

# **The Aviary Study Guide**

## **The Aviary by Kathleen O'Dell**

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## Plot Summary

Clara Dooley is a twelve year old girl that lives with her mother in Lockhaven, Maine, a seaport town. Due to a supposed physical condition, a weak heart, Clara is housebound in the Glendoveer mansion along with the owner, Mrs. Glendoveer, and the cook, Ruby. Clara's mother, a nurse, takes care of Mrs. Glendoveer. The only place Clara is permitted to go outside of the house is into the rose garden where the aviary is located. The birds had belonged to Mr. Glendoveer, a magician that had died 30 years earlier. The birds, still precious to Mrs. Glendoveer, terrify Clara; they are loud and constantly screech at her.

Clara describes the Glendoveer mansion and her fascination with its fading beauty. Clara is so charmed by the house that she does not notice that much of it is falling apart. The Glendoveer mansion, arts and crafts in style, is decorated with souvenirs and intricacies from around the world, gathered by George and Cenelia Glendoveer on their travels. Clara loves every part of the house including the Italian murals, brightly patterned Persian carpets, and the intricate woodwork from Germany featuring exquisitely carved flowers and birds.

Clara, unable to attend school, spends a great deal of time in Mrs. Glendoveer's bedroom, elegantly appointed with Chinese wallpaper, bric-a-brac, and a French green enamel stove. The house has some modern conveniences but still possesses gas lamps and wood and coal stoves.

Being confined to the house means that aside from her studies, Clara spends a great deal with time with Mrs. Glendoveer, who also serves as her teacher. Clara is kept under close surveillance and isn't allowed to run or exert herself in any way. Clara longs to go outside and play, to go to school, and make friends her own age.

Clara shows a fascination for the rare birds and sea creatures in the books Mrs. Glendoveer uses to teach. Mrs. Glendoveer talks about the birds in the aviary and how much her late husband loved them. Clara is uncertain why anyone would love such noisy and contentious creatures, and she is concerned about Mrs. Glendoveer's anxiety whenever the birds are upset. Clara and her mother constantly worry about Mrs. Glendoveer catching a cold, as she stands on the balcony to watch the birds. She laments not being able to go out into the garden to calm the birds.

During one of their afternoon talks, Mrs. Glendoveer tells Clara that she had a young son that had been kidnapped and had never been found. The story is almost mentioned in passing and Mrs. Glendoveer doesn't seem to know what had happened or who might be responsible for the disappearance of baby Elliot.

Mrs. Glendoveer becomes ill and dies. Clara soon learns that there were four other Glendoveer children that had been kidnapped, along with Elliot, but that the four older children had drowned. According to Daphne, Clara's new secret friend, the townspeople believe that Mr. and Mrs. Glendoveer had arranged for the kidnapping and murder of

their own children. Clara finds letters and diary entries from Cenelia and George Glendoveer and becomes convinced that their former friend, Woodruff Booth, had a part in the kidnappings.

Clara and Daphne investigate the best they can with limited resources. One day, the birds begin to speak to Clara. They tell her to hurry and shout out Elliot's name. Clara does not know what the birds are trying to say at first, yet their attempts at communication take away some of the fear Clara had felt toward them. Clara continues to investigate and learns that the birds are really the Glendoveer children. George had used an incantation to turn their souls into birds until the day Elliot would return.

Harriet, Clara's mother, finally confesses that Clara is not ill but that she made up a lie to protect Clara from people that might choose to harm her. Harriet is worried that if people can link Clara to the Glendoveer fortune, she may also be in danger, just like the Glendoveer children. Clara learns that her father is really Elliot Glendoveer.

Daphne finds Mr. Booth and corresponds with him through letters. Daphne eventually persuades Booth to come to Lockhaven. Booth uses the ruse that an old friend has issued an invitation and that while he is in town, he will make the trip to meet with Daphne and Clara. Booth believes that Daphne and Clara have evidence that could tie him to the kidnappings and deaths of the Glendoveer children. The girls know that Booth is guilty and is coming to Lockhaven to find and steal any evidence linking him to the crime. The girls put a plan into action to stop Booth. By this time the birds are speaking quite fluently and agree to help Clara and Daphne catch Booth.

Booth arrives and attempts to steal the incriminating evidence from the girls. His henchman, Jimmy, is the man that kidnapped and raised Elliot as his son. After a struggle, Daphne and Clara manage to trap the men in the aviary. Frances and Arthur, the two middle children/birds, fly off to find Elliot.

Frances and Arthur locate Elliot on the island where he had been raised. Elliot is released from the spell that had been cast on him by Booth and returns home. The two men are arrested for their crimes and the entire story comes out about how Booth wanted the money from the ransom. Booth swears that the deaths were accidental.

Clara is desperate to find a way to return the birds to their former states and to allow them to fly off to be with Cenelia and George. Elliot takes a letter supplied by Clara and utters the incantation used by their father and releases his siblings from their avian prison. The children fly off to be with their parents.

Clara and her family, relieved to know the truth, plan their future together.

# Chapters 1-6

## Summary

### Chapter 1

The story begins with this quote: "As a young child, Clara Dooley had felt that the Glendoveer mansion contained the whole world." Chap. 1, p. 7

Clara describes the Glendoveer mansion and her fascination with its fading beauty. The Glendoveer mansion is decorated with souvenirs and intricacies from around the world, gathered by George and Cenelia Glendoveer on their travels. The house is arts and crafts in style. Despite the house's rundown condition, Clara is still able to appreciate its beauty including the Italian murals, brightly patterned Persian carpets, and the intricate woodwork from Germany featuring exquisitely carved flowers and birds.

Clara, unable to attend school, spends a great deal of time in Mrs. Glendoveer's bedroom, elegantly appointed with Chinese wallpaper, bric-a-brac, and a French green enamel stove. The house has some modern conveniences but still possesses gas lamps and wood and coal stoves.

The mansion boasts a beautiful rose garden. In the corner of the garden, positioned against the wall, is a large black iron cage, an aviary, containing five birds. Clara is afraid of the birds, while Mrs. Glendoveer speaks about them as if they are her children.

Clara sits with Mrs. Glendoveer and studies a book of sea creatures. Clara, born with a weak heart, is unable to run, play, or attend school with the other children. She is twelve years old and is outgrowing many of her childish habits and things, such as the desk in Mrs. Glendoveer's room.

Mrs. Glendoveer shares many stories about her travels around the world and the act she and her husband performed. She also talks about the birds and how much her late husband loved them.

Ruby, Mrs. Glendoveer's housekeeper, calls Clara downstairs for tea. She tells Clara that her mother has gone to the pawnbroker's shop for the second time in a month. Ruby is clearly worried that the money is running out and they will be in dire straits.

A powerful rain and hail storm hits. When the storms hit, the first duty of Ruby is to cover the birds and make sure that they are dry and unharmed. During those storms, Clara's mother, Harriet, prays that the shingles will stay on the roof. Mrs. Glendoveer stands looking out of her bedroom doors until she is sure that the birds are safe.

### Chapter 2



Clara and her mother wake at sunrise. Harriet rushes outside to see what kind of damage had occurred during the storm. A giant oak had split in half and leaned against the door. Harriet and Ruby go outside to chop up the downed tree and examine the house. They find fallen brick and some damaged and fallen shutters. Clara rushes to Mrs. Glendoveer's room to find that the old woman had caught a chill. In between coughing spells, she insists on knowing if the birds are okay. Clara reluctantly agrees to go to the aviary to check on the birds. Clara is fearful but keeps her promise and goes into the garden to examine the birds. The birds are "lively" but fine. The mynah squawks about someone named Elliot.

Clara returns to Mrs. Glendoveer's room and tells her about the birds and the mynah's strange behavior. Mrs. Glendoveer admits that Elliot was her son but that he had not stayed with them for very long. Despite her curiosity, Clara does not press Mrs. Glendoveer for more information.

Every morning Clara stands in the window and watches the school children on their way to school. As she does every day, Clara dreams of being one of the children.

