

Notes on *This Boy's Life*

- 4 – “make a play for souvenirs”
- 6 – “but his letter was friendly”
- 9 – changes name to “Jack”
- 10 – biological father is dishonest, tension between parents shown
- 11 – feels unworthy, believes everyone can see through him except his mother; why?
- 15 – Roy, mother’s boyfriend who follows to Salt Lake City, is jealous
- 16 – Roy implicates Toby into his plan for retribution against Toby’s mother
- 17 – goes to confession, uses swamp metaphor to describe guilt
- 23 – gets Roy’s rifle, aims at people
- 25 – “fearlessness in those without power is maddening to those who have it”
- 31 – great insight in noting mother puts argument against taking gun in practical terms
- 37 – Toby and mother move to Seattle instead of Phoenix, home of pen pal
- 38 – Portrait of Marian
- 42 – Silver’s crank calls, being “plausible and suave”
- 44 – contrast with rudeness and absorption in Mousketeers
- 47 – car egging scene, use of anti-Semitic slur
- 49 – incident of going back to Gil and Judd’s house
- 55 – great use of situational irony in telling of Jack asking about the Raleigh
- 59 – information about mother’s childhood
- 63 – introduction of Dwight
- 64 – description of lighter scene
- 65-75 – trip to Chinook for Thanksgiving
- 75 – note image of salmon
- 76 – note use of bad language
- 77 – comb obscenity incident; ultimately leads to his move to Chinook
- 78 – “and at that moment, I wasn’t”
- 84 – mother suggest move to Dwight’s
- 89 – hope of change; Dwight drives drunk
- 91 – note irony of Jack’s hope for change and Dwight’s “whole new ballgame”
- 96 – horse chestnuts are inedible
- 97 – detail of dolls’ eyes in the attic
- 99 – why does Dwight stick close to Jack on visits to Seattle? Note “watching myself...”
- 101 – Boy Scouts, Dwight’s new uniform
- 102 – Lord Baden-Powell invented scouting
- 104 – in front of mirror
- 105 – mother puts decision of marriage on Jack’s shoulders; “the last lie we tell before hurling ourselves over the brink”; Dwight paints everything white
- 106 – fight with Arthur
- 111 – “...also knew she would become angry if I did not produce some mimicry of remorse....”
- 111 – Dwight and mother return two days early from honeymoon

- 112 – family pose
- 120 – misses brother and father
- 125 – sitting in Dwight’s ruined car; “If I didn’t look too hard I could almost believe I was moving.”
- 126 – basketball game with street shoes; Dwight wouldn’t withdraw money from newspaper account to buy him a pair
- 130 – reveals his infatuation with Norma, jealousy of Bobby
- 132-3 – nice transition; “I was a liar...”
- 133 – thinks about shooting Dwight, “just to quiet him down.”
- 134 – “In the past I had been ready, even when innocent to believe any evil thing of myself. Now that I had grounds for guilt I could no longer feel it.”
- 137 – Writes letter to Uncle in Paris; going to go to Paris
- 146 – Dwight plays saxophone in front of Lawrence Welk Show
- 147 – Norma agrees to marry Kenneth
- 149 – Kenneth’s visit, Christmas, chestnuts and beaver molding in attic
- 155 – plan to run away to Alaska
- 159 – kisses Arthur
- 164 – loses money playing carnival game
- 169 – Dwight “trades” Jack’s rifle for a dog, Champion – cf. memory quote at beginning of book
- 174 – gets car stuck; incident with short reflection, bad model!
- 176 – good simile, “like a mime acting out relaxation”
- 178 – Dwight has to kill champion; “take a little ride with Dwight”
- 181 – description of concrete high, Mr. Mitchell
- 188 – gets drunk and falls down hill
- 193 – forged check incident
- 198 – puts on Boy Scout uniform as escape from bad check pursuit
- 202 – Dwight hits him over thrown out mustard, calls brother
- 204 – applies to prep schools
- 205 – Dwight holds knife to Jack’s mother’s throat
- 212 – gets school stationary from Arthur
- 214 – “sees (his) own face” in the false letters of recommendation
- 215 – has to fight Arthur in “grudge match”
- 217 – note contrast of his own false application w/ Arthur’s “performance” as a straight arrow
- 220 – note how boys are effected by public sentiment
- 221 – clear that despite hatred, Jack desires Dwight’s affection
- 223 – call from Hill School alumnus, Mr. Howard
- 229 – cuts off fingertip
- 331 – Dwight pushes him, mother decides to leave; note Jack’s complicity
- 232 – why does he shake Dwight’s hand?
- 233 – moves to Chuck’s
- 232 – description of going to church, Mr. Bolger, religion

- 241 – steals gas from the Welches
- 245 – good model of incident; stealing gas cans, reflection begins of 245 with “I didn’t need to see the tears....:
- 246 – doesn’t apologize
- 248 – mother wins reprieve from the Bolgers
- 251 – the conversation with Father Karl
- 252 – great description of the river’s sound: also conveys tension of silence
- 253 – Sheriff’s visit to tell Chuck is father
- 254 – note irony of Jack’s comment about being happy Chuck is in trouble so he can show he is a better friend
- 255 – great examples of details indirectly showing information about tension in family
- 255 – What does it mean to “accept the cost of (one’s) principles”?
- 257 – accepted at The Hill School (see www.thehill.org)
- 259 – looked at the pictures of students as one would look at National Geographic
- 261 – Dwight has stolen the paper route money
- 264 – Huff is going to marry Tina Flood; Chuck has won the war of nerves
- 265 – vision of Huff caught in “The Flood”
- 266 – Jack’s mother leaves Dwight
- 268 – steals Dwight’s hunting equipment
- 273 – Why is Franz (the tailor) Franz, and Jack “Mr. Wolff”
- 276 – the apparition of the well-dressed Jack in the mirror of the store
- 283 – father takes off for Los Vegas the day after Jack arrives
- 283 – father’s friend makes pass at Jack
- 284 – Jack’s father committed to mental hospital
- 284 – Dwight tries to strangle Jack’s mother; Jack does nothing
- 285 – does poorly at The Hill
- 286 – reflection section begins
- 287 – metaphor of the city as a trap
- 288 – how to interpret the final image; sincerely singing hymns between sip from the whiskey bottle