is this boy and what is he running from?

The action then moves to that of Officer David Delinko, a police officer who has been sent to the future site of another Mother Paula's All-American Pancake House. For now, it is a vacant lot where he meets a construction foreman named Curly who, in spite of his humorous name (he's as bald as a cue ball), is cranky and unsmiling. Someone has vandalized the site by pulling up all the survey sticks and filling in the holes, putting the project behind even more than it is already. Officer Delinko is concerned about whether to label the crime vandalism since there have been no monetary damages. He's willing to label it trespassing and malicious mischief. As he walks back toward his patrol car, he trips after stepping into a rather large hole. Curly tells him that the hole is the burrow of some owls that are no bigger than a beer can. Curly has no sympathy for the creatures and labels them stupid. When Delinko asks what will happen to them, Curly just smiles maliciously and says, "What owls?"

Roy can't stop thinking about the strange running boy. He looked in school between classes to see if he could recognize him, but he never saw him. He then sits alone at the cafeteria table, with the exception of a boy named Garrett who just says hi, because he is the new kid. He's an old pro at being the new kid, because he has attended six schools and the town, Coconut Cove, Florida, is the tenth town his family has lived in since he could remember. That's because Roy's father works for the government and frequently gets promoted. Garrett then begins to carry on a conversation for the first time, talking first about skateboards and then snowboards since Roy had just moved from his favorite place – Montana – where he snowboarded a lot. It turns out Garrett is no better than a D student, but is very popular, because he cuts up in class. He is known as the "King of Farts," because he can actually fart out the first line of the Pledge of Allegiance. His mother, ironically, is the Guidance Counselor for Trace Middle School. Roy tells Garrett about the running boy to see if he knows him, but Garrett can only guess that he might be a high school kid. Roy speculates that he might be an outlaw and is determined to find him.

Notes

Roy's experiences reveal a great deal about him: he's a somewhat lonely boy, because his family is always moving; he is creative, intelligent, and curious in his imagining the running boy's story; he's impatient with dealing with such kids as Dana Matherson, but he's also realistic enough to know that he can't beat his size; and he longs for the state he just left, Montana, where he was his happiest.

The incident with Office Delinko is foreshadowing in that it prepares us for the people who are trying to save the owls who live in burrows on the site of yet another pancake house.

HOOT BOOK SUMMARY AND NOTES

CHAPTER TWO

Summary

The next morning on the bus, Roy trades seats so as to be closer to the door. He keeps his backpack on his shoulders as if preparing to jump off the bus after the running boy. However, the boy doesn't show up. The same thing happens the day after that and the day after that and Roy pretty much gives up. Then, on Friday, as he is reading an X-Men comic book, he sees the boy out of the corner of his eye. Roy jumps up to follow the boy, when suddenly he is grabbed around the neck from behind by Dana Matherson. He's desperate to get off the bus and even though he knows it's against the rules to fight on the bus, he clenches his right fist and brings it up blindly over his shoulder and thrust it at Dana as hard as he can. The punch lands and Dana gives out a gargled cry and lets Roy go. He edges past a tall girl with curly blonde hair and glasses as well as the bus driver who both demand to know where he's going. But Roy doesn't stop to answer. He just keeps going, believing he can run fast enough to at least keep the boy in sight.

Once, in his pursuit, Roy sees the boy look backwards as if he knows he's being chased, but Roy never stops. Eventually, he finds himself on a golf course as he follows the boy down a long, lush fairway. Golfers scream angrily at him, but that doesn't make him stop either. It's only when he's hit with a ball off a long drive and collapses to the ground that Roy's pursuit finally comes to an end. As he lies there, he's aware that there are men running up to him in a panic, but he drifts away into his own thoughts and dreams. He remembers Bozeman, Montana, where he had wanted to stay forever, and how he had cried when his parents had told him they were moving once again.

Later, Roy finds himself back at school and in the principal's office, because he punched Dana Matherson. He explains that the act was not unprovoked as Dana said and that no one else complains about his bullying behavior because they're afraid of him. He explains that he ran, because he's afraid of Dana, too. He doesn't want the principal to know the real reason he left the bus. The principal examines the knot on his head and then sees the finger marks on his neck from Dana choking him. Nonetheless, she suspends him from the bus for two weeks – something that Dana is happy about – and orders him to write a letter of apology to Dana.

At lunch, Roy is ordered to sit down by the same tall girl with the red-framed glasses. She demands to know if he had been chasing someone when he ran from the bus. Roy thinks she can identify the kid for him, but, instead, she pushes him around and orders him to “mind his own damn business.” She won't identify the boy and just walks off, flipping him off as she goes.

Notes

This chapter helps to flesh out Roy's character even more. The reader must wonder what makes Roy so determined to find the running boy. He is unusual for his age, seeking the answers to questions that other teens would never have sought. He even takes on a bully like Dana in his search for the answers. He is sensitive as well as he remembers the time he spent in Montana. With the principal, he is humorous and witty in his observations about what he had done to Dana, acting more mature than one would expect from a boy his age. Even when confronted by the blonde girl in the cafeteria, it isn't her threatening attitude that Roy cares about. It's whether or not she can answer his questions about the running boy. All of this tells the reader that Roy is someone worth knowing, a character who will present more surprises as the plot unfolds.

HOOT STUDY GUIDE - CHAPTER SUMMARY AND ANALYSIS

CHAPTER THREE

Summary

This chapter begins with Officer Delinko and Curly once again. Delinko has been delayed by a car accident with injuries, but Curly is not moved by this scenario. He's just angry that Delinko is late. Once again, the survey stakes have been removed from the construction site and this time, the air has also been let out of the tires of a flatbed truck. Furthermore, when Delinko investigates the Travelin' Johnnys for damage, he finds alligators swimming inside each one.

Once he arrives home, Roy has to explain what happened to his parents. He's surprised to see that his Dad seems almost proud about Roy breaking Dana's nose, he's angry that the Dana wasn't accused of assault. Roy is appalled that his father insists on following up on Dana's punishment, because he knows that could land him in even bigger trouble. Nevertheless, he goes up to his room to begin the apology letter.

Roy's room is very representative of the kind of young man he is. There are posters of cowboys riding bucking bulls and a Yellowstone flyer warning people not to go up to the buffalo, very dangerous animals. He wants to someday be a bull rider like the cowboy in the picture and the flyer reminds him of just how stupid people can be. Even Roy's apology to Dana is a revelation of an intelligent, witty young man: he says he's sorry and promises never to hit Roy again as long as Roy doesn't bother him on the bus. He ends the letter by pointing out that he thinks his suggestion is a fair arrangement. His mother doesn't like the tone, but his father thinks it's just right.

The Police Captain is in a worried state, because the incidents at the construction site have come to the attention of all the big shots in the government of Coconut Cove. He discusses who might be doing this with Delinko and Delinko's sergeant. He decides to send a patrol car by the site every hour to protect it and try to catch the vandals. Delinko asks if he can come in early to work the case. He swears he doesn't want overtime. He just wants to solve the mystery.

Notes

The uncompassionate character of Curly who only wants an officer on his site immediately and the political interference of the owners of Mother Paula's set them up as the villains of the story. They only care about the money they're making and they foreshadow a coming battle over the owls. However, the attacks on the construction site are not without humor when the reader realizes that they put alligators in the Travelin' Johnnys.

Roy's room decorations and his witty letter of apology reveal again a smart, immensely interesting young man. Whatever he finds himself in as the plot unfolds will be just as interesting as he is. He is also a kind of mirror image to Delinko who also wants to solve a mystery. It makes the reader feel as if a meeting between Roy and Delinko is inevitable.

HOOT CHAPTER SUMMARY AND NOTES

CHAPTER FOUR

Summary

Roy has to stay home all weekend to make sure he's okay and even though he's nervous about seeing Dana for the first time, there's no sign of him at school. Garrett tells Roy that everyone is talking about what he did to Dana and they all think he's a tough guy. This bothers Roy who doesn't want to stand out in any way. He just wants to blend in quietly. Roy asks Garrett to tell him who the tall girl with the red glasses is, and he discovers that her name is Beatrice Leep, she's a major soccer jock, and she has a major attitude. She's so tough that she broke the collarbone of a lineman on the football team after he slapped her on her bottom.

Officer Delinko looks forward to getting up early and scouting the construction site. He sees the solving of the case as a chance to show he has the right stuff to become a detective. He sits in his squad car with his headlights on and that's when he sees the owls. He turns off the headlights, hoping he hasn't scared off the birds from their nest. It's so early, Officer Delinko soon nods off. He awakens and everything is so dark he wonders if he has slept through until nighttime. Then, there is a pounding on his window, and when he opens the door with his gun extended, he sees it's Curly, and the darkness he is experiencing is due to the fact that someone spray painted his car windows while he slept. Furthermore, the survey stakes have once again been pulled up.

At school, Roy comes to the conclusion that something has to be done: he can't spend the rest of the year avoiding Dana Matherson and Beatrice Leep. He begins by walking over to the table where Beatrice is eating lunch with his friends. He apologizes to her for whatever she thinks he did which, of course, he doesn't know. He tells her that if she ever has any problem with him again, she should sit down with him and discuss it like civilized people. Beatrice is so amazed that she can't say a word, and Roy just walks away.

Then, Roy asks Garrett to sneak into his mother's office and get Dana's address. When he arrives at Dana's house, he finds Dana's mother is amused that "a little twerp" like him was able to break Dana's nose. Dana comes downstairs and Roy gives him the apology. Dana warns him that they'll settle up when he returns to school. Roy leaves with Dana and his mother fighting over the apology letter on their porch.

Notes

Once again, the reader sees that Roy is not a typical teen. He has the maturity to settle his differences with both Beatrice and Dana. He has the "right stuff" that Officer Delinko so much wants, but has been unable to achieve. However, in spite of the damage to the squad car that Delinko allowed to happen, he shows he's a compassionate man in the way he treats the owls. This foreshadows that he will be perhaps be on the side of the birds when their habitat is threatened.

