

## PinkMonkey Literature Notes on . . .

<http://monkeynote.stores.yahoo.net/>

### Sample MonkeyNotes

**Note: this sample contains only excerpts and does not represent the full contents of the booknote. This will give you an idea of the format and content.**

# *The Lost Boy*

by

**David Pelzer**

1997



MonkeyNotes Study Guide by Laurie Lahey

<http://monkeynote.stores.yahoo.net/>

Reprinted with permission from TheBestNotes.com Copyright © 2003, All Rights Reserved  
Distribution without the written consent of TheBestNotes.com is strictly prohibited.

## KEY LITERARY ELEMENTS

### SETTING

Because David is a foster child there are many minor settings. However, the majority of the action occurs in common vicinity. This is in the outlying suburbs of San Francisco, California.

**Daly City, CA** - The story begins in David's home with Mother in this small California suburb of San Francisco; it is a middle class neighborhood.

**Pizza Bar** - This is where David ends up the first time he runs away.....

### LIST OF CHARACTERS

#### Major Characters

**David Pelzer** - David is the main character and narrator as well as author of this story. This memoir meets him at age nine and leaves him when he is an adult; it follows more precisely the years between age twelve and eight-teen. He is shy and describes his outer appearance as that of a geek.

**Mother, Catherine Roerva Pelzer** - Catherine is David's mother and most often referred to simply as "Mother." She is a haggardly, putrid woman who is responsible for David's torment.

**Stephan Pelzer, Father** - David's father, he is the man who was David's hero as a child. He undergoes a transformation into worn alcoholic. David spends much of his life looking up to then simply looking out for him.

#### Minor Characters

**Mark** - He is the man who works at the pizza bar. He offers to make David a pizza when he sees him steal a quarter left on a pool table for a game. With the best of intentions, he phones the police to tell them that David is there.

**Mr. Ziegler** - David's homeroom teacher, he is instrumental in involving the.....

Many additional characters are identified in the complete study guide.

### CONFLICT

In this story there are many minor conflicts normally with David as the protagonist and a minor character as the antagonist, e.g. John, the crazy doctor, the snobby lady at Duinsmoore. The main underlying conflict however is much larger, also most that of the forces of good vs. evil; it is as follows:

**Protagonist** - David who is playing the lost boy in search of what Mother never gave.....

**Antagonist** - Mother. While she has brief, fleeting moments of kindness, she is essentially .....

**Climax** - It is difficult in a memoir type piece to determine the one true rise in action that will lead to ultimate resolution. This is a story of many little climaxes, e.g. when Mother is chasing.....

The major climax, I would argue, is when Alice and Harold give David the key to their home. I would say it is the major climax because it resolves the major issue of this story, which is about a lost boy. Upon receiving the key the final detail that David needs to be resolved, is determined. He has.....

**Outcome** - As can be seen in the final scenes with his Mother and Father, David prevails. He is able to confront his father and see him for what he truly is, a hopeless, pathetic alcoholic. In the.....

## **SHORT PLOT / CHAPTER SUMMARY (Synopsis)**

This story begins with nine-year old David Pelzer running away from his apparently abusive home. He is reported to the police by a kindly stranger that works in a pizza bar. His father picks him up and we find out that David's mother beats him and his father has no intentions of helping him. David leads a pathetic existence. The next time we meet David he is a fifth grader. His teachers have been documenting his appearance and actions for sometime and have alerted authorities. David is taken from school by a police officer. After a visit to the hospital, David goes to his first foster home, "Aunt Mary's." He is introduced to his social worker, Ms. Gold, whom he describes as his angel. Ms. Gold provides much comfort for David and stands by him no matter what. David must face Mother in court. The courtroom scene is particularly difficult for David, but he finally decides to tell the judge he does not wish to live with Mother.

Next David is moved to a more permanent foster home, that of Lilian and Rudy Catanze. He develops a particularly affectionate relationship with Lilian whom is the first woman he will call mom. He also meets Larry Jr. who is a source of conflict for David, as he is mean spirited and belligerent. David encounters tough times at this stage in his life. He begins stealing, and runs away. This escalates until David is involved in a fire at school. While he actually puts the fire out- he was supposed to start it as.....

## **THEMES**

### **Major Theme**

**The Journey for Self** - Throughout this entire story David is seeking himself, a figure which elucidates him until the very end. He is essentially alone in his journey but is still able to find his way, all the while gaining important elements he was never given.

### **Minor Themes**

Almost every chapter of this book has a minor theme, which is often nicely indicated by its title. The theme isn't necessarily pervasive throughout the entire story, but is essential for that particular section.

