

Circling the Sun Study Guide

Circling the Sun by Paula McLain

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Plot Summary

Though wounded at first after her mother abandons her, Beryl Markham's tenacity allows her to overcome the challenges of being a woman in early-twentieth-century Africa. Her headstrong ways lead to failed marriages and a passionate romance, but also allows her to reach greater heights as a horse trainer and a record-breaking aviator.

Beryl's father moves the family from England to Kenya when Beryl is a small child. After a few years, her mother has had enough of Africa and moves back to England with Beryl's brother -- leaving Beryl with her father in Kenya. Beryl's father raises her with the help of the Kipsigis tribe, native Africans who share his estate. She's allowed to learn how to be a warrior with the Kip boys and how to train horses from her father. Her unconventional education leads to a love of all things wild and an understanding of nature.

As Beryl's childhood ends, however, people attempt to tame her and make her bow to conventional expectations. Everything she knows and loves becomes history. She tries, but fails, to merge the two perspectives in two disastrous marriages.

Realizing that she needs to exist in her own world, Beryl follows her own rules and becomes a horse trainer, like her father and achieves success. Her actions attract the attention of the Happy Valley group, a drug-taking, bohemian community that lives by their own rules. Beryl rejects them and instead learns what she is really meant to do - fly! - with the help of Denys Finch Hatton, possibly the only man, other than her father, whom she truly loved.

Denys dies in an airplane crash and, partly in his memory and partly to accomplish a new challenge, Beryl continues to fly after his death, finally becoming the first woman to fly solo across the Atlantic from east to west.



Prologue, Chapters 1 -- 4

Summary

As the book opens with the Prologue, Beryl is boarding a plane called The Messenger in an attempt to fly solo across the Atlantic from England to America. Two years earlier, JC Carberry had challenged her to attempt the feat, something no one else had yet achieved. Some friends and journalist are there to see her off. The weather is far from ideal, but it's the best she can expect for a long time. She starts the plane and overcomes the first hurdle, taking off.

Four hours after her take off, one tank runs out of gas. As the engine sputters, she follows the instructions those who had helped her prepare for the flight had given her and she switches tanks. They had told her that the engine would start again, but it doesn't. She switches the toggle again, but nothing happens. She wonders whether pilots she had known who had died in airplane accidents had felt the way she was feeling now. As her plane descends, she feels as if she's going back in time, to Kenya, and that she's going home.

It's 1904 in Chapter 1. Beryl Markham's father, Charles, is a British horseman by trade. But when he starts seeing advertisements about cheap land in Kenya, he moves his family from their life in Edwardian England to untamed farmland in Kenya. As they make their way to Kenya, Beryl marvels at what she sees. Her mother, however, doesn't share her amazement. Their closest white neighbors, Lady and Lord Delamere, live seven miles away and that's going through the wilderness. Simple luxuries, like taking a bath requires lugging water for two miles.

After two years, her mother has had enough and leaves, taking Beryl's older brother Dickie, with her, but leaving 4-year-old Beryl with Charles. She tells Beryl that she'll send her sweets from Piccadilly. Beryl hopes her mother and brother will return. But months later, when she receives the sweets her mother had promised her, she knows that they aren't coming back. She hides and eats the sweets until she throws up. Afterwards, she asks her father if her mother and Dickie are coming back. He says he doesn't know. When she suggests that her mother might be waiting for them to come to her, he says the farm is their home now and he's not ready to give up the dream. He asks her if she's willing to love the farm as much as he does even without her mother, but she doesn't answer because she doesn't know how to forget her mother. Her father doesn't know how to comfort her, so she just sits in his lap in silence. Finally, Charles gives her a light kiss and places her on her own two feet.