"I'm like a ghost in a tower," Clara murmured. "I might as well be invisible." Chap. 2, p. 17

Suddenly, a girl in a red cap sees Clara and begins to wave and shout, "Hullo!"

### Chapter 3

Clara continues to watch the children walk to and from school, hoping to see her new friend, the girl in the red cap. The girl, Daphne Aspinall, wrote a poem and a note to Clara, telling her that she is a new neighbor. No one in town seems to know anything about Clara except that someone in the house is ill. After much thought, Clara replies to her new friend and briefly explains her situation. Clara regrets not being able to invite Daphne to the mansion.

The birds begin to speak to Clara with more frequency. The mynah often screeches out Elliot's name plus some words in Latin. Clara eventually tells Ruby that the birds are speaking to her in Latin, saying "statim" which means "hurry." Ruby doesn't believe Clara since the birds have never spoken to her, their caretaker.

### Chapter 4

Clara wakes early. She is restless and wants to see Daphne. However Mrs. Glendoveer's condition has worsened and Clara and Harriet must tend to her. Clara manages to steal away for a short time and throw the letter she had written to Daphne out of the window. Tied to a rock, she hopes it will reach the sidewalk where Daphne walks to school. Instead, it lands in the bushes.

It is obvious that Mrs. Glendoveer's health is failing rapidly. Mrs. Glendoveer tries to impart wisdom to Clara before it is too late. Mrs. Glendoveer warns Clara that soon she will begin to feel restless and want to run away as she had when she was 17. Clara

says she will not run away. Mrs. Glendoveer says it would break Harriet's heart to lose Clara.

Clara notices that Mrs. Glendoveer is getting worse by the minute. As she runs for her mother, she knows it is too late for the old woman.

## Chapter 5

The house is in turmoil following Mrs. Glendoveer's death. Harriet asks Ruby to watch over Clara. Instead, it is Clara that comforts Ruby.

"Clara did not cry. In the space where her heart used to lie was a frozen lump." Chap. 5, p. 32

Clara writes Mrs. Glendoveer's obituary and it is published in the local paper. On the day of the funeral, Clara realizes her dream of riding through town in a carriage but wishes the circumstances were different. Mrs. Glendoveer is interred in the family crypt alongside many people that are unfamiliar to Clara. Clara and Ruby are sent to the carriage while Harriet speaks with Mrs. Glendoveer's lawyer. Mrs. Glendoveer had upheld her husband's wish to maintain the mansion for fifty years after the disappearance of their son, Elliot. The time is almost up. The trio also learns that Mrs. Glendoveer has left the house and a trust for Harriet, Clara, and Ruby.

## Chapter 6

Clara, Ruby and Harriet return to the house. It was the first time the house had been completely empty in many years. Clara goes to Mrs. Glendoveer's room and looks around. She sees her small desk and wonders if her education is over. The entire scene shakes Clara.

"Time seemed to stretch out before Clara in a way that actually frightened her." Chap. 6, p. 40

Daphne and her mother, Delia, arrive with a casserole for the family. It is a surprising gesture, as no one ever visits the mansion. Harriet and Ruby understand when they learn that the family is new to the neighborhood. Clara is excited to see Daphne but the Aspinalls do not stay.

Harriet goes to visit the lawyer which is strange because it is a Sunday. Ruby offers no explanation to Clara. Ruby leaves Clara to go outside and do some yard work. Clara falls asleep on the sofa but is awakened by Daphne calling out to her. Daphne comes into the house and is fascinated by the mansion and its contents. The girls talk for a few minutes and then Ruby returns. Clara manages to whisk Daphne away before Ruby sees her. Clara shows Daphne a way to sneak in and out through the basement. The girls plan to meet again.

## Analysis

Clara Dooley is a young girl that is, in some ways, a prisoner inside the Glendoveer mansion. She is taught by an aged woman who is dying and, due to her heart condition, required to stay inside the majority of the time. This allows Clara to have no friends or social interaction with anyone outside the house. To compensate for her lack of stimulation outside the home Clara loves her books and takes refuge in them. She is less socially inept than one might expect but is easily driven to anxiety by the possibility of outside interaction, such as when she meets Daphne for the first time. Clara is desperate to make a friend yet feels the urge to hide behind the curtain when she sees Daphne. Clara knows her mother and Ruby would not approve of her making friends with other children, as the excitement might be too much for her heart.

The death of Mrs. Glendoveer gives Clara the opportunity to meet with Daphne. Although Clara has lost someone she loves dearly, she is able to turn the dark event into a positive. Clara is delighted to learn that Daphne has a mind of her own and is not afraid of the rumors around town. Like Clara, Daphne is a quirky girl intrigued by the mansion and its secrets. It remains to be seen if Daphne will become a true friend to Clara.

Mrs. Glendoveer is a woman of many secrets. The town rumors suggest that Mrs. Glendoveer and her husband murdered their children. Clara is pleased when Mrs. Glendoveer confides in her about Elliot but wonders what might have happened to him, as nobody ever speaks about him. It is likely that the mystery will entrance Clara and Daphne.

The secrecy among the adults in the house is odd. While it is clear that adults will want to keep some things from children, 12-year-old Clara is old enough to know basic facts, particularly about the house in which she lives and issues that might affect her future. The secrecy is all encompassing and Clara has been taught not to ask questions. Clara feels comfortable talking with Ruby but it is not clear if Ruby is in on all of the household secrets. Harriet is much more secretive and keeps things from Ruby as well, even when they may affect Ruby's employment and welfare.

Clara fears the birds and it is unclear why the aviary exists except that it once belonged to Mr. Glendoveer. Mrs. Glendoveer seemed to have a great fondness for the birds, not necessarily because she likes birds but because her husband loved them so much. The birds go from being almost completely silent in speech to becoming quite talkative. The talking birds hint that there is magic involved and that the birds have valuable information.

## Discussion Question 1

Why is Clara kept inside the house at all times?





## Discussion Question 2

Why is Mrs. Glendoveer obsessed with the birds in the aviary?

## Discussion Question 3

What advice does Mrs. Glendoveer give to Clara about restlessness?

## Vocabulary

Illusionist, curiosities, mansion, intricately, far-flung, murals, scattered, frail, gloom, decay, circumscribed, enamel, aviary, pergola, tattered, mynah, saffron, grackle, kiskadee, cockatoo

# Chapters 7-12

## Summary

### Chapter 7

Clara sneaks into the room across the hall from Mrs. Glendoveer's bedroom. She had never been inside the room before but suddenly begins to wonder what is behind the closed door and if it might give information about the Glendoveer children. The door is hard to open but Clara finally manages. She pulls aside the curtain to signal Daphne that the coast is clear. As Clara is exploring the room, she hears music from a music box inside the bedroom. Spooked, she tells herself that she must have jostled it. Clara looks in the closet and finds many matching outfits in varying sizes. The room had once belonged to a child; that much is clear.

Clara still has time before her mother and Ruby return. Daphne arrives and Clara takes her to the old bedroom. Daphne tells Clara that there are rumors about the Glendoveers throughout town. Clara demands to know about the rumors but Daphne is hesitant. Finally, sitting in the kitchen, Daphne tells Clara that the Glendoveers supposedly had five or six children and murdered them. Clara is aghast and says Mrs. Glendoveer was the gentlest soul and wouldn't even know how to chastise a child.

### Chapter 8

Daphne finds it odd that Clara had known nothing about the Glendoveer legend.

"You should see my mother. Always protecting me from even the slightest excitement. No wonder she never told me anything about the Glendoveers." Chap. 8, p. 53

Daphne pays another short visit while Harriet and Ruby are out. The birds make a fuss and screech at Clara. After Daphne leaves, her kitten manages to get inside the aviary. The birds attack it. Clara rushes out and saves it but notices that the honeycreeper is injured and dying. Clara rushes both creatures into the house. The honeycreeper stops breathing until Clara's tears hit its neck. The bird begins to revive slightly. Ruby and Harriet come home to Clara explaining what has happened.

