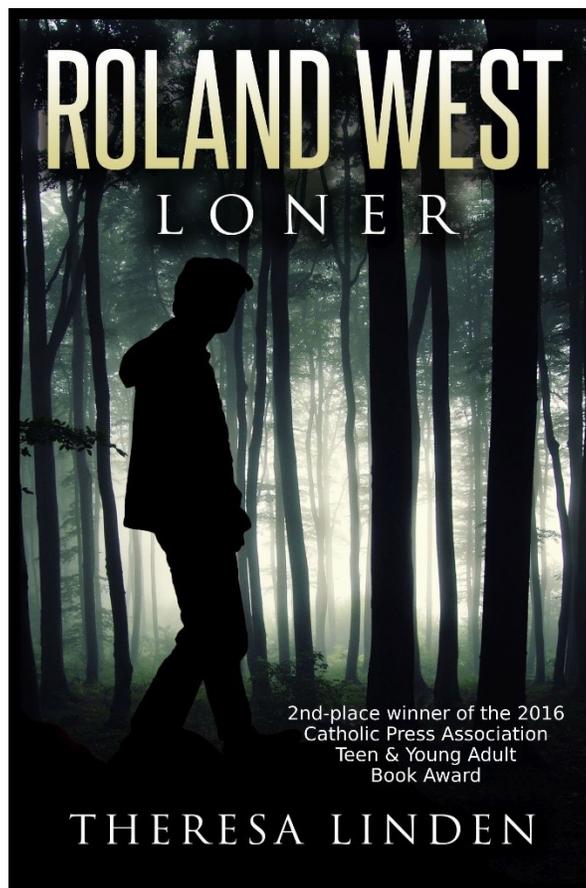


# ROLAND WEST, LONER

## STUDY GUIDE

by Theresa Linden

(Teacher edition: includes Answer Key)



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# Note to Instructor

This study guide is intended to help students analyze the story by providing comprehension questions about character, setting, plot, and theme. Additional essay questions are provided for higher grade levels. Select the questions appropriate for your student(s). Suggested answers are at the end of this document.

## Synopsis

Despised by his older twin brothers, new to River Run High, friendless, and the subject of cruel rumors ... Roland West has a plan. He wants to get his tutor back and avoid high school by proving himself on his father's upcoming assignment in Italy. Before the trip and while his father is away, he must avoid falling victim to his brothers' schemes. To get free from his older brothers' first trap, he ends up accepting the help of Peter Brandt, a kid from school who lives nearby. Not sure if he can trust Peter, he finds himself drawn to Peter's inheritance, an old, mysterious, locked box. The secret of the inheritance may have the power to change the life of this loner.

## Note from the Author

A cradle Catholic, I grew up in a two-parent family with an older brother and younger sister. My father was in the Coast Guard, so we moved often, giving me the impression that life was an adventure. We lived in several parts of California, the small island of Guam (it's in the Pacific Ocean near the Philippines and Japan—hard to find on a map), and in Oahu, one of the Hawaiian Islands. We visited many cultural centers and historical sites, enjoyed bananas and coconuts from the trees in our yard, saw wild boars in the woods behind our house on Guam, and we lived through Typhoon Pamela.

My father retired in Ohio, where I currently live with my husband and our three teenage boys. As a teen, the cold weather, flat landscape, difficulty making friends, and knowing that we would not move again dampened my spirit of adventure. God, however, never ceases to care for us, and He soon began to show me an even greater adventure than the ones I previously experienced. Our parish youth group leader's zeal and fiery love for Christ and His Church opened my eyes to the beauty and exciting elements of our Catholic faith. As a young adult, bursting with the desire to share this treasure, I decided I wanted to learn how to write. It has taken years to refine my skills, but I am now pleased to present these books to Catholic teens and adults everywhere. I hope each book sparks in my readers' hearts a greater love for the treasures of our Catholic faith.

# Chapters 1-7

**Characterization: authors develop characters through appearance, dialog, hobbies, habits, introspection, and by giving them a history.**

1. What are some of Roland's interests and hobbies, and how do they show his personality?
2. What happened in Roland's past that adds to his feelings of loneliness?
3. Roland's brothers are identical twins, yet their personalities are very different. What are some of the characteristics of Jarret and Keefe?
4. Based on Mr. West's description and dialog, what kind of man does he seem to be?

**Setting: authors often use setting details to develop characters, plot, theme, and mood. And some details will become more important later in the plot.**

1. What can you guess about the West family from the setting details?
2. Describe the Brandts' home and those that stay there. Can you predict how the Brandts' B & B might be relevant later in the story?

**Questions:**

1. What detail in Chapter 2 suggests that someone was eavesdropping on Roland and his father's conversation?
2. Compare Caitlyn's and Peter's attitudes toward Toby.
3. How does Roland respond when he overhears Jarret's devious plans, and what does it show about Roland's character? Include Roland's actions and thoughts in the answer.
4. What makes it possible for Peter to have fun with Toby at the river?
5. Why is the Italy trip so important to Roland?
6. What is Peter worried about when they cross onto the Wests' property? Do his fears seem reasonable?

# Chapters 8-14

**Characterization: after the initial introduction of characters in the early chapters, behavior and thought processes develop characters throughout the story.**

1. What behaviors develop Toby's character and how do they move the plot forward, especially in Chapter 8?
2. What does Roland think of Peter and Toby when he first meets them in Chapter 8?
3. Describe Roland's impression of Caitlyn. To what does he compare her?