At the beginning of Chapter 2, Beryl has lots of questions about her mother's abandonment of her and her father, but doesn't feel comfortable going to her father for answers. She's finally able to push her mother's memory to the recesses of her mind so that she doesn't get hurt again, due to members of a Kipsigis village who realize that Beryl needs help. They "adopt" her and allow her to forgo the domestic role of the



women in the village. Instead, she participates in the male activities. Kibii, the son of the head warrior, becomes her friend. They take walks at night in the bush. Her father works the farm and it grows. Beryl realizes that she was made for the farm and the bush and that coming there had been like a second birth for her.

Beryl is 11 years old in Chapter 3. Instead of going to school, she goes to the stables in the morning and gallops with Kibkii who is a little younger than she is. Lately, she's begun to feel as if he is tiring of her efforts to keep up with him. Her behavior was okay when they were little children, but now he thinks that it's time for her to realize that they have two very different paths. She has no intentions of doing so. On this morning she tells him that she could be a warrior if she had the right training and she would even do it in secret, being happy to know of her achievements even if no one else did. Kibii laughs at her. Instead of galloping, she goes with her father to look at a brood mare that Lord Delamere is selling. Kibii goes hunting.

The sight of the mare, Coquette, wins Beryl over. After examining her, Charles starts negotiating a price with Lord D. This part of the buying process bores Beryl, so she sits, sulking, while she waits for the two men to finish. Lady D comes and offers her biscuits. She also offers to brush Beryl's wildly unruly hair. She compares it's color to that of the mare. The comparison pleases Beryl and she lets Lady D brush it. She finds herself enjoying the experience. She also eats the biscuits (which she had earlier refused even though she was starving.) The men finish their negotiations and Lady D presents Beryl with her brushed hair. She makes a comment about wondering what she was going to find behind Beryl's ears as she brushed her hair and this sets off a friendly discussion about her being a tomboy. The exchange leaves both Beryl and her father unsettled. After they leave, her father says that raising her can be a bit much for him at times (not in such a direct way, but she knows what he means). She tells him that they are fine and she wouldn't have it any other way.

In Chapter 4, Coquette wins over everyone at the farm, partly because of her golden color. For the first few months, everything goes well and Charles choses a horse to breed her with. They talk about the expected foal so much that Beryl feels as if he were already there. One day she's with Kibii, thinking up possible names for the foal when a train arrives from Nairobi. On it is Mrs. Orchardson, the new housekeeper. As soon as she comes, Beryl feels that she takes over the house and her life, trying to tame her. She has to stop doing everything she loved, including eating with Kibii and his family in favor of having a proper education and learning the Queen's English. Beryl complains to her father, but he says that its for her own good. Beryl decides that if she wants her old life back, she's going to have to figure out a way to get the best of Mrs. O.

Analysis

This section serves to introduce readers to the novel's main character, Beryl Markham. The prologue delivers a snapshot of Beryl as an adult. Chapters 1 through 4 help readers understand how her character developed to create the woman they meet in the prologue as well as some of the characters who set her life's course into motion. The



section also introduces some of the novel's symbols, such as the plane and farm which represent freedom and themes, such as freedom, self-reliance, the role of women, overcoming challenges, and convention and rebellion.

The snapshot readers get of Beryl in the prologue is that of a strong woman who's brave enough not only to fly a plane, but to also attempt a feat that not even a man has successfully accomplished in an age in which women didn't do such things. The portrayal shows her to be daring, but not reckless. She didn't simply jump into the plane and take flight. She planned her trip as carefully as one can plan such a thing. She has her food, charted her route, equipped the plane with enough gas to make the trip, learned the peculiarities of the plane, and even has a watch that was lent to her by the last man who had attempted the flight and came back alive, implying that she had consulted him and knew him well enough that he was willing to lend her his watch. It's interesting to note that he didn't give it to her, he lent it to her as if to say that he expected her to return.

From the prologue, readers also obtain their first glimpse of how Beryl handles challenges, especially those laced with fear. She believes that one has to fly straight through them because one can't chart a course around things you fear. And, in fact she's ready to embrace whatever comes without fear even when it seems as if she's going to plunge into the ocean. She tries not to panic as she switches the toggle for a second time when the engine doesn't start. After doing this and nothing happens, she starts to feel as if she is heading home instead of showing signs of panic.

