

It

by Stephen King · Language: EN

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Overview

It is a massive horror novel by Stephen King that centers on the town of Derry, Maine, where a malevolent, shape-shifting entity—most often appearing as a clown named Pennywise—awakens every 27 years to prey on the town's children. The story alternates between two time periods: 1958, when a group of seven outcast kids, calling themselves the Losers' Club, first confront the creature and seemingly defeat it, and 1985, when they are called back to Derry as adults because the horror has returned. The novel weaves together their childhood traumas, the town's dark history, and the nature of fear itself, suggesting that the entity feeds on fear and that belief is the key to fighting it.

The narrative is not linear; it jumps between the two eras, revealing the characters' pasts and their present struggles. The Losers—Bill, Ben, Beverly, Eddie, Richie, Stan, and Mike—each have their own fears and personal demons, which the entity exploits. As adults, they have mostly forgotten their childhood pact, but they must remember and reunite to finish what they started. The novel explores themes of memory, trauma, friendship, and the loss of innocence, while also delving into the cyclical nature of evil and the power of collective courage.

It is considered one of King's most ambitious and influential works, a defining novel of the horror genre that blends supernatural terror with deep psychological insight. Its impact extends beyond literature, inspiring films, a miniseries, and a cultural fascination with Pennywise the Clown. The book's significance lies not only in its scares but in its profound meditation on how childhood experiences shape adult lives and how facing one's deepest fears can lead to healing, even if the scars remain.

Key Takeaways

- The entity in 'It' is an ancient, shape-shifting being that primarily appears as Pennywise the Clown, but it can take the form of whatever its victim fears most.
- The Losers' Club defeats It in 1958 by believing in their own power and using the 'Ritual of Chüd,' a psychic battle of wills, not by physical force.
- The novel alternates between 1958 and 1985, showing how the characters' childhood traumas and memories are essential to their adult confrontation with It.
- Each member of the Losers' Club has a specific fear—Bill's stutter and his dead brother, Ben's weight, Beverly's abusive father, Eddie's hypochondria, Richie's fear of clowns, Stan's fear of the dead, and Mike's fear of the town's history—which It exploits.

- The power of friendship and unity is the central weapon against It; the Losers are strongest when they are together, and their bond is what allows them to survive.
- The novel explores the idea that memory is selective and that forgetting can be a protective mechanism, but confronting the past is necessary for true resolution.
- It's return every 27 years is tied to the town of Derry's own dark history, which is marked by cycles of violence and tragedy that the adults often ignore or rationalize.
- The ending suggests that the Losers' victory in 1985 is final, but the novel leaves a lingering sense that evil may never be completely eradicated.

Chapter Summaries

Part 1: The Shadow Before

The novel opens in 1985 with Mike Hanlon receiving a phone call from a boy who claims to have seen a clown, triggering Mike's realization that It has returned. He begins calling the other members of the Losers' Club, now adults scattered across the country, to remind them of their childhood promise to return to Derry if It ever came back. The narrative then shifts to 1958, introducing the seven children and their initial encounters with the creature, including Bill's grief over his brother Georgie's death, which is the catalyst for the group's formation. The chapter establishes the town's unsettling atmosphere and the children's growing awareness that something supernatural is at work.

Part 2: June of 1958

This section details the Losers' Club's first summer together. They bond over their shared outsider status and begin investigating the town's history of child disappearances. They encounter Pennywise in various forms, including a leper for Eddie and a mummy for Richie. They also face the human threat of Henry Bowers and his gang, who bully them relentlessly. The children discover the 'Deadlights'—the entity's true cosmic form—and learn about the Ritual of Chüd from a Native American legend. They decide to confront It in the sewers, where they believe It resides, leading to a climactic battle in which they use their belief and a silver slug to wound It, forcing It into a dormant state.

Part 3: Grownups

In 1985, the adult Losers return to Derry one by one, each struggling with fragmented memories of their childhood. They reunite at a Chinese restaurant, where they begin to share their vague recollections and realize they have all been called back for a reason. The narrative interweaves their adult lives—Bill's successful writing career, Ben's architectural success, Beverly's abusive marriage, Eddie's hypochondria, Richie's comedy, Stan's accounting, and Mike's role as the town librarian—with flashbacks to their childhood. They grapple with the fact that they have forgotten so much, and Mike reveals that he has stayed in Derry to keep watch and record the town's history. The group decides to honor their promise and face It again, despite their fear and

reluctance.

