

Chapter 17

Chapter 17 of *The Chocolate War* builds up an intense atmosphere during the roll call in Brother Leon's classroom, where the students' responses regarding their chocolate sales highlight the weight of the ongoing assignment. The Goober, nervously waiting for Jerry Renault's turn, is acutely aware of the internal struggle Jerry has been facing due to his refusal to sell chocolates as part of a Vigils assignment. Jerry's decision to resist has impacted his life in significant ways, affecting his performance in football and even drawing concern from their coach, who notices Jerry's distracted state. Despite their limited interactions, The Goober understands that Jerry is planning to end his involvement with the assignment the following day, marking a pivotal moment in Jerry's resistance. This knowledge adds a layer of tension to the situation, as The Goober watches the ripple effects of Jerry's defiance impact not only his own life but the lives of others around him. Jerry's choice to reject the chocolate sale is not merely an act of rebellion; it signifies a challenge to the societal and institutional pressures that define their world.

Brother Leon conducts the roll call with his usual polished demeanor, as if everything is proceeding as expected. The classroom, filled with the rhythmic chanting of students reporting their chocolate sales, offers an illusion of conformity and routine. However, as the roll progresses, an undercurrent of tension begins to build, especially as Jerry's name approaches. The atmosphere in the room changes; the air seems heavier, as everyone anticipates what Jerry will say when asked about his chocolate sales. This moment becomes pivotal, not just for Jerry but for everyone present in the classroom, as it marks a break in the routine and a shift in power dynamics. When Jerry's turn finally comes, he delivers a single, resolute word: "No!" His refusal to comply with the chocolate sale assignment stands in stark contrast to the expectations of the class and Brother Leon. In that moment, the entire room is frozen in silence, the weight of Jerry's

decision hanging in the air. This response, simple yet powerful, signifies not just Jerry's personal defiance but also a broader resistance to the expectations imposed on him, a moment of rebellion that disrupts the classroom's established order.

The Goober, observing Jerry's defiance, is struck by the gravity of the situation. The shock of the moment is palpable, not only for him but for the rest of the class, who are now forced to confront Jerry's bold stance. Brother Leon, initially stunned, attempts to regain control of the situation, trying to steer the classroom back to normalcy, but Jerry remains unwavering. His refusal to participate in the chocolate sale becomes a defining moment for him, highlighting his courage and resolve in the face of immense social pressure. The room is filled with an eerie silence, a silence that signifies the significance of Jerry's actions. In this charged moment, it's clear that Jerry's decision is more than just about chocolates; it's about standing up for his principles, despite the overwhelming force of authority and conformity. This moment of resistance challenges not only Jerry's personal beliefs but also the structure of power within the classroom and, by extension, the entire school. For The Goober, this is a jarring realization, as he has always known Jerry as someone who could be counted on, but now Jerry is revealing a new side of himself—a side that refuses to bow down to the pressures of authority.

As Jerry's firm stance becomes clear, his rebellion against the chocolate sale assignment takes on a new significance, highlighting the deeper themes of conformity and resistance within the story. This moment is not merely about Jerry's rejection of an assignment; it reflects his broader struggle against the expectations of his peers, the Vigils, and the oppressive structures within his school. Jerry's decision to stand up against the system also forces The Goober to reflect on his own role in this environment. While Jerry's resistance to the Vigils and Brother Leon is a bold declaration of autonomy, it also isolates him, leaving him vulnerable to further pressure and consequences. The silence that follows Jerry's "No" encapsulates the emotional weight of his decision, representing not only the personal cost of defiance but also the larger social and psychological battle that will continue to shape Jerry's journey. As the chapter closes, it's clear that this pivotal moment will resonate

throughout the story, marking a turning point in Jerry's evolution as he grapples with the cost of rebellion and the implications of his actions for both himself and those around him.