Is it enough for her to know that she at least attempted to cross the Atlantic even if she dies doing so? In a conversation with Kibii later in the section, she says that she could train to be a warrior in secret. When he says that no one will know what she has done, she says that it doesn't matter because she will. Beryl might want to show the strength of women, but maybe she also wants to prove something to herself.

Flight represents freedom and Beryl feels free as she flies, even as she thinks that she is going to crash into the ocean. Now there is no one to impose their rules on her -- the rules of society that dictate behavior -- rules that can be difficult for a free spirit to follow.

Yet, even though the prologue characterization of Beryl paints the picture of a brave, assured, trend-breaking woman who has broken through a glass ceiling, it also shows that Beryl has maybe only just now discovered what really makes her happy and feel free. And freedom and her purpose may be something Beryl searches for throughout the entire novel, for the remainder of the section shows that she once thought that she was meant for something else -- her father's farm.

The first four chapters reveal that she was totally free up until the age of 11. She was able to hang with the boys, but not white boys, the boys who were the members of a neighboring African tribe. She learned about horses from her father. she galloped, hunted, and wandered in the bush. Her best childhood friend was an African boy and she was even allowed to eat with his family.



On the surface, Beryl seems to fit right into her environment. Her perfect world, the innocence that accompanies childhood, is ending for her as the section ends. Still one wonders what made her the tough girl who wants to be a warrior. Is it truly her nature? Did her mother leave her with her father because she saw this spark when she was a child and thought she was better off in Africa than England? Did the Kipsigis notice the same thing and thus didn't make her learn domestic things as other girls did?

Or did she adopt a tough attitude as a result of her mother's abandonment? She never answered her father when he asked her if she could love the place as much as he did even if her mother never returned. She looked for her to return. When the sweets arrived she expressed her hunger for her mother's love by devouring so many that she finally threw up. But she did this in hiding -- not showing her weakness. She also hid the questions that she had about her mother from her father. Her mother's abandonment of her hurts her so much she developed the perspective that it was best to move thoughts of her mother to a place where they wouldn't hurt her and when she did think of her, pretend that she had gone because she had to. She wanted to ask her father questions but didn't feel comfortable sharing her hurt feelings with him. When Lady D offers her biscuits, she first rejects them even though she's starving. In doing this, she is rejecting bonding with a female, motherly figure. She resists having her hair brushed until Lady D compares the color to the mare. But once the brushing starts, she loves everything about the process.

This raises the question of whether a person is born with their personality or if it's shaped through circumstances. Beryl herself even says that she thinks that it's one's challenges that sharpen and shape people.

In this section the innocence of childhood shields Beryl and she is able to overcome the challenge of being abandoned by her mother. But as readers see the world that's comforted her being taken away, the section leaves readers wondering how she, as an individual, is going to face society, if she is going to regain her freedom, and how she's going to be able to follow through with her plan to rebel in the face of convention.

Discussion Question 1

Why did Beryl's mother take Dickie with her, but leave Beryl with her father?

Discussion Question 2

Did being abandoned by her mother shape Beryl's personality in any way, or would she have been the same even if her mother had stayed? Support your opinion.



Discussion Question 3

Beryl's mother went with Charles and tried to live in Kenya for two years before leaving. Do you think that she should have stayed for the sake of the family? Should Charles have gone back to England for the sake of the family? Why or why not?

Vocabulary

aerodrome, timpani, petcocks, squadrons, lacquered, agates, knots, altimeter, fathomless, bush, imperial, passage, cable, curlicued, script, retching, hyraxes, maimed, bwana, paraffin, machetes, gristmill, maize, escarpment, foal



Chapters 5 -- 8

Summary

Chapter 5 opens with Coquette's foal coming early and no one hearing her have it. By the time Beryl's father finds it, giant Siafu ants have devoured parts of the dead foal. It could have been stillborn upon birth, but there is no way to know whether that was the case or not. When Beryl finds out, she skips her lessons and runs to the Kip village. There, as she watches the boys play, she wishes that she had been born as a Kip boy. Kibii finishes his training and talks to her. She tells him about Coquette's foal and questions the purpose of the giant ants. He says that it is not for man to know.

