



The Chocolate War

by Robert Cormier

Teacher's Guide

Written By Mary Ellen Snodgrass

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Synopsis

Chapter 1

While trying out for the football team, Jerry Renault faints. The coach suggests that someone his size should play end rather than quarterback. At Jerry's insistence, the coach relents and orders him back the next day. Walking home, he feels pain in his side and recalls his dying mother's drugged sleep. Nauseated and weak, he manages to return to school.

Chapter 2

On a bleacher at the football field, Obie is bored, disgusted, and tired. He is ambivalent toward Archie, an atheistic cynic. Obie fears that Archie will make him late for his despised job as grocery stock clerk, yet enjoys his skill at psychological torment. Archie selects Roland "the Goober" Goubert for Brother Eugene's room, then complains about having to make assignments. He concludes his list with Jerry, a freshman. To Obie's objections that Jerry's mother recently died, Archie comments on his toughness on the football field and selects Jerry for chocolates.

Chapter 3

Three days after football practice begins, Jerry waits for the bus across from the Common. A hippie complains that he is staring. Jerry escapes by boarding the bus. Exhausted, he is unable to think.

Chapter 4

In the office of Brother Leon, an algebra teacher and assistant headmaster, Archie is astonished that students must sell 20,000 boxes of Mother's Day chocolates. He realizes that, to make a dollar on each box, Leon doubled the quota and that each of the 400 students must sell fifty boxes. He pon-

ders how a predatory teacher bothers with such mundane concerns. Leon fears that Trinity may close for lack of funds. Archie promises help from the Vigils, a secret society.

Chapter 5

At a meeting of the Vigils behind the gym, Archie assigns Goober to loosen screws in Brother Eugene's room. The others laugh. Carter, the Vigils' president, presents a black box to Archie, who successfully draws a white marble to avoid carrying out the assignment himself.

Chapter 6

Brother Leon harasses Gregory Bailey, hits him on the cheek with his pointer, and asks if he cheats. Bailey denies the charge. Leon ridicules his appearance and questions his perfection. Leon concludes that Bailey is dishonest. A student orders Leon to stop tormenting Bailey. At the sound of the bell, Leon orders the class to remain. He claims that his questions were a test and that Bailey is a hero.

Chapter 7

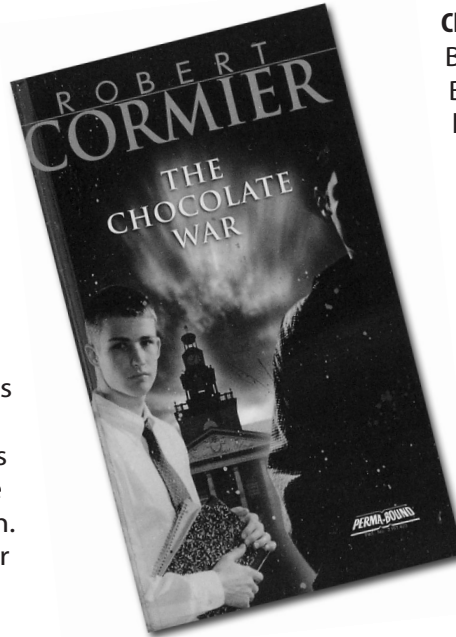
In the parking lot, Archie interrupts Emile Janza, a bully who steals gas from Carlson's car. Emile asks about a picture; Archie walks away.

Chapter 8

At 9:00 P.M., Goober is close to tears after six hours of loosening screws. Masked figures crawl into the room to help and finish at midnight.

Chapter 9

At the Renault apartment, Jerry relives his mother's death and thinks over his visit to Canada and the rigors of football practice. His father heats a tuna casserole left by Mrs. Hunter, their housekeeper. Jerry longs to tell his father about his loss of confidence, but remains silent.



Chapter 10

At assembly, Leon launches the candy sale and plays up school tradition and the illness of the headmaster. Archie enjoys the Vigils' role in the campaign and plans to have five boys sell his share.

Chapter 11

The furniture in Eugene's room collapses. Students credit the Vigils. Archie denies Leon's accusation that Archie masterminded the havoc. Leon complains that the prank endangers the candy sale. As he departs, Archie exults to find him in tears.

Chapter 12

At a scrimmage between star players and freshmen, the coach complains of the beginners' performance. On the seventh play, he compliments Jerry's pass to Goober, who scores. Afterward, Jerry finds a summons from the Vigils taped to his locker door.

Chapter 13

As Leon hands out the chocolates a week later, Goober feels guilty about loosening the screws. Jerry surprises Leon by refusing to sell chocolates. Leon emphasizes that loyal students support the sale.

Chapter 14

Leon, chalking up sales, praises and cajoles salesmen. The class awaits Jerry's refusal to sell chocolates. Treasurer Brian Cochran notes that some boys retain the proceeds. Leon checks Brian's figures and hounds him for every dollar. Brian is puzzled why Leon inflates sales totals when the annual sale lags behind previous years. Tension mounts as Leon's homeroom waits for Jerry's refusal to sell.

Chapter 15

Emile worries about the picture. Archie, who knows there is no photo, claims he photographed Emile masturbating in the restroom.

Chapter 16

David Caroni, a scholarship student, complains to Leon about an F on a test. Leon comments that David has sold eighteen boxes of chocolates, but Jerry has sold none. David, sensing Leon's corrupt logic, divulges that the refusal is a ploy of the Vigils. Leon promises to reconsider the F at the end of the term. David resents obvious blackmail.

Chapter 17

On the tenth day of the sale, Jerry nears the end of the assignment and surprises himself and the group by refusing to sell.

Chapter 18

That night, Jerry ponders how daily confrontations with Leon disgust him. Sexual fantasy does not relieve his anguish.

Chapter 19

The next morning, Jerry fears a geography test. On the bus, a transfer student admires his defiance. At the school entrance, Goober urges him to accept the boxes. Jerry explains his ideal, epitomized by a poster that asks, "Do I dare disturb the universe?" At roll call, he again rejects the chocolates.

Chapter 20

At the Vigils' instigation, Brother Jacques' class gyrate when he says "environment." Obie, the Vigils' secretary, resents Archie's assignments and anticipates that he will overreach himself. Jacques meets the challenge by overusing "environment" to exhaust the students. Outside the door, Archie smirks in triumph.