**Setting: while initial setting details should provide the backdrop against which the story plays out, they can also create mood, meaning, and even conflict in a story.**

1. How do the setting details in the second half of Chapter 8 create tension?
2. What can you tell about Peter from his bedroom and hobbies?

**Questions:**

1. Describe Peter's inheritance. What do you think is inside?
2. Does Roland or Peter seem more interested in the box? Explain. See chapters 9 & 12.
3. How does Roland end up talking to Caitlyn in chapter 10, and why does he later regret it?
4. How does Caitlyn show her faith?
5. When Peter invites Roland to Mass, what is Roland's internal and external response?

# Chapters 15-21

**Characterization:** to bring the reader deeper into the story, it is better to “show” how a character feels than to “tell” how he/she feels.

1. What details show that Roland is nervous when he sneaks back into his house?
2. Describe the new guest to the Brandts’ B & B, Edward Reinhard, from Peter’s perspective.

**Setting:**

1. What setting details create mood in Chapter 20 when Peter is sneaking in the kitchen?

**Questions:**

1. How does Roland feel about St. Michael’s Church?
2. Peter asks the question: “How can a substitute teacher be permanent? Sounds like an oxymoron.” What is an oxymoron? Give an example of one.
3. Realizing that Nanny doesn’t know what happened to Roland, what does Roland do to try and make things right? Should he have done more?
4. When Mr. Brandt gives Roland a ride home, what thoughts show that Roland’s conscience is pricked?
5. In Chapter 20, who/what does Peter see that increases the tension in the story?
6. In Chapter 21, what inner response does the sincere look in Peter’s eyes trigger in Roland?
7. What clues show that Peter’s parents know Mr. West?
8. What happens that foils Roland’s plan to avoid Jarret?

# Chapters 22-28

## **Characterization:**

1. How does Peter react to Foster's treatment of Dominic? And what does this show about Peter's character?
2. What is Roland's reaction to the waterfall, and what does it show about his character when he forces himself to follow Peter anyway?

## **Setting:**

1. Describe Peter's "perfect hiding place."

## **Questions:**

1. What turn of events increases the tension in Chapter 22?
2. What do the Spanish words "vato" and "loco" mean?
3. What two rumors about the West family does Dominic share with Peter? Which one might make Peter worry?
4. What metaphor goes through Roland's mind when Jarret tells him Nanny never got his note? What does it mean?
5. What special assignment does Mr. Reinhard give the class?
6. While Peter waits on the bus for Roland, he thinks Roland might not want to be his friend. Give two reasons he thinks this.
7. What makes Peter and Roland suspect they are being followed in the woods? Who could've followed them?
8. What saint does Roland turn to in the cave and why?
9. Name the reasons Peter is growing suspicious of Mr. Reinhard.

# Chapters 29-36

## Characterization:

1. What do the West twins do when they see Roland being picked on at Peter's locker?
2. How is Mrs. West's faith shown in Chapter 34?

## Setting:

1. Describe the turret in the West house.

## Questions:

1. When Peter brings in an old radio instead of the old box, what is Mr. Reinhard's reaction?
2. What happens that damages Roland's trust in Caitlyn?
3. What does Toby do when Peter finally gets the key to the box in the mail? When, in this story, did Toby first show that he liked keys? How does Peter finally get it back?
4. Describe the contents of the old box?
5. When Roland doesn't show up at school, what do Caitlyn and Peter think the reason is?
6. How does Psalm 142 both relate to and comfort Roland?
7. Give the two similes at the beginning of Chapter 35. Come up with your own simile to express an emotion.
8. When Keefe lets Roland out of the turret, what challenge does Roland give Keefe?

# Chapters 37-44

## Characterization:

1. How would you describe Peter and Caitlyn's friendship? Use their dialog in Chapter 42 for examples.

## Setting:

1. Describe the setting details and the mood they create in the second section of Chapter 42.

## Questions:

2. Name three things that make Caitlyn think Roland comes from a poor family. How does she react when she sees his house?
3. Over dinner, what does Mr. West say he'll do if he finds out Jarret is responsible for what happened? Who comes to Jarret's defense?
4. What does Peter feel compelled to do when he realizes Mr. Reinhard is no longer their teacher? Why does he not follow through with this?
5. Why doesn't Caitlyn think Roland has forgiven her?
6. Describe the event from Mr. Reinhard's past that compels him to obtain Peter's inheritance. What do you think happened to Heidi?
7. What two things does Roland find out that might explain Foster's bullying and attitudes toward Dominic and Peter?
8. On the way home from detention, Roland's father asks for an explanation for his behavior. Why does Roland struggle to answer this question? How does Mr. West respond?

# Chapters 45-49

## Setting:

1. Describe St. Michael Church.

## Questions:

1. Once Roland tells Peter and Caitlyn the language the book is written in, what do they do? And what do they discover?
2. What scene does Peter see when he comes downstairs the morning after they translated the book? How does it make him feel?
3. Mr. Brandt talks to Roland and Peter in the car, on the way to the church. Explain how the Brandts already knew the Wests. Why did they drift apart?
4. Why is Roland reluctant to go to confession and what actions and thoughts change his mind?
5. What does Father tell them about saints and the Body of Christ? Explain simony.
6. Realizing the miracles that took place through Saint Conrad's intercession and believing the relics came to Peter for a reason, what do Peter and Roland decide to do?
7. What does Peter tell Roland about Foster and Dominic? What does Foster accuse Peter of having stolen?
8. Describe the virtues and/or resolutions of Saint Conrad, and explain what Roland has in common with the saint?

