

Ch. 1 & 2

Why are Parker and Wren in the junkyard at the opening of the story?

How do Parker and Wren react differently to the puppet they find? Why does Parker ignore Wren's feeling about it?

What can we tell about Ferrisburg from the beginning? Is it a town or a city? New or old? What time of year is it?

Why doesn't Drog talk for Wren?

What does Parker like and admire about Wren? How has she shown in the past that she is a good friend to him?

Is Parker right to expect Wren to believe him when he says the puppet talks? Why doesn't she? What do you think she thinks is happening?

What wild story does Drog tell at bedtime?

Why doesn't Parker cut Drog off his hand?

Why does Parker hide the puppet problem from his mother at first? Why doesn't he want his dad to find out?

What does Parker's going-to-sleep routine tell us about the way he thinks?

Ch. 3 & 4

Parker tries everything he can think of to get Drog off. How does Drog explain his ability to stay on?

What do Parker's teacher and classmates think when Drog talks in class?

What feelings surprise Parker when he tries to soak Drog off in the bath?

What are some ways Parker's mom is different from his dad? When Parker tells his mother about Drog, does she believe him? How does she handle the situation?

Chapter 5 & 6

What does Parker's phone conversation with his Dad tell us about their relationship?

What story does Drog tell Parker? Why does he advise Parker to quit school?

What is it in Parker's dream about Drog that frightens him so much?

After being teased on the playground, Parker says to himself, "I guess telling the truth only works when you have something usual to say." What does he mean?

What spoils things when Parker goes with Wren to visit the puppies?

What does Drog say to Parker afterwards that makes him throw up?

What, according to Drog, is the story of the "Ruby Yacht"? What does Parker do to try to keep Drog amused?

What "deal" does Parker's mom make with the school, and how does Parker feel about it?

Ch. 7-8

What does Parker like about his memories of his father?

How does Dr. Mann try to help Parker with his puppet problem?

What does Parker tell the doctor that he didn't plan to say?

What does Parker like about the movie October Sky?

How and why does Parker try to solve his problem on paper?

What happens at the video store that wouldn't have happened if it hadn't been for Drog?

When Parker sees the Japanese man coming out of the library, what does he notice most about him?

What does he remember about the plane his dad made for him?

How does Parker's dad handle the news about the puppet? What does he advise Parker to do, and how does Parker react after he hangs up?

Ch. 9

Who shows up on the playground, and what is he supposed to be doing? What does Drog think he's up to?

What does Wren do to try to get back the friendship with Parker?

Why does Parker dread Bradley Military Institute?

How does Parker meet Sensei and sign up for aikido classes?

Ch. 10 & 11

What does Parker like about the dojo right away? What important lesson does he learn in the first class?

What amazing “skill” does Sensei show Parker in the second class? How does that help him to be accepted in the class?

Why do you think Mrs. Belcher comes up with the plan for the puppet play?

How does Drog act before and during the performance? How do Wren and Big Boy react?

Ch. 12, 13, & 14

How does Parker get away from Big Boy’s attack?

How do Big Boy and Parker settle the problem the next day?

Why is Mrs. Belcher pleased with the play?

What does Wren say that hurts Parker?

Why does Mrs. Belcher show Parker the Punch & Judy tape?
Why doesn’t Drog like it?

What is Drog’s argument against aikido?

What is the relationship between the boy and the dad in the story Parker writes for Mrs. Belcher?

What does Sensei want the students to notice about the people around them?

Why does Parker have trouble drawing Wren? What idea does he get after drawing Big Boy? Has he been thinking about this idea for a while?

What does Sensei try to teach the class using finger puzzles?

Ch. 15 & 16

What does Dad hope to do when he visits Parker? Why is Parker suddenly filled with hope, too, at the beginning of the visit?

What story does Dad tell from his own boyhood, and why? What advice does he give Parker?

How does Drog ruin this chance and make things even worse between father and son? Why do you think he does this?

Ch. 17 & 18

What does Parker do to Drog after his father leaves?

Parker is amazed and frustrated when he can't cut Drog off. What is Drog's explanation?

What does Parker's Mom tell him about the divorce, and why does Parker feel partly to blame?

Why does Parker go to look at Bradley Military?
What frightens him about the statue? Why is Drog even more frightened?

Ch. 19 & 20

What does Notebook Man do on his second visit to the playground? Why does Mrs. Belcher tell him to leave?

What does Wren say to Parker about what's happening between them?