Chapter 21

By telephone, Kevin and Danny discuss attempts to sell chocolates. Howie and Richy decide to stop selling. Richy suggests that the junior class block the sale; Howie wants to let individuals make up their own minds. While waiting for Obie in the gym, Archie thinks over his rushed schedule. Obie insists that Jerry is defying the Vigils. Archie dispatches Obie to summon Jerry before the group.

Chapter 22

Brian worries that candy sales have dropped sharply and reads names and totals to Leon, who concludes that apathy stems from Jerry's bad example.

Chapter 23

As they sprint homeward, Jerry and Goober discuss Brother Eugene's reaction to the "environment" prank. Goober believes that evil corrupts Trinity. Jerry trivializes pressures. They reach an impasse over Jerry's refusal to sell chocolates and Goober's decision to quit the team.

Chapter 24

By telephone, Leon accuses Archie of failing to support the candy sale. Archie comments that Leon is in financial difficulty. Leon implies that the Vigils ruined the sale. Archie retorts that students are tired of selling. Leon orders Archie to retaliate against Jerry.

Chapter 25

A crude note summons Jerry to a Vigils' meeting. In the storage room, Archie questions his school spirit. Jerry remains wary and sad. Archie requests that he sell candy, then abruptly adjourns the meeting.

Chapter 26

Jerry telephones Ellen Barrett, but does not identify himself. She suspects the caller is Danny and calls him a pervert. Jerry hangs up. He rejoices that he has refused to sell candy.

Chapter 27

Frankie Rollo refuses to cooperate with Archie, citing Jerry's defiance as an example of the Vigils' ineffectiveness. Carter punches Frankie, then challenges the club to restore its authority. Archie proposes popularizing the sale. Carter agrees, but adds that Archie's authority hangs in the balance.

Chapter 28

At practice, Jerry tackles Carter, then topples when struck from behind. At 3:00 and again at 11:00 he receives anonymous phone calls. The next day, his poster is smeared with ink and his sneakers slashed. A third call awakens his father. In art class, Brother Andrew reports that Jerry will fail if he doesn't locate his landscape.

Chapter 29

The Vigil's support improves the sale. Carter submits \$150 to be credited to various boys. The total reaches 15,010 boxes.

Chapter 30

At roll call, more students reach their quotas. Darcy asks why Jerry refuses to sell. The class resents Jerry's reply: "It's a free country." Goober wishes that Jerry were more flexible. When fifty boxes are falsely credited to Goober, he cries.

Chapter 31

Dismissed early from practice, Jerry runs into Emile, who accuses him of being gay. Six smaller bullies knock Jerry unconscious.

Chapter 32

Jerry takes the bus home, where an anonymous call disturbs him. From three floors below, voices call obscenely. At 2:30 A. M., phone calls awaken Jerry's father. Jerry decides not to involve his father.

Chapter 33

Archie rebukes Emile for having bullies assault Jerry. To Emile's request for the photo, Archie declares that he had no film in the camera.

Chapter 34

Jerry feels alienated. Brian reports to Leon that all but fifty boxes of candy have been sold. Obie sets aside the boxes that Jerry did not sell. Archie plans a special assembly where Jerry will raffle off the remaining candy.

Chapter 35

At the athletic field, a quarter mile from the campus, Archie disguises the raffle as a football rally. He offers Jerry a boxing match against Emile. In the spotlight, Jerry realizes that Emile looks forward to the challenge.

Chapter 36

Archie gloats at having students buy raffle tickets to name the winning blow and the winner of the bout. The event is a sellout, but Obie spoils Archie's enjoyment by presenting the black box. Archie quickly selects two white marbles.

Chapter 37

In the bleachers, Goober hears the rules: the person who predicts the blow that ends the fight wins the prize. The fight takes an ugly turn with an illegal blow to the groin. Jerry breaks the rules by avoiding the punch; the stands erupt in a vicious outcry. Obie, sensing disaster, flees the arena. After Jerry suffers sixteen punches and a crushed eyeball, Goober screams for an end the fight. Jerry falls; the lights go out. Obie realizes that Leon has been on a nearby hill all along. When Archie turns the power on, Jacques accuses him of masterminding the event.

Chapter 38

Goober cradles Jerry, who suffers a broken jaw and possible internal injuries. He is taken away by ambulance. Jacques questions Archie, who justifies the match as the outcome of a successful choco-

late sale. Leon exonerates Archie for loyalty to the school.

Chapter 39

Archie divulges that he informed Leon anonymously about the fight. Obie hopes that Archie will someday receive his comeuppance. They depart in darkness.

Timeline

- spring** Jerry's mother dies at home of cancer. Jerry and his father moves into a garden apartment.
- summer** Jerry visits a distant cousin on a farm in Canada.
- late August** Jerry returns to New England.
- September** Fourteen-year-old Jerry tries out for the football team.
- shortly before 4 p.m.** Archie selects Jerry for chocolate assignment.
- three days later** Jerry, weary from three days of football practice, waits for the bus home.
- One day in October** In the last ten minutes of class, Leon terrorizes Gregory Bailey.
- Thursday afternoon, 3:00 P.M.** Goober begins loosening screws in Brother Eugene's room, number nineteen.
- Thursday night, 9:00 P.M.** Masked figures, headed by Obie, help Goober with his assignment.
- Thursday, midnight** Goober's assignment is complete.
- Friday** Brother Leon unveils the candy campaign. Later, the furniture in Brother Eugene's room collapses; he has a nervous breakdown. The chocolate sale is postponed for a week.
- next Friday** Brother Leon hands out the first round of chocolates. Jerry refuses to participate.
- nine school days into the sale** Brother Leon talks with David Caroni about his F on the pass-fail test. David divulges that the Vigils assigned Jerry to refuse the chocolates for ten school days.

tenth school day

- of the sale** Jerry refuses to sell chocolates.
- that night** Jerry ponders why he continues the battle of wills with Leon.
- next day** A student admires Jerry's rejection of the chocolate sale. Goober urges Jerry to stop defying Leon, but Jerry again rejects the chocolates.
- later** Emile beats Jerry in a brutal boxing match.

Author Sketch

Robert Edmund Cormier lived all his life in Leominster, Massachusetts, the French-Canadian town where he was born on January 17, 1925. A newspaper reporter most of his life, Cormier wrote turbulent, vengeful psychological fiction aimed at the young adult market too. The bookish son of factory workers Lucien Joseph and Irma Collins Cormier, he produced fiction that reflects community values and the strong Catholic upbringing indigenous to New England. He attended St. Cecilia's Parochial School and Leominster High School and in 1943 worked nights in a comb factory so he could study at Fitchberg State College for one year.