### Chapter 9

Ruby pulls Clara aside and confronts her about inviting Daphne to come over to the house in her absence. Clara promises not to do it again.

Clara cares for the wounded honeycreeper. She decides to name it Gawain after the brave knight but learns that the bird doesn't like the name, mainly because she is a girl. The bird communicates with Clara in yes or no "tsip" noises but also exhibits a strong personality and attitude. Clara renames the bird Citrine.



Clara has found a friend in the little bird. Clara and Citrine talk about Mrs. Glendoveer. Clara is urged by Citrine to go and fetch Mrs. Glendoveer's locked album to learn more about the family.

## Chapter 10

Clara goes into Mrs. Glendoveer's room to look for the album. It is gone. Clara thinks her mother must have taken it. Clara finds an embroidered picture in a frame as well as a picture of the Glendoveer children. Clara can't understand why Mrs. Glendoveer had never mentioned the children except for Elliot. She hides the photograph in her bottom dresser drawer. Clara goes into the children's bedroom to signal Daphne. She investigates the closet to find matching dresses, stockings and pantaloons in various sizes. Clara takes a pair of stockings. Clara also finds a poster offering a reward for the return of the children. It offers \$25,000. The children, along with their 22-year-old nanny had gone missing as well as some silver and other items. The children must have been included in the robbery.

Clara meets Daphne in the boiler room. She tells Daphne about the poster and the reward issued by Woodruff Booth. Daphne promises to do some investigating on the man.

## Chapter 11

Clara receives a note from Daphne. Daphne says she met Frances Glendoveer's teacher at a tea she had attended with her mother. According to the teacher, Cenelia and George were in Europe when the children were kidnapped. Daphne also says Woodruff Booth is alive and that she is going to send a letter to him the next day.

## Chapter 12

Clara gets up early, excited that she is going to be able to see Daphne. Ruby asks Harriet if she wants to go into town but Harriet says she wants to stay home and work in the garden. Clara is upset that her plans have been ruined. Clara goes upstairs and learns that the door to the children's bedroom has been locked.

"So this is how it is to be, Clara thought. No direct questioning or accusations, no punishments; just a silent tit for tat, like a chess game." Chap. 12, p. 79

Harriet and Ruby spend the day in the kitchen preparing a grand meal that is to be eaten in the dining room. Harriet gives Clara a gown she'd made for her. At dinner, Harriet says she has been approached by someone that wants to buy the house. A door opens, a vase crashes, and the smell of burning feathers fills the air.

## Analysis

The dynamic of the story begins to change at this point. Clara begins to think more for herself, even going so far as to directly disobey her mother and Ruby. This action had

been foreshadowed by Mrs. Glendoveer's tale of running away at age 17. Clara is quickly caught up in the mystery of the Glendoveer children and is grateful to have Daphne's help and enthusiasm to clear the family name. Daphne is eager for adventure and does the things Clara cannot – such as ask around town about the family and its legend.

Clara becomes secretive as she explores the children's bedroom and discovers more information about the Glendoveers. Clara also carefully asks questions about Cenelia, trying to piece together a better picture of the old woman's life with her husband.

Citrine continues to guide Clara's actions through her limited communication skills. Although Citrine is recovering from her injuries and will soon be able to return to the aviary, Clara has become quite attached to Citrine.

Harriet remains secretive, meeting with Mr. Merritt-Blenney in private regarding the house. Although the house also belongs to Ruby, Harriet takes it upon herself to consider a possible sale. Surprisingly, Ruby does not challenge Harriet's actions, conveying that Harriet knows what is best for her and the house, even when she does not agree.

Clara is often confronted with magical happenings, such as the talking birds, the music from the children's room and more. When Clara allows herself to think about such things, she attributes them to Mrs. Glendoveer to keep from being afraid.

Mrs. Glendoveer wants to make her presence known to everyone in the house. Magic appears once again in the form of ghostly activity during dinner when the possible sale is mentioned. Clearly, someone is unhappy at the thought. The reader may surmise that a potential buyer may be thwarted by the house's ghost(s).

Harriet and Ruby are panicked at the ghostly appearance and Ruby swears she will never eat in the dining room again. Clara attempts to assuage their fears but is unsuccessful.

## **Discussion Question 1**

Why do you think Mrs. Glendoveer never mentioned the children to Clara? What happened to the children?

## **Discussion Question 2**

Why are Clara and Daphne so intent on solving the decades old mystery?

## **Discussion Question 3**

Who is Woodruff Booth? What part does he play in the story?

## Vocabulary

Conciliation, exquisite, filigrees, honeycreeper, celadon, Aspinals, greenie, gauze, unfasten, flutter, bind, bashful, deary, interfere, missus, overjoyed, scarcely, conversationalist, sensation, shrill, pinafore



# Chapters 13-19

## Summary

### Chapter 13

Clara is unable to contact Daphne for several days. She is anxious but it seems as if her mother and Ruby are purposely not giving her the opportunity to contact Daphne. Clara hopes that Daphne will get in touch with her. Clara checks their secret spot every day but no letters come. Finally, Clara receives a letter from Daphne. Included with it is a letter from Mr. Booth. Booth tells the tale of the Glendoveers, dispelling the myths perpetrated by the town. Clara feels better about the situation and decides to speak to her mother.

While Clara is pondering the mystery, she hears a racket at the window and turns to see the white cockatoo knocking with its beak.

### Chapter 14

Clara has a revelation and realizes that the white cockatoo is really George William, the eldest of the Glendoveer children. He was sent to communicate with Clara and to get her help.

Clara rushes out to the aviary to check on the other birds. The love Mr. and Mrs. Glendoveer felt for the birds is finally clear to Clara. For the first time, Clara enters the aviary to speak with the birds. One by one, she identifies them as the Glendoveer children. Each reacts when called by name and Clara feels that everything makes sense yet nothing makes sense at all. Clara does not know about magic and cannot fathom how the spell occurred. Ruby finds Clara in the aviary and asks how she got inside since the door was locked and she has the key. Clara says the door was unlocked.

### Chapter 15

Clara continues to speak to the birds whenever possible. At times they neither answer nor give a direct answer which is frustrating for Clara.

Clara is desperate to share this newest information with Daphne. Clara sneaks out of the house and finds Daphne with two other school girls. Clara makes up a ruse to get Daphne away from the girls. She takes Daphne to the aviary but the birds refuse to talk. Daphne does not believe Clara which upsets the girl. Clara tricks the birds by leading Daphne away but still within earshot. Daphne is stunned by the turn of events.

### Chapter 16



Clara takes Daphne to the boiler room to catch her up on all that has happened. Daphne is stunned by the events in the dining room and wonders how Clara is not afraid.

“‘I do get frightened,’ Clara said, ‘but it isn’t so bad if you believe, as I do, that it is Mrs. Glendoveer that has a presence here. Mrs. Glendoveer was not a scary person.” Chap. 16, p. 106

Clara tells Daphne everything, including the story of how she came to learn about the identity of the birds. Clara says perhaps the birds had never spoken to her before because she had never spoken to them.

Clara says she is jealous of Daphne’s freedom. Daphne encourages Clara to go to the Lockhaven Historical Society to meet with Miss Lentham, Frances’ teacher. Clara is afraid of disobeying her mother although Daphne points out that she has been disobedient for some time. Daphne insists that Clara must do all she can to help the birds and the Glendoveers.

“‘You’ve said it yourself that they are children and they only speak to you. Who else has come even close to discovering their secrets? Who else will help them?’” Chap. 16, p. 107

Clara feels a rat run across her shoe. She jumps and lands in a cardboard box. Inside she finds a broadsheet advertising the Glendoveers’ show, jewelry boxes and Mrs. Glendoveer’s book. Clara hides the damage on the box and takes the items to her room.

## Chapter 17

Clara opens Mrs. Glendoveer’s book to find things she had kept over the years, mostly from her children. She’d also kept letters and correspondence from George, who describes the horror of coming home to find their children dead. George dispels the rumors and says the house is now like a tomb. Cenelia believes that Booth is to blame but George disagrees.