What does Drog mean when he says, "I say what I please when I please. Which is a lot more than I can say for you."

What does Drog criticize about aikido?

Why does Wren join the aikido class?

Why does Parker attack Sensei after practice? How does Sensei react?

How does Parker suddenly improve in math, and how does Wren react? Why does Mrs. Belcher's reaction scare Parker?

What are the boys' theories about what is going on with

Parker?

What is Parker's worst fear about not getting the puppet off?

Chapter 21

Why does Parker get into a fight with Wade Hunt, and how does he feel about it afterward?

How does Big Boy react at aikido?

How does Sensei treat Parker when he overhears the news, and what does he tell him he has to do?

Ch. 22-23

What does Parker believe about his dad and his half sister?

How does Wren keep trying to get Parker to let her back into his confidence?

What does Parker find out about Drog's "Ruby Yacht"?

Why does Parker leave aikido practice and go to the Titanium Club?

How does his mom react when the officer brings Parker home, and why doesn't she believe Parker is being followed?

Ch. 24-25

Why does Parker decide he is going to have to apologize to Wade Hunt, even if he doesn't want to do it?

What does he realize when he goes to Wren's Dad's shop? What does this scene show about Wren and her father? About Parker and her father?

How does Parker react when his dad asks him to visit for Christmas?

What thought helps Parker decide to apologize to Wade Hunt? How does aikido play a role in the apology? What is the result?

Ch. 26-27

What do Parker and Big Boy learn when they follow Notebook Man?

Why does Parker have to go back to Bradley Military and face the statue?

What does he learn from Wade Hunt?

How is aikido practice helping Big Boy and Parker become closer friends?

When Parker sees a white Toyota he runs; why is he afraid?

Even though Drog hates the junkyard, Parker goes there to hide. Why is it a much scarier place at night, even for Parker?

When Parker asks Drog where he came from, Drog says something Parker can't stand to hear. What is it? Drog then

explains why he can't let Parker take him off. Does Parker understand?

“At least I have my voice,” Drog says, and speaks about an earlier time when “I kept my thoughts to myself, like you do” and ended up in a trash can. Does Parker need to speak up more?

Ch. 28–29

How does going to see Sensei and drinking tea with him at his apartment help Parker to calm down? What important question does Sensei ask Parker?

What does Mom decide to do about Notebook Man?

How does Parker show his mother how bad it would be for him to go to the military academy?

Why does he consider going anyway? What does he think will happen if he doesn't? If he does?

What makes Sensei believe Parker can solve his puppet problem? Do you agree with his reason?

What does Parker's mom find out from his dad about Notebook Man ?

Ch. 30-31

How is Parker's visit to Dr. Mann different from past visits?

What does Parker figure out about Drog, and how does that change what he tries to do about the problem? What's his best plan?

Why does Parker put Dad's gift away, even though he likes

it?

How does Wren finally realize that Drog talks, and how does that change things? How does she react when Parker says he may go to Bradley?

What answer does Parker come up with for the question Sensei asked him, and why does his answer scare him a bit?

Ch. 32-33

When they set out for the puppet try-out in Peoria, Drog is eager, but Parker is very nervous. Why?

How does Parker feel entering the theater? What makes Sergio the puppeteer and Parker hit it off right away?

How is the other puppet and the scene they have to improvise is perfect for Parker's secret goal of getting Drog to join the troupe alone?

How does Drog react when Jasmine, the other puppet, talks back to him?

Why is Parker worried at first during the skit, and how was he feeling by the end?

Why does he say "I never felt less weird in my life" after Sergio discusses puppet-voices with him?

Suddenly when everything seems to be going according to plan, Drog announces he will never leave Parker. What does he mean when he says Parker isn't honest, and needs him?

When Parker dials his dad the second time, what does he tell him and ask him, and how does this conversation change

things between them?

During the phone conversation, Drog falls off Parker's hand. Why, do you think?

Ch. 34-35

What does Drog do with the now-empty Drog?

Drog scolds Parker at first, but what signs does he give that he's happy to join the troupe?

Sergio talks Drog off easily. How does he explain this to Parker?

Why doesn't Parker want his mother to say he got rid of Drog?

Why is the U.A.E. label on the puppet label so funny to Parker?

How does Parker resolve the Christmas problem? What worries him about the future?

Why is Parker so happy when Wren attacks him at aikido? What has changed?

What might Parker miss about Drog now that he's gone?