***Unwind* by Neal Shusterman**

**Discussion Questions**

**Directions:** Each time you meet with your group, choose 2-3 of these questions to discuss. (You should choose your questions from a relevant chapter. E.g. If you read chapters 4-10, you should discuss questions from those chapters.) Have one person jot down notes on what your group said in response to the questions. (These can be in bullets.)

**Ch. 1**

1. What can you infer about society’s values and beliefs from the first few pages before chapter 1?
2. What does the use of the word “stolen” on page 3 imply about Connor’s values and beliefs?  What are the connotations of the word “stolen”?
3. What do you think kicking AWOL means?
4. What are the connotations of the word “evicted”?  What does the use of the word “evicted” on page 5 imply about Connor’s relationship with his family?
5. What is Connor’s motivation for bringing home flowers and good grades?  Why does he want to make his parents suffer?  What does this imply about his character
6. What can you infer about Connor’s parents’ values and beliefs if they are unwinding Connor?
7. Why isn’t Ariana going with Connor like she promised?  What does this tell you about her values and beliefs?
8. How does Andy have a “small victory”? (15)
9. Describe Connor’s dream on page 16.   Why do you think he had this dream and how did the dream affect him.
10. How did the truck driver’s values and beliefs motivate him to help Connor?
11. When Connor is caught by the Juvey-cops and he sees his father, his father calls him “son.”  This makes Connor want to shout, “I’m not your son!...I stopped being your son when you signed the unwind order” (17)
12. Is Connor impulsive and reckless or a shrewd quick-thinker?
13. What can you infer about Connor’s values and beliefs from this chapter?

**Ch. 2**

1. Using context, what is a State Home in this book? What does this make Risa?
2. Why is it so important to Risa to do well in the recital?
3. What can you infer about the values and beliefs of this society that they would decide to unwind Risa for making a few mistakes in the recital?
4. What do you think about Samson’s comment to Risa that “I’d rather be partly great than entirely  useless”? (26)  This was the quote at the beginning of the book.  What do Samson’s words reveal both about his own values and beliefs and society’s?  How are people in this society able to accept unwinding?

**Ch. 3**

1. What can you infer a tithe is?  (The dictionary may help you a little bit.)
2. If Lev is a tithe, why is he having a party?  How does society view tithe’s differently from Unwinds?
3. How are Marcus’s values and beliefs different from his family’s values and beliefs? Why are they different?
4. How does Lev feel about being a tithe?  What does this reveal about how his values and beliefs are different from Connor’s and Risa’s?
5. Why is Lev so insulted when Connor calls him an  Unwind?
6. Why does Pastor Dan tell Lev to run?  What does this reveal about his true values and beliefs?

**Ch. 4-8**

1. What motivates Connor to grab Lev?
2. 22. Is Connor more selfish or selfless?
3. Remember that when Lev wakes up his furious that Connor “saved” him.  Lev thinks to himself that Connor and Risa “haven’t saved him, they’ve damned him.”  (42)  Why does Lev think this way?  Is he right? Or was Connor right to grab Lev?
4. Remember that Connor asks Lev what is like “knowing all your life you’re going to be sacrificed.”  Lev responds, “It’s better than going through life without knowing your purpose.”  (44)   Is Lev right?  Ultimately, who’s in the better position?  Lev or Connor?
5. Based on their words, thoughts and actions so far, who would be a better leader for the group: Connor or Risa?

**PART TWO**

1. Who is right?  Nurse Yvonne or Nurse Greta? (51)

**Ch. 9-11**

1. What is “storking”?  Is it a good thing or not?
2. What does storking also reveal about this society’s values and beliefs?
3. Based on their actions in this chapter, now who do you think makes the better leader: Connor or Risa?
4. Why do Risa and Connor react differently when they see there’s no mention of them in the newspaper?  What do their reactions reveal about their characters?
5. Address this question again: to what extent is Connor reckless and impulsive vs. shrewd and quick-thinking?
6. How did the fat kid’s words, “We’ve been storked again,” motive Connor to grab the storked baby?  Did he make the right decision or did he just “Screw Up Royally”?