## Chapter 18

Clara steals away to read George’s diary whenever possible. He speaks often of the Book of H and an incantation he had cast for the souls of the children. The entry ends with the incantation: “Together always to the last, Our love shall hold each other fast. Delivered from the frost and foam, None shall fly till all come home.” Chap. 18, p. 118

It is Ruby’s birthday. Harriet is off to the market to buy food for a special dinner. Since Ruby has been ordered not to work for the day, Clara talks her into going into town to see “The Great Train Robbery.” Clara stops by to speak to the birds before she leaves to go to the historical society.

## Chapter 19



Clara meets Miss Lentham. The old woman is suspicious about Clara's motives and her interest in the Glendoveers. Clara shows the woman the hieroglyphics she had found in George's diary. They show souls turning into birds.

Clara questions Miss Lentham about Woodruff Booth. Miss Lentham says Mr. Booth is above reproach and was a good friend to the Glendoveers.

Miss Lentham becomes suspicious of Clara's motives. Clara runs away.

## Analysis

Clara is anxious being left to her own devices. Now that she knows her mother is watching her and is determined not to leave her alone, Clara wants more than ever to see Daphne. Clara manages to sneak out of the house long enough to meet Daphne as she is walking home from school. This is an extremely brave move for Clara who tends to be obedient and has never wandered away from home alone. Until this point, Clara has been trapped by her loyalty to her mother as well as the fear of something going wrong with her heart. Clara begins to question her physical ailment and wonders if she truly is sick, why she never feels ill or short of breath. Harriet's secrecy only fuels Clara's thoughts.

Daphne had been worried about Clara's inability to contact her and thought that perhaps Clara had given up on the mystery and the friendship. Daphne is excited to learn about the events that had taken place in the dining room. Daphne is asked to suspend judgment on several levels and Clara feels betrayed when Daphne does not take her at her word. Things change when Daphne hears the birds talk to Clara. Daphne feels remorse for not believing Clara and becomes even more committed to finding out what had happened to the children.

Clara is jealous of Daphne's freedom and becomes emboldened enough to go to the historical society. Miss Lentham is typical of many small town gossips who are convinced their story is the truth. Miss Lentham paints Cenelia to be a bitter old woman who had been hanging on to a false story for many years, creating the image that Mr. Booth is somehow responsible for the disappearance of the children. Clara is not convinced by anything Miss Lentham says and it is obvious. Miss Lentham's suspicions grow stronger and her threatening manner scares Clara so much that the girl runs away and regret venturing out on her own.

There is foreshadowing in this section regarding the truth about Harriet's relationship with Cenelia and Booth's involvement with the Glendoveer family. Miss Lentham's behavior reinforces to Clara that not everyone can be trusted.

## Discussion Question 1

Why is Clara unable to contact Daphne?





## Discussion Question 2

What does Clara find inside the cardboard box in the boiler room?

## Discussion Question 3

What causes Miss Lentham to be aggressive toward Clara?

## Vocabulary

Unsettling, talkative, engage, forthcoming, mudroom, boiler, citrine, footboard, erupted, magnetized, approach, shrieked, mayhem, deflated, proceeded, evidence, customary, melancholy, bureau

# Chapters 20-25

## Summary

### Chapter 20

Harriet catches Clara returning to the house. Ruby says it was Clara that talked her into going to the movies so that she might go out. Clara tells her mother about the historical society. Clara and her mother get into an argument about Harriet being so secretive. Clara storms off to her room as ordered.

Clara wakes up to find her mother standing by the bed. Harriet tells Clara about her father, an older man who believed that he was Elliot Glendoveer. When Clara was a young child, her father left and refused to tell Harriet where he was going. He wanted to protect Harriet and Clara from harm. He had never returned.

Cenelia gave Harriet a job. Harriet and Cenelia both wanted to believe the story about Elliot but there was no proof. Cenelia convinced Harriet that Clara could be in danger. Harriet decided to turn her daughter into a recluse to protect her from those that might kidnap or harm her. Harriet admits that Clara is not ill. Clara becomes angry. Harriet also explains that she had feared Clara's father had been mad and wanted to be sure that Clara had not inherited mental illness.

"Darling, I needed an excuse to keep you hidden. If only I were cleverer I would have thought of something better." Chap. 20, p. 133

### Chapter 21

Clara enjoys Ruby's birthday dinner and the new openness created by Harriet's confessions about her father and their past. It is decided that Clara should be allowed to have a friend in Daphne. Clara is excited.

Clara takes the book of poems to the aviary. The birds speak to her and confirm that Elliot is her father. Clara begins to understand her part in the mystery and says she will try to find her father but does not know how.

### Chapter 22

Daphne comes to visit Clara and is surprised to learn that she is now allowed to have guests. Clara tells Daphne about the birds and her belief that Elliot is her father.

"The birds believe he is still alive and, they're also convinced he's my father. They want me to find him because, somehow, finding him will break the spell." Chap. 22, p. 145

Daphne is upset because she has to leave before she hears the rest of the story.



Clara and Ruby learn that someone wants to buy the house and everything in it. Clara knows immediately that it must be Mr. Booth. She pleads with Harriet to refuse to sell the house, saying that Mrs. Glendoveer would never sell it to the man she despised. George's diaries prove that Cenelia did not like nor trust Booth. Harriet says nothing can be decided until the term in the will is up, permitting them to take action. Harriet wants to sell the house and buy a small one that is not in need of repair. Clara runs off in tears and promises the birds they will not be sold to Mr. Booth.

### Chapter 23

Clara continues to try to convince her mother not to sell to Mr. Booth. Harriet sees things differently. Clara reminds her and Ruby about the events in the dining room when the subject was broached. Ruby agrees that it was probably Cenelia objecting to the sale. Clara pleads with Ruby not to give her consent on the sale. Ruby says they aren't sure it is Mr. Booth that wants to buy the house but Clara disagrees. Clara makes a vow to Cenelia to do everything in her power to stop the sale.

Clara visits the birds. Once again, they tell her that they do not like Mr. Booth. They tell Clara the whole story of their deaths, that Mr. Booth had hypnotized Nelly the nanny. She and a male friend took the children out onto the water. All drowned but baby Elliot who was spared by the man. The birds, crying now, tell Clara that they believe their baby brother is still alive.

### Chapter 24

Daphne comes to visit. Clara tells her the latest events from her mother wanting to sell the house to the probability that it is Mr. Booth that wants to buy it. Clara declares that Booth is a villain. Clara believes it was Mr. Booth that was with Nelly and had taken Elliot away. Clara also tells Daphne of the signs she had received from Cenelia.

Clara says they must find a way to convince Mr. Booth to tell them Elliot's whereabouts. Daphne produces a letter she had written to Mr. Booth, telling him about the letter at the mansion accusing him of unspeakable crimes. Clara would be willing to turn over the letter if Mr. Booth makes a personal appearance.

### Chapter 25

Daphne receives a reply from Mr. Booth stating he will arrive on the 19th as requested. He makes up a story about a tea being hosted by Miss Lentham and invites Daphne to write at any time.

The girls discuss finding a way to protect themselves in case Mr. Booth should try to harm them. The best suggestions come from the birds, including powdered lye, glue puddles, and a sleeping tonic. Frances and George agree to talk and to protect the girls if necessary.

## Analysis

Clara shows great progress in growing up in this section. She begins to see things as they truly are rather than through the eyes of a child. For the first time, she realizes that the house is in desperate need of repair and is no longer beautiful. She learns to trust her intuition and knows deep down that her father is alive and that Mr. Booth is responsible for his kidnapping and disappearance. The birds confirm Clara's feelings.

As with most pre-teen girls, Clara is often at odds with her mother. This is particularly true when it comes to the sale of the house. Clara and Ruby both believe that Cenelia is trying to communicate with them regarding a potential sale of which she does not approve. While Harriet agrees that there are some strange happenings she refuses to believe in spirits or that Cenelia is trying to communicate. Clara is determined that the house will not be sold and makes a promise to Cenelia, one that may be difficult, if not impossible, to keep.

