

Burning for Revenge Study Guide

Burning for Revenge by John Marsden (writer)

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Plot Summary

Burning for Revenge is the fifth book in the seven-book Tomorrow series. In this book, the team of ragtag teenagers continue to battle against an unnamed army with the hopes of one day being reunited with their families and returned to New Zealand.

When the novel opens, the teenagers are in hiding in their hometown, Wirrawee, after the events of the last novel. After a week of hiding, Lee decides that he can't sit around doing nothing. Even if it means dying, he wants to get back to the battle and take out as many Aussie soldiers as he can. The group has long ago decided that when one among them makes a decision, the rest of them will follow. Reluctantly, the rest of the teenagers pack up their belongings and prepare to move. Only Kevin refuses, but the others soon bully him into joining, regardless of the fact that he is clearly suffering from a mental breakdown. The teens manage to make their way to the Wirrawee city dump in search of materials, but the enemy soon intercepts them. Jumping into the back of abandoned dump trucks, the teens are unexpectedly brought to enemy headquarters and abandoned at the army base, still in the back of the trucks.

At first, the teenagers feel it would be best to explore their surroundings before leaping to any conclusions, but when Ellie is forced to kill two soldiers inside the barracks during her exploration, the teens have no choice but to fight their way off the airfield. Armed with nothing but a few rifles and a few jerry cans of petrol, the teens manage to blast away nine airplanes and at least three enemy jeeps. Their own truck flips and explodes, but all the teens manage to survive, unscathed. With enemy soldiers in hot pursuit, the teens slip into the nearby river, which allows them to travel undetected to Stratton, where rumor has it Homer's parents are living in hiding.

Although they were expecting a certain level of destruction, when the teens arrive in Stratton, they are shocked at the city's state of disrepair. Aerial bombings have destroyed much of the city's architecture and enemy soldiers have taken up residence in the wealthy mansions. Ellie and her friends break into Ellie's grandmother's house with the hopes of finding food and shelter. Although the house is empty, the teenagers know they are not alone. An afternoon mugging the next day introduces the teens to the street gang now running Stratton, made up entirely of children aged six to thirteen. They steal everything from the teens, including Ellie's only copy of her parents' photograph.

In the days that follow, the teenagers discover a peaceful rhythm. Kevin begins tending to Grandma's garden, Ellie kills a lamb, and everyone successfully fishes for trout. Soon, the teens are eating well, but Lee's mysterious late night excursions have left everyone feeling unsettled. If Lee is waging a private war against the enemy, he is putting them all at risk. Ellie decides to track Lee during one of his evenings out, and she follows him to barn in the countryside. A beautiful woman soon joins Lee, and Ellie can feel her heart breaking as the two embrace. However, this young love is not as it appears. The girl is clearly setting Lee up, preparing to turn him in to the enemy. With no choice but to save her friend, Ellie sets the barn on fire before the enemy can reach him. The pair successfully escapes, but their relationship will never be the same.



Chapters 1 & 2

Chapters 1 & 2 Summary

The novel opens in the wake of a terrible summer storm that's knocked down trees and turned the sky ghostly grey. The novel's teenage narrator, Ellie, used to love storms, but that was before the war. Now, everything's different. Ellie and her crew (Lee, Homer, Kevin, and Fi) are hiding in Hell, a small city in Australia, during the war with the unnamed enemy. The crew has been abandoned by Colonel Finley, who was meant to send a helicopter to pick them up, but now they are on their own in the wilderness, surrounded by the enemy. The teenagers had been hired as guides for the Kiwi soldiers, but untrained, they had accomplished more for the army than any professional soldier could have done. This knowledge adds to Ellie's frustration over being abandoned.

After sulking for a week, Lee, a member of Ellie's crew, decides that he's going back out into the fields to take down as many enemy soldiers as he can before they kill him. The rest of the teenagers decide to join him, but Kevin, another member of the team, is furious: Colonel Finley dumped them in the middle of the war, why should they do anything else for his cause? When Ellie tries to reason that they're all scared but they've got to help save their country, Kevin retorts, "At least I don't scream when I see a soldier" (Page 9). The tension between Ellie and Kevin is palpable for hours afterward, but they all decide to stick together. Ellie convinces the team to travel through Holloway, where she heard her mother was hiding, in the hopes of seeing her again. They decide to radio Colonel Finley to let him know that they're on the move. During the call, Homer questions why no one has come to retrieve them, and Colonel Finley assures him that the army has not forgotten about them. Then the radio falls dead.

The teenagers traverse the wild forest after the storm. Ellie sees three fallen trees, which reminds her of her three friends who recently died in battle: Robyn, Corrie, and Chris. She convinces herself that the fallen trees are a sign: three fallen trees for three dead friends. She hopes she doesn't see any more fallen trees, for fear it might mean more of them will die. In a way, Ellie can hardly comprehend death anymore; it doesn't seem real. So many people have died, and she's been in near-death experiences so many times, she can no longer process the fear. Pushing her anxiety aside, Ellie presses on with her crew.

Chapters 1 & 2 Analysis

The teenagers have been in hiding for over a week and they are starting to sink into depression. They're bored, hungry, and desperate to see their parents again. The teenagers have already been through a lot - this is the third book in a five-book series - and Ellie is feeling particularly depressed. She has just seen three of her closest friends die; she has been abandoned by the colonel who promised to protect her; she has just lost her virginity to Lee (which is only hinted at in this novel), and she feels responsible



for the disappearance of the Kiwi soldiers. In the previous novel, Colonel Finley hired the motley crew of teenagers to act as guides for twelve of his Kiwi soldiers traversing through the unfamiliar terrain. Although it hasn't been fully explained, there was an incident involving the enemy soldiers and the Kiwis. When Ellie saw the enemy soldiers, she screamed, and immediately after, the Kiwi soldiers disappeared. The teenagers aren't sure if the Kiwis are dead, imprisoned, or lost, but it's clear that Ellie has taken some of the blame. Now that they've lost the Kiwi soldiers, Colonel Finley has lost interest, or ability, to send a rescue helicopter.

Before the war, the teenagers all lived under the popular motto, "Live as though you'll die tomorrow, but farm as though you'll live forever" (Page 12). Ellie recalls planting beautiful oak trees with her father when she was a child. Her father knew he wouldn't live to see the trees reach full maturity, but that didn't hold him back. Now that she is deeply embroiled in the war, Ellie has come to terms with the fact that she, too, might not live to see the tall trees. The trees are also an important element because Ellie sees them as symbols for her dead friends. Her thoughts on symbolism also encourage the reader to search for symbols in the lyric text.



Chapters 3 & 4

Chapters 3 & 4 Summary

After a long day of hiking, the teenagers rest for a few hours, sleeping in shifts, and wake at 5:00 am for breakfast. Ellie takes a walk to start her morning, marveling at how beautiful nature can be, even in the middle of a war. With a settled spirit, she returns to camp to find a fight raging between Kevin and Homer. Once again, Kevin has cold feet about wandering through enemy terrain without a plan. He would prefer to wait for Colonel Finley's helicopter - if it ever comes - in Hell. He would rather die in hiding than in battle, which none of the other crew members can fathom. They decide to leave him behind: if he wants to die a coward, he can do it alone. They take off into the woods and unwillingly, Kevin trails behind them. They approach the old neighborhood on Wirrawee-Holloway road in search of some un-looted shacks that might house some useful tools for their mission.

