

A.P. English • Mr. Averill  
A PRAYER FOR OWEN MEANY

## UNDERLINING

*One of the habits that I developed as a reader-student-teacher of literature was underlining key passages in works (I owned) as I was reading them. Often, the collecting and sorting of these underlinings helped me to develop a thesis for the inevitable essay that was coming (or for an idea that I would present to class). Even if I were not studying the work formally, I would underline for the sake of recall, insight, and synthesis. I want you to underline in your books, and I hope it will help you to bring up ideas in class, to develop a sense of the novel as a whole, and to appreciate Irving's craftsmanship. On this sheet are some of my underlinings from The Angel. In each case, compare with your underlinings and consider why I might have underlined the ones I chose.*

99 It was not the play that interested us -- it was what a lie it was that Dan was awful to my mother, that he meant her harm. That was fascinating.

102 It made him furious when I suggested that anything was an "accident" --- especially anything that had happened to him; on the subject of predestination, Owen Meany would accuse Calvin of bad faith. There were no accidents; there was a reason for that baseball -- just as there was a reason for Owen being small, and a reason for his voice. In Owen's opinion, he had INTERRUPTED AN ANGEL, he had DISTURBED AN ANGEL AT WORK, he had UPSET THE SCHEME OF THINGS.

105 What a phrase that is: "that explains everything!" I know better than to think that anything "explains everything" today.

111 What made Mr. Merrill infinitely more attractive was that he was full of doubt; he expressed our doubt in the most eloquent and sympathetic ways. In his completely lucid and convincing view, the Bible is a book with a troubling plot, but a plot that can be understood: God creates us out of love, but we don't want God, or we don't

believe in Him, or we pay very poor attention to Him. Nevertheless, God continues to love us -- at least, He continues to try to get our attention. Pastor Merrill made religion seem reasonable. And the trick of having faith, he said, was that it was necessary to believe in God without any great or even remotely reassuring evidence that we don't inhabit a godless universe.

112 "BELIEF IS NOT AN INTELLECTUAL MATTER," he complained. "IF HE'S GOT SO MUCH DOUBT, HE'S IN THE WRONG BUSINESS."

117 Pastor Merrill started us off with the Song of Solomon - "'Many waters cannot quench love,'" he read. Then he hit us with Corinthians ("Love is patient and kind"), and finished us off with John - "Love one another as I have loved you."

125 ... a hailstone ricocheted off the roof of the car and smacked her right between the eyes, "Ow!" she cried, holding her head. "I'M SORRY!" Owen said quickly.

126 Squeezing a hailstone the size of a marble in my hand, feeling it melt in my palm, I was also surprised by its hardness; it was as hard as a baseball

135 When someone you love dies, and you're not expecting it, you don't lose her all at once; you lose her in pieces over a long time - the way the mail stops coming, and her scent fades from the pillows and even from the clothes in her closet and drawers.