Like many successful authors, Cormier evolved his skills from journalism. He accepted a three-year scriptwriting job at radio station WTAG in Worcester in 1946. The commercialism of writing spot advertisements displeased him, but provided a strong beginning in the writer's trade. From there he graduated to reporting for the night staff of the *Worcester Telegram and Gazette* from 1948 to 1955 and editing the *Fitchberg Sentinel and Enterprise* from 1955 to 1978. Reporting led to the post of wire editor from 1959 to 1966 and associate editor and columnist under the pseudonym John Fitch IV in 1969. In this capacity, Cormier won "Best New England New Story" and a K. R. Thomas Newspaper Award in 1973 and "Best Column" the next year.

After 1966, Cormier continued producing a column, "1177 Main Street," for the *St. Anthony Messenger* and short fiction for *Woman's Day*, *Redbook*, *McCalls*, *The Sign*, and *Saturday Evening Post* while concentrating on his primary focus: teenage themes and situations. He

adapted much of his material from discussions with his own son and three daughters, whom he welcomed at his desk. Prior to his death in 2005, Cormier had produced a string of bestselling young adult novels.

Critic's Corner

Cormier credits his interest in writing to several influences. An early reader of Thomas Wolfe's semi-autobiographical novel *The Web and the Rock*, Cormier realized "there was someone else like me, who felt the same way." He patterned his style, not on Wolfe, but on Ernest Hemingway, Nobel-winning author and journalist, as well as novelists Graham Greene and William Saroyan. Cormier's college art teacher helped him into print by submitting "The Little Things That Count" to *The Sign*, a Catholic magazine.

Often compared to William Golding and J. D. Salinger, whom he admired, Cormier established himself as a leading writer of young adult fiction. Part of his success derived from his skill with high drama and action-packed journalistic style, which creates the illusion of front-row observation. To extend his knowledge of hard-hitting, objective fiction, he studied the craft of detective and police novels. His creation of Kate, his first full-scale female character, inspires girls to telephone and write in questions about *After the First Death*. In 1983, Almi filmed his psychological thriller, *I Am the Cheese*, which deals with similar themes of power and betrayal. The screen version stars Robert Wagner, Robert MacNaughton, Hope Lange, and Cormier himself as Mr. Hertz. In 1988, a less successful venture, the film version of *The Chocolate War*, premiered, featuring Ilan Mitchell-Smith as Jerry and Wally Ward as Archie.

Cormier's accomplishments include a fellowship to the Bread Loaf Writers Conference (1968), the *New York Times* Book of the Year Award (1974), *Media and Methods* Maxi Award (1976), *School Library Journal's* "Best of the Best" list (1979), Lewis Carroll Shelf Award (1979), Woodward Park Book Award (1978), Notable Children's Trade Book (1980), ALAN award (1982), and ALA best book (1983). In addition, Cormier received an honorary doctor of letters from his alma mater in 1977.

Other Works by the Author

Now and at the Hour (1960)
A Little Raw on Monday Mornings (1963)
Take Me Where the Good Times Are (1965)
I Am the Cheese (1978)
After the First Death (1979)
Eight Plus One (1980)
The Bumblebee Flies Anyway (1984)
Beyond the Chocolate War (1985)
Fade (1988)
Other Bells for Us to Ring (1990)
We All Fall Down (1991)
I Have Words to Spend: Reflections of a Small-Town Editor (1991)
Tunes for Bears to Dance To (1994)
In the Middle of the Night (1995)
Tenderness (1997)
Heroes (1998)

Related Reading

Judy Blume, *Tiger Eyes*
 Walter Van Tilburg Clark, *The Ox-Bow Incident*
 Vera and Bill Cleaver, *Where the Lilies Bloom*
 Caroline B. Cooney, *The Face on the Milk Carton*
 Lois Duncan, *Killing Mr. Griffin*
 William Golding, *Lord of the Flies*
 Judith Guest, *Ordinary People*
 S.E. Hinton, *Tex*
 Lois Lowry, *The Giver*
 Scott O'Dell, *Sarah Bishop*
 J. D. Salinger, *The Catcher in the Rye*
 Todd Strasser, *The Wave*
 Cynthia Voigt, *Izzy Willy-Nilly*
 Kurt Vonnegut, "D. P."

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<http://www.uiowa.edu/~english/litcult2097/tlucht/lit-yalib.html>

General Objectives

1. To discuss the effects of loss and cruelty on a teenager
2. To explain peer pressure and its role in secret societies
3. To define victimization and sadism
4. To examine the importance of self-esteem
5. To discuss the implications of a power structure
6. To list self-defensive and survival techniques
7. To define tradition
8. To define the concepts of hero and villain
9. To contrast a Catholic boy's school with a co-educational public school
10. To account for attempts to suppress or censor this book

Specific Objectives

1. To describe how Jerry tries to combat the Vigils
2. To note similar perversities in Archie and Brother Leon
3. To evaluate Jerry's need to talk with his father
4. To account for Jerry's desire to play quarterback
5. To analyze examples of manipulation and harassment in Brother Leon and Archie
6. To comprehend Jerry's response to accusations of homosexuality
7. To analyze the effect of death on Jerry's personal philosophy
8. To discuss the motto on Jerry's poster
9. To evaluate Goober's weakness and self-loathing
10. To project how Jerry will cope with his loss of innocence

Literary Terms and Applications

For a better understanding of Robert Cormier’s novel, present the following terms and applications:

Bildungsroman: literally a “formation novel,” which describes the coming-of-age of an untried or naive youth. The emergence of Jerry after a miserable year of watching his mother slide toward death is fraught with small successes and unforeseen tensions and obstacles. Simultaneous with his success in football, he faces the secret society that intimidates not only students, but teachers and administrators as well. Jerry’s intent to maintain independence collapses from the cruelty of a boxing match allied with a raffle. By the novel’s end, he has suffered damage to his body and possible loss of an eye, both reminders that growing up is not necessarily a child’s game.