The most important part of Wirrawee-Holloway now is the old dump, or tip. The teens spend an hour playfully rooting through the disposed junk before they are shocked to see a group of trucks accelerating toward the tip. Knowing they are in extreme danger, the crew races to a nearby shed to hide. The teens tumble on top of each other, looking through small peepholes to monitor the position of their enemy. The teens are unarmed and unprepared for a battle, and are certainly mismatched to battle against trucks full of armed, trained soldiers. They search desperately for cover to run away from the tip, but all around them is open space; if they run, they will be seen and killed. After a few nerve-racking minutes, they decide to make a run toward one of the trucks, knowing it will be their only option for escape. They cannot overtake the truck - that would be too dangerous - but they hide in the back, under piles of debris. They hope that somewhere along the way, they'll be able to jump from the back of the truck, or that they'll be able to slip out undetected once the truck reaches its destination. As they drive, Ellie's mind begins to wander. She thinks about the Kiwi soldier who went missing, then she scolds herself for daydreaming; she needs to stay alert at all times. After a few hours of driving, the truck comes to a stop. Based on the way the driver's voice echoes, Ellie figures that they're in a giant parking garage. When the coast is clear, the teens wiggle their way out of the truck to take stock of their new surroundings. They are shocked by what they see: the garage is massive, much larger than any garage they've ever seen, and filled to the brim with large delivery trucks, all, most likely, carrying war supplies. When Homer peeks outside, his face turns pale. They're not in a parking garage, but an airplane hangar. They're in the middle of the Wirrawee Airfield.

Chapters 3 & 4 Analysis

When Ellie is at the dump, a wave of powerful memories floods her mind. Everything around her reminds her of her family, including the old city dump. She is reminded of the time she and her father traveled to the dump to get rid of his old stove. After they



dumped it, a man came rooting through the dump in search of treasure. He was astounded that anyone would throw away such a valuable antique, and Ellie laughed as her father helped the man haul the old stove from the dump and load it onto his truck. During the war, there are very few moments when the teenagers feel secure enough to have fun. All around them, death and destruction rule their day. All the joy Ellie feels happens in her imagination, through strong reminiscences and her memories of home.

The fact that the teenagers end up in the middle of Wirrawee Airfield is significant because it's the hub of the enemy army. When the war first broke out, Ellie and her crew had the brave idea to attack the airfield, knowing it would make the enemy army vulnerable to defeat. They had plotted and planned for months, but had been unable to breach the airport's security. When the teens had failed, Colonel Finley hired the Dirty Dozen, the twelve Kiwi soldiers who went missing, to complete the job. They too had failed. Although Ellie recognizes that she and her friends are in extreme danger - they are literally surrounded by the enemy - she understands the rare opportunity they have to inflict major damage, even if it costs them their lives.



Chapters 5 & 6

Chapters 5 & 6 Summary

Ellie is horrified when she realizes where the crew is. She recalls a conversation she had with Colonel Finley during the onset of the war when he explained that if the airfield could be knocked out, the skies would be open for the Australian Air Force. While the enemy has many other defenses, it's clear that the airfield is the key to it all. When she delivers the news to the rest of her crew, they take it in different ways. Some cry, some turn pale, while some look resolved to get out of there alive. Surprisingly, everyone turns to Ellie for advice. She has become their unofficial leader, and has become known for thinking on her toes. The teens are worried. They know that they have no chance of escaping without cover. They are in the middle of an airbase; they can't simply run out the door. Their only option is to stay inside and hope that the driver of the truck moves his supplies in the next few days, before they starve to death. It is Lee who disagrees with the decision to sit in wait. They've been afforded rare access to the enemy, and Lee doesn't want to lose out on the opportunity to do some damage. He would never forgive himself if they ran out of here like frightened rabbits. He wants to attack the airfield, even if it means they die in the process. Against her better judgment, Ellie agrees.

When they bring the subject of an airfield attack up to Kevin, Ellie can immediately sense that something is wrong. His face crumples and begins shaking. He's having a nervous breakdown and there's no medical attention around. Once it's been decided, they'll attack, the crew jumps into planning. They scout out how their attack will be the most effective, and if there's even a slight possibility of survival. They decide to attack the fighter planes during refueling, after long missions. Once their target has been identified, they search the grounds near the hanger for supplies. Ellie is sent to the barracks while the enemy soldiers are out. Inside the barracks, Ellie is shocked by the neatness. She cannot believe that a group of men could ever be so clean! She rummages around in a few lockers and searches under the beds, but finds nothing. Suddenly, she hears footsteps approaching and realizes that two generals are making the rounds, inspecting the barracks. She runs to a back room, another room of bunks, and looks frantically for somewhere to hide. During her search, she discovers a loaded rifle and knows it is necessary. She will have to shoot her way out. She lies underneath a bunk, waiting for the generals to approach. At just the right moment, Ellie leaps from her hiding spot and fires two shots, one at each of the soldiers. She kills both of them instantly. Dragging the bodies to her hiding spot, and mopping up the blood as best she can, Ellie grabs the gun, an armful of food from the refrigerator, and sprints back to the truck.

Chapters 5 & 6 Analysis

Ellie's character as a leader is beginning to emerge. She is an interesting narrator for this novel because of her active imagination. Not only does she regularly think of home,



and daydream about her beloved family, she also has vivid dreams of war scenes - some real and some imagined - that help garner strong attack ideas when her crew is in tight situations. When the crew finds themselves abandoned in the airfield hangar, for example, Ellie imagines what the Kiwi soldiers would have done, how they would have fought their way to freedom. Something about his daydream provides a strong enough plan that she convinces the rest of her crew to fight. In this section, Ellie shows that she is not afraid to risk life and limb for her cause. When she is cornered by the enemy generals in barracks, she is able to think clearly. This shows that she has matured since the horrible screaming incident that endangered, and may have ended, the lives of the Dirty Dozen. Today, Ellie calmly collects the gun, checks that it's properly assembled and loaded, lies in wait - in the perfect position to monitor both general's footsteps - and calculates the precise angle she will need to hold the gun to kill both enemy soldiers instantly. Afterward, she methodically hides the bodies and mops up the blood, hoping that this will buy her a few more minutes of safety when the rest of the troops return; collects food to feed her crew; and races back to the truck. In this section, Ellie proves that she can be composed in the face of imminent danger, which is likely why the rest of the crew look up to her as a leader.

It is interesting to note that Ellie has resigned herself to death. Death is a part of war, whether she kills the enemy or the enemy kills her. While she is waiting for the generals to cross her path, Ellie programs her brain to think like a terminator. Her only job is to wipe out anything that stands in the way of her safety. She doesn't think of the enemy soldiers as people, but as objects she must destroy. It is only after they are dead that the weight of the situation hits her. "I didn't spend any time thinking about what I'd done. I wasn't a robot or a terminator any more, but I wasn't normal either. I wasn't Ellie. I just got on with the job" (Page 78).