CHAPTER NOTES FOR HOOT

CHAPTER FIVE

Summary

Roy has just finished his homework, when he overhears a phone conversation between his parents. Trace Middle School has decided to take no disciplinary action against Dana Matherson, because his injuries were severe enough to provoke a lawsuit. Roy leaves the house and rides his bike to the spot where he first saw the running boy. He retraces his steps to the stand of Australian pine trees where he saw the boy disappear. On foot, he begins to search the woods and finds a series of charred rocks encircling a layer of ashes – a campfire. Then, he finds three plastic garbage bags. One holds everyday trash, a second holds a stack of boy's clothing (with no socks or shoes). The third one isn't full so Roy unties it and dumps it out. At first, he thinks it's a pile of thick brown ropes, but then he realizes it's a pile of cottonmouth water moccasin snakes, which are highly poisonous. He struggles to remain motionless as they uncurl at his feet. Then, he hears a voice speak out from the thicket behind him, telling him not to move.

As he stands there in fear, Roy remembers the time he went on a field trip with his class in Montana and sneaked away from the group in hopes of surprising them. Instead, he ran into a grizzly bear. Just as with the snakes, Roy had stood absolutely still, and eventually, the bear had moved away. Now with the snakes, Roy is advised to step slowly backwards by the voice on the count of three. Roy does so, but the person behind the voice grabs him, ties him up, and puts a hood over his head.

Roy tells the boy that he hasn't come to hassle him, but the boy insists that he has to leave. He leads Roy out of his area while admitting that any other kid would probably have wet his pants. Roy tells him as they walk that he had seen lots of snakes where he used to live. However, Roy wonders why the snakes the boy caught had blue sparkles on their tails. He says that they're going to a party and guides Roy back to the golf course. He asks the boy his name, but all the kid will say is that they call him Mullet Fingers. He won't tell Roy if he lives out there either. He warns him instead that, if he turns around before he's counted to fifty, he'll end up with a cottonmouth in his bed. Roy does what he's told, takes off the hood, and runs for his bike. He pedals off as fast as he can, but not because he's afraid. "He isn't frightened and he isn't discouraged. He's more excited than ever."

Notes

Two ideas of importance stand out in this chapter: one, Roy is unjustly punished while his attacker is not so that the school can avoid a lawsuit; two, Roy makes contact with a boy he finds too interesting to ignore. In the process, he discovers a world that is much more interesting than anything he's experienced yet. The reader senses that Roy will not give up until he finds out the truth behind the running boy. Life has become exciting at last.

HOOT SYNOPSIS AND NOTES

CHAPTER SIX

Summary

At breakfast, Roy is curious about how Mullet Fingers has managed to escape punishment for not going to school, but his questions about truancy to his parents stop short of revealing what he knows about the running boy. Then, his father reads a newspaper article about the vandalism at the pancake house construction site. They laugh about the alligators and the spray-painted squad car, but Roy also puts together the fact that the site is right near Beatrice Leep's bus stop.

The scene shifts to Officer Delinko's appearance before his captain for falling asleep and allowing the squad car to be spray painted. The captain insists that they all follow the lie about Delinko having fallen asleep due to medication he was taking for the flu. He also inserts the bill for cleaning the car into Delinko's personnel file which worries the officer that it will keep him from a promotion. He is commended for having been at the site on his own time; nevertheless, he's assigned to desk duty for a month. This is better than being suspended, but Delinko hates the thought of sitting at a desk. He's allowed to keep his squad car for traveling to and from work, so he decides to use it to take an alternate route past the construction site. Also, he can take his sweet old time getting to work if he leaves early. His investigation is still on.

The next day, Dana Matherson is still absent from school. Roy has thought a lot about the situation. He knows that another confrontation is inevitable, and because he has this stubborn pride, he has no intention of spending the school year sneaking through the halls to avoid Dana. At school, Garrett tells him that the kids are taking bets on how many times Dana will beat Roy up. However, Roy also recognizes that two good things have come out of the Dana Matherson experience: he has successfully tailed the running boy, and he has been booted off the bus for two weeks.

After school, he heads once again for the golf course on his bike with a shoe box in his hand. He stops to look at the construction site and is chased away by Curly who thinks he's one of the vandals. Then, he leaves his bike (forgetting to lock it up) and goes in search of Mullet Fingers. He is determined to persuade the boy that he is someone to be trusted, but the camp is cleaned out, and Mullet Fingers is gone. Unfortunately, he has no time to explore, because a thunderstorm crops up, and so Roy heads back to his bike. When he arrives at the spot where he left it, the bike is gone and now the rain is pouring down. Roy knows that he won't get home until dark, and his parents will be frantic. So, he just starts trudging home in the downpour. He's about to venture into the road when he's stopped by Beatrice Leep who wants to know what's in the shoebox.

Notes

This chapter serves to advance the plot and Roy's obsession with the running boy. We see that his instincts about Beatrice and her bus stop are correct and that she does know something about Mullet Fingers.

We also are able to add more to our understanding of Roy. He is a proud young man who has had to face many new situations. His maturity won't allow him to give in to the bullies and he knows he has eventually face Dana.

HOOT CHAPTER SUMMARY AND NOTES

CHAPTER SEVEN

Summary

Beatrice is riding Roy's bike and orders him to hop on the handlebars. She is so strong that riding with Roy onboard is a snap for her. They stop when they come to a tall chain-link fence. She leads him to an old panel truck and demands to know what's in the shoebox. He finally gives in and tells her that he has shoes in the box and that they're for a kid he met, the one he told her about at school. She wants to know how he knows if the kid even wants the shoes and why he cares about him. Roy finds it hard to answer that question even to himself, so he just says he doesn't know. They stay quiet while a watchman passes by the old truck, and then, Beatrice tells Roy that she'll make him deal: she'll give the kid the shoes if Roy promises to stop his spying. Roy promises her he will, and then asks how she knows the boy. Beatrice tells Roy the running boy is her brother.

At six o'clock, Officer Delinko finally starts for home, but is stuck for a bit waiting for the rain to let up. While he stands there, he ruminates over what he knows about the vandalism, still thinking that it has to be someone who is more intelligent than typical kids. He eventually heads for home. On the radio comes the report of a missing young boy named Roy whom Delinko then sees standing on the corner of West Oriole Street. He stops and offers Roy a lift home.

In the squad car, Roy is at first polite, but doesn't really concentrate on what the officer is saying. Instead, he remembers what Beatrice had told him before she left him. The running boy is actually her stepbrother, and she nicknamed him that, because he could catch the slippery, free-jumping baitfish with his bare hands. He had been shipped off to a "special" school, but only lasted two weeks before he ran away and hitch-hiked all the way home. His parents don't know he's back, and Beatrice says no one is going to tell them. Before he leaves, Beatrice comes up with a plan to explain where he's been: she bites a hole in his bike tire so it goes flat! The conversation with Officer Delinko continues when he asks Roy whether he's heard anything about the vandalism at the construction site from kids at school. Roy is uncomfortable being asked to be a snitch so he just offers Delinko a sincere thank you. Delinko stops to talk to Roy's father – one law enforcement officer to another. As he is leaving, he asks Roy to ask his father to write a letter to his police chief about how he helped Roy. It could be something that could be placed in his permanent file and would help his chances for promotion. Roy says he'll help in a noncommittal way. Once Delinko is in his car, Roy's mother asks him if he knows the policeman who fell asleep while at the construction site. The queasy look on Delinko's face and the way he screeches off in the squad car makes Roy realize the officer his mother is asking about is Delinko himself.

Notes

Once again the reader can see how Delinko is being paralleled to Roy – both are detectives with a sincere desire to learn the truth. However, Delinko does have ulterior motives that Roy does not have. Also, Roy is actually more intelligent than Delinko even though he is the child to Delinko being an adult.

STUDY NOTES FOR HOOT

CHAPTER EIGHT

Summary

Roy sticks to his promise to Beatrice about staying away from Mullet Fingers. It's easy to do so at first, because the rain continues for three straight days. The bike tire is beyond repair as well, so he has no transportation to follow the running boy anyway. Later, his mother tells him that his bus suspension has been lifted, because it is unfair that he is being punished while Dana is not. Roy figures that tomorrow is as good as any day to face his bully problems.

Curly is being chastised soundly by Chuck Muckle, the Vice-President of Corporate Relations for Mother Paula's Pancake House. He's ordered to find attack dogs to guard the construction site and he's warned that one more incident will lead to his dismissal. So the first thing that Curly does is erect a chain-link fence around the site and then he hires a dog trainer named Kalo to bring in his four Rottweilers named Max, Klaus, Karl, and Pookie Face! Curly leaves feeling comfortable that the site is now protected.

The next morning, Roy walks to the bus stop and notices some ospreys have built a nest at the top of a concrete utility pole. He's excited to see them, because he had seen them in Montana, too, and didn't think he'd find them here. He finds it remarkable that the same species of bird can thrive in tow places so far apart and so completely different. It makes him feel like maybe he can do the same thing.

When Roy gets on the bus, all the kids grow quiet as he walks down the aisle. He has a bad feeling about it, but he doesn't turn around once he finds a seat to see if Dana is behind him. Finally, though, he does turn around and says hi to Dana. Dana's nose isn't as bad now as it was, but he has a fat lip from someone popping him in the mouth. Dana threatens Roy, but Roy calmly tells him that the terms in his letter of apology should be the end of their problems. However, Dana doesn't see it that way, especially since his friends are sitting there watching what he's going to do. So, Roy tells him to go ahead and hit him and get it out of his system. Dana slaps him around three times and works it so the bus driver sees nothing. It seems like it's going to get worse when suddenly, Dana sits up and slumps sourly against the bus window. A kid from the last bus stop has bravely chosen to sit right beside him – it's Beatrice.

Notes

The lifting of the bus suspension foreshadows another showdown for Roy with Dana. However, he is a realist and faces it with a resigned attitude. he doesn't want to spend the whole school year running and hiding from the bully. The telephone conversation between Curly and the company vice-president is amusing given that the guy who is laying down the law is named Chuck Muckle, and the chastised employee is named Curly and he's as bald as a cue ball! Also, the names of the Rottweilers are equally as amusing – a vicious attack dog named Pookie Face is a bit unusual! The irony is that the attack dogs will prove to be less than effective.

