

# **22 Britannia Road Study Guide**

**22 Britannia Road by Amanda Hodgkinson**

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# Plot Summary

This book tells the story of the Nowak family before, during, and after World War II. They are Polish natives who flee their homeland and create a life in England but not without suffering a great deal of trauma during and after the war.

"22 Britannia Road" begins as Silvana Nowak and her son Aurek are on a boat headed for Britain to meet her husband, Aurek's father, for the first time in six years. They were separated during World War II. It is quite obvious from this first chapter that Silvana has suffered from wartime trauma. The book jumps between the present day, post-war, and previous experiences in Poland and in France. As information is revealed about the past, the reason behind the actions of the characters in the present become apparent.

The chapters spent in Poland tell of Silvana and Janusz's lives before World War II from both of their perspectives. They were both young adults when they first met, dated, and expected the birth of their son. They married, moved to a small flat in Warsaw, and spent two happy years together with their son. When World War II arrived in Poland, Janusz felt it was his duty to enlist. At this point, their stories differ greatly.

Janusz ends up separated from his unit soon after joining it and meets up with two other soldiers, Bruno and Franek, who are leaving the country. The three men plan to secretly travel to England to join the military there, since the Polish army was being decimated by both the Germans and the Russians. By the time they reach Marseilles, France, one of the men is dead and the other two are exhausted. While in Marseilles, Janusz falls in love with Helene and plans on staying with her and her family permanently. Unfortunately, the German army is advancing south, so Janusz and Bruno leave for Britain to join the military and escape the Germans headed towards Marseilles. While they are in Britain, Bruno dies in a plane crash and Helene is shot and killed. At this point, Bruno's girlfriend says he is lucky to not be alone and suggests that he search for his wife and child.

At the same time as Janusz's story, Silvana and Aurek feel the pressures of occupation. They finally flee Warsaw, but Aurek is killed in the process. In her grief, Silvana finds another baby boy and swaps him for her dead son. She calls this little boy Aurek, seeing him as the replacement for her dead son. They spend years in the Polish woods and on various farms struggling to survive and suffering from wartime trauma. They are finally rescued by the British forces and placed in a refugee camp where Janusz finds them.

Upon arriving in Britain, Janusz brings his wife and now seven-year-old Aurek to the home that he has recently purchased at 22 Britannia Road. Janusz dreams of recreating the perfect British family, while Silvana simply wants a father for the little boy. After struggling to adjust and suffering from a rift in their relationship, the family is finally restored.



# Pages 1-28

## Pages 1-28 Summary

This book tells the story of the Nowak family before, during, and after World War II. They are Polish natives who flee their homeland and create a life in England but not without suffering a great deal of trauma during the war.

In "Spring 1946. To England," Sylvana Nowak and her son Aurek are on a boat headed to England and Sylvana's husband, Janusz, who she has not seen in six years. She has decided to make this journey so that her son her could have a father. She still has nightmares of the years during the war, but tries to push them aside and focus on the future. She has hope for the future of her family.

In "22 Britannia Road, Ipswich," Janusz has purchased a house for his family. He finds this home to be lucky because it hardly shows the effects of war. He hopes that this house will share some of its luck with him and his family. Over the six years that Janusz has been in England, he has learned the ways of the British and has come to admire them and their culture. The decision to buy this home and reunite the family began when Silvana and Aurek were found by a Red Cross officer in a refugee camp. They had spent much of the war hiding out in the forest in Poland. Janusz had hoped to be able to return to a free Poland but realizes that is no longer an option now that Poland is a communist nation. Britain is his home now. With the arrival of his wife and child in the near future, Janusz tries to forget the French woman he had fallen in love with, Helene. Janusz prepares the house for Silvana and Aurek's arrival; he is very lonely and misses the company of a woman. Janusz meets Silvana and Aurek in Victoria station. He is shocked to see how thin Silvana is, with her beautiful red hair now cut short and gray and how wild his now seven year old child is. Both Silvana and Janusz are nervous and try to not show the shock that they feel. Janusz says that people are still the same inside, no matter how many years have gone by, but both he and Silvana know he is lying.

In "Poland, 1937," Silvana first saw Janusz when he and his friends were swimming in the summer of 1937. She had been avoiding going home after her job as an usherette at a movie theater because her family was not close. Her drunken mother still grieved over the loss of Silvana's brothers who had all died in infancy. High-strung Silvana was not a comfort to her, and she regrets having this willful daughter and wishes her sons had survived instead. Janusz and Silvana were both attracted to each other instantly and began spending time together. After a few months, at the age of eighteen, she became pregnant with their son Aurek.

In "Poland, 1939," Janusz has said good bye to his family and is going off to join the army, as the young boys of Poland have been encouraged to do. He fights the crowds and finally boards a train with only his army gear and hopes of being a good soldier. During the train ride, Luftwaffe fly over head, and everyone quickly disembarks the train



to hide in the forest. Janusz watches as an innocent peasant woman is shot down by these German gunmen. He panics and begins to run, eventually tripping, falling, and knocking himself unconscious. When he finally becomes completely conscious, the train is gone. He wanders in the direction he believes is Warsaw.

## Pages 1-28 Analysis

"Spring 1946. To England," gives off both feelings of fear and hope. Much is unknown at this point in the book, but much is hinted at regarding what has taken place in their lives during the six years they have been apart with Silvana's memories of wartime. An important aspect of this chapter is change, which will become a theme throughout the book.

"22 Britannia Road" is an important chapter. It is the chapter that brings this family together for the first time in six years. A theme of change that was brought up in the first chapter has become extremely important to this second chapter. War has played an important role in the changes that have taken place in these characters. All three characters have aged but have not aged particularly well. Wartime was hard on all of them, especially Silvana and Aurek. They are both very thin and Aurek is practically a wild animal. A significant change in Silvana for both her and Janusz is the graying of her beautiful chestnut-colored hair. This seems to represent the change that has taken place; what was once beautiful, bright, and hopeful is now dull, old, and fearful. Another theme that is significant is that of loss. These three main characters have all suffered from loss due to the war. They have lost precious time with each other, happiness and a sense of security, and others they have loved. Janusz misses his family, always wondering what happened to them. He also misses a woman named Helene that he cannot seem to get out of his mind.

"Poland, 1937" takes the reader back in time to learn about the lives of Silvana and Janusz. They are young and in love and very innocent, with Silvana being highly influenced by the romantic American films she sees at the movie theater. This chapter shows how different these characters were just a few years before, star-struck, hopeful, and in love. With Silvana's pregnancy these two young lovers begin to lose their innocence.

"Poland, 1939" jumps ahead in time. War has begun and Janusz is excited to show his family that he can be a good soldier. He quickly realizes that he may not be as courageous as he hoped he would be; when leaving Silvana, she shows more courage than him. Also, this feeling of inadequacy continues as he runs in a panic away from a woman who has just been shot and does not get up to help those people around him who might have needed him. The chapter ends leaving him disappointed in himself and the fear that he let control him.



# Pages 29-56

## Pages 29-56 Summary

In "Ipswich" Silvana is disappointed to see in Great Britain similar reminders of war that she had seen in Poland. She does feel a sense of hope when Janusz shows her and Aurek their new home. Along with this hope is still the fear that this family will not work and that Janusz will find her inadequate. The family meets their neighbor, Doris, who reveals to Silvana how different people are in Britain. Doris agrees to take their photograph, and Silvana's feelings continue to waiver between hope and fear. She has given up a great deal for her dreams for this family and fears she will be a disappointment to Janusz. That night, their first night together in six years, Janusz and Silvana are both nervous but quickly this nervousness turns to joy at no longer being alone and finding someone they once known so well. This reunion is suddenly interrupted by Aurek, who does not understand what is happening between his father and mother. He has come in because he is hungry, and at seven years old, still nurses. This comes as a shock to Janusz.

In "Poland," Silvana and Janusz have moved into their own flat. She worries about the reasons for Janusz marrying her, wondering if he did it simply out of duty. She also feels hope for the future, because she is with the man she loves and free from her parents and the constant reminders of her dead brothers. At nineteen, she thought she knew everything there was to know about the world. The chapter then jumps to Janusz after being knocked unconscious and heading off to Warsaw. He has across the dead peasant woman's home. He feels the need to do something for this woman, so he tends to her home and animals. After living in this home for over a month, two Polish soldiers arrive looking for food. He learns that the Polish people have been tricked by the Russians and are now under Russian rule. He invites the two men in and is glad for their company.

In "Ipswich" the family works on adjusting to their new life. Silvana and Aurek struggle with this return to civilization and Janusz tries to be patient as he reteaches them how to behave in society. Aurek misses the forest and does not trust his father. He sees him as the enemy, because he has taken his mother from him. Silvana works hard to be a good British housewife and sees Janusz as a wonderful, patient man. The chapter ends as Silvana learns about Janusz's plans for her; she is to go to work and Aurek is to attend school.