Chapters 7 & 8

Chapters 7 & 8 Summary

Back at the truck, Ellie informs the crew that they will have to act immediately. She has just killed two guards and as soon as the other soldiers return, they'll figure out that enemy fighters have infiltrated their airbase. The team, aside from Kevin who is still in the throngs of an emotional meltdown, spring into action. They grab the weapons Ellie has stolen from the barracks for them and divide into two teams: Ellie, Fi, and Kevin in one truck, Homer and Lee in the other. The plan is to shoot down the planes while they are refueling, or directly after, while their tanks are still dripping with gasoline. In Ellie's truck, Kevin curls up in a ball, weeping, while Ellie drives and a panic-stricken Fi struggles to hold a massive rifle in her shaking hands. They roll forward and through the open doors into full exposure. Ellie is surprised by how clear and beautiful the afternoon sky is. In the distance, Ellie can see rows of soldiers returning to the barracks after completing their drills. She knows they have only a matter of moments before the dead bodies are discovered and the army springs into defensive action.

A jeep of enemy soldiers chases down the trucks of teenagers. There is a high-speed pursuit, and Ellie must use her best driving skills to survive. She accelerates and turns at breakneck speed, which results in the jeep overturning and all the enemy soldiers dying. Soon after, the rest of the enemy army realize what is happening and quickly fill the airplane tankers. When the enemy is lined up, Ellie hears a few of the planes explode. Homer and Lee must have started unleashing their ammo. Now she knows the plan will work. With a scream to Fi, Ellie fires at the remaining airplanes and braces herself for the explosions. In one massive boom, Ellie's truck flips over, engulfed in flames. Miraculously, when the truck flips, it lands upright and the teens escape with minor injuries. The same cannot be said for the enemy. After a series of fired shots, nine planes have been destroyed along with countless enemy soldiers. Fi and Ellie leap from their busted van, dragging a limp Kevin with them, and run toward Lee and Homer's vehicle. As soon as they reach it, gunshots erupt around them. The enemy has regrouped for a counter-attack. Still, there is enough distraction for the teenagers to accelerate to full speed and escape the airfield unharmed.

Chapters 7 & 8 Analysis

Ellie's split-second decision to shoot and kill the soldiers has not put her entire group in jeopardy. When she returns to the hangar, she has no other option than to tell her team that it's time to move. And they have no other option than to follow her. For the first time, the teenagers are terribly afraid. Kevin weeps and Fi's hands shake, but they know they must move forward. The teenagers compose a quick plan - destroy the airplanes - and hope that if they die, at least they've done all they can for the cause. It is interesting to note that as the trucks peel out of the hangar, Ellie notices how beautiful the sky is. This unexpected moment of beauty is Marsden's way of reassuring the reader that



everything is going to be okay. The beautiful sunny sky and warm breeze give the reader a sense of calm, symbolically conjuring peace.

In this chapter, and the following chapter as the battle wages on, the teenagers are put in some of the most ridiculous, violent situations, and they always survive unscathed. The Tomorrow Series is written as fantasy, not as realistic fiction, so there is a certain amount of leeway given. That said, certain readers would have a hard time getting into the action-packed scenes, since they are completely unrealistic and unbelievable.



Chapters 9 & 10

Chapters 9 & 10 Summary

All the teenagers are now piled into the same truck fleeing the airbase as quickly as possible, with two army jeeps following on their tail. Lee is hanging in the hollow of the dump truck trying to attack all three jeeps on his own. Ellie knows that he'll never be able to manage it, so she crawls out of the window of the accelerating truck, and hurls herself into the hollow alongside him. She almost misses the jump and has to cling onto the side of the truck by just her bloodied fingertips. When she finally crawls her way to Lee he says, "Thought you'd never get here" (Page 117). Together, Lee and Ellie work to hoist jerry cans of gasoline out of the truck body, and set them ablaze as the enemy jeeps drive toward them. When the pair gets the timing perfect, the jerry cans explode, beautifully killing off the enemy. They manage to explode the first jerry can and jeep just as Homer drives the dump truck into the airfield security fence. With no jerry cans left, Ellie and Homer have the ingenious idea of releasing the back panel of the dump, sending a huge well of metal into the final two jeeps. It's difficult work prying the pins loose, but eventually, they manage it. The steel panel flies into the enemy at top speed. Ellie is horrified to watch the metal decapitate the first driver. She and Lee use their guns to finish off the third and final jeep. Ellie sinks to the floor of the truck, desperate for a rest.

With no more enemies in sight, the teenagers pile out of the truck to discuss their next move. They know they need to abandon the dump truck, but they fear too many soldiers will be following them on foot, and it will be too dangerous to take to the bush. Ellie suggests the river, their only option. Without further discussion, all five teenagers rush to the water. Despite their physical exhaustion, the teens press forward for miles in the freezing river. As they wade in silence, excitement threatens to overwhelm Ellie: she can't believe what they've pulled off, and on top of that, she can't believe they all survived! She tells herself that she's always going to remember the lesson they learned: "We'd made things happen. We'd found answers where there were none" (Page 129). Her reverie is interrupted when she hears, further back, someone is following them. The teens manage to find enough cover to hide themselves as six soldiers, in full uniform, run past, obviously in pursuit of them. When the danger has passed, the teens continue forward. Ellie mentions for the first time that this river feeds into Lake Murchinson, which means that it will lead them straight to Stratton, where Homer's parents are thought to be in hiding.

Chapters 9 & 10 Analysis

Adding to the cinematic action of the teenagers' battle against the airbase is Ellie's constant referral to the Terminator Feeling: "My hands were kind of operating separately, as though they were robotic ... I felt quite calm, quite calm, quite detached" (Page 114). This allusion highlights the unbelievable nature of the escape sequences.



The most likely reason Marsden has for including such ridiculous, over-the-top scenes, is that generally speaking, audiences read to be entertained. Just as in huge, blockbuster Hollywood films, audiences don't want realism, they want spectacle. This series appeals to a specific target-audience, one that appreciates escapism and fantasy over reality. A world in which a motley crew of teenagers can overpower a highly intelligent national army is a quintessential David and Goliath story, and most audiences love a tale in which the little guy overpowers the big guy.

The unfortunate by-product of action-packed thrillers is that there often isn't time for character development. In this series, Marsden has, unfortunately, gone the way of Hollywood film teams and inserted two-dimensional characters reliant on stereotypes to create audience relationships. When the reader meets each of the characters for the first time, they know exactly what to expect out of them for the rest of the novel. Readers who don't mind this also won't mind the egregious use of stereotypical action film one-liners like Lee's painful, "Thought you'd never get here," (Page 117) after Ellie has just risked her life shimmying up the side of a dump-truck at 100 miles an hour.



Chapters 11 & 12

Chapters 11 & 12 Summary

After another hour in the water, the teenagers get out in search of food. Ellie can't remember the last time she ate, and she is shocked by what her body has accomplished despite its lack of nourishment. No sooner have they crawled out of the water, however, than they hear the faint purring of an enemy jeep approaching. The teens break for cover, rushing to the shadows of the nearby gum trees. Four soldiers climb out of the jeep, with two taking up position on one side of the river, and two on the other. It's clear that they suspect the teenagers will wade down the river, and they have been sent to monitor the water's movement. It also appears as if they've been ordered to shoot at will. Ellie knows they have very little chance of escaping without being noticed. And then, she is shocked to see the jeep moving, rolling forward toward the water. The handbrake must have failed, she rejoices! The jeep accelerates down the steep slope and splashes into the water.

