

# Summary of "greasy lake" by t. coraghessan boyle

Literature



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Greasy Lake written by T. Coraghessan Boyle is the tale of a young man completely living a life full of rebellion and loving it. He is brought to reality and the consequences of attempting to live the 'bad life'. The ignorance of the main character shifts into 3 stages throughout the entire story and this shows the slow growth of the character. He is first dedicated to being bad, then reflective, and regretful over his actions. As the story starts to end, we see him broken by his actions and gets a real look into what the bad life brings.

Boyle's main character and his two friends are looking to be the bad kids with a "we don't give a shit about anything" attitude. The main character is a nineteen year old under the influence of drugs, alcohol, peer pressure, and the freedom that comes with summer break. Accompanied by two friends of the same age (Digby and Jeff), they all want to find a way to make this summer worth remembering.

He and his friends Digby and Tony go down to Greasy Lake and they never thought of the reason why they wanted to go they just went because that's where everyone goes. They just wanted to have a good time and enjoy some cheap thrills. They wanted to, "sniff the scent of possibility, watch a girl take off her clothes, drink beer, smoke pot, and listen to the incongruous full-throated roar of rock and roll against the primeval susurrus of frogs and crickets...This is nature".

His friends influence every decision he makes and they support his bad decisions no matter the cost. The friends are described as, "dangerous characters", Digby 'allowed' his father to pay his tuition and Jeff was

contemplating dropping out of school to become a painter/musician/ head-shop proprietor. After the main character and his friends had made their rounds at all the closing bars, ate all they could, harassed hitchhikers, and vandalized property, they made their way down to Greasy Lake. Greasy lake is their last visit for the night, so of course they feel the need to go and try to embarrass their friend Tony Lovett, who they think is in his car having a good time with a foxy young lady. They start to realize that it is not his car but actually a " bad character in greasy jeans and engineer boots".

At this point he begins to think about his bad choice, when before he wouldn't even come close to thinking about it. He remembers his first mistake was dropping his keys after jumping out of the car; the second was mistaking the blue Chevy to be Tony Lovett's. Seeing the bad character that hopped out of the car was not looking to be nice, he now sees the difference between right and wrong. After being sprawled out in the dirt by a kick from the bad character in the blue Chevy, the protagonist becomes less nonchalant about his situation. He thinks about the bad situation, " knowing things had gone wrong, that I was in a lot of trouble, and that the lost ignition key was my grail and my salvation". He knocked out the guy with one swing of a tire iron he had in the car.

While looking at the guy he begins to realize what he did and he was thinking about, " headlines, pitted faces of police inquisitors, the gleam of handcuffs, clank of bars, the big black shadows rising from the back of the cell...". The whole time the main character thinks that he may have murdered the guy. Now thinking about jail time for murder and an attempted rape, he thinks of himself different from everyone else. Now being bad is no

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longer good. The teenagers run away into the woods away from the scene and away from everything that just happened. As the protagonist is running he is "imagining cops and bloodhounds" trekking through the muddy polluted water looking for him. The main character runs into a corpse, and he is horrified and begins to be sorry about his actions. The corpse was a symbol of what the bad life brought, and he begins to go against his decision to being bad.

In light of seeing the dead body and believing he killed the greasy character in the engineer boots he considers: "I was nineteen, a mere child, an infant, and here in the space of five minutes I'd struck down one greasy character and blundered into the waterlogged carcass of a second". The greasy character he had struck with the tire iron and two blondies that pulled up during the attempted rape had pulverized his mother's bel-air.

At the end of the story, the protagonist has changed his perspective on life. He no longer deems the bad life good, seeing what the bad life resulted in. The greasy character and the blonde jocks are long gone as the protagonist emerges from the muddy waters. "I pushed myself up from the mud and stepped into the open"; this line is symbolic of the protagonist's mental shift from dark to light.

Assessing the damage to his mother's car, the protagonist looks to his friend Digby who states, "at least they didn't slash the tires". It is ironic that the protagonist rebelled against standards and regulations, however, those tires set to regulation was his savior out a bad situation and back to normalcy. Here at the stories end, the protagonist is broken, sympathetic for the

druggy, the dead man in the lake, and contrite over his foolishness in wanting to be bad.