

THE SWEET
HEREAFTER

RUSSELL BANKS

THE JUNIOR SUMMER READ



PRE-READING

1. Even in a small town, or in a small community like our school, we find ourselves the perpetrator (doer) and often the victim of false assumptions or pre-conceived notions or stereotyping. Relate a specific time when you were the perpetrator and a specific instance when you suspect you were the victim of false assumptions.

Perpetrator:

Victim:

2. Henry James once claimed, “The best fiction illuminates life as an immensely complex process.” Relate a time in your life when events took an unexpected or unusual turn, and you realized the “complex process” of life.

Chapter One: “Dolores Driscoll”

Between questions 1 – 5, choose at least one to answer.

1. When Dolores says, “When I’m wrong, at least I’m wrong on the side of angels,” what does she mean? (page 1)

2. When Dolores speaks of her husband, Abbott, she speaks of a GHT (Greater Human Truth): “Because he’s passed so close to death he has a clarity about life.” Please share an experience of someone you have known who has come so close to death that his or her outlook on life became heightened.

3. Abbott says, “short-term profits can often turn in to long-term losses” (16). In other words, what we want and get today may hurt us tomorrow. What experience have you had this summer that would confirm Dolores’s assumption that “much of life is like that” – something won, but something lost?

4. During the discussion of religion, Abbott presents his philosophy of life: “The biggest difference between people is the quality of attention.” Abbott means that a person can be defined by the intensity and choices of his or her interests. Describe or draw an example of something that you are *wild* about that helps define who you are:



5. When we first meet Dolores she is *certain* that she *thought* she saw the dog. How is this uncertainty a statement of life? Describe an experience in your life when you were *sure* about something, and then became *uncertain*.

Between questions 6 - 8, choose at least one to answer.

6. Dolores describes the difference between adults and children. How does she define the difference? How do you define the difference?

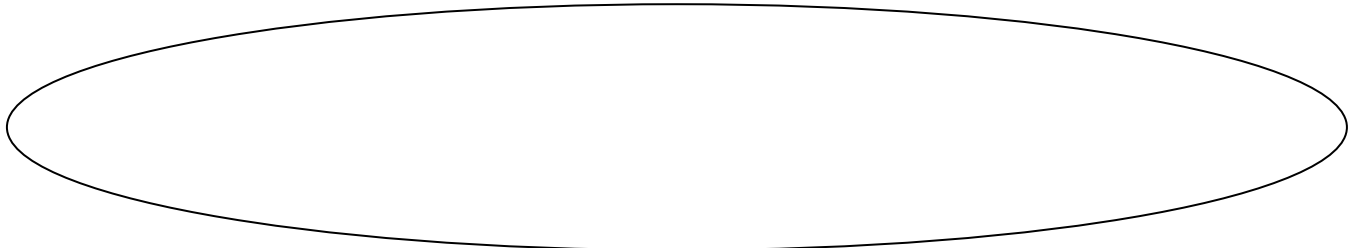
Dolores:

You:

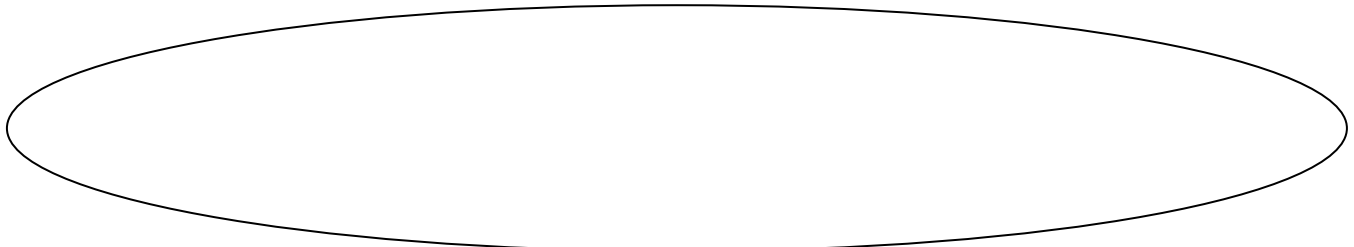
7. Using Dolores's account of the accident, please fill out the Illinois Motorist Report, including all the particulars that apply.