Quickly, Ellie realizes that Lee must have somehow weaseled his way down to the jeep and manually released the handbrake from below. She watches as the two soldiers - who appear to be father and son - frantically try to pull out the jeep and realize it will be impossible without a winch. The two opposite soldiers cross the river and keep watch while the father and son search out the right tools. During this confusion, the teenagers creep their way out of the shadows, back toward the road hoping to escape. Suddenly, Ellie realizes that as soon as the soldiers manage to pull up the jeep, they'll immediately see that the handbrake has been tampered with. Someone needs to wait around to release it again, so they'll think the jeep has malfunctioned. No one volunteers, so Ellie takes the task upon herself. As she creeps toward the jeep, she hears the animated whispers of the enemy. They know their jeep's been tampered with and that the teenagers must be close by. Bravely, Ellie releases the handbrake again and methodically makes her way back to her friends. It takes half an hour, but when the enemy reaches for the handbrake, he lets out a shout of surprise, or possibly even joy, as the jeep begins rolling toward the water. Ellie's plan has worked. The enemy now believes their jeep has malfunctioned and hasn't been tampered with after all.

After wading for another hour, the teenagers finally decide it's safe enough to start a fire and search for some food. Lee suggests that they should try to contact Colonel Finley, to tell him about their success at the airbase. When they manage to get through, Ellie is disappointed to give her report to a new woman. She had been hoping to speak directly to the Colonel.

Chapters 11 & 12 Analysis

When the teenagers decide to contact Colonel Finley after the attack, Ellie admits that she only wants to speak to him to hear the reassuring voice of an adult again. This



basic want reminds the reader that the teenagers, despite their heroic and violent actions, are still just children. Ellie is the most vocal about wanting adult praise and supervision, but surely all the children are missing their parents. She is disappointed, then, when the man she emotionally equates as a father, Colonel Finley, is too busy to take their call. Ellie struggles to come to terms with her emotions. She has just risked life and limb for the cause and all she wants in return is a few words of encouragement from an adult. It takes the woman online a full five minutes before she even questions whether the teenagers have suffered any casualties. It appears that the cause these teenagers are fighting so hard to protect may view them as little more than disposable soldiers, whom they never expected to accomplish much anyway. In the mind of Colonel Finley and his crew, whatever the teenagers accomplish is an unexpected bonus. Of course, this cynical view may not be entirely true. Colonel Finley is no doubt an extremely busy, high-ranking soldier. He cannot be expected to sit in an office fielding phone calls. However, this knowledge does little to quell Ellie's disappointment as she feels she has risked everything for nothing.

Perhaps Ellie will have her chance at parental affection if they locate Homer's parents in Stratton. It is also revealed that Ellie's grandmother lives in Stratton, although it is unlikely she made it through the city's occupation. Still, the teenagers move forward with a new resolve and heightened spirits. If they don't find their family members, at least they may find food and shelter. It should be noted, however, that Fi is adamant that Stratton is an extremely unsafe place to hide. Time will tell whose opinion should have been followed. As the children progress, they take part in many more unbelievably lucky acts of courage. It is highly unlikely that even the most trained soldiers could live through the events of this novel, but Marsden's narration relies heavily on suspension of disbelief.



Chapters 13 & 14

Chapters 13 & 14 Summary

The teens finally arrive in Stratton after hours of wading through the river. They are absolutely ravenous, but have only chewing gum to hold their appetites at bay. Ellie decides that they should head toward her grandmother's house. She knows her grandmother won't be there - all the civilians were shipped away to work camps months ago - she knows the way, and at least the house will provide some much needed shelter until they can come up with another plan. As the children walk, they unexpectedly hear planes overhead. The New Zealand army used to love bombing, but with the sudden growth of enemy occupation, they haven't been able to bomb. The teenagers know that it is due in large part to their attack on the airbase that their army has found room in the sky to fly once again. Enemy soldiers are everywhere in Stratton and it takes the teens a good few hours to reach West Stratton, which is deserted.

When they reach Grandma's house, they see immediately that the building is in disrepair and there is no power. Most depressingly, Grandma's front garden is completely overgrown, so the teens know there will likely be no food there. In the back, however, Ellie is confused to see that the garden looks organized, even tended to. As Ellie breaks open the front door of the house, she is shocked when someone whacks her hand with the fireplace poker. She hears a scrambling upstairs as, what clearly sounds like a group of people, flee the house. The teens search for over an hour, but no one is there. After, they focus their search on food. They manage to scrounge up a few potatoes from last season's crop forgotten under the garden soil. They roast them up and, for the first time in nearly a year, sleep in real beds.

The next morning, Ellie, Homer, and Fi leave the house to explore the neighborhood. Straight away, they see that the neighborhood is occupied by enemy soldiers. Clearly, the big, beautiful houses of grandma's prestigious neighborhood have drawn the enemies like moths to flames. Still, something else feels amiss as the teens traverse the narrow back alleys, ignored by the enemy soldiers. As they creep down one lane, they are suddenly attacked by a wild group of wily children. The gang is a mixture of all ages of children, from six to thirteen. They are all armed, and they all look starved. The kids well-and-truly mug the teenagers, taking everything from Ellie's last tampon to the photograph of her parents. When the teens glumly return to Grandma's house, Kevin has come up with a new idea for food: the trout farm up the street.

Chapters 13 & 14 Analysis

Ellie has a strange reaction to visiting her grandmother's house after the occupation. . Crossing the threshold, Ellie is overwhelmed with the feeling that her grandmother is dead. "I just felt that her spirit, which had filled the house for so many years, was gone" (Page 176). Seeing Grandma's house overtaken by the enemy truly highlights the



changes Ellie's hometown has undergone since the war broke out. All of Grandma's belongings are strewn about the house and it's clear that anything of value has already been stolen. There is no food, anywhere, but it appears that someone has attempted to farm the small patch of garden in the backyard. Whoever it is would have likely found vegetable seedlings that had self-started from the previous season and tried to encourage them to grow. Food is horrifically scarce, and whoever has been tending to this garden probably thought that a garden in the backyard would be less likely to be discovered than one in the front yard. The fireplace poker attack clearly shows that whoever had been squatting in Grandma's house had been working with a team.

When Ellie is attacked by the gang of Stratton kids, she is overwhelmed with sorrow. These kids are Australian, just like her. They are from the same side, fighting against the same enemy, but starvation and desperation have forced these kids to turn against their own people. These children highlight the issues the teenagers are faced with on an exponential level. The teens feel homesick, miss their parents, and worry whether they are going to find food, but they are near adulthood and can fend for themselves. This gang of kids has managed to survive with members as young as six-years-old. Their determination speaks not only to human resilience and the drive to survive, but also to the bravery of children. Still, the children steal everything from the teenagers, including the photograph of Ellie's parents, which is a particularly hard blow. Ellie is flabbergasted that the children, who are fighting on their same side, could be so heartless. She muses that at the end of the war, "The whole country's going to be a psychiatric hospital" (Page 192).



