

Blackout Study Guide

Blackout by Connie Willis

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Plot Summary

Blackout is a novel by the award-winning author Connie Willis. The story follows a series of historians that are studying history at Oxford University. It's 2060 and these historians get to study history first hand by traveling back in time to the events and time periods they wish to study. The history advisor, Mr. Dunworthy, has to approve each historian's travel because he won't allow them near any dangerous situations, especially after one of the historians is killed while on assignment.

The primary characters of the novel are primarily studying the different aspects of World War II. Eileen studies the evacuees or the children sent from London to the outskirts of England to keep them safe from the war. Michael Davies is studying normal citizens that become heroes in certain situations, such as the civilians during one of the battles during World War II. Polly is studying the shop girls working on Oxford Street during the War and the citizens that take shelter underground in the tube stations during the war.

Everything is fine until an unexpected obstacle prohibits each character to be picked up the lab in Oxford to bring them back from history into the present of 2060. One by one, each of the historians finds themselves stuck in time travel in 1940s England. Each believes that something is wrong with their area of the time travel net and so they each try to find one of the other historians. By the end of the novel, three of the historians are collectively working together to try to figure out how to get from 1940s England back to 2060 Oxford. To find out the conclusion of Blackout, the author invites readers to read her next novel, All Clear.



Oxford—April 2060 Pages 1-11

Oxford—April 2060 Pages 1-11 Summary

Colin Templer is looking for Mr. Dunworthy at Oxford University. Mr. Purdy, Mr. Dunworthy's secretary, says Colin needs to talk with the provost if he is applying to Oxford. When Colin says he is a friend, Eddritch recognizes Colin as an Eton student. Colin insists that it's important he speak with Mr. Dunworthy.

When Eddritch says he can't give Colin an appointment until the nineteenth, Colin thinks to himself that this is too late because he needs to speak with Mr. Dunworthy before Polly returns. Colin asks the porter, Mr. Purdy, about Dunworthy's whereabouts and then Colin goes in search of Dunworthy.

Colin finds Badri and a tech assistant at the lab going over coordinates for October 4, 1950. Badri mentions that if Colin is there to ask to go to the Crusades that the answer is no. Badri says Colin just missed Mr. Dunworthy. Colin suggests that Mr. Dunworthy is getting ready to travel but Badri won't tell Colin anything. Colin asks Badri when Polly is due back.

As Linna, the other lab tech, escorts Colin out of the lab, she tells him that Polly's retrieval is scheduled for next Wednesday at two o'clock. Colin is friendly to Dunworthy in Wardrobe who is trying on a tweed jacket for his upcoming travel to St. Paul's, where Colin assumes that Dunworthy plans on saving the treasures.

Dunworthy knows that Colin is skipping school, even though Colin lies saying that a water pipe break flooded the school and the area where Colin lives so classes are cancelled. Colin tries to convince Dunworthy to allow him to travel to a time and place that isn't dangerous, but Dunworthy says Colin has to be a third year student at Oxford first.

Colin goes back to the lab. He wants to get information from Linna about why Dunworthy is traveling to St. Paul's in 1950 so he can try to make an excuse to accompany Dunworthy. Linna says he can't come in the lab because Dunworthy called them to tell them not to allow Colin anywhere near the net.

Oxford—April 2060 Pages 1-11 Analysis

Colin alludes to the fact that his urgent need to speak with Mr. Dunworthy has something to do with Colin's future. The lab techs talking about coordinates for dates and event in the past suggests that they are able to time travel, and to send people to specific dates and places in time. This also suggests that Polly is time traveling because Colin needs to speak with Mr. Dunworthy before she returns



Badri and Colin discuss a previous incident that suggests Colin jumped into the time travel machine without permission. Colin says he was able to save Dunworthy's life and the life of another person in the process. This implies that his reason for finding Dunworthy prior to Polly's return is a life or death situation as well, which is why it is so urgent for Colin to find and speak with Dunworthy.

It seems as if the time travel is for third-year historian students at Oxford. Time travel allows the historians to go back to perform research for their various papers, projects and knowledge. Colin has a reason for wanting to travel to World War II, where Polly Churchill is now, but he won't divulge this information to anyone, including Dunworthy.

The net must be the mechanism they use for time travel because Linna says that Dunworthy doesn't want them to allow Colin anywhere near the net.



Warwickshire—December 1939

Warwickshire—December 1939 Summary

Eileen, one of the servants from the manor, escorts Theodore, one of the child evacuees to the train station. Eileen is waiting for the train to London, so she can send Theodore back to his mother. While they are waiting for the train, two of the other children pop up, Binnie and Alf, who are brother and sister. Binnie and Alf are also child evacuees that are staying at the manor. They are also troublemakers.

When the train arrives, Eileen hands Theodore over to one of the soldiers on the train. With his gas mask and his address around a paper hanging on his neck, Eileen asks the soldier to make sure that he gets to London and meets his mother. The vicar comes along looking for Binnie and Alf, who have put a snake in the headmistresses' gas mask, but the two children are hiding.

Alf and Binnie reappear after the vicar leaves. By this time, it is dark, and they have to walk with Eileen back through the woods to the manor. The walk takes an hour and they can't use a torch because of the blackout for the war. As they start their journey back, Alf and Binnie are talking about the Germans invading and bombing. Eileen insists this isn't going to happen. When Alf and Binnie ask how she knows, Eileen thinks about the true outcome of events in her head.

Warwickshire—December 1939 Analysis

Eileen is a servant at the manor that takes in children evacuees from London. During the war, some families send their children away from the city so that the children are not killed or injured if the city is bombed. It seems as if Eileen is Polly. Eileen is likely Polly Churchill's name for the time period in which is acting so that Polly can properly conduct her historical research. The fact that Eileen knows the true outcome of the war before it happens indicates that she is in fact a time traveler, even if she is not Polly Churchill.



Balliol College, Oxford—April 2060

Balliol College, Oxford—April 2060 Summary

Michael returns to his dorm room to find his roommate Charles is still there. Charles was supposed to be on a time travel, but he says that it's been postponed. Michael talks about the four time travel events he's schedule for, which will allow him to study ordinary people that become heroes during an emergency or catastrophic event. Michael also reveals that Ira Feldman is the inventor of time travel during his discussion with Charles.

Charles mentions Michael getting Dunworthy to approve a project like Michael is doing. Charles says Shakira took a phone message for Michael, but Michael can't read her handwriting. Charles tries to read it, but agrees that Shakira's handwriting is wretched. When they determine it might refer to a schedule change, Michael calls the lab, but Linna says his drop is still scheduled for Friday morning at 8 a.m.

Michael spends the time waiting for Shakira to return studying the information on each of his four drops. Shakira calls and Michael asks about the message. She says that his first drop is changed to Dunkirk.

Balliol College, Oxford—April 2060 Analysis

Charles saying that Dunworthy had to approve Michael's time travel for his project again gives credit to the fact that the students travel back in time to specific events for research purposes. The implication is that Colin is somehow responsible for leaving the message for Michael. Changing Michael's first drop to make it Dunkirk would allow Colin to get to Polly while she is still in World War II times.



Warwickshire—February 1940

Warwickshire—February 1940 Summary

Eileen is hanging the laundry inside of Lady Caroline's manor because it is raining. She thinks about how she had to postpone her drop a week before because the kids followed her. Eileen is also thinking about all of the other duties that have prevented her from making it to the drop point. She thinks if she doesn't make it there soon that Oxford will send a retrieval team after her, thinking that something has happened to her.

Today is another one of Eileen's half-days, where she has half of the day to take care of her personal needs. Lady Caroline summons Eileen, however, which can prevent Eileen from getting to the drop point once again. When Eileen arrives in the drawing room, she finds the vicar with Lady Caroline. Lady Caroline tells Eileen the vicar is giving Eileen driving lessons this afternoon, so Eileen can drive ambulances for the war effort.

Eileen tries to switch lesson time with the maid, Mrs. Bascombe, but Mrs. Bascombe says she isn't getting inside of any automobile. They hear a thump upstairs in the ballroom. When Eileen goes to check on it, she finds two children dressed in the clean sheets and the other children huddled in a corner scared. While Eileen is cleaning up the mess, Una, another servant summons Eileen back to the drawing room.

The Magruders are there to pick up their three children now that they think Hitler is not going to bomb Europe. Eileen runs into the vicar, who says he switched Eileen's lesson until tomorrow so Una will have her lesson this afternoon. Eileen walks out into the woods where the drop is scheduled. The drop only opens once an hour, when Eileen gets there, she can hear a man talking to Badri about his drop being rescheduled. Eileen walks into the net and into the lab at Oxford.

Warwickshire—February 1940 Analysis

Ironically, the students travel back in time to study history, but their mere presence might be enough to change the course of history. There is some foreshadowing that their work and efforts while they are time traveling might change historical events, which ultimately rewrites history as everyone knows it. Because of her duties, Eileen is going to once again miss her drop and check-in with Oxford.

Eileen thinks about how in theory historians are not allowed to do anything that could alter history. Again, this is foreshadowing that this is precisely what is going to happen. The inference is that the man talking to Badri about his drop being rescheduled is Michael Davies.



Oxford—April 2060 Pages 33-41

Oxford—April 2060 Pages 33-41 Summary

When Michael Davies arrives at the lab, he has to wait to talk to Badri because Badri is getting ready to drop Phipps into 1930's Oxford. When Michael overhears Linna on the phone saying it's a recon and prep mission, Michael wonders what it could be since those types of drops are only for special circumstances.

Whoever is on the phone is requesting a list of all historians and their current locations. After Badri drops Phipps, he and Michael argue about Badri changing the order of Michael's drops. Another man enters the lab and starts arguing with Badri about moving his drop up as well.

When the retrieval beep starts coming through the lab, it is Phipps coming back already. He tells Badri that there wasn't too much slippage, which is a delay in time when time traveling. Phipps starts talking about when his assignment travel is scheduled to start. Phipps leaves and when Michael can't get Badri to budge on his schedule, Michael leaves too.

Michael returns to his dorm to start preparation for Dunkirk when Linna calls to ask if he has a drop location suggestion. She says Badri says the slippage is weeks at all of the location they know of and since Dunkirk is only a nine-day event, Michael has to be there by a certain date. Even the next day, the lab is not having any luck finding a drop location and so they have to move from spots surrounding Dover to locations in London.

While Michael is running around trying to get ready for his travel, Props calls his room to say they can't have his papers ready for his trip. Then, the lab calls to say they found a drop location, but had to move his travel up to the next afternoon.

Oxford—April 2060 Pages 33-41 Analysis

Presumably, it is Dunworthy that is requesting the list of historians and their locations. It can also be Colin impersonating Dunworthy so that he can find out where the historians are and where he might be able to drop into history as the net window opens for these historians to check-in with Oxford.

It appears as if Phipps and Badri are running a test. They seem to be testing slippage, which is the delay in time that allows the historians to account for anything that might alter history. The rush to get Michael into a drop location near Dover for Dunkirk means that he is going into history unprepared. This foreshadows Michael doing something that will alter the course of history, even if it is accidental.