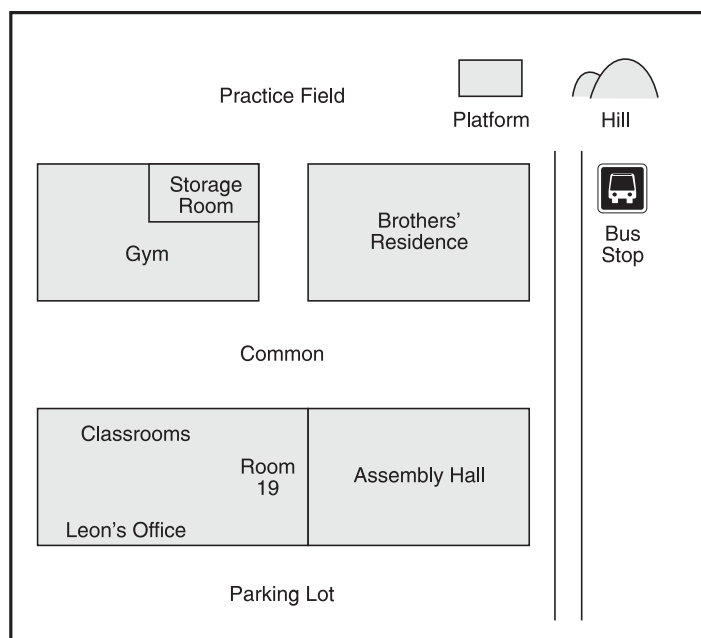
Dialogue: the expression of the exact words exchanged between two or more participants in a narrative, as used in exchanges between teachers and students, students and Vigil members, coach and players, and parents with children. The perversity of the assault on Jerry takes on a detached tone in Chapter 32, when he answers the phone and shouts “I’m here” to his faceless stalker. From the window come voices from the street below, “Jerry ... oh Jerry ...” and “You hoo, Jerree ...” Cormier notes the irony that the tones are “a parody of those long ago childhood pleadings” to come out and play.

Irony: an implied discrepancy between what is said or done and what is meant. As Jerry challenges himself to play football, he develops idealism based on the motto on his poster. His refusal to sell chocolates appears harmless enough until his stance conflicts with the ego of Archie, the perverse taskmaster for the Vigils. The seemingly harmless dispersal of chocolates escalates into a matter of supreme importance to the interim headmaster, who must force the boys to peddle candy to rescue him from an unwise purchase. During one of Archie’s confrontations with Jerry, he innocently munches chocolates, the cause of the contretemps that threatens Archie’s authority and Jerry’s life.

The Importance of Setting

The milieu of Robert Cormier’s *The Chocolate War* is the average small town parochial school, where four hundred male high school students attend classes led by Catholic brothers. The innocuous settings are the usual teachers’ offices, gym, parking lot, and practice field. The boys who attend school live in nearby neighborhoods and may ride a bus to school. Classrooms indicate a choice of subjects that includes social studies, French, math, art, and physical education.

Apart from the routine of attending high school, the students involve themselves in individual activities. In art class, Jerry realizes that intimidation may mar his grades after an unknown villain steals his landscape before it is graded. In the hall, he begins to experience the freeze as students turn against him. Some of the action takes place at Jerry’s locker, where he stores his sneakers and his poster advocating an idealistic outlook. The Vigils meet in the storage room of the gym. Archie intimidates Emile in the school restroom. The final scene pictures Jerry lying inert on a practice field platform. Brother Jacques rescues him after a cruel beating and tries to restore discipline among boys fleeing the bleachers. An ambulance carries Jerry away to medical treatment for a burst eye and internal injuries.



Outside of the school campus, implications of evil abound in an equally innocuous setting. As Jerry and his father cope with the aftermath of Jerry's mother's death, they strive for normalcy in everyday meals supplied by a housekeeper. Jerry feels isolated in his bed and mulls over the choices he must make at school. Three stories up from ground level, he hears taunts from unseen harassers and answers phone calls that yield insidious chuckles. Overall, Cormier stresses the ordinary lifestyle of the Renaults as the backdrop of an eerie intimidation plot that demonstrates manipulation and physical battering in a religious and educational setting that should be safe and harmless.

Cross-Curricular Sources

For more information about morality, depression, death, bullying, isolation, survivalism, grief, and other subjects and issues deriving from the novel, consult these sources:

Acting on Your Values, Rosen Publishing Group

Bully: A True Story of High School Revenge, Avon

Characters in Crisis, Center for Humanities

Coping with Peer Pressure: Getting Along without Going Along,
Guidance Associates

Feeling Good about Yourself: How to Build Self-Confidence,
Guidance Associates

Grief Recovery Handbook, HarperCollins

How to Say No without Losing Your Friends, Guidance
Associates

I'm Not You: Recognizing Individual Differences, Educational
Impressions

No Man Is an Island, Center for the Humanities

Stand Tall, AGS Media

Why Me?—Sadness, Educational Impressions

Also, consult these web sites:

"Bullying: A Survival Guide,"

<http://www.bbc.co.uk/education/bully/deal.htm>

"The Bullying Problem,"

<http://home.navisoft.com/aapa/bully1.htm>

"Children and Grief,"

<http://www.psych.med.umich.edu/web/aacap/factsFam/grief.htm>

"Crisis, Grief, and Healing,"

<http://www.webhealing.com>

"Depression Homepage,"

<http://www.depression.com>

"Leadership,"

<http://www.unca.edu/Leadership/bibliography.htm>

Themes and Motifs

A study of the central issues and situations in Robert Cormier's *The Chocolate War* should include these aspects:

Themes

- loss
- isolation
- challenge
- idealism
- power
- coercion
- violence
- guilt
- suffering
- rescue

Motifs

- coping with gang intimidation
- assessing self-determination
- exploiting human weaknesses
- taking responsibility for actions
- grieving the loss of a parent

Meaning Study

Below are words, phrases, sentences, or thought units that have a particular meaning in this novel. Explain the meaning of each. Chapter and page numbers pinpoint the context in which the item appears.

1. The Goober nodded, accepting the assignment like a sentence of doom, the way all the others did, knowing there was no way out, no reprieve, no appeal. (Chapter 5, p. 36)
(Unlike Jerry, who accepts nothing at face value, Roland "Goober" Goubett gives in to bullying and fear of humiliation by assuming that the Vigils allow no reprieve, no second chance. Goober's inherent weakness contrasts Jerry's willingness to put his body and spirit to the test to determine if his character can withstand overwhelming peer pressure and the cynicism of the corrupt school leadership.)
2. The black box was his nemesis. (Chapter 5, p. 37)
(To keep Archie from cowing Carter and the other Vigils and from tyrannizing the boys who accept assignments, a former Vigil member thought up a control on the assigner's manipulation of others. If Archie draws the lone black marble, he must

perform the task himself. By luck, Archie beats the box for three years. The novel implies that his evil brings him good luck, even at the end when Brother Jacques accuses him of masterminding a cruel beating.)