As time goes on, Beryl realizes that Mrs. O, or Emma, acts more like her father's wife or her mother than a housekeeper. Emma tries to give Beryl school lessons, but tires of Beryl stubborn attitude and convinces Charles to hire a governess. Beryl manages to run a multitude of governesses and tutors away, even going as far as to put a black mamba in one of her governess's bed. Finally, there are no tutors and governesses left to teach her. Beryl thinks she's won. But her victory is short lived as readers discover in Chapter 6. Her father, urged by Emma, decides to send her to boarding school after Paddy, a lion Lord D holds captive and considers to be a pet, mauls Beryl. Beryl had been careless and had run into the lion's space, and while she says that something like that will never happen again, Emma says that the farm is not a safe place for Beryl. Charles agrees.

Beryl tells readers in Chapter 7 that she's expelled from boarding school after two years for inciting a sort of rebellion. While she's at school, however, she finds out that Emma is married and ran away from her husband who had gotten an African woman pregnant. She also realizes that Emma and her father are lovers. World War I breaks out while Beryl is in boarding school and Beryl returns to a changed farm. There is fighting in Kenya and Lord D and Kibii's father join the war effort. Kibii's father dies in combat.

The war is not the only thing that has changed the area. Lady D has died from an illness that she had kept secret and, in Chapter 8, Beryl realizes that Kibii has started to treat her differently. He walks behind her and when she tries to touch him he warns her off, saying that any hint of a romantic relationship between the two of them could get him killed.

A drought brings on even more tough times on the farm, but Emma continues her campaign to tame Beryl. She says that she should stay away from Kibii and no longer eat with his family. By the end of the chapter, Beryl acknowledges that the days of her childhood when she could run freely with the Kips are over and she misses them.



Analysis

The events in this section support the themes of the role of women in society, man vs. nature and racism.

Emma's insistence that Beryl receive a proper education and dresses correctly shows how, even in Africa, society expected British women to behave in a certain manner. While they were not considered to be the property of men as the Kip women were, they still had to follow a code of conduct. Beryl's father, distracted by farm issues and not knowing how to raise a daughter, delegated these issues to Emma. This fact is ironic, however, as society scorns Emma because of the actions of her husband. He had had an affair with an African woman that had resulted in the birth of a baby. Yet, Emma suffered social exile because of his actions. This foreshadows the situation Beryl will find herself in when Jock attacks D. Women carry the blame of their husband's indiscretions.

The forces of nature in the novel appear in the form of the environment and human and animal nature. This section shows various instances in which nature, in all its forms, beats the will of man. The ants devour Coquette's foal, nature's way of showing that as much as man does to manipulate it, nature has the final say. Charles is an expert when it comes to race horses. He buys Coquette because he knows that he can mate her and produce superior offspring. In doing this, he is manipulating nature as he chooses Coquette's mate and makes sure that the chosen male services her. Nature shows that it has the final say by having Coquette's foal early, without the knowledge of man who may still try to manipulate the outcome, and then enforcing one final blow by having the ants devour parts of the foal. The drought that engulfs the region is another way of nature showing man that no matter what man does, ultimately nature will fight back and show its might.

Human nature and the nature of animals also win out in this section. Paddy exemplifies nature's force in animals. Lord D adopts Paddy when he's a cub and seems to be fun-loving and playful. Once he grows up, however, his true nature emerges, much as Kibii's emerges when he becomes of age. At this point, Paddy is a lion, with the urges to hunt that lion's naturally have. Lord and Lady D try to keep him at bay with whips, but this does not kill his natural instincts. They feed him, but this does not make him a pet cat. In the end, his natural instincts take over and he attacks Beryl. The only way they can control him is to lock him up. Still he cries for his freedom.

