

Group _____

In an interview, Anne Tyler said, "I consciously try to end my novels at a point where I won't have to wonder about my characters ever again." Still, as most contemporary novelists, she often closes her stories at a peak in the plot, without any epilogue. In *Dinner at the Homesick Restaurant*, particularly, she finishes without plot resolution or full character exposes. If she does not have to wonder about the Tull family ever again, she certainly leaves the reader *thinking* about them. Despite some unresolved feelings, though, the details of the novel reveal that Tyler has, in fact, finished her story.

CLOSE READING OF CHAPTER 10

Return to chapter 10 and look at particular moments in the chapter. Draw inferences, compare the information to that in previous chapters—do a little detective work! What conclusions can you reach based on these moments from the chapter?



NOTE: I did not include page numbers because I am using an e-book; however, these quotes all go in order with the chapter so that should help you know if you've gone too far looking for a quote!

This moment . . .	reveals (suggests, could mean . . .)
She took Cody's hand in both of hers and gripped it, tightly . . . he stood for a while, allowing her; then he gently pulled away . . .	
Luke, who was now a senior in high school . . .	
They walked toward the house in silence. Cody had still not responded.	
"I told Ezra we'd be there in the morning." "How is he taking it?" Cody asked.	
He decided that he felt not so much sad as heavy . . . he imagined he had suddenly sunk in on himself and grown denser.	
He thought of the tiny framework of his mother's bones, the crinkly bun on the back of her head. Did that fierce little figure exist any more? Was it already ashes?	
They passed trees ablaze with red and yellow leaves and shopping malls full of ordinary, Monday morning traffic."	

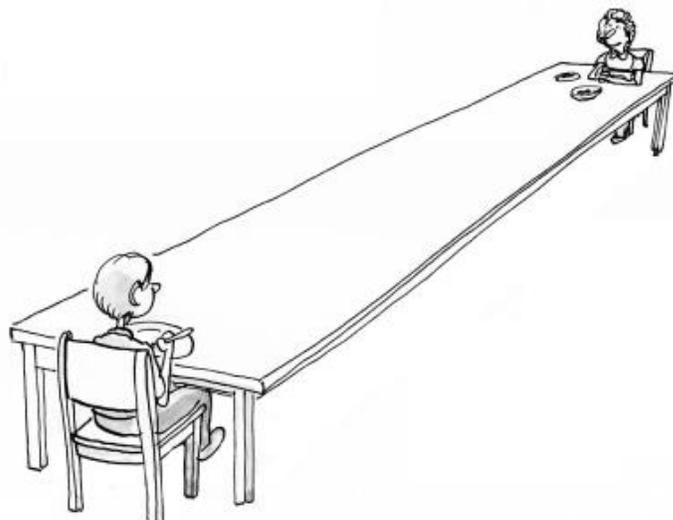
This moment . . .	reveals (suggests, could mean)
The city seemed even more ruined than usual, tumbling under a wan, blue sky.	
Ruth had her hand hooked in the back of Luke's belt. He was too tall for her to cup the nape of his neck, as she used to.	
Now, crossing the porch, Cody didn't know whether to knock or just open the door.	
He touched Cody's arm in that tentative way he had—something more than a handshake, less than a hug.	
From the gloomy depths of the house, Jenny stepped forward to kiss everyone.	
<p>"Ezra—"he said.</p> <p>"That was thoughtful of you," Ruth told Ezra, "but really, we're fine, and we wouldn't want to hold people up."</p>	
<p>"It wasn't <i>my</i> idea," Ezra said. "It was Mother's. She talked about it when she got so sick. She said 'Look in <i>my</i> address book. Ask everybody in it to the funeral.' I wondered who she meant at first . . . but as soon as I opened the address book I saw it: Beck Tull."</p>	
<p>"What difference would it have made? . . . He ditched us," Cody said, "when we were kids. What do you care about him now?"</p>	
Cody, who had so often been exasperated by Ezra's soft heart, saw that in this case, it was true: he really didn't care.	
She had been so young when their father left, anyhow. She claimed to have forgotten all about him.	
Jenny said, "Can we get started now? My children will be freezing to death."	