The ospreys are symbolic of Roy himself – like them, he can find a way to thrive in an environment that is far away and different from his beloved Montana.

It is ironic that Roy is saved once more from Dana's wrath, this time by someone he had also feared – Beatrice.

CHAPTER SUMMARY AND NOTES

CHAPTER NINE

Summary

When Roy gets in school, Garrett tells him that Dana will be waiting for him after 7th period and is going to snatch him before Roy can get on the bus. Now Roy has to think of something to avoid yet another confrontation. He has few options: if he eludes the bully, it will start all over again on Monday; if he reports it to the vice-principal, Dana will only receive a stern lecture that he'll laugh off; if he tells his parents, that might withdraw him from Trace Middle School and send him to some private school he has no desire to attend; if he grovels and apologizes again, Dana will sense his weakness and continue to harass him; or he can stand and fight. Roy is also very aware of the effect his being in a fight can have on his mother. Being an only child is something he takes very seriously and has ever since his parents lost a baby girl in a miscarriage. However, his greatest weakness is his pride which makes him behave sometimes in ways he doesn't understand.

At the end of history class, Roy sticks with his teacher, Mr. Ryan, because he's a former football player. Eventually, though, he finds himself alone in the halls. Then, as he walks by a janitor's closet, he is grabbed and pulled inside by Dana.

The scene changes to Curly and Chuck Muckle once more on the telephone. There has been mischief at the construction site again. Someone put poisonous snakes inside the chain-link fence and the dogs went berserk. Kalo, their trainer, is furious, because the dogs cost about \$12,000 each and might have died from a snakebite. He pulls them from the job immediately. On top of the snakes, Kalo stepped into one of the owl burrows and sprained his ankle. Now Mother Paula's will be responsible for that as well. Curly calls the same reptile wranglers that had removed the alligators, but when they arrive, the snakes are all gone. Muckle just orders him to get back to work on Monday morning.

Meanwhile, in the janitor's closet, Roy is getting the tar beaten out of him. Dana gets him in a bear hug and is once again cutting off his air, when suddenly the bully is lifted off him. Roy is unsure in the dark of the closet who has saved him, but when he peeks out of the closet, the hallway is clear. So, Roy streaks for the nearest exit.

Notes

Roy's review of his options in dealing with Dana shows mature and intelligent introspection. He understands his weaknesses and strengths and his concern for being an only child on his parents is admirable. Then, when he finally is another brawl with Dana, he fights as well as he can against the bigger boy and that makes him admirable as well. He's a character the reader can't help but cheer on.

CHAPTER SUMMARIES WITH NOTES

CHAPTER TEN

Summary

It is Beatrice who has saved Roy yet again. She left Dana stripped to his underwear and then tied him to the flagpole in front of the administration building. She has “borrowed” a bicycle, installs Roy on the handlebars, and takes off again. She tells him she’s taking him home where he can do a favor for her. Roy agrees, and Beatrice tells him she needs bandages, tape, and medicine to prevent infections. Roy worries that something bad has happened to the running boy. Once they are at the Eberhardt home, Beatrice charms Roy’s mother and convinces her that they are working on a science project together. As a result, they leave together with the medical supplies and two pounds of hamburger for their experiment on “cell decay.” Roy is totally clueless, and his mother falls for it.

Beatrice tells Roy that she lives with her father, Leon “Lurch” Leep, a former professional basketball player who’s done little or nothing since his retirement. She chose to live with him, because her mother is a cockatoo trainer at Parrot Jungle, and she also doesn’t believe that her father can survive alone. Then, Leon remarries a woman named Lonna who is Mullet Fingers’ mother. Lonna doesn’t get along with him and ships him off to military school. Every attempt to make him “normal” fails, so when he runs away the last time, she decides not to look for him at all. However, Mullet Fingers and Beatrice have quietly forged a bond, and it’s she who takes care of him and keeps him under the radar. When they arrive at the old panel truck, Roy sees that the boy’s arm is purple and swollen, and he learns that it’s the result of a dog bite. Mullet Fingers had been bitten as he was releasing the snakes in an opening in the fence at the construction site.

The three of them then take the hamburger and leave the truck. Mullet Fingers begins running, wearing the shoes Roy brought him, to Roy’s satisfaction, and Beatrice and Roy take off on the bike. Roy thinks the meat is for the dogs, but he soon learns the truth: Mullet Fingers had never intended to hurt the dogs, and in fact, actually taped the mouths of the snakes shut; Roy is totally confused until he watches Beatrice and her stepbrother distribute the hamburger in little balls at the entrances of several owl burrows. The little owls come out to eat, and Mullet Fingers turns to Roy and asks, “Now do you get it?” Roy answers, “Yeah. I get it.”

Notes

This chapter is the one that creates a bond between the running boy, Beatrice, and Roy. They all help each other in some way or another and it’s obvious that they will soon be working together to save the owls.

HOOT-CHAPTER SUMMARY AND ANALYSIS

CHAPTER ELEVEN

Summary

Officer Delinko is continuing to drive by the construction site every morning on his way to work and again on his way home. The only unusual thing he has seen is a wild man with a red umbrella speaking to Curly, and so he hopes once again to capture the vandals himself. The next afternoon, he drives by once more and sees no dogs on patrol. He stops and the only sound he hears is a soft coo-coo, coo-coo sound which turns out to be the owls. He smiles at this before he notices a strip of green cloth hanging from the fence. He retrieves it and pockets it as part of his investigation.

In the meantime, Beatrice and Roy are pedaling madly with Mullet Fingers who slumps across the handlebars barely conscious. Roy sees Delinko's police cruiser and at first waves at him for help. But Beatrice bolts away with her brother slung over her shoulders to escape the cops so Roy follows. They are the closest things he has to friends in Coconut Cove. To Roy, Mullet Fingers is only trying to save some owls. How can that be a crime? Five minutes later, they are resting under a shade tree in someone's yard where ironically, tough Beatrice turns to Roy and asks him what they are going to do.

Curly decides that the only way to catch the vandals is to spend the night at the trailer on the construction site. He sits down at the television with a .38 revolver for protection, dreaming at the same time of Kimberly Lou Dixon the former runner-up to Miss America who will be playing the role of Mother Paula at the groundbreaking ceremony. Then, the cable goes out and his TV goes silent. In the silence, Curly becomes nervous especially when he hears a sound in the bathroom. His fear of more snakes makes him break open the door and before he can catch himself, he shoots the gun, destroying the toilet seat. The sound is only a mouse and Curly knows it's going to be a long weekend when he realizes he's shot the commode!

Officer Delinko shows up at the Eberhardt home for two reasons: he has seen Roy, Beatrice and Mullet Fingers on the street and even though he's not sure it's Roy, he uses his concerns to speak to Mr. Eberhardt and gain perhaps an ally in his career moves. Mrs. Eberhardt recognizes the bike that Delinko brings to them as the one Beatrice had been riding, but neither parent recognizes the green cloth he has found as belonging to Roy. Before Delinko leaves, he asks Mr. Eberhardt if Roy had mentioned his request for a letter for his personnel file. Even though he's running out of tolerance for the young police officer, he promises Delinko that he'll see what he can do. Then, Mrs. Eberhardt runs in after answering the phone and says she's on her way to the emergency room, because Roy has been hurt.

Notes

It's important to note that once again, Delinko smiles when he sees the owls. He is not at all turned off by them and this will be important at the end of the book. He also now has the bike Beatrice had stolen and a piece of Mullet Fingers' shirt. His brazen attempt to help his career by using Mr. Eberhardt's influence is somewhat disconcerting for the reader who wants to like this inexperienced young policeman. However, he will redeem himself later.

It's ironic that Beatrice who has a tough, in-charge attitude about her, turns to relatively weak Roy Eberhardt for advice. This firms up his character even more, showing the maturity and decency that other people will have come to depend on.

CHAPTER SUMMARY AND NOTES

CHAPTER TWELVE

Summary

Roy and Beatrice have finally arrived at the emergency room, so Beatrice has accepted Roy's advice. Roy has protected her brother by giving his own name and address in place of Mullet Fingers'. When Dr. Gonzalez questions the two of them about "Roy's" dog bite, it's obvious she suspects them of lying, but backs off eventually. Then, Beatrice decides to leave Mullet Fingers in Roy's hands so she can go home and feed her father. When he insists she tell him Mullet Fingers real name before she goes, she refuses, because she has made her brother a blood promise not to reveal it. So, Roy reads an *Outdoor Life* magazine and then gets up to wander around the hospital rather than watch patients brought in by ambulance. When he returns to the ER, he hears the voices of his parents arguing with medical officials to be allowed to see their son, so he opens the double doors and reveals himself. Just before he does so, however, Dr. Gonzalez appears and agrees to allow them to see "Roy." They are all totally surprised when she pulls back the curtain to see that the bed where Mullet Fingers had been laying is now empty with the IV dripping on the floor. Roy then walks a fine line trying to explain who the boy in the bed is and why he gave his name instead. In the end, Roy can only say, "I don't know the boy's name, and I don't know where he is."

Notes

It's obvious from this chapter that Roy is now committed even more to protecting Mullet Fingers, but he is also more mature in his concern than the average teenager. He has insisted on taking the running boy to the hospital and in this decision may have saved his life. Ironically, he is strong enough to force the running boy to the ER, but his stomach is too weak to watch patients brought in by ambulance.

CHAPTER THIRTEEN

Summary

When the Eberhardts arrive home, Roy knows he has to face the "den." This is a code word for Roy's father sitting down with him whenever there's some serious explaining to be done. When he enters the den, he is carrying a book his parents had gotten him for Christmas: *The Sibley Guide to Birds*. Roy explains that he's reading about the Burrowing Owl, and then he tells his father everything except about the snakes. He insists that Mullet Fingers is not a bad kid at all. He's just trying to save the owls. However, Mr. Eberhardt tells his son that there's not much they can do, since the Pancake House owns the property. They then take a walk together, and Mr. Eberhardt voices his concern for the family situation in the Leep home. But he does tell Roy that he will spend some time thinking very seriously about the situation.