Oxford—April 2060 Pages 42-55

Oxford—April 2060 Pages 42-55 Summary

Eileen tries to arrange a return date with Linna so that she has time to learn how to drive a 1940s car, but Linna says they are booked solid. While Eileen is walking from the lab to schedule time for her driving lessons, Polly Churchill starts calling Eileen's real name, which is Merope, but Eileen doesn't respond at first. Polly says she just returned from her assignment the day before. They talk about how they keep their cover names straight.

Polly convinces Merope to return to Balliol with her so that Merope can get Dunworthy's permission to get her driving papers. Then, Polly says she'll teach Merope what she needs to know about the basics of a 1940s vehicle. Polly also offers to talk with Dunworthy about allowing Merope to attend VE-Day. Colin runs up behind Polly and hands her a sheaf of papers, which are the names and dates the London tube stations were bombed so that Polly won't be in them while she's there. After Colin leaves, Merope suggests that Colin is in love with Polly, but Polly says Colin is in love with time travel.

At Mr. Dunworthy's office, Polly and Eileen run into Michael Davies, who is waiting to see Mr. Dunworthy. They talk about all of the schedule changes Mr. Dunworthy is making. Eileen also tries to figure out who the other historian in World War II is that is prohibiting her from attending VE-Day.

Suddenly, Polly seems very distracted and says that she has to go. She offers to help Eileen learn about the Bentley tomorrow as she rushes off. Colin comes looking for Polly, but Eileen tells him she went to wardrobe. Colin also says that Dunworthy isn't in his office but it is London and won't be back until tonight. Michael ends up giving Eileen a blank permission form that Dunworthy signed for him to take flying lessons so she can fill it in for her driving lessons. Colin comes back to tell Michael that when he went to wardrobe that they need him to come for a fitting for a new costume because they had to give his to Gerald Phipps.

Oxford—April 2060 Pages 42-55 Analysis

It seems as if all of the drops Dunworthy is changing have to do with World War II. This indicates that he is trying to prevent Colin from unexpectedly dropping through the net into history again.



Oxford—April 2060 Pages 56-62

Oxford—April 2060 Pages 56-62 Summary

When Michael goes through the net to Dover, it is so dark that he cannot see. Badri warns him of slippage, but it seems as if the slippage is more than just the few hours that it should be. Mike determines he is on a beach but doesn't know where. He decides he has to sit and wait for light because he doesn't want to light his safety matches and he doesn't want to trip on a landmine.

When Michael starts to think about how cold it is for May, he starts to worry that they've sent him to the wrong place and time. When light finally breaks, Michael looks at his watch, which reveals he's been on the beach for six hours. He sees a chalk cliff in the distance, which reveals that he is in the right place.

Michael walks off the beach and comes to a fishing village. He sees that the movie theater is showing a movie that came out in 1937, but it is the month of May. As Michael hunts for a bus schedule in a nearby building, he comes across a letter addressed to the wrong town, one that is thirty miles from Dover instead of six miles away. He finds a newspaper and with the news headlines, he figures out that he is only one day earlier than he expected. Then, another story makes him realize he is a day late and has already missed the first day of the evacuation.

When a girl that lives above the pub where Michael is comes downstairs, he asks about the bus to Dover. She said he missed it yesterday, which was Tuesday. The next one doesn't come until Sunday.

Oxford—April 2060 Pages 56-62 Analysis

It seems as if Badri has made a mistake while dropping Michael. Instead of 1940, it seems as if Michael is in 1937. Instead of six miles north of Dover, Michael is thirty miles south of Dover. Michael's trip is all messed up, which might lead to him doing something that alters history. For one, the young pretty girl at the pub might just end up being a romance for Michael, which could definitely alter what happens in history.



Oxford—April 2060 Pages 63-73

Oxford—April 2060 Pages 63-73 Summary

Polly rushes around campus to get ready for her next assignment. Colin brings her the list of bombing locations and the damage reports for the time she is in London. He tells her that within about twenty minutes of the sirens sounding the bombings usually occurred. He also warns her to stay close to buildings because many people were killed from shattering glass.

Polly makes a stop at Costume, but they only have a navy skirt in the style that she needs. As a shop girl, she needs a black skirt and long-sleeve, white blouse. When she finds out that it will take three weeks to make a black skirt, she takes the navy one instead.

Colin catches up with Polly again. He asks her to promise to do all of her assignments in real time rather than flash time. This is when Colin admits that he wants to be with Polly. If she does her assignments in real time and when he is able to start traveling, does his is flash time, then he thinks he will be able to catch up to her in age. Polly says she can't really talk to Colin about this because she is trying to prepare for her trip. Polly decides to have an implant put in that contains the information on the bombings so she doesn't have to memorize that.

When she returns to her dorm, Polly receives a call from Linna. Linna says they've found a drop location. Linna tells Polly she can leave in thirty minutes or in three weeks. Polly decides to leave today. As they are about the drop Polly, Badri tells Linna to call Dunworthy. Linna says he's in London, so they decide not to call him. This is to Polly's relief because she doesn't want Dunworthy to know she is back, and she doesn't want him to stop her from leaving.

Oxford—April 2060 Pages 63-73 Analysis

Polly is trying to hide the fact that she is back from Dunworthy. It seems as if she is doing this because she doesn't want him to change her travel schedule like he has been changing everyone else's schedule. All of the changes that are happening foreshadow mistakes being made. With all of the confusion, it is possible that Badri and Linna will drop people in the wrong places, at the wrong times, or both at the wrong place and time. This can mean death or serious injury to the historians, especially those dropping into to war zones or dangerous situations.



Warwickshire—Spring 1940

Warwickshire—Spring 1940 Summary

Two days after returning, Eileen goes for her driving lesson. While she learned the basics of a Bentley at Oxford, the vicar teaches her how to drive on his car, which is completely different. Eileen does better than the other servants. The Hodbins, Binnie and Alf, enjoy heckling each servant as they are taking their lessons. Eventually, Eileen consents to allow Binnie to have lessons in hopes it keeps her out of trouble.

As the months go by, more and more evacuees arrive. Before she knows it, Eileen only has one week of her assignment left. Since she returned in February, she hasn't been back to the drop location, and it's now mid-April. On the day Eileen is set to return to the drop point to leave, she removes a hidden letter from the hem of her jacket. It is a letter summoning her home to her sick mother, which she will leave behind to explain her sudden absence.

As Eileen is getting ready to leave, Una says Lady Caroline wants to see Eileen. When Eileen gets to Lady Caroline, she finds more evacuees, including Theodore Willett, the little boy she put on the train with the soldiers to return to his mother in London.

Warwickshire—Spring 1940 Analysis

Eileen gets her wish to have more evacuees to study and research. The challenge is that it is keeping her so busy that she doesn't even have time to check in with the lab at Oxford. This can cause a problem for her return and she won't know if anything is going wrong that can delay her return. Additionally, now that there are more evacuees arriving, including Theodore Willett, it is going to be even harder for Eileen to make it the drop point before the window closes for her to close out her assignment and return to Oxford.



Saltram-on-Sea—29 May 1940

Saltram-on-Sea—29 May 1940 Summary

Michael continues to talk to Daphne about catching a bus, a train, or a ride to Dover. She says one of the local men might be able to drive him when he returns from picking up his bull. His conversation with Daphne confirms that he has already missed three days of the evacuation. Michael walks through town to see if there is a bicycle or even a boat that might take him to Dover.

One of the local men refers him to Commander Harold. When Michael finds Commander Harold, Harold thinks Michael is there to commission him. Michael tries to explain to him that he is trying to hire someone to take him to Dover, but the Commander doesn't let Michael talk too much. When Michael tells the Commander he is a reporter writing a story on the preparations, the Commander compares the town to a resort because of their lack of preparations.

Saltram-on-Sea—29 May 1940 Analysis

Something seems to be wrong with the time travel net. It has dropped Michael into the wrong day and the wrong place. Not only does this mean that Michael has missed the opportunity to observe and research three days of the evacuation, but since his memorization is for a specific place and time, it could put him in danger that he is not aware of happening.

Since Michael is trying to hitch a ride by boat, and he can't remember which boats were sunk, he could be riding on a boat that goes under. This puts Michael's life in danger. Additionally, it can alter history.



Oxford—April 2060 Pages 89-103

Oxford—April 2060 Pages 89-103 Summary

Polly lands in the dark of what she thinks is a locked basement, but turns out to be an alleyway. She thinks that she is in the right place by looking around the neighborhood, but she also thinks it's the morning of the day that she is supposed to drop. While she is trying to buy a newspaper, the sirens go off, and the shopkeeper says something that makes Polly realize that it is dark because it is evening and not because it is early morning.

As the shopkeeper pushes her out before she buys a paper to see the date, she runs into an old man that escorts her to a shelter. After being in the shelter and hearing the men talk about their guns returning fire, Polly realizes that it is Saturday night instead of Tuesday morning, so she has already missed almost a week of observing the shop girls.

Oxford—April 2060 Pages 89-103 Analysis

Not only is the slippage longer for Michael but the same thing happens to Polly. This indicates that there is some kind of a problem with the time travel net. This time, the slippage not only causes Polly to lose a week of her six-week assignment, but it has her sitting in a bomb shelter that is closer to bombings than historians typically are allowed. It seems as if all of the slippage problems are eventually going to land one of the historians in such a dangerous situation that they are severely wounded or even killed.



Saltram-on-Sea—29 May 1940

Saltram-on-Sea—29 May 1940 Summary

When Michael steps onto the Commander's boat, he finds himself standing in about four inches of water. The Commander assures Michael they just have to get the pump going to pump the water out and that it's nothing for Michael to worry about. Every time Michael tries to leave the boat to get back to town to see if Mr. Powney has returned from picking up his bull, the Commander detains Michael. When Michael returns to the pub, Daphne tells him Mr. Powney still hasn't returned, but then she tells him his farm is south so he doesn't have to drive through town to get. Michael walks the three miles to Mr. Powney's farm with Daphne's map, but Mr. Powney isn't there and not one car drives past Michael during his walk there or back to the pub.

Michael goes down to the docks but notices that all of the boats are gone except for the Commander's boat. When he returns to the pub, Michael overhears the Commander on the phone complaining that they commissioned all of the small vessels except his. The Commander rushes out of the pub, jumps on his bicycle and rides away. As Daphne is telling him that all the small vessels went to Dover for the war effort, they see the Commander zoom by in his—a car Daphne forgot to mention to Michael.

Michael goes back down to the Lady Jane, the Commander's boat. He's so tired that he decides to sleep for an hour. When Michael wakes up, the Commander calls him a stowaway and says they are halfway across the English Channel on their way to Dunkirk.

Saltram-on-Sea—29 May 1940 Analysis

Not only does Michael drop into the wrong town and three days late, but now he has wasted another day in Saltam-on-Sea, which means he's missed four days of the evacuation at this point. Ironically, Michael misses his chance to hitch a boat ride to Dover because he is walking to the farm to try to commandeer a ride from Mr. Powney. If Michael had told the Commander that he needed a ride to Dover, Michael might have found out about the Commander's car before seeing the Commander whiz by in it. Now that Michael is on the Lady Jane, he is going to a completely different town, Dunkirk, which is where a major battle is going to ensue. Not only is Michael going to miss another day of observing the evacuation but he is heading directly into danger.