**Acceptance** - This theme can be traced throughout the entire story. It is introduced most obviously in chapter two. David is concerned about what the other children think of him because he badly wants to be accepted. This continues with almost every other character he meets for the rest of the.....

Additional themes are discussed in the complete study guide.

## **MOOD**

The mood of this story is somber. Because of its very nature one is sobered upon reading it. However, it is dashed with lightheartedness. Its ultimate effect is inspiration.

## **BACKGROUND INFORMATION - BIOGRAPHY**

This is an entirely true story written by the author himself. David was rescued from the torment of his mother at age twelve and then lived in foster care until of legal age. When he turned eighteen he joined the U.S. Air force. During his years of service he played a pertinent role in Operation Just Cause in Desert Storm and Desert Shield. Ever since Dave has continued to lead an inspiring and amazing life for which has been recognized by the last three Presidents of the United States: Regan, Bush, and Clinton. 1990 named him the California Volunteer of the year. In 1993 Dave was named one of the Ten Outstanding Young Americans. In 1994, he became the only American to be named one of Outstanding Young Persons of the World. In 1996 he was honored at the Olympic Games in Atlanta by being selected to carry the Centennial torch.....

## LITERARY / HISTORICAL INFORMATION

This is the true story of David Pelzer's tormented childhood, as told by the survivor himself. The people, places, and events are not fictitious creations- though they are hardly believable. This case is the third worst to be reported in the history of California State. By reporting this case, David's teachers were jeopardizing their careers. In 1974, a year after David's rescue, the Federal government took a .....

## CHAPTER SUMMARIES AND NOTES / ANALYSIS

### CHAPTER ONE "The Runaway"

#### Summary

This chapter begins in Daly City, California in the winter of 1970. Nine-year-old David Pelzer is sitting alone in his family's garage in a P.O.W. position. He is rarely allowed to eat. When he is offered food, it is usually left over cereal from his brothers' breakfasts. His life has been this way for years. His mother regularly beats him. At night, he is forced to sleep on an old army cot in the basement. He is made to be a complete outcast of the family. He is referred to as an "It."

On this particular day, his parents break into an alcohol induced argument about "the boy," which is what they call him. Father often tries to persuade Mother to treat David better. In this particular argument, Mother says that if "the boy" has it so bad then he can leave. David recognizes this as another one of her games – cruel amusements she creates for herself with which to torment David. After much internal deliberation, David decides to take this opportunity to leave, and so he does.

He leaves with the intention of going to the Russian River in Guerneville, where he spent some happy summers as a child before his mother became abusive. He has nowhere to go and no friends to take him in, and soon begins to doubt his decision. Food takes over his thoughts and he begins to search for a meal. He goes to an old church but leaves when he sees a priest; finally, he ends up in a pizza bar. At the pizza bar he steals a quarter and gains the attention of a man named Mark who works there. After Mark makes David return the quarter, he inquires about why David is out alone and so late. He promises David a pizza and calls the police. The police officer takes David to the station, where he is able to get David to give him his telephone number. David's father comes to claim David. Father tells the officer that David and Mother had a disagreement because Mother would not allow David to ride his bike. The policeman scolds David and tells him that he should be happy to have such a caring Mother; he is a lucky boy. David doesn't even have a bike.

During the car ride home, Father scolds David further. He tells David he must be a good boy and not upset Mother. David cries. As the pull into the driveway Father remarks that they are home and David realizes he has no home.

#### Notes

This expository chapter includes two interesting elements that catch the reader's eye immediately. It is italicized and it is written in the first person. These factors are employed to distinguish this chapter from the rest of the story. This chapter is a flashback and creates a foundation from which the subsequent chapters will build. This section establishes exactly what will later cause David to be the "lost boy." The first person narration and italicization give this section a memory- like quality. We learn that David has been the victim of extensive child abuse, and that his parents are suffering from their own problems with alcohol and a querulous marriage.

The incident described here is also of significance. Because David could obviously choose to recall many incidents of his tormented past, it is important to note that he is describing running away. This "permission" given to David by Mother to leave can be seen as a foreshadowing of his later legitimate release from her custody. Also, the difficult decision he must face before leaving parallels what will be his later indecision over

his testimony in the courtroom against Mother. When David leaves home in this chapter he is utterly alone, and this is how he will feel for much of his time in foster care.

Also of significance, is David's desire to go to the Russian River. This is a symbol of peace for him, and a place that has always represented happiness for him. His time in foster-care (and therapy) will also be a quest, in a more figurative and emotional sense, for the Russian River.

## CHAPTER TWO "An Angel Named Ms. Gold"

### Summary

This chapter begins with the day David was rescued, March 5, 1973. He gives a brief description of how his teachers at Thomas Edison Elementary School notified the police of what was happening to him. His homeroom teacher, Mr. Ziegler promises to tell the other kids what has been going on with David. This means a lot to David; he only wants acceptance. An officer takes David to the police station. The officer calls Mother and tells her that David is in the custody of the county. He then tells David that he is free.

