



SUMMARY

Stranger Things: The First Shadow plunges us into Hawkins, Indiana, in 1959, decades before the hit Netflix series begins. The story follows the arrival of Henry Creel and his family, who move into a creaking old house on the edge of town, unaware that it sits at the center of a supernatural disturbance.

Soon, Hawkins is rocked by unexplained phenomena: flickering lights, terrifying visions, and a dead cat that no one can explain. As Henry struggles to survive both bullies and unearthly phenomena, he discovers that he has mysterious powers that can tear holes into reality. Familiar locations and institutions from the TV series take shape, including the sinister Hawkins Lab and the dreaded Upside Down.

By the play's thrilling climax, the origin of the show's greatest villain, Vecna, is revealed, the barrier between worlds is breached, and Hawkins is cursed forever, setting in motion the events that will eventually lead to Eleven, the Demogorgon, and the five seasons of thrilling, chilling excitement that is *Stranger Things!*

CHARACTER GUIDE

Henry Creel: A withdrawn, unsettling teenager new to Hawkins. Intelligent, observant, and quietly furious, Henry begins to discover terrifying powers he cannot control.

Joyce Maldonado: A sharp high schooler desperate to escape Hawkins. Curious and stubborn, Joyce senses that something is wrong long before anyone else is willing to believe it.

Jim Hopper: A popular but conflicted teenager trying to live up to expectations. Beneath his charm is a moral core that draws him toward truth and responsibility, even when it puts him in danger.

Bob Newby: Kind, awkward, optimistic, and loyal, Bob's belief in people make him a quiet hero in a town increasingly ruled by fear.

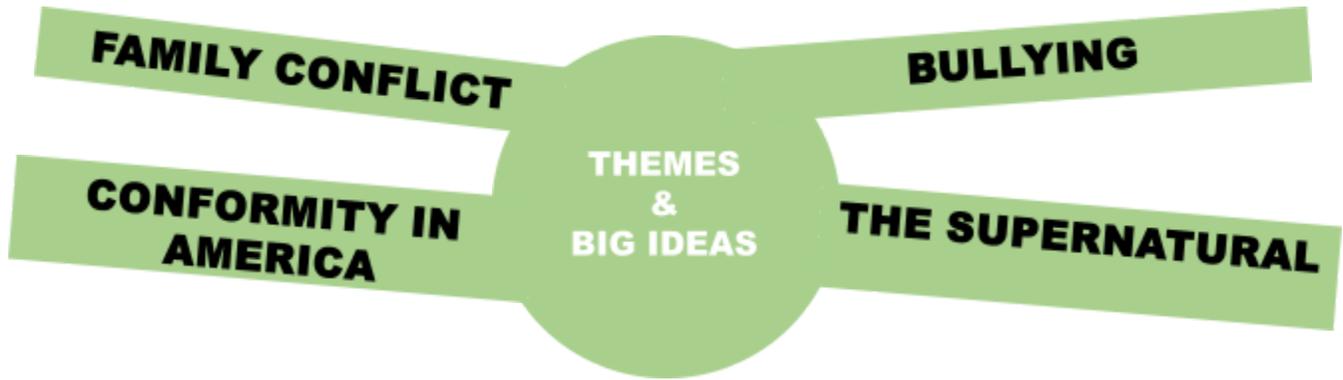
Patty Newby: Bob's confident, quick-witted sister, unafraid to ask tough questions. Her intelligence and bravery pull her into Hawkins's darkest secrets.

Victor Creel: Henry's stern, traumatized father, determined to impose order on a family already slipping into disarray.

Virginia Creel: Henry's anxious mother, desperate to protect her family as their home becomes a site of supernatural evil.

Alice Creel: Henry's younger sister, innocent and perceptive, caught in the shadow of forces she does not understand.

Dr. Brenner: A calculating scientist whose early experiments and interest in Henry lay the groundwork for Hawkins Lab and the horrors to come.



EXERCISES & ACTIVATIONS

Writing

Stranger Things: The First Shadow takes place in Hawkins, Indiana, in 1959, a time of strict rules, Cold War fear, and pressure to appear “normal.” Before seeing the play, research a cultural trend from the American Midwest in the 1950s. You might learn more about 1950s teen life, Cold War anxiety, race relations, or gender roles for teenagers. Then, create one artifact from Hawkins in 1959 that reflects these cultural norms. You might write a diary entry, a newspaper article, a school rulebook page, or a movie review. Finish by writing a short reflection explaining how this time period makes the play more frightening.

Embodying

In *Stranger Things: The First Shadow*, supernatural forces disrupt ordinary life, often before characters fully understand what they are facing. Before seeing the play, think about how actors communicate fear and unease in the presence of something unnatural. Pick one of these emotions, and with a partner, concoct a series of gestures that display these feelings. The supernatural element should remain unseen, so find ways to communicate your feelings to each other through movement. Perform the scene using no dialogue, allowing the audience to sense that something is wrong before it is named.

Contextual

In *Stranger Things: The First Shadow*, the supernatural bleeds into everyday life, turning ordinary places into sites of dread. Before seeing the play, investigate some 1950s trends in depicting the supernatural, like science-fiction illustration, horror comics, monster movies, or pulp magazine covers. Then draw, paint, or sculpt a scene or an object from Hawkins in 1959 that hints at something unnatural breaking through the surface of normal life, as the Upside Down does in *Stranger Things*. You might make a distorted school poster, an ominous comic panel, a warning sign, a movie advertisement, or a public image that seems “off” in subtle ways.