In "Poland," Silvana is enjoying her life as a soon-to-be mother and the Janusz's wife. The night before her son is born, she and Janusz are continuing to learn about each other intimately, even though they have been married for several months. The next day Silvana wakes up and realizes her water is broken and she is in severe pain. As she attempts to leave the building, a neighbor woman and her husband help her into their flat. She gives birth to Aurek on their floor. Many fears run through her mind, but once she holds her son, she knows that he will be the center of her universe. Janusz's



section of this chapter continues with him in the cabin with the two army men. He learns what has happened to these two men. Franek is mentally handicapped, and his brother and Bruno had tried to get him back home. Franek's brother had distracted the Russian guards so that Franek could escape; he was shot down by these guards. Janusz is somewhat fearful of this child in a man's body and decides the sooner he leaves for Warsaw, the better.

## Pages 29-56 Analysis

Memories are frequent in "Ipswich." Both Janusz and Silvana want this relationship to work. They want to be happy and be a family. It seems Aurek and Helene may, in their own ways, stand in the way of this family's happiness. Aurek is like a wild animal, feeding off his mother at the end of the chapter. Helene is the woman that Janusz cannot seem to forget.

Loneliness is a theme found in "Poland." At nineteen Silvana thought she had finally gotten rid of her loneliness. She had left a dysfunctional family life, had married a man she loved, and was going to have his baby. In Janusz's portion of the chapter, he had finally understood what it meant to be lonely. His father had described loneliness as a disease that can come upon someone who is away from his spouse. Now, being in a cabin away from his wife and child, he now truly understands loneliness. The arrival of the two soldiers reveals to Janusz how truly lonely he had been.

"Ipswich" continues the theme of change. Change is difficult for Silvana and Aurek. This chapter shows the struggles the family is having; six years apart has led to many significant changes. The one character who does not seem interested in changing is Aurek. He struggles the most with having a father and living in a home. Unlike Silvana and Janusz, Aurek has no memories of life before the forests of Poland, so this new life is extremely foreign and uncomfortable for him.

"Poland" tells of a change that takes place in Silvana the day her son is born. She truly became a mother the moment that she saw her son and she realizes that he is all that matters. The story then jumps from Silvana's life and point of view on the day of Aurek's birth to Janusz with the two military men. He fears Franek's childlike behavior and desperately wants to return to Warsaw. These two parts of the story show the connection between these three characters. Aurek strengthens the tie between Silvana and Janusz, while causing a change in their relationship. Now, Janusz is not the most important man in Silvana's life, Aurek is. For Janusz having a son and a wife has made it difficult for him to join the military and he now wishes to return to Warsaw and learn what has happened to them.



## Pages 57-82

### Pages 57-82 Summary

In "Poland," Silvana is enjoying her life as an urban wife. One morning she wakes up in pain; her water had broken. Janusz had already left for work, so she stumbles down the stairs to try to get to the doctor's home. She manages to get downstairs and neighbors in her building bring her into their home. She gives birth to her son on their floor. She feared that she would have her mother's bad luck and that her son would die. She loved him more than anything the moment she laid eyes on him and worried thoughts ran through her mind. Janusz wants to name him after his father, Aurek. In Janusz's section of this chapter, Franek and Bruno join him in the cabin for a meal. While Bruno and Janusz talk, Franek is outside trying to kill a chicken for dinner. This mentally handicapped man scares Janusz, and he decides he better leave for Warsaw as soon as possible.

In "Ipswich," Aurek struggles against going to school, and Silvana struggles with the monotony of her job as a factory seamstress. She frequently is lost in her dreams, and the foreman threatens to fire her. Janusz asks to take Aurek to see the doctor; he worries that there is something wrong with him. The doctor says time, love, and security will cure him of animal-like behavior. Aurek runs away from school again and hides in an abandoned home. After Janusz finds him they begin to head home. On the way they pass a pub where Aurek pretends to shoot a little chubby boy off a barstool. The boy pretends to get shot and fall. Janusz is upset by this war game.

In "Poland," Janusz leaves Silvana and Aurek to join the Polish army, and Silvana feels the fear of loneliness. In her grief and fear, Silvana keeps herself and her son in their flat, eating whatever food they can find. When the neighbors downstairs leave, she and Aurek move in. When a German soldier arrives to move into the empty flat, she gives herself to him to get him to leave. This gives her time to gather a few things, hidden money, and Aurek and leave. They leave the city, jumping from one bus to another and finally walking. In her tiredness she gives Aurek to another woman to hold. As the German planes attack from overhead, the woman is shot down and Silvana finds her son wrapped in the woman's clothes. In Janusz's story, he is convinced through fear to join Bruno and Franek as they travel to Britain.

### Pages 57-82 Analysis

"Poland" shows what is going on in both the lives of Silvana and Janusz at different times. Although Silvana's story and Janusz's story are only a couple of years apart, much has changed. In Silvana's story she has just given birth to their son. Although she is fearful, there is still a great deal of hope for this family. In Janusz's story, he is kept company by two military men and hopes to return to Warsaw and find his wife and child. The effects of war have impacted this family greatly and quickly.





In "Ipswich," Aurek continues to be headstrong, much like his mother. He has not adjusted to his new life; war and the wilderness has been such an influence on his life. Everyone else may be trying to forget their old lives, but he has no desire to do this. Meeting the chubby boy in the pub foreshadows an important friendship to come.

In "Poland," the main characters are filled with feelings of fear and anxiety. Chaos reigns the world in which they live and Silvana and Janusz are being dragged along by the tidal waves of fear and chaos. They are both determined to survive, Silvana for her son and Janusz to finally be the soldier he told his family he would be.



## Pages 83-119

### Pages 83-119 Summary

In "Ipswich," Janusz reminisces about his life in Marseilles with Helene by reading one of her letters but wants to love his troubled wife. He wishes he could tell her about Helene but knows he never can. Janusz wonders what horrible things happened to his wife and son and wants to make them feel safe and happy. Taking Silvana and Aurek to the forest makes Aurek very happy, which makes Silvana happy. At school on Monday, Aurek hides in the boys' toilet and is discovered by Peter, the chubby boy from the pub. Both boys skip school to play war games and play in woods and pond; they become fast friends. When they are caught by their parents, their misbehavior is forgiven since they have both found a friend. Tony Benetoni, Peter's father, is just as happy as the Nowaks to see the boys together. Silvana is instantly attracted to this lively dark, Italian man. This attraction warms the coldness she has felt for so long that she feels she may be able to love Janusz like she used to.

In "Poland," Silvana meets Hanka, strong-willed young former night club singer. Hanka says she will look after Silvana and her baby. With the help of Silvana's wedding ring and Hanka's willingness to give herself to a farmer, the three are given food and shelter. They help the farmer and his wife around the farm in return for continued food and shelter. In Janusz's story, the three men are traveling through Europe trying to get to France where they could join the army and fight the Germans and Russians. It all makes Janusz miss Poland and his family. As he leaves Poland, Janusz is surprised how he feels. The excitement about the adventure ahead is stronger than his feelings of guilt and sadness for leaving his country and family.

In "Ipswich," Aurek is in his shelter in the back yard, imagining that he is a wild boar. He misses his life in the woods with his mother. Tony and Peter arrive with flowers for Silvana. Aurek is not ready to be a boy, but Tony and Peter do not seem bothered by his lack of interest in them. Tony and Peter eventually leave, and Silvana finally is able to get Aurek out of the shelter; she tells him they are finally safe with his father. The next day, as Janusz destroys the shelter to build Aurek a tree house, Gilbert Holborn, Doris' husband, makes friendly conversation over the fence. Later, while Janusz and Aurek are out watching a game of cricket, Silvana accidentally comes across Janusz's letters from Helene. She had been looking for shoe polish to polish shoes she had purchased for Janusz. Finding these letters and understanding they came from a lover during the war creates an instant sense of hurt and fear that she and her son are no longer safe. She runs out of the house and runs into Tony. He knows she is upset, but she feels that she cannot tell him what has happened. She tries to harden herself to this news, knowing that Janusz is not the only one who has terrible secrets to hide.

In "Poland," Hanka, Silvana, and Aurek grow close. Silvana and Hanka discuss the future. Hanka wants to return to Poland, but the thought of returning to Poland causes



Silvana feelings of dread. In Janusz's story in this chapter, he, Franek, and Bruno safely make it across the Hungarian border.

## Pages 83-119 Analysis

In "Ipswich," Janusz's memories of Helene continue to keep him from completely loving Silvana. Silvana's meeting of Peter's father leads to romantic feelings that she transfers to Janusz; this instant attraction for Tony foreshadow complications to come. Aurek finally makes a friend, which will aid him in adapting to his new life in Britain. He has found a boy like himself; a boy who is friendless and a social outcast.

