

Characters		
<b>Francis Cassavant</b>	Protagonist and narrator. He battles with the idea of being a hero. Loves Nicole but fails to protect her from Larry. Sustains horrific injuries at war. Seeks revenge on Larry LaSalle.	Introverted, shy, solitary, isolated, vengeful, self-loathing, self-deprecating, damaged, tortured, cowardly, vulnerable, helpless
<b>Larry LaSalle</b>	A local hero who is loved and respected by the people of Frenchtown. Earns a Silver Star in combat but returns on leave and rapes Nicole. Kills himself when confronted by Francis.	Charismatic, admired, enigmatic, mysterious, manipulative, predatory, ambiguous, duplicitous, unrepentant, remorseless, deceptive, sinister
<b>Nicole Renard</b>	Francis' childhood sweetheart who is cruelly singled out and raped by Larry LaSalle. She becomes a recluse and moves away from Frenchtown.	Innocent, saintly, solitary, optimistic, selfless, vulnerable, violated, abused, suffering, stoic, defiant.
<b>Arthur Rivier</b>	War veteran. He recognises Francis in Frenchtown and suffers the lasting effects of war.	Damaged, traumatised, scared, pessimistic, angry, betrayed, haunted.
<b>Mrs Belander</b> Francis' landlady in Frenchtown <b>Enrico Rucelli</b> Spent time with Francis in hospital <b>Joey LeBlanc</b> Francis' school friend in Frenchtown		<b>Dr Abrams</b> – The doctor who treats Francis' injuries <b>Marie La Croix</b> – Francis' neighbour and friends with Nicole <b>The Nuns</b> – The teachers at the Roman Catholic school Francis attended

#### Vocabulary

Protagonist, antagonist, foreshadowing, anonymity, communion, veteran, litany, enlist, recitation, vengeance, furlough, tenement, confession, accomplish, isolation.

Plot			
1-3	After being badly injured at war, Francis Cassavant returns to Frenchtown with severe facial injuries. He covers his face to avoid recognition and carries a gun with which he intends to commit murder. Francis is haunted by his first meeting with Nicole Renard and his immediate attraction to her. He visits the place she used to live. The horror of his wartime experiences returns to him in his dreams.	11-12	The flashback to wartime Frenchtown continues. Larry LaSalle returns on furlough and rapes Nicole Renard after the celebration party held in his honour. Francis overhears the attack but is too frightened to stop it. Francis' guilt leads him to visit Nicole but she blames him for not trying to help her. Francis considers suicide but instead lies about his age and enlists in the army.
4-5	Francis talks to Arthur Rivier in St Jude's bar. He keeps his identity a secret. Unlike him, the other veterans are optimistic about the future. Francis visits the Wreck Centre. Larry LaSalle is introduced. He is presented as a leader and teacher who becomes an inspiration to children of Frenchtown. An air of mystery surrounds Larry: this is the man that Francis plans to kill.	13-14	Back in the present day, Francis discovers that Larry has returned to Frenchtown. He visits his home intending to kill him in revenge for what he did to Nicole. Larry admits to his actions and tells Francis to go: he has already made plans to kill himself. After Francis leaves, Larry commits suicide.
6-10	The veterans at St Jude's talk about Larry LaSalle's bravery at war. Arthur Rivier recognises Francis' voice but agrees to keep his identity a secret. Francis recalls the time that he became a table tennis champion, in a flashback. A newsreel clip shows Larry celebrated as a hero.	16-17	Francis visits Nicole, seeking her forgiveness and to tell her of Larry's death. It is clear that their relationship will not be rekindled. Francis considers his options for the future which includes writing a book. Carrying his bag, containing the gun which he brought to Frenchtown to kill Larry LaSalle, he boards the train.

#### Three things

##### Three things to read:

- **The Chocolate War** by Robert Cormier
- **The Book Thief** by Markus Zusak
- **101 Amazing Facts about the Second World War** by Jack Goldstein

##### Three things to watch:

- Pearl Harbour
- Band of Brothers
- Saving Private Ryan.

