The House of the Scorpion

• Chapter 1
  • Identify the person of the narration.
  • Explain what is happening during chapter 1 in your own words.
  • What how is Matteo different from the other clones?
• Chapter 2
  • Describe Matt.
  • How could the events and characters of chapter 2 be related to those in chapter 1?
  • Who visits Matt's shack? How are they connected to the people Celia describes from the "big house"?
• Chapter 3
  • Explain Matt's motivation for smashing the window.
  • Why does Matt have difficulty talking to the other children?
  • Why is "Property of the Alcatrán Estate" tattooed on Matt's foot?
  • Make an inference as to why Rosa dumped Matt out on the lawn, even though he was badly hurt.
• Chapter 4
  • Explain why Steven and the other "big house" people call Matt an animal.
  • What makes Matt different from the other clones?
  • Discuss why the characters seem so revolted by the idea of clones.
  • What is the author's purpose in having María visit Matt and bring him food?
• Graded Assignment 1
  • Complete the following assignment for a classwork grade:
    • Write a full paragraph describing Matt. Explain what makes him special, how he talks and behaves, and what you think about him, based on what you have read so far.
    • Discuss the following questions with your group. Take notes on your discussion and be prepared to share your thoughts with the whole class:
      • How is Matt different from other clones?
      • What is the purpose of Chapter 1?
      • Are the people in the "big house" right to treat Matt like an animal?
      • Compare and contrast the reactions of María and the other characters to Matt. Consider why they behave differently towards him.
      • Write a paragraph explaining why the other characters are repulsed by Matt. Consider how you would behave towards him, and why.
• Chapter 5
  • Draw conclusions to determine why Rosa treats Matt so cruelly.
  • Describe the extent of Rosa's abusive treatment of Matt.
  • How does Tom react to finding Matt in his "pen"?
  • How does Celia find Matt?
• Chapter 6
  • What is the cause of Rosa’s agitation and her sudden insistence on getting Matt cleaned and dressed?
  • Consider the doctor’s betrayal of Rosa and her reaction. What do these events say about the characters in this story?
• Identify the relationship between El Patron and Matt.
• Why does El Patron call Matt “Mi Vida?”

• Chapter 7
  • How is Tam Lin different from everyone else Matt knows?
  • Describe Tom as a character.
  • Explain how the author uses characterization to differentiate the personalities of Tom, Tam Lin, and Matt.
  • What is strange about Matt's teacher?

• Chapter 8
  • What are the workers in the field harvesting?
  • How was Matt cloned from El Patron?
  • What is an eejit?
  • Why did the farm worker that Tam Lin and Matt found in the field die?

**Graded Assignment 2**
• Create an idea map describing each of the following characters. For each character, identify at least five characteristics that make them seem like real people. Draw lines between each character and explain how they are connected on the line.
  • Matt
  • Celia
  • Rosa
  • El Patron
  • Tom
  • Maria
  • Tam Lin

• Chapter 9
  • Who is Felecia? (See the family tree at the beginning of the book if you are still confused)
  • Describe what Matt witnesses from his hidden passage.
  • Identify a way in which Matt proves to be different from El Patron.

• Chapter 10
  • Identify at least one element of foreshadowing in this chapter.
  • Infer how Furball could have ended up in the toilet.
  • Explain why everyone gives El Patron presents, even though he is old and incredibly rich. Go beyond the obvious and draw some conclusions about what sort of person El Patron is.
  • Summarize the origin of El Patron.

• Chapter 11
  • Form a hypothesis about how El Patron has managed to live so long. How could he possibly look younger than his grandson?
  • Consider what might have caused Matt to behave to cruelly towards Maria during the party.
    • Is it because he is a clone?
    • Is it because he is El Patron's clone?
    • Is it because he was treated so terribly by Rosa?
    • is he angry at Maria?
• Chapter 12
  • Identify Felecia’s true purpose in visiting Matt.
  • Describe what Matt found at the hospital and how it made him feel.
  • Why did Matt say that the clone looked like Tom?
  • What foreshadowing might there be in this chapter?

• Graded Assignment 3
  • Discuss the following questions with your group then create a visual that compares and contrasts the information you discuss. A Venn Diagram is acceptable, but you might want to consider a two column organizer, an idea map, or labeled drawings of the two characters.
    • Compare and Contrast Matt and MacGregor’s clone.
    • Explore possible reasons for the difference between them.

• Chapter 13
  • Make inferences to answer Matt's questions: Why would MacGregor want a clone when he already has a son?
  • Explain Matt's motivation for kidnapping Furball.
  • Draw a conclusion about what actually happened to Furball. Write down this prediction and check it against what you learn later.