In "Poland," the two main characters' lives are being dictated by the strong personalities around them. Without the help of these strong-willed individuals, Janusz and Silvana would most likely not stand a chance against the invading armies, harsh weather, and lack of necessities. To survive Janusz and Silvana are making life choices that are also moving them farther and farther away from each other. The desire to survive has influenced these decisions, but their desires to survive are not completely selfish. They want to survive for each other, their son, and their country.

In "Ipswich," feelings of pain and longing run rampant. Aurek misses the only life he has known, a wild one in the woods with his mother. When Silvana learns of her husband's letters from Helene, she longs for the feelings of security she had just begun to feel. The pain she feels is not only because her husband had a lover during the war; she is upset that he has kept this woman a secret from her, and this woman could easily be the end of the safe, happy family Silvana had been trying to create. This pain also reminds her how much she misses Poland and how lost she feels in Britain.

In "Poland," Silvana and Janusz continue to grow closer to and safer with the people with whom they are traveling.



# Pages 120-149

## Pages 120-149 Summary

In "Ipswich," Aurek's feelings towards the enemy, his father are beginning to change. Although Janusz is not what he expected, Aurek is adjusting to the reality of who his father is. Tony and Peter come over for a visit, and, while Tony is very chatty with the entire family, he only has eyes for Silvana. Janusz does not seem to notice. He is wrapped up in how happy he is that Aurek is adjusting to life in Britain and how important this English garden is to their future happiness. It represents what Janusz wants his family to be. Janusz does notice that Silvana has grown distant from him recently.

In "Poland," Hanka, Silvana, and Aurek are asked to leave by the farmer. Hanka wants to take them to Warsaw, but Silvana tells her she is not interested in returning. The next morning Silvana wakes to find Hanka gone. As she realizes she and Aurek are alone, a man named Gregor Lazovnik walks up the footpath to her. In Janusz's part of the chapter, the three men find shelter in a home owned by a man named Ambrose. He will help them get to Yugoslavia. From there they can catch a boat to France. Franek is in love with the man's dogs, and Janusz wonders if the boy wouldn't be better hiding out in this village until the end of the war. Ambrose takes them hunting, and Franek accidentally shoots himself to death when attempting to save one of the dogs when it falls through the ice on lake.

In "Ipswich," Silvana is out shopping and finds herself outside Tony's pet shop. She enters it, and he shows her his wares. She panics when she sees the pile of bones, being reminded of horrors during the war. Tony demands she tell him what is wrong; she tells him she wants a French-English dictionary. Later, Silvana is fired from her job because she does not work fast enough. Upon returning home, she finds her husband and Aurek with Doris, Gilbert, and Tony. Doris surprises her with hair dye. As Doris dyes and curls Silvana's hair, Silvana learns more about her neighbors, as well as the widower, Tony. Tony gives everyone gifts, and Silvana's is a dictionary. That night Silvana begins to translate Helene's letters, and her suspicions become reality; these are love letters. Upon returning to bed, she tells Janusz she lost her job; he's not upset. Silvana decides to stay on track with her goals of being married, being a mother, and having this house.

In "Poland," Gregor says he is a doctor. Silvana and Aurek join him and his followers. He teaches Silvana how to survive in the wilderness, and for this she is grateful. But, he also has sexual relations with one of the other women and wants to be with Silvana. She dismisses his advances. In Janusz' portion of the chapter he is trying to make sense of Franek's death. After writing a letter to Franek's family, Bruno and Janusz leave Ambrose's. Two unknown girls say goodbye to Bruno and Janusz, so it does not look like they are traveling together. Janusz tells the girl he will come back for her, thinking it is easy to love a stranger. He feels his loneliness is driving him mad. He and



Bruno separately board the train and Janusz tries to accept that he will most likely never see Silvana and Aurek again.

## Pages 120-149 Analysis

In "Ipswich," Janusz tries to build a perfect world around his imperfect family, while a relationship of sorts is building between Tony and Silvana. It is now obvious that they are both attracted to each other, especially since Silvana found Helene's letters. This foreshadows a relationship and subsequent complications to come.

In "Poland," loss is significant. Silvana loses Hanka who had become a close friend and Janusz loses Franek, a mentally-challenged man who he saw as a sweet and innocent boy. Loss is significant throughout this entire book. Both main characters, as well as many other characters, have felt the pangs of sadness caused by losing one's love ones and possessions. Loss has done significant damage to the characters in this book and has frequently led to changes in the characters' decisions and attitudes towards their lives and the lives of others.

In "Ipswich," the relationship between Tony and Silvana continues to develop as her feelings of safety with Janusz continue to dwindle. Despite the letters Silvana begins to translate, she seems to understand some of Janusz's deception. Once again her lies are brought up but not discussed. There is more in Silvana's past to be learned. The atrocities that Silvana faced are hinted at when she sees the bones and when Tony says he has read stories of what had happened in Poland.

In "Poland," Gregor is the new leader in Silvana's life. He is both beneficial and trouble; his skills in the wild will prove very useful for Silvana, but his behavior towards the women who travel with him is also wild. He is like a wild animal who is the leader of a pack; he seems to believe he has complete control over what takes place in this group. As Silvana focuses on survival, Janusz focuses on his loneliness. He is struggling to deal with the loss of Franek, as well as all those he had previously lost. As the losses pile up, Janusz feels that his sanity slipping.



# Pages 150-183

## Pages 150-183 Summary

In "Ipswich," it is September and the boys are going back to school; Aurek no longer makes a fuss. Tony and Silvana's relationship develops as they spend time together with the two boys. Tony often has grand plans for them but frequently does not show. Then, he will surprise them and show up out of the blue with presents. Silvana wants to share her life story with Tony; it seems she can trust him, but at the last moment she changes her mind, grabs Aurek, and heads home. Upon arriving home, she goes straight to where Helene's letters are hidden; they are not there. She feels relief. She also wonders what is taking place between her and Tony. She convinces herself it is a girlish infatuation. She needs Janusz to keep her son safe.

In "Poland," the story returns to a year after Silvana and Aurek had left Warsaw. She is with Gregor and his followers and knows that they could not have survived without Gregor. When he makes advances towards her, she finally gives in, although she realizes it was a mistake. In Janusz's portion of the chapter, he and Bruno arrive in Marseille, France. Janusz wants to join a French unit, but Bruno wants a couple weeks of vacation. During this time Janusz falls asleep in the sun and ends up with sun poisoning. The people with whom he and Bruno stay find him a place in the country to recover.

In "Ipswich," Silvana has decided to try to not think about Tony. To help her do this, she has told Aurek he may no longer play with Peter. Aurek becomes upset and runs out into the rain. A week later, Aurek, who has still not forgiven her, comes down with a fever. After a visit to the doctor, it is discovered he has the chicken pox. His father is relieved that it is nothing too serious and that his son is becoming more and more like other boys. Silvana feels embarrassed for how she overreacted to Aurek's fever; Janusz is proud of her and her instincts. This sweet moment between the two of them ends when Janusz says they should try for another baby, and Silvana's body language clearly says she is not interested. As Silvana sleeps, Janusz looks at Helene's letters, which are now stashed away in the potting shed; he is not ready to let go of Helene. He and Aurek spend time together, and it is clear Aurek is growing fond of the enemy, his father. The chapter ends as Aurek asks Silvana if they are going to have a baby, like his father had mentioned. She says no, because they do not need anyone but him. He agrees.

In "Poland," Silvana's life revolves around survival; she has almost forgotten the war. One day when Silvana and Aurek return from wandering the woods, she finds out that Gregor and one of the women, Elsa, have deserted the group. The next morning the other women leave to find him. Silvana is left to tend to the dying husband of one of the women; the man dies a week later. In Janusz's section, he is welcomed by a farmer and his family. Their beautiful daughter, Helene, tends to the sun-poisoned Janusz. As the days go by, Janusz is healing due to Helene's attention and the simplicity of their lives on the farm.



In "Ipswich," it is Christmas at Number 22 Britannia Road. Silvana wonders what Tony is doing and tiredly watches her husband and son as they imitate the perfect British gentleman. Silvana has caught the flu and spends the holiday in bed; she lies there feeling that Aurek is slipping away from her. She learns that Tony and Peter have left town and she goes for a walk to escape the intimate relationship she sees developing between Janusz and Aurek. She ends up wandering into the yard of the rag and bone man. It is her birthday, and she says as much to the rag and bone man. He says she can take whatever she would like as a gift. She sees all the used items he has and mourns for those who were the previous owners of these items. She helps to organize these items, so they may start new lives with new people. She chooses a black gown that reminds her of her mother, who she surprisingly misses. She arrives home later to a surprise birthday party thrown by Janusz, Doris, and Gilbert. She is given a brand-new dress and is told she will be taken to a movie theater the next day. Tony will be babysitting Aurek. Silvana cheers up.