Later that night, when she comes to tuck him in, Roy's mother reminds him that what he did at the hospital, even though he did it for the right reasons, was still a lie. However, Roy says he would do it the same way if he had to do it all over again. She reinforces then that what he did was go with his best judgment, and that's the proper way to go. She is further appalled by Lonna Leep who doesn't want Mullet Fingers back. She can't imagine a mother who doesn't want her son. She tells him she loves him and that both she and his father are very proud of him. Now all Roy has to do is continue to find a way to settle the argument between his heart and his brain.

Notes

The den in the Eberhardt home is a metaphor for the environment a parent must create in order to teach his child the right way to live. By talking out the problems there, Roy learns from his father and his father learns from him how to be a man of integrity. Also, Roy's parents are symbols of what true parents should be. They are an antithesis to Lonna Leep who doesn't even want her own child and treats her family irresponsibly.

CHAPTER SUMMARY AND NOTES

CHAPTER FOURTEEN

Summary

The next day, Garrett calls Roy to find out what had happened to Dana Matherson at Trace Middle School. However, all Roy will say is “No comment.” Then Roy gets on his bike and heads for the Leep home. He tries to talk with Beatrice, but she tells him it’s a bad time, a comment reinforced when Lonna comes to the door and treats him with rude contempt. He thinks Lonna is walking on thin ice with Beatrice who, he knows, could destroy her stepmother easily. He wonders if Mullet Fingers isn’t better off living on his own in the woods.

After that, Roy goes to Dana Matherson’s home where the bully’s father answers the door. The older man thinks Roy is there to be paid for doing Dana’s homework. However, Roy finally convinces him that he just wants to see Dana. Dana comes downstairs where he immediately threatens Roy. Roy gets him to come outside where Dana immediately takes a swing at him. Roy ducks and Dana strikes a fiberglass birdfeeder which makes his fist swell up and turn purple. Roy sincerely tries once again to get Dana to see how stupid his behavior is, but Dana refuses and threatens Roy again.

Roy’s next stop is the junkyard and the panel truck where Mullet Fingers is sleeping. They discuss the running boy’s commitment to the owls and he tells Roy that it’s just like Roy’s willingness to cross the line at the hospital. Roy cared about Mullet Fingers the same way that Mullet Fingers cares about the owls. He tells Roy how he wrote a letter to Mother Paula’s explaining that the owls should be protected and how he had received a form letter from Chuck Muckle. So he’s decided he’s there until they chase him out for good. He advises Roy that if he wants to be a part of the continued activity at the construction to be there that night with a socket wrench. Roy says that the stuff Mullet Fingers is doing won’t work, because a company as big as Mother Paula’s won’t give up. The boy says he won’t either. He doesn’t miss a normal life, because he’s never known one, and he believes he’s as smart as he needs to be to survive. Then, he tells Roy he has something to show him.

Mullet Fingers takes Roy to a half-sunken crab boat called the Molly Bell. It is a hidden sanctuary where Mullet Fingers tells Roy he has seen crocodiles there and the two of them sit quietly and watch all kinds of birds and other natural creatures. They even talk a little about the running boy’s mother and how he believes the problem is that they just never connected. Finally, Mullet Fingers demonstrates how he got his nickname by catching one of the swift fish and then releasing it back to the water. In the end, however, Mullet Fingers won’t tell Roy what he plans to do that night. Roy has to show up.

Notes

This chapter is a revelation of Roy as a mediator. He shows his talent for talking and helping even for those who refuse his help. He may not like Dana Matherson, but he’s willing to negotiate a truce with him. He may not like that Mullet Fingers lives alone in the woods, but he understands why he avoids his mother. His willingness to help also brings rewards: Mullet Fingers acknowledges that Roy cares about him and then he shows him the sanctuary at the sunken boat. He shares his world with Roy.

CHAPTER SUMMARY AND NOTES

CHAPTER FIFTEEN

Summary

Roy decides that the mission to Mother Paula's is just too risky: someone or something will be waiting. He also has fears about trying something that is illegal. This is a problem for him, because he feels that just because something is legal doesn't make it right. He feels like he needs to come up with a plan to protect Mullet Fingers. So he rides to Dana's house again and taps on the window until Dana comes to see who's there. When the bully looks out, Roy does something that's totally atypical for him: he "moons" the bigger boy. Then, when Dana begins to run after him, Roy takes off, staying just enough ahead of the fatter boy. Eventually, he allows Dana to catch him, but the bully is so tired, he can't really hurt Roy. Roy pretends, however, that he feels threatened and tells Dana that if he doesn't hurt him, he'll tell where he can find a whole case of really expensive cigarettes. He makes the bully promise that he won't ever hurt him again and then directs the boy to the trailer at the construction site.

The scene shifts to Curly who is still staying at the trailer. He's set up rat traps all around the trailer to protect against snakes and rodents, but he's bored and easily falls asleep. He's suddenly awakened by a noise outside – a SNAP! and a cry. Then the doorknob begins to jiggle, so Marine-style, Curly crashes through the trailer door and pins the intruder to the ground. It is Dana who then tells Curly that his name is Roy Eberhardt. The bully grabs a fistful of dirt and throws it in Curly's face and runs away.

At the same time, Officer Delinko has this Saturday off. He now has the complete shirt left behind on his antenna by Mullet Fingers. He's tired of being the butt of the jokes and is even more determined to catch the vandal. He gets into his squad car and decides to drive to the market. Along the way, he sees a boy running in a very wobbly way, each step making a strange clacking sound. The boy tries to run away from Delinko, but the officer catches up to him. At the same time, Curly shows up and tells Delinko what Dana did. Fortunately for Roy, Delinko knows that Dana is not Roy Eberhardt and arrests him for assault, attempted burglary, trespassing, and destruction of private property. Dana's only response is to ask for a cigarette!

Notes

Roy's plan has worked. Officer Delinko and Curly both believe that they have found the vandal which now takes the pressure off Mullet Fingers. Roy has used his intelligence to protect his friend and himself. He continues to learn about how to adjust to change and make his new world work for him.

CHAPTER SUMMARY AND NOTES

CHAPTER SIXTEEN

Summary

On Sunday, the Eberhardts are eating lunch when the doorbell rings. It is Garrett and he wants Roy to go skateboarding. Garrett tells Roy all about Dana being busted and how this time, they're going to lock him up for good. It gives Roy a sense of liberation.

Meanwhile, Curly is feeling good about the bust as well especially when it comes to reporting to Mr. Muckle. He goes back to the trailer and discovers that his gun is missing. He begins to search for it when he discovers something more has happened: someone has removed the seats from every bulldozer, making them impossible to operate. Now Curly knows that either Dana has an accomplice or someone completely separate has broken into the site. The final insult is when he discovers his gun inside one of the Travelin' Johnnys.

Roy really wants to go over to the junkyard, but his mother insists on some family time. So, his father finally fulfills a promise he had made to Roy to take him on an airboat ride through the Everglades. The trip reinforces Roy's newfound feelings about preserving nature and the places in danger of being wiped out. He also comes to realize that his parents can be his friends and that the constant moves are not any easier on them than they are on him. When they arrive home, they have a message left on their answering machine from Officer Delinko about the arrest of Dana Matherson. They ask Roy if Dana is collaborating with Mullet Fingers, and of course, Roy protests that Dana wouldn't care at all about the owls.

Roy asks his father what he would have to do to check up on Mother Paula's permits and his father tells him to go to the building department at City Hall. He goes to bed and is just falling asleep when he hears someone whisper his name: Beatrice is laying underneath his bed. Things had become impossible at home and she was able to take the sliding door to the Eberhardt house off its track and entered. He lets her sleep there and tells her that since they can't stop Mullet Fingers from protecting the owls, they're going to have to join him.

Notes

This chapter continues to reinforce Roy's progress in becoming a man of integrity. He recognizes the beauty of the natural world and the value of his parents. He also takes on the responsibility to do the right thing when he tells Beatrice that they have to join her brother in his protection of the owls.

CHAPTER SUMMARY AND NOTES

CHAPTER SEVENTEEN

Summary

The chapter opens with another telephone conversation between Curly and Chuck Muckle. The capture of Dana bodes well for Curly, but it is neutralized by the loss of the bulldozer seats. Muckle tells him he has to lock down the site for just another forty-eight hours and that if anyone asks, the owl burrows are deserted.

Beatrice is gone when Roy wakes up. When he arrives at school, everyone is talking about Dana's arrest. Roy keeps his mouth shut so as to arouse no more suspicion towards himself. Garrett later tells him that Roy had rat traps attached to his feet when they arrested him, and that's why he couldn't run away. Then, Roy looks for Beatrice, and one of her soccer teammates tells him that she's at the dentist. She had fallen down some steps and broke a tooth. Roy is sure that something other than a fall had broken her tooth. On the bus ride home, he also wonders if Dana's gang will try to jump him, but they just ignore him.

Meanwhile, Officer Delinko is praised by the Captain, and even though they all have doubts that Dana is the real vandal, they decide for the sake of politics, he's their official perpetrator. Delinko is allowed back in his car and is assigned a special patrol of the construction site. Delinko also tries to interrogate Dana who shows nothing but a bad attitude. He even buys a rubber alligator and throws it at Dana, who jumps back screaming in fear. This tells Delinko that Dana isn't the perpetrator.

Roy gets online and searches for information about the Burrowing Owl. He eventually comes across just the information he needs and prints it out. Then, he heads for City Hall, and using the excuse that he's doing a report for school, asks to see the file on the Mother Paula construction project. Unfortunately, the clerk tells him that the file seems to be missing. Then, he takes a box of live crickets to the construction site, because the owls will eat bugs and insects before the meat. He sees while he's there that the bulldozer seats are missing, and when Curly drives up and demands he leaves, Roy talks to him about the owls, insisting Curly recognize that they do exist and deserve to be protected. Curly yells that they're just chickens, but Roy rides away like he's climbing a mountain in Montana, and he won't stop until he's reached the crest.