Dulwich, Surrey—13 June 1944

Dulwich, Surrey—13 June 1944 Summary

Lieutenant Mary Kent checks into Dulwich at the First Aid Nursing Yeomanry post. She first meets Lieutenant Fairchild, who ends up showing her around post. Mary is an historian that is there to study the women ambulance drivers. What Mary finds bizarre is that nobody seems to know about the VS-1 attacks. The major in charge of the post is away. When the other girls of FANY arrive, they have just come from a clothing exchange. Again, Mary remarks to herself how their talk seems to be so mundane when there has been a recent attack when the women ambulance drivers would have been very busy.

When the major returns to the post, she tells the girls to gather for an important announcement. Mary expects it to be about the combings. Instead, the Major announces that they'll be transporting the soldiers wounded in the Normandy invasion.

Dulwich, Surrey—13 June 1944 Analysis

It seems that Mary is another historian that has been dropped into the right place but during the wrong time frame. Mary hasn't figured it out yet. At present, she suspects something is wrong because none of the women are talking about the bombings. Ironically, it doesn't occur to Mary that she was dropped into the wrong date.



Warwickshire—May 1940

Warwickshire—May 1940 Summary

Eileen spends hours completing the paperwork on the new group of evacuees. She is starting to worry that she's not going to make it to the drop spot to return to Oxford. Una pulls up with the vicar and the vicar convinces Eileen she has to have her lesson now. Eileen tries to think of an excuse but can't. Fortunately, when she gets in the car with the vicar, he tells her to just pull out of Una's sight because he just couldn't drive anymore with Una.

On the drive, they come across the Hodbins. Eileen asks why they aren't in school, but Binnie says that Alf is sick. She thinks they are faking until she feels that Alf is burning up with a fever, and then vomits all over Eileen's shoes. They get the kids into the house and the vicar goes to get the doctor. The doctor diagnoses Alf with measles. Eileen says she hasn't had the measles so Una is assigned to care for Alf.

Alf vomits again. Eileen changes him and his sheets. She takes the dirty bedding and clothes to dump into the bathtub so she can get out of the house and head to the drop location. As she is exiting the door to the house, a representative from the health department is there nailing up a quarantine notice and tells Eileen she can't leave.

Warwickshire—May 1940 Analysis

As the window of opportunity for Eileen to leave Warwickshire and return to Oxford closes, chaos ensues. One thing after the next prohibits Eileen from leaving the house. If she doesn't make it to the drop today, she'll have to wait another week to leave. Once the house becomes quarantined, Eileen won't be able to leave, possibly even longer than the one week period. Since this offsets the drop and retrieval schedule, it also impacts history. The longer Eileen stays in the 1940s, the more opportunities there are for her to affect what happens in history.



Kent—April 1944

Kent—April 1944 Summary

Worthing is writing his stories for the newspaper when Cess comes in to say that they have to say that the tanks are here and they have to blow them up. Worthing tries to get Cess to take a bunch of different people before he finally relents. Before leaving, Worthing puts his work into a folder and locks it under a stack of other things in his desk drawer.

With the thick fog, it takes longer than it should to get to the field. The two men start blowing up inflatable tanks and set out a phonograph playing tank noises. Worthing also have a machine, similar to a lawn mower to make "tank tracks" in the mud of the cow pasture where they have arranged to use the property with the farmer. When they are done, Worthing goes back to get the phonograph at the time the fog clears and Worthing sees a bull staring at him. A farmer yells to ask what he's doing on their property.

Kent—April 1944 Analysis

The fact that Worthing locks up his "top secret" work in his desk drawer suggests that he is an historian. With the thick fog and the hard time Cess had finding the correct farm, it is easy to understand how he landed them on the wrong cow pasture. If Worthing is an historian, he is about to be in danger because a bull is about to charge him. Additionally, staging the tanks in the wrong field can attract the Germans to bomb the wrong field, thus altering history and endangering the historian that is there even more than he already is.



London—15 September 1940

London—15 September 1940 Summary

As the bomb shelter starts to clear out, Mrs. Rickett tells Polly that she has a room to rent in a boardinghouse. The room is very small and her rations don't start until the following day, but Polly takes the room so she doesn't waste any more time looking for a place to stay. After renting the room, she heads out to look for something to eat and decides she should go sightseeing before the bombs drop. Polly ends up sneaking into St. Paul's, even though it is closed to the public because they are clearing out an unexploded bomb nearby.

London—15 September 1940 Analysis

It is ironic that the historians know what is going to happen but the people that surround them are living it firsthand. It does give the historian a leg up, however. In Polly's situation, she knows where and when the bombs hit, which gives her a lead on what she should see before it is destroyed as part of the carnage of war.

London—7 May 1945

London—7 May 1945 Summary

Three girls, Paige, Reardon, and Douglas, get on the train. They've heard that the war has ended. They are looking for the square where the celebration is unfolding. Every stop, they don't see anything, so they start to question whether it is a rumor or not. Douglas knows that the war has been over for hours and that they have already missed hours of the celebration.

When the train stops again, the girls see everyone celebrating, the train is so crowded, they have to maneuver to get off before the train starts moving again. Paige and Reardon are able to get off the train to the platform. Douglas doesn't make it in time and the train pulls out of the station while Paige and Reardon are standing on the platform waiting for Douglas.

London—7 May 1945 Analysis

Douglas seems to be the historian. Douglas knows they've already missed hours of her opportunity to observe the celebration. Now that she's gotten stuck on the train, she potentially could miss all or more of the celebration, which is what she is there to observe.



Backbury, Warwickshire—May 1940

Backbury, Warwickshire—May 1940 Summary

Eileen finds out that they might be quarantined for up to a month because of the incubation period of the measles. It is also contingent on whether or not anyone else catches the measles. The vicar thinks Alf is faking because nobody else in the village has the measles and Alf isn't acting very sick.

By the time the doctor returns to the house that afternoon, three more children are sick and Alf has broken out with the red pinpoint dots that indicate it is definitely measles. By the end of the week, eleven children have the measles, in the next few days, more children fall ill.

Mrs. Bascombe puts Binnie to work, but after a week or so Binnie starts complaining of a headache. One look at Binnie verifies for Eileen that Binnie has the measles too, so Eileen puts Binnie to bed. While her fever and headache don't subside, Binnie never breaks out with the rash. Eventually, Binnie's illness gives her pneumonia. As Binnie's fever continues to increase, Eileen sneaks into Lady Caroline's study to take a couple of aspirin from her stash. Eileen gives the aspirin to Binnie to try to break her fever.

Backbury, Warwickshire—May 1940 Analysis

Eileen has already missed the retrieval. Now that she is so late, the lab will send in a retrieval team. With the quarantine notice on the gate and the door of the house, they will figure out what has happened to Eileen. Eileen makes it a point to try to save Binnie's life since this act will not change the course of history. Binnie making Eileen swear not to leave them can be what prompts Eileen to stay in history for good and not return to the lab even after the quarantine is lifted.

London—17 September 1940

London—17 September 1940 Summary

By Tuesday, Polly still hasn't found a job. Due to the bombings, none of the shops are hiring. Every night of the bombings, Polly goes back to the original bomb shelter with all of the same people, even though she is supposed to be studying the people in the tube stations. Polly still hasn't checked in with the lab, which she knows is going to make Dunworthy angry.

By this time, Polly has observed and gotten to know all of the people in the shelter. The only man she doesn't know the name of is the one that gave her his newspaper, and still continues to do so each night they spend in the shelter. During the raids, there is a knock at the door and two lost ARP women stumble in. When they find out they are in the wrong place, they get a map and continue on to their post.

London—17 September 1940 Analysis

Even though Polly's drop has not turned out the way it was supposed to, she is still learning a lot about the people during the Blitz. She observes how calm and normal the people act as they sit in the bomb shelter. When the knock comes to the door of the shelter, though, Polly realizes that the people are afraid but that they are burying their fear as much as they can. Additionally, Polly realizes that all of this people are heroes and they are brave for having to live through this on a daily basis.



Dulwich, Surrey—14 June 1944

Dulwich, Surrey—14 June 1944 Summary

It is Wednesday morning and Mary still hasn't had any news of the V-1S, which is causing her to worry. Mary also thinks that if she hadn't prepped prior to her drop, that in her current situation, she wouldn't even know they were in a war at all. In the midst of talking about dresses and the betting pool the girls have for when the war will end, the Major summons Kent to her office.

The major sends Kent with two other ambulance drivers to learn the route. They pick up a patient who needs his leg amputated. They are driving down what will be Bomb Alley a couple days from now. Kent starts to question if the wrong data is in her implant and that's why she hasn't heard about any of the VS-1 or VS-2 attacks. Kent waits until 11:31 passes, which is when the VS-1 is supposed to hit. It doesn't hit however.

Dulwich, Surrey—14 June 1944 Analysis

Something is wrong. Mary Kent has the wrong information in her implant. This means that she has to rely on her own memory as to when and where bombs drop. This is potentially dangerous because she could find herself in the midst of an attack if she forgets or mistakes a bombing time in place. Additionally, since many of the bombings were kept out of the newspaper, or the English and Germans planted falsified stories, even what Mary can remember studying might not be enough to help save her life.



The English Channel—29 May 1940

The English Channel—29 May 1940 Summary

Michael is horrified to find out that they are halfway across the English Channel. While he's trying to convince the Commander to turn around, he finds out Jonathan, the Commander's fourteen-year-old grandson is on board. Michael also discovers they have a lot of petrol cans on the boat, which means they can easily blow up if they hit a mine. Just as Michael starts to think that the net wouldn't have allowed him through if his presence would alter history, they arrive at Dunkirk.

The English Channel—29 May 1940 Analysis

Something appears to be wrong with the net of the time machine. All of the historians are trained to believe that a drop is not possible if their presence alters or writes history. If there is a mechanical problem with the net, however, this explains why all of the historians are experiencing problems with their drops.



London—17 September 1940

London—17 September 1940 Summary

Everyone is asleep in the bomb shelter, except for Polly and the elderly man. Bombs are dropping and the anti-aircraft guns shooting back sound like they are right over the top of the shelter. This wakes up the others. The elderly gentleman stands up and gives a performance to divert their attention from the bombings. This is when Polly finds out that he is a famous Shakespearean actor.

London—17 September 1940 Analysis

Polly is able to observe how people live while they are living in the bomb shelters.



London—18 September 1940

London—18 September 1940 Summary

It takes Polly hours to get to Peter Robinson's store because of all the rubble and cleanup from the bombing. When Polly does eventually get there, she accepts a junior shop assistant position in the lingerie department. One of the shop girls shows Polly the ropes. While Polly has had some training at Oxford, she finds that wrapping purchases is something that she's not good at doing.

Polly decides not to go to the drop off point after work. She heads home instead. Polly plans to go to drop off place before the raid sirens go off. When the raid sirens go off earlier than she expects, her landlady pushes Polly into the shelter instead. Polly practices her wrapping skills in the shelter until Godfrey enlists her to play a part in his performance.

London—18 September 1940 Analysis

Timing seems to be off all the way around. This can mean that the historical records are inaccurate. The problem with this is that this is what the historians study and this is the information the implants contain. If this information is off, then it could put the historians in danger.