## Pages 150-183 Analysis

In "Ipswich," the truth comes out regarding Tony's feelings for Silvana and she begins to confide in him. There is a sense of safety with Tony, although it is no match for the security she feels in the word family, which she believes can only take place between her, Aurek, and Janusz. So, she downplays her feelings for Tony because the security of her life with Janusz is more important than her feelings for Tony. This sense of security increases when she realizes the letters are gone.

"Poland" is a short chapter that focuses on mistakes made by Silvana and Janusz. Silvana lets her loneliness convince her to sleep with Gregor, and Janusz wastes time in Marseilles instead of joining the French military. This time leads to a dangerous sunburn and possible capture by the German forces who are headed south through France.

In "Ipswich," Janusz and Silvana still struggle in their relationship with each other. They both are in love with others but want to love each other. They also have different goals. Silvana simply wants to protect her son, while Janusz wants to create a perfect British family, which now he thinks should include another baby.

In "Poland," the war is almost completely forgotten by both Silvana and Janusz. Both of these characters have changed a great deal since they last saw each other. Silvana and Aurek are practically wild animals, while Janusz has lost his loneliness in the company of others and has found peace in the beautiful Helene and her family.

In "Ipswich," like Janusz's father once said that someone can be lonely in a crowd, Silvana has a husband, a son, and friendly neighbors, yet she seems so alone in this chapter. She seems more alone in this chapter than in ones in which she and Aurek were alone in the Polish woods. Aurek and his father have bonded and Silvana feels left out and unneeded. She finds that she feels better when she sorts through the rag and bone man's goods, because she feels useful. Her happiest moments in the chapter are spent at the rag and bone man's shop. The only other time in which she seems to cheer

up is when she hears that she will be seeing Tony. So, it seems that all her efforts to forget Tony have been in vain.





# Pages 184-215

## Pages 184-215 Summary

In "Poland," after Gregor left with Elsa, Silvana and Aurek begin to aimlessly wander the woods. She is ready to die and can see that her son is also fading. She comes upon a bunch of furniture in a hole made by a bomb. She curls up with Aurek on a red velvet chaise longue and waits for death. In Janusz's section of the story, he has healed enough that he could help Helene's family around the farm. As he and Helene work, they talk and become better acquainted. He told her about his wife and child, and she wanted to be with him. He cannot be with his wife and child because of the war, but she understands that this is only a temporary relationship. They sleep together, and Janusz is falling in love with this woman that is like no one he has ever known.

In "Ipswich," Tony arrives to babysit Aurek. Silvana is shocked at how happy she is to see him, although it bothers her when he brings up his dead wife's name. After some small talk and Silvana thinking about how annoying their discussions are and how everyone seems to be eating out of the palm of Tony's hand, they head to the cinema. They spend a memorable evening at the movie theater, but the evening's sweetness is cut short when Janusz asks again to try to have another baby and Silvana says no. She feels she has ruined the moment that she was having with Janusz. Upon returning home, Janusz puts Aurek to bed and Tony asks to see Silvana in the park with the boys. Silvana fights her desire to be with him and tells him she cannot meet him unless Janusz is there. She then goes to bed, sleeping in Aurek's bed. She must stand firm to her purpose; she must provide Aurek a safe home with a father and that father is Janusz.

In "Poland," Silvana is saved by a woodsman and his family. She and Aurek are taken in and brought back to good health. The woodsman sees them as miracles; he is happy he was able to bring them back to life. In Janusz's story, his relationship with Helene and her family continues to develop. He all but forgot about the war and his past. He is ready to make Helene his wife.

In "Ipswich," Janusz is hoping to receive a promotion at work. He believes that patience and hard work pay off in the end. With this sense of hope for his life and his family, he looks into purchasing a car that is in pretty bad shape. After listening to the owner of the car discuss politics and meeting the wife and their handicapped fourth child, Janusz is ready to head home. He comes across his boss along the way and learns he is to be the new foreman; he received his raise. Upon returning home, he burns Helene's letters; it is time for him to move on. He tells Silvana that he got the raise and purchased a car. He asks her again about having another baby; the doctor said it might help her heal from her trauma. She agrees and Janusz is overjoyed. Silvana secretly got a diaphragm from the doctor and feels like she should burn in hell for the lies that continue to grow.



## Pages 184-215 Analysis

In "Poland," as Silvana resigns to the sleep of death, Janusz is brought back to life by the bold and beautiful Helene. As Silvana's life seems to be ending, Janusz's is starting fresh. The weather in both locations enhances what is taking place to these main characters. Silvana is dying in the freezing snow, and Janusz is blossoming in the summer sun. On the surface it seems that Janusz may be freed from his duties as a husband and father, but, just as Helene said, this is only a temporary situation. Many more plot twists can be expected.

In "Ipswich," Silvana continues to be tormented by her love for Tony and her desire to provide a family for Aurek. Silvana's possessive behavior towards Aurek has also caused her feelings of jealousy when she sees how close Janusz and Aurek have become. The relationship that she had hoped for has developed, but her past and her role in Aurek's life up until this point keep her from enjoying this relationship between a father and his son. Her secretive past also keeps her from getting close to Janusz and from wanting another child. Fear is a frequent companion for Silvana that influences her thoughts and actions.

In "Poland," Silvana and Janusz's lives continue to change. They have both been saved by others, but while Janusz seems ready to forget the past and focus on a happy future with Helene, Silvana is more skeptical about the goodness of being saved. She does see Aurek as a possible good luck charm.

In "Ipswich," as in the previous chapter, Silvana and Janusz's lives continue to move in opposite directions. Janusz receives a raise and feels hopeful about his family's future. Silvana, on the other hand, is falling further into despair as her lies continue to pile up. At some point Silvana will not be able to handle these lies and will either tell Janusz about them or leave to avoid having to tell him her lies.



## Pages 216-239

### Pages 216-239 Summary

In "Poland," Silvana adjusts to life at the woodsman's home. As she helps around the home, she learns of medicine that the mother takes and Silvana only knows of one man who could make it, Gregor. She wonders if he will ever come around. In Janusz's story, Helene asks Janusz to stay with her and although he knows he would be risking getting arrested, he wants to stay with her in this dream life. Later that day Bruno arrives and tells Janusz he has no choice but to leave. He tells her he will come back to her; his thoughts are with her as he and Bruno travel to England to join up with British troops.

In "Ipswich," the enemy has taught Aurek how to catch birds' eggs. Aurek, Peter, Silvana, and Tony are spending the day in the woods, and Aurek is tempted to get a rook's eggs, which would be dangerous to do, since rooks are so protective of their nests. He decides he will bring a rook egg home to the enemy as a gift, and climbs the tree to the nest. The rooks will not leave him alone, and Peter gets Silvana and Tony to come help. Silvana climbs the tree, and Aurek falls into her arms. Tony takes them back to his home to get cleaned up. As the boys clean up, Silvana tells Tony the truth about Aurek. He is not her son; her son is dead. Aurek walks into the room just as Tony kisses her. Aurek is shocked by what he sees and runs home to safety, his father.

In "Poland," Silvana finds her missing possessions; Marysia had stolen them. She confronts her mother about it, but the mother warns her that Marysia has given much of herself to help all of them and should not be punished for stealing. Ela and Antek approach a soldier who has arrived; it is obvious that something is wrong. Soon Gregor and Marysia get out of the back of a truck; she must have been found with Gregor, and the German soldier was upset because he thought she was his. After shooting the mother and being distracted by Silvana, a scuffle takes place ending with Gregor killing the soldier with an ax. Silvana and Aurek run away from this gruesome scene. They were now safe again in the forest. In Janusz's story, Bruno and Janusz are in Scotland. Bruno is flirting with a lady named Ruby, while Janusz's mind is far away in France.

In "Ipswich,"

### Pages 216-239 Analysis

In "Poland," many questions arise. What is the significance of Gregor? What might his return mean for Silvana? What will be the fate of Janusz and Helene? The lives of these characters are always in a state of change. They find some sort of happiness and stability and something out of their control takes place and destroys that safe world. Will they eventually find security?

In "Ipswich," the truth finally comes out. The foreshadowing of this event does not keep the reader from feeling shock at this news. Silvana's obsession with orphaned children



and her constant state of terror now makes complete sense. She had somehow lost her own child and replaced him with an orphaned one. She must feel that it is her duty to protect this boy because she was not able to protect her own. The truth is told to Tony, and, since Aurek caught Tony kiss his mother, many other truths may be surfacing soon. These truths could destroy this family and all their dreams of love and security.