Notes

Roy is committed to helping not only Mullet Fingers, but also the owls. He boldly finds information online that will help him in his plan, and he goes to City Hall to see for himself if Mother Paula's Pancake House had filled out the proper reports and permits. He knows within his heart that he's doing the right thing. He has found a way to balance his heart and his mind. When he climbs his imaginary mountain in Montana, this is a metaphor for finding the path that creates and fulfills your personal strength.

CHAPTER SUMMARY AND NOTES

CHAPTER EIGHTEEN

Summary

Curly reports to Officer Delinko about his encounter with Roy, but tells him not to write it up. Delinko doesn't tell Curly about Dana's reaction to the rubber alligator, and Curly doesn't tell Delinko about the bulldozer seats being stolen while Dana was in custody. They both carry secrets, but they are also both glad not to be alone on the construction site.

As Delinko is patrolling the site once again, he trips for the third time in an owl burrow. He hears a funny laugh like, "Heh! Heh!" but can see no one. Eventually, he realizes it's a baby owl. He slowly backs up so that the adults will feel comfortable about returning to their home and backs into one of the bulldozers. When he turns on his flashlight, he doesn't notice that the seat is gone. He is more concerned about what is going to happen to the little owls if he does his job.

The next morning, Roy sees in his father's newspaper the announcement about the groundbreaking ceremony. His mother sees how depressed it makes him and offers to drive him to school. However, Roy says he'd rather take the bus. He also asks her for permission to use her digital camera. She agrees. He leaves as soon as he can and jogs to Beatrice's house. Together, they run to the bus stop while he questions her along the way about what happened to her tooth. She tells him that she had broken it while biting a ring off one of her stepmother's toes. It seems that Lonna had found a small topaz charm that Beatrice's mother had left behind when she moved away and confiscated it for herself. Beatrice had taken exception to the theft. She also tells Roy that she hasn't seen Mullet Fingers since Sunday when he had briefly returned home to get some shirts. His dad walked in on him in the garage and talked calmly to him, but when Lonna saw him, she threw a fit. She refused to allow him to come live with them again. Roy offers Beatrice shelter in his house, but she refuses, saying that her father feels safer when she's around. He ends up telling her that he has a plan to help Mullet Fingers.

The principal calls Roy into her office and tries to find out as much as she can about what happened with Dana. But Roy is noncommittal, and she's forced to allow him to leave. At lunchtime, he borrows Garrett's bike and sets off for the junkyard. There, he tells Mullet Fingers about the groundbreaking ceremony and tells him that if he can get pictures of the owls with his mother's digital camera, they can reveal that Mother Paula's is illegally building on the site. Mullet Fingers picks Roy up and throws him out of the panel truck and tells him that he doesn't know how to work one of those digital cameras and that Roy has done enough to help him. He's done more than the running boy could ever have expected. When Roy leaves, the running boy gives him thumbs up and even calls him by his first name, at last.

Roy returns to school to give his current events report in Mr. Ryan's class. He doesn't use any of the usual types of subjects for his report. Instead, he begins to tell his classmates about what Mother Paula's Pancake House is doing to the owls. He describes how they're protected by the EPA as an endangered species and how the file on the permits for the company is missing from City Hall. The students, and even Mr. Ryan, are moved by what he tells them. He ends his report by insisting that what's happening out there is wrong, just plain wrong.

Notes

Roy's plan progresses. He tries to get Mullet Fingers to follow through, but has no luck in convincing him. He avoids the principal's interference, and he tells his class about the plight of the owls. All of these actions reveal a young man of integrity. The balance he has found between his head and his heart has given him the courage to do what is right. Meanwhile, a similar transformation is taking place in Officer Delinko who is beginning to have doubts about the company's priorities. He's worried about the owls, too, and is beginning to find the integrity he had lost for awhile.

CHAPTER SUMMARY AND NOTES

CHAPTER NINETEEN

Summary

Officer Delinko tells Curly that he's worried about the owls, but Curly only responds, "What owls?" Later, as he's patrolling, Delinko hears Curly shout that he's heard someone jump the fence. When Delinko arrives at the trailer, he sees nothing except a series of white flashes at the other end of the property. When he runs to that spot, he sees nothing out of the ordinary.

The next day is the groundbreaking ceremony, and Roy asks for a permission slip from his mom to leave school to attend. She's worried that it's not such a good idea, but his dad signs it and tells him to be careful and to be smart. Beatrice tells Roy on the bus that she got a note, too, and then gives him his mother's camera. Mullet Fingers had dropped it off the night before, saying he had gotten the pictures Roy wanted.

At 10:45, a stretch limousine arrived at the construction site carrying Chuck Muckle and Kimberly Lou Dixon. Officer Delinko is on his way home, having no desire to see the bulldozers begin to work, but Muckle calls him over and demands he help Kimberly find a place to change into her Mother Paula costume. Muckle is uncomfortable when he discovers that Delinko is the same officer who fell asleep while guarding the site, but he has no time to demand someone else help. Curly is quite impressed with Miss Dixon who is the first celebrity he had ever been around. Delinko is impressed with how pretty she is, too, but is put off with her rough voice and somewhat condescending manner.

Notes

This chapter is filled with preliminaries – events that help set the stage for what's about to happen during the groundbreaking ceremony. They create a subtle sense of suspense since the reader is at this point anxious to know what Roy's plan entails, even though some of what he has in mind might be easy to guess. It's also ironic for Delinko to meet a celebrity who is so pretty and yet has such a rough manner about her.

Roy's dad's decision to sign his permission slip and his warning him to be careful and to be smart is a sign that the parent has decided that it's time he allowed his son to make a decision about his own sense of integrity. Roy will live by and be responsible for his own choices now.

CHAPTER SUMMARY AND NOTES

CHAPTER TWENTY

Summary

Soon another limo arrives with all the important officials of Coconut Cove. At ten minutes to noon, Roy and Beatrice arrive. They are startled to see that they are not the only students there. Several of Roy's history classmates have come, too, along with a bunch of parents. Then, the school van arrives and unloads Beatrice's soccer teammates who are all carrying signs. Roy looks for signs of the owls, but they're nowhere in sight. He knows that this is what Mother Paula's officials are counting on.

Chuck Muckle is the first to speak to the crowd. He makes a welcoming speech and then hands out gold-painted shovels to the city officials who all shovel a bit of dirt simultaneously to Beatrice's quiet comment that they all need to get a life. Muckle then attempts to end the ceremony by saying that he'll see them all next spring at the grand opening. He's interrupted by Roy who says he won't be there if they hurt a single one of the owls. This is when Kimberly Lou Dixon steps forward to find out what Roy is talking about. Roy explains about the owls and their burrows, and how they're an endangered species, while the soccer team raises their signs and begins to chant. Kimberly is appalled, saying she doesn't want to hurt any owls. However, Muckle again interrupts and tells Roy he is irresponsible to make such accusations without proof. Roy holds up the camera with what he says is proof and begins to look for the pictures Mullet Fingers took the night before. Unfortunately, the boy's insistence that he didn't know a thing about digital cameras comes true when none of the pictures is clear enough to prove the existence of the little birds.

Once again, Roy is stymied until a voice rings out that "it ain't over by mile!" It's Mullet Fingers who has climbed into one of the burrow with only his head is showing. He says they'll have to bury him along with the owls. Furthermore, he is holding a kite string between his teeth which is attached to a bucket which he says is filled with cottonmouths and that if they begin to bulldoze the property, he'll spill them out into the crowd. When Roy looks inside, he sees that the snakes are rubber just like Delinko's crocodile. Muckle orders Curly to get the boy out of his sight and to take the bucket of snakes with him, but Curly refuses to touch the bucket even though it means Muckle will fire him.

Then, Delinko looks in the bucket, and Roy is convinced that the protest will soon be over. But to his surprise, Delinko doesn't tell the truth about the snakes. He instead advises Muckle to negotiate. Muckle becomes enraged and takes one of the shovels, empties the bucket, and viciously cuts up all the rubber snakes. When he realizes the snakes are fake, he heads for Mullet Fingers with the intention of attacking him. At that point, Roy and Beatrice join hands and create a barrier around the running boy. They are soon joined by all the other students, who form a circle around the burrow where Mullet Fingers lies. None of the parents stop their children, either. Stealthily, the city officials begin to melt away, not wanting to be seen with this maniac from Mother Paula's. Even Kimberly Lou Dixon joins the circle while all the kids begin to sing, "This Land Is Your Land."

Muckle seeks help from other policemen who then arrive, but they, too, refuse to step into the protest. Then, Lonna Leep arrives attempting to get camera coverage by pretending she is so proud of her son, but once again, the kids close ranks against her. It looks like it might turn ugly until Garrett launches one of his fake farts which forces Lonna back. The final touch comes when one of the owls no one has yet seen suddenly appears looking for its burrow. It dives down and lands on the top of Mullet Fingers' head.

Notes

All of the events at the groundbreaking ceremony are examples of the adage that one good turn deserves another. Each of the kids who partakes in the protest are doing the right thing while the officials of the company and the city symbolize phonies who have been revealed to be more interested in what's good for them than in what's good for the city and its citizens.

Roy, Beatrice, and Mullet Fingers are examples of brave young people who willingly take on the "establishment" for the sake of what is right. They even put their own physical well-being on the line to protect the birds and their friends. In the process, they grow and learn about the same integrity that Roy's parents have been trying to teach him.

CHAPTER SUMMARY AND NOTES

CHAPTER TWENTY-ONE

Summary

Roy learns that Mullet Fingers real name is Napoleon Bridger, a name that totally amazes him. Meanwhile, his mother is cutting out all the articles about the protest to make a scrapbook for her son. They learn as they read the articles that Mullet Fingers had gone home to his parents. Roy's mother then tells him that his father wants to see him before he goes to school, and because Roy hadn't seen him the night before, he's worried that somehow he's in trouble. His mother reassures him that his dad respects what he did. His mother also tells him she's not sure if the Pancake House will be built now or not. Apparently, after the kids left the scene, Chuck Muckle tried to choke a reporter when she asked the same question.