# Chapters 50-55

## Questions:

1. How does the conflict build in these last chapters?
2. What is Peter doing when he finds the key? After finding the key, what does Peter think might be the reason the relic came to him?
3. Explain how Peter's inheritance speaks to Roland the Loner. How does his understanding of the saints show that he has grown?
4. What sacrifices does Roland make to pray for Dominic with the relic?
5. Why does Mr. Reinhard want the relic so badly? What false ideas does he have about the relic?
6. Describe two moments that show there may be hope for Jarret's conversion in the future.
7. Explain how Peter's attitude toward Toby has changed and how it shows character growth.
8. In the West family meeting, Roland is about to tell on Jarret. Explain how the example of Saint Conrad changes his mind.

# Answer Key

*Answers should be in complete sentences but need not contain all the points given here. Answers will vary.*

## Chapters 1-7

### Characterization:

**1. What are some of Roland's interests and hobbies, and how do they show his personality?**

Roland enjoys reading, drawing, taking walks, repairing his mother's antique miniature castle, and loves antiques in general. He believes old things have value. "An old piece of furniture, like any antique, had a story attached to it. A secret. Sometimes a lesson." His hobbies show that he is thoughtful and creative and that he enjoys doing things alone. He also likes going on trips with his father.

**2. What happened in Roland's past that adds to his feelings of loneliness?**

Roland's mother died when he was six years old. As the youngest child, he probably received a lot of her attention. His older brothers have each other and his father is often away, so Roland feels alone.

**3. Roland's brothers are identical twins, yet their personalities are very different. What are some of the characteristics of Jarret and Keefe?**

Jarret is confident and happy with who he is, but he is also bossy, arrogant, and a bully. Keefe does whatever Jarret wants him to do, even when it's wrong. "Keefe was a lamb and Jarret a wolf." Keefe shows concern for Roland by asking why kids at school think Roland is a mute.

**4. Describe Mr. West's appearance and manner of speech. What kind of man does he seem to be?**

Mr. West has graying hair and dresses like a cowboy with boots and a weathered Stetson hat. He occasionally uses cowboy talk. For example: "I'm fixin' to head out..." and "...that you'll take a liking to..." He works freelance in the fields of archaeology and geology, and so he has traveled much. While he seems to be a strong man who want to raise his children right, he also seems uncomfortable breaking bad news to his boys.

### Setting:

**1. What can you guess about the West family from the setting details?**

The West family lives in a big house on several acres of land, so they are probably well-off and private people. The outside of the house resembles a castle, complete with two turrets, notched battlements, and windows with iron bars. That, and antiques throughout the house—including a suit of armor, shields, and weapons—indicate that Mr. West appreciates the medieval period and may be a bit eccentric.

**2. Describe the Brandts' home and those that stay there. Can you predict how the Brandts' B & B might be relevant later in the story?**

There are four members of the Brandt family: Mr. and Mrs. Brandt, Peter, and Toby, who has autism. They live in and operate the Forest Gateway bread-and-breakfast, so they have strangers in the house all the time. One of the guests might be relevant to the story.

**Questions:**

- 1. What detail in Chapter 2 suggests that someone was eavesdropping on Roland and his father's conversation?**

"...the slightest movement near the door on the opposite wall caught his attention." Roland turned to look at the dark keyhole in the old-fashioned doorknob.

- 2. Compare Caitlyn's and Peter's attitudes toward Toby.**

Caitlyn gives Toby a hug when she first sees him. She is patient when he takes the package and seems confused about what is in it. Peter is impatient with Toby, especially after finding his bathroom flooded. He wants to get a lock for his bedroom door to keep Toby out. When Caitlyn suggests Toby needs more of his attention, Peter says he can't do anything with him because Toby always causes a scene.

- 3. How does Roland respond when he overhears Jarret's devious plans, and what does it show about Roland's character? Include Roland's actions and thoughts in the answer.**

Roland stands up to Jarret even though it's difficult for him. When Jarret ruins his favorite shirt, he tries to master his emotions rather than lash out. But when he realizes Jarret is going to trick his father, anger threatens to his judgment. Rather than listen to his conscience, which tells him to walk away and cool off, he shoves Jarret and starts a physical fight.

- 4. What makes it possible for Peter to have fun with Toby at the river?**

Toby and Peter both enjoy fishing. No is around to see if Toby does anything embarrassing, he can't get into any trouble—Peter thinks—and they can both be themselves.

- 5. Why is the Italy trip so important to Roland?**

Roland thinks he can prove to his father that he can be a good assistant. The he hopes to get his tutor back and avoid the humiliation he experiences at high school.

- 6. What is Peter worried about when they cross onto the Wests' property? Do his fears seem reasonable?**

Having listened to rumors from school, he is worried one of the West boys will come by with a gun. He tries to tell himself that the rumor isn't true and that they are just as boring as any other family. Student can decide whether his fears are reasonable. The rumor might be based on truth, but more likely it is not.

