Discussion/Study Questions for The Chocolate War, by Robert Cormier

For Discussion:

1. The first sentence of this book is "They murdered him." In what ways does this small sentence apply to the book as a whole? Who is murdered, metaphorically, in the book? By whom?

2. There are no main female characters in this book, partly because Trinity is a boys' school. Yet the Trinity boys often discuss girls. Jerry wishes he could talk to the girl near the bus stop. Janza watches girls as they walk by, and Archie won't let anyone touch him except certain girls. What function(s) do you think girls play in the novel?

3. Why do you think Archie is repulsed by human sweat? What do you think this says about Archie as a person?

4. Archie's greatest strength is in exploiting other people's weaknesses. Why do you think Archie does this? Why do you think he needs to manipulate every situation?

5. Discuss the significance of the title. Why is it a chocolate "war"?

6. Why do you think Jerry decides not to sell the chocolates even after his assignment is over? Have you ever dared to "disturb the universe"? What happened?

7. How do you feel about how Brother Leon treated Bailey? At the end of the class Brother Leon says that the students had allowed him to turn the class into Nazi Germany. Do you think this is a true statement?

Study Guide Questions:

Chapters 1-6:

1. What does the first sentence “They murdered him.” Mean?
2. What impressions does the reader get of Jerry?
3. Why must people stay on Archie’s “good side”?
4. What is the secret organization and its purpose that the boys belong to?
5. Why do the boys near the bus stop call Jerry “square boy”?
6. What are your impressions of Brother Leon?
7. Why is it important to sell chocolates?
8. What is The Assigner’s job?

Chapters 7-13:

1. What do we discover about Emile Janza’s character?
2. What does Goober’s running show about him?
3. How does Jerry feel about himself on the football field?
4. Jerry does not want to be a “mirror of his father”. What does that mean?
5. What do Archie’s reactions tell you about him?
6. Who is Goober and what is his assignment?

Chapters 14-21:

1. How do the rest of the boys react to Jerry’s refusal to sell chocolates?
2. How does Archie use his power over Emile Janza?
3. What is the real reason why Leon keeps Carter after school?
4. What does Archie mean when he says “Nobody defies The Vigils, Obie, and gets away with it.”?

Chapters 22-30:

1. What is Brother Leon’s reaction to Jerry’s refusal to sell chocolates?
2. Why is Goober quitting the team and refusing to give anything more to Trinity?
3. What is the purpose of Brother Leon’s phone call to Archie?
4. Why doesn’t The Vigil’s pressure convince Jerry to sell chocolates?
5. Identify and describe the types of mental/physical abuse that The Vigils commit against Jerry.

Chapters 31-39:

1. Why is Emile Janza waiting for Jerry after practice?
2. Describe the kinds of harassment Jerry must deal with.
3. Why do Obie and Carter force Archie to select a marble from the black box?
4. What does the author mean when he says Jerry is “invisible”?
5. What serious mistake does Carter make during the raffle?
6. Who shuts off the lights in the stadium? Why?
7. Who watches the entire boxing match from the top of the hill? Why doesn’t he stop the fight?
8. How does Brother Leon feel about the raffle and the results?
9. What does the title, *The Chocolate War*, mean in both a literal and a figurative sense?