Clara understands why Harriet had lied to her about her heart condition and seems to take it in stride which is not at all the behavior one would expect from a pre-teen. The author would have the reader believe that Clara is easily distracted by the Glendoveer mystery and the involvement of Mr. Booth that she would simply overlook or forgive the fact that her mother had lied to her for her entire life and keep her confined inside a house. Logic does not play a part in a girl's emotions.

Suddenly, Clara seems to have a great deal of autonomy. She makes a plan with Daphne regarding a way to trap Mr. Booth and solve the mystery. The birds continue to communicate and offer a great deal of help to Clara and Daphne regarding their meeting with Mr. Booth. It is unknown what Mr. Booth wants to do with the house or how far he will go to get his wish. The girls are prepared to face danger in order to break the spell. Frances continues to be the most vocal and determined of the group and will undoubtedly aid in the quest.

## Discussion Question 1

Clara's opinion of the mansion is changed. What is her new perception of the old home?

## Discussion Question 2

Which of the birds seems to be most eager to help Clara? Why?

## Discussion Question 3

What does Clara learn about her father?

## Vocabulary

Reeling, leafed, mourning, outraged, hunched, precious, sternly, motives, struggled, exception, pry, harsh, scolding, poof, deceitful, wishful, strain, glimpses, shed, cuff, severely



# Chapters 26-32

## Summary

### Chapter 26

Daphne arrives at the mansion to find that Clara had already begun preparations for the next day. The girls have laid out a plan to trap Booth once he is inside the boiler room. Rat traps had been purchased, tacks and glue are in place, and Clara is biding her time before she procures the lye to stash in the rafters. Daphne is impressed. Daphne asks to speak to the birds. The birds are hesitant, but they speak to Daphne who is amazed. The birds give Daphne a single feather from each. Daphne and Clara declare their sisterhood.

### Chapter 27

Clara visits Ruby in her room and asks her to promise not to sign any documents at the lawyer's office the next day. Ruby is afraid she cannot stand up to the lawyers and to Harriet, whom she calls "the most willful woman since Eve." Clara says if all else fails that Ruby should just pretend to faint. Ruby claims the plan is ridiculous but promises to try her best.

Daphne arrives at the mansion. Shortly thereafter, Mr. Booth arrives. Clara is surprised to see that the man is old, crooked and feeble. She begins to wonder if perhaps they had accused the wrong person. Daphne escorts him to the house where Clara had supposedly hidden a letter from George Glendoveer regarding his interactions with Booth. Clara notices that Daphne is acting strange.

### Chapter 28

Frances says Daphne has cold eyes and she believes Daphne has been hypnotized by Booth. She tells Clara not to look into Booth's eyes or else the same thing could happen to her. Clara lures Booth into the boiler room where the birds descend. Booth is startled to see the birds but does not believe they will hurt him. Clara orders Booth to undo the hypnotism he performed on Daphne or she will let the birds attack. Booth complies and Daphne is returned to normal. Clara asks about Elliot but Booth says he does not know Elliot's whereabouts. Clara thinks the man is lying.

After being threatened once more, Booth finally admits to knowing Elliot's whereabouts. He says Elliot is on an island known as Razor's Slip. Elliot is Clara's father but his memory has been altered and he does not remember Harriet or Clara. Just as the group prepares to leave the boiler room, the man with the chipped tooth arrives. It is the man that was with the children's nanny on the night the children died. Booth turns vicious and orders the man, Jimmy, to shoot the girls and the birds. Jimmy is stunned at the order. He asks about the forged papers from Cenelia but Booth says it was a trap.

Jimmy points the gun but seems hesitant to use it. Clara offers the papers just as Daphne runs at him from behind.

## Chapter 29

Daphne attacks Jimmy from behind. He falls, setting off numerous rat traps. George continues to issue threats from his perch on the ceiling and succeeds in distracting Booth and Jimmy. Clara grabs the gun and drops it before she can hand it to Daphne.

Frances and Arthur leave the boiler room to fly off to find Elliot.

During the struggle, Jimmy grabs Clara's ankle. George ascends from the ceiling and attacks Jimmy. Daphne holds the gun on Jimmy but he mocks her. A glass jar of lye hits Jimmy and explodes, coating him with the white powder. He screams for water. Jimmy is told where to find water. He drinks it, unaware that it had been tainted with a sleeping potion.

Daphne orders Booth to put his hands behind his head and march out of the boiler room before they are all poisoned by the lye.

Daphne and Clara guide Booth out to the aviary and lock him in the cage. Jimmy is asleep in the boiler room and the girls discuss a way to get Jimmy from the boiler room and into the cage with Booth.

Clara and Daphne drag Jimmy to the aviary and lock him in with Booth. Daphne brings bread and water for the prisoners. Clara looks at the gun and sees that it is engraved with "J. Dooley." Clara puts the pieces together and realizes that Jimmy is the man that had raised her father.

Clara and Daphne sit and watch the men, waiting for Frances and Arthur to return.

## Chapter 30

The afternoon drags by. Booth attempts to cajole and then threaten the girls to let him go. George tells him to be quiet. Clara tries to get more information about her father, but Booth won't talk.

Harriet and Ruby come home. Clara begs Daphne to go home and not speak a word of what has happened. Daphne refuses until Clara says she may need Daphne's help later. Harriet yells for Clara. When she and Ruby enter the garden, they see the men in the cage. Clara explains. Harriet is stunned. She tells Ruby to go for the police. Clara begs her to hold off until Frances and Arthur return from Razor's Slip. George tells Harriet to listen to her daughter. Both Harriet and Ruby nearly faint as the birds speak. Clara, Harriet, Ruby and George adjourn to the kitchen. After Clara explains the situation, Harriet says they will hold off until Frances and Arthur return but then they must call the police.

## Chapter 31

The night drags on. Harriet tells Clara that Ruby was impossible during the meeting with the lawyers and even pretended to faint. Clara laughs at the antics and is pleased to know that her plan had worked. Clara says she will not sleep but eventually nods off at the table while Ruby and Harriet do the mending. Clara wakes to a bright light filling the room. Cenelia has lit the candles and made them dance.

Nevan, aka Elliot, arrives at the door, undernourished and wearing threadbare clothes. He runs to Clara and Harriet and embraces them.

Elliot talks of his past on the island. George and the others reintroduce themselves to Elliot. Everyone goes out to the aviary to confront Jimmy and Booth. The men blame each other and profess their innocence, claiming that the drowning was an accident. Elliot had brought gold with him that Booth had stolen from his family and melted down in a furnace.

The police arrive and take the men away. Elliot goes to the police station to give his statement.

Later that night, Elliot returns and he talks with Clara and Harriet. Clara says they should not be bitter over what had happened.

## Chapter 32

Clara goes into the kitchen to speak to the birds. Frances tells how they found Elliot and broke the spell. The birds say they want to go home and the group attempts to figure out how to break the spell. Ruby, Harriet and Elliot enter the room. Elliot says he has been entranced by the old house and cannot wait to fix it up. This makes Clara happy.

It is decided that the poem recited by Clara might be able to break the spell. However, only two of the birds can speak. Elliot attempts to break the spell with the incantation. It does not work. It is tried again and again, first in the parlor and finally in the nursery. A bright sparkle of light fills the room and Clara sees the other children standing before her. The children rejoice at being released from the birds and turned into ghostly form. One by one they thank Clara and then fly out of the window to go and join their parents.

The family decides to go down to their first family breakfast while Clara stays behind to signal Daphne that all is well.

## Analysis

The last section of the story is very much like the fairy tales Clara likes to read – predictable but with a happy ending.

Frances and Arthur fly off to find Elliot and break the curse so that he remembers all that had happened to him since the kidnapping by Jimmy. Like George Glendoveer, Booth had been outcast from his family when he decided to tour the world doing his brand of magic. This created a type of kindred spirit feeling between Booth and Glendoveer.