Then, the doorbell rings, and it turns out to be the same reporter who had been choked by Chuck Muckle. She starts to ask Roy all kinds of questions until his dad intervenes and has Roy give her a folder that turns out to be the file that was missing from City Hall. It seems his father had borrowed the folder and made copies of all the permits. He discovered that there was an E. I.S. missing from the file. That's an Environmental Impact Statement, which was required by law to be in the file. The fact that it's missing indicates the company had never done one or they lost it on purpose. That's when Roy knows that his dad cares about the owls, too.

Notes

Once again, Roy learns how lucky he is to have such great parents. Not only have they taught him about integrity and good character, but they have shown by their own example how to live the right way.

EPILOGUE

Summary

In the weeks that follow the protest, the Mother Paula's story turns into a full-blown scandal. It's discovered that an E. I. S. had been completed, but the document conveniently disappeared when Councilman Bruce Gandy took money to hide it in his golf bag. Kimberly Lou quits her role as Mother Paula in protest against the company. It seems she has a lifetime membership in the Audubon Society. The incident jumpstarts her career, while the stock of Mother Paula's drops like a stone.

Chuck Muckle is demoted and forced to take anger management classes. He fails the course and eventually has to take a job as a cruise director in Miami. The company agrees to preserve the spot where the owls are living and gives \$50,000 to the Nature Conservancy. Roy and Beatrice are interviewed by Tom Brokaw for the national TV news, but Roy is upset that Mullet Fingers isn't receiving his share of the credit. Unfortunately, the boy had only lasted 48 hours with his mother and then took off again. He got caught when a nosy neighbor saw Beatrice lower him out of the bathroom window and the cops took him to juvenile detention when Lonna accused him of taking the toe ring that Beatrice had bit off her toe. In juvenile detention, he met up with Dan Matherson whom he convinced to escape from detention with him. It was a perfect plan, because Dana couldn't run as fast as Mullet Fingers, and the cops stopped to handcuff Dana.

Beatrice knows where her brother was hiding, but she won't tell Roy, because she took a blood oath never to reveal the truth. Roy knows he will never see Napoleon Bridger again unless he wants to be seen.

When the Eberhardts take a drive to the construction site, it's as if Mother Paula's company had never been there. Officer Delinko and Curly and his family are also there. Patiently, they wait until eventually the owls appear. Curly admits that they're "kinda cute."

One Saturday, Roy goes to one of Beatrice's soccer games where Roy accepts the fact there's no change of seasons like in Montana, only mild variations of summer. However, he has been dreaming less and less about Montana anyway. He sees Beatrice score several goals and thinks about how ironic it is that Beatrice the Bear offers thumbs up to Tex the new kid. Then, he's reminded of that wonderful afternoon with Mullet Fingers on the sunken boat and he decides to head there on his bike. When he arrives, like the running boy had done, he stretches out into the water until a school of the mullets begin to swim toward him. As quickly as he can, he grabs for one just like Mullet Fingers and for one thrilling moment he actually feels it in his hands. But it's too quick and too slippery and gets away. He wonders if the running boy had actually captured one or if it was just some trick or illusion.

The, Roy hears a noise like a laugh and calls out, "Napoleon Bridger, is that you?" Nothing happens. Reluctantly, he slides off the wreck and lets the tide take him to shore. As he's getting dressed, he notices one sneaker missing. He soon finds it half-submerged in the shallows. When he reaches over to pick it up, he sees that it's securely entwined around a barnacle-encrusted root. He carefully unties each meticulous knot and discovers inside the shoe a baby mullet. He empties it from his hand and releases it into the water. He looks around, but the running boy is already gone. He laughs to himself, because now he knows it's not a trick. You can catch a mullet barehanded. He decides he'll just have to come back another day and try again. After all, that's what a real Florida boy would do.

Notes

The epilogue serves to tie up all the loose ends of the story and summarizes all that the characters have learned. Unscrupulous politicians are caught and punished; movie stars jumpstart their careers; some adults are caught in lies by the children who listen to their stories; other adults are loving and respected by their children; and young people learn how important it is to stand up for you believe.

As for Roy, this young man's coming of age has come full circle. Not only has he found the balance between his head and his heart, but he's also learned that life is all about change and how we adjust to it. He loved Montana and ached to return there, but now he's found that Florida offers a life of interest also; it's just different than Montana, not any less valuable. He's a part of this new environment now, and he's all the better for it.

OVERALL ANALYSIS

CHARACTER ANALYSIS

Major Characters

Roy Eberhardt

Roy is a typical teenager with all the angst that puberty brings. His parents move around a great deal because of his father's job, and Roy seems to just find his way in one place when he has to move to another. Like any kid, he has some resentment for this situation, but he also has a strong sense of responsibility as the only child of his parents. He knows that he had a baby sister who died early in his mother's pregnancy and that they never had any more children. Because of this, he knows he owes it, especially to his mother, to keep himself safe. This is a highly mature attitude for such a young boy.

When Roy comes to Florida, he is very homesick for his favorite place, Montana. Florida is very difficult to adjust to. What's worse, he must contend with the middle school bully who has singled him out for his special wrath. Roy actually is nearly choked to death twice by Dana Matherson. Again, however, Roy's innate integrity surfaces as he tries at least three times to make peace with this bully. Roy is also an extremely curious and intelligent young man as evidenced by his decision to find out who this running boy really is, a decision other teens may not even have considered. Then, he becomes so involved in Mullet Fingers' life that he takes on the responsibility along with him to save the owls. He learns to balance his heart with his head and live with the consequences of his decisions. In the end, the reader can't help but be impressed with the young man that Roy becomes.

Mullet Fingers

Far from normal, Mullet Fingers – also known as Napoleon Bridger - is the product of an extremely dysfunctional family. He has no idea who his biological father is and his own mother has literally rejected him, forcing him from her home. His step-sister, Beatrice Leep, is the only one who protects him, even though his step-father wants him to live with them. He is just incapable of caring for himself let alone a son. As a result of being rejected, this young man has found a way to survive on his own, living in the forest of Florida and appreciating how nature provides a home for many creatures including himself. He is one of those children who fall through the cracks of social services. No one knows that he's on his own and so, he never goes to school or even wears shoes.

In spite of all his problems, he is a supremely responsible young man when he takes on the establishment to save the Burrow Owls. He also has the ability to recognize the good in others, like Roy, even though he really trusts no one but Beatrice at the time. The reader is left wondering in the end when Mullet Fingers disappears again whether he will be safe. However, Roy has no doubts that his new friend will be fine even though he knows he will only see him again if Mullet Fingers wants to see him.

Beatrice Leep

She is Mullet Fingers' step-sister, and she protects him fiercely. She is known at school as Beatrice the Bear, because she is so tough on and off the soccer field. No one messes with Beatrice including Dana Matherson. At first, she is threatening to Roy who is curious about her brother, but she soon recognizes that he is actually an asset to her brother and a friend to her. She then champions him against Dana and works with him when he's determined to help the running boy save the owls. She, too, is very responsible. She takes care of her father who seems incapable of caring for himself, and she stands up to her "evil step-mother" when she would hurt any of her family.

Officer David Delinko

This young police officer is an adult version of Roy in that he, too, is on a journey to find his own integrity. He wants badly to be a detective and uses any opportunity that comes to him to further his career. This includes taking on the investigation of the vandalism at the construction site on his own time and "sucking up" to Mr. Eberhardt in order to get a letter of recommendation for his personnel file. However, this weaker side of his character is soon overcome when he realizes he's going to destroy the innocent owls if he does his job. As a result, just when the kids standing up for the owls need him, he chooses to side with them and shows his true strength and integrity.

Dana Matherson

Dana is one of the villains of the story. He is the school bully who comes from his dysfunctional family. Because he is larger than his classmates, he is able to control them physically and enjoy his own sense of power because of it. He is actually quite stupid and stubborn, and it's obvious that he will always have problems with authority. He takes on Roy as his own personal punching bag and is totally enraged when the other boy won't just lie down and take it. Ironically, Roy gives him many chances to back off and redeem himself, but, in the end, Dana is unable to see or take the higher ground. The reader knows that he's probably a lost cause.

CHARACTER ANALYSIS

Minor Characters

Roy's Parents

Although minor characters, Roy's parents are presented in an extremely positive light. They are the ones who have instilled in their son this sense of integrity and have helped him mature into a fine young man. Their jobs do force Roy to move many times which sometimes makes his life difficult and forces him to be lonely. However, they are depicted as being people who don't enjoy the fact that they are asking their son to move so many times and find it difficult themselves. Fortunately for Roy, they always make themselves available when he needs them, and they protect him as fiercely as Beatrice protects her brother.

Curly Branitt

Curly is another character who comes across as surly and mean in the beginning, but redeems himself by the end when he realizes that the owls are worth saving. He is the construction site foreman for Mother Paula's Pancake House and is very aware that his job is on the line if the vandalism continues to occur on the site. This is obviously the reason why he is so irritable whenever Roy comes near. He is under pressure from a company that is determined to build the new facility even if they have to break the law to do it. In the end, however, Curly refuses to help his boss, Chuck Muckle, deal with the young kids who are protesting the building of the restaurant. He even goes back to the site when it's all over and admits that the owls are "kinda cute."

Chuck Muckle

Another villain, Chuck is a stereotypical presentation of the corporate bully and as such is comparable to Dana Matherson. He uses his power to force the building of a new restaurant even though he knows it's illegal to build on protected habitats. He also is willing to bribe public officials to make sure the illegalities disappear. He bullies everyone who stands in his way and shows that he also has a severe temper that could be dangerous. Like Dana, he can't be negotiated with, preferring to use threats to get his way. Also like Dana, he is depicted as a lost cause who in the end loses his job and becomes a tour director.

Kimberly Lou Dixon

At first she seems to be the stereotypical Hollywood starlet by her condescending behavior and rough attitude. However, she turns out to be a lifetime member of the Audubon Society and willingly steps forward to repudiate the actions of the Mother Paula Pancake House company and join the kids in protecting the owls. If the adage that doing good brings good back to you is true, then Kimberly is the ultimate example. She was floundering in her career until her conscience makes her repudiate the attack on the owls. Then, her career takes off, and she becomes successful.

