

# Facing Forever

An unusual dog in an unusual place helps Nathan process his grief

## About the Story

Lexile® 750L

For qualitative complexity factors,  
go to Scope Online.

**Learning Objective:** to analyze how  
and why a character changes over the  
course of a story

**Key Skills:** allusion, inference, mood,  
character, figurative language

**Essential Questions:**

- Would immortality be a blessing  
or a curse?
- How can we cope with loss?
- What gives life meaning?

**Standards:**

The article and lesson support these  
Common Core anchor standards: R.1,  
R.2, R.3, R.4, R.5, R.6, W.2, SL.1, L.4,  
L.5, L.6

For more standards information—  
including TEKS—go to Scope Online.



## Your Teaching Support Package

Find your full suite of support materials at [scope.scholastic.com](https://scope.scholastic.com).

### Audio:

- Story read-aloud
- Text-to-speech
- Vocabulary

### Vocabulary Slideshow

### Connected readings from the Scope archives:

- "13 and a Half"
- "The Message"
- "The McCoy Game"

### Skill Building Activities to print, project, or share digitally:

- Writing Planner: Nathan's Decision
- Close-Reading and Critical Thinking
- Vocabulary: Definitions
- Context Clues Challenge
- **Core Skills Workout:** Inference
- Choice Board
- Quiz\*
- Contest Entry Form

\*Available on two levels

# Step-by-Step Lesson

Close Reading, Critical Thinking, Skill Building

## 1. Preparing to Read

20 minutes

### Do-Now: Journal and Discuss (10 minutes)

- Project the following journal prompt on your whiteboard: *Make a pro/con list for immortality (the ability to live forever). Then respond to the following question: Would immortality be a blessing or a curse?*
- Invite students to share their responses.

### Preview Vocabulary (10 minutes)

- Project the **Vocabulary Slideshow** on your whiteboard. Review the definitions and complete the activity as a class. The audio pronunciations of the words and a read-aloud of the definitions are embedded on the slides. Highlighted words: *bushwhack, definitively, dilapidated, discernible, impeccable, oasis.*

## 2. Reading and Discussing

45 minutes

- Read the **As You Read** box on page 28 or at the top of the digital story page.
- Point out the directions at the top of the column on the far-right side of page 29 and read them aloud to your students.
- Optionally, for students' first read, have them follow along as they listen to the **audio read-aloud**, located in the Resources tab in Teacher View and at the top of the story page in Student View.
- Divide students into groups to read the story again, pausing to discuss the close-reading questions that appear in the margins of the print magazine or by clicking on the bolded words on the digital story page. Have students record their answers in their own document or on the **Close Reading and Critical Thinking** activity.

### Close-Reading Questions

(30 minutes)

*The close-reading questions can be shared in printable or interactive form.*

1. **What does the name of the travel park refer to?** (allusion) *Juan Ponce de León is the name of the conquistador who is said to have embarked on a quest to find the legendary Fountain of Youth. The author names the travel park after him to bring to readers' minds the idea of the legendary spring that reverses aging and makes people immortal. [Allusion is a literary device: an implied or indirect reference to a person, place, thing, or another work of literature. Allusions are based on the assumption that there is a body of knowledge shared by the author and the reader and that the reader will understand the author's reference.]*
2. **What can you infer from Nathan's reaction to the name Maggie chooses?** (inference) *Based on details Nathan reveals in the story's opening, readers can infer that Nathan's family has suffered some sort of loss, perhaps the death of a loved one. Nathan says, "Dad said we needed this vacation, especially Mom, after everything that had happened" and "thinking about home made me think about who wasn't there anymore." When Nathan becomes physically ill and runs away after Maggie calls the dog "Boo," her nickname for their Grandpa Lou, readers can infer that it was Grandpa Lou who recently died—and that Nathan is really struggling with the loss.*
3. **What mood is the author creating in this paragraph?** (mood) *The author is creating an eerie mood in this paragraph. The campground's emptiness, the gusty wind, and the creaky noises create a feeling of uneasiness that's almost frightening.*
4. **Why is this an important moment for Nathan? What knot is starting to loosen?** (character) *Up to this point, Nathan has not been enjoying the family vacation. He's mad at the world about his grandpa's death, but he's not talking to anyone about it, and he's not allowing himself to live in the moment or find moments of joy. For example, when Nathan's family goes to the amusement park, he doesn't go because it "seemed like the wrong thing to do somehow." But in this moment at the stream with Boo, Nathan finds a feeling of peace, even joy. He listens to the leaves rustling, the birds chirping, and the stream gurgling; he appreciates the beauty of what he calls a "magical oasis in the swamp"; he thinks about how much Grandpa would have loved it. Having positive thoughts of Grandpa and finding joy in playing with Boo loosens the knot of grief that Nathan has been dealing with since Grandpa's death.*
5. **What does this detail tell you about Dr. Brewster?** (figurative language) *This detail tells you that Dr. Brewster looks strong and/or tough.*
6. **What is Nathan realizing?** (inference) *Nathan is realizing that Boo really is 75 years old because Boo has been swimming in and drinking from the Fountain of Youth. Nathan understands this from the fact that after he and Boo got in the stream in the swamp, Boo's limp went away and he pranced around like a puppy, and the cuts on Nathan's feet were healed.*

7. **What home is Nathan referring to?** (inference) *Nathan is referring to his family's home in Maryland.*
- As a class, discuss the following questions.

### Critical-Thinking Questions

(5 minutes)

*The following questions can be shared in printable or interactive form.*

1. **Why do you think Nathan decides to take Boo home at the end of the story? Do you think Nathan made the right choice? Why or why not?** *Nathan decides to bring Boo home to Maryland because he believes that having a life filled with love and family will be better for Boo than living forever on his own at the abandoned campground. You understand this because it is remembering what Nathan's grandpa said just before he died —“I've had a long life. A life filled with love and family. What more could I ask for?”—that leads Nathan to his decision about Boo. Answers to the second question will vary.*
2. **Would you bathe in the stream if given the chance?** *Answers will vary.*
3. **Compare how Maggie and Nate react to the death of Grandpa Lou and to the idea of leaving Boo. What point might the author be making by presenting these contrasting characters?** *Answers will vary. Sample answer: Maggie and Nate react very differently to the death of Grandpa Lou and to the idea of leaving Boo. For example, Maggie names the dog they find after Grandpa Lou, while Nate runs off to be alone when he thinks of Grandpa Lou. Maggie is devastated at the thought of leaving Boo, while Nate—at first—would rather be without Boo than for Boo to die. The author is most likely trying to make the point that we all experience grief and other powerful emotions in our own unique ways.*

## 3. Skill Building and Writing

30 minutes

- Have students complete the **Writing Planner: Nathan's Decision**. This activity will help them organize their ideas in preparation for the writing prompt on page 31 in the printed magazine and at the bottom of the digital story page.
- Alternatively, have students choose a culminating task from the **Choice Board**, a menu of differentiated activities.

**Connected fiction from the *Scope* archives about experiencing loss:**

- [“The McCoy Game”](#) (April 2022)
- [“The Message”](#) (September 2019)
- [“13 and a Half”](#) (November 2018)