

A study guide prepared by IYC Tutor Byron Eden

The Fallen
by Paul Langan

As you read this book, The Fallen, please make a list of all words that are used that you do not know the meaning of. Bring your list to class each week, and we will resolve vocabulary words that you find.

This author uses a lot of *similes* in his writing. A *simile* is a comparison (usually using the word “like” or “as”) between two things that are dissimilar but have certain qualities in common. Examples of *similes* are: She has a temper like *an erupting volcano*. I feel alone “like” *the last leaf hanging on a tree in winter*. My hands are as cold “as” *an ice cube*.

As you read the book, *The Fallen*, see if you can recognize some of the similes that Martin uses to describe his feelings. Find as many similes as you can in this story.

- samples:
- p. 2-3 Guilt clawing at my chest like invisible hands.*
 - p. 8 When Huero died I snapped like an old rubber band.*
 - p. 12 The car got as quiet as a grave.*
 - p. 17 I couldn't speak, like invisible hands were holding my mouth shut.*
 - p. 38 burned my insides like she was poking deep into my chest with a hot iron.*
 - p. 54 He was dropping truth on me like a rain of bombs.*

CHAPTER 1

1. Martin said he stained the letter with his tears and made the ink bleed. How does ink bleed? What did he mean? (p.2)
2. Frankie and the rest of my crew were on the road and someone was about to get hurt. What did Martin mean when he referred to his friends as his “crew”. (p.5)
3. In this book there are many references to cowards, heroes, bravery, snitch, and fear. Watch for them while you are reading and share them with me. On Page 9, Martin is talking about his sadness of his brother’s death. He says “You’re not the one who sits at your brother’s grave, listens to your mother crying in the dark, and knows what it’s like to lose someone. If you were, you’d understand why I couldn’t be like the coward who drove down our street and stole my brother’s life with a gunshot. Why does Martin call his brother’s killer a coward? Martin is planning on doing something he thinks is brave, what is it? Do you think the killer of Martin’s brother is a coward? Do you think what Martin is planning to do is brave?”

4. Martin's mother transferred Martin from his old high school, Zamora High, to a new school, Bluford High, because she was afraid of the bad influences around Martin. Martin says that "when she told him that he would now be going to Bluford High, I was so angry I almost punched her." Then he says, "I hate it when I get that way, but Huero's death did that to me". (p.10) Have you ever been that angry at someone? Did you just feel the anger inside, like Martin is describing, or did you act on that anger? What are some of the things that Martin could do to lessen the anger he was feeling?
5. Martin begins to see Frankie differently. He begins to hate Frankie. What was Martin seeing about Frankie that was different from earlier? What was it that Frankie wanted Martin to do? (p.12) Have you ever thought someone was your friend, but then you saw them do things that you didn't like, and it changed your opinion of them?
6. Chago is Martin's best friend. He tells Martin that "we're family, man. Brothers." (p.13) What IS a family? Can it be more than just the people you are related to? What are qualities of a family? What has it cost Martin to be 'family' with Frankie and Chago and the crew? (p.13)
7. That night Martin struggled with his feelings all night long. What did he finally decide? (p.15) Now what is going to happen to Martin? What did Frankie do to another person who argued with him and how does this memory affect Martin?

CHAPTER 2:

8. Martin makes a big decision after being confronted by Frankie. What did Martin do? Was Martin being brave by doing this? What does Martin think will happen to the killer of his brother? What will happen to Martin when Frankie finds out? (p.16-23)
9. Officer Ramirez tells Martin that he's a good kid and he tells Martin "to stay at Bluford High, get his education and do something with himself." What did Detective Ramirez mean by this? (p.25) What do you want to do when you get to be an adult? What steps can you take now to reach your goal?
10. After Martin comes home from the hospital his mother tells him he cannot hang out with his old friends anymore. Martin yells at his mother and asks her why she is "punishing him"? (p.27) Why does Martin think this is punishment? Why does his mom think it is not punishment, but love?
11. When Martin and his mom get off the bus on the way home from the hospital, Martin sees something on his front door knob? (p.29) What was it? What does it mean?