The same is true of Beryl. Emma tries to twist her nature into something that it isn't. She tries to educate Beryl, she dresses her up, but Beryl's nature is already in her and can't be changed. As a result, she lashes against Emma's efforts to twist her nature and turn her into something she isn't. She attacks her governesses and tutors as Paddy attacks. In trying to teach her, they have unknowingly entered dangerous territory as she did prior to Paddy's attack. When put into boarding school, she's like a caged animal howling for its freedom and she finally gets it.



Beryl confronts habits caused by racism and discrimination when she returns home and notices Kibii's behavior. She confronts him, but his nature causes him to follow the rules, not to rebel. Thus he walks behind her and shuns her touches. He also moves forward in his training to be a warrior while now seeing her as a weak girl.

Discussion Question 1

Why is Beryl so against getting a proper education?

Discussion Question 2

Is Beryl to blame for Paddy's attack? Why or why not?

Discussion Question 3

Is Kibii's life diminished now that he's older and has to respect the rules of the British colonists? Why or why not?

Vocabulary

bunks, timbre, stillborn, welts, latch, gibes, silt, baffled, prop, crags, veranda, glade, sullenly, invincible, invulnerable, pried, lulling, atlas, regiment, conscripted, conventions



Chapters 9 -- 12

Summary

Readers find Beryl in Chapter 9 helping her father train horses now that he realizes that there is no point in trying to give her a traditional education. She's his head boy and now has her own horse, Pegasus, an offspring of Coquette whom she had foaled herself staying with Coquette to ensure a successful birth. After telling her father her plans for the day, she rides Pegasus and runs into a new neighbor with a farm, Jock Purves. The two talk and she leaves. She tells her father and Emma about her encounter when she gets home. She finds out that even though her father has given up on a formal education for her, Emma still insists that she does what's proper for high-society British girl. Beryl has to attend a coming out party.

The party takes place in Chapter 10. Beryl dances, gets drunk, and flirts with Jock. When she goes outside for air, she meets Denys and Berkley, who are attending another event, for the first time. They are intelligent, recite poetry and show the possibility of a world beyond local farmers like Jock.

Times continue to be hard and in Chapter 11, Beryl's father announces that due to financial problems he's selling the farm and taking up a horse training job in Cape Town.

Chapter 12 finds a distraught Beryl. She doesn't want to leave Njoro, but if she goes, she's not sure about her place as Emma will be going too and her father will be working for someone else. Even though she's only 16, her father suggests that she marry Jock. She protests, but considers it as an option. She goes to see Kibii and talk to him about it, but the meeting shows her how far apart they have become. He is now a man in the eyes of his tribe and he has a new name, arap Ruta. He had passed into this stage on life without telling her. His plans to leave the village and perhaps find a wife or even his father's killer, but maybe not, as his father will live through his sons. Beryl feels hurt and abandoned once again and in the end, decides to marry Jock, a man she barely knows and who is much older than she is.

Analysis

Beryl faces abandonment once again in this section. This time it is by two men she loves, her father and Kibii. Even though she knows that there's a gulf between her and Kipii, the size of the gulf becomes obvious when she goes to talk with him about her options. He's left her out of his coming-of-age ceremony even though she had taken part in the training herself and the two of them had formed a team, of sorts. In addition of his becoming a man in her absence, he now had plans to leave the village just when her father was also leaving. The only steady thing in her life at this point was the place she thought she was meant to be, Njoro, and not feeling welcomed anywhere else, this thought leads her to choose to marry Jock.



As a woman, would she have had any other choice? Everyone acts as if it's normal for her, a girl of 16, to marry Jock. The news that she has a marriage proposal does not surprise Kibii. Her father says that girls her age are already thinking about it, and Emma has already united the two in her mind. A woman's father wasn't expected to take care of her forever. When the time for fatherly support was over, she was passed on to a husband.