From here David is taken to the hospital. He is washed from head to toe. The doctors x-ray and examine his badly bruised and battered body. The doctor discovers that David can no longer feel the tips of his fingers and has little skin on his raw arms. This is the result of being forced to clean with dangerous chemicals. David becomes so fearful while at the hospital that he pleads with the officer to check around every corner to make sure she is not lurking, ready to reclaim him.

David then goes to "Aunt Mary's, a temporary foster home run by an elderly woman. For the first time in many years, he is given a delicious dinner. He is introduced to the seven other children who also live with Aunt Mary and finds that he is instantly accepted. With his newfound freedom, David.....

## OVERALL ANALYSES

### CHARACTER ANALYSIS

**David Pelzer** - David is the main character, protagonist, and narrator, and author of this story, his memoir. This story is essentially his journey for self, and so titled the "lost" boy. We meet him as a nine-year old not even capable of running away from his horrifyingly abusive mother and, for all intents and purposes, apathetic father.

After he is rescued he makes important decision to be a good person. Each trial he.....

**Mother** - Mother is a sick, demented, and inconsistent character. She varies from evil to almost sweet. It seems that her mission is to make David's life miserable. She is present in David's psyche even when she is psychically absent via panicked thoughts and terrifying nightmares. She is.....

**Father** - Father is a sad, almost pitiable character. His first major action is his utter failure to save David at the police station. He goes beyond simple failure when he defends Mother's actions and scolds David. Father continues to be a let down when he does not visit David while in foster care, though David is.....

### PLOT STRUCTURE ANALYSIS

The plot is unique and interesting because it details the events of a true story. It is also told in the first person with little dialogue. The story is experienced as though the reader were sitting inside the head of David Pelzer. It is important to note the events chosen as they are believed to be significant by the author, who obviously could have picked any number of other events to convey his message.

Pelzer chooses to begin his memoir with an event that occurred three years or so before he actually begins his story. This section is offset by italics, the present tense, and a stream of .....

## **THEMES - THEME ANALYSIS**

The major theme of this narrative is the **search or journey for self**. In a sense, this can be declared a quest piece. David embarks on both a physical and emotional quest. This idea is even established in chapter one when he runs away. This pattern continues for the rest of the story, where he continues as a “lost” boy, seeking his identity and peace. The places that we encounter this theme are numerous.

First, we see it in David’s tumultuous living patterns. Especially in the beginning, David leads an existence of impermanence. This seems to reflect, to a degree, his state of psychological .....

## **POINT OF VIEW**

This story is told from a first person point of view. This means that it is told through the eyes of the narrator, who in our case is also the main character. We are able to know everything.....

## **IMPORTANT QUOTATIONS AND ANALYSIS**

1. *“ Get out of my house! I don’t like you! I don’t want you! I never loved you! Get the hell out of my house!”*

-Mother p 9

This quotation comes from chapter one, where we meet the three major characters, Mother, Father, and David. This is said to David right before Mother tells him he can leave. This is a significant statement because it gives up insight into the dynamics of David’s home life before foster care. This also helps the reader understand the absolute cruelty of Mother, thereby validating David’s need for affection.

2. *“Do you have any idea what your mother’s been doing? I can’t get a moment of peace in that house. For Christ’s sake, it’s been nothing but hell since you left. Jesus, can’t you just stay out of trouble?”*

-Father p 31

This exemplifies Father’s selfish, hopeless attitude concerning David’s existence. This is what he says when he picks David up from the police station after having lied to the officer about why David ran away. His is concerned only with how bad things have been for him, and he blames David as the cause.....

## **STUDY QUESTIONS**

1. Q: From what point of view is the story told?  
A: First person
2. Q: Who is the protagonist?  
A: David
3. Q: Who is the antagonist?  
A: Mother.....

## **ESSAY QUESTIONS / BOOK REPORT IDEAS**

1. Evaluate David’s discovery of self. What major turning points does he exhibit in this story?
2. Examine Mother in contrast with the main female characters of this story. Do you think they serve as good foils? Why or why not?
3. Examine Father in contrast with the main male characters of this story. Do you think they serve as good foils? Why or why not?.....

## ***END OF SAMPLE MONKEYNOTES EXCERPTS***

<http://monkeynote.stores.yahoo.net/>

Copyright ©2003 TheBestNotes.com.

Reprinted with permission of TheBestNotes.com. All Rights Reserved.

Distribution without the written consent of TheBestNotes.com is strictly prohibited.