3. I don't want to be an accessory, Emile. (Chapter 7, p. 52)
(Archie's menace easily cows a bully of lesser intelligence. Emile Janza fears that Archie may expose him by displaying a picture of Emile masturbating in the toilet stall. He could free himself of blackmail if Archie were implicated in the siphoning of gas from Carlson's tank. Archie, who knows how to play the power game, prefers not to let himself be listed as an accessory or to participant in the crime. Ironically, Archie admits in Chapter 15 that he has no picture of Emile.)
4. But now, listening to Leon sounding as if the school was embarking on the Crusades, for crying out loud, Archie was doubtful. (Chapter 10, p. 69)
(The Christian church conducted lengthy military forays from England to Constantinople and south to Jerusalem during the eleventh-thirteenth centuries to reclaim the holy city of David from the Muslims. Leon's melodramatic speech about the candy sale makes the students perceive selling candy as a religious act—a crusade to redeem Trinity High School from debt.)
5. Brother Leon had "volunteered" Brian Cochran for the position of Treasurer of the Chocolate Sale. Which meant that he'd looked around the classroom, pinned those watery eyes on Brian, pointed his finger, and, *voilà*, as Brother Aimé said in French class, Brian was treasurer. (Chapter 14, p. 97)
(The French term meaning "see there" is often used in English to denote surprise at a result or seemingly magical transformation or discovery. The use of the word to describe Brother Leon's power indicates how easily he gets what he wants.)
6. What was it the guy on the Common had said the other day, his chin resting on the Volkswagen like some grotesque John the Baptist? (Chapter 18, p. 123)
(The image of a disembodied head atop a Volkswagen indicates Jerry's fears and the author's implication that Jerry will serve as a sacrifice. The biblical John the Baptist, Christ's cousin and prophetic forerunner, was the victim of Herod, who beheaded the preacher because his stepdaughter Salomé wanted to dance with John the Baptist's head on a platter.)
7. And the teacher had turned the tables. It was now the teacher who was in command, mak-

ing the guys jump up and down until they almost collapsed in exhaustion. (Chapter 20, p. 135-136)

(Obie, who lacks the depth to see that Brother Jacques has caught on to the trickery and is using the assignment to wear down the students, fails to understand how shallow teenage power games appear to adults.)

8. He kept mentioning something about Leon abusing his power of attorney. (Chapter 24, p. 162)
(Brother Jacques recognizes that Leon has overstepped his power during the headmaster's absence and has bought candy that must be sold to cover the misuse of school funds. Because Leon has gained the role of titular headmaster, he, like Archie, grows heady with self-importance and foolhardiness.)
9. Hey, you're getting paranoid, he told himself. (Chapter 28, p. 195)
(When the landscape assignment disappears, Jerry is not quick to blame others for victimizing him. Instead, he wonders if his mind is becoming too suspicious of others, if he has lost faith in humanity.)
10. Jerry's progress through the corridor was like the parting of the Red Sea. (Chapter 34, p. 224)
(Jerry envisions himself as Moses leading the Children of Israel through the parted waters of the Red Sea, which God separates to let the Hebrews flee the advancing Egyptian forces.)

Comprehension Study

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

Questions 1-5 (Literal Level)

1. Explain the system of assignments.
(A secret society at Trinity High School pits a sadistic club of older boys against the younger, more vulnerable freshmen, sophomores, and weaker students. Presided over by Carter, the club functions mainly as a source of merriment for bored, rebellious students who look forward to the assignment of humorous stunts to relieve their tedium and challenge authority. Archie, the self-important assigner, has free rein to think up pranks and select the students to perform them. By forcing Roland "Goober" Goubert to remove screws from the furniture in Brother Eugene's room, Archie causes the teacher such stress that he departs from

the faculty to seek treatment. The plan to disrupt Brother Jacques's class with gyrations every time the teacher says "environment" backfires when the teacher realizes the connection and overuses the word.

These pranks are limited by a black box containing five white marbles and one black marble. The purpose of the box is to force Archie to draw a marble to increase tension on him as assigner and to provide a fail-safe to keep the pranks from developing into overt cruelty or destruction of property. If he draws the black marble, he must accept the assignment himself. For three years, Archie eludes the black marble, but the device keeps him off-balance, always fearful that he might have to perform for the Vigils. At the raffle, Archie wins again and boldly thrusts his fist to the crowd to reveal a white marble.)

2. Explain the purpose and nature of the candy sale.

(At chapel after prayers, Brother Leon announces a fund-raiser. To provide \$20,000 for the financially strapped school, students must sell the twenty thousand boxes of Mother's Day chocolates bought by Brother Leon, who is acting as headmaster. The rash decision to buy the candy puts Leon in a tenuous position: if the Vigils turn against him or if Jerry starts a trend of refusals, Leon will have to reveal that he has violated the trust of the headmaster's power of attorney. Leon selects Brian to post charts and insert numbers of boxes sold at each day's roll call. The alphabetic call moves briskly until it arrives at Jerry Renault's name. Students await his refusal to sell chocolates. The candy sale changes from a traditional event to a chocolate war.)

3. What is Emile Janza's role in tormenting Jerry?

(Strong and unprincipled, Emile Janza is a dimwitted juvenile delinquent. Cormier notes that he "didn't harass only teachers. He found that the world was full of willing victims, especially kids his own age. He had discovered a truth early in life—in the fourth grade, in fact. Nobody wanted trouble, nobody wanted to make trouble, nobody wanted a show-down. The knowledge was a revelation. It opened doors."

Emile's repulsive habits and criminal behavior leave him open to blackmail. Because Archie claims to have taken a picture of Emile masturbating in the toilet stall, Emile becomes Archie's pawn, wheedles a time when Archie will hand over the picture, and does Archie's bidding in the meantime. To perpetuate the Vigils' torment, Emile implies that Jerry is homosexual and, after suffering some strong hits from Jerry, beats him brutally at the raffle, crushing his left eyeball and breaking his jaw.)