Chapters 15 & 16

Chapters 15 & 16 Summary

Ellie spends the next day cleaning up her grandmother's house. She picks up the broken possessions on the ground, wraps what few clothes are left of her grandmother's in plastic, and does her best to organize the mess. As she works, Ellie can't help but feel frustrated that all of her grandmother's belongings, which would have come to her someday in the will, have been either stolen or destroyed. The rest of the teens go about their own tasks. Kevin tends to the garden, Fi does all the cooking, Homer finishes odd-jobs around the house, but Lee is often missing and no one knows where he has gone. Ellie and Fi discuss Lee's strange behavior that night, while snuggled in bed together. Fi thinks Lee has been heading into town on his own, and both girls hope he isn't starting solo missions up there. The girls also discuss their romantic crushes and giggle about the boys, acting, for the first time in a long time, like true teenagers. Fi reveals that she's had a crush on Homer for years, but she wonders if it will ever work out. She wonders if the war has ruined love for both of them. A few days later, Ellie confronts Lee about his late-night wanderings. He is infuriatingly mute and refuses to give Ellie any information about his activities. Ellie warns him that he could be putting them all in danger, but Lee doesn't seem bothered. This could be because he isn't doing anything dangerous, is trying to get a rise out of Ellie, or truly doesn't care who he hurts in his pursuit of wiping out the enemy.

A few days later, the teenagers are still trying to get a hold of Colonel Finley. They haven't heard from him since before their strike on the airbase and they are beginning to worry that he's forgotten about them. They also return to the streets in search of supplies, but they are weary after the attack from the child gang earlier that week. As Ellie walks, she is surprised to see a pile of her belongings, including the photo of her parents, lying in the middle of the road. She knows it's a trap, and that the gang must be watching the area, but she vows to come back and collect what's hers. That night, Ellie catches and kills a lamb from a nearby field, and the teens feast on a glorious meal. Outside grandma's house, they hear scratching and know that the children must be close. Later, Ellie hears a child weeping and she knows he must be hungry. She and Fi decide that next time they have a meal, they'll leave some outside so the children can eat too.

Chapters 15 & 16 Analysis

In an earlier book in the series, Ellie and Lee were involved in a romantic relationship, and Ellie gave Lee her virginity. For reasons not discussed in this novel, their relationship hasn't worked out and it's clear that Ellie feels abandoned by him. She often thinks that Lee owes her something, and when he speaks harshly to her, Ellie has a difficult time accepting his scolding. "I felt [Lee] owed me a favor or two. To be totally honest, I sort of thought that the fact we'd slept together might have made a difference.



OK, I know it means less to boys than it does to girls ... but I still thought it would have made a difference" (Page 198).

The fact that Lee has been sneaking away from the house and into town is a source of worry for many people. Lee has always been the most hard-headed, the most determined to kill as many of the enemy as possible before he dies. Fi equates this Rambo-style attitude to the fact that he's only just found out that his parents were killed, and he found out in such an unceremonious, brutal way, it was sure to have shocked his system. However, if Lee is working on solo missions in town, it could endanger his gang of friends. If the enemy discovers where he is, they will certainly follow him back to grandma's house and kill them all. The girls know they can't risk being discovered, so they must find out what Lee is up to and stop him before he gets them all killed.

Ellie's discussion with Fi also highlights the fact that these girls, although dealing with violent, mature issues, are still just teenagers. They giggle and talk about boys, but their conversation is tainted by the fact that many of their previous crushes have been killed during the war, and they may never have happy family weddings. Marsden's message about war is clear. War destroys lives, not just during the fighting, but far after. It decimates families, demolishes landscape, and ruins lives for years to come. For some, like the teens in this novel, life will never go back to normal.



Chapters 17 & 18

Chapters 17 & 18 Summary

The teens decide that eventually, they should try to return to their safe place in Hell. It won't be safe to leave for another week, so until then, they have to stay put. Kevin is clearly healing from his mental breakdown, and his idea to fish for trout has proved worthwhile. The teenagers are having no trouble finding food to sustain themselves, and Ellie wonders if the kids are as lucky. She's seen glimpses of them over the past few days - heard them crying at night, and sometimes even laughing - but they have been careful to set themselves up to avoid another ambush. After the fishing expedition, Ellie tries to leave some food out for the children, but to her disappointment, they leave the food untouched.

Meanwhile, bombings take place almost everyday, but Stratton is relatively untouched, probably because it had been decimated in previous bombing runs. The teens see an equal number of enemy and ally planes, so they know neither side is truly winning. Ellie finds herself continually worrying about the children, worrying about what kind of adults they'll grow up to be. She knows that the deepest wounds of war have not occurred on the skin-deep level, but much, much deeper, affecting everything about her community and the people within it. To try to make life homier, Ellie puts up a few flower vases and makes a fruit salad. They're small steps, but they help make the teenagers feel less like they're living in the middle of a war zone, and more like they're at home.

Chapters 17 & 18 Analysis

The area where the teenagers live in hiding has likely been under colonized by the enemy due to the damage it suffered during the air raid, which is why the teens and children have been able to live under the radar for so long. As previously discussed, the enemy officers have moved into the pristine mansions, where they could simply order the previous owners out, feast on their food, and increase their wealth with the previous owner's belongings. It seems barbaric, but that's the harsh truth of war. Marsden does not shy away from war's unpleasantness with his young audience. His anti-war message is clear, and he hopes to inspire his readers to peace while they are young enough to be impressionable yet old enough to make up their own minds.

Ellie finds herself deeply concerned with the street children. She wonders what type of adults they'll grow up to be without any responsible adults to model themselves after. She remembers her own parents fondly, meals around the dinner table, learning how to drive. Growing up to be a respectable person is a natural impulse when you're surrounded by respectable people. It's as natural as mother's milk. When Ellie realizes this, she realizes that an entire generation of children is growing up in a world where scavenging and selfishness are vital to security. "I began to think the damage to our country, to us even, went so deep now that it would never fully be repaired. I realized

the worst damage wasn't the bombed buildings, the burnt-out cars, the shattered windows ... It was the damage deep inside us" (Page 229).



Chapters 19 & 20

Chapters 19 & 20 Summary

One morning, the teenagers wake suddenly at the sound of motorcycles approaching. Enemy soldiers have entered Stratton to search for supplies. In a panic, the teens rush out to Kevin's carefully tended garden and rough it up, trying to conceal the fact that people have been living here. Lee continues to sneak out at night, so Ellie decides that she is going to follow him, to finally get to the bottom of what he's been up to. She follows him for miles, frustrated that she can't figure out what he's up to, into enemy civilian areas. Ellie is absolutely shocked that Lee is walking through the most dangerous area in the world without even bothering to hide underbrush. He walks toward a civilian barn and is greeted by a beautiful teenage girl. The two embrace and Ellie forces herself to watch as they kiss. Lee walks straight to the barn but the girl lingers outside, as if searching for someone. A few moments later, Ellie sees what the girl was searching for. In the distance, a group of enemy farmers creep toward the barn. Ellie knows that if she doesn't act soon, these farmers will pounce and Lee will be thrown in prison, or worse, killed.