**Ch. 12-14**

1. What motivates Lev to want to escape from Risa and Connor?
2. Why didn’t Lev turn himself into the police when he saw them?
3. What happened to the baby that was storked to Connor’s parents? What do the actions of both Connor’s parents and the other neighborhood families reveal about this society’s values and beliefs? How did the storked baby’s fate motivate Connor to take “DiDi”? How did the baby’s fate also shape some of Connor’s  values and beliefs?

**Ch. 15**

1. Why doesn’t Lev want Connor and Risa hurt and killed despite how they’re preventing him from being unwound as he wanted?
2. How did Pastor Dan convince Lev’s parents not to call the police?  More importantly, why did he convince them not to call the police?
3. What does Lev realize about Pastor Dan and how does that realization affect Lev?
4. What motivates Lev to pull the fire alarm?  Why does he think, “I am lost in every possible way” (81)?

**Ch. 16**

1. Why does Shusterman switch to a teacher’s perspective for this chapter?
2. When the teacher, Hannah,  discovers Connor and Risa, Connor says, “Please…”  Hannah thinks, “*Please what?...Please break the law?  Please put myself and the school at risk?* But, no, that’s not it at all.  What he’s really saying is: *Please be a human being*.  With a life so full of rules and regiments, it’s so easy to forget that’s what they are.  She knows—she sees—how often compassion takes a back seat to expediency” (83). What does Hannah mean?  What motivates her to help Connor and Risa?
3. Ch. 17-18
4. Why do you think Lev started running towards Connor and Risa and yelling, “Wait!”
5. What can you infer about what Clappers are based on everyone’s reaction when Connor and Risa pretended to be Clappers?
6. How have Lev’s values and beliefs changed?  What caused them to change?

**Ch. 19-20**

1. In this chapter Connor says to Risa, “I go by instinct, you go by brains. I guess we make a pretty decent team”(90).  Is this true?  Do they make a good team?
2. Why does the thought of Lev being unwound bring “Connor a pang of regret” even though Connor believes Lev betrayed them? (90)
3. Why does Connor get so angry when he starts to think about the baby they took?
4. Why did Hayden’s, Mai’s and Roland’s parents decide to have them unwound?  Do any of them deserve to be unwound?  Why or why not?
5. What are Roland and Hayden’s character traits?
6. What is the legend of Humphrey Dunfee?  Why is Humphrey Dunfee an appropriate name for the boy in the legend?
7. Why does Sonia have each of the runaway Unwinds write a letter to someone she/he loves?
8. Why does Connor sign his letter to his parents with “I love you” even though they decided to have him unwound?
9. How does Sonia challenge the values and beliefs of her society?  What do you think might be motivating her?
10. So far how have Risa and Connor also challenged the values and beliefs of society?  What is their motivation so far?
11. Why is it so important to Connor that Hannah want the baby?  What does this reveal about Connor?
12. If you didn’t already discuss the question, who is right: Nurse Greta or Nurse Yvonne?
13. When Connor and Risa leave Sonia’s they find out they are going to a place called “The Graveyard.” What does this name foreshadow?

**PART THREE**

1. The article about the about the Ukrainian Maternity Hospital is a real article.  If you want, you can go to the URL and read the original article.

**Ch. 21**

1. What do you think of CyFi?  What are his character traits?
2. How has Lev changed since he lost Connor and Risa?
3. What motivates Lev to travel with CyFi?
4. Why does CyFi choose to talk the way he does?
5. How did CyFi benefit from unwinding?
6. What motivates Lev to go after CyFi when CyFi runs off?  (133)
7. What is wrong with CyFi?  Why does he have the meltdown?  Why does he say, “I DIDN’T STEAL THIS” even though Lev saw him steal the ornament the ornament?  Why does he have Lev get rid of all the other stolen property in his coat pockets?
8. Why is CyFi going to Joplin?  Why didn’t he tell his dad why he was going?
9. What motivates Lev to help CyFi get to Joplin?

**Ch. 22**

1. Why doesn’t Connor tell anyone he’s “The Akron AWOL”?  Why has the story of Connor’s escape turned into such a big deal for the kids in the safe houses?
2. What does the fact that there is a whole network of safe houses for unwinds suggest?
3. Why are Connor and Risa still sticking together even though Risa knows that it would be “common sense…to distance herself  from him”? (143)
4. Why does Connor have such a bad temper?  Why can’t he control it?
5. Why does Risa want Connor to watch Roland closely?