Dunkirk—29 May 1940

Dunkirk—29 May 1940 Summary

When Michael, the Commander, and Jonathan arrive at Dunkirk, Dunkirk is in flames. A battle still seems to be occurring in the background. Michael acts as the navigator of the boat to maneuver it around floating debris in the water. As they reach the dock, two soldiers are wading toward the boat and a dog is swimming next to them.

The soldiers help tie the boat to the dock. Michael fills the boat with gas while the Commander and Jonathan help hoist the dog and the soldiers into the Lady Jane. Once they get the soldiers in, they decide to leave. Something is holding them back so Michael goes to see what is stuck in the propeller. It turns out to be a dead body. The Germans are dropping flares, which mean the bombs will be dropping in about five minutes. Michael frees the body from the propeller and resurfaces just in time for the sky to light up with bombs.

Dunkirk—29 May 1940 Analysis

Michael is concerned about doing anything that can alter history. This is why he chooses to fill the boat with gas instead of helping the soldiers into the boat. Additionally, Michael volunteers to go under the water in place of Jonathan because Jonathan cannot swim. Michael doesn't want the boy to die at fourteen years old, so Michael takes his place. The problem Michael now faces is that he is in the middle of a war battle that he is not supposed to be in.



Dulwich—15 June 1944

Dulwich—15 June 1944 Summary

Five minutes after she expected it, Mary hears the warning siren go off. She waits to see if she can hear the jet engines of the V-1s flying in but she doesn't. Suddenly, they hear a big explosion and the ground rumbles. The dispatch phone rings alerting the women there's been a plane crash and numerous casualties. Those on duty have to get to work.

The women continue to hear what they think are more planes crashing. Only Mary knows that what they are hearing are unmanned bombs. Mary observes the girls, which are still calm and chatting about dances and men. Mary also listens for each of the V-1s to drop. Each drops on schedule, but one that is supposed to drop at 2:09 doesn't. While the sirens and a few other bombings are a few minutes off, everything else seems to be according to the historical records.

The next day and the following days, the girls speculate what caused the explosions. Some say Hitler created invisible planes. Others say, he has a new glider bomb. The newspaper stories put all of the speculation to an end when they find out it is manless bombs—the V-1s. From all of the bombings, the FANYs are working double shifts.

One of the girls convinces Mary to go to the USO dance on Saturday. Mary knows a bomb is supposed to hit that afternoon so asks where the dance is. Finally, the girls convince her to go because she thinks it will get her near Darnell Green, where she has been trying to get to see if a bomb exploded the bridge there. Saturday, the girl comes to get Mary in the afternoon, saying the dance isn't at night but in the afternoon.

When they get off the bus, they start to walk. The girl is using one of the shop windows to put on lipstick. She's yelling over a motorcycle coming down the lane. When Mary hits the motorcycle sound suddenly stop, she realizes it is a V-1S and tackles the girl to the ground so she isn't killed by shattering glass when the bomb explodes.

Dulwich—15 June 1944 Analysis

While there are some discrepancies in times and locations, for the most part what Mary Kent knows from the historical record is proving to be accurate. Now, however, Mary Kent is messing with fate by being a location where she is not aware where she is. She could potentially be standing in the middle of a war zone and not know it yet. If it is not a bomb, then Mary Kent is going to have to explain her bizarre behavior to her friend that she's going with to the dance.



Warwickshire—May 1940

Warwickshire—May 1940 Summary

Eileen continues to nurse Binnie. She's giving Binnie aspirin to try to bring down her fever. One night, Eileen doesn't give her the aspirin and Binnie's temperature spikes. Eileen really believes that Binnie might die. Then, suddenly her fever breaks. Even after Binnie doesn't have a fever, Eileen notices that Binnie isn't acting like her boisterous self. She arranges for Alf to come in and the ribbing between sister and brother seem to get Binnie back to her old self.

Binnie and Alf start asking about tombstones and what happens when you don't have a name. This is when Eileen gets it out of Alf that Binnie is just short for Hodbin and that Binnie doesn't have a name. Considering Binnie's mom didn't come when they sent for her while Binnie was sick, Eileen and the vicar think it's possible that Binnie doesn't have a name. Eileen tells Binnie she can pick her own name.

Meanwhile, the quarantine continues. Some more children fall ill with the measles. Meanwhile, the children that are feeling better, such as Alf, are literally bouncing off the walls of the manor. The vicar sends up books, games and things for the children to play with through the nursery window, which seems to help a little bit. Every time someone falls ill with the measles, the quarantine is extended. Just when Eileen gets all of the kids feeling better and the quarantine is about to lift, Una comes down with the measles, even though she thought she had them already.

As soon as the quarantine is lifted, Eileen goes straight to the drop. She waits and waits but the net never opens. Eileen goes back and forth a couple of different times but the net still doesn't open. When she arrives near the house one day, Alf tells her that some strangers are in the house. Eileen thinks it's the retrieval team that's come for her, but she finds out it's the military because they are taking over the manor as a rifle range.

Warwickshire—May 1940 Analysis

The net malfunction is what is causing the drop not to open to allow Eileen to return to Oxford. It is possible that the lab has forgotten about Eileen somehow. If they are not aware of where she is or have forgotten her, then this would explain why nobody has to come to retrieve her, even after the quarantine is lifted from the manor.

If it is not that they have forgotten or misplaced her, then it can be a mechanical problem with the net that is prohibiting her from returning to Oxford. If Eileen is not retrieved then she is stuck in time. If she is stuck in time, then her presence can alter history and mess everything up.



Kent—April 1944

Kent—April 1944 Summary

Ernest almost gets gored in the field by the farmer's bull. The bull ends up spearing one of the inflatable tanks instead, which startles the bull and makes the farmer laugh. The farmer asks what kind of games the boys are playing when they hear a plane roaring overhead. They convince the farmer they have to hide because it's a German plane that they need to photograph the tanks on the field. The plane turns out to be one of their own planes.

Once the farmer understands what they're trying to do, he allows them to leave the tanks in the field. Cess and Ernest convince the farmer not to tell anyone because it is top secret. When they get back, Ernest missed the deadline for one paper, so says he's going to submit them to another. He says he plans to write a letter to the editor claiming he woke up to find Canadian tanks in his field, but then their superior comes in to say they need to get ready to go to see the Queen.

Kent—April 1944 Analysis

Once again, things are not going according to plan and according to the way history is supposed to go. Ernest misses his opportunity to finish his news stories when he has to go to the field with Cess. Now, Ernest is missing his opportunity again because they have to go see the Queen of England. The inference is that Ernest writes stories to plant information in the newspapers. While the letter is a direct plant of information, the other news stories are ways for him to send messages to the other historians that are in the place and time he is in at the current time.



London—19 September 1940

London—19 September 1940 Summary

Polly leaves the shelter the next morning. She goes home to quickly wash out her blouse and skirt and get to work. She still has to buy a black skirt but won't have time today before the shop opens. She ends up leaving the shop late, even though it is starting to close early because of the raids.

Polly plans to go to the drop to check in before going home or to the shelter. She takes the train to the street where she needs to exit, but the guard and the gate won't allow her up to the street. She gets on another train to try to get off there, but this guard is even worse about allowing people up from the train tunnel to the street, so Polly gets stuck in the tunnels. She decides to use the opportunity to observe the multitude of people hiding out there from the bombs. She manages to get a little sleep but not much. She doesn't make it home in time to wash out her clothes so she has to go straight to work with a stained and wrinkled outfit.

Her boss gives her a warning. One of the other shop girls says she'll cover for Polly so she can buy a skirt before the shop closes. Polly buys the skirt and heads to the drop off location. At first, she finds herself on the wrong street. When she finds the right street, she realizes it has been bombed and the alleyway where the drop point is covered in debris and she isn't able to enter it.

London—19 September 1940 Analysis

One by one, the historians are running into obstacles that prohibit them from reaching their drop locations, or from checking in with the lab. Now, because of a bomb that somebody didn't expect, Polly's drop location is not accessible. This means the lab has to find another drop location, which was highly difficult for them to find in the first place. This too can mean that Polly is stuck in history, just as Eileen seems to be stuck in history.



Dunkirk, France—29 May 1940

Dunkirk, France—29 May 1940 Summary

When Michael wakes up, Jonathan and the others are pulling him up over the side of the boat. Jonathan says they thought he was dead when the bomb hit because they found Michael floating face down with his arms out. In the delay of rescuing Michael, the soldiers on the beach are rushing toward the boat and climbing aboard.

They are packed in like sardines, but the Commander manages to get the boat going before too many soldiers board and sink the *Lady Jane*. When they reach Dover, one of the soldiers says Michael saved his life. He says when he saw the light he knew it was a boat. Michael realizes the soldiers saw the flashlight he made Jonathan shine so he could see the propeller.

When they reach Dover, Michael realizes he is finally where he was been trying to get all along. He starts blabbering about contacting Oxford to tell them he might have altered events. The medics start seeing to the bloody mess that was once Michael's right foot.

Dunkirk, France—29 May 1940 Analysis

Michael is at a divergence point when he is in Dunkirk. This is an important location in history. Any actions Michael takes while in these points can alter history. This is why historians are not typically allowed in divergence points. When Michael made Jonathan shine the flashlight, this is the point where the soldiers spotted the boat. In essence, Michael created a situation where he possibly saved the lives of men that otherwise would not have been saved. Additionally, it seems Michael is injured.



London—20 September 1940

London—20 September 1940 Summary

Polly notices the drop location has debris on top but isn't damaged itself. As she tries to climb onto the pile of debris, a raid warden catches her and sends her away. She waits for the warden to leave and then sneaks back, lowering herself into the alleyway and then through the cellar door. Polly waits for the drop to open but it doesn't, so she has to

London—20 September 1940 Analysis

It seems as if the historians that alerting history where they are is affecting the other historians. This can be the reason why the drop isn't opening for several different historians that are in different locations but during the same time period as those historians who are altering history.

War Emergency Hospital—Summer 1940

War Emergency Hospital—Summer 1940 Summary

Michael wakes up in a hospital bed with a nun hovering over him. He tries to talk but the ether is making him sick. He vomits and then drifts in and out of sleep. When he wakes again, he is in a different hospital. He finds out he is in Dunkirk and that it is August—meaning three months have passed since he was injured.

The doctor and the nurse come and go. Michael's fever is up and down. He finally convinces them to let him see his foot and he realizes they didn't amputate it. He keeps asking the nun to bring him a newspaper, but she never does. Fordham is a soldier in the bed next to Michael. From his conversations with Fordham, Michael realizes that the nurse is not a nun, so he's not in a convent.

This baffles him because he doesn't understand why the retrieval team hasn't come for him if he's in a normal hospital. Fordham reads Michael his newspaper and Michael realizes that the war seems to be on track. Suddenly, someone comes running down the corridor announcing that the Germans are invading and that they are coming up the Thames.