## Chapter 8-14

### Characterization:

- 1. What behaviors develop Toby's character and how do they move the plot forward, especially in Chapter 8?**

Toby is interested in keys and fire. When he and Peter see Roland through the black gate, Peter tries to get Toby to leave. Toby won't. If they had left, Roland would not have been rescued. Toby's persistence to see "some-un" and to see the fire, kept them around long enough for Roland to realize they could help him escape. Later in this chapter, Toby's behavior almost gets them caught. He doesn't respond to Peter's call and doesn't realize that they need to hide from the West twins.

- 2. What does Roland think about Peter and Toby when he first meets them in Chapter 8?**

Roland is annoyed that they were sneaking around on West property. When Toby peers through his fingers and repeats "double u," Roland recognizes that he is different. Realizing that Peter goes to his school, he worries about the rumors that will spread because of this. Once they rescue him, he's thankful that they were there.

- 3. Describe Roland's impression of Caitlyn. To what does he compare her?**

Roland first sees Caitlyn while he is sitting on the church steps. He thinks she's upset about something because she's pacing back and forth, talking to herself, and scowling. When she stops under a sunbeam, her hair blazes like polished copper. He notices "her frilly beige dress, her fiery curls, her beauty..." and compares her to an angel pleading with God for the salvation of a mortal.

### Setting:

- 1. How do the setting details in the second half of Chapter 8 create tension?**

The boys hear horses trotting down the trail, drawing closer, and know that the West twins are out there. Instead of being out in the open, Roland hides behind a boulder but it's only waist high and someone might be able to see over it. Peter and Toby "thrash through brush" which might have caused too much noise. The horses continue to draw near: "Forms showed between leaves, moving up the path."

- 2. What can you tell about Peter from his bedroom and hobbies?**

Peter's messy room filled with incomplete electronic projects shows that he is more concerned with creating and fixing things than tidiness. He also seems to have more goals and projects than he can ever accomplish, but he is unwilling to give up on them.

### Questions:

- 1. Describe Peter's inheritance. What do you think is inside?**

Peter receives an old, ornate, dark wooden box. It has black metal corners, each decorated with a different symbol, and a locking latch. The top and sides are decorated with cross shapes and interlaced circles. A robed figure holding a branch is carved into the top. Roland later says it, "It looks like a 16<sup>th</sup> or 17<sup>th</sup> century, chip-carved box, maybe European."

Here is an example of a chip-carved box:



**2. Does Roland or Peter seem more interested in the box. Explain. See chapters 9 & 12.**

Students can choose either one. Roland is immediately impressed by the box because of his love for antiques. He feels like the box wants him to discover something. Peter is a bit disappointed and calls it "...just an old, locked box." He was hoping for something more important but is a little more impressed when Roland suggests it's worth a lot of money. Peter hopes there is something important inside, but he must wait for the key.

**3. How does Roland end up talking to Caitlyn in chapter 10, and why does he later regret it?**

Roland was feeling sad, empty, and lonely. Then he sees Caitlyn walking across the street and notices that she is upset about something. When a biker knocks her over, Roland rushes to help her. Once he gets there, she doesn't seem to need help. He accepts her invitation to sit with her in the grass, and they just start talking. She explains why she's upset (she'll have to miss the camping trip). When she asks why he was sitting all alone, he finds himself wanting to tell her. She offers him some advice. As they go their separate ways, Roland realizes that she must be around his age and so probably goes to his school. He's worried she might gossip about him too.

**4. How does Caitlyn show her faith?**

Caitlyn uses the example of Saint Elizabeth when encouraging Roland to pray for peace with his brother. She also explains that the saints are real people. When Roland says "...she's not alive," she counters, saying, "There are no dead people in Heaven."

**5. When Peter invites Roland to Mass, what is Roland's internal and external response?**

Roland hasn't attended Mass in a long time, and he feels a bit guilty about that, but he pushes that feeling aside. He simply tells Peter, "No." When Peter pushes the issue, he thinks to himself that it is none of Peter's business.

## Chapters 15-21

### Characterization:

**1. What details show that Roland is nervous when he sneaks back into his house?**

Roland creeps through the dark tunnel without any lights because he doesn't want Jarret to know he's there. When he tries to use the key, his hands are trembling. Roland's heart pounds "louder than his footsteps" as he climbs the stairs from the basement. When he nears the staircase that leads to their bedrooms, the trembling moves from his hands to his chest. When he sees Jarret's bedroom door open, he stops cold. Answer can include any of this or similar examples.

**2. Describe the new guest to the Brandts' B & B, Edward Reinhard, from Peter's perspective.**

Peter guesses that the man is fifty-something. His clothing, a black sweater over a white dress-shirt, and his wide gut make Peter think of a penguin. He thinks Mr. Reinhard's face gives a bird-like impression, with a long nose and beady eyes. And he waddles when he walks.

### Setting:

**1. What setting details create mood in Chapter 20 when Peter is sneaking in the kitchen?**

The house is mostly dark. "...pale gray moonlight shone in through the window over the sink, and the clock on the microwave cast a bluish glow." Other setting details: muffled voices, the creak of the office door, the door clicking shut, and darkness.