Garrett

He appears very briefly in the story, but he's an example of a good kid. He befriends Roy when no one else will and feeds him information when he needs it. He also steps forward with Roy when they link arms against Chuck Muckle at the protest.

Leon and Lonna Leep

These two are the unusual parents of Beatrice and Mullet Fingers. Leon is a former professional basketball player who retired because of injuries. However, he was never able to adjust to life after that and flounders around his house as a real couch potato, being cared for by Beatrice. He likes Mullet Fingers and wants him to live with them. However, he doesn't have the strength to fight his second wife and is still confused by the abandonment of his first wife. Lonna, his second wife, is the "wicked witch of the west." She has no time for Mullet Fingers, her biological son, and willingly allows him to run away and never searches for him. Then, when he gains positive publicity, she pretends to love him. She also steals from Beatrice's biological mother and literally makes life miserable for all of them in the Leep household. She's a third villain in the story.

PLOT STRUCTURE ANALYSIS

The plot of *Hoot* begins from one of the first days that Roy Eberhardt attends his new school in Coconut Cove, Florida. It follows after this point chronologically until Roy and his friends face down the executives from Mother Paula's Pancake House. The plot goes back and forth between Roy's experiences and those of Officer Delinko and construction site foreman Curly Branitt. These three characters all experience a metamorphosis in that they mature into responsible adults, even though their ages are so widely disparate.

The author seems to choose this structural format to show the simultaneous journeys these men and this young boy are taking both physically and emotionally. It also shows how adults can be buffoons at first, but turn out to be a kid's greatest champion in the end. He also uses the motif of a bildungsroman (a boy's journey to manhood) to show Roy's maturation process. In the end, the possibilities of decent behavior among both kids and adults seem to be the author's greatest emphasis while he keeps his reader entertained with the silly characters and the funny sides of being a teenager in America.

THEME ANALYSIS

Growing Up

The theme of growing up is the most relevant of the novel. It is applicable to any young person who might read this book and learn through Roy's example. It emphasizes that growing up means adjusting to change even when we don't want to; it means making decisions based on a balance between the head and the heart and then accepting the consequences of those decisions no matter what they might be; it means having integrity and using the strength of it to help you survive; it means accepting people for who they are and trying to work with them even when they resist; it means appreciating your parents when they are trying hard to earn your respect; and it means learning that life will never be easy, but it can be interesting and delightful.

Corruption

Another theme is corruption. This is another important idea presented to the young people who might read this novel. It presents the reality of the world, that there are people who do bad things out of selfishness and greed, and they often impact in devastating ways to people around them. Presenting this in opposition to the idea of integrity helps emphasize that we all have choices in how we behave and that just because someone is an adult doesn't mean they are unwilling to lie to kids if it will promote their own intentions. The readers of this book can then see how their choices can determine whether they'll be people of integrity or corrupt individuals.

Parental Love

A third theme is that of parental love. This lesson is seen in the juxtaposition of the Eberhardts and the Leeps. The Eberhardts love Roy and hold him to high standards of behavior. They are also willing to admit when they're wrong and offer Roy the opportunity to make his own choices and learn from his own mistakes. They earn his respect and he earns theirs. The opposition is seen in the Leeps. Beatrice finds herself taking care of a father who can't even make his own dinner, because she loves him. He seems like a good man, but he is unable to live his own life in such a way as to earn his daughter's respect. His second wife is a constant disruption to any peace that there might have been in the Leep home. She is mean and uncaring and combative, the last kind of mother any girl should want to be. As a result, the example of these two sets of parents exemplify to the reader how parents should behave.

Integrity

A final theme concerns integrity. Roy's decision to take up the cause of the owls shows that he values his character as a good man. Each and every person who takes the side of the underdog has this integrity in his character and is to be admired. Many of the characters in the story choose to change their selfish traits and take up side of the unprotected and become better people for it.

RISING ACTION

The rising action begins in chapter one when Roy first sees the running boy and out of curiosity and the desire for a friend resolves to find out the boy's story. It continues until the confrontation with the Pancake House executives at the construction site.

FALLING ACTION

The falling action occurs when everyone turns against Chuck Muckle and Mother Paula's Pancake House at the demonstration. As a result, the building project falls through, the owls are saved, Mullet Fingers is free to live on his own, and Roy becomes a young man of integrity and compassion.

POINT OF VIEW

Third-person omniscient. It is written omnisciently as if viewed by a source outside all the action.

AUTHOR'S STYLE

The author's style for *Hoot* can only be described as somewhat tongue-in-cheek while at the same time expressing some serious ideas for the young readers he targets. For example, he uses silly names for the characters like Chuck Muckle, Beatrice Leep, Mullet Fingers, and Napoleon Bridger. The characters are often stereotypical like Dana Matherson who fits all the character traits of a typical bully and Officer Delinko who behaves like an eager young policeman who is made a fool by an unknown vandal. Furthermore, adults are often presented as buffoons and clowns while, even though some are silly and ornery, most of the kids understand their responsibilities and follow through when they must.

Obviously, Mr. Hiassen creates characters and situations that can be unrealistic, but his intent seems to be to emphasize the more serious ideas of integrity and responsibility while keeping his readers entranced by his story.

FORESHADOWING

There are several other literary devices that pop up at various times in the story. One of the most prevalent ones is foreshadowing which frequently presents clues of something that will happen later in the novel. Some examples of foreshadowing include:

- 1.) The incident with Office Delinko is foreshadowing in that it prepares us for the people who are trying to save the owls who live in burrows on the site of yet another pancake house.
- 2.) The owners of Mother Paula's are depicted as the villains of the story. They only care about the money they're making and they foreshadow a coming battle over the owls.
- 3.) In spite of the damage to the squad car that Delinko allowed to happen, he shows he's a compassionate man in the way he treats the owls. This foreshadows that he will be perhaps be on the side of the birds when their habitat is threatened.
- 4.) Roy's bus suspension is lifted, because it is unfair that he is being punished while Dana is not. Roy figures that tomorrow is as good as any day to face his bully problems. This foreshadows yet another confrontation with Dana.

IRONY

Another element that is important to note is **irony** – when something happens, or is seen, or is heard that we may know, but the characters do not, or that appears opposite of what is expected. Some examples of irony include:

- 1.) A construction foreman named Curly who, in spite of his humorous name (he's as bald as a cue ball), is cranky and unsmiling.
- 2.) Garrett is no better than a D student, but is very popular, because he cuts up in class. He is known as the "King of Farts," because he can actually fart out the first line of the Pledge of Allegiance. His mother, ironically, is the Guidance Counselor for Trace Middle School.
- 3.) Dana slaps Roy around three times and works it so the bus driver sees nothing. It seems like it's going to get worse when suddenly, Dana sits up and slumps sourly against the bus window. A kid from the last bus stop has bravely chosen to sit right beside him – it's Beatrice, the tough girl who had once threatened him about looking for her brother.
- 4.) Beatrice bolts away with her brother slung over her shoulders to escape the cops so Roy follows. Five minutes later, they are resting under a shade tree in someone's yard where ironically, tough Beatrice turns to Roy and asks *him* what they are going to do.
- 5.) Roy gets up to wander around the hospital after he and Beatrice bring Mullet Fingers for help. He's rather wander than watch patients brought in by ambulance. The boy to whom everyone now looks for help is unable to look at blood and suffering.
- 6.) Delinko is impressed with how pretty Kinmberly Lou Dixon is, but is put off with her rough voice and somewhat condescending manner. It's ironic that beauty has a sordid side.

MOTIFS

Another literary device used by the author is **a motif**. This device allows the author to run an important idea throughout the story by using images to create the thought for the reader. There is one motif used in *Hoot*:

- 1.) Bildungsroman which is a motif whereby a young boy grows, matures, and comes of age. The reader sees this in the following ways: Roy searches for the reason why a boy his age would be barefoot, living in the woods, and not going to school; he has to find a way to deal with a bully that is mature and effective; he must make choices that could have serious repercussions; he had to recognize that he owes his parents respect, because they have earned it; and he must accept that life is all about change and how we adapt to it.

IMPORTANT QUOTATIONS - QUOTES

The following quotations are important at various points in the story: (Alfred A. Knopf, New York, 2002):