CHAPTER 3:

12. That night Martin sees his brother's picture in the candlelight and remembers a time when his little brother had a nightmare and came into bed with him. He was annoyed with his brother then because he couldn't sleep, but now Martin realizes he'd do anything to have that time back again. (p. 31) Do you have a time that you wish you could relive? Would you do things differently, or feel differently if you had a chance to do it again?
13. Martin remembers when he first met Vicky and how at that time he thinks that she is pitying him and he thinks 'I ain't no one's charity case.' (p.37) What does Martin mean by this?
14. When Martin returns to school after being beaten by Frankie, he is mean to Vicky, the girl who had been nice to him and whom he had liked. (pg. 39-41) Why does he do this to his one new friend at Bluford High? Do you think this is the right way to go about trying to protect someone? What could he have done differently?
15. Martin is very cruel to Vicky and ends up telling her "the only problem I have right now is you, Vicky, I said and turned away, hating myself". Have you ever said some very hurtful or hateful things to someone that you love? Why? What did you do about it? How do you go about healing a relationship after saying something like this?

CHAPTER 4:

16. An athlete at school named Steve Morris is a bully towards a boy named Eric. Steve got a whole group of kids laughing at Eric. Martin thinks to himself "that it was the cowards who laughed loudest". (p. 44) Why does Martin think this? Have you ever experienced anything like Eric, where he is being picked on? How does that make you feel? Why do people bully other people?
17. Even though Steve was the bully, when Martin's friend Frankie shows up, Martin steps in front of Steve and the other football players to protect them from Frankie. (p. 45-46) Why did Martin do this? Was Martin being brave? Is Frankie going to be concerned that Martin interfered?
18. Steve wants Vicky to dislike Martin. Steve tells Vicky that his grandfather used to say, "If you lie with dogs you're gonna end up with fleas." (p. 46) What does that saying mean? What does Steve mean about Martin? How can this saying apply to you and your friends? Is there truth to this saying?
19. The biggest theme in this book is revenge. The teacher, Mr. Mitchell says to the class, "Revenge is sweet. He then paused and asked, "is this a true statement"? Is revenge a good thing? The class had different opinions. (p. 49) What are your thoughts on revenge? Vicky points out how it can become

a cycle of violence and Mr. Mitchell tells the class that revenge is messy, very messy. Do you agree with that statement?

20. Mr. Mitchell has Martin stay after class and he tries to talk with Martin. Martin is very rude to Mr. Mitchell. Even though what Mr. Mitchell had told Martin earlier, “that he had potential”, and had given Martin the courage to put up with the beating from Frankie and had demonstrated courage to call Detective Ramirez—Martin pushes Mr. Mitchell away at the same time he wants Mr. Mitchell to still believe in him. (p. 53) Have you ever been emotionally upset and pushed someone away physically or verbally, yet that person was the very person who trusted in you and could help you?
21. When Martin finally talked to Mr. Mitchell, Martin found out his teacher understood exactly what Martin was feeling. (p. 54) Why was this?
22. Mr. Mitchell tells Martin that “I see too many kids taken down on these streets. Too many young people swallowed up by drugs, guns, and gangs. Kids who don’t know better making bad choices that ruin their lives”. Could there be truth in what Mr. Mitchell is telling Martin? What are your feelings upon hearing comments like that? Martin tells Mr. Mitchell that “right now school is the least of my problems.” What does he mean? (p. 55)
23. When Eric talks to Martin and tries to be friends with him, Martin shoves Eric and says something mean to him. (p 57-58) Why does Martin do this?

