Notes – “The Ravine”

**INFERENCES** Readers often need to figure out something that an author has not explained. When this happens, you make an inference. An inference is a logical guess based on facts and the knowledge you already have. Making inferences helps you understand a story clearly. Sometimes the author leaves these details out on purpose because he wants you to figure it out on your own.

For example, Vinny says he wants to hug Starlene when she is up there and about to jump.

Make an inference – why does he want to hug her?

Because she is in a dangerous situation and he cares about his friend. He is afraid that she could die like Butchie did, and wants to be able to hug her. Make inferences about a character’s traits by combining details from the story with your own experiences and knowledgeExample: We can see by Starlene’s actions that she is not afraid. You might also have a friend that is not afraid to take risks and lead the way. By making that inference and using your own experiences, you can identify her personality as outgoing, fearless and adventurous.

Make an inference: “The next few steps were the hardest he’d ever taken in his life. He tried not to look down, but he couldn’t help it. His gaze was drawn there. He struggled to push back an urge to fly, just jump off and fly. He could almost see himself spiraling down like a glider, or a bird, or a leaf.”

Vinny says he has the urge to fly as he looks down into the ravine. Why does he feel this way?

He wants to be able to stop worrying and not be afraid. If he were able to fly, he could safely leave it all behind without fear.

**CHARACTERS** Author’s reveal (show) character traits through the way a character reacts to other characters and their ideas. Readers learn about a character’s personality when the author shows his of her ideas and actions. Example: When Starlene tells Vinny that a goddess stole the boy, he is uneasy/ uncomfortable. This shows us that he might be questioning what he believes in because he is afraid.

Character traits are personal qualities about them, like parts of their personalities.

They can be physical traits, such as being tall, having brown hair. They can be personality traits, such as being outgoing or being weak. For example, because Vinny is worried about the missing boy, one of his character traits is that he is sympathetic.

Character motivations explain why they do what they do. It is why a character acts, feels or thinks in a certain way. What is a character motivator for Joe-Boy? He wants to impress Starlene so he jumps off the cliff. This shows us that he wants Starlene to like him. She is a motivation for him to be brave. Character traits and character motivations contribute (add) to a character’s development in the story. Character development is how a character changes during the story or becomes more understood by the readers.

When Starlene laughs about the jump, Vinny says she is “asking for it”. What does he mean by this?

He thinks that they are not taking the boy’s death seriously. Vinny is more sensitive about the death, he cares more. He thinks that they should see the death as a warning, and not jump because it risks dying in the same awful way. Author’s show character development by writing the way a character thinks and feels. What is the author showing when he describes Vinny’s conflict?

“The dead boy had just come to the ravine to have fun, Vinny thought. Just a regular kid like himself…. Where was he? Inch by inch Vinny made it to the ledge. He stood, swaying slightly, the tips of his toes one small movement from the precipice…. Vinny thought he heard a voice, small and distant. Yes. Something inside him, a tiny voice pleading, Don’t do it. Walk away. Just turn and go and walk back down. “ . . . I can’t,” Vinny whispered…

Something very strange happened. Vinny felt at peace…. He would walk back down.”The author is showing that Vinny is making the connection that he is just like Butchie, that it could happen to him too. He makes a decision and is at peace.

**SETTING** The setting of a story is a factor that affects a character’s development. The setting can affect characters by influencing their values, beliefs, and emotions by affecting the way they interact with other characters. What impact does the setting have on Vinny?

**CONFLICT** A good story plot centers around conflict. Conflict is a struggle or problem between two opposing forces. The conflict triggers the action and events of the story. External conflict: involves a character who struggles against an outside force, such as nature, a physical obstacle or another character.

Internal conflict is a struggle that happens within the character, such as dealing with fear or sadness. Stories can have both internal and external conflicts.