8. Dolores first describes herself as “careful and not overly optimistic” (4) and then as an “optimist, basically, who acts like a pessimist” (25). Build a profile of Dolores Driscoll.

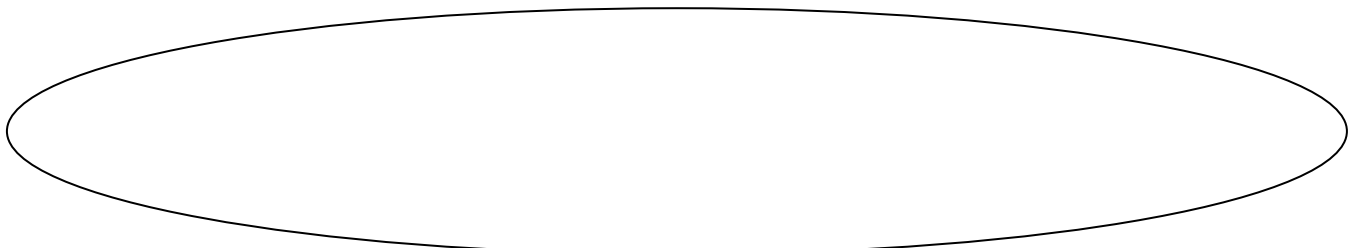
A. Insert a quote that reveals how she feels about the kids, the adults, and outsiders?



Kids



Adults



Outsiders

B. Is she a reliable narrator? Support your answer.

Fill in this chart

6. Fill in the character chart for Billy paraphrasing quotes throughout the chapter and include the page number. From this chart, a full characterization of Billy should emerge.

Wife

Children

Billy's Character Chart
Paraphrased Quotes

Job

Billy's Thoughts

Vietnam

Chapter Three: “Mitchell Stephens, Esquire” (of Oak Park, Illinois)

Choose THREE of the following six questions to answer

1. Stephens says he is angry. What words or phrases does the author include in this chapter that confirms the claim?

A.

B.

C.

D.

E.

2. Why do you think Russell Banks devotes the most airtime to the lawyer, who was not even a victim of the accident?

It is the second time Stephens says that there is no such thing as an accident. What is his reaction to the Ottos, and what is their reaction to him?

Summarize how Stephens feels about the Ottos in your words:

Summarize how the Ottos feel about Stephens in your words:

Choose three of the most significant quotations from the conversation:

A.

B.

C.

5. Does Stephens manage to be **invasive** (persistent) but not **intrusive** (too pushy), like a good lawyer?

Paraphrase specifics as Stephens questions Billy and Dolores.

Stephens questions Billy:

Stephens questions Dolores:

6. This section is also devoted to Zoe. How would you assess her problem and her relationship with her father? Fill in the two-column quote chart below with at least three revealing quotations:

Quotation	What does this quote reveal?

Chapter Four: “Nichole Burnell”

Choose two of the following three questions to answer

1. What quote most reveals Nichole’s reaction to the accident, Dr. Robinson, her friends, Billy, and her condition. Include page numbers

The Accident:

Dr. Robinson:

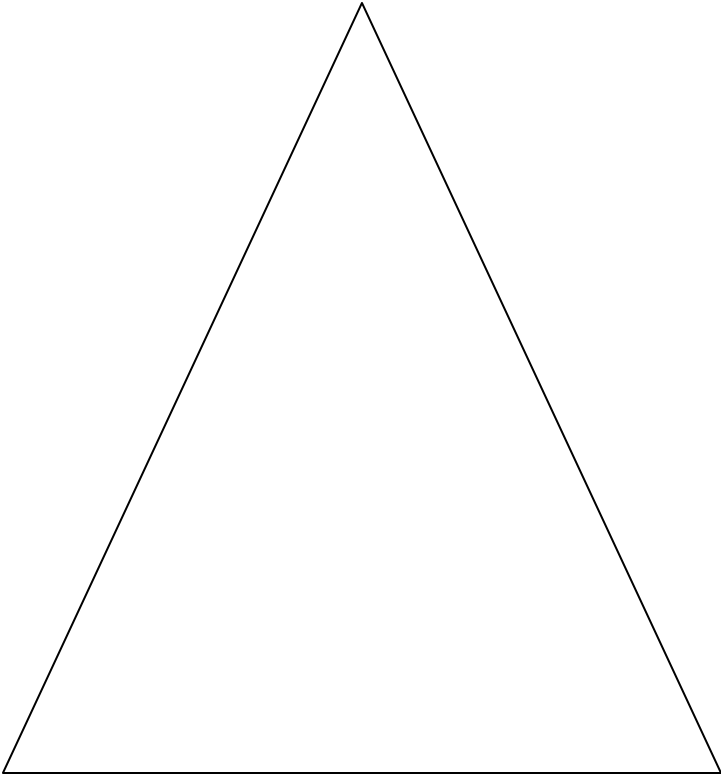
Friends or school:

Billy:

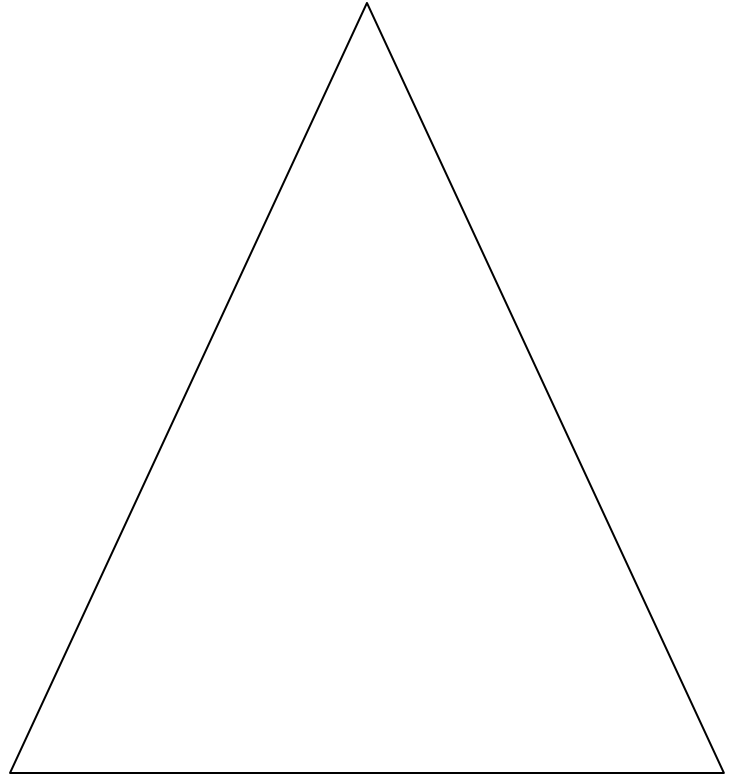
Her Condition:

How do you suppose you might react? Are you sympathetic?

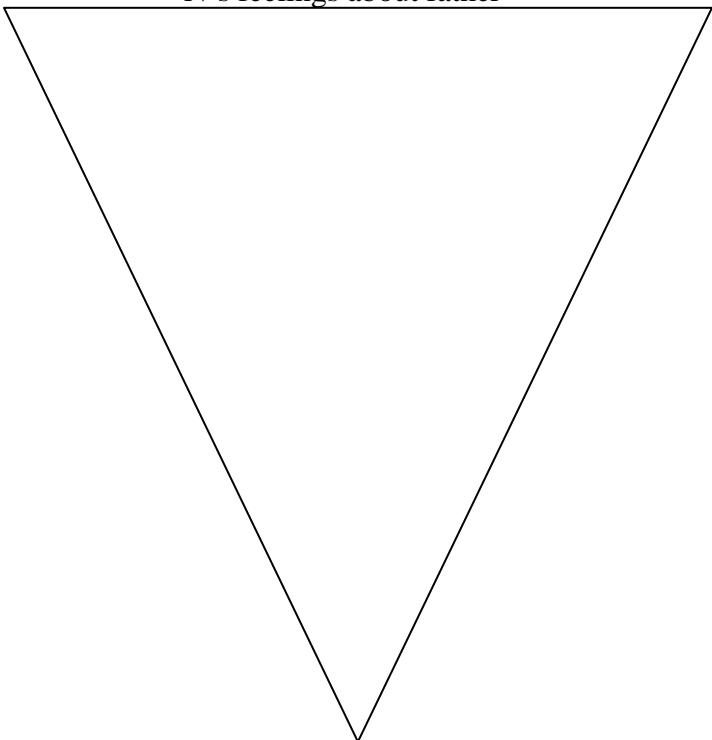
2. Nichole's chapter represents what in literature is sometimes referred to as a "Great Lacuna," a wave of extreme emotion.
- A. Describe her relationship with and reactions to her father and her mother. Include the reasons for her emotional responses.