In "Poland," Silvana and Aurek suffer, yet, another traumatic experience. It is even more significant now that the reader knows that this boy is not Silvana's real son. It makes the reader wonder when her real son had died and when this boy had become her child. Once again the lead characters lives continue to change. In an instant Silvana and Aurek lose the safety of a home to return to the safety of the woods, and Janusz is in the military in Scotland, grieving from missing Helene.



# Pages 240-271

## Pages 240-271 Summary

In "Ipswich," Janusz's car has arrived and Doris and Gilbert are visiting, discussing the car and making small talk. As they are about to go in for tea, Janusz sees Aurek running up the street, and he looks like he has been crying. What Aurek has to say shocks him, but he stays calm and tells Aurek they will be just fine. At the same time, Silvana is begging Tony to drive her home, so she can catch Aurek before he gets to Janusz. She decides, with some relief, that it is time to tell Janusz the truth. She comes home to find that Doris and Gilbert have heard what has happened and side with Janusz. Once they leave, Silvana tells Janusz the truth about Aurek and tells him that she knows about the letters. Janusz kicks them both out, and reluctantly they stay with Tony.

In "Poland," Silvana and Aurek watch as German soldiers execute three men. Later, they search the dead bodies for necessities and valuables. In Janusz's story, he and Helene had been writing letters back and forth. As usual, he receives a letter, assuming it is from Helene. The letter is from her brother telling him that Helene had died in a hospital after being shot in the streets by German soldiers.

In "Ipswich," Silvana sees fear and uncertainty for the first time in Tony's eyes. He tells her he will take them to his house by the sea. They move into this home, and Silvana is surprised to see boxes of various supplies everywhere; Tony is a black marketeer. She is relieved that she told Janusz the truth, despite the consequences. Aurek wants to go home, and Silvana wonders if it is possible to love two men. Silvana is embarrassed when Tony tells her she should pose as his housekeeper to protect her reputation. Silvana agrees; she believes they will not be staying long. Janusz will forgive her, at least to see Aurek. This makes Tony sad. Silvana cannot sleep that night, so she goes into downstairs and looks at the newspaper articles and pictures about orphaned children. She worries that she stole Aurek from his mother. As morning comes, she begins cleaning the house.

In "Ipswich," Janusz is alone in the house thinking about all that has taken place in his life including the death of his son and his finding Silvana. He wonders if he should have left her in the wilderness and returned to Helene's family. Peacetime has not brought the peace he expected. His thoughts about what Silvana has done and what she has gone through cause him feelings of both anger and pity.

In "Felixstowe," Silvana and Aurek have been in the house by the sea for five days, and Aurek wants to go home. Silvana wanders around the house in a daze, and, for a moment, Aurek contemplates poisoning Tony with poisonous mushrooms. Neither Silvana nor Aurek are happy.

In "Poland," Silvana and Aurek have readjusted to living in the woods, and they are surviving. Silvana sees them now as part of the forest. In Janusz's story, he waits for



Bruno to return. Bruno has been out flying on a mission. Sadly, the planes get caught in heavy fog, and Janusz' learns that Bruno's plane crashed to the ground.

## Pages 240-271 Analysis

In "Ipswich," what once began as a girlish crush has led to the destruction of Silvana's family. Janusz is unable to see the similarities between his own secrets and Silvana's. All he can understand is that she has cheated on him and lied about their son. He acts out of anger and pain, and only time will tell if he can forgive her.

"Poland" focuses on death and how the main characters react to it. Silvana and Aurek have become like animals, taking advantage of those who have died so that they may survive. They are still affected by these deaths, but their own survival may depend on what they can get from others, in this case, dead bodies. Janusz must now deal with Helene's shocking death. It is now understandable why he had kept her letters and had been unable to get over her. It also explains why he must have decided to search for Silvana and Aurek. If Helene had not died, he most likely would have returned to her and tried to forget his lost family.

In "Ipswich," Silvana and Aurek are again homeless. Her life seems to be starting over again, although she is determined to believe that they will not be staying with Tony for long. She has hope that Janusz will forgive her and will want to at least see Aurek. This chapter reveals Tony's other sides; he is not always the strong, suave man Silvana once thought him to be. He is also a black marketeer and not simply a pet shop owner with good connections. Although Silvana is glad she told Janusz the truth, this confession has hurt her and Aurek in many ways. Aurek could possibly be without a father, they are homeless, and Silvana is once again haunted by her dead son and the possibility that she stole this Aurek from a mother who misses him.

"Ipswich" is a chapter that revolves around Janusz's thoughts and feelings. It is filled with "what ifs" and "should haves." He is unsteady and unsure of what to do and how to feel. On one hand he wants to hate Silvana for what she did to him, and on the other hand, he knows that she deserves his pity and forgiveness. She has suffered a great deal, and he is now just starting to realize how much. The only thing solid in his life is the house, and it seems that could become his focus.

"Felixstowe" is primarily from Aurek's point of view. As he grows in this book, his thoughts become more important to the story and reveal more about the characters. He watches his mother and Tony and knows this situation is not right. Like many children with parents in struggling relationships, he wonders if he is to blame for what has happened. All he wants to do is to go home, yet it is interesting that, although he wants his father, he still calls him the enemy. It seems that this name is more of a pet name now and thought out of habit, rather from a place of anger or distrust.

"In Poland," Silvana and Aurek seem to have adjusted to their wild life in the Polish woods. They are so well-adjusted it seems they have always lived in the woods. This

seems to be the safest and most hopeful chapter for Silvana and Aurek since the war began. There is now no longer anyone with them to lead them astray or cause problems. They are on their own and doing well in the woods. Janusz, on the other hand, loses yet another loved one. With the loss of his wife and child, the rest of his family, Helene, and now Bruno, life will be very difficult for Janusz. Although he has persevered through his struggles, he suffers greatly, both physically and mentally, from change and hardship.



## Pages 272-320

### Pages 272-320 Summary

In "Ipswich," Janusz clings to his routine of working many hours at the factory and then coming home and making repairs around the house. The grief and heartache he feels causes anger in him. He begins digging up the garden that had meant so much to him. He realizes now that it was a dream and now there are no more dreams.

In "Felixstowe," Tony surprises Silvana with a wardrobe full of clothes. She wonders if he had planned her coming here with him all along. She then asks if they had belonged to his dead wife, Lucy, and Tony replies that they did not. She sees herself in the mirror and sees a movie star instead. Tony says he loves her and they kiss.

In "Poland," as Silvana and Aurek are doing well on their own in the forest, they come across a road. Coming down this road they see a line of green army trucks. In Janusz's part of the chapter, Janusz meets Ruby and tells her the news of Bruno's death. She encourages Janusz to find his wife because he does not have to be alone; his family could be out there somewhere. Janusz decides to search for Silvana and Aurek and speaks with an officer in charge of looking for those missing during the war. He says if she is in a refugee camp and they would find her.

In "Ipswich," Janusz destroys everything in the yard but the treehouse; he cannot stand to destroy it. Janusz grabs a spade and catches a bus out to the forest. He digs up a sapling and walks all the way home with it, when the bus driver refuses to allow him on the bus with the tree. This tree is a new beginning for him and is in honor of his son who had died. The next tree will be for the Aurek that is living.

In "Felixstowe," Silvana sends a postcard to Janusz every week, hoping he will respond and want to see his son. She has decided that she will send only one more postcard and then give up; she will try to forget him like she did in Poland. She feels tenderness towards Tony and wonders if Tony, Aurek, and she can be a family. One day while out on the beach, Silvana runs into Doris, who tells her Janusz has moved and gives her a hard time about her behavior. Silvana's reaction is just as Doris had hoped; she feels depleted, and Doris is triumphant. Silvana thinks she failed both her sons and her husband. Upon returning home she begins cutting out the pictures of orphans from the newspapers Tony has collected. Each face reminds her of her dead son; she feels more lost now than she ever did in the forest.

In "Poland," Silvana and Aurek are picked up by the British military.

In "Ipswich," Janusz continues digging up trees for his yard. Gilbert has come with him to assist and tells him Tony, Silvana, and Aurek are moving. This is what Doris had told him. Janusz thinks of the postcards she has sent and wonders if he should leave her with Tony, if she is happy. He returns home, plants the trees, and decides he must try to





let Silvana and Aurek go. His section of the chapter ends with him lying on Aurek's bed, weeping. Silvana's part of the story in this chapter tells of their boat trip to Britain. She comes across a wooden rattle, thinking of the one her father had made and wondering what had happened to it. She gives it to Aurek, telling him it is a magic rattle. They finally arrive on English soil.