War Emergency Hospital—Summer 1940 Analysis

Michael keeps thinking that the net never would have allowed him to go to a place in history where he can have the chance to alter events. This points to the fact that the net is malfunctioning. Since Michael was at a divergence point, any inconsequential thing he can do, such as saving the dog, can alter events. Not only is Michael stuck in a hospital, injured and under the care of primitive medicine, now the Germans are invading. This alone can cost Michael his life.



Warwickshire—August 1940

Warwickshire—August 1940 Summary

It's been four months and the drop still hasn't opened for Eileen. A retrieval team has not come for her either. They have been busy packing the manor and finding new homes for the children. Some of the children are going back to their parents. The only ones they haven't found a new home for is the Hodbins.

Eileen decides she has to try to find Polly on Oxford Street in London, so she's going there she wants to try to use Polly's drop to get home. Eileen goes to the drop site the night before she is to leave on the train with the Hodbins and Theodore—to return them to their parents when they arrive in London. It doesn't open.

The next morning, she's waiting at the train station with the three children. The train is coming when the vicar pulls up in his car. He rushes out with a picnic basket and an envelope full of money for Eileen. He also says he's arranged for passage on a ship to Canada for the Hodbins. Eileen worries because one of the ships to Canada sinks and all the evacuees onboard die. As they board the train, the vicar shouts at Eileen that everything will turn out fine.

Warwickshire—August 1940 Analysis

Eileen is depending on Polly's drop to get home. Since Polly's drop isn't opening either, this is a problem. Additionally, Mr. Dunworthy doesn't allow two historians to be in the same place at the same time. Once Eileen arrives there, she's going to have to find a way to work and live there because she won't have any other place to go. With Polly and Eileen both stuck in history, this can seriously alter events.

Since Eileen knows which boat sinks with evacuees on its sail to Canada, if it is the boat the Hodbins are supposed to be on, she isn't going to allow them to go. Since Eileen will save their lives, she will also be altering history.



London—21 September 1940

London—21 September 1940 Summary

The bombs are dropping on what seems like right over where Polly is crouched in the drop site. When the bombardment stops, Polly makes her way to the street. She realizes that the historical records got the bombing site wrong. Polly runs into a man on the street that tells her St. George was bombed and that everyone died. St. George is where the bomb shelter is that Polly goes to with all of the others.

As she looks around at the destruction, Polly confirms that the bombs dropped in a different place than the historical records say. She runs into her supervisor in front of Townsend Brothers, the shop where Polly works. Polly is in shock so her supervisor tries to send her home. Polly simply replies that she can't go with him.

London—21 September 1940 Analysis

Another ripple of change is taking place. The bombing locations have been altered. It seems as if the net can be working to some extent because the bombing of the church took place the night that Polly was stuck in the tunnel. If she had made it out of the tunnel, she might be dead too. When Polly tells her supervisor that she can't go home, Polly means she literally cannot get back to her home in Oxford in 2060.

En Route to London—9 September 1940

En Route to London—9 September 1940 Summary

The train is corded and Alf and Binnie both want a window seat when there isn't one available. They start misbehaving until they get all of the other people out of their car and it's only Eileen and the three children left. When a headmistress enters the car later, she realizes what kind of tricks Alf is up to until he pulls a snake out of his pocket, which sends her running from the car.

When the train stops at the next station, there is a delay in starting the train again. Eileen sees this is because the headmistress is waving her hands around as she talks to the conductor. The train starts moving again and Eileen tries to busy the children with activities while she reads a discarded newspaper looking for ads for the shops where Polly is working.

The train stops in the middle of field. The conductor comes to tell Eileen they have to evacuate the train and catch a bus in a nearby town. They have to walk across a field to get to the nearest town. While doing so, they witness a dogfight between two planes. Eileen rushes the children to try to get to the town before the bus leaves since all of the other passengers are way ahead of them.

En Route to London—9 September 1940 Analysis

Eileen realizes that Alf's snake incident is what caused the train to be late and for them to miss the bombing that lies ahead on the train tracks. Once again, history is being altered. If Alf and the others hadn't been on this train, the train might have been on time and all of these passengers might have been killed.



London—21 September 1940

London—21 September 1940 Summary

Miss Snelgrove, the supervisor, and Marjorie, one of the other shop girls, settles Polly in to rest on one of the cots in the basement and bomb shelter of the Townsend Brothers. Later, Marjorie brings down a cup of tea and parcel that is black skirt from Miss Snelgrove. Polly keeps waiting for the retrieval team.

She keeps telling herself that they don't know where to find her, so she repositions herself so that they can. This thought process sends her upstairs back behind her work counter. At closing time, the retrieval team still hasn't come and Marjorie whisks Polly off to her house so Polly doesn't have to stay alone. On the way home, the bus is diverted so the girls start walking to the tube station. When Polly sees where they are, she realizes she was here during the end of the war and how an historian can never be in the same place twice.

London—21 September 1940 Analysis

It becomes more and more apparent to Polly that she is alone now. She is stuck in history. She can't get back to Oxford and she is clueless as to why nobody has come for her. What Polly doesn't know is that Eileen is heading her way. When Eileen shows up and tells Polly that she was having the same problem, the girls will have each other. However, they will realize that the retrieval team is definitely not coming to save them at this point.



War Emergency Hospital—Summer 1940

War Emergency Hospital—Summer 1940 Summary

The man continues to flash the light at Michael and scream that the Germans are invading until a nurse comes in and leads him away. Michael thinks he really has altered the events of the war. Fordham, the patient next to him, says the man is shell shocked. Michael urges the woman delivering papers to give him one but she says the nurses don't want him reading anything troubling.

Eventually, she starts allowing him to have papers. Michael sees that the events are unfolding the way they are supposed to so far. This causes him to wonder even more why the retrieval team hasn't come for him. He asks a nurse how many hospitals there are in Dover and the nurse tells him he isn't in Dover, but is in Orpington.

War Emergency Hospital—Summer 1940 Analysis

Michael continues to worry that his actions are altering the outcome of the war. So far, however, the events of the war are unfolding exactly as they should. Once again, however, Michael finds himself in the wrong place. Since he doesn't know what happens to his current location in the war, he can be in danger that he is not even aware of being. As historians, they typically memorize and have implants for the time and location they are travelling. Since Michael is totally off course, his information is flawed as well.



London—10 September 1940

London—10 September 1940 Summary

It takes a few bus rides to get to London. When they arrive, Eileen tries to drop the Hodbins at their home first. Their mother isn't there and the landlady refuses to take them. They get back on the bus and head to Theodore's house. His mother has already left for the night shift at the factory, but the neighbor lets them into Theodore's house. The neighbor points out the Anderson is in the background, which is the shelter.

Eileen gets all of the kids ready for bed until the sirens go off. Then, she herds all of them into the shelter, which ends up being flooded. Eileen thinks that she should have knocked on the door and ran because then she would be home already.

London—10 September 1940 Analysis

All of the delays in time in catching the buses are setting Eileen back even more. These delays can alter what happens to Eileen and what happens to the children. The problem is that the alteration can be for the good or can be for the bad. The outcome is yet to be seen. Eileen thinks finding Polly and using Polly's drop is going to save her, but little does she know that it isn't going to resolve anything.



War Emergency Hospital—August 1940

War Emergency Hospital—August 1940 Summary

Michael convinces Mrs. Ives to write a letter to the Commander for him, while Fordham is down getting X-rays. When days pass and he doesn't receive a response, he worries that something happened to his letter preventing the Commander from receiving it. Michael scans the newspapers for stories that might prompt his memory to return from the amnesia the doctors and nurses think he has.

Michael waits until it's visiting day. Expecting the Commander to come see him, he tells the nurse that he has his memory back. When the doctor finds out he isn't a soldier, he tells the nurse to get to matron because they have to transfer Michael to a civilian hospital. On visiting day, Daphne, the barmaid from the pub comes to visit him. She tells Michael that the Commander and Jonathan were killed at Dunkirk.

War Emergency Hospital—August 1940 Analysis

If the Commander and Jonathan died in Dunkirk, this suggests that everything Michael thinks he experienced after the explosion while he was in the water was a dream or an illusion. It means that Jonathan and the Commander didn't pull Michael out of the water and drive the boat full of soldiers to Dover.



London—21 September 1940

London—21 September 1940 Summary

Polly continues to walk with Marjorie toward Marjorie's boarding house. Polly thinks back to being in the same place back when the war ends as part of her time travel. When they get to Marjorie's boarding house, they find that everyone else has gone to the shelter already. Marjorie tells Polly she doesn't go to the shelter, but uses the basement of the boarding house instead. As Marjorie starts the kettle for tea, the sirens go off so the girls head down to the basement. When the all clear siren sounds, they return to Marjorie's room.

Polly falls asleep. When she wakes up, Marjorie is ironing Polly's blouse and has washed the blouse and the skirt for Polly. Polly thanks Marjorie for everything but rushes out after getting dressed. Polly is trying to get the train to her boarding house when she hears someone calling her name. It's Lila and Viv - the two women from her shelter.

London—21 September 1940 Analysis

Even though Polly thought everyone died when the church collapsed, it appears there are survivors. Since Lila and Viv are calling out Polly's name, they are still alive.

London—22 September 1940

London—22 September 1940 Summary

Lila and Viv go on and on about how they thought Polly was dead. One by one, Polly finds out that everyone from the shelter survived. They were evacuated because a bomb got hung up on the building so the warden got them out before it exploded. Polly also realizes that the rescue tunnel she saw was for her because they all thought she might have been in the shelter.

Polly tries to find out if anyone has been looking for her at the boarding house, but the landlady says no. Polly keeps making up excuses as to why the retrieval team hasn't found her yet. Polly even considers going to the country to look for Eileen. She thinks about writing a letter to Eileen but can't remember the last name Eileen is using. Polly decides to give in until Thursday to see if the retrieval team shows up. But, they don't.

London—22 September 1940 Analysis

Polly is making up excuses and looking for the reasons why the retrieval team hasn't found her yet. The truth seems to be that the retrieval team, Dunworthy, and not even Colin have been looking for her. It is likely that she is stuck there but she doesn't want to admit to it. Ironically, Polly is considering going to the countryside to look for Eileen when Eileen is already in London planning to search for Polly.



War Emergency Hospital—September 1940

War Emergency Hospital—September 1940 Summary

Michael tells Daphne the Commander and Jonathan didn't die at Dunkirk because he was with them as Dover. She tells him that the Commander and Jonathan made a second run to pick up soldiers after they dropped the first load off at Dover. This is when they died. Daphne says they were real heroes—that they saved hundreds of soldiers.

When Michael asks if anyone has been to town asking for him, Daphne says not that she knows. The hospital ends visiting hours, but Daphne promises to write and visit Michael. She does, writing that she talked with her father to verify that nobody had been by the pub asking for Michael. Michael decides that he has to get out of the hospital to try to get to one of the other historians.

Michael convinces the nurse to take him up to the sunroom. When he's alone, he tries to walk on his foot. He is in a lot of pain when he does it and he doesn't get very far. He does this on and off over a period of different days to try to rehabilitate his foot. Someone who knows Michael's last name catches him trying to walk on his foot one day.