**Ch. 23**

1. Why does Connor keep looking for Lev in the safe houses?
2. What are Roland’s character traits?  What makes him so dangerous?
3. Why doesn’t Connor attack Roland when Roland attacks Risa in the bathroom?
4. Why is Risa so upset when Connor doesn’t fight Roland even though Connor is only doing what Risa told him to do?

**Ch. 25-27**

1. Has Connor changed at all since the beginning of the book?  If so, how?  Give evidence.
2. What does the chapter with the pawnbroker reveal bout Lev’s character?
3. Why doesn’t Emby believe unwinding is all bad?  Is he right? Why would Connor rather die than get a piece of an unwind?  Is he being moral or foolish?
4. What are some of the different beliefs the kids in Connor’s crate have about unwinding, death, love and souls?  Why do they have these beliefs?
5. Do you agree with Hayden’s comment that law is only “educated guesses at right and wrong’? (172)
6. When Connor asks Hayden, “When do we start to live?” Hayden replies, “I don’t know.” Connor then thinks, “Maybe it’s the best answer of all.  If more people could admit they really don’t know, maybe there would never have been a Heartland War.”  (174). What do you think of this?

**Ch. 28-31**

1. What do you make of the Admiral?
2. Now that CyFi and Lev have made it to Joplin, what motivates Lev to stay with CyFi?
3. Describe what it’s like in CyFi’s head.
4. Why does Shusterman write this chapter from CyFi’s perspective?
5. What did Tyler need to get CyFi to go all the way back to Joplin?
6. What do you think of how Lev threatened Tyler’s parents with the shovel?  Is it admirable or cruel?  Is this evidence of Lev’s growth into a better person or evidence of Lev’s moral degeneration?
7. Has Lev “become like that briefcase in the ground—full of gems yet void of light, so nothing sparkles, nothing shines” (193)?  If so, why?

**Ch. 32-33**

1. What do you think of the Admiral’s rules?  What do they reveal about his values and beliefs?  Are they good rules for The Graveyard?
2. What is it about “the Goldens” that makes Risa start to hate them?
3. How did the Admiral give Risa “back her right to exist”? (202)

**Ch. 34**

1. Why does Hayden say Connor has integrity?  Do you agree that Connor has integrity?  Why or why not?
2. What has been causing Connor to change?
3. What is it about the Admiral that Connor doesn’t really like? Do you think the Admiral can be trusted?  Is he a good leader or not?
4. Do you think it’s wise for Connor not to make an alliance with Roland?
5. Why does Connor have such mixed emotions once he sees Lev? Why does he punch him and then hug him?
6. What does Lev do that shows Connor how much he’s changed?
7. How does the Admiral get Connor on his side? Do you think Connor is right to trust the Admiral now or not?
8. Why does the Admiral ask *Connor* to be his eyes and ears?  Why does the Admiral choose to trust Connor?
9. How is Roland undermining the Admiral’s power? Do you think Roland is actually a threat or not?
10. Do you agree with the Admiral when he says, “You see, a conflict always begins with an issue-a difference of opinion, an argument. But by the time it turns into a war, the issue doesn’t matter anymore, because now it’s about one thing and one thing only: how much each side hates the other” (223)
11. Why did both sides in The Heartland War agree to the Unwind Accord when it was originally intended to shock everyone into coming to their senses?
12. Why did Unwinding become such a big business according to the Admiral?  What did people really value?
13. What motivated the Admiral to unwind his son?  How does he feel about his decision? Does the Admiral desire any sympathy?

**Ch 35**

1. Why doesn’t Lev tell the other kids he was a tithe?
2. Why do the other kids believe Lev when he lies about his past?
3. Before Lev goes to the secret meeting with Cleaver, the book says that Lev “suspects he’ll meet other tonight who are very much like him” (227).  What does this mean?  What would it mean to be like Lev?
4. Why does Cleaver think it’s great when he find out Lev was a tithe?
5. What do Cleaver and his group value and believe?
6. What are Lev’s values and beliefs now?  What evidence can you find in this chapter?