4. Describe Jerry's home life.

(At the Renault apartment, Jerry and his father James, a phar-

macist who often works the night shift, live out the grieving period following Mrs. Renault's slow wasting from cancer. Their meals are mundane and their conversation trivial. To Jerry, his father's life is humdrum, "not good, not bad, not great, not lousy, not exciting, not anything."

In his own private world, Jerry prefers to keep school problems separate from home and conceals his slashed gym sneakers, a hidden attacker, Emile's accusation of homosexuality, and the torn poster. His father, still recovering from loss, makes a peripheral effort to protect Jerry from repeated phone calls, but is unaware of the heavy burden his son bears by fighting the system.)

5. What does Jerry learn at the stadium fight?
(Too late to withdraw, Jerry, a slender fourteen-year-old, allows himself to be drawn into the fight without realizing that Emile is capable of doing serious harm to him. At the end of the beating, Goober holds Jerry while awaiting the ambulance. Jerry, who knows that his body has been badly abused, realizes that his idealism is false. The poster daring him to "disturb the universe" has led him astray within a corrupt power structure composed of a sadistic gang and a cynical acting headmaster who achieves personal delight by tormenting others.)

Questions 6-8 (Interpretive Level)

6. Describe the pressures that beset Jerry.
(Overwhelmed by adversity, Jerry moves through a slow-motion hell. He forces himself to attend football practice and seeks the position of quarterback against the coach's better judgment. Jerry's private thoughts include normal stirrings of interest in girls, his trip to Canada, the months of his mother's illness, and the change in his father since her death. At school, Jerry asserts idealism when he studies the poster daring him to "disturb the universe."

Jerry's most serious challenge comes from the impromptu summons to meet with the Vigils. The secret society requests that Jerry begin supporting the candy sale, which he has so far refused to participate in. A series of mishaps—a surprise tackle from behind, anonymous phone calls, a lost art project—convinces Jerry that the Vigils are behind his difficult days at school. Still, Jerry refuses to sell chocolates. The final strategem that defeats Jerry is the vicious beating that Archie disguises as a rally.)

7. How are Obie and Goober pivotal characters in the silent battle between Jerry and Archie?
(Obie allows himself to be used as Archie's cat's-paw. Goober, also a tool who can be intimidated, knows that the secret gang and the school authorities are evil, but he is unable to exert strength of character to challenge them. At the match between

Jerry and Emile, Obie and Goober sit safely in the bleachers, but battle their consciences at the bestial contest which Jerry is sure to lose. At the height of the match, Obie flees the stadium and learns that Brother Leon has been watching from the hill. Goober, pressed to the limit, screams for an end to the fight and holds Jerry until the ambulance arrives. Alike in their breaking points, both Obie and Goober conceal inner qualms about the evil power struggle.)

8. How does peer pressure influence Trinity High?

(The student body responds to two forces: the prevailing fear of the Vigils and Brother Leon's insistence that selling candy is part of Trinity High School's tradition. Students are easily manipulated by implications that Jerry's refusal to sell candy is a threat to school spirit and, by extension, to Catholicism. A similar following of the Vigils' tradition of minor disruptions causes students to ridicule Brother Eugene's discomfiture and Brother Jacques' use of the word "environment." The few students who function above the level of manipulation and herd instinct are Archie, the malevolent manipulator; Emile, the evolving criminal; Obie, Archie's nemesis; and Jerry, a student who thinks for himself.)

Questions 9 and 10 (Critical Level)

9. Why does Robert Cormier describe the conflict as a "Chocolate War"?

(The war of wills at Trinity High derives from an evil presence—the assistant headmaster who uses manipulation to control and intimidate students. The chocolate, which is an ill-advised purchase, presses Leon to exert more manipulation. To strengthen his power over all the boys, Leon does what warring factions often do—he allies with another power, the secret society. By admitting to Archie that he needs the Vigils to carry out a successful sale, Leon shares a certain amount of power with a vicious student. The raffle, which Leon knows about and watches from a hill above the stadium, is Archie's payoff—a student-run assembly held for the completion of the candy sale and as a comeuppance to Jerry, who stood in the way of Leon and Archie's evil alliance.)

10. Why is this book the target of censorship?

(Robert Cormier's novel is an unflinching examination of a truth that people know, but choose to ignore. Like all institutions, schools contain their bullies, corrupt authorities, manipulators, squealers, criminals, and child abusers. Educational hierarchies support administrators like Leon without digging too deeply into their motivations or methods. Parents, too, deserve blame for allowing children to live out the misery of school years in silence and to suffer the nightmares of peer pressure as a requirement of coming of age.

Censorship of so frank a description of failure indicates a form of acknowledgement. Adults who are uncomfortable with the theme of treachery as it applies to children have a responsibility to remove gangs and child abusers from power. If adults deny that Cormier's picture is a fair assessment of corrupt power structures, then the responsibility vanishes and corruption thrives.)

Questions 11 and 12 (Creative Level)

11. Contrast the paranoia that underlies *The Chocolate War* and other of Cormier's works, particularly *After the First Death*, *I Am the Cheese*, and *Fade*. Explain the difference between real suspicion and pathological suspicion.
12. Create a role for a social worker who will visit James Renault, assist in Jerry's rehabilitation, lighten the family's grieving, and establish a new routine for Jerry's school days. Determine whether Jerry should remain at Trinity High School or attend a public school. Also, advise the Renault family on involving the police.

Across the Curriculum

Art

1. Draw contrasting murals or posters to demonstrate positive and negative aspects of Trinity High School, such as riding the bus, football practice, Brother Leon's office, assembly, Brother Eugene or Brother Andrew's class, meetings of the Vigils, the locker room, the stadium, and student traffic on the stairs.
2. With a group, create some designs of school uniforms, including jacket, shirt, slacks, belt, tie, gym clothes, and football jerseys. Suggest an appropriate color scheme and a school motto.
3. Create a bulletin board illustrating personality differences between Jerry and Archie. Quote meaningful lines from the text, for instance, "I am Archie," "Beautiful," and "It's a free country."

Geography

1. Draw a map of the settings of the story, particularly the school, gym, stadium, Commons, bus route, apartment building, and brothers'

residence. Mark the location of such major events as the rally and the spot where six bullies beat Jerry.