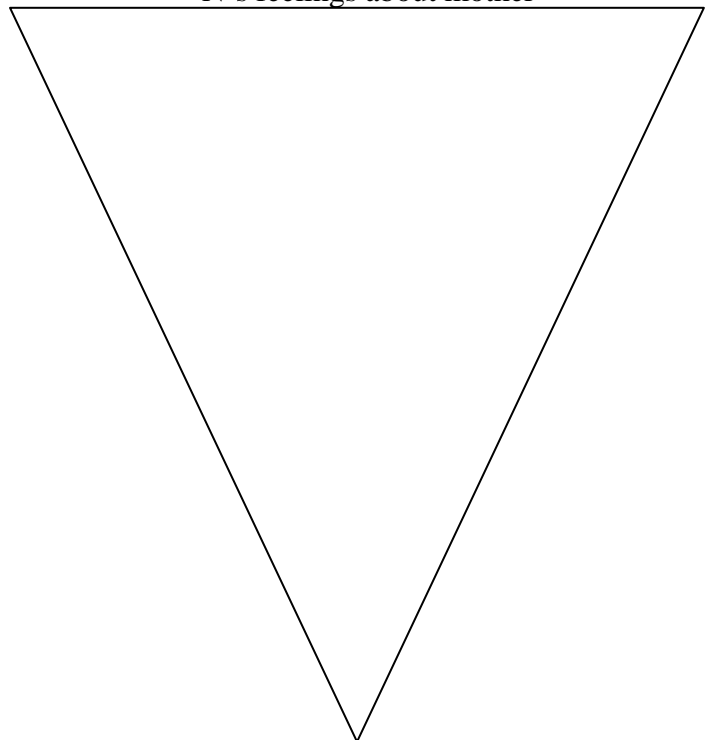
Relationship with father



Relationship with mother

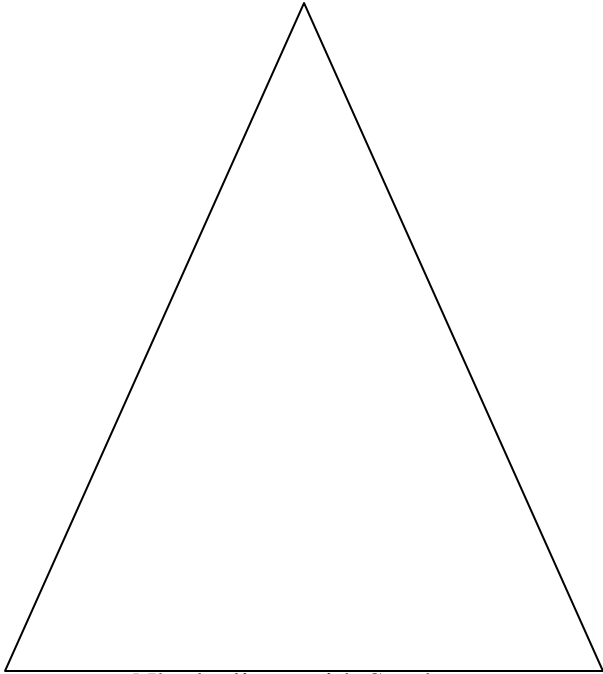


N's feelings about father