**Ch. 36**

1. Why does Risa wish she could stay in the graveyard beyond eighteen?  What does this suggest she values most?
2. Risa notices that the study jet is often full of kids trying to learn, but “there are no teachers and no exams” (231).  Risa thinks, “Oddly, it’s precisely that lack of expectation that keeps the study jet full most of the time.”  (231).  What does this mean?  Why would a lack of expectation keep kids studying?
3. Why doesn’t Connor want Risa to help the Admiral?
4. Why does Risa want the old Lev back?
5. Why do you think Lev volunteered for the pipeline job  in Alaska?

**Ch. 37-46**

1. How does Emby turn out to be “the central bumper in the pinball board”?  What does this metaphor even mean?
2. What do you think of the Admiral after the events of this chapter and the previous?
3. What motivates the kids in the Graveyard to form such  a vicious, brutal mob?  Is this part of the book realistic?  Would or could teenagers become so violent?
4. What do you think of the way Connor handled the meeting with Roland?
5. Why does Risa defend the Admiral when the mob storms his jet?  What motivates her to defend someone she doesn’t really know?
6. How does Connor calm the mob?  Why do his words stop them?
7. What do you think of how Shusterman jumps back and forth between some many points of view so quickly in these chapters?

**Ch. 47**

1. What values and beliefs motivate Connor and Risa to take the Admiral to the hospital knowing they are putting themselves at risk?
2. What motivates the Admiral to refuse a heart transplant?
3. What motivates Roland to betray not just Connor and Risa but every kid at the Graveyard?
4. What does Risa think motivates people to become Juvey cops?
5. What belief do the Juvey cops have about unwinding that enables them to support such a cruel act?

**Ch. 50-54**

1. If the Juvey cops have known about the Graveyard all this time, why didn’t they ever put a stop to it?
2. Why do the harvest camps look like resorts?  Does their appearance make them more or less horrific?
3. When Connor is brought into the harvest camp, why isn’t he brought to the welcome center and orientation like everyone else?  Why do the harvest camp staff force him he to take the longer route past the dormitories and fields instead?  Was this a wise decision for the harvest camp’s staff to make?
4. When Roland starts telling lies to make him look like a hero, why doesn’t Connor tell all the kids at the harvest camp the truth?
5. How are the tithes treated at the harvest camp?   Why are they treated differently from the other unwinds?  How are they perceived at the camp?

**Ch. 55**

1. What motivates Roland to attack Connor even though he knows he’ll be unwound sooner? Why does he stop all of a sudden?
2. As Roland is strangling Connor, Connor wonders if this is what he secretly wanted, “Because he’d rather be killed with a furious hand than dismembered with cool indifference” (278).   What does he mean?  Why might he think it’s better to be killed by Roland?
3. What do you think Lev is up to in the harvest camp?
4. What values and beliefs motivate the clappers?  (283-284)

**Ch. 61-66**

1. What do you think of this chapter? Why did Shusterman include a description of Roland’s unwinding?  Was it necessary or gratuitous?
2. Why is it so important to Lev that Connor not be unwound?  What is motivating him to save Connor?
3. Why is it important to Connor to walk to his unwinding by himself?
4. What motivated Mai to murder the Goldens? What motivated her to become a Clapper?
5. What typo can you find on page 309?
6. Why doesn’t Lev clap?  What is motivating him at this point?
7. Why does seeing Connor emerge from the Chop Shop cause all the kids to revolt?
8. How did Connor wind up surviving his injuries from the explosion?  How did he qualify for transplants?
9. What do you think of the nurse who talks to Connor when he wakes up?

**Ch .67**

1. Why does Risa refuse to let them replace her damaged spine with a new one from an unwind?
2. What effect has Lev had on society’s values and beliefs?  Why has he had such a significant effect?
3. When Pastor Dan visits Lev, he says to Lev, “You may be responsible for your actions…but it’s not your fault you weren’t emotionally prepared for life out there in the real world.  That was my fault—and the fault of everyone who raised you to be a tithe.  We’re as guilty as the people who pumped that poison into your blood”  (327).  Is Pastor Dan right?  Do you agree with what he said?
4. What motivated Pastor Dan to resign from the church?
5. What is motivating Connor to continue resisting unwinding when he could be free now that he has a fake identity?