### Questions:

**1. How does Roland feel about St. Michael's Church?**

The church reminds him of when his mother was alive and his family used to go to Mass. They always sat close to the front, which made Roland think everyone was looking at them. He thinks of his mother's beautiful singing voice and how she always held his hand or rubbed his back. He also thinks of how Jarret used to bug him.

**2. Peter asks the question: "How can a substitute teacher be permanent? Sounds like an oxymoron." What is an oxymoron? Give an example of one.**

An oxymoron is a figure of speech in which two seemingly contradictory words are used together for effect, as in "make haste slowly" or "poor little rich girl."

**3. Realizing that Nanny doesn't know what happened to Roland, what does Roland do to try and make things right? Should he have done more?**

Roland sneaks back into the house to leave a note. Then he sneaks back over to Peter's house. He should have spoken directly to Nanny and taken his chances.

**4. When Mr. Brandt gives Roland a ride home, what thoughts show that Roland's conscience is pricked?**

As they near the house, Roland feels like bugs are zipping around inside him. When Mr. Brandt glances at Roland a few times, looking like he has something serious to say, Roland wonders if he knows that he snuck into Peter's room and stayed the night.

**5. In Chapter 20, who/what does Peter see that increases the tension in the story?**

Peter sees Mr. Reinhard walking through their dark house. Now he suspects that Mr. Reinhard is up to something.

**6. In Chapter 21, what inner response does the sincere look in Peter's eyes trigger in Roland?**

The look triggers a profound longing for a true friend, someone his age that he could trust and with whom he could share his thoughts.

**7. What clues show that Peter's parents know Mr. West?**

When Mr. Brandt gives Roland a ride home, he doesn't need to ask where he lives. He doesn't seem shocked to see their castle-like house but gives a sentimental or sorrowful sort of reaction. And when Mr. Brandt confronts Roland about secretly staying the night, he again mentions letting his father, not his parents, know, as if he is aware that Roland has only his father now.

**8. What happens that foils Roland's plan to avoid Jarret?**

Mr. Brandt tells Roland they need to call his family if he wants to stay another night. Roland can't let that happen because then Jarret will know where he is. So he decides he must face both Nanny and Jarret.

## Chapters 22-28

### Characterization:

- 1. How does Peter react to Foster's treatment of Dominic? And what does this show about Peter's character?**

Peter sticks up for Dominic, telling Foster to stop calling him names. Then he gets ready to push the wheelchair for Dominic, to move past Foster, but Foster blocks them. His response to the bullying shows that he is comfortable speaking out and sticking up for someone. He doesn't turn a blind eye to conflict.

- 2. What is Roland's reaction to the waterfall, and what does it show about his character when he forces himself to follow Peter anyway?**

Roland does not want to get close to the waterfall. He sees it as a "rushing monster," and he has a fear of cold water rushing over him. Wanting to trust Peter, Roland forces himself to follow Peter through the waterfall and to the secret cave behind it. This shows his strength of character, how he is willing to step outside his comfort zone and push past his fears for a good reason.

### Setting:

- 1. Describe Peter's "perfect hiding place."**

Peter hides the box in a cave behind the waterfall. The cave is about ten feet wide and fifteen feet deep. Light comes in from overhead cracks and through the waterfall. Candles sit in holes and natural shelves in the cave walls. And two tree stumps sit by a low rock shelf. Peter puts the box in "a more secret place," a little cave that can only be reached by swimming through the pool behind the waterfall.

### Questions:

- 1. What turn of events increases the tension in Chapter 22?**

Caitlyn tells Peter that Mr. Reinhard, the creepy man from the B & B, is their new history teacher.

- 2. What do the Spanish words "vato" and "loco" mean?**

Vato means friend. Loco means crazy.

- 3. What two rumors about the West family does Dominic share with Peter? Which one might make Peter worry?**

Dominic heard that Mrs. West was a witch. She cast spells on the whole family, which is why none of the West brothers were seen around town before. But the spell she cast over the summer went wrong, and she vanished or died. This broke the spell on the rest of the family and that's why the West boys are now going to school.

Peter thinks the first rumor is ridiculous, but he might worry about the second rumor: Dominic claims that Mr. West buys and sells illegal artifacts. Mrs. West did too, but she was caught and is now in jail.

**4. What metaphor goes through Roland's mind when Jarret tells him Nanny never got his note? What does it mean?**

A metaphor is a figure of speech used to compare two things that are not alike but have something in common. The metaphor in Roland's thoughts is about Jarret being a train. Roland pictures himself lying on railroad tracks. A person and a train are not alike, but Jarret moves powerfully and quickly, like a train. Additionally, Jarret is destroying both Roland's reputation with his family and his hopes of going on the Italy trip. Roland feels like there is little he can do about it.

**5. What special assignment does Mr. Reinhard give the class?**

Mr. Reinhard wants everyone to bring in something old, even antique, from home. It must be something that has special meaning to the student's family or concerns their family's history. He even gives the example of bringing in an old box.

**6. While Peter waits on the bus for Roland, he thinks Roland might not want to be his friend. Give two reasons he thinks this.**

Peter thinks that his brother's bizarre behaviors might scare Roland off. And he thinks all the strangers at his family's bed-and-breakfast bother Roland too. If Roland wanted a friend, he would probably prefer one with a simpler life.