CHAPTER 5:

24. Chago asks Martin how Officer Ramirez knew it was Frankie who had beaten Martin up, if Martin wasn’t the one who snitched. Martin says it was because Frankie “left his signature on my face.” (p. 63) What does Martin mean?
25. Chago tries to encourage Martin to get revenge on Hector for killing his brother. Chago says, “Let’s do it for Huero” (p. 64) How does this affect Martin? Chago “acted like killing was the best way to show respect for a kid who never hurt anyone, who smiled at strangers, and felt sad when he saw a stray cat”. (p.65) What do you think of Chago’s suggestion that killing is the best way to show respect?
26. Chago encourages Martin to move out of the neighborhood, even to consider enlistment in the military. Martin says “I almost laughed in his face at how crazy his words sounded. You gotta admit, it’s a messed up world when going to war is safer than staying home”. What are your thoughts on this comparison?
27. Chago warns Martin that Frankie is coming to kill him on Saturday night. Martin thinks to himself that’s the way the world is, puttin’ you in bad

positions and forcing you to make a move. You have to make a choice and no one ever said choosing was easy. (p. 68) Chago had made a choice by warning Martin. Was this a brave thing for Chago to do? Was it the right thing to do? Have you ever been in a position where there was a very important choice you had to make? Were you brave enough then to make the right choice? How about now?

CHAPTER 6:

28. When Martin goes to Tanner St. where Hector Maldanero lives, he is surprised that it is just like his own neighborhood. (p. 74) How can we (you & I, kids at school; people in our town; people in our country; in our world) be so alike, yet mortal enemies? What do you think causes this to happen? How could we have peace on our street, in our town, in our country and in our world?
29. At Hector Maldanero's home, a guy comes near him in a wheelchair and Martin has a terrible realization. (p. 78) What did Martin realize? How does this completely change Martin's thinking now? What did Martin think of revenge now?
30. Earlier in the day, Martin had made a choice to talk to Detective Ramirez. How has Martin's earlier choice now save his life? (p. 81)
31. Martin's interactions with the police are far from ideal. "It was the same old deal with the cops in the barrio. Here they were in front of a killer and didn't know it. And here I was with my eyes red from tears, and I'm accused of using drugs. I've said it before, I'll say it again. The world is messed up". (p.82) Have you ever been treated unfairly by police? Have you ever felt that the way in which police conduct an investigation or inquiry have been biased or prejudiced against you?

CHAPTER 7:

32. Martin has a nightmare that night. (p. 85) What was the nightmare about? What do you think this nightmare represents?
33. When Martin's mother comes in to comfort him after his nightmare, he looks at his mother and realizes all she has suffered. What does he realize about himself? (p. 86) Have you ever realized how much your choices have affected people you love and the people who love you?
34. The next day at school, Martin skips some of his classes and hides in the library and reads Hamlet? (p. 91) What did he discover? What did he do about what he discovered?

CHAPTER 8:

35. While Martin is in the principal's office, he overhears two secretaries talking about how he is a trouble maker, has a bad attitude, temper, etc. Martin thinks to himself that most people don't really know what goes on in school. (p. 100) Do you think this is a true statement? Why or why not?
36. Martin feels his suspension from Bluford High school is a kind of death sentence. (p. 102-104) Considering that Martin was angry when he found out his mom had transferred him to this school, what has happened to make him feel so different now? Have you ever been upset about a situation you were put in, but in time changed your mind about it and thought it was good for you after all?

CHAPTER 9:

37. When Martin's mother confronts him about being expelled from school, Martin says her words hit him harder than any punches. (p 106) What are the powers of words? For good? For evil? How can you build a person up or tear a person down with just words? Do you think about the words that you use?
38. Martin's mother is very upset with Martin, and tells him that he is "throwing your life away". (p.105) She goes on to tell her son "You're killing me! I'm scared of what you're doing. Whenever the phone rings I am afraid to pick it up". "I'm tired of your excuses". "You had a choice. But what did you do?". (p.106-107) Have you ever done anything that has brought such pain to a family member or loved one? What steps can you take to try to rebuild a relationship after such hurtful things are said?
39. Vicky challenges Martin to tell her the truth—everything. She tells him that is what friends are for, but Martin feels afraid, like he is on the edge of a cliff. (p. 111-113) Why would Martin be afraid to tell Vicky all that was going on? Have you ever been afraid to tell a friend or family about what is going on with you? How did you feel after you told?
40. Have you ever had someone who believed in you, even when you didn't always treat them as you should?
41. What was Vicky's reaction and what does she encourage Martin to do? (p. 114)

