

Irving's Owen meany: protagonist's intelligence in prayer

[Literature](#), [Books](#)



**ASSIGN
BUSTER**

In *A Prayer For Owen Meany* by John Irving, Owen possesses an extraordinary amount of intelligence at a young age. After soaring through high school, besides the hiccup of his expulsion, he continues life with a career in the military to fulfil God's plan. Despite all of the changes in his life, Owen never loses his remarkable literary love and comprehension, and helps Johnny confront his most difficult task yet- the dreaded Master's thesis.

Owen Meany excelled in all school subjects, and had a bright, young, motivated mind. He especially made use of these talents in high school English class to show remarkable understanding of difficult texts and to aid Johnny in the improvement of his below-average intelligence. Even though Owen does not pursue a career utilizing his above-average language abilities, he still makes use of it “ ‘ TO BEGIN, YOU SIMPLY TAKE ONE OF HIS BLUNT OBSERVATIONS AND PUT IT TOGETHER WITH ONE OF HIS MORE LITERARY OBSERVATIONS-YOU KNOW, ABOUT THE CRAFT LIKE THIS ONE: ‘ A STORY MUST BE EXCEPTIONAL ENOUGH TO JUSTIFY ITS TELLING. WE STORYTELLERS ARE ALL ANCIENT MARINERS, AND NONE OF US IS JUSTIFIED IN STOPPING WEDDING GUESTS, UNLESS HE HAS SOMETHING MORE UNUSUAL TO RELATE THAN THE ORDINARY EXPERIENCES OF EVERY AVERAGE MAN AND WOMAN’ ’ ” (Irving 519). Irving alludes to “ *The Rime of the Ancient Mariner*” which furthers Owen's continued attachment to his extraordinary literary knowledge and understanding. Additionally, this reference exemplifies Owen's dedication to Johnny. Throughout their school years, when Johnny struggles, especially in English class, Owen was always around to bail him out. Owen never turned down a situation in which he

could help his best friend, especially one involving a subject in which his knowledge was quite mature and extensive.

Through the employment of allusion in this novel, Irving conveys the hardships Owen encounters, but also his courage to endure difficult situations. This also serves to compare the story that plagues the Mariner's life to the experience of Owen's own life. The Mariner embarks on a treacherous sea journey along the way encountering Death and trying to avoid it while contrastingly, Owen confronts life ready and willing to face death. In a manner more similar to the Mariner, Johnny also faces a rough sea and just only sticks around for the journey out of pressure and necessity. Furthermore both the Mariner and Johnny reveal their seemingly woeful tales to anyone who may lend an ear to listen, no matter how unsuspecting or innocent. This allusion also reinforces the role Johnny plays in this novel. Johnny is similar to the Mariner in that he is timid, and just happens upon unfortunate circumstances with no control in his life whatsoever. They then both choose to share their peculiar tales as storytellers. The parallels and contrasts of Johnny and the Mariner give a deeper, intellectual connection to the overall story, just like Owen Meany