Booth's family had money but Booth had been cut off so he decided to betray his best friend and get rich through ransom. The plan went awry but Booth had stolen a great deal of the family fortune. Now that Elliot's true identity is known, the money will be returned to Elliot and his family.

Elliot's return sparks a joyous family reunion. Elliot had been on the island since Clara was a small child. It is never clearly explained how or why Elliot, aka Nevan Dooley, married Harriet and had a child and then was returned to the island to live with Jimmy. Oddly, enough, this lack of explanation does not seem to bother the characters.

The outcome of the arrest of Booth and Jimmy is not revealed although the reader can surmise that they will be punished for their crimes.

The magic spell cast upon the birds comes full circle when Elliot reads the incantation and breaks the spell. The children return to an ethereal earthly form before donning their wings once again and flying away to be with their parents.

Clara is not sad to lose her contact with the birds or Mrs. Glendoveer, knowing that she was able to set things right with the help of the children and Daphne.

Happily ever after consists of Elliot, Harriet, Clara and Ruby staying in the house and restoring it and the family name.

## Discussion Question 1

How is the spell cast onto Elliot broken? Who breaks the spell? How?

## Discussion Question 2

Who is responsible for Elliot's kidnapping?

## Discussion Question 3

How is the spell broken on the birds/children?

## Vocabulary

Slunk, cowered, manner, perched, rafters, siblings, underlining, pecked, retreated, islanders, indignation, clamored, poling, rehearsed, conquered, incantation, reflective, nudge, pitiful, shallow, threshold



# Characters

## Clara Dooley

Clara Dooley is a twelve year old girl with a high IQ and a sense of curiosity. Clara has been told all of her life that she has a physical condition, a weak heart, which severely limits her activities and keeps her housebound in the Glendoveer mansion. The only place Clara is allowed to go out of the house is into the rose garden. While Clara likes the rose garden, she does not like the aviary that is located there. The birds in the aviary constantly screech and make otherworldly noises that terrify Clara. Clara tends the birds only when necessary, such as when there is a storm or she is prompted by Mrs. Glendoveer, her mother, or Ruby, the cook. One day, the old mynah bird begins to speak to Clara. Clara tries to ignore the birds but eventually realizes that they are trying to tell her something and may hold an important secret.

Being confined to the house means that Clara spends a great deal with time isolated or in the company of the three women that live there – her mother, Ruby the cook, and Mrs. Glendoveer, the owner of the mansion who also serves as her teacher. Clara stares out the windows of the house and longs to go outside and play, to go to school, and make friends her own age.

One day Clara is summoned from the street by a girl in a red cap. Clara eventually meets and makes a secret friendship with Daphne Aspinall, a new girl in Lockhaven. Clara lights up when she sees Daphne for the first time. She hopes against hope that the girl who waved to her from the street will become her friend. When Clara is with Daphne, she forgets about being sick. She is focused on this fascinating new person just as much as Daphne is fascinated by her. The two put their heads together to solve a mystery, and for the first time Clara begins to feel like she is truly alive.

Clara shows that she is capable by helping to solve the decades old mystery. Her resolve becomes even stronger when she realizes she may be Mrs. Glendoveer's granddaughter and that she is not actually sick. It is the child that needed to be protected that frees the house and its inhabitants.

## Cenelia Glendoveer

Cenelia Glendoveer is the widow of George Glendoveer, a famous magician and illusionist. When the story begins, Cenelia is a frail and sickly old woman living out her days in seclusion in her mansion in Lockhaven, Maine. Cenelia is a well-traveled and smart woman. She is described as being thin with long hair as well as being someone prone to catching chills and respiratory ailments. Cenelia is practically bedridden and spends her days in her room, often looking longingly out the bedroom window and onto the rose garden and the aviary.

Cenelia and George had traveled the world with their magic show and retired to the mansion. The story unfolds to reveal that Cenelia and George had five children, four of which were kidnapped and drowned. The baby, Elliot, was kidnapped and never seen or heard from again. The story begins almost 50 years after the kidnapping.

Cenelia adores Clara and takes great pleasure in educating her. In turn, Clara looks upon Cenelia as a grandmotherly type – one who teaches her about the world and supports her with love and good advice. Cenelia leaves many clues behind after her death for Clara and Daphne to figure out the family mystery. Clara does not believe for a minute that Cenelia could ever hurt a child, let alone murder four of her own. It is Clara's mission to clear the names of the Glendoveers.

When Cenelia dies, Clara learns many secrets about the Glendoveers. Cenelia is reunited with her husband George. At the end of the story, Clara does not feel sadness at losing the Glendoveer children but knows that they will be happy with their parents once again.

## **Harriet Dooley**

Harriet Dooley is Clara's mother. Harriet, a nurse, was hired on to care for Mrs. Glendoveer. After Mrs. Glendoveer died, Harriet learns that she has inherited the house along with Ruby the cook.

Harriet is a pragmatic and stubborn woman. She tends to keep secrets that should perhaps be revealed willingly rather than being forced by Clara. Harriet does her best to protect her daughter but must learn that Clara is growing up and has the right to know about her ancestry.

## **Ruby**

Ruby is an older woman that serves as a cook at the Glendoveer mansion. Ruby more or less runs the house for Mrs. Glendoveer and inherits along with Harriet when the old woman dies. Ruby is like a second mother to Clara making it easy for Clara to confide in her. Yet, when it comes to discipline. Ruby can be as stern as Harriet.

## **George Glendoveer**

George Glendoveer was a magician and illusionist. He was a world traveler that was married to Cenelia Glendoveer.

## **Elliot Glendoveer**

Elliot is the youngest son of George and Cenelia Glendoveer. He was kidnapped and never heard from again.



## **Daphne Aspinal**

Daphne Aspinal is a new girl in town. She is a talkative, bubbly girl with a nose for adventure. She and Clara become fast friends.

## **Woodruff Booth**

Woodruff Booth is a mentalist and friend of George and Cenelia Glendoveer.

## **Clayton Merritt-Blenney**

Clayton Merritt-Blenney is Mrs. Glendoveer's lawyer.

## **School children**

Clara admires the school children as they walk to school every morning. She longs to be one of them but knows she never will be because of her illness.

# Symbols and Symbolism

## The Aviary

The aviary is a sanctuary for five birds that live in an enormous black iron case in the Glendoveer rose garden. The cage, almost as large as twelve year old Clara's bedroom, is nested against the back wall of the garden under a worn pergola with a tattered roof. The cage is rarely opened or entered by anyone but Ruby, the birds' caretaker. When it storms, the aviary must be covered to protect the birds from the rain, other foul weather, and from catching pneumonia.

The aviary seems to be a fitting place to house Booth and Jimmy when they are caught by Clara and Daphne, forcing the men to endure the prison that they had forced the Glendoveer children into for the past 50 years.

## Glendoveer mansion

The Glendoveer mansion is the main setting in the story. The mansion is decorated with souvenirs and intricacies from around the world, gathered by George and Cenelia Glendoveer on their travels. The house is arts and crafts in style. In the story, the mansion was past its prime with George Glendoveer long dead and Cenelia in poor health. The house itself is run down and many of the rooms are no longer in use, closed off and shuttered. Despite its condition, Clara is still able to appreciate its beauty including the Italian murals, brightly patterned Persian carpets, and the intricate woodwork from Germany featuring exquisitely carved flowers and birds.

Clara, unable to attend school, spends a great deal of time in Mrs. Glendoveer's bedroom, elegantly appointed with Chinese wallpaper, bric-a-brac, and a French green enamel stove. The house has some modern conveniences but still possesses gas lamps and wood and coal stoves.

The mansion boasted a beautiful rose garden. In the corner of the garden, positioned against the wall is a large black iron cage containing five birds. This is the aviary. Clara is afraid of the birds while Mrs. Glendoveer speaks about them as if they are her children. When the storms hit, the first duty of Ruby, the housekeeper, is to cover the birds and make sure that they are dry and unharmed. During those storms, Clara's mother, Harriet, prays that the shingles will stay on the roof.