In "Felixstowe," Silvana tries to give up on Janusz and gives in to Tony's desire for her. Tony tells her he is selling the pet shop and they will move to London to start a life together. Tony is full of many promises, but Silvana is beginning to realize that many of them are empty. She agrees to go with him, because she has given up hope that Janusz will come for her. As this scene is playing out, Aurek is secretly writing a letter to Janusz, stealing stamps from Tony to mail it.

In "Ipswich," Janusz has planted seventy silver birch trees in his backyard. He cares for them like a mother. He sits and thinks of Helene, but since burning her letters, his memories of her have faded. Time has helped to heal this wound. Janusz goes inside and looks at the picture Doris took of him, Silvana, and Aurek. He admires her for what she had done for the boy. If only she had not fallen for Tony. He wonders what he would tell his family back in Poland, if he ever got in touch with them. He begins a letter and writes about the treehouse and how proud they would be of their grandchild.

In "Felixstowe," as Tony prepares to move them to London, Silvana continues collecting pictures of orphans, placing them under her pillow at night like a mother hen sitting on her nest.

In "Ipswich," Janusz goes to town and sees that the pet shop is for sale. He contemplates going to Felixstowe to see if he can win back Silvana, but he is afraid of her rejecting him.

In "Felixstowe," Peter's grandmother comes to visit Silvana. During this uncomfortable ordeal, Silvana learns that the clothes she has been given are actually Lucy's and the house she is living in actually belongs to Lucy's parents. She even resembles Lucy; this sends a chill up her spine. Later, after Peter's grandmother has left, Aurek asks when they can go home, and she evades the question by saying they are home and they are survivors. She wonders if he knows she is not his mother. Then, after thinking for a moment, she knows she is his mother. She goes to the pictures of orphans and sends them fluttering out her window. She knows that she and Aurek cannot stay in Felixstowe and changes into the dress Janusz had bought her.

In "Ipswich," when Janusz arrives home from work, he finds Aurek's postcard. He reads it over and over again, marveling at it.

In "Felixstowe," Silvana confronts Tony about his wife's clothing. Tony does not want her to leave, but Silvana realizes the feelings he has for her are really feelings he still has for his dead wife that he is projecting onto her. She can understand this because she has done the same thing to the boy. She had tried to make him her dead son, rather than loving him for the boy that he is. Tony asks that she be at home when he returns



from making a delivery; Silvana does not respond. As Tony is driving along the road, he stops when he sees Janusz. He tells Janusz that Silvana is waiting for him. As Silvana is coming back from the beach, she sees Janusz in his car and her heart soars. Silvana gets into the car and the two begin to tell each other what has happened since they first parted. Silvana tells stories of the boy, which begins to blend the two Aurek's in Janusz's mind, which he feels is the best thing for him. The two boys become one. They kiss awkwardly, although they are full of love and desire. They then drive to the house and Aurek sees them from his window. In his excitement, he hangs out the window with his parents fearing that he will fall.

In "22 Britannia Road," the Nowak family drives home. Aurek feels like a sailor coming into his home port. Upon arriving home, his father shows them the trees in the backyard and says that he and his mother are everything to him. Aurek, hearing the call of a cuckoo and unable to resist its song, begins to sing.

## Pages 272-320 Analysis

In "Ipswich" Janusz life is falling apart. The only stable part of his life is his home, so he spends all of his spare time taking care of it. At one point he begins destroying the garden. This represents the destroying the dream of having a perfect British family. He realizes this was just a dream, not reality, and that there will be no more dreams. He is using this act as a way of trying to harden himself against the loss of his wife and child, yet again.

In "Felixstowe," Tony gives Silvana a gift it seems he had been planning for a long time. This gift foreshadows events to come. As Janusz gives up on his dream in the previous chapter, it seems that Silvana is living her dream of living the life of an American film star. She has the handsome man and the beautiful clothes, but does she love him? Will this make her happy? Most likely it will not make her happy.

In "Poland," the story is about to come full circle. The green army trucks are most likely those of the military refugee camp in which Janusz finds Silvana and Aurek.

In "Ipswich," it seems at first that Janusz is still trying to destroy the dream that the garden represented. As the chapter progresses, it is clear that he is creating a new, more realistic dream. He realizes that he had not taken his family into account when he created the dream of a perfect English family. He now sees this as ridiculous. His family had been living in the forest for years and so it is fitting that he would begin creating a forest for them.

In "Felixstowe," it is clear that Silvana is still in love with Janusz but is trying to see a future with Tony. This future with Tony may be more possible now that Doris has told Silvana that Janusz has moved. His moving reinforces what Silvana already believes. Her husband is not coming for her, and she has failed all of them, her husband and her two sons. Just as Janusz uses the digging up of the garden to deal with his grief,



Silvana cuts out pictures of orphans to grieve for her dead son and her feelings of loneliness and loss.

In "Poland," Silvana is unsure how to act; she has been in the wilderness for so long. She also no longer knows who she can trust. She makes the choice to be honest about who she is, which makes it possible for Janusz to find her.

In "Ipswich," the reader learns that Janusz has not moved. It seems Doris is telling lies to both Silvana and Janusz, most likely to protect Janusz. She sees Silvana as a liar and a cheat and due to the hurt she feels from losing this friend, she reacts in a way that could keep Janusz and Silvana apart when it seems they want to be together. Also, the story finally comes full circle. Silvana and Aurek have arrived in Britain, which connects to the first chapter in the book. The rattle in this chapter represents this second Aurek. Although he may look similar to and be similar in age to the first Aurek, he is not the same boy, just as this rattle may look like the one Silvana's father made, it is not the same one.

In "Felixstowe," Silvana gives in to Tony, but it is obvious that her feelings for him have faded and she still wants to be with Janusz. Now that she has spent more time with Tony, she sees how empty most of his promises are. He is full of dreams but very little reality. Fortunately, Aurek is writing a letter to his father. Maybe this letter will be enough to get Janusz to come for them.

The trees in "Ipswich" are very important, because they keep Janusz going. They need him, and it is good to feel needed. He has also begun to heal. The pain he felt from losing Helene has started to subside, and he has begun to forgive Silvana for what she had done to him and their son. He now feels admiration for what she did for a poor orphaned boy. Through the writing of the letter to his family, it is revealed how much he cares for this little boy; he sees him as his son. It also shows that he desires to keep the pain he felt from losing his real son from his family, so he plans to tell them this boy is his son.

In "Felixstowe," Silvana deals with the grief she feels in a similar way to Janusz and his trees. The collecting of these pictures makes her feel a little like a mother to these children. By thinking about them and carefully cutting out their pictures and stories, she is honoring their lives. This helps her to rest and recover.

In "Ipswich," Janusz is torn about what to do about Silvana. Seeing the store closed, he knows he has very little time before she moves. He obviously loves her and the boy, but might let his fear of rejection and loss stop him from going to her. The story is building up to the climax, and Silvana's moving has made the story feel more urgent, as time is running out for Janusz to save his family.

In "Felixstowe," the climax continues to build as Silvana learns of Tony's lies. His love for her seems to be strongly based on her resemblance to his dead wife. The letting go of the pictures of the orphans represents her acceptance of herself as the boy's mother



and her first son's death. The changing of her dress represents the end of her relationship with Tony and her plans for herself and Aurek.

"In Ipswich," Aurek's letter may be the luck that this family needs. He has been seen as a lucky charm in the past and may be one again. This postcard may make them a family again.

In "Felixstowe," the truth sets Silvana free. She has been looking for a reason to leave Tony and now one has come. The meeting of Janusz and Silvana and the telling of events during the war is the climax of the story. They no longer have a son that is the glue between them. They only need each other, and the boy can now be their son without being the luck that draws them together. The chapter ends fearfully as Aurek slips on the windowsill. What would his death do to these two characters? Could they survive this loss?

In "22 Britannia Road," the story comes to an end. Aurek did not fall, and the family returned to a changed home. Unrealistic dreams and hidden secrets no longer exist at 22 Britannia Road. Through Aurek's eyes the reader can see how happy this family is and hopefully will remain. They have suffered greatly and deserve some happiness.



# Characters

## Silvana Nowak

Silvana Nowak is a young Polish woman whose life begins to change when she becomes pregnant with her boyfriend's child. They quickly marry and move to Warsaw to begin their lives together. When the war comes to Poland, Janusz, her husband, leaves to join the army and she is left to care for their young son. She finally flees Warsaw and ends living in the woods. At this point, she has no contact with her family and her son has died. She had left him in a cart where she had found a crying boy about the same age as her son. In her crazed mental state, she saw this baby boy as the replacement for her son and she began calling him Aurek, the same name as her dead son. They spent the next several years hiding in the woods and on various farms, relying on other characters to teach them how to live in the wilderness. Silvana and the boy suffer many traumatic experiences as they watch other get killed and suffer from the hard life they are now living. She and her son are finally saved by the British military and placed into a refugee camp.