**7. What makes Peter and Roland suspect they are being followed in the woods? Who could've followed them?**

Roland hears a branch snap. Peter accuses him of being paranoid until he hears a branch crack too. Either Mr. Reinhard or Jarret could be following them.

**8. What saint does Roland turn to in the cave and why?**

When Peter dives into the pool to take the box to a more secret place, Roland remembers what Caitlyn said to him and he prays to Saint Elizabeth. He wants to ask for help with his messed up situation.

**9. Name the reasons Peter is growing suspicious of Mr. Reinhard.**

Mr. Reinhard's behavior bothers Peter on the first day they meet. He is staying at their bed-and-breakfast, working as a teacher at Peter's school, asking too many questions, and—it seems—keeping an eye on Peter. Peter now finds signs that someone has been in his bedroom. When he goes downstairs to talk to his mom, he sees Mr. Reinhard and Aunt Lotti together in a booth.

## Chapters 29-36

### Characterization:

**1. What do the West twins do when they see Roland being picked on at Peter's locker?**

Jarret and Keefe go after the kids that picked on Roland and emptied Peter's locker. Jarret threatens them.

**2. How is Mrs. West's faith shown in Chapter 34?**

Alone in the turret, Roland looks through his mother's Bible. Holy cards mark several pages, but one page in Psalms is very worn, showing that his mother read Psalm 142 countless times. A statue of Our Lady of Guadalupe is also in the turret. This was his mother's patron saint.

### Setting:

**1. Describe the turret in the West house.**

The door to the turret is thick and locks with cast-iron lock pins. A winding staircase leads from Roland's bedroom to the narrow turret. Light comes in from a single window high in the curved stone wall. It is so high up that it only provides a view of the sky. There is only room for a table and a small couch. Over the year, Roland had set up a sort of prayer table with his mother's Bible, the Our Lady of Guadalupe statue, and a crucifix on the wall above it.

### Questions:

**1. When Peter brings in an old radio instead of the old box, what is Mr. Reinhard's reaction?**

Mr. Reinhard tells him this isn't electronics class and he asks if it has some history in his family. When Peter admits that it doesn't, Mr. Reinhard turns red and gives a dry smile. He tells Peter that the assignment was to bring in something that has a history in his family.

**2. What happens that damages Roland's trust in Caitlyn?**

Roland overhears Caitlyn talking to a group of gossipy girls. He doesn't want her to say anything about him or his family. The girls list all the rumors they've heard. Caitlyn groans in frustration and shouts, "Their mother isn't even alive. How can she be in jail? She's dead." Roland feels betrayed.

**3. What does Toby do when Peter finally gets the key to the box in the mail? When, in this story, did Toby first show that he liked keys? How does Peter finally get it back?**

Toby grabs the key, says it's his, and takes off. Peter chases him, but Toby runs right to Aunt Lotti, who is sitting in a booth with Mr. Reinhard. Toby first showed interest in keys when he and Peter discovered the secret entrance to the West house and Roland asked them to get the key. Peter gets the key back only after promising to "play trains" all night after dinner.

**4. Describe the contents of the old box?**

The box contains a black wooden rosary, an old holy card, a folded piece of rough brown cloth, and a small, leather-bound notebook.

**5. When Roland doesn't show up at school, what do Caitlyn and Peter think the reason is?**

Peter thinks maybe Roland didn't show up at school because Toby threw a water balloon at him the day before. He also considers the rumor Dominic had told him, that the Wests sell illegal artifacts. He's a bit worried about Roland having the old book. Caitlyn thinks Roland didn't show because he heard her talking about his mother.

**6. How does Psalm 142 both relate to and comfort Roland?**

The verse that says, "In the path where I walk they have hidden a trap for me," relates to Roland situation. His brothers set a trap for him and now he is locked in the turret. The Psalm goes on to say what Roland feels, that no one cares for him. And the last lines of the Psalm are his prayer: "Deliver me from my persecutors, for they are too strong for me. Bring me out of prison that I may give thanks to thy name."

**7. Give the two similes at the beginning of Chapter 35. Come up with your own simile to express an emotion.**

A simile is a figure of speech in which two unlike things are compared using "like" or "as." From Chapter 35: "Anxiety chewed at Peter's innards like a dog with a bone." And Caitlyn says the math numbers bounce around in her head like a hundred beads that slid off a string.

**8. When Keefe lets Roland out of the turret, what challenge does Roland give Keefe?**

Roland asks Keefe if he is always going to let Jarret control him.

## Chapters 37-44

### Characterization:

1. **How would you describe Peter and Caitlyn's friendship? Use their dialog in Chapter 42 for examples.**

Peter and Caitlyn act like brother and sister, working together on things but also speaking sarcastically to each other. Sometimes Peter doesn't take her seriously when he should. For example, Caitlyn points out the big black car that she saw at the school and the B & B, but Peter says, "Who cares?" However, they do care about each other and offer each other advice. While walking through the woods Caitlyn tells Peter what's bothering her. Peter responds with a few words of comfort but then an insult. Caitlyn retorts, "Did I ever tell you I don't like you?" He says, "All the time."

### Setting:

1. **Describe the setting details and the mood they create in the second section of Chapter 42.**

"The overcast sky dulled the shadows and colored the forest in grayish hues of brown and green." This creates a somber, mysterious mood. The wind that blows Caitlyn's hair in her face can also emphasize her emotional state. The farther along they get, the more the forest seems to come alive with quivering leaves, cracking twigs, rustling bushes, and noisy gusts of wind. This adds tension to the mood.