## Rose garden

The rose garden is the place where the aviary is located. The rose garden is somewhat bedraggled but tended as best as Harriet and Ruby can manage. It is surrounded by a wall and includes a gate which Clara sometimes uses to leave the yard.

## **Birds**

The birds scare Clara with their screeching cries and piercing demands. Many times the birds do not make a sound but when Clara enters the garden, they carry on without end. Eventually, the mynah begins to speak to Clara, often shouting “statim!” (“hurry,” in Latin) or “Elliot!” No one else hears the cries and Clara believes that the birds are actually the reincarnation of the murdered Glendoveer children.

The birds in the aviary are very old for their age. Mr. Glendoveer had the birds long before his death 30 years earlier. No one dared to ask Mrs. Glendoveer how long the birds are expected to live. The aviary includes a mynah bird that will only nest in books or newspapers, a cockatoo with a gift for picking locks, Citrine the nervous sea foam honeycreeper, a common grackle with the reputation of being a watchdog, and the kiskadee.

The birds are well tended, almost as if they are children. They must be kept warm and dry, even when it is raining and are often fed the treat of worms.

Clara learns to speak to the honeycreeper, Citrine, after it is injured by Daphne’s kitten. Along with yes no answers, the bird often gives clues to the mystery being solved by Clara and Daphne.

## **Clara's desk**

Clara's desk represents her childhood. In the story, she refers to the desk as being a place she is growing out of and perhaps, after Mrs. Glendoveer's death, will never use again.

## **Citrine**

Citrine is the injured honeycreeper that learns to communicate with Clara.

## **Books**

Books are a main source of education and distraction for the home bound Clara.

## **Boiler room**

The boiler room is the place in the cellar Clara goes to find the door that exits into the garden. This is the door she and Daphne use to meet in secret.

## **Crypt**

The crypt is where the Glendoveers are buried. It is the first time/place that Clara learns the Glendoveers had many children, not just Elliot. It opens the door to the mystery.

## **Children's room**

The children's room is the room across from Cenelia's that had been kept locked for many years. In this room, Clara finds evidence of the children that used to live in the mansion.

# Settings

## The Glendoveer Mansion

The Glendoveer mansion is the main setting in the story. It is located in Lockhaven, Maine, a seaport town. The mansion, once a grand and elegant home to the Glendoveer family, has become run down and in need of repair. Several of its rooms have been closed off and are no longer used. The interior of the mansion is decorated with souvenirs gathered from around the world during the time George and Cenelia Glendoveer traveled with their magic show. The house is arts and crafts in style. The main character, Clara, loves everything about the old house despite the fact that it is well past its prime with George Glendoveer long dead and Cenelia in poor health. Harriet and Ruby often fear that the next big storm coming from the sea will tear the shingles off the roof and damage the windows and shutters. In one scene, the women go out into the yard to assess the damage from a storm and Harriet sets about replacing shutters that had been torn from the casements. Despite the worn down state of the house, Clara still appreciates its beauty including the Italian murals, brightly patterned Persian carpets, and the intricate woodwork from Germany featuring exquisitely carved flowers and birds. The first time Daphne enters the mansion she, too, gapes in awe at the faded beauty.

Since Clara has been diagnosed with a weak heart and is unable to attend school, she spends a great deal of time in Mrs. Glendoveer's bedroom where she reads books and studies at a small desk. The bedroom is elegantly appointed with Chinese wallpaper, bric-a-brac, and a French green enamel stove. The house has some amenities that may be considered modern conveniences but still possesses gas lamps and wood and coal stoves.

The aviary is a favorite part of the estate for Mrs. Glendoveer. The aviary rests in a once beautiful rose garden. In the corner of the garden. The aviary is a large black iron cage which contains five aging birds. Clara admits to being afraid of the birds while Mrs. Glendoveer speaks about them as if they are her children, which, as the story bears out, they are. When the storms hit, the first duty of Ruby, the housekeeper, is to cover the birds and make sure that they are dry and unharmed. During those storms, Clara's mother, Harriet, prays that the shingles will stay on the roof.

## The Aviary

The aviary is a sanctuary for five birds that live in an enormous black iron case in the Glendoveer rose garden. The cage, almost as large as 12-year-old Clara's bedroom, is nested against the back wall of the garden under a worn pergola with a tattered roof.

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## **Lockhaven, Maine**

Lockhaven, Maine is the setting for the story. It is a port town located on the ocean. The town is described as being old fashioned and dreary. The Aspinals moved to Lockhaven so that Mr. Aspinal could relocate his shipping business.

Although the layout and population of the town are not specifically discussed, it is clear by the attitudes and close knit rumor mill that it is a relatively small town. Clara fears that Daphne will hear rumors about her and not want to be her friend. The people that live in Lockhaven have small town minds and it is clear that most have lived their all of their lives. This can be seen in the way Miss Lentham talks about Woodruff Booth.

Daphne and the other school children walk to school, suggesting that the town is rather small. This is also mirrored by Clara's trip to the historical society.

# Themes and Motifs

## The Aviary

The aviary is a sanctuary for Mr. Glendoveer's five birds that live in an enormous black iron cage in the Glendoveer's rear rose garden. The cage is quite large. Clara describes it as being as large as her bedroom. While the aviary is quite large, it is positioned against the back wall of the garden under a pergola with a tattered roof. When storms come, as they often do in the seaport town, Clara and Ruby must rush to cover the aviary and its contents to protect it from wind and rain. Rarely does anyone except for Ruby venture inside the aviary.

The aviary is representative of several things in the story. First and foremost, it is a type of prison for the five Glendoveer children that have been turned into birds until Elliot has returned. The children are trapped inside the birds' bodies as the birds are trapped in the cage. The only way they can escape this prison is to be released by Clara, the person that is most frightened of them.

The aviary also represents the unknown to Clara. The birds, just like the future, are an unknown and often scary. However, when Clara begins to push ahead and learn about what is in front of her, it becomes much less scary and enables her to grow and change.

Lastly, the aviary represents a sense of irony when Booth and Jimmy are locked inside with only bread and water to eat. It is because of the actions of the two men that the Glendoveer children were taken from their family and killed. Now it is their turn to understand what it is like to be trapped inside the aviary - a prison of their own making.

## Illness

Illness is a main theme in the story. Clara Dooley is a twelve year old girl that has been told she has a weak heart. The exact condition is never spelled out but she is banned from any kind of activity that will cause exertion. She is also warned to avoid excitement. It is discovered later in the story that Clara is not ill at all, it was a story her mother had invented to keep her safe from people that may want to kidnap and harm her as they had with the other Glendoveer children. As a result of this fear, the over protectiveness of her mother and Ruby causes Clara to be housebound, only being able to go out into the garden for fresh air. The birds in the aviary scare Clara, so even that small joy is taken away. Clara's "illness" is asymptomatic which causes the girl to begin to question her illness and, eventually, her mother. Clara notices that she does not feel short of breath, fatigue or anything else that is supposedly associated with her illness. As a result, Clara begins to become suspicious of her mother's motives in this area as well as others.

When Ruby finds out that Clara has been meeting with Daphne in secret, she becomes angry. She warns Clara against excitement and says that Harriet, Clara's mother and a



nurse, would be furious if she knew Clara was putting her health in jeopardy. Clara accepts her illness but often wishes she could go out and be with other children. The sense of confinement worsens after Mrs. Glendoveer dies.

Harriet was hired on to take care of the aging and frail Mrs. Glendoveer. The old woman has some illness that is never disclosed. The majority of her ailments are related to old age. She finally dies from pneumonia. The death of Mrs. Glendoveer, while sad, opens new doors for Clara. It prompts Clara to learn more about the old woman and the mysterious family. Clara discovers information she could not have discovered while Mrs. Glendoveer was alive, therefore turning a tragic illness into a means of getting at the truth.

## Mystery

Clara unwittingly stumbles upon a mystery involving the Glendoveer family. Mrs. Glendoveer never talks about her family or the deep dark secrets that surround the disappearance of her five children and the deaths of four of them. The fifth, Elliot, was never found.