This moment . . .	reveals (suggests, could mean)
<p>He was back to his boyhood, it seemed, fearing that his mother could read his mind as unhesitatingly as she read the inner temperature of a roasting hen by giving its thigh a single, contemptuous pinch. He glanced sideways at Ruth, but she was listening to the minister.</p>	
<p>Outside the cold was a relief, and Cody was grateful for the lumbering noise of the traffic in the street.</p>	
<p>"Oh God, I suppose there'll be one of those dinners. We'll have to have one of those eternal family dinners at Ezra's restaurant."</p> <p>"He's probably too upset, Ruth said. "I doubt he'd give a dinner now."</p>	
<p>"I said," the old man told him, "I said, 'Cody? Do you know me?'"</p> <p>Cody knew him.</p>	
<p>"You remember Ruth," said Cody.</p> <p>"Ruth?"</p> <p>"My wife."</p>	
<p>He pumped the hand of the tallest teen-ager, who unfortunately was not a grandson at all but one of Ezra's salad boys.</p>	
<p>Cody watched with interest.</p>	
<p>Cody's son, Luke, and Jenny's son Peter—both unnaturally formal in white shirts and ties—wrestled together in an aimless, self-conscious way, tossing hidden glances at Beck.</p>	
<p>Cody had a sudden intimation that tomorrow it would be more than he could manage to drag himself off to work. His success had finally filled its purpose.</p>	
<p>"Oh?" said Cody, politely. "Have you been away?"</p>	
<p>No one seemed able to think of any comment.</p>	

This moment . . .	reveals (suggests, could mean)
<p>"Eleven, twelve . . . thirteen . . . counting the baby, it's fourteen people!"</p> <p>"There would have been fifteen, but Slevin's off at college," Jenny said</p>	<p>HINT: do some math . . .</p>
<p>" . . . Slevin's off at college."</p>	
<p>"What I mean to say," he said, "it looks like this is one of those great big, jolly, noisy, rambling . . . why <i>families!</i>"</p>	
<p>"Becky?" said Beck. "Does she happen to be named for me, by any chance?"</p> <p>"No," said Jenny . . . "Her name's Rebecca."</p>	
<p>"What she was saying was, the man had nothing to do with them. He wasn't ever there, you see, so he didn't count. He wasn't part of the family."</p>	
<p>"He's gone."</p>	
<p>"Please!" said Ezra. "For once, I want this family to finish a meal together."</p> <p>. . . "Or," Cody pointed out, "we could finish the meal <i>without</i> him. That's always a possibility."</p> <p>But it wasn't; even he could see that. One empty place at the table ruined everything.</p>	
<p>"I believe I'll just go check on how they're doing," Cody told her.</p>	
<p>A weak sun lit the tops of the buildings, and it didn't seem so cold.</p>	
<p>The back of his neck took on that special alertness required on Baltimore streets, but he walked at an easy, sauntering pace with his hands in his trouser pockets.</p> <p>"Always have a purpose," his father used to tell him. "Act like you're heading someplace purposeful and none of the low-life will mess with you."</p>	

This moment . . .	reveals (suggests, could mean . . .)
<p>"All we have is each other," Ezra would say, justifying one of his everlasting dinners. "We've got to stick together; nobody else has the same past that we have."</p>	
<p>Cody suddenly longed for his son—for Luke's fair head and hunched shoulders. . . . He wondered whether Sloan would lend him the cabin again next weekend, so they could give it another try.</p>	
<p>He came out on Bushnell—sunnier than the alley and almost empty.</p>	
<p>There was Luke, as if conjured up, sitting for some reason on the stoop of a boarded-over building. Cody started toward him . . . but it wasn't Luke. It was Beck . . . his sharp, cocked shoulders so oddly like Luke's.</p>	
<p>"You left us in her clutches," Cody said. . . . "How could you do that? . . . How could you just dump us on our mother's mercy? . . . We were kids, we were only kids, we had no way of protecting ourselves . . ."</p>	
<p>"Oh it's closeness that does you in. Never get too close to people, son—did I tell you that when you were young?"</p>	
<p>"It was the grayness; grayness of things; half-right-and-half-wrongness of things. Everything tangled, mingled, not perfect any more. I couldn't take that. Your mother could, but not me."</p>	
<p>"Look! Haven't you all turned out fine—leading good lives, the three of you? She did it; Pearl did it. I knew she would manage."</p>	
<p>"Oh, what will I do now she's gone?"</p>	
<p>Cody, searching for something to say, happened to look toward Prima Street and see his family rounding the corner, opening like a fan . . . they all looked unexpectedly joyful. The drab colors of their funeral clothes turned their faces bright.</p>	
<p>Cody felt surprised and touched. He felt that they were pulling him toward them—that it wasn't they who were traveling, but Cody himself.</p>	

This moment . . .	reveals (suggests, could mean . . .)
"Let's go finish dinner."	
Cody held on to his elbow and led him toward the others.	
Overhead, seagulls drifted through a sky so clear and blue that it brought back all the outings of his boyhood—the drives, the picnics, the autumn hikes, the wildflower walks in spring.	
He remembered the archery trip, and it seemed to him now that he even remembered that arrow sailing in its graceful, fluttering path.	
He remembered his mother's upright form along the grasses, her hair lit gold, her small hands smoothing her bouquet while the arrow journeyed on.	
And high above, he seemed to recall, there had been a little brown airplane, almost motionless, droning through the sunshine like a bumblebee.	



“Having dinner together brings us closer.”