Ellie reaches in her pocket to find the pack of matches she found while cleaning grandma's house earlier. She eyes the farmers' pickup truck, with the back full of hay. Timing her movements perfectly, Ellie lights the hay on fire, jumps in the car, and drives it toward the barn, leaping away just before it hits. Ellie watches proudly as the flames take over the building. Surely no one outside the barn would risk their life to run in, giving Lee the perfect opportunity to escape out the back. Ellie is about to turn away when she hears the terrified whinnying of horses trapped inside. Knowing that she has caused this fire, and that the animals will surely die a horrific death, she is willing to risk everything to save them. Ellie rushes inside the burning barn and frantically begins freeing the horses. She is not surprised to see that Lee has already begun the work, and Lee too does not seem surprised to see Ellie. They work in perfect tandem until eventually, all the horses are free. Ellie leaps aboard a tractor and drives it straight through the barn's wall, freeing everyone.

The two teens clamber bravely back to grandma's house in Stratton, although with their cuts and burns, it feels like miles away. When they make it back, Ellie doesn't want anyone but Fi to tend to her wounds. She knows that Fi will tend to all her sores, both physical and emotional. Ellie has never felt more rejected, or more confused. The novel ends with Lee coming to apologize. He had met this enemy girl when she nearly drown swimming in the river. Lee had jumped in to save her. He thought they were in love, but it was clear to him now that the girl had been setting him up, trying to pry information from him. Ellie tells him to leave her alone and doesn't know if she can ever forgive him.



Chapters 19 & 20 Analysis

Ellie is outraged by Lee's relationship on a multitude of levels. The first, most personal reason, is that Ellie is obviously still in love with Lee. She feels used, for the first time since giving up her virginity, as she realizes it meant nothing to Lee. Second, Ellie is outraged that Lee would risk his friends' security for sex. Every time Lee walks to meet this girl, he is putting their entire crew in danger of being discovered. Finally, Ellie is outraged that Lee seems to have lost all sense of danger. He walks confidently to the barn and doesn't even bother to look around for enemy before he creeps inside.

It's interesting to note that the novel ends with a moment of character development rather than action-packed plot. For much of the novel, the characters have been relatively two-dimensional, but in these last few chapters, the relationship between Lee and Ellie has gathered much insight and depth. It is safe to assume that the sixth and seventh books in the series will tackle adult topics of sex and love, with enough depth to substantiate their weight.

It may be disappointing to some readers that the novel ends on a cliffhanger, without any resolution for the problems introduced in this novel. None of the Tomorrow series novels work as stand-alone books. Working together, they create an intricate series that forces the reader to purchase the next book to continue reading.



Characters

Ellie Linton

Ellie Linton is the main protagonist and narrator of the story. Ellie was born and raised on a sheep farm not far from the edge of the country town of Wirrawee. Throughout her narration, Ellie often imagines the peaceful life she remembers on the farm, and she often pulls wartime inspiration from the lessons she learned from her family back home. It's clear that she loves her family and wants nothing more than to be reunited with them. It is also clear that Ellie has the deepest respect and strongest love for the Australian outback. Even when bullets are flying at her head, Ellie cannot help but marvel at the beauty of the Australian landscape. Through Ellie's narration, the reader fully understands John Marsden's own love for his home country, Australia.

Although Ellie is given very little physical description, nor are the other characters in the novel, the reader has the firmest grasp on Ellie's psychological character through her narration. The reader knows that Ellie is fiercely determined and has a well-earned ego. Whenever tough missions arise, Ellie is the first to volunteer herself, likely because she is the only one among her group who can complete these dangerous acts. Along with Lee, Ellie is one of the unspoken leaders of her group. Despite this strength, Ellie is often scared and uncertain if her decisions are best. She craves the respect of boys, like Lee, and the support of men, like Colonel Finley.

Lee

Lee is Ellie's on-again-off-again love interest throughout the series. He is a somewhat enigmatic character, and despite the fact that Ellie spends long hours obsessing over him, the reader learns very little about his character. The reader learns that he is tall, physically strong, calm in the face of violence, and a silent brooder. Prior to the war Lee had been a studious, somewhat lonely boy who played the violin. When the war broke out, however, Lee demonstrated an aptitude for violence as well as a tendency to act impulsively and a strong desire for vengeance. All this had been heightened when Lee unceremoniously found out that his parents had been killed by the enemy. Since then, Lee has lost the desire to return home that has motivated the rest of the teenagers. The only emotion fueling his actions now is a desperation for revenge. Now, Lee is somewhat of a loose cannon, starting solo missions without the group's consent and sneaking off in the middle of the night, endangering the lives of his friends. At the end of the novel, Ellie discovers that Lee has been having an affair with a teenage enemy, and Ellie must save him from the trap the enemy has laid down for him. In the novel's final pages, Lee apologizes for putting Ellie in danger but she is unsure if she will ever be able to forgive him.



Homer Yannos

Homer Yannos is Ellie's closest childhood friend, with whom she has an endearing brother/sister relationship. Throughout the novel, Ellie recounts pleasant memories of playing in the neighborhood with Homer, highlighting the drastic ways their lives have changed since the battles began. Prior to the war, Homer had been a somewhat irresponsible, immature leader, but the stress of war has proved Homer to be a very confident leader. Homer is described as short, strong, and dark due to his Greek heritage.

Fiona Maxwell (Fi)

Fiona Maxwell (Fi) is Ellie's closest confidant during the war. Fi has pale skin and blonde hair, and is generally described as being the least fit of the entire teenage crew. Fi clearly had the most sheltered upbringing of all the teens, and therefore struggles the most when faced with the brutal violence of war. Although Fi rarely volunteers to take part in planned attacks, when she is faced with fighting, she always rallies to save her friends.

Kevin Holmes

Kevin Holmes is a member of Ellie's crew, although in this novel he is completely out of commission. When his girlfriend was killed in the previous novel, Kevin suffered a nervous breakdown. Now, he is completely unable to process the violence of war and functions 100% of the time on auto-pilot. Toward the end of the novel, Kevin begins to heal and takes pleasure in tending the garden at Grandmother's house.

Remi

Remi is the mysterious enemy Lee with whom Lee had been fraternizing at Stratton. Remi had first met Lee when she nearly drown swimming nude in the river and Lee jumped in to save her. After starting a romantic relationship with him, it becomes clear that Remi had set up a trap to hand him over to the enemy, but Ellie intervenes, saving his life.



Objects/Places

Hell

Hell is the area of relative security where the teenagers are hiding at the opening of the novel. After Lee convinces the crew to keep moving, the teenagers move on to Stratton, but a week into their mission, plan to travel back to Hell.

The Dirty Dozen

The Dirty Dozen are the missing Kiwi soldiers Ellie and her crew have been hired to guide through the foreign terrain. After Ellie's scream, their presence is revealed to enemy soldiers and the Kiwi fighters go missing.