##### Three things to do:

- Research a family member who was involved in WW2 : [www.forces-war-records.co.uk](http://www.forces-war-records.co.uk)
- Visit a local war memorial
- Research the Invictus Games Foundation.

Context	
Robert Cormier - Frenchtown	Robert Cormier based Frenchtown on a place where he lived most of his life, renaming his hometown of Leominster, (Massachusetts) as Monument, Frenchtown represents the suburb of French Hill in the town.
Depression	Many of the flashbacks in the novel refer to the Great Depression which was an effect of the Wall Street Crash of 1929. In 1932, Franklin Roosevelt was elected. He began the New Deal, which aimed to solve some of the problems within the community, such as unemployment.
Second World War	On 7 December 1941 the Japanese carried out an attack on Pearl Harbor. This meant the US entered the war. The novel explores the effects of war on Frenchtown.
Women's Roles	As a result of the war, women are given service jobs in the local factories to make products for the war effort.
Leisure activities	Radio was the chief form of entertainment and listening increased in war time. A visit to the cinema was also a popular leisure activity along with dancing.
GI Bill	The GI Bill was created to help veterans of World War II. It covered tuition and expenses for veterans attending college or trade schools.
Battle of Guadalcanal	The World War II <b>Battle of Guadalcanal</b> was the first major offensive and a decisive victory for the Allies in the Pacific. With Japanese troops stationed in this section of the Solomon Islands, U.S. marines launched a surprise attack in August 1942 and took control of an air base under construction.

### War and heroism/heroes

'The war is over and I have no face.'

'I want to forget what happened there in France.'

'Poor Joey Leblanc, who died on a beach in Iwo Jima in the South Pacific'

'You're a goddam hero'

'I am not a hero of course'

'You would have fallen on that grenade, anyway'

'But heroes, anyway. The real heroes.'

### Flawed heroes

'Then I am filled with guilt and shame, knowing that I have just prayed for the man I am going to kill'.

'We weren't heroes. We were only there...'

'So, you'd better go, OK?'

'How could I die by leaping from a steeple?'

'I had always wanted to be a hero like Larry LaSalle and all the others, but have been a fake all along.'

'I think of Larry LaSalle and his Silver Star. And my own Silver Star, for an act of cowardice.'

### Isolation and Loneliness

'I had no best friend ...' 'The loneliness of the tenement drove me to the Wreck Centre after school and weekends'

'Did she want to be alone with Larry?' '[I was] miserable in my aloneness.'

'So I didn't tell anybody.' (Nicole)

### Forgiveness and Guilt

**Larry**

'You didn't do anything you should feel guilty about... You couldn't have stopped me, anyway, Francis.'

'Everybody sins, Francis. The terrible thing is that we love our sins.'

'Does that one sin of mine wipe away all the good things?'

**Francis**

'Then I am filled with guilt and shame, knowing that I just prayed for the man I am going to kill.'

'Pray for your enemies, for those who have done you harm.'

'Saying a prayer before committing the worst sin of all: despair.'

'Say your prayers'

**Nicole**

'You didn't do anything.'

'Why didn't you do something? Tell him to stop. Run for help. Anything.'

'You weren't to blame for what happened.'

### Religion

'I kneel at the communion rail and say my prayers'

'...the nuns who could be ruthless with punishment'

'The recitation begins like a litany'

'I could only stand there mute, as if all my sins had been revealed and there was no forgiveness for them.'

'How could I die by leaping from a steeple?'

'Say your prayers'

### Appearance and Reality

'Here is the point where my life becomes a lie.'

'... no exploding head no body cut in two'

'Dazzled by his talent and his energy, most of us didn't dwell on the rumors'.

'The Movietone News brought reminders of the war that was raging around the globe'

'I had always wanted to be a hero like Larry LaSalle and all the others, but have been a fake all along.'

'I think of Larry LaSalle and his Silver Star. And my own Silver Star, for an act of cowardice.'