• Chapter 14
  • Describe what happens to Tom after Furball is killed.
  • Explain why Tom lives with the Alcatrán family instead of his father.
  • Summarize how Celia came to "belong to" El Patrón.

• Chapter 15
  • Describe what happened to Rosa. Draw a conclusion about why she suffered this fate.
  • Consider what might have motivated Tam Lin to leave this gift for Matt.
  • Describe how Mariá helps Matt at the funeral.
  • Speculate on why the priest grew angry and started yelling at Matt.

• Chapter 16
  • According to Mariá, how is Matt different from humans?
  • Summarize the secret that Mariá and Matt discover while spying on the security room from the hidden passage.
  • How do the characters’ actions in this chapter change your understanding of previous events?

• Graded Assignment 4
  • Retell one of the following scenes from a different character's perspective. Make your retelling try to the events of the story, but be sure to explain their own thoughts and motivations. Draw on other events in the story to characterize your narrator and make their motivations and actions justified in their own eyes. A recommended character is provided (in parenthesis).
    • The funeral (the priest).
    • The conversation about why Matt is different from humans (Mariá).
    • The conversation between Felecia and Tom in the security room (Felecia).

• Chapter 17
  • Summarize the history of Opium and the Alcatrán family, including El Patrón.
    • Do you believe what Matt read?
• Summarize what Matt learns about the Farm Patrol and Tam Lin during the drive back from the eejit pens.
  • What do you think about Tam Lin now?

• Chapter 18
  • Make an inference about why Matt was dragged from his bed to the hospital in the middle of the night.
  • Infer why Celia insisted on Matt eating before going to the hospital.

• Chapter 19
  • Putting aside the literal interpretation of him entering puberty, how does Matt "come of age" in this chapter?
  • What central conflict of the whole story is revealed in this chapter?
  • Looking back at earlier events in the story, how does this chapter show them to have foreshadowed the central conflict of the story?

• Chapter 20
  • Identify the connection between Maria and the History of Opium book that Tam Lin left for Matt.
  • Make a prediction about why Tam Lin is concerned that Celia might accidentally kill Matt while trying to help him.

• Graded Assignment 5
  • There are two steps to this assignment:
    • First, create a two-column organizer identifying important scenes or characters from the story in the left column and explaining how you now realize them to have foreshadowed the central conflict of the story in the right column. Some elements will directly foreshadow later events, while others will simply start to make sense in light of the new information you have. Identify at least five scenes or moments of characterization to discuss.
    • Second, write a paragraph predicting what will happen in the second half of this story.

• Chapter 21
  • Why does El Patrón arrange the marriages of his family members?
  • What is Maria's reason for refusing to tell Matt where El Patrón's piggyback heart came from?
  • Explain Matt's reason for giving Maria a book at her sister's wedding.
  • Summarize Matt's assessment of the Alcatán family at the wedding.

• Chapter 22
  • Explain the analogy between El Patrón and an Egyptian king.
  • Do you understand why everyone is so desperate to find Matt when El Patrón has a heart attack?
  • Describe Matt's plan for escaping Opium.
  • How is Matt betrayed in this chapter? Who betrays him? What is their motive?

• Chapter 23
  • Explain why Dr. Wilum calls Matt "it."
  • What is the "one thing" Mat could do to rescue Maria from El Patrón?
  • Consider Celia's actions. What motivated her to confront El Patrón?
• Why does El Patrón say that Matt owes him his life? Discuss why his might be right or wrong.
• Identify how Celia made Mat unfit to be an organ donor for El Patron.
• Chapter 24
  • What is Tam Lin's motivation for not escaping with Matt.
  • How is a velociraptor an appropriate metaphor for María's mother?
• Graded Assignment 6
  • Create a timeline of Matt's life from birth until Tam Lin helps him escape from Opium. Include at least 20 major events. Illustrate the five most important events.
• Chapter 25
  • Explain why the world outside of Opium comes as a shock to Matt.
  • Suggest a reason for the farm patrol letting Matt go, rather than chasing him down and capturing him.
• Chapter 26
  • Consider these points as you read the chapter. Be prepared to discuss the topics and answer the questions.
  • Who are the lost boys?
  • Draw a conclusion about the government of Aztlan, based on the way that the Keepers speak to Matt. What's so bad about having hobbies?
  • What is "Dreamland"?
• Chapter 27
  • Consider these points as you read the chapter. Be prepared to discuss the topics and answer the questions.
  • Propose an explanation for why people still run away from Aztlan to the United States if America has lost much of its power and has many places that are poor.
  • What is the Keepers' reason for not giving Fidelito as much food as the other boys?
  • Explain the metaphor of the Five-Legged horse. Do you agree with it?
  • Compare and contrast the Recitation and hard labor for orphans with the practice of creating eejits.
• Chapter 28
  • Discuss why the Keepers refer to Matt as an "aristocrat." Determine the reason for this word being considered a powerful insult.
  • Why must Matt and the other boys continue to work, even when traveling?
  • Describe the power structure at the plankton factory.
  • Explain the Keepers' rationale for keeping people in factories, labor camps, and hospitals, even when they have other options.
• Graded Assignment 7
  • Compare and contrast Matt's life in Opium with his experiences upon arriving in Aztlan. Create a graphic organizer (other than a Venn diagram) that expresses the similarities and differences.
• Chapter 29
  • Consider these points as you read the chapter. Be prepared to discuss the topics and answer the questions.
  • Explain the metaphor of minds gathering dust like old rooms.
  • Discuss the arguments for and against the Keepers and what they teach.
• What is the purpose of making the boys recite the Principals and Attitudes whenever they have behaved contrary to the orders of the Keepers?
• Why do the Keepers instruct the other boys to verbally assault Matt?