Tailor's Stitch

Tailor's Stitch is a narrow, dangerous passage in the wilderness of Hell. Despite its danger, it has been a popular place for bushwalkers, and it's through this thin passage that Ellie and her crew first make their way out of Hell.

Ellie's Boots

Ellie's Boots are her most prized possession and one of the last few links she has to home. When she first purchased them, they had been a beautiful olive-green, very dark. Now that she's been trudging through the wilderness during the war, they've been bleached and cracked, scuffed dull and worn.

The City Dump

The City Dump is where the teenagers search for mission supplies. When Ellie arrives, she is overwhelmed with memories of visiting the dump with her father, which highlights the way Australia has changed since the war broke out. This is also where the teenagers are first ambushed by the enemy and forced into the trucks that drive them to the airbase.

The Wirrawee Airfield

The Wirrawee Airfield is where the teenagers enact their greatest attack on the enemy. After unexpectedly being delivered to the airbase in the back of the dump trucks, Ellie and the others decide to go out with a bang. As they escape, the crew manages to destroy nine airplanes and three jeeps filled with enemy soldiers.



Bracken River

Bracken River is the river the crew of teenagers escapes into after running from the airbase. The teens decide to wade through the river because it will be more difficult for the enemy to track them in water than on land.

Stratton

Stratton is the city where the crew of teenagers spends the most time during Burning for Revenge. The teens choose to travel to Stratton because they've heard that Homer's parents are in hiding here, and it's also where Ellie's grandmother lived. The war has destroyed much of Stratton's beauty. Bombing raids have leveled architecture, and enemy soldiers have moved into the wealthy mansions but left most of the suburbs untouched. Gangs of starving children, however, have stripped all the houses, including Ellie's grandmother's house, of all useful belongings.

Winchester Heights

Winchester Heights is the pretentious neighborhood where Ellie's grandmother lived. Although the neighborhood was beautiful before the war, it has been completely destroyed by enemy occupation, and its pristine setup has left very little room for exploration or hidey-holes.

The Barn

The Barn is where Lee regularly meets with the enemy teenager for romantic liaisons, and where the girl lures him to be handed over to enemy soldiers. When Ellie figures out what is happening, she burns the barn down to save Lee's life.



Themes

Team Unity

In the nearly post-apocalyptic world of a war zone, having a team of friends you can depend on can mean the difference between life and death. From the beginning of the series, Ellie, Lee, Homer, Fi, and Kevin (along with other friends who have died along the way) have known that they can count on each other. They've even made a pact that when one of them makes a decision, the rest will follow unquestioning. The reader first sees this when Lee makes the decision to leave Hell and continue fighting against the enemy. The rest of the team aren't convinced, and Kevin is in no state to continue fighting, but the rest support his decision. If Lee were to go alone, there is a higher chance that he would die without his team to support him. The reader sees this mentality again when the team drags Kevin along with them, even though he is virtually comatose. In his present emotional state, Kevin is an absolute hindrance to the team's progress, but they would never leave a man behind. Because of this, Lee's betrayal at the end of the novel, when he literally sleeps with the enemy, is even harder for Ellie to get over. Even though Lee hasn't give the enemy any information about his team, he is putting their lives - which they have worked so hard to protect - in very grave danger. After all the team has been through together, Ellie isn't sure she'll ever be able to forgive Lee for what he's done.

Overcoming Underestimation

When Ellie and her friends are first hired into the Australian army volunteer base, Colonel Finely and the rest of his team don't think they will accomplish much. They are only teenagers, after all. Yet, the teens had "achieved more with our rough-and-ready tactics, our homemade bombs, and make-it-up-as-you-go approach than just about any professional soldiers could have done" (Page 3). In this book, Ellie and her team enact one of the greatest attacks on their enemy of the entire war. They bomb nine planes and three jeeps full of soldiers at the Wirrawee airfield. As a result, the skies open up for New Zealand bombers to take to the sky.

During the mugging at Stratton, Ellie tries to reason with the leader of the children's gang, a young girl. "I chose her not because she looked kinder but because she was a girl, so I assumed she might be more reasonable" (Page 191). This blatant sexism introduces the idea of gender expectations. Ellie expects this young girl will be more reasonable than the boys, just as Lee (and sometimes even Homer) expect that Ellie and Fi will be unable to keep up during physically demanding missions. In both cases, these expectations are blown out of the water. Ellie oftentimes performs better than her male counterparts, even saving their lives on multiple occasions, just as this girl overcomes Ellie's underestimation of her danger by threatening Ellie's life.



Marsden adds the emotional conflict of underestimating children (and females) no doubt to create a sense of camaraderie with the reader. Audiences love to root for the underdog. Watching underestimated characters rise up and overpower their enemy gives each reader a sense of accomplishment and a feeling that they too can go out and conquer the world.

Longing

During times of war, something is taken away from everything, be it a family member, possessions, or a sense of security. Although the teenagers in this novel have dedicated their lives to the Australian cause, they are not immune to feelings of longing, and these longings taint their opinions and actions during the war. The most present longing for all the children is a longing for home. The reader is most exposed to Ellie's longing for her parents and the comfort of home life through her narration, but it is clearly present in each of the character's struggles. With Ellie, this longing has morphed into a strange obsession with reaching Colonel Finley. It's clear that Ellie is desperate for adult approval, and since Colonel Finley is the only adult with whom she has regular contact, she craves his encouragement. For Lee, the longing for home has morphed into a vicious pursuit of revenge. He knows that, unlike the other teenagers who cling to glimmers of hope, he will never have home security again after his parents' murder. To cope with his longing and loss, Lee is determined to kill as many enemies as possible before he, too, is killed.

The other ever-present longing in the novel is the longing for love. Ellie longs for Lee, who longs for the enemy teenager. Fi longs for Homer who longs (it is hinted at) for Ellie. Although the teenagers have strong bonds of friendship, they long for a further feeling of belonging and an affection that, on some level, will replace the affection lost when their parents went missing.



Style

Point of View

Burning for Revenge is told in first-person limited omniscience narration from Ellie's perspective, which means that the audience is held very close to Ellie's thoughts and emotions throughout the novel. Through the point-of-view narration, the reader gains intimate access into Ellie's longing for home, her desperation to be reunited with her parents, her fears in battle, and her love for Lee. This access is vital to the reader's understanding of Ellie's character because she is extremely guarded on the outside. She would never let even her closest friends know how vulnerable she truly feels. Because Ellie is often lost in her daydreams, she feels free to express herself openly and honestly in her thoughts, without holding embarrassing emotions back, which allows the reader unprecedented access to Ellie's emotional growth. Also, the point-of-view of the novel allows Ellie to reflect on years of history, emotion, and relationships, which create a complex world for the reader to inhabit alongside her. The story is told mostly through exposition, with scenes of dialogue. The story is completely filtered through the thoughts and emotions of Ellie, so the reader sees the world through her unique perspective. Because Ellie has a tendency to look at the world, particularly the war, slightly off kilter, the reader is forced to reevaluate their own views of the world around them, particularly in relation to the many wars raging across the globe today.