Clara begins to suspect that the birds in the aviary know something. The mynah bird begins to shout at Clara about Elliot and often says, "Statim!" which is Latin for "hurry!" Clara does not understand the clues given to her by the birds. Mrs. Glendoveer tells Clara about Elliot but never mentions the other children. Clara first learns about the other children upon her visit to the Glendoveer crypt. Later, Clara stumbles upon the children's bedroom, which had always been locked. Slowly but surely Clara begins to uncover the hideous tale of the kidnapped children, all but one of whom had been drowned in the sea.

Daphne tells Clara about the rumors she hears in the town regarding the Glendoveers. Neither Clara nor Daphne choose to believe the tales and set out to prove the innocence of the family. Against the advice of her mother and Ruby, Clara allows herself to get worked up about the mystery and becomes obsessed with finding a way to clear the Glendoveers of being accused of murdering their children.

Clara finds information through keepsakes belonging to Cenelia as well as letters and journal entries written by George. Clara connects Woodruff Booth to the crimes against the children and attempts to investigate the man. Daphne begins a correspondence with Booth who comes to visit Lockhaven.

The details of the mystery move the story along from one point to the next. With each step she takes, Clara becomes emboldened. The most compelling piece of information Clara receives is that her father believes he is really Elliot Glendoveer.

Clara takes steps - often dangerous ones - as she and Daphne attempt to ferret out the truth. The once sickly little girl turns into a brave heroine as she and Daphne solve the mystery and set right the wrongs against the Glendoveers.

# Styles

## Point of View

The point of view used in “The Aviary” by Kathleen O’Dell is third person omniscient. This point of view works well throughout the book as there are several components and underlying factors that would not be revealed otherwise. The story itself is somewhat layered and complex for a young adult mystery and only third person omniscient would allow the reader to follow and understand the activities of all of the characters as well as the dangerous and deadly events involving the tale of the Glendoveer family. It also allows for the reader to follow and understand actions and thoughts of other characters in the book as well as those events of which one single character has no knowledge.

Third person omniscient also allows the reader to know about activities and issues that occur outside of the Glendoveer mansion, such as the rumors being told around town or the goings on of Woodruff Booth and Mrs. Glendoveer’s lawyer.

While the first person point of view might have been interesting when coming from the characters in their time of confusion, or perhaps even the birds in the aviary, third person conveys the entire story and not just the subjective opinions of the characters. It also permits the reader to take part in the journey and development of each character in the story.

## Language and Meaning

The language and meaning used throughout “The Aviary” by Kathleen O’Dell reflects on the times in a number of ways. It is not clear in what time period the people live but the language is more formal and the behavior of the characters is that of an older time. The language gives the impression that there are fewer outside influences than in modern times. There is no mention of a television, phone, computer, etc. Clara and the others are often sheltered from news outside of the house which also means that they are relatively reclusive.

O’Dell does not use a great deal of slang or any language that would date the work in a negative way.

O’Dell is a master of language and is not afraid to exercise her vocabulary. There is a marked absence of sex, violence, and vulgarity throughout the story. This may be due to the fact that many of this is a young adult book and the use of those words was not commonplace in the time or appropriate to be used by women.

## Structure

“The Aviary” by Kathleen O’Dell is a work of fiction. The work is chronological in nature. It is comprised of 215 pages, broken into 32 chapters. The shortest chapter is 2 pages in length; the longest chapter is 12 pages in length; the average number of pages per chapter is 7 pages.

The book begins with the introduction of Clara Dooley, the main character. Clara is a twelve year old girl, housebound with a weak heart. Clara spends her days in the company of Ruby the cook, her mother, and Mrs. Glendoveer, mistress of the Glendoveer mansion. Clara is fascinated by Mrs. Glendoveer. Mrs. Glendoveer’s fascination is with the birds in the aviary; birds that had once belonged to her husband, a magician.

Clara is afraid of the birds. When they begin to talk to her, she thinks that perhaps they are in some way magical. Yet their aggressive behavior and constant shrieking scare Clara.

When Mrs. Glendoveer dies, Clara learns that the old woman and her husband had five children. The children were never mentioned, save Elliot, who was brought up to Clara by the mynah bird.

Clara and her new friend Daphne begin to delve into the mystery of the disappearance of the Glendoveer children and are determined to get to the bottom of the rumors and lies about the possibility of the children being murdered by their parents.

# Quotes

As a young child, Clara Dooley had felt that the Glendoveer mansion contained the whole world.

-- Narrator (Chapter 1 paragraph 7)

**Importance:** This quote shows that Clara was fascinated and encompassed by the Glendoveer mansion and that its people and surroundings would play a significant part in the story.

I'm like a ghost in a tower," Clara murmured. "I might as well be invisible.

-- Narrator (Chapter 2 paragraph 68)

**Importance:** This quote shows Clara's loneliness as she stands in the window and watches the school children walk down the sidewalk.

Clara did not cry. In the space where her heart used to lie was a frozen lump.

-- Narrator (Chapter 5 paragraph 7)

**Importance:** This quote shows that Clara is in shock over the death of Mrs. Glendoveer and is not yet allowing herself to grieve.

Time seemed to stretch out before Clara in a way that actually frightened her.

-- Narrator (Chapter 6 paragraph 4)

**Importance:** Clara suddenly realizes that Mrs. Glendoveer is really gone. She thinks about spending the rest of her life in the house and wonders if she, too, will one day be carried out of the house dead and wrapped in a rose quilt.

You should see my mother. Always protecting me from even the slightest excitement. No wonder she never told me anything about the Glendoveers.

-- Clara (Chapter 8 paragraph 7)

**Importance:** This quote shows that Clara has always been sheltered by her mother for her protection. While it has kept Clara safe, it has also inhibited her growth.

But there were very few distractions in the Glendoveer mansion for a young girl alone, and the questions in Clara's mind only grew more persistent.

-- Narrator (Chapter 8 paragraph 97)

**Importance:** Clara's isolation works in her favor as it allows her to ponder the facts of the mystery.

So this is how it is to be, Clara thought. No direct questioning or accusations, no punishments; just a silent tit for tat, like a chess game.

-- Narrator (Chapter 12 paragraph 10)

**Importance:** Clara learns that her mother is somewhat stealthy and underhanded. Harriet knows Clara is up to something but as with other issues, chooses not to confront her daughter.

I do get frightened,' Clara said, 'but it isn't so bad if you believe, as I do, that it is Mrs. Glendoveer that has a presence here. Mrs. Glendoveer was not a scary person.  
-- Clara (Chapter 3 paragraph 16)

**Importance:** Clara explains to Daphne why she is not afraid of the happenings in the house. The strange occurrences, while they would have adversely affected Daphne, do not bother Clara.

You've said it yourself that they are children and they only speak to you. Who else has come even close to discovering their secrets? Who else will help them?  
-- Daphne (Chapter 16 paragraph 51)

**Importance:** Daphne works hard to convince Clara to take the chance of leaving the mansion and going to the historical society to meet Miss Lentham.

Together always to the last, Our love shall hold each other fast. Delivered from the frost and foam, None shall fly till all come home.  
-- George Glendoveer (Chapter 18 paragraph 8)

**Importance:** This is the incantation that George used in an attempt to save the souls of their children. It is this incantation that turned them into birds, each waiting for the return of Elliot.

Darling, I needed an excuse to keep you hidden. If only I were cleverer I would have thought of something better.  
-- Harriet (Chapter 20 paragraph 93)

**Importance:** Harriet finally admits that she had lied to Clara about her heart condition. Harriet was worried that Clara may have inherited madness from her father, or worse, that she, too, would be kidnapped.

Clara felt a knot of apprehension in her chest. She knew how badly the Glendoveers had longed for Elliot's help; how they had looked to it as their only hope. What if they never figured out what was required?  
-- Narrator (Chapter 32 paragraph 53)

**Importance:** This quote shows that all of the work put into saving the children might be worthless if the group cannot figure out how to break the spell.