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**Literature**  
Teaching Unit

Chapter-by-Chapter Study Guide



## The Maze Runner

by James Dashner

- Learning objectives
- Study Guide with short-answer questions
- Background information
- Vocabulary in context
- Multiple-choice test
- Essay questions
- Literary terms



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# Literature Teaching Unit

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 **Prestwick House**

P.O. Box 658, Clayton, DE 19938  
[www.prestwickhouse.com](http://www.prestwickhouse.com)  
800.932.4593

ISBN: 978-1-62019-255-9

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Item No: 310079

# The Maze Runner

## Note to the Teacher

A *New York Times* best seller, James Dashner's *The Maze Runner* follows Thomas as he is thrust into the Glade, remembering only his name. The Glade, filled with other adolescent boys without memories, is an efficient, orderly civilization that feels all too familiar to Thomas. It quickly becomes Thomas's job to figure out how to escape the complicated maze that surrounds the Glade and changes every night. With recollections of his former life and the help of a mysterious girl who delivers a crucial clue to solving the Maze, Thomas helps the boys leave the lethal experiment that is the Glade.

The first in a five-book series and a 2014 movie, *The Maze Runner* is a high-interest read for struggling and proficient adolescent readers alike.

*The Maze Runner* vividly depicts intense violence, disturbing creatures, and body horror at many points throughout the novel. Though very little strong language is used, the author substitutes clear euphemisms for offensive language. There are several instances of both obvious and implied character death in the novel as well.

All references come from the Delacorte Press edition of *The Maze Runner*, copyright 2009.

# The Maze Runner

## Objectives

By the end of this Unit, the student will be able to:

1. identify elements of dystopian fiction apparent in *The Maze Runner*.
2. discuss the importance and meaning of the following symbols:
  - the Maze
  - the Glade
  - the Box
  - the sun
3. cite moments of crisis in *The Maze Runner* and discuss their impact on the plot.
4. describe the evolution of the following characters' goals and motivations throughout the novel:
  - Thomas
  - Newt
  - Alby
5. identify the author's use of cliffhangers at the ends of chapters and discuss their purpose in the story.
6. explain the effect of the limited-omniscient narrator on the reader's understanding of *The Maze Runner*.
7. describe how the author characterizes the major characters and compare the characters' various strengths and weaknesses.
8. discuss Thomas's status as a hero throughout the novel.
9. identify instances of foreshadowing and flashback in the text.
10. describe the effect of the novel's beginning *in medias res*.
11. cite examples of allusion in the text and explain their meanings.

# The Maze Runner

## Questions for Essay and Discussion

1. Who are the antagonists in this novel? Explain how one of the antagonists changes throughout the course of the novel.
2. Describe the ways in which the Gladers maintain order in their society. Are their methods effective?
3. Is Thomas a hero? Cite information from the text as support for your opinion.
4. What attributes of dystopian literature are present in *The Maze Runner*?
5. The Gathering of the Keepers carries out justice when rules are broken in the Glade. Are all of the council's decisions fair? Provide textual support for your response.
6. Examine the paradox "WICKED is good." Given the events of the final chapters, why might the Gladers distrust this statement?
7. Because they have no memories of their lives before the Glade, Thomas and the other Gladers struggle to discover their identities. What does Thomas learn about his identity throughout the course of the story?
8. Find two examples of man vs. society conflict. Compare and contrast the two conflicts. Who is right? Who is wrong? Where is there doubt? Explain your response in detail, using information from the story.
9. How do cliffhangers impact the reader's experience?
10. Why do you think the author chose to write from a third-person limited-omniscient perspective? What impact does this choice have on the reader?
11. Why do Gladers behave differently after they go through the Changing?
12. Identify changes in Thomas's goals. What causes these changes?
13. What motivates Newt? Alby? How and why do their goals change?
14. Compare the Glade before and after Teresa triggers the Ending. What does the disappearance of the sun in Chapter 34 symbolize?

**Chapter 2**

VOCABULARY

**bizarre** – strange, odd  
**captors** – people who trap others  
**cascading** – flowing downward  
**churned** – was uneasy  
**corridors** – passageways; hallway-like structures  
**devoid** – lacking  
**dilapidated** – run-down  
**dominance** – power over others  
**fumed** – expressed anger  
**grove** – a small orchard or group of trees  
**menacing** – threatening  
**piercing** – loud; sharp  
**salvageable** – able to be saved; recoverable  
**scowl** – a harsh, unhappy expression  
**shriek** – a loud, sharp noise  
**shrill** – high in pitch; loud  
**swiveled** – turned around; rotated

1. Describe the Glade.

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2. Why is it hard for Thomas to understand the other boys?

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3. How does the author describe the girl?

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4. Why do Alby and Newt ask Thomas repeatedly if the girl looks familiar to him?

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5. The girl says, "Everything is going to change," and then delivers a note saying that she will be the last Glader delivered in the Box. What might these messages foreshadow?

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6. Consider the setting of the novel as an allegory for the various stages of life. What might the Box represent? The Glade? The Maze?

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**Chapter 25**

VOCABULARY

**belligerence** – hostility  
**clamoring** – eager; anxious  
**disoriented** – confused; without a sense of direction  
**evasive** – intended to attempt escape  
**hypocrisy** – doing the opposite of what one says should be done  
**maneuvers** – movements; strategies  
**maniacal** – evil; wild  
**remote** – distant; unlikely

1. What does Minho say is special about Thomas?

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2. What causes Minho and Gally's physical fight?

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3. Is Gally the antagonist? If so, why do you think so? If not, who is?

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