### Questions:

1. **Name three things that make Caitlyn think Roland comes from a poor family. How does she react when she sees his house?**

Caitlyn thinks Roland comes from a poor family because he borrowed Peter's Sunday clothes, she thinks he wears the same clothes to school every day, and he is humble. She thinks that poor people learn harder lessons and can grow in greater virtue. When she sees the Wests' castle-like house, her eyes pop open wide and she gets mad at Peter for letting her go on about him being from a poor family.

2. **Over dinner, what does Mr. West say he'll do if he finds out Jarret is responsible for what happened? Who comes to Jarret's defense?**

Mr. West says he will separate the twins for the rest of the school year. Nanny comes to Jarret's defense, saying he helped and advised her and he even brought her tea and helped with meals. Mr. Digby agrees, saying, "It was almost like he and Roland switched roles."

3. **What does Peter feel compelled to do when he realizes Mr. Reinhard is no longer their teacher? Why does he not follow through with this?**

Peter feels compelled to get the box and keep a closer watch over it. He doesn't follow through because someone is following them on the way to the hiding place.

4. **Why doesn't Caitlyn think Roland has forgiven her?**

When she was talking to him after school, he wouldn't look at her. Since that chapter was from Roland's point of view, the reader knows that Roland was thinking how pretty she is.

5. **Describe the event from Mr. Reinhard's past that compels him to obtain Peter's inheritance. What do you think happened to Heidi?**

One winter when Edward Reinhard was ten years old, he and his five-year-old sister, Heidi, went out without permission to play with their friend Harry on a frozen pond. Heidi fell through the ice and the boys struggled to rescue her.

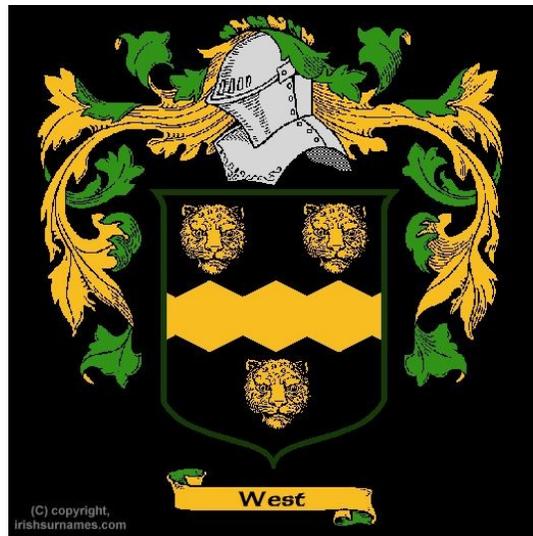
6. **What two things does Roland find out that might explain Foster's bullying and attitudes toward Dominic and Peter?**

Foster says that Peter stole something from him. Also, Foster has no one to pick him up from school after detention and he lives far away in a trailer park. He asks Mr. West to drop him off near the park but says he wants to walk from there, as if he's embarrassed about where he lives.

7. **On the way home from detention, Roland's father asks for an explanation for his behavior. Why does Roland struggle to answer this question? How does Mr. West respond?**

Roland begins to tell on Jarret, but then he isn't sure he wants to get Jarret in trouble. And when his father asks him to explain his behavior, Roland thinks about how lonely he's been since his mother died, how he has no friends, and how important the trip to Italy is to him. Mr. West tells Roland that he understands that some things aren't easy to explain. Mr. West also blames himself for Roland's behavior because he is away a lot. He says they can talk more later.

**The West Family Crest looks something like this:**



## Chapters 45-49

### Setting:

#### 1. Describe St. Michael Church.

The church is almost empty when Peter and Roland arrive. Sunlight through the stained-glass windows throws colorful patterns on the pews and tiles down the main aisle. Candles flicker before statues of saints all around the church. The doors to the confessional are made of carved wood and little lights glow above them, letting people know if the confessional is in use.

### Questions:

#### 1. Once Roland tells Peter and Caitlyn the language the book is written in, what do they do? And what do they discover?

They get to work translating the book from German to English. Roland spells out words in the old book. Peter looks the words up in the German-English dictionary, and Caitlyn writes the translations down. They discover that the old book lists miracles that took place through the intercession of Saint Conrad between the years 1912 and 1925.

#### 2. What scene does Peter see when he comes downstairs the morning after they translated the book? How does it make him feel?

Peter sees Roland sitting in a booth with Mr. Reinhard. Mr. Reinhard seems a bit threatening as he speaks to Roland. "Peter's blood turned to ice." He is worried about Mr. Reinhard being so close to the old book.

#### 3. Mr. Brandt talks to Roland and Peter in the car, on the way to the church. Explain how the Brandts already knew the Wests. Why did they drift apart?

Mr. and Mrs. Brandt used to be close friends with Mr. and Mrs. West and used to get together often. As life changed—children, jobs, etc.—their friendship changed too. After Mrs. West died, Mr. West came around a lot less. He took her death hard.