- 1.) “*‘What’s gonna happen to them? Once you start bulldozing I mean.’* Curly the foreman chuckled. *‘What owls?’* he said.” (pg. 8) This quote begins the confrontation between what’s right and what authority claims is right.
- 2.) “*Next time you’ve got a problem just tell me, and then we’ll sit down and talk about it like civilized human beings.*” (pg. 45) This is Roy’s comment to Dana when he tries to reason with boy to stop the bullying.
- 3.) “*Roy ran all the way back to his bicycle and rode home as fast as he could. He wasn’t frightened and he wasn’t discouraged. He was more excited than ever.*” (pg. 57) This is Roy’s reaction to his first encounter to the running boy.
- 4.) “*He wasn’t cocky, but he had a stubborn streak of pride.*” (pg. 65) Here Roy recognizes that this character trait will not allow him to spend the rest of the school year cowering in fear of Dana Matherson.
- 5.) “*He was determined to persuade Mullet Fingers that he was someone to be trusted, that he hadn’t come to interfere but rather to help, if Mullet Fingers needed it.*” (pg. 67) This shows that inside Roy is a good boy who has compassion for the needs of others.
- 6.) “*‘Eberhardt, why do you care about this kid?’ It was a good question, and Roy wasn’t certain he could put the answer into words. there was something about the look on the boy’s face . . . something urgent and determined and unforgettable.*” (pgs. 74-75) These words show Roy’s inner strength and goodness.)
- 7.) “*It was remarkable that the same species of bird was able to thrive in two places so far apart, and so completely different. If they can do it, Roy thought, maybe I can, too.*” (pg. 93) This shows Roy’s progression into the understanding of life as change and adaption.
- 8.) “*He refrained from doing some of the wild, daredevil stunts that boys his age tried – not because he feared for his safety, but because he felt it was solemn duty as an only child.*” (pg. 101) This shows Roy’s respect for his parents and his knowledge of their love for him.
- 9.) “*There, standing by the hole and peering curiously at one of the meatballs, was the smallest owl he had ever seen. Mullet Fingers chuckled him gently on the shoulder. ‘Okay – now do you get it?’*” (pg. 124) Roy finally learns why Mullet Fingers is willing to go after a large corporation.”
- 10.) “*The kid was only trying to take care of some owls – how could that possibly be a crime? Roy thought.*” (pg. 128) This shows how Roy is beginning to sense the corruption inherent in the building of the restaurant.
- 11.) “*Sometimes you’re going to be faced with situations where the line isn’t clear between what’s right and what’s wrong. Your heart will tell you to do something different. In the end, all that’s left is to look at both sides and go with your best judgment.*” (pg. 160) This commentary from Roy’s mother expresses what he has already come to believe.
- 12.) “*As Roy rode away on his bike, he pondered the possibility that Mullet Fingers was better off roaming the woods than living at home with a witch for a mother.*” (pg. 166) Roy has come to realize that being a biological parent doesn’t necessarily make you good for your child.
- 13.) “*Just because something is legal doesn’t automatically make it right.*” (pg. 180) Roy recognizes that the world is filled with injustice and we must all make choices that may not always have the best consequences.
- 14.) “*‘You can’t stop him, Roy. He’s too darn thickheaded.’ ‘Then I guess we’ve gotta join him.’*” (pg. 210) Here Roy has made his decision to stand up for the owls – to do the right thing.
- 15.) “*He wouldn’t stop until he reached the crest of his imaginary Montana mountain and coasted downhill into the coolness of the valley.*” (pg. 228) These words show how delighted Roy is to have taken the adult steps to stand up for what is right.
- 16.) “*Now he understood what was going to happen to the little owls if he did his job properly, and it weighted him with an aching and unshakeable sorrow.*” (pg. 234) Officer Delinko is coming to realize that what he is doing may be legal, but it is still wrong.
- 17.) “*The classroom fell quiet, a long heavy silence that roared in Roy’s ears like a train.*” (pg. 248) This occurs after Roy tells about the plight of the owls in current events. he knows he’s awakened the consciences of all these kids as well as his teacher.
- 18.) “*‘You bury those birds,’ Mullet Fingers said, ‘you gotta bury me, too.’*” (pg. 267) Mullet Fingers puts himself in danger for the owls.
- 19.) “*Guess I’ll have to come back another day and try again, Roy thought. That’s what a real Florida boy would do.*” (pg. 292) The novel ends with this thought showing that Roy finally has adapted to the change in his life; he has grown up.

SYMBOLISM / METAPHORS / IMAGERY / SYMBOLS

Other elements that are present in this novel are **symbols and metaphors**. Symbols are the use of some unrelated idea to represent something else. Metaphors are direct comparisons made between characters and ideas. There are many symbols and metaphors used by the author such as:

- 1.) “The next morning, Roy walks to the bus stop and notices some ospreys have built a nest at the top of a concrete utility pole. He’s excited to see them, because he had seen them in Montana, too, and didn’t think he’d find them here. He finds it remarkable that the same species of bird can thrive in tow places so far apart and so completely different. It makes him feel like maybe he can do the same thing.” (The ospreys are a metaphor for Roy’s inability to adapt to change for awhile after he comes to Florida.)
- 2.) “The ‘den.’ This is a code word for Roy’s father sitting down with him whenever there’s some serious explaining to be done.” (The den is symbolic for both discipline and a parent’s attempt to reason with his child.)
- 3.) “She [Roy’s mother] can’t imagine a mother who doesn’t want her son. She tells him she loves him and that both she and his father are very proud of him.” (his mother’ thoughts are a metaphor for the behavior of good parents.)
- 4.) Roy rides away like he’s climbing a mountain in Montana, and he won’t stop until he’s reached the crest. This is a metaphor for climbing the mountain of indecision and then finding the answer at the top.
- 5.) Chuck Muckle is the first to speak to the crowd. He makes a welcoming speech and then hands out gold-painted shovels to the city officials who all shovel a bit of dirt simultaneously to Beatrice’s quiet comment that they all need to get a life. Here we see the silly behavior of adults as symbolic of the lies they live.

KEY FACTS

Title: *Hoot*

Author: Carl Hiassen

Date Published: 2002

Meaning of the Title: It refers to the owls who are protected by a group of children who discover something deeper in life.

Setting: Coconut Cove, Florida during the present day

Protagonist: Roy Eberhardt who chooses to stand up for the endangered owls

Antagonist: Dana Matherson, the company officials of Mother Paula’s Pancake House, Lonna Leep, and Roy’s own inner doubts and fears

Mood: The mood is at times frustrating as we watch Roy try to adjust to a new community and the bully who makes his life miserable. But mostly, it is uplifting as we see several young people make decisions on behalf of what is right and good.

Point of View: It is written omnisciently as if viewed by a source outside all the action.

Tense: This story is written in the past tense.

Rising Action: The rising action begins in chapter one when Roy becomes interested in the running boy.

Exposition: Roy Eberhardt becomes inetersted in a running boy who has no shoes and lives in the woods. The relationship he eventually forges with this boy and his sister Beatrice leads him to protest the destruction of the natural environment of the Burrow Owls. Through these experiences, he grows up and learns the meaning of integrity.

Climax: The climax of the story occurs when Roy and his friends stand up against a national corporation to protect the owls.

Outcome: The company backs down and even donates money to preserve the natural site they were going to build on. Those who stood against the protest end up losing their jobs or otherwise frustrated while those who stood up for what is right learn what it is to do the right thing.

Major Themes: Growing up; Corruption; Parental Love; and Integrity

STUDY QUESTIONS - MULTIPLE CHOICE QUIZ

- 1.) Roy is intrigued by the running boy, because
 - a.) he runs faster than anyone Roy has ever seen before.
 - b.) he is running barefoot.
 - c.) he is nearly naked.
- 2.) Roy's reaction at first to Dana's bullying is
 - a.) to sit somewhere else on the bus.
 - b.) to scream at the bus driver to help him.
 - c.) to take what Dana hands out.
- 3.) When Dana is choking Roy, he retaliates by
 - a.) punching him in the nose.
 - b.) kicking him between the legs.
 - c.) spitting on him.
- 4.) Roy's curiosity about the running boy leads him to
 - a.) Lonna Leep, his mother.
 - b.) Leon Leep, his step-father.
 - c.) Beatrice Leep, his step-sister.
- 5.) Roy finally goes after the running boy by following him back to his lair in the woods. In the process, he receives a concussion, because
 - a.) he is hit in the head by a golf ball.
 - b.) he trips and hits his head on a log.
 - c.) he is hit by the running boy.
- 6.) Roy doesn't give up on the running boy and goes back to his lair. There the boy
 - a.) sits down and finally talks to him.
 - b.) knocks him out again.
 - c.) ties him up and covers his face so he can't see the boy.
- 7.) Roy shows that the boy can trust him by giving him
 - a.) a new pair of shoes.
 - b.) money to buy shoes.
 - c.) a new bike.
- 8.) Roy learns from Beatrice that she nicknamed her brother Mullet Fingers, because
 - a.) he wore his hair long in the back and short on the top.
 - b.) he was a quick runner.
 - c.) he could catch small fish with his bare hands.
- 9.) Roy discovers that Mullet Fingers left the snakes in the construction lot. But he made sure they couldn't hurt the dogs by
 - a.) taping their mouths shut.
 - b.) painting their tails sparkly colors.
 - c.) using non-poisonous snakes.
- 10.) Roy's parents take him for the day of his life by
 - a.) going to Disney World.
 - b.) walking to the lair and meeting Mullet Fingers.
 - c.) taking an airboat ride through the Everglades.
- 11.) Roy comes up with the plan to protect the owls by
 - a.) taking their pictures to show at the groundbreaking.
 - b.) hiding in one of the burrows of the owls.
 - c.) stealing the seats from the bulldozers.
- 12.) The first one to interrupt the groundbreaking ceremony is
 - a.) Beatrice.
 - b.) Mullet Fingers.
 - c.) Roy.
- 13.) Chuck Muckle's reaction to the revelation that the owls are a protected species is to
 - a.) declare that he didn't know.
 - b.) go crazy and chop up the fake snakes.
 - c.) attack Roy.
- 14.) One of the biggest surprises of the protest is
 - a.) the discovery that Chuck Muckle took a bribe.
 - b.) an eagle landing on Mullet Fingers' head.
 - c.) Kimberly Lous Dixon being a life member of the Audubon society.
- 15.) In the end, Roy learns
 - a.) how to be a Montana boy.
 - b.) how to be a Florida boy.
 - c.) how to set up a protest.

ANSWER KEY

- 1.) b
- 2.) c
- 3.) a
- 4.) c
- 5.) a
- 6.) c
- 7.) a
- 8.) c
- 9.) a
- 10.) c
- 11.) a
- 12.) c
- 13.) b
- 14.) c
- 15.) b

ESSAY TOPICS - BOOK REPORT IDEAS

- 1.) Follow Roy's maturation by showing how he learns about change, adaptation, and integrity. Cite specific events from the story.
- 2.) Describe the kind of boy Mullet Fingers is. Why does he live the way he does? What might his future hold?
- 3.) Contrast Roy's parents to Lonna and Leon Leep. How have each contributed to the character traits their children exhibit?
- 4.) Explain how Officer Delinko goes through the same maturation process as Roy.
- 5.) How does Roy balance his head with his heart?
- 6.) Discuss the role of the bully, Dana Matherson, in this story. Why is his role important even if his character is a person who seems to have little value?
- 7.) Attempt to explain how Lonna Leep could reject her own son.
- 8.) Explain how Mother Paula's Pancake House attempted to build on a protected site.
- 9.) What were the driving forces behind Chuck Muckle's behavior? How is he a bully just like Dana Matherson?
- 10.) What does it mean in the end when Roy says he'll do what a real Florida boy would do?

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