

ROLAND WEST, LONER

STUDY GUIDE

by Theresa Linden

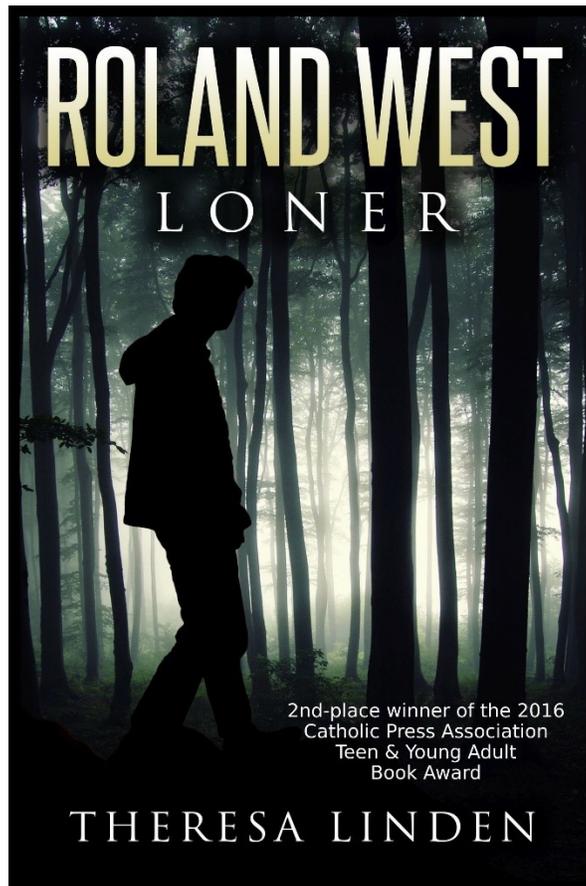


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Note to Instructor

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.