History and Social Studies

1. Lead a discussion of Robert Cormier's dissection of power struggles. Apply your findings to other institutions, such as medical care, industry, the military, the media, and government.
2. Make an oral report on secret societies. Discuss why such groups are often banned. Explain how such groups could be detrimental to student discipline and the self-esteem of individuals.
3. Suggest ways that Goober can help Jerry recover from the vicious beating. Explain how Jerry will tell his father about events leading up to the boxing match against Emile Janza. Discuss whether Jerry should return to class or transfer to a public school.
4. Conduct a mock hearing to determine whether Brother Leon, Archie, Obie, Carter, or Emile should be punished for the boxing match. Call on Goober or Brother Jacques as witnesses.
5. Make a short oral presentation describing how Leon sets up the chocolate sale and what profit margin he selects. Include information about the headmaster and student treasurer. Draw daily charts to show the progress of the sale.

Language Arts

1. Explain to a small group why Jerry's poster inspires him to defy group pressures to conform. Discuss whether or not Jerry is a hero.
2. Compose an extended definition of sadism. Using examples from the story, explain why Archie enjoys creating assignments, Carter presents the black box, Emile likes to brutalize others, and Brother Leon plays humiliating cat and mouse games with his pointer.
3. Locate examples of slang from the novel; such as: cool it; stick with me; cat and mouse game; drool over; put-on; con; fall for it; hook,

line, and sinker; eager beavers; brown nosers; flower children; queer pitch; gang bang; and get under a guy's skin. Compose a paragraph explaining why slang permeates the language of teenagers.

4. Write a brief explanation of Jerry's dilemma at the end of the book. Comment on Thomas Wolfe's famous remark, "You can't go home again."

Science and Health

1. Describe aloud the way in which Archie undermines other people's self-confidence. Contrast his cruelty and manipulation to that of Brother Leon.
2. Discuss Jerry's recovery from the death of his mother. Suggest ways of coping with terminal disease in a family, such as through counseling or group therapy.
3. Define unconsciousness. Explain why the trauma of the fight endangers Jerry.
4. Sample psychology books that describe the interrelated motivation and behavior of bullies and victims. Create a pamphlet on bullying.

Student Involvement Activities

1. Explain in a paragraph how you would have responded to a disruptive, dangerous, or illegal assignment from the Vigils. Compare the situation to peer pressures in your own school and community.
2. Join a discussion group to determine any school's justification in coercing or intimidating students who refuse to sell items to raise money. How can such sales benefit individual sellers? What dangers threaten student sellers? What reasons might a parent have for withdrawing a student from sales?
3. Draw stage settings for a dramatization of a crucial scene, such as the six bullies attacking Jerry. Include a list of characters, props, music, make-up, costumes, and lighting necessary to the scene.

4. View the film of *The Chocolate War*. Decide why the screenwriter altered the ending so that Jerry must fight Archie.
5. Explain in a short speech the effect of alienation and grief on a lonely, diffident student like Jerry. Comment on his bleak, unsatisfying homelife.
6. Dramatize in a short skit a conversation—an interview between Brother Leon and James Renault, police interrogation of Obie and Carter, visit by Ellen Barrett to Jerry's hospital room, telephone call from Brother Andrew to Jerry's hospital room, or a protest led by Brother Jacques against Brother Leon.
7. Explain in a theme the significance to the novel of one of these quotations: "We are locked on the horns of a dilemma," "One rotten apple does not spoil the barrel," or "Boys will be boys."
8. Write a scene in which Jerry confronts Archie, Obie, Carter, and the Vigils for victimizing him.
9. Discuss the effects of violence. Project how the beating will influence future events at Trinity High School. Comment on what the faculty can do to prevent future occurrences.
10. Draw a character web representing Jerry's relationship with students, Vigil members, football players, bus drivers, Ellen, his father, teachers, and others.

Alternate Assessment

1. List examples of manipulation, intrigue, cruelty, suffering, fear, intimidation, loyalty, honor, cooperation, excellence, and character at Trinity High School.
2. Compile a list of scenes that lead to Jerry's personal and scholastic downfall. Include information about his parents and friends.
3. Compose a scene in which Jerry's father withdraws his son from the school along with other parents who disapprove of the ethics of the raffle, the savagery of the beating, and the pressure on students to sell Mother's Day candy.
4. Make a character list and explain the relationship of each to the Vigils. Include Carter, Obie, Emile, Brian, Brother Jacques, Brother Leon, James Renault, Archie, David Caroni, Brother Eugene, the headmaster, Brother Andrew, Goober, and Jerry.

Vocabulary

Using the terms in parentheses, complete each sentence below with a detail from the novel.

1. (siphoning) Emile's reputation _____

2. (manipulated) Archie enjoyed _____

3. (stooge) Using a student as _____

4. (dress code) To boys at Trinity High, _____

5. (dilemma) David Caroni's explanation _____

6. (assignment) Jerry's arrival in the room _____

7. (endorsement) The use of a secret society _____

8. (noble) The attitude of the student body _____

9. (premeditated) The selection of the site for the rally _____

10. (varsity) Although Jerry feels sick after the first scrimmage, _____

11. (nemesis) Archie believed _____

12. (malice) Obie watched _____

13. (paranoid) The harassment by the Vigils _____

14. (revelation) Emile became a bully _____

15. (insolent) One of the students _____

16. (tradition) At Trinity _____

17. (exploiting) Brother Leon _____

18. (humiliations) Every day _____

19. (confession) To Brother Leon, _____

20. (desolate) Each day Jerry _____

Comprehension Test A

Part I: Matching (30 points)

Match the following descriptions with characters. Choose your answers from the list of characters below. You may use some of the answers more than once and some not at all.