Setting

Because the teenagers are constantly on the move, there are many different settings for the novel. On a large scale, the novel is set in Australia in modern time, in the middle of a war with an unnamed country. Throughout the novel, the enemy is referred to only as "the enemy," likely to prevent readers from associating particular nations with violence, or drawing parallels to particular wars in history. This way, Marsden's tale becomes timeless. It should be noted, because at times it is quite confusing, that most of the Australian airbase is set up in New Zealand, where Colonel Finley and his team are located, and where the teenagers struggle to reach him through radio signals.

The war has destroyed much of Australia's beauty. Bombing raids have leveled architecture, particularly in Stratton, where the children set up camp for a short time. Enemy soldiers have moved into the wealthy mansions within Stratton and have left most of the suburbs untouched. Gangs of starving children, however, have stripped all the houses, including Ellie's grandmother's house, of all useful belongings. The nation has morphed into a post-apocalyptic mindset where selfishness and scavenging are more important than a sense of community, and neighbor turns against neighbor just to survive. Most families have been broken up, with parents either killed or sent away to prison labor camps. Because of this, the strong bonds formed between the teenagers are all they have to keep themselves alive.



Language and Meaning

Since the novel is written for young readers, the language tends to be very conversational and easy to follow. The sentences are constructed in a way that is not only easy to follow, but also gain momentum as the reader reads on. The sentences are constructed to entice the reader to turn the next page, and often this structure works. The novel is clearly geared toward modern teenagers and is written in modern teen-speak. Adult readers may be confused by some of the teenaged vernacular, but are given ample contextual clues to understand its meaning. Because this novel is written by an Australian author, and is set in Australia, there are many Aussie words and phrases sprinkled throughout, often some whose meaning cannot be deduced contextually. For phrases like this, Marsden has kindly included a glossary in the book's first pages. Although sometimes confusing, this language adds a depth to the novel that allows the reader a glimpse into a world that is made believable through the language used. Most of the novel is told in exposition so there is not a lot of dialogue to distinguish secondary characters, although the reader does learn a lot about Ellie. The structure of the novel not only entices readers to carry on to the next chapter by utilizing cliffhanger phrases, but each paragraph propels the reader on with its present-tense action written with a sense of urgency.

Structure

Burning for Revenge is comprised of twenty chapters averaging twelve pages each. The chapters are simply numbered at the top of the page, without titles or headings to distract from the action of the story. The chapters tend to be short to engage the reader in the immediate suspense and action of the tale. As many readers find themselves wading through lengthy chapters, Marsden creates many small problems and resolutions to maintain the novel's quick pace from beginning to end. Adult readers should have no trouble finishing the book in one sitting, or a single afternoon.

The storyline is relatively straight-forward as this ragtag band of teenagers struggles to stay alive while simultaneously trying to inflict as much damage as possible on the occupying enemy army. Because this book is fifth in a seven book series, there are many references to events that took place in the first novels in this series by which audience members reading Burning for Revenge without having read the previous novels may be confused. Overall, Marsden does an excellent job of grounding the reader and of clarifying events that have happened in the back-stories, but there are still many question marks.



Quotes

"If only our country hadn't been invaded. If only we could have carried on the way we used to, watching other people's war on television. If only we'd been better prepared, and thought more about this stuff" (Page 3).

"I don't know about the others but I'd started blocking out fears about danger and death. Seeing so many people die, including some of my friends, had made me feel weird about my own life. I'd moved gradually into a state of thinking where I didn't dream much about the future" (Page 12).

"Sometimes there aren't any questions any more. Sometimes there's nothing to debate. If we have any choice at all, it might be as simple as this: to die fighting or to die as cowards" (Page 25).

"I needed time to think ... It's not an easy thing to face your own death. Not when you're feeling young and alive and healthy" (Page 59).

"I didn't spend any time thinking about what I'd done. I wasn't a robot or a terminator any more, but I wasn't normal either. I wasn't Ellie. I just got on with the job" (Page 78).

"I had been burning for revenge for a long time, and now I was going to do some real burning, to get them back for all they'd done to us ... It went further back than primitive: it was primeval. I was cave-woman swinging the club around my head and charging at the jackals and hyenas" (Page 100).

"I had thought there was no hope. I had thought there was no solution. I thought death was the only option. Now I realized that by our own determination we'd made things happen. We'd found answers where there were none" (Page 132).

"It's easy when you hate someone. You can persuade yourself that anything you do is OK then. Hassle them, pick at them, bully them: no problem, you hate them, it's fair enough" (Page 145).

"I chose her not because she looked kinder but because she was a girl, so I assumed she might be more reasonable" (Page 191).

"The biggest thing was always the war. Sometimes it seemed like everything came down to that" (Page 201).

"I didn't want to talk about any of it. I'd more or less convinced myself it was all OK, that we were soldiers doing it for our parents ... and here was Fi dragging me back into the world of reality" (Page 219).

"I began to think the damage to our country, to us even, went so deep now that it would never fully be repaired. I realized the worst damage wasn't the bombed buildings, the burnt-out cars, the shattered windows ... It was the damage deep inside us" (Page 229).

"It was love and loyalty that had kept us together all this time. It held us together through experiences that would have destroyed most groups" (Page 252).



Topics for Discussion

Describe the bond between the team of teenagers. How do they work together to overcome the obstacles in their lives? Are their relationships realistic or believable? Why or why not? What do their relationships teach the reader about teamwork and unity? Be sure to include examples from the text to help strengthen your arguments.

How does it feel to read the seventh book in a series without reading the earlier books first? Do you think *Burning for Revenge* works as a stand-alone novel? Why or why not? How does Marsden incorporate useful information about the previous novels? Does this style work or is it heavy-handed? Be sure to include examples from the text to help strengthen your arguments.

What do you think of the line, "I began to think the damage to our country, to us even, went so deep now that it would never fully be repaired. I realized the worst damage wasn't the bombed buildings, the burnt-out cars, the shattered windows ... It was the damage deep inside us" (Page 229). What moral message can be found in this quote? How might this quote be seen as social commentary in a modern society? Be sure to include examples from the text to help strengthen your arguments.

Before and during the war, what kind of expectations were placed on Ellie's performance, particularly by the men in her life (Colonel Finely and Lee)? Does Ellie meet these expectations? Explain. How does Ellie's character function as an underdog in the novel? What does this accomplish? Be sure to include examples from the text to help strengthen your arguments.

How does the landscape of Australia become a character of its own in the novel? Choose one descriptive passage of landscape or nature from the novel and explain how this description adds to the novel's complexity. How has war changed the landscape of Australia, or the small communities within it? In turn, how does this change affect the teenagers? Be sure to include examples from the text to help strengthen your arguments.

Describe Kevin's progress throughout the novel. Compare / contrast his mental and emotional state at the opening of the novel with his emotional state at the end of the novel. What events have prompted this change? How does Kevin's transformation relate to Ellie's statement that after the war, the entire country would be in a mental institution? Be sure to include examples from the text to help strengthen your arguments.

Describe Lee's betrayal of the team at the end of the novel. How do Lee's actions put the team in danger? Why do you think Lee continued with his plan, even if it meant endangering his friends? Can you understand his motivations? Why or why not? Do you think Ellie will, or should, ever forgive him? Be sure to include examples from the text to help strengthen your arguments.