War Emergency Hospital—September 1940 Analysis

Michael, like Polly and Eileen, is making up excuses as to why the retrieval team hasn't been looking for him. Michael too starts to think that he has to get out of the hospital to try to find one of the other historians to use their drop site to get back to Oxford. Michael intends on doing physical therapy on his own so that he can walk. Once he is able to walk, he can escape the hospital and make his way to where one of the other historians is. With all of the historians planning to go to find another historian, what can happen is they all end up missing each other.



London—September 1940

London—September 1940 Summary

Eileen finally relents and takes the children from the shelter to the house so they can use the bathroom. She gets them back into the shelter and they fall asleep until Theodore's mother comes knocking on the door. She feeds all of them and offers to allow Eileen to stay as long as she wants. Eileen asks if she can give the address during her search for her cousin. Mrs. Willet agrees and says Mrs. Owens has a phone so Eileen can use the number for contact as well.

Eileen tries to take the Hodbins to their mother but she's still not home. Alf finds a place for them to hide their luggage so they can go to the shops on Oxford Street to search for Polly. They search but can't find Polly. This time when Eileen takes them home, their mother is there. She's not happy to see her children and only asks about their ration books. As Eileen walks away from the door Miss Hodbins slammed in her face, she realizes she didn't give her the letter for the Hodbins' passage to Canada.

Eileen goes back to search some more of the shops but still can't find Polly. She leaves her name and Mrs. Owens's phone number at Padgett's employment offices. Eileen returns to Mrs. Willet's house and Theodore tells her she has a call. When Eileen calls the employment office back, the woman offers her a job. Eileen accepts it so she can continue to search for Polly.

London—September 1940 Analysis

Eileen is starting to realize that she is going to have to get a job to make ends meet until she can find Polly. She lucks out in landing a job in an Oxford Street shop. Unfortunately, she doesn't know if it is one of the shops that is bombed or not. It will provide her with the time she needs to search for Polly and also the money that she needs to eat and pay for the train and bus fare until she can find Polly again.



London—26 September 1940

London—26 September 1940 Summary

As Polly listens to the others from her bomb shelter talk about what play they plan to perform as a troupe, she's planning what day that she can go to Backbury to find Eileen and still return in time for work. At work that day, she consults the train and bus schedules. She finds there are three trains set to leave after work. She buys Marjorie replacement stocking for the ones she borrowed because stockings are about to become scarce in the war. Polly tells Marjorie she has to leave because her mother is sick, so Marjorie says she'll cover for Polly.

Polly has to go back to the boardinghouse to get her reserve cash so she can afford her train ticket. She gets a taxi from the boardinghouse to the train station. On the ride, she starts to feel guilty for not letting the others know she's leaving, so she has the tax driver take her to the tube station they are now using as a shelter.

She tells them the same story and says her goodbyes. By this time, Polly has missed two out of the three trains. She ends up missing the third one as well. She has to take a bus to Backbury and she arrives the following morning. She asks the trainmaster for directions to the manor. She walks to the manor to find out it is a rifle school now and nobody seems to know what happened to the evacuees or the servants. On the walk back, she tries to catch up with the vicar as he goes into church, because it is Sunday. He has to go in to give the sermon before Polly can ask him about Eileen.

Polly goes back to the train station. The now drunk trainmaster tells her the train for London won't be there for hours. She returns to the church to speak to the vicar when his sermon is over. As Polly listens to the sermon, she hears the train whistle. The train is on time and Polly rushes out of the church to try to catch the one and only train back to London today.

London—26 September 1940 Analysis

Everything in Polly's life seems to require her to hurry up, but then have to wait. She hurries everywhere to catch the train or the bus, but something always delays her. While the majority of the delays are not in her control, Polly makes matters worse by creating her own delays. Buying Marjorie stockings, going back to the boarding house and going to the tube station all delay Polly until she misses all three of the trains from London to Backbury.



War Emergency Hospital—September 1940

War Emergency Hospital—September 1940 Summary

It turns out to be another patient, Tensing, that recognizes Michael in the sunroom. He proposes that they back each other up in getting to walk again. Tensing arranges for Michael to be brought to the sunroom everyday at the same time. Michael ends up getting about an hour of exercise daily and in a little over a week can limp across the room.

Michael asks his nurse about Tensing, she says he's from the War Office and has a back injury and some broken ribs. Tensing walks down to Michael's bed a few weeks after they meet to tell him he's being discharged the following day. After Tensing leaves, Hardy comes to visit Michael. He is a new patient at the hospital, waiting for shoulder surgery. He thanks Michael for saving his life, telling Michael he was able to use the small vessels to save hundreds of soldiers' lives.

War Emergency Hospital—September 1940 Analysis

Tensing isn't who he says he is. His ability to have Michael brought to the sunroom and his surprise when Michael thinks he's going back to work at the Ear Office suggest Tensing is a powerful individual. Hardy telling Michael that he escaped a German concentration camp and was able to save hundreds of soldiers suggests that Michael saving Hardy's life is altering history.



En Route to London—29 September 1940

En Route to London—29 September 1940 Summary

Two trains packed full of soldiers and a bus get Polly back to London. When she goes to work, she finds out that Marjorie stopped coming into work and that all of the stuff in her room is gone. Everyone assumes Marjorie has finally run off to Bath to be with her old flatmate. When Polly goes to the tube station for shelter, she finds out which play the group has chosen and receives her script.

On and off, Polly goes to her drop to see if anyone has been there. She waits a few times to see if it opens, but it never does. The work crews have been clearing out the rubble, so the entryway to the drop is easier to see and easier to get to now. Polly leaves a coded note on the sidewalk and the wall outside of the drop door so the retrieval team can find her.

When she returns to the station, one of the people says a woman was looking for Polly. When the woman points her out, it is Doreen, another shop girl. Doreen says Marjorie didn't go to Bath but instead was on one of the streets when it was bombed.

En Route to London—29 September 1940 Analysis

Polly is moving around a lot so even if the retrieval team were looking for her, she's not making it easy for them to find her. She has thought of this to some extent, however, so her looking some semi-coded messages with the boardinghouse phone number can resolve the problem. To some extent, Polly is starting to come to terms with the fact that is stuck in 1940s history and she might have to live out the rest of her life there.



War Emergency Hospital—September 1940

War Emergency Hospital—September 1940 Summary

Michael asks the nurses how to get new papers and clothes since his were left behind in Dunkirk. The next day, they send a woman from the Assistance Board. She asks him a bunch of questions and the next day shows up with a temporary passport and visa. The same woman helps expedite the hospital discharge papers and leaves a set of clothes for Michael.

When Michael leaves the hospital, he paws the cufflinks and overcoat and tries to catch the bus to Saltam-on-Sea. The cab driver says the entire coast is off limits because of the invasion. When Michael wanders into a pub looking for the garage owner to hire a car, one of the men in the pub loans Michael his car, when the man finds out Michael was at Dunkirk.

Michael drives to drop in Saltam-on-Sea. When he hobbles to the where the rocks are on the beach, he finds an artillery gun there.

War Emergency Hospital—September 1940 Analysis

Michael thinks the retrieval team hasn't been able to come through because the entire coast is being carefully watched for invasion and spies. Ironically, when Michael finally reaches the drop location, the military has set up a gun there to fire at any invaders. The problem with this is that the net doesn't open if there is any chance that someone might see it.



London—October 1940

London—October 1940 Summary

Doreen tells Polly that Marjorie was trapped under the rubble for three days before rescuers found her. Marjorie was in an abandoned house. She has a ruptured spleen and three broken ribs and is in the hospital. Polly convinces herself that the retrieval team could think she is dead, so she says she's attending her aunt's funeral so she can check the issues of the newspapers around the time everyone thought Polly died in the church bombing.

Polly doesn't find a death notice or a mention of her name in the news stories she finds. She also thinks that even if everyone else at Oxford was distracted, busy or had forgotten about her that Colin never would. On her way back to the store, she stops at Padgett's. Polly thinks about how it is bombed tonight and that there are three fatalities. When Polly goes back to the store, Marjorie ends up stepping off the elevator on to the floor where Polly is working.

London—October 1940 Analysis

It seems as if Marjorie is an historian too. This can explain why she was in an abandoned house on the other side of town from the train station, which is where she would have been if she was trying to go to Bath. Since Padgett's is bombed that night, it is possible that Eileen is one of the fatalities.



London—25 October 1940 Pages 428-434

London—25 October 1940 Pages 428-434 Summary

Marjorie says she left the hospital because she just remembered that she was supposed to cover for Polly. Marjorie also says that a girl Polly went to school with came looking for her five weeks ago. Marjorie says the girl was Eileen O'Reilly. Marjorie says she lost her address in the bombing but that she works at Padgett's on the third floor in notions.

Polly runs to Padgett's because she thinks she has to save Merope before the bombing tonight. When she reaches Padgett's, it is already closed because of the air raid sirens have gone off. Polly sneaks into the building and dodges the guard inside. She makes it to the third floor but nobody is there. Someone clamps his hand on her arm and when she turns to see who it is, she finds out that it is Michael Davies. They can hear the planes coming close to drop the bombs.

London—25 October 1940 Pages 428-434 Analysis

Two of three fatalities can be Michael and Polly if they don't get out of the Padgett's store soon. Since it has been five weeks since Merope went looking for Polly, it is possible that Merope thought Polly already returned to Oxford so Merope moved on to try to find another historian and their drop site. Now that Michael Davies is with Polly, they will be able to put their stories together to figure out that something is wrong with the net.



London—25 October 1940 Pages 435-440

London—25 October 1940 Pages 435-440 Summary

Eileen has been transferred from notions to children's so this is where she is when Padgett's closes and the planes are nearing for the bombing. She's been staying at Mrs. Willett's home and she's trying to save up enough money to return to Blackbury. She wrote the vicar to let her know where she is in case the retrieval team is looking for her. she thinks Polly has already returned to Oxford. Eileen finally gets a difficult customer and her son to leave when she hears voices. Thinking it's the problem client, Eileen hides.

London—25 October 1940 Pages 435-440 Analysis

Polly and Eileen are working on the same street and have been for about five weeks and still have not run into each other. Eileen stops looking for Polly when she thinks Polly returned to Oxford. The voices Eileen thinks are the clients returning are the voices of Polly and Michael. Since Eileen is working on a different floor now, Polly doesn't know to look for Merope there instead of on the third floor. This foreshadows that the three casualties from the Padgett's bombing are Eileen, Michael and Polly.



London—25 October 1940 Pages 441-452

London—25 October 1940 Pages 441-452 Summary

Polly is glad to see Michael. She tells him Merope is here. He insists she isn't because he's been at Padgett's for over an hour looking for Polly. He also says he's been looking for Polly for a month. Polly insists they search the store for Merope. They end up finding her and they all get into the elevator as the planes close in, bombs start to drop and the artillery guns start firing back.

The elevator gets stuck and Polly believes the three casualties are going to be them. Michael hoists the two girls up out of the elevator. Then, they retrieve a chair from a nearby ladies' room so Michael can climb out too. They get out of the store and explosion starts occurring.

Merope stops running to take a break and says they should go to Polly's drop. Polly says they can't. They go to the nearest tube station for shelter and find an abandoned blanket to talk. Each tells their story. Polly realizes that something must have happened at Oxford and they are not coming for any of them.

