

The lovely bones book report essay



**ASSIGN
BUSTER**

Title The novel's title stems from a line toward the end of the novel, in which Susie ponders her friends' and family's newfound strength after her death: These were the lovely bones that had grown around my absence: the connections — sometimes tenuous, sometimes made at great cost, but often magnificent — that happened after I was gone. And I began to see things in a way that let me hold the world without me in it. The events my death brought were merely the bones of a body that would become whole at some unpredictable time in the future. The price of what I came to see as this miraculous lifeless body had been my life.

1] [edit] Synopsis On December 6, 1973, in Norristown, Pennsylvania, a suburb of Philadelphia, Susie Salmon takes her usual shortcut home from her school through a cornfield. George Harvey, a man in his mid-40s who lives alone and builds dollhouses for a living, persuades her to enter an underground den he has recently dug in the field. Once she has entered, he rapes and kills her, dismembering her body, whose parts he puts in a safe and dumps in a sinkhole. Susie's spirit flees toward her personal heaven. The Salmon family at first refuses to accept that Susie is dead, until Susie's elbow is found by a neighbor's dog.

The police talk to Harvey, finding him odd but seeing no reason to suspect him. Susie's father Jack, on extended leave from work, begins to suspect Harvey, a sentiment his surviving daughter Lindsey comes to share. One day the detective assigned to the case, Len Fenerman, tells the Salmons that the police have exhausted all leads and are dropping the investigation. That night in his study, Jack looks out the window and sees a flashlight in the

cornfield. Believing it to be Harvey returning to destroy evidence, he runs out to confront him with a baseball bat.

It turns out to be Susie's best friend, Clarissa, and her boyfriend, Brian. In the ensuing struggle Brian hits Jack with the bat, requiring that Jack have knee replacement surgery. While he recovers, Abigail begins having an affair with the widower Fenerman. Lindsey sneaks into Harvey's house, finding a drawing of the underground den he had dug in the cornfield, but is forced to leave when Harvey returns unexpectedly. While the police are satisfied with his explanation, he flees Norristown.

Later evidence is discovered linking him to not only Susie's murder but others.

Susie meets his other victims in heaven and sees into his traumatic childhood; she also realizes that he has tried in the past to stop killing. Abigail leaves Jack, eventually taking a job at a winery in California. Her mother, Grandma Lynn, moves into the Salmons' home to help care for Buckley and Lindsey. Lindsey and her boyfriend, Samuel Heckler, become engaged, find an old house in the woods owned by a classmate's father, and decide to fix it up and live there. Sometime after the celebration, while arguing with Buckley, Jack suffers a heart attack.

The emergency prompts Abigail to return from California, but the reunion is tempered by her son Buckley's lingering bitterness at her for having abandoned him and his father. Meanwhile, Harvey returns to Norristown, which has become more developed. He explores his old neighborhood and notices the school is being expanded into the cornfield where he murdered

Susie. He drives by the sinkhole where Susie's body rests and where Ruth Connors and Ray Singh are standing. Ruth, an old classmate of Susie's who had felt Susie's spirit go past her after her murder, senses the woman Harvey has killed and is overcome.

Susie, looking down from heaven, is also overwhelmed with emotion and feels how she and Ruth transcend their present existence and the two girls exchange positions: Susie, her spirit now in Ruth's body, connects with Ray, who had a crush on Susie in school, and had made plans to go out with her a few days before the murder. Ray senses Susie's presence, and takes advantage of the fact he has Susie back with him for the time being. The two go to the back room in Hal Heckler's (the older brother of Lindsey's boyfriend Samuel) bike shop and make love, as Susie had longed to do after witnessing her sister and Samuel. Afterward, Susie returns to heaven. She moves on into the larger heaven, still watching earthbound events from time to time.

Her sister gives birth to a daughter, Abigail Suzanne. She watches as Harvey dies in a fall down a snow-covered slope in New Hampshire. At the end of the novel her charm bracelet is found by a Norristown couple who know nothing of its significance, and Susie closes the story by wishing the reader "a long and happy life". [edit] Characters * Susie Salmon, a 14-year-old girl who is murdered in the first chapter, and narrates the novel from heaven.

Jack Salmon, her father, who works for an insurance agency in Chadds Ford, Pennsylvania. After Susie's death, he is consumed with guilt at having failed to save her. * Abigail Salmon, her mother, whose growing family frustrated her youthful dreams. After her daughter's death, sick of her husband's

preoccupation with the past, she has an affair with Detective Len Fenerman.

* Lindsey Salmon, Susie's sister, a year younger than she is, thought of as the smartest. * Buckley Salmon, Susie's brother, is ten years younger than she is.

His unplanned birth forced Abigail to cancel her plans for a teaching career.

He sometimes sees Susie while she watches him in her heaven. * Grandma Lynn, Abigail's mother, an eccentric alcoholic who comes to live with her son-in-law and grandchildren after her daughter leaves. * George Harvey, the Salmons' neighbor, who murders Susie and goes unpunished, even though the Salmons come to suspect him, then leaves Norristown to kill again. Throughout the novel she refers to him as Mr.

Harvey, the name she had addressed him by in life. * Ruth Connors, a girl Susie went to school with, whom her dead spirit touches as she leaves the earth.

She becomes fascinated with Susie, despite having barely known her in her life, and devotes her life to writing about the visions of the dead she sees. * Ray Singh, a boy from India, (via England), the first and only boy to kiss Susie, who later becomes Ruth's friend.

Was first suspected by the police of murdering Susie, but later proves his alibi. * Ruana Singh, Ray's mother, with whom Abigail Salmon sometimes smokes cigarettes. * Samuel Heckler, Lindsey's boyfriend and later her husband. * Hal Heckler, Sam's older brother who runs a motorcycle repair shop. * Len Fenerman, the olice detective in charge of investigating Susie's

death and finds her elbow. His wife commits suicide some time before the events of the novel take place and he later has an affair with Abigail.

* Clarissa, Susie's best friend on Earth. Susie explains that she admired Clarissa because she was always allowed to do things Susie was not, like wear platform shoes and smoke. She has a boyfriend named Brian. * Holly, Susie's best friend in heaven. While the text does not say so explicitly, it is implied she is Vietnamese American. She has no accent, and took her name from Holly Golightly in *Breakfast at Tiffany's*.

Her own life and death are never expanded upon. Holly plays the tenor saxophone in heaven with accompaniment by a violinist and hound dogs as the vocals. * Franny, a middle aged woman who worked as a social worker before being shot. She becomes Susie and Holly's mentor in their Heaven.

* Mr. Dewitt, the boy's soccer coach at school. Mr. Dewitt encourages Lindsey, a successful athlete, to try out for his team. * Mrs. Dewitt, Mr.

Dewitt's wife, an English teacher at Susie's school. She teaches both Lindsey and Susie. * Holiday, Susie's dog.