

# The pigman



The plot of *The Pigman*, by Paul Zindel is the key element in understanding and clarifying the situations that this book's characters go through. The setting of *The Pigman* is a neighborhood in New York City and more specifically Franklin High School. The protagonists of this story are John Conlan and Lorraine Jensen. The story does not have a specific person or character that is the antagonist, but is several different challenges that John and Lorraine are faced with throughout the story.

The title of the book comes from the nickname that John and Lorraine gave to their new friend, Angelo Pignati, partly because of his name but also because of the collection of pigs that belonged to his late wife. The author of the book, Paul Zindel, is from Staten Island, New York. *The Pigman* was Zindel's first novel and he won many awards for this novel including "Children's Book of the Year" in 1968.

The three reasons I selected plot as the most important literary element of this novel is:

- John and Lorraine become friends with an older man who has no wife and no children of his own
- John and Lorraine face many conflict and complications that teenagers still face today
- John and Lorraine have to deal with death which is unexpected.

John and Lorraine meet and become friends with Mr. Angelo Pignati after prank calling him and getting him to agree to donate money to their fake charity. The kids feel guilty about taking Mr. Pignati's money and so they take him to the zoo to see his friend, Bobo, a baboon.

The friendship continues to grow from that point on because John and Lorraine enjoy spending time with the Pigman because they do not get to spend time like this with their own parents. John and Lorraine realize how lonely the Pigman is and decide to try to make his life more fun by visiting him every day after school and on the weekends. They did many activities with the Pigman that they had never got to experience at home with their own parents.

John and Lorraine face many conflicts and complications that teenagers face today. John is portrayed at the beginning of the book as a teenager giving in to the temptations of alcohol and tobacco. So, peer pressure is a big factor in *The Pigman*. The beginning of the book tells about John and Lorraine being pressured into prank calling the phone number that ends up being Mr. Pignati's. They are then pressured into collecting the money that Mr. Pignati donated to their fake charity. After the kids have befriended the Pigman, a schoolmate, Norton tries to get John to let him steal from the

Pigman. John and Lorraine give into peer pressure when they have a party at Mr. Pignati's house while he is in the hospital. Norton shows up at the party and destroys Mr. Pignati's pig collection. John and Lorraine ultimately regret the pressures that they have given into and try to fix the damage that has been done. Unfortunately, it's too late. John and Lorraine have to deal with death, which is unexpected. Mr. Pignati has a heart attack but recovers and returns to his home, only to find that his baboon friend at the zoo had died.

This breaks Mr. Pignati's heart and ultimately he dies from a supposed broken heart. John and Lorraine feel tremendous guilt and responsibility over the Pigman's death. They learn that even though they were

seeking forgiveness from Mr. Pignati for the mistakes they had made, John and Lorraine realize some things can never be forgiven. John and Lorraine are left with a deep sense of regret and sadness because of the Pigman's death. The consequences they have to live with will be with them for the rest of their lives.

The key element in understanding and clarifying the situations in Paul Zindel's *The Pigman*, is the plot of the book. The various conflicts, complications and relationships that John and Lorraine deal with throughout the book reveal valuable lessons about friendship and betrayal that can never be forgiven. Mr. Pignati's death forces John and Lorraine to deal with their fault in this final outcome. I enjoyed this book and would recommend it based on the fact that there are so many issues that me and other teenagers can relate to today.