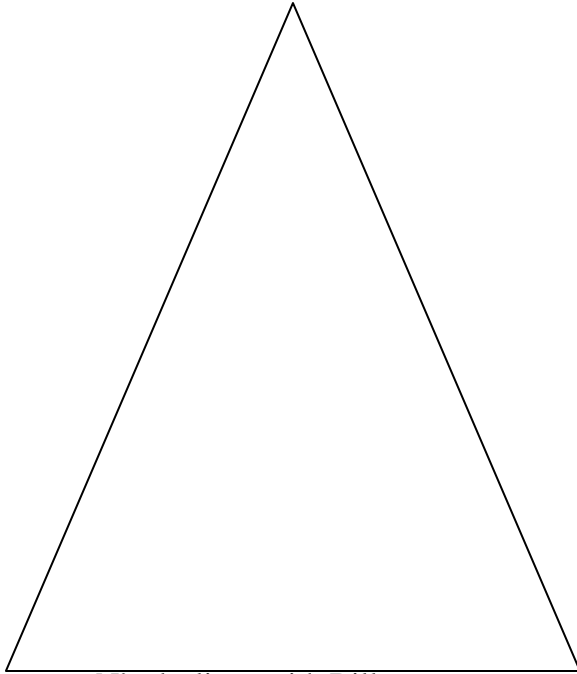


N's feelings about mother

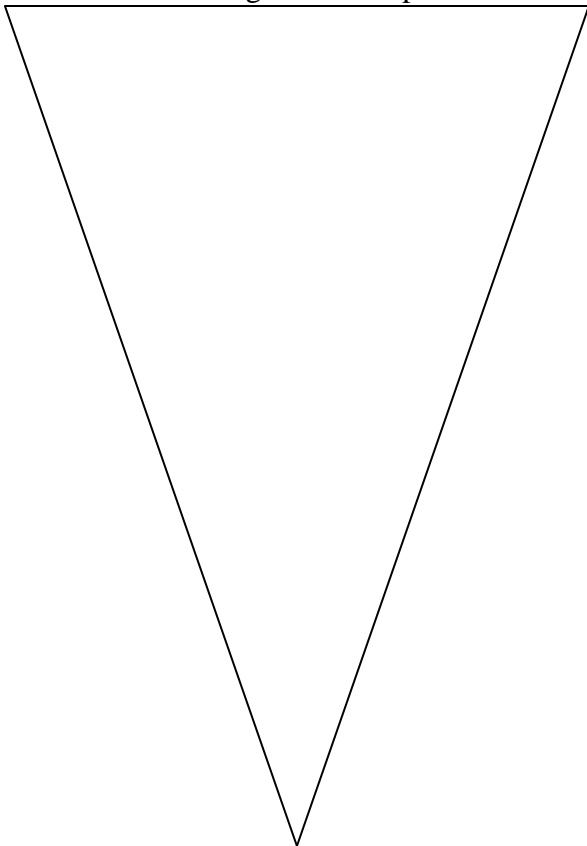
B. Describe Nichole's dealings with Stephens and Billy, and how she feels about them.