• Chapter 30
  • Identify a moment of foreshadowing in this chapter.
  • Consider the implications of learning that the Keepers have possessions that the other boys do not.
  • Discuss the Jorge’s motive for punishing Ton-Ton so severely.
  • Why is Jorge angrier at Fidelito for defending Matt than at Matt for not confessing to any bad behavior?

• Chapter 31
  • Describe how the lives of the Keepers are different from the lives of the Lost Boys.
  • How could the Keepers be justified in treating the Lost Boys so differently from themselves?
  • What does Matt learn about the keepers that foreshadows how he will escape from the Plankton Factory.
  • Consider how friendships might complicate Matt’s life.

• Chapter 32
  • Explain Jorge’s purpose in punishing Fidelito.
  • Consider why the Lost Boys had never noticed their superior numbers before this moment.
  • What motivated the boys to rise up against the Keepers?
  • Consider the Keepers’ motive in revealing that Matt is a “zombie”.

• Graded Assignment 8
  • Discuss whether it would be better to be turned into an eejit or be subjected to the Keepers' stories, demands for confession, and punishment.
  • Create a graphic organizer illustrating the pros and cons of both situations and write a complete, well argued paragraph explaining which situation you would rather find yourself in.

• Chapter 33
  • Do you agree with Tam Lin’s explanation of the difference between humans and animals?
  • Why does Matt call Celia and Tam Lin his mother and father? Is it only to hide his past?

• Chapter 34
  • Describe how Ton-Ton escaped the plankton factory.
  • What motivated Ton-Ton to help the other boys escape?
  • Why is Ton-Ton conflicted in his feelings about Jorge and the other keepers?

• Chapter 35
  • What motivates Guapo and Consuela to protect Matt and Fidelito from the Keepers?
  • Why don’t the Keepers prevent the townsfolk from celebrating the Day of the Dead?

• Chapter 36
  • Describe how San Luis differs from El Patrón’s estate in Opium. Propose an explanation for the differences.
• Explain how Matt understands the Convent security system, if you can.
• Explain how Jorge and the other Keepers could have arrived at the convent ahead of Matt and Fidelito.
• Discuss the sudden appearance of Doña Esperanza. Where did she come from? Why is she at the convent?
• How does Esperanza prevent the Keepers from taking Ton-Ton and the other boys back to the plankton factory?
• Is there anything odd about the scene with Esperanza at the convent hospital?

• Graded Assignment 9
Select one of the following assignments to complete for a classwork grade. Whichever you select, write at least one well-constructed paragraph discussing the issue and arguing in favor of your opinion.
• Discuss the purpose of the chapters set in Aztlán. Consider why the author felt it necessary to make Matt spend three months in a communist labor camp and how living through the experience changed him as a character. Give evidence to support your opinion.
• Consider the role that Esperanza plays in resolving the conflict between Matt and the Keepers. Discuss how these events can be explained within the plot of the book and whether or not they constitute an incident of Deus Ex Machina. Give evidence to support your opinion.

• Chapter 37
• Why is it taking Chacho so long to recover?
• Why has nobody been about to communicate with the people of Opium?
• Identify a massive plot hole in this chapter (hint: it is related to a difference between clones and the people they are cloned from).
• Explain why Matt is now considered to be a full human, rather than livestock. Discuss whether this law is right.
• Describe Esperanza in your own words. Consider how the author characterizes her relationship with the police, her daughter, and Matt.

• Chapter 38
• Describe the fate of the Alcatrán family.
• Note the difference between Daft Donald’s dialog and that of the other characters. What is the reason for this?
• How was Matt supposed to be El Patrón’s ninth life?
• Identify how the author foreshadowed the destruction of the Alcatrán family during Matt’s escape from Opium.
• Why did Tam Lin drink the wine?
• Predict whether Matt will be successful in dismantling El Patrón’s empire.