CHAPTER 10:

42. After Frankie tries to kill Martin, Chago pleads with Martin to let Frankie go. Martin asks Chago, “Why, so he can come back and finish what he came to do?” Chago “did not understand the lesson Huero’s death, Cesar’s injury, and Mr. Mitchell’s story taught me. That I had to break from the street before it broke me”. What does Martin mean by this comment? What does that tell you about your life?
43. This book starts and ends in the present but the whole story is set as a flashback of Martin’s memory. Was this an effective way of telling Martin’s story? Did it keep you interested in what was going to happen?
44. Lets talk about the words bravery, coward, hero, and bully. Who ended up being brave? Who ended up being a coward? Do we sometimes pre-judge someone by their appearance or who they hang around with? Is this right or wrong? Remember the saying by the grandparent that “if you lie with dogs and you’ll get fleas”. Does who we hang around with influence us for good or bad? How about in this book? What did Martin learn about this?
45. Revenge. What did Martin end up learning about it? Has this book made you think differently about revenge, why or why not?

What did you think of this book, and why?

ALTERNATIVE ENDING: Go back to page 123 where Frankie has broken into Martin’s home, and plans to shoot him. Write an alternative ending for this story that is something different from how this author ended the story. Please remember that there is no right or wrong ending, you can write whatever you wish. Be creative. Have fun. When you are finished I will show you an alternative ending that I wrote.

Alternative Ending

The Fallen

By:

In the book The Fallen, the main character, Martin Luna, witnesses his younger brother Huero being shot to death. The main plot of the story concerns the efforts of Martin, and his fellow gang members, to seek revenge on the person responsible for the shooting and death of his brother. Eventually Martin comes to realize that his brother was killed in the shooting, but that the intended target was the leader of Martin’s gang, Frankie.

In the last chapter of the book, Frankie tries to kill Martin. On page 123 Martin heard footsteps rushing down the hallway of his mother’s apartment. Through the flickering candlelight Martin was able to see something shimmer for just a second. “Frankie was just outside my door. Only a few feet separated us”.

ALTERNATIVE ENDING

by IYC Tutor Byron Eden

Martin's head began to spin as he started to feel light headed and dizzy. While holding his breath Martin listened as closely as he could for the footsteps that he had heard just moments ago. At this point there was nothing but absolute silence. Martin strained to pick up on any sounds that would give him a clue as to what to expect. The more effort that Martin put into holding his breath, the more he came to realize that he was suddenly getting very warm. Even though it was late at night, there was no chill in the air. Martin was so warm that he felt that he was getting sick. This was no time to get sick, as he would have to be alert, and ready for anything that Frankie might try. Yet in the silence, all Martin could think about was how much his head was spinning. "Snap out of it!" Martin said to himself. Once again Martin held his breath and focused his attention on any sounds that he might be able to make out from the other side of his bedroom door.

Then he heard it. But what was that? Focusing all of his attention on the sounds he was able to take in, Martin slowly realized that what he was hearing was the very soft whisper of his mother's voice. "Mom? How could this be?", Martin thought. Surely she was not going to have to witness the pain of having her only other son being killed, just as Huero had been shot earlier. This made no sense at all. Martin tried to reason with himself. Was there any way that he could spare his mother the pain and suffering that he had caused when Huero had been shot while spending time with Martin? His mother's soft and gentle whispers grew a little louder, and then quite unexpectedly Martin could feel his mother's hand on his forehead. "Martin? Martin, wake up honey!"

Martin sat up in his bed with the speed of lightning. "What is happening?" Martin screamed at his mother. His mother quietly begged Martin to keep his voice down, "or you will wake up your brother, Huero". "You must have been having a terrible nightmare Martin, because you have been moaning and talking to yourself for some time now". "Huero?" yelled Martin. "What day is this?" "Where is Huero?"

The words were just out of Martin's mouth, when his bedroom door squeaked open. A very sleepy Huero shuffled into the room and asked "What is going on?" Martin let out a loud yell with all of his strength. "I can't believe this! **A dream!**"