London—25 October 1940 Pages 441-452 Analysis

Each of them believes that the other one is the retrieval team sent to find them. The three of them really are stuck on London in 1940 in the middle of a war. All of the hope is draining from each of them as they realize that their idea to depend on the other person's drop isn't going to get them back to Oxford either.



London—25 October 1940 Pages 453-471

London—25 October 1940 Pages 453-471 Summary

When it hits Polly that they are stuck there, she makes an excuse to try to get away from Michael and Merope. Michael goes after her and eventually Merope catches up with them too. They make a vow to call each other by their historical names and that if they ever get separated to meet at the bottom of the escalator of the Oxford Circus tube station.

They send Eileen off for food while Polly and Michael start questioning each other. When Eileen comes back, they decide to all try to get rooms in Polly's boardinghouse. Eileen can room with Polly since Polly has a double and then Michael can get his own room. They decide this will make it easier for the retrieval team to find them.

They also talk until they realize that another historian, Gerald Phipps is in World War II. Eileen is trying to remember the name of the place that he was going. The following morning, when they emerge from the tube station shelter, there are bodies all in front of Padgett's.

London—25 October 1940 Pages 453-471 Analysis

Polly is holding back information from Michael and Eileen. She knows the war ends because she has already traveled back to that day in time before. Michael is questioning Polly about the events of the war unfolding the way they are supposed to because he is trying to verify that his actions at Dunkirk have rewritten the outcome of the war. Polly is also concealing that she has a deadline on her project because it seems as if the other two do not have a deadline. Polly thinks if she reveals this then Michael and Eileen will realize that they are trapped.



Oxford Street—26 October 1940

Oxford Street—26 October 1940 Summary

When they examine the bodies up close, they realize they are mannequins. They find out from a warden that two women are missing. When they find out Eileen works there, they question her about whether two of her co-workers left before Eileen did. Eileen assures them she was the last one out.

Polly and Michael continue to discuss how his actions at Dunkirk might have altered events. Polly says they haven't Michael thinks they have. Polly goes to work, while Michael goes with Eileen to Stepney so she can get her things to move in with Polly. During work, Polly tries to get help from the shop girls on the name of the airfield where they think Phipps is. Then, Polly starts to wonder where Eileen and Michael are because it shouldn't take four hours to get back and forth from Stepney.

When Marjorie comes in, she's glad to see Polly is well. She's heard about Padgett's Marjorie asks about Polly's cousin and Polly says she's find. Marjorie says five people were killed from the explosion.

Oxford Street—26 October 1940 Analysis

Now that Polly has separated from Michael and Eileen, they might not reunite. Michael might be correct that the events of the war have been altered. History states that only three casualties occurred at Padgett's Marjorie says that there were a total of five casualties.

London—17 September 1940

London—17 September 1940 Summary

A male comes through the net that he set for September 16, 1940. He realizes he dropped in the bottom of a tube station so when he climbs the stairs, he tries to figure out which station it is and the date and time. Two kids he runs into tell him he's at St. Paul's. He finds out from a newspaper that it is the seventeenth so he must have set the net to the wrong date.

He goes out of the station and runs into a woman causing the stuff she's carrying to go everywhere. He wants to see St. Paul's before the sirens go off. He helps her pick up the things, apologizes and then walks away as bombs start to drop and the anti-aircraft guns start to shoot. The novel ends without revealing who the male is and it is said to find out the conclusion by reading the next novel in the series, which is *All Clear*.

London—17 September 1940 Analysis

The inference is that the male is Colin. Since he mentions that he set the date on the net and he is so interested in seeing St. Paul's, it implies that it is Colin. It is possible that Colin is there to help find Polly since he is in love with her.



Characters

Colin Templer

Colin Templer is a seventeen-year-old student at Eton. He is almost eighteen. He is searching for Mr. Dunworthy at the start of the novel because he wants to travel back in time prior to Polly Churchill returning from her time travel trip to World War II. Colin has jumped into the time travel mechanism before to travel back in time without Mr. Dunworthy's permission. In that instance, however, Colin was able to save Dunworthy's life and the life of another person.

Mr. Dunworthy

Mr. Dunworthy is an historian. He seems to be in charge of the history program at Oxford in 2060. It appears that Dunworthy is specifically responsible for the time travel studies of third year students that are at least twenty years old, sending them back at different periods in history for research purposes.

Mr. Dunworthy forbids Colin to time travel because Colin is too young. Dunworthy is also angry at Colin for time traveling without permission, even though Colin saved Dunworthy's life in the process. Dunworthy seems to be concerned for the safety of the historians because recently one died while he was on an assignment. While Dunworthy is a continuous thought throughout the novel, he is in London for the majority of the novel, so he's not interacting too much with the characters.

By phone, he tells the workers in the lab that he wants schedules changed and rearranged. He never gives a specific reason for the schedule changes. It appears that the schedule changes can be a way of preventing Colin from traveling to World War II.

Eddritch

Eddritch is Mr. Dunworthy's secretary. When Colin is looking for Dunworthy, Eddritch offers to schedule an appointment for Colin to meet with Dunworthy. Eddritch also calls Eton and reports to Dunworthy that Colin is skipping classes and has had repeated absences lately.

Badri

Badri is one of the lab technicians. Colin speaks to Badri in the lab when Colin is looking for Mr. Dunworthy. Badri is the assistant that tells Colin that he might be able to find Dunworthy in Wardrobe.



Linna

Linna is the other lab tech working with Badri. Linna escorts Colin out of the lab, according to Badri's orders. When she does this, Linna also tells Colin when Polly is scheduled to return from her time travel trip. When Colin tries to get back into the lab later, however, Linna is the one that bans him from entering according to orders from Dunworthy.

Polly Churchill

Polly Churchill is one of the students of Oxford that is on a time travel trip. She is also the person that Colin is trying to get to while she is in World War II. Polly's studies include that of Girls working in the shops on Oxford Street during the war. She is also studying the lives and behaviors of the citizens of London that take shelter in the tube stations during the air raids.

Polly is one of the historians that have a schedule change. The lab techs also have a hard time finding a drop location for Polly. When Polly arrives, she delays checking in with the lab, and then when she tries to go back to the lab, her drop no longer works. Michael Davies and Eileen eventually find Polly and the three of them work together to try to figure out how to get back to Oxford in 2060.

Eileen

Eileen is an historian as well. Her real name is Merope, but she uses the name Eileen while she is working as a historian in World War II England. Eileen is studying the children evacuated from London during the war. The evacuees were sent to other areas outside of the city in an attempt to protect them from the bombings.

Eileen works as a servant in one of the manors that takes in the evacuees. Compared to the other historians, Eileen's assignment has a longer term. After the manor is quarantined because of an outbreak of measles, Eileen is delayed in getting to her drop location to return to Oxford 2060. When Eileen does go back, the drop never opens so she is not able to return to the present time. Eileen makes her way to London to try to find Polly. Eventually, Michael Davies and Polly find Eileen and the three of them try to work together to figure out how to get back to Oxford 2060.

Michael Davies

Michael Davies is another one of the historians traveling back in time to various wartimes. He is also one of the historians that are affected by the schedule change. Michael is studying normal citizens that turn into heroes when catastrophes occur. When he tries to make it to Dover during World War II, his drop location ends up being in the wrong place and on the wrong date.



In an attempt to get to Dover, Michael finds himself in the middle of the battle of Dunkirk. Michael is injured and spends months in the hospital recovering from his injury and from surgery on his injured foot. When he finally returns to his drop location, there is an anti-aircraft gun on the site, which means that the drop is not going to open.

Michael goes in search of Polly. After almost a month of searching for her, Michael finds Polly and they both find Eileen. The three of them try to figure out why their drops are not working and how to get back to Oxford 2060.

Commander

The Commander is an old man that Michael Davies meets in Saltam-on-Sea. It is the commander's boat that takes Michael into the battle of Dunkirk. The commander ends up dying while trying to rescue soldiers with his boat, the Lady Jane, in Dunkirk.

Jonathan

Jonathan is the Commander's grandson. Jonathan makes the boat ride with the commander from Saltam-on-Sea to Dunkirk. Jonathan is only twelve years old, but he assists his grandfather with rescuing soldiers from Dunkirk to Dover. Jonathan also dies while rescuing the soldiers.

Binnie Hodbin

Binnie Hodbin is one of the evacuees under Eileen's care at the manor. She has a brother, Alf. Binnie and Alf are very ill behaved children. They are always doing mischievous things and getting into trouble. After Alf gets the measles, Binnie falls ill as well. Binnie's fever spikes so high that Eileen is sure Binnie is going to die.

After Binnie gets well, she admits to Eileen that Binnie is just a nickname. Binnie says that she doesn't have a real name. Eileen tells Binnie that she can pick her own name. When Eileen returns Binnie and Alf to their mother in London., all that Ms. Hodbin seems to care about is their ration books.

Alf Hodbin

Alf Hodbin is one of the evacuees under Eileen's care at the manor. He has a sister, Binnie. Binnie and Alf are very ill behaved children. They are always doing mischievous things and getting into trouble. Alf is the first of the evacuees to get the measles, which causes the manor to fall under quarantine. When Eileen returns Binnie and Alf to their mother in London, all that Ms. Hodbin seems to care about is their ration books.



Lady Caroline

Lady Caroline owns the manor where the evacuees live and Eileen works. She is very wealthy and is always involved in ways to do something for the war effort. Every time Lady Caroline does something for the war effort, however, she doesn't do anything, but instead makes the servants do it. when the house is quarantined, Lady Caroline is away so she is unable to return to the manor until the quarantined is lifted. Additionally, Lady Caroline never gets Eileen's name correct. She is always calling Eileen by the name of Ellen.



Objects/Places

Oxford

Oxford is in England. It is the college where the historians are studying history. Oxford is also where the lab is located. The lab is responsible for operating the time travel net and coordinating the time travel schedules with each of the historians.

Lady Jane

Lady Jane is the commander's boat. The commander tries to sign the Lady Jane as part of the small vessel convoy that helps in the war. The small vessel committee turns the Lady Jane down, saying it is not seaworthy. The commander drives the Lady Jane to Dunkirk with Michael asleep onboard the ship. When they arrive in Dunkirk, soldiers board the Lady Jane and are transported to Dover. On the second trip back to Dunkirk, the commander and his grandson Jonathan are killed on the Lady Jane.

Net

The net is the machine used for time travel. The net opens and closes in periods of history known as drops. The net allows the historians to walk out of history and into the lab in Oxford, and vice-versa.

Lab

The lab is where the technician, Badri and Linna, work at Oxford. The lab handles all of the scheduling for time travel. This is also where the historians report to step into the net for transport back in time.

Oxford Street

Oxford Street is where the major shops were in London during the 1040s. It is where Polly works in one of the shops to study shop girls during the era. Oxford Street shops are bombed during the war, so Polly has to keep track of which shops are bombed and when so that she works in a safe environment. Eileen also ends up working on Oxford Street in one of the shops when she comes to London looking for Polly.



Manor

The manor is the house that lady Caroline owns. It is also where the child evacuees live. Eventually, the government buys the manor from Lady Caroline to use as a rifle training school.