Janusz finds them in this camp and brings them to Britain to live with him. Silvana decides to join him in Britain so that she can provide the boy with a father. Silvana struggles with the secrets she keeps from her husband and the guilt she feels for the death and abandonment of her son. Her family struggles greatly during their time in Britain but finally begin to heal from their suffering and become a real family.

## Janusz Nowak

Janusz Nowak meets Silvana while he is swimming with his friends. When he finds out that she is pregnant with his child, he marries her and moves into a flat in Warsaw. The first couple years of their life together are great. When war comes to Poland, he feels he must do his duty and be a soldier, so he leaves to join the military. During his train ride with his unit, Luftwaffe fly over the train, so they all disembark and run for the woods. He sees a woman get shot down, runs in the opposite direction, and falls and hits his head in his panic to escape the bloodshed. When he awakens, the train has left. He heads in the direction of what he believes is Warsaw and comes across the dead woman's cottage. He stays here for a month before being found by two Polish soldiers. He learns from them that Poland has been taken over by the Germans and the Russians, and the three men decide to leave for England to join the military to fight the Germans and the Russians. Janusz is traumatized by the hard life they lead as they secretly leave the country. By the time they arrive in France, one of the soldiers, Franek has died. Bruno and Janusz enjoy some much-needed rest, but Janusz falls asleep in the sun and gets sun poisoning. He is taken to a farmer's home and is cared for by the farmer's daughter, Helene. He and Helene fall in love and decide to marry after the war. Janusz and Bruno leave for England to finally join the military. During the war, he learns that Helene has



died and he soon loses Bruno in a plane crash. Bruno's girlfriend convinces him to look for his wife and child, who he has not seen in six years.

With the help of the military, his wife and child are found. He brings them to Britain and moves them into his new home at 22 Britannia Road. Peacetime is almost as much a struggle as war time as he and his family adjust to life together and heal from their wartime traumas. By the end of the story, he and Silvana have been honest with each other about what had taken place during the war and reconcile.

## **The Second Aurek Nowak**

The second Aurek was an abandoned baby boy that Silvana found in a cart. She saw this crying boy as the replacement for her son. This boy grew up assuming Silvana was his mother. After growing up in the wilderness, he was practically a wild animal. He called his father the enemy because his father was responsible for making him live in a society that was so foreign to him. He also took his mother from him. Throughout the course of the story, he adjusted to his new life and began to trust his father. Although he calls him the enemy throughout the story, by the end he saw him as a loving father and the nickname was simply that.

This boy is seen as a good luck charm, frequently saving Silvana and himself from imminent danger and death. He also brings his parents back together and is the reason for his family's reconciliation.

## **The Real Aurek Nowak**

The real Aurek Nowak was a sickly baby who died when a woman carrying him was shot and killed. Silvana left him in the cart in which she found a crying baby similar in age to Aurek.

## **Tony Benetoni**

Tony is the father of Aurek's friend, Peter who falls in love with Silvana, who reminds him of his dead wife.

## **Peter Benetoni**

Peter is a chubby boy who is Aurek's only friend. It seems that Aurek is also his only friend.



## **Helene Legarde**

Helene is the Frenchwoman who cares for Janusz after he got sick with sun poisoning. She and Janusz fall in love and plan to marry after the war.

## **Gilbert and Doris Holborn**

The Holborn's are the Nowak's neighbors in Ipswich.

## **Hanka**

Hanka is a Polish night club singer who takes care of Silvana and Aurek soon after they leave Warsaw.

## **Gregor Lazovnik**

Gregor teaches Silvana the ways of the forest and, although he acts like a wild animal and sleeps with all of the women with whom he travels, is credited with helping her and Aurek survive in the wilderness.

## **Bruno**

Bruno is a soldier that Janusz befriends. He is killed when his plane crashes in thick fog.

## **Franek**

Franek is a mentally handicapped young man who accidentally shoots himself as he tries to save a dog from drowning in a lake.

## **Elsa**

Elsa is one of the women who travels with Gregor.

## **Lottie**

Lottie is another woman, known for wearing her hair in a bun, who travels with Gregor.

## **Old Couple**

An old couple travels with Gregor.



## **Antek, Ela, and Marysia**

This family takes in Silvana and Aurek. Silvana and Aurek run away from their home when soldiers come and kill Ela.

## **Ruby**

Ruby is the Scottish woman Bruno had planned to marry.

## **Moira**

Moira is Peter's grandmother who tells Silvana the truth about the clothes Tony gave to her.

## **Olga**

Olga is Silvana's mother. She does not love her child as she should, because she still grieves for the sons that died before the birth of her daughter. She does not understand why her daughter has lived while her sons had not.





# Objects/Places

## Poland

Poland is the location for most of the story. The three main characters in this book are all Polish and do not plan on returning to this now Communist country.

## Warsaw

Warsaw is a large city in Poland that was the home to the Nowaks prior to World War II.

## Poland Woods

Silvana and Aurek spent almost six years in the woods in Poland, hiding from German and Russian soldiers. Silvana hid there with her son, Aurek, because she feared the soldiers would take her son from her.

## Marseilles

Marseilles is the French town in which Janusz met and lived with Helene.

## 22 Britannia Road

22 Britannia Road is the address of the home that Janusz bought before the arrival of his wife and son that he had not seen in six years.

## Ipswich

Ipswich is the small town in which 22 Britannia Road exists.

## Felixstowe

Felixstowe is the seaside town to which Tony takes Silvana and Aurek.

## Italy

Italy is the country from which Tony's ancestors came.



## **Refugee Camp**

Silvana and Aurek were found by Janusz while living in a refugee camp.

## **Wooden Rattle**

Silvana's father made a wooden rattle that was given to her. Another wooden rattle that looked much like this one was given to the second Aurek by Silvana.

## **Trees**

Trees are an important part of Aurek and Silvana's life in the woods. Janusz plants trees in their backyard with the first two being in honor of his two sons.

## **Newspaper Clippings**

Silvana cuts out newspaper clippings of orphaned children as she grieves for the death of her son.

## **Helene's Letters**

These letters keep Janusz from getting over her and cause a rift between Silvana and Janusz when Silvana finds them hidden with the shoe polish.



# Themes

## Change

An important theme in this book is change. The lives of all the characters have changed throughout the timeframe of this story. Due to the war, all the characters had to make adjustments and deal with changes in their social status, wealth, and even basic necessities. For example, Silvana began the story as a young woman who spent most of her time either at the cinema or with her new boyfriend, Janusz, to being a married woman reuniting with her husband after six years of war-torn separation.

It seems that these characters' lives changed with every chapter. Strong characters lead them down different paths, and often tragic events change their course in life. These changes that take place in their lives alter them in many ways. Silvana begins as a confident, hopeful, and innocent young woman. Through the course of the story, she becomes a lover, a mother, a wife, an adoptive parent, a woodland creature, and a traumatized survivor. Janusz begins this story as a young, self-assured, and God-fearing man. By the end of the story however, he has aged both physically and spiritually, while realizing his weaknesses. His belief in God has also vanished.

Change is a universal theme because it can be understood and has been experienced by all. In real life, the one constant is change. Some changes are good and some are bad, but change of all kinds is inevitable.

## Perseverance

A second important theme is perseverance. These characters had suffered greatly during the war and continued to suffer during peacetime. But they persevered for the sake of themselves, their families, and their desires for the future.

Throughout this book, Silvana, Janusz, and Aurek, as well as many other characters, suffered great losses and disappointments. They lost their homes, possessions, and loved ones. Heartache and pain were around every corner, yet these characters, time and time again, brushed themselves off and picked themselves back up. Although, this is not to say there were not moments when the characters believed that death was a much better choice than life. Several times Silvana wished for death for herself and her child. They suffered a great deal, both physically and emotionally, and death often seemed sweet and peaceful. Janusz suffered from the loss of others and often envied their deaths because their suffering was over.

Every time death grew closer, these characters managed to have luck come their way. This good fortune gave them the strength and hope they needed to keep going. In the end, this perseverance paid off. This family that had suffered greatly from the war was finally reunited and ready to face the future as a family.



## Secrets

Keeping secrets is a third important theme. The list of secrets and lies grew longer and longer as the story progressed. Most of these secrets were caused by events during the war that were out of the control of the characters, but this did not keep them from feeling ashamed for these secrets.

The most significant secret is one held by Silvana. She had in a moment of weakness given Aurek to a woman to carry and Aurek had died when the woman was killed and fallen. This secret grows when she takes her dead child and leaves him in the place of a crying, but very alive, abandoned little boy of Aurek's age. In her crazed mental state, she decided this little boy was her replacement son and called him Aurek. She was so ashamed of her behavior that she had planned to keep these secrets for the rest of her life. It took her a great deal of time to finally share these secrets with first Tony and then finally, Janusz.