#### 4. Why is Roland reluctant to go to confession and what actions and thoughts change his mind?

Roland hasn't been to Mass or Confession in a long time. He knows he needs to go but doesn't feel ready. As Peter is shoving him toward the confessional, he finally gives in because he realizes Peter is right: he can return to grace in a single instant. "Christ had already shed his blood for his sins." Roland only needed to repent and reach out for the forgiveness freely offered in the sacrament.

#### 5. What does Father tell them about saints and the Body of Christ? Explain simony.

The saints in heaven and the just on earth are all members of the one Body of Christ. The saints are more than just good examples; they care about us and intercede on our behalf. Their prayers are powerful with God. "God bestows many benefits to the faithful through the intercession of saints, often using relics."

Simony is the buying or selling of spiritual things. It is failing to recognize that all spiritual goods have their source in God. Relics don't have power that we can master.

**6. Realizing the miracles that took place through Saint Conrad's intercession and believing the relics came to Peter for a reason, what do Peter and Roland decide to do?**

Peter and Roland decide to pray for a miracle. Roland suggests they pray for Toby to be healed of autism. Peter suggests they pray for Dominic. They decide to walk over to Caitlyn's house and tell her everything they found out.

**7. What does Peter tell Roland about Foster and Dominic? What does Foster accuse Peter of having stolen?**

Peter tells Roland that Dominic's legs are paralyzed because of a car accident. When it happened, Dominic became angry and pushed everyone away, including Foster, who was his best friend. When Dominic rejected him, Foster put up a wall of anger and resentment and became a little meaner. After Dominic stopped feeling sorry for himself, he and Peter became friends but Foster still resented Dominic's rejection.

**8. Describe the virtues and/or resolutions of Saint Conrad, and explain what Roland has in common with the saint?**

Virtues: suffering without complaining, putting up with the meanness of others, serving faithfully to the end, always joyful

Resolutions of a Novice by Conrad of Parzham:

- I will strive earnestly to form the habit of always placing myself in the presence of God and of often asking myself: Would I do this or that in the presence of God and my guardian angel?
- I will often ask myself when crosses and pain come upon me: Conrad, why are you here?
- I will earnestly strive to preserve brotherly charity.
- I will be careful never to utter a word against charity.
- I will patiently bear with the faults, defects, and weaknesses of others, and as far as possible, I will cover them with the mantle of charity.

Roland and Saint Conrad both lost their mothers at a young age.

## Chapters 50-55

### Questions:

1. How does the conflict build in these last chapters?

Peter still can't find the key to the box. And he can't search for it because the family is going bowling. Plus, Mr. Reinhard is hanging around the house and seems to be keeping an eye on him. Mr. Reinhard's car was spotted at Church. They see signs of someone following them to the waterfall.

2. **What is Peter doing when he finds the key? After finding the key, what does Peter think might be the reason the relic came to him?**

The family returns home from bowling, and Peter spends the rest of the night playing games with Toby. After setting up a train track, Peter picks up other toys and discovers a drawer full of keys, including his key. He then remembers that Father Carston said the relic might have come to him for a reason, and he decides that Toby is the reason. He thinks maybe God wants to heal him.

3. **Explain how Peter's inheritance speaks to Roland the Loner. How does his understanding of the saints show that he has grown?**

Peter's inheritance has helped him to recognize the mystical bond between those on earth and those in heaven. Surrounded by the saints, he was never really alone. Until today, Roland had never realized how often the saints were mentioned in the prayers of the Mass. Now the prayers really mean something to him and he feels close to the saints, especially Saint Conrad. Roland's willingness to pray for Dominic, who spread more rumors about him than anyone, shows that he has grown.

4. **What sacrifices does Roland make to pray for Dominic with the relic?**

Roland helps carry the wheelchair through the river, getting soaked, and through the waterfall, despite his fear of cold water pounding his head. He then dives to the second part of the cave to get the relic.

5. **Why does Mr. Reinhard want the relic so badly? What false ideas does he have about the relic?**

He believes the relic belongs to him because the families had shared it. He wants it now because his sister, Heidi, is dying of cancer. When Heidi was a child and she fell through the ice, they all prayed for her through the intercession of Saint Conrad, touching the relic to her. And her life was saved. Mr. Reinhard is looking at the relic as something powerful that he can control, instead of realizing that the power comes from God.

6. **Describe two moments that show there may be hope for Jarret's conversion in the future.**

Jarret gets the box back from Mr. Reinhard and gives it to Peter. Jarret tells Roland where the gold coins are so that Roland doesn't get in any more trouble. Also, Jarret touches the relic and Roland prays for him at just that moment.

7. **Explain how Peter's attitude toward Toby has changed and how it shows character growth.**

Peter trusts that God has a reason for not healing Toby of autism. In the beginning of the story, Toby's behavior embarrassed Peter, but now Peter decides he likes Toby just the way he is. He comes to accept Toby for who he is. He sees that Toby is very happy. He's special, and he makes life fun.

**8. In the West family meeting, Roland is about to tell on Jarret. Explain how the example of Saint Conrad changes his mind.**

Roland is about to tell on Jarret when he remembers the words of Saint Conrad's resolution:

*I will patiently bear with the faults, defects, and weaknesses of others, and as far as possible, I will cover them with the mantle of charity.*

Following the example of Saint Conrad, Roland decides to tell on himself for the things that he did wrong and to cover Jarret's faults with the mantle of charity.