Saltam-by-Sea

Saltam-by-Sea is the small town Michael Davies arrives in instead of Dover when he travels through the net. It is small coastal town where Davies tries to hitch a ride to Dover. Saltam-by-Sea is where Davies meets the commander and ends up getting on the Lady Jane., which takes Davies to Dunkirk and then on to Dover.

Tube Stations

The tube stations are where London residents would hide during the air raids. Polly also travels back in time to study these tube stations and the people living in them as bomb shelters during the war. The tube stations represented an entirely different culture during the war.

Props

The props department is in Oxford in 2060. Props is responsible for putting together the items the historians need to be authentic members of society when time traveling. The props department is also responsible for identification papers and permission forms for various aspects of life for the historians when they are traveling.

Wardrobe

The wardrobe department is in Oxford in 2060. Wardrobe is responsible for outfitting the historians properly for travel. If specific wardrobe items are not available, then a request can be to have someone in wardrobe make an authentic costume. Due to the last minute change in schedules, they are late in changing their wardrobes and so they send Polly through with a dark blue skirt instead of a black skirt worn by the shop girls on Oxford Street.



Themes

War

The novel is set in two different time periods. The first time period is the present time in the novel, which is in Oxford in 2060. When the historians travel back in time, it is set in various locations in England during World War II, so the early 1940s. The historians are not directly affected by war time because they are able to return to the present time of Oxford 2060. The historians also have access to historical records to prepare them for the various aspects of living through a war prior to traveling back in time.

As the drop locations stop functioning, however, the historians get stuck back in the 1940s. Since they are in England and it is war time, the historians have to learn how to function on a daily basis, without being able to return to the present time. In essence, they become a part of history and a part of the war.

Since the historians study the facts for the time period they are set to be in time travel, once they run out of this information, they will no longer have any historical records and information to reference. They will have to learn to live life, just as those would, without knowing what will happen next.

Competition

The historians are in constant competition with one another. Each of them is traveling back in time so they can conduct research to complete their thesis papers and research projects for college. First, it is competitive because no two historians are allowed to be in the same place and during the same time period as another historian. Second, the same historian is not allowed to travel to the same place and time twice. Therefore, they have to gather all of the information they require on the first time travel.

The competition increases when Dunworthy makes last-minute changes to the time travel schedule. Each historian has a deadline to complete their projects. When the time schedule is changed, this jeopardizes each historian getting their time travel in time to gather the information they need from in-field research. Additionally, it becomes a self-competition for each historian to memorize the information they need prior to traveling and living in the place and time to which they are traveling.

Friendship/Relationships

While each of the historians is friends with other, each historian learns what true friendship and companionship is while they watch the people where they are in England. Friendship shows up for Polly in the form of the girls she works with in the shops that cover for her. Additionally, she becomes very good friends with the people

she meets in her bomb shelter. She sees firsthand how these people learn how to be there for each in a great time of need.

When Polly, Eileen, and Michael get stuck in England, they learn how to depend on each other. They are forced to be friends that watch each other's backs and try to help each other get through the daily life of living in a war. Additionally, they have to work together as friends and colleagues to try to figure out how to get back to Oxford 2060.



Style

Point of View

The novel is written in the third-person point of view. Each chapter is devoted to one character and their plight in time travel and research. The point of view of this novel is intimate, allowing a reader to connect closely with each of the characters as they come up in the plot of the novel. The book written in this manner allows the reader to get inside their heads, thoughts and inner struggles. The reader cares what happens each of the characters. The point of view also allows the author to inject her own opinions into the narration and to expand on the events taking place around the other characters and the occurrences taking place.

Setting

The novel takes place in 2060 and during the years of World War II in England, particularly in the early 1940s. The main characters are involved in the daily life of living and working during World War II.

The setting of this novel works well with the plot. At first, the reader is not aware that the main characters can time travel, and that something malfunctions with the time travel machine, which is the net. However, as events unfold, the war, time travel, and the malfunctioning of the net is a constant part of the plot, the lives of the characters, and even the outcome of the novel.

Language and Meaning

The language of this novel is relatively simple and easy to read. The language is from the future and from the 1940s - the two centuries in which the novel takes place. The language is descriptive enough that it helps to explain the situations and is detailed enough for the reader to truly understand.

Structure

Each chapter of the novel represents a different character and a different date. Each chapter ranges from five pages to 20 pages long. The chapters tell the story primarily in exposition and with some dialogue. The narrator injects her own voice and thoughts throughout the book, providing her opinions and feelings of the events unfolding in the novel. The narrator switches back and forth between the past and the present.

The novel contains one main plot and several subplots. The main plot is that of war. One subplot is competition. Another subplot is friendships.

Quotes

"By then, it'll be too late" (Oxford - April 2060, p. 10).

"Because I have faith in the future" (Warwickshire - December 1939, p. 21).

"Two, observing from a safe distance is what historians were stuck doing before Ira Feldman invented time travel" (Balliol College, Oxford - April 2060, p. 23).

"And now that Hitler's coming to his senses and realizing Europe won't stand for his nonsense, there's no reason not to have them with us" (Warwickshire - February 1940, p. 31).

"Good news. We've found a drop site" (Oxford - April 2060 Pages 33-41, p. 41).

"Are all the drops he's changing World War II" (Oxford - April 2060 Pages 42-55, p. 53).

"No. I told you it came yesterday. On Tuesday" (Oxford - April 2060 Pages 56-62, p. 62).

"I forgot something. Colin was doing some research for me" (Oxford - April 2060 Pages 63-73, p. 73).

"Come home at once. Mum's very bad. I hope you are in time. Kathleen" (Warwickshire - Spring 1940, p. 78).

"I said, the bus came yesterday. It comes on Tuesdays and Fridays" (Saltram-on-Sea - 29 May 1940, p. 81).

"Saturday, 14 September 1940, Late Edition" (Oxford - April 2060 Pages 89-103, p. 103).

"I can't go to Dunkirk" (Saltram-on-Sea - 29 May 1940, p. 113).

"Here it comes" (Dulwich, Surrey - 13 June 1944, p. 123).



"This house and everyone in it's been quarantined" (Warwickshire - May 1940, p. 132).

"Get those bloody tanks out of my pasture" (Kent - April 1944, p. 139).

"Has been removed for safekeeping" (London - 15 September 1940, p. 154).

"It looks like we're going to Trafalgar Square after all, Douglas" (London - 7 May 1945, p. 160).

"I won't leave you" (Backbury, Warwickshire - May 1940, p. 169).

"Michael Davies should have come here, not Dunkirk, if he wanted to observe heroes" (London - 17 September 1940, p. 175).

"Mr. Dunworthy will have a fit when he finds out I was in Bomb Alley" (Dulwich, Surrey - 14 June 1944, p. 181).

"Grandfather was never in the Navy" (The English Channel - 29 May 1940, p. 186).

"He's Godfrey Kingsman, the Shakespearean actor" (London - 17 September 1940, p. 192).

"We are too late met. Time is out of joint" (London - 18 September 1940, p. 205).

"Do you think we'll get to see any Germans" (Dunkirk - 29 May 1940, p. 206).

"Stay down" (Dulwich - 15 June 1944, p. 224).

"The government's taking over the manor for the duration. They're turning it into a riflery training school" (Warwickshire - May 1940, p. 141).

"If you do, you could lose us the war" (Kent - April 1944, p. 241).



"No one's allowed out till after the all clear" (London - 19 September 1940, p. 245).

"I may have altered events. I've got to warn them. Dunkirk's a divergence point. I may have done something that'll make you lose the war" (Dunkirk, France - 29 May 1940, p. 259).

"This incident's off limits" (London - 20 September 1940, p. 261).

"The Germans, they've invaded. They're coming up the Thames" (War Emergency Hospital - Summer 1940, p. 278).

"I said, it will all come right in the end" (Warwickshire - August 1940, p. 287).

"Dreadful business. so many killed" (London - 21 September 1940, p. 291).

"There's been an incident on the line ahead" (En Route to London - 9 September 1940, p. 304).

"You'll see, things will work out all in the end" (London - 21 September 1940, p. 316).

"Where am I? What hospital is this" (War Emergency Hospital - Summer 1940, p. 321).

"Can I leave them with you till their mother returns" (London - 10 September 1940, p. 324).

"They were killed, you see. At Dunkirk" (War Emergency Hospital - August 1940, p. 236).

"Polly Sebastian! Over here" (London - 21 September 1940, p. 345).

"What matters is that you're alive and safe and we're all here together" (London - 22 September 1940, p. 351).



"Tsk, tsk, tsk. I thought you were supposed to keep your weight off that foot, Davies" (War Emergency Hospital - September 1940, p. 365).

"I'm going to stay here and work at Padgett's" (London - September 1940, p. 378).

"We must act" (London - 26 September 1940, p. 392).

"And all because I saw that light of yours" (War Emergency Hospital - September 1940, p. 399).

"Marjorie wasn't in Bath after all" (En Route to London - 29 September 1940, p. 408).

"Have you seen any suspicious strangers on the road" (War Emergency Hospital - September 1940, p. 415).

"And the worst part...oh, Polly, she was in the rubble for three days before they found her" (London - October 1940, p. 418).

"Marjorie, are you certain she said Padgett's" (London - 25 October 1940 Pages 428-434, p. 431).

"I am not going out there, no matter what" (London - 25 October 1940 Pages 435-440, p. 440).

"But if we can't use any of our drops, what do we do now" (London - 25 October 1940 Pages 441-452, p. 452).

"It's all right. It was hit" (London - 25 October 1940 Pages 453-471, p. 470).

"One of them died on the way to the hospital. That's how I found out about it. I heard the nurses talking. The other four were dead when they found them" (Oxford Street - 26 October 1940, p. 485).

"I made it. I'm actually here in London in World War II" (London - 17 September 1940, p. 487).



Topics for Discussion

Who is the true Colin? Why do you think he wants to time travel so badly? Do you think it's Colin that arrives in World War II England in the last chapter of the book? Do you think he has anything to do with the drop locations not working?

Discuss the relationship between Polly and Colin. Are they friends, foes, in love, or colleagues? How does their relationship change throughout different points of the novel? Why do you think Colin wants to help Polly with her research? Is there true competition in their relationship? How does Polly feel about Colin? How does Colin feel about Polly? Why do you think Colin reveals his feelings to Polly?

Discuss the relationship between Eileen and the Hodbins. Is Eileen just caring for them or does she truly care about what happens to them? Is there true competition in their relationship? How does Eileen feel about the children? How do the children feel about Eileen? What do you think happens to the Hodbins?

Discuss the relationship between Polly, Michael and Eileen. Do you think there is competition in the relationships? Why do you think Polly doesn't tell Michael the entire truth? Why do both of them shield the whole truth from Eileen?

Who is the true Mr. Dunworthy? Why do you think he makes the last minute time travel schedules? Do you think something happens to Dunworthy while he's traveling that makes the net stop functioning properly? Why do you think he prohibits Colin from traveling back in time?

Why do you think the net stops working? Do you think the historians get stuck in history? Do you think Colin finds Polly, Michael and Eileen in England? Do you think Colin plays a role in changing the historians' lives?

Discuss the war. What impact does it have on the characters of the novel? How does it motivate them and how does it derail their lives?