Janusz had his own secrets to keep during and after the war. Due to his loneliness, he fell in love with another woman, Helene, and may very well have returned to her after the war, rather than look for his own wife and child. Only after Helene's death was he able to consider looking for Silvana and Aurek. Even after her death and the return of his family, he struggled to get over her, secretly reading the letters she had written him.

Only once these characters' and others' secrets had been revealed were they able to move past these traumatic events. Only then were Silvana, Janusz, and Aurek able to truly become a family.

Just as in this story, secrets kept in real life tend to fester and cause more problems than they are often worth. They affect one's mental health and one's relationships with others. Those relationships in which there are no secrets are the healthiest and most beneficial.



# Style

## Point of View

The point of view of this book is primarily an omniscient and third-person perspective. The reader feels like an outsider observing the story as it unfolds. This all-knowing narrator slowly reveals the story by jumping from present-day late 1940s to the late 1930s and throughout World War II. By the end of the book, the reader knows why the characters act the way they do and have ended up in their current situation.

At times the narrator has employed quotes and the first-person perspective. This gives the reader a more personal sense of each character. It also gives each character a unique voice, especially with the inclusion of grammatical mistakes, British slang, and several other languages. This lends to a realistic feeling of what it might be like to be these characters or to speak to these characters.

Through the use of both third-person omniscient and first-person perspective, the reader gets a clear image of these characters and the ever-changing world in which they live.

## Setting

The setting of this story frequently jumps back and forth between Poland before and during the war and Great Britain during and after the war. This at first is a bit confusing, as the reader has to acclimate him or herself to the new location and time period.

The parts of the story that take place in Poland include the time in which Silvana and Janusz meet and a little about their families and upbringing. It describes the development of their relationship, unplanned pregnancy, marriage, and the birth of Aurek. It follows Janusz as he joins the military, ends up lost in the woods, and his subsequent adventures with Bruno and Franek as they secretly leave the country to join up with British troops. The Poland chapters also follow Silvana as she deals with the takeover of Warsaw by the enemy and flees Warsaw with young Aurek. Her adventures and terror in the forests around Warsaw are described in detail through the Poland chapters.

Those sections of the story that take place in Great Britain tell of first Janusz's arrival after leaving France, while he is in the military and then the arrival of Silvana and Aurek and the time spent attempting to create a family of these three very different individuals.

Other parts of chapters take place in France while Janusz is living with Helene's family and the countries through which he travels to get to France.



All of these countries and the jumping from one place to another makes for an interesting and intriguing read. The details of these various places and time periods add to the depth and dimension of the setting of this heart-wrenching story.

## Language and Meaning

Along with the use of the first-person and third-person omniscient perspectives, the author uses incorrect English grammar, British slang, period language, Polish, French, and Italian to enhance her story. The author uses poor grammar and mispronunciation to emphasize Silvana's foreignness and the English spoken other characters where English is a second language. It also shows how much Janusz has practiced to sound British. British slang is used by those native to Great Britain to set them apart from those not from Great Britain. Polish is used throughout the book especially as Silvana and Aurek are learning English. This shows the great difference that exists between English and Polish. French and Italian are used sparingly to enhance those characters who are of French or Italian descent. Lastly, period slang and period references help to place the characters specifically in the 1930s through the 1940s during World War II. These details add interest to the story and aid the reader in feeling a part of this book and understanding what life might have been like at this time in these countries.

## Structure

This historical fiction book is more than 300 pages in length. The book alternates between chapters that take place in Poland, Ipswich, Marseilles, Yugoslavia, Scotland, Felixstowe, and various towns in England. Most of the chapters are named after the main places in which the chapters take place such as Poland, Ipswich, and Felixstowe with a few being named after the time in which the story takes place or for the title of the book. For the most part, the chapters alternate between Poland and either Ipswich or Felixstowe. Those chapters named Poland take the reader into the past to learn what has taken place in the lives of Silvana and Janusz. They begin directly before Silvana and Janusz meet and end right after Silvana and Aurek are saved by the British. Each Poland chapter describes Silvana's experiences during and directly after the war first. Then, Janusz's portion of the story is told. The two stories do not necessarily take place at the same time, but they are connected by events taking place in both the characters' lives and emotions felt by both characters. Sometimes the purpose is to show the similarities in the lives of the characters and other times it is to show how the two characters contrast one another. The chapters named Ipswich and Felixstowe take the reader to present-day post-war Britain. They begin just as Silvana and Aurek are headed to Britain and end as the family is driving in the car together. By alternating between these chapters, the reader can understand how events in the past directly affect the characters' lives in the present day.



## Quotes

"Together or separate, Silvana was sure nobody would believe the words house or wife had anything to do with her." (To England., p. 2).

"Over the years, Silvana hardened herself against all of them, her crazy mother, her useless father, and the pressing ghosts of her dead brothers; all of them trapped within the four walls of the cottage." (Poland, p. 16).

"The last thing he saw as he stumbled back into the ditch was the goose-girl falling. Murder was the word that flashed into his mind." (Poland, p. 26).

"I don't want to see any other Polish people...They'll just remind me of what I have lost." (Ipswich, p. 50).

"He picks up a stick and holds it like a gun, shooting at windows and doors...By the time he gets home, Aurek has killed everybody." (Ipswich, p. 72).

"They are all wrong. He is not a heathen child, whatever that means. He is a wild boar." (Ipswich, p. 105).

"The gun sounded again and Franek fell to the ground, his body twisting." (Poland, p. 131).

"He touches Janusz's hand. Perhaps the enemy will try to hug him today? If he does, Aurek will let him." (Ipswich, p. 169).

"She was a blanket then, against the world." (Poland, p. 188).

"Orphans everywhere. They had no one. I think about them. They won't leave me alone." (Ipswich, p. 229).

"He clasped his head in his hands, aware of the fragility of flesh and blood, the easy way people were killed and blown apart by guns and bombs and terribly afraid that he, on the other hand, was condemned to live through it all." (Poland, p. 252).

"Even in the forest, she never felt as lost as this." (Felixstowe, p. 286).

"She takes her folder of newspaper clippings up to bed with her and sleeps with it under her pillow every night. She feels like a mother hen with all those little faces under her head." (Felixstowe, p. 300).

"His mother sits next to him, his father the other side. The way they look at him makes him feel safe; it's like he's everything they ever wanted." (22 Britannia Road, p. 320).



## Topics for Discussion

Silvana replaces her dead son with a baby boy about the same age. Why does she do this? Should she have done this? Why or why not? How does Janusz react to this news? Are you surprised that he has acted this way? Why or why not? How does his view of this situation change? Why? Should Silvana and Janusz tell the boy that he is not really their son? Why or why not?

Janusz sees Silvana as being stronger than him. Why does he feel this way? What evidence is given throughout the book that supports this? How do Janusz's weaknesses influence his decisions? When have you allowed your own weaknesses to influence your decisions and/or actions? How can this help you relate to Janusz?

Helene is shot and killed. If she had not died, do you believe that Janusz would have returned to her? Would he have searched for his wife and child? How different might the story have been if Helene had not died? Would the characters have been better off this way? Why or why not?

Many secrets exist in this story. What are two main secrets kept by the characters in this book? Why do they keep these secrets? How does the keeping of secrets affect the characters? What does this say about keeping secrets and lying? How can you relate to these characters regarding the keeping of secrets? Why do people keep secrets? Are there times when it is appropriate to keep a secret from someone else? If so, when and why? If not, why not?

Many characters in this book act like animals during the war. Describe this behavior in four of the characters. Why do they act like animals? How does this behavior affect other characters? Do you believe this type of behavior could happen today? If so, when and why? If not, why not?

Silvana's mother lost all of her sons. How did this affect her relationship with Silvana? Why did it affect their relationship? How did the relationship between these two characters change Silvana and influence her behavior? Describe your relationship with your own mother or mother figure? How does it compare to the relationship between Silvana and her mother? How different would you be if you had a mother like Silvana has? Explain.

Strength is an important trait found in many of the characters. Describe the strength of two of the characters (physical, mental, emotional, and/or spiritual). How have they become strong? How do their strengths compare? Do you consider yourself to be a strong person? Why or why not? To which character can you relate the most, regarding strength? Why? Can strength be found in all people? Why or why not?

The Nowak family reconciles at the end. How does this finally take place? Do you think this will be a lasting reconciliation? Why or why not? Do anymore changes still need to take place for these characters to be truly happy with their lives and with each other? If



so, what are these changes? If not, why not? How might someone who is in the military feel about this story? Might he or she suffer from the same types of problems? Why or why not? How can we support those who suffer from such trauma?