

Reflections:

A Student Response Journal for...

My Darling, My Hamburger

by Paul Zindel

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Chapter 1

1. Like Maggie, a number of students don't like physical education class because it can mess up their appearance. How do you feel about it?
2. What are your first impressions of Liz and Maggie? Think of some adjectives that describe them. What do you think of their friendship? Can you remember specific details that made you feel one way or the other? How would you respond to Maggie's questions if you were Liz, or Liz's answers if you were Maggie?
3. Some of the girls' language and school routines might be different from yours. If you find this to be true, list some differences. Then try to list some similarities. Can you think of reasons to explain the differences or similarities? What are some advantages and disadvantages of writing a book about teenagers?
4. How do the girls seem to feel about school? Is it a social arena, an academic institution, or both? Do they willingly spend time there?

Chapter 2

5. Having asked Maggie out, Dennis hates himself for “doing something he didn’t want to do.” Did you ever have an experience when you did something you didn’t want to do? Did you hate yourself for it?

6. To Dennis’ eye, Maggie looks “gigantic” in the dress she wears on their first date. What might account for Dennis’ attitude toward Maggie? List your impressions of Dennis.

7. If you were to stop reading the book at the end of this chapter, what would you predict for Dennis and Maggie? List some details that might lead you to make such a prediction.

8. How do each of the four characters react to the movie? Why do you think the author chose to set this scene during an educational documentary?

Chapter 3

9. After observing people who looked depressed or grotesque to him, Sean decided “life was one huge pathetic waste.” If a depressed friend said this to you, what would you say to cheer him or her up?

10. What do you think of Sean’s characterization of Liz as “a frightened animal”? Does it say anything about Sean himself?

11. Comment on some of the details in this chapter. Why does Sean notice the structure made of toothpicks in the convenience store? What might he be feeling when he sees the rabbits? What might Liz, Maggie, and Dennis be feeling?

12. What do you think of Maggie and Dennis now? Where is their relationship headed? List some details that make you feel one way or the other.

13. The author hasn’t directly told us a great deal about Liz, but has given us some hints. What can you infer about Liz, her personality, and her home life? Is she turning out to be the person you thought she was going to be?

14. When Liz and Sean walk on the beach, Sean notes that Liz’s voice is “Too energetic. Too quick.” He thinks to himself, “She must have had another fight at home.” Based on what you know of Liz and her mother, construct a dialogue that may have occurred between them.

Response Journal

15. Assume that Liz and Maggie go to the restroom together before they leave the beach. Write the dialogue you think takes place.

Chapter 4

16. Mrs. Tobin tells Maggie, “A boy doesn’t have to look like a prince to be a good husband.” How important is it to you that someone look a certain way?
17. In this chapter, we meet the main characters’ parents. Give a capsule description and your opinion of each parent. If they were to get together and have a conversation about their children, what might they say? Do they seem generally supportive of their children? Why might they feel and act the way they do?
18. Sean feels he can’t talk to his father. What advice would you give to Sean to improve communication with his father? What advice would you give Sean’s father?
19. It appears that this novel is going to deal with these four friends rather than focusing on one or two as main characters. Record your feelings about each character at this point.
20. What do you think about the letters, notes, and other material that the author sometimes inserts between chapters?

Chapter 5

21. What accounts for the difference between Liz's and Maggie's reaction to Rod and Don? Whose reaction appears to have more things correct about it?

22. Sean compares sex to breathing. Do you feel that his analogy is accurate? Why do you think he chooses the analogy? Why is he having this discussion with Dennis?

23. Sean says, "Everybody gets suffocated as teenagers." As a teenager, do you ever feel "suffocated"? Record some other words you might use to describe this feeling.

24. In Paul Zindel's novels, teenagers frequently drink beer; they have easy access to it. At the time the book was written, the legal drinking age for Staten Island, where the book is set, was 18. Do you have any feelings one way or the other about the characters' consumption of alcohol?

25. Do Sean and Dennis seem like the kind of people who would really be friends? What about Liz and Maggie? Cite some interactions between them that lead you to answer the way you do.