- | | |
|--|--------------------|
| _____ 1. takes the headmaster's place. | A. John Sulkey |
| _____ 2. leaves the field in an ambulance. | B. Obie |
| _____ 3. calls Jerry a pervert. | C. Brother Eugene |
| _____ 4. sets up a meeting with Archie in the gym. | D. Emile |
| _____ 5. is too mild to report a theft of gasoline. | E. Carlson |
| _____ 6. locates discrepancies in the daily totals of candy sales. | F. Brother Leon |
| _____ 7. demands that Archie look at him. | G. Goober |
| _____ 8. suffers a nervous breakdown. | H. coach |
| _____ 9. wastes away with cancer. | I. Brother Jacques |
| _____ 10. thinks Jerry would make a better end than a quarterback. | J. Brian |
| _____ 11. bangs the gavel at a Vigils' meeting. | K. Carter |
| _____ 12. wins an award for service to the school. | L. Jerry |
| _____ 13. tells Leon that Jerry is carrying out an assignment. | M. Mrs. Renault |
| _____ 14. begs Jerry to take the chocolates. | N. David Caroni |
| _____ 15. calls Jerry a fairy. | O. Ellen |

Part II: Identification (10 points)

Explain the significance of the following details:

- _____ 1. candy
- _____ 2. poster
- _____ 3. power of attorney
- _____ 4. playing quarterback
- _____ 5. Mrs. Renault's death

Comprehension Test A (Page 2)

Part III: Fact/Opinion (30 points)

Mark each statement either F for fact or O for opinion. Justify your answer on the line that follows.

_____ 1. Jerry convinces Goober that they must obey the poster's challenge and dare to disturb the universe.

_____ 2. Brother Leon knows that Brother Jacques can reclaim the power of attorney.

_____ 3. Mr. Renault suspects that Jerry is having trouble at school.

_____ 4. Brother Eugene's emotional collapse occurs after the removal of screws from the furniture in his room.

_____ 5. Archie boldly holds out the white marble to the audience.

_____ 6. Ellen calls Danny a pervert.

_____ 7. Goober is more certain of the Vigils' evil plan than Jerry is.

_____ 8. Apathy is the cause of problems at Trinity High.

_____ 9. When the headmaster left, the Vigils became stronger.

_____ 10. The coach makes a good choice of athletes.

Part IV: Essay (30 points)

Choose two and answer in complete sentences.

1. Account for the power of the Vigils at Trinity High School.
2. Discuss the forces that weaken and terrorize Jerry.
3. Describe Archie's final scenes in the novel.
4. Summarize ways that Archie oppresses and intimidates weaker students.

Comprehension Test B

Part I: Setting Identification (20 points)

Identify the characters who fit the following descriptions. Select your answers from the list that follows.

assembly	drugstore	platform
bleachers	football field	project
Brother Leon's room	gym	provincial headquarters
brothers' residence	locker	Room 19
bus stop	parking lot	toilet stall

- ___ 1. Leon strikes Bailey with the pointer.
- ___ 2. Furniture creaks eerily
- ___ 3. Obie calls Archie to a meeting.
- ___ 4. Jerry finds a message from the Vigils.
- ___ 5. Jerry admires Ellen.
- ___ 6. Archie finds Emile committing a crime.
- ___ 7. Goober cradles Jerry.
- ___ 8. Archie pretends to photograph Emile.
- ___ 9. A poor family considers buying chocolates.
- ___ 10. After prayers, Leon announces the sale.

Part II: Fill-in (30 points)

Fill in the blanks with answers that complete each statement.

- 1. Goober is too fearful to admit that he didn't sell _____ boxes.
- 2. After making a _____, Jerry is hit from behind.
- 3. Groggy from lack of sleep, Jerry fears a _____ test.
- 4. The unidentified person who enters Room 19 is wearing a _____.
- 5. Archie considers the assistant _____ an errand boy.
- 6. The Vigils are aware of Mrs. Renault's _____.
- 7. The person who predicts the blow that ends the _____ wins the prize.
- 8. Jerry suffers a broken _____.
- 9. _____ catches on to the cause of the students' gyrations.
- 10. _____ gives a pass-fail test.

Comprehension Test B (Page 2)

Part III: Identification (30 points)

Place an X by statements that refer to Archie Costello.

- _____ 1. holds the black box out to Carter
- _____ 2. is accused of failing to support the candy sale
- _____ 3. hurries to turn the stadium lights on
- _____ 4. screams after Jerry's eyeball bursts
- _____ 5. informs Brother Jacques of a planned rally
- _____ 6. is too small to play end
- _____ 7. hangs out in the gym
- _____ 8. admires a copy of *Playboy*
- _____ 9. gloats over plans for a raffle
- _____ 10. intimidates Goober by assigning him to remove screws
- _____ 11. promises that the Vigils will help with the candy sale
- _____ 12. overuses the words "beautiful" and "environment"
- _____ 13. plays mind games
- _____ 14. calls obscenities up to Jerry's room
- _____ 15. asks Obie for a Hershey bar

Part IV: Essay (40 points)

Choose two and answer in complete sentences.

1. Contrast Archie and Brother Leon in terms of manipulative technique.
2. Explain the purpose of the marbles.
3. Contrast the character and strength of Jerry, Archie, Emile, and Goober.
4. Summarize the source of evil at Trinity High School.

Answer Key

VOCABULARY

Answers will vary.

COMPREHENSION TEST A

Part I: Matching (30 points)

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

Part II: Identification (10 points)

- Brother Leon overextends the school budget and must sell the candy to cover the cost.
- The poster gives Jerry the courage to defy peer pressure.
- Brother Leon holds power of attorney for the absent headmaster and can make decisions concerning school policy and budget.
- To Jerry, playing quarterback is a goal that raises his morale and builds self-esteem.
- Mrs. Renault's death causes the malaise in the Renault family and recurs in Jerry's private thoughts.

Part III: Fact/Opinion (20 points)

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

Part IV: Essay (30 points)

Answers will vary.

COMPREHENSION TEST B

Part I: Setting Identification (20 points)

- Brother Leon's room
- Room 19
- gym
- locker
- bus stop
- parking lot
- platform
- toilet stall
- project
- assembly

Part II: Fill-in (20 points)

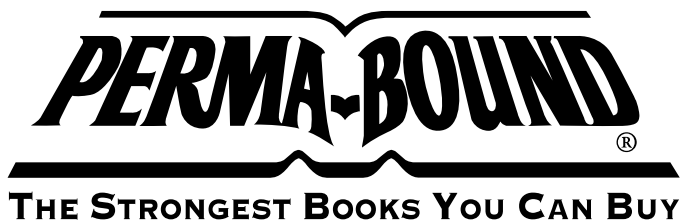
- | | |
|---------------|--------------------|
| 1. 50 | 6. death |
| 2. tackle | 7. fight |
| 3. geography | 8. jaw |
| 4. mask | 9. Brother Jacques |
| 5. headmaster | 10. Brother Leon |

Part III: Identification (20 points)

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

Part IV: Essay (40 points)

Answers will vary.



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