Part 4: July of 1958

This section returns to the summer of 1958, focusing on the deepening friendship and romantic tensions among the Losers, particularly between Beverly and Bill, and Ben's unrequited love for Beverly. They explore the Barrens, a marshy area where they build a clubhouse, and they have several encounters with It, including a terrifying experience in a junkyard where It appears as a werewolf. They also learn about the town's history of cyclical violence, including the Bradley Gang massacre and the Black Spot fire, which are linked to It's presence. The children decide to perform the Ritual of Chüd, and they descend into the sewers to face It, but the battle is not fully resolved, and they are left with the belief that they have defeated It for now.

Part 5: The Ritual of Chüd

This chapter covers the adult Losers' preparation for their final confrontation. They gather weapons and artifacts from their childhood, including Bill's silver slug, and they revisit key locations in Derry that hold memories of their past. They also confront their personal demons—Beverly must face her abusive husband, who has followed her to Derry, and Eddie must overcome his fear of disease. The group descends into the sewers, where they encounter It in its lair. They perform the Ritual of Chüd, a psychic battle of wills, and they are aided by the Turtle, a cosmic entity that represents the force of creation. The battle is brutal, and they lose one of their own, but they ultimately succeed in destroying It's physical form by tearing out its heart.

Part 6: The Aftermath

After the final battle, the surviving Losers—Bill, Ben, Beverly, Eddie, and Richie—emerge from the sewers, wounded but alive. They have lost Stan, who committed suicide rather than face It again, and Mike, who was severely injured during the fight. The town of Derry is devastated by a massive storm, and the group realizes that It's death has caused a kind of cleansing. They make a pact to forget the events of their childhood once again, as a way to move on with their lives. The novel ends with them leaving Derry, and the final scene shows them as adults, having largely forgotten their ordeal, but with a lingering sense of connection to each other and to the place that shaped them.

Themes

- Childhood trauma
- Power of friendship
- Memory and forgetting
- Fear and belief
- Cycle of evil

- Loss of innocence

Notable Quotes

- "We all float down here." — Pennywise the Clown says this to Georgie Denbrough in the opening scene, luring the boy into the sewer before killing him.
- "Beep beep, Richie." — A phrase used by the Losers' Club, particularly Beverly and Bill, to tell Richie to stop his constant joking and be serious.
- "The terror, which would not end for another twenty-eight years—if it ever did end—began, so far as I know or can tell, with a boat made from a sheet of newspaper floating down a gutter swollen with rain." — The opening line of the novel, setting the tone and foreshadowing the long-lasting impact of the events.
- "I am the eater of worlds, and of children." — Pennywise's declaration of its nature, spoken during the final confrontation in the sewers.
- "This is the part where the kid gets the clown." — A line spoken by Bill during the final battle, as he and the others attack It.

Frequently Asked Questions

What is It about?

It is a horror novel about a shape-shifting entity that preys on children in the town of Derry, Maine, often appearing as Pennywise the Clown. A group of outcast kids, the Losers' Club, confronts It in 1958 and seemingly defeats it, but they must return as adults in 1985 when It resurfaces. The book explores their childhood traumas and the power of friendship in overcoming fear.

Is It worth reading?

Yes, if you enjoy epic horror with deep character development and psychological depth. It is considered one of Stephen King's best works, blending terrifying supernatural elements with a poignant coming-of-age story. However, it is very long and contains disturbing scenes, so it may not be for everyone. Fans of King's style and complex narratives will find it rewarding.

How does It end?

Spoiler: The adult Losers' Club descends into the sewers and battles It in its lair. They perform the Ritual of Chüd and manage to destroy It's physical form by tearing out its heart. Stan commits suicide before the fight, and Mike is severely injured. The survivors make a pact to forget their childhood experiences and leave Derry, with the implication that It is finally dead, though the town's dark history remains.

Who should read It?

Readers who enjoy long, immersive horror novels with strong character arcs and themes of friendship and trauma. It is ideal for fans of Stephen King and those who appreciate a blend of supernatural terror and literary depth. It may be too intense for younger readers or those sensitive to graphic violence and disturbing content.

How long does it take to read It?

The book is approximately 1,138 pages in the original hardcover edition, with a word count of around 445,000 words. At an average reading speed of 250 words per minute, it would take about 30 hours, or roughly 15-20 hours for a faster reader. Many readers take several weeks to finish it, especially if reading in short sessions.