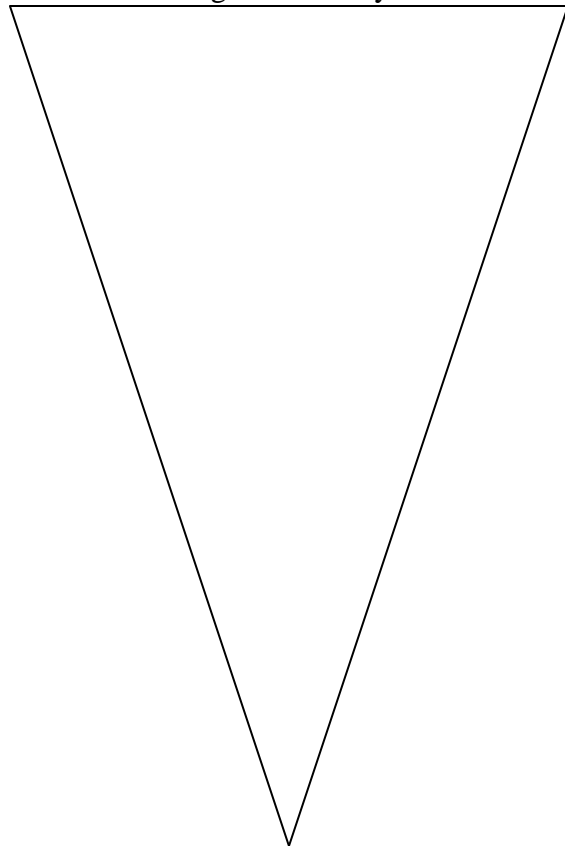
N's dealings with Stephens



N's dealings with Billy



N's feelings about Stephens



N's feelings about Billy

What is the one Greater Human Truth that you will take with you as you close the book?

Who was your favorite character? What made you bond with him or her?

Look up each word below, write the part of speech (noun, verb, adjective), and a synonym:

Vocabulary Word	Function	Synonym
1. Curt (6)		
2. Sanguine (23)		
3. Precarious (39)		
4. Cavernous (48)		
5. Extracted (48)		
6. Sullen (49)		
7. Prescience (56)		
8. Pessimistic (58)		
9. Reticent (62)		
10. Forage (95)		
11. Impunity (99)		
12. Negligence (106)		
13. Belligerent (107)		
14. Concurring (108)		
15. Gaunt (112)		
16. Lassitude (113)		
17. Ambivalent (124)		
18. Instigate (138)		
19. Precedent (139)		
20. Enthralled (237)		

POST-READING PROJECTS:

- A. Create the board game: “Blame Game”
 1. How do the character pieces based on the book process around the board?
 2. What are the roadblocks?
 3. What is the reward at the end?

- B. Research the Vietnam War and create Billy’s **scrapbook** of his experiences.

- C. Create a graphic novel of one episode as seen through the eyes of two different characters (like Zoe and Mitchell). Use the pages provided.

- D. Uncork the Bottle. Imagine one of the characters alone at home fuming and pacing. What words would be pouring out of the bottle?

- E. For the movie buffs, story board the opening scene before the opening credits begin. Choose the predominant mood of the ending, and create it through a series of six shots for the beginning. Use the pages provided.

- F. Create the **poster** and cast the movie. Include a **tag line** that reflects one of the Greater Human Truths. A sample of a tag line is: “The greatest risk in life is not taking one.” (*Proof*) or “He had a perfect life before he became a hero.” (*History of Violence*)

DEAR STUDENTS
WELCOME TO THE JUNIOR SUMMER READ

As you enjoy your time away from school, we are asking that you schedule in the reading of at least one book, *The Sweet Hereafter* by acclaimed writer, Russell Banks.

Before you leave as a junior, your English teacher will give you this packet and warm you up to the summer read. You can buy the book at our bookstore at a cut rate, and are encouraged to do so before school lets out this year, especially if you receive free books. This packet will be available at the bookstore and on line.

Requirement:

There are five chapters, each named for the person who is speaking. It will say at the beginning of each chapter section in the packet what choices you have for answering questions. **A complete packet will have fifteen completed answers.** In the fall, you will have answered at least ten packet questions. The Post-Reading Activities will be done next year with your new senior class.

A Few Suggestions:

1. Read through the entire packet. Some of the responses are written responses, while others are charts that ask you to interpret characters' thoughts as they relate to the main event of the book and other characters. Some questions are more difficult. You may choose to challenge yourself, and answer a difficult but intriguing question.
2. Many of your teachers next year will expect you to annotate. We encourage you to practice annotating as you read. Many of the questions have page numbers to help you.
3. The Required Summer Read is new for all of us, but like other college prep high schools, a summer read allows your new teacher to get to know how you think, what you think, and how you approach reading. It will also give you an opportunity to discuss the same book with your friends in a more casual manner, like a giant book club.