Having to make such choices at this time in her life shocks Beryl who's identity of herself doesn't match that of society's role for her. She feels closer to the Kip boys and would have preferred to have been born as one of them. Instead, she's a British woman who has no idea of what's expected of her.

Beryl's situation is in sharp contrast to Kibii's. His identity matches what his society expects of him. It's something that his village prepared him for since the day he was born. Therefore, he moves into adulthood with confidence.

Another issue makes Beryl's situation murky for her. While she values her life on the farm, she is curious about men and married life. Thus she not only faces an identity conflict with society, but also one within herself.

Still, being abandoned again etches her character further. Surviving means thinking of herself and, once again, standing on her own two feet.

Discussion Question 1

Why doesn't Beryl's father send her to England to grow up as a proper English woman when the options in Africa run out?

Discussion Question 2

Has Charles been a good father to Beryl? Support your opinion.

Discussion Question 3

What would you have decided to do in Beryl's situation?

Vocabulary

ledger, lacquer, escarpment, cisterns, rupee, bloodstock, parcel, dysentery, concocted, contraption, crimped, swooning, perils, quinine, compulsory, peevish, vertigo, threshold, shingles, peaty



Chapters 13 -- 16

Summary

Beryl marries Jock in Chapter 13 even though she's not in love with him. She tries to convince herself that she's made a good decision by listening to Dos who says that Jock can take care of her and is good looking. She hangs on to the idea that he is strong and will make their farm successful. On the first night of their marriage, they try to make love, but Beryl laughs and ruins the mood. She's still a virgin when they go on their honeymoon.

The couple goes to Bombay, India for their honeymoon. Jock's family lives there and she meets them in Chapter 14. By the time they arrive she is no longer a virgin, but the act of lovemaking disappoints her as does the whole trip. She feels as if Jock's mother doesn't like her and doesn't feel connected to Jock even though she tries to. She also discovers that he's a heavy drinker.

In Chapter 15, when Beryl and Jock return home, British East Africa has become Kenya. Everyone was a bit lost due to the results of the war, drought, and disease. Beryl feels the same way. Her father's farm has not yet sold and, when he invites her and Jock to dinner, she realizes that it is no longer her home. Green Hills finally sells through auctioning off bits and pieces. Beryl keeps Pegasus and she and Jock also keep a few horses waiting to sell them at a good price. Beryl feels distant from Jock, but still tries to make the marriage work. Towards the end of the chapter she watches her father leave on the train after he encourages her to get her trainer's license.

To lift her spirits in Chapter 16, Beryl works with the horses as her father had done, but Jock resents her working by his side. Beryl finally tell him that she's not the type of wife he wants and that she wants to train horses for Lord D. After some time, Jock agrees on the condition that she go as his wife and come back regularly to keep up appearances.

Analysis

Beryl experiences the feelings of abandonment once again as she sees her father off at the train station. The difference between this time and when her mother left is that now she's fully aware of what's happening and she's truly alone. The dream of Green Hills is over and she's left with Jock, a man who she can't relate to even though she tries. It's not surprising that she runs to Lord D. He is like a godfather to her and there she can work on keeping her promise to her father and work towards getting her training license.

It doesn't bother her father, or her, that no other woman has ever achieved this goal. The fact that her father suggests that she get her license shows that he understand who she is. She's a talented trainer, likes doing it, and the work will make her happy, unlike her marriage. To him, being a woman should not impede her ability to succeed.



Unfortunately, her father can't give her good marital advice as he did not have a happy marriage himself and even though he's with Emma, she's not his wife. Now that Lady D is dead, Beryl can only turn to Dos. This option, though, is like the blind leading the blind as Dos doesn't have marital experience. She can only talk in terms of what girls think marriage should be. Not knowing any better, Beryl tries to make things work by creating the same type of relationship she had with her father, working my Jock's side. She only knows how to deal with men on an equal footing. That had been her relationship with Kibii as well. This type of relationship doesn't work with Jock, however, as he is very conscience of what people think and he wants everyone to know that he is the man of the house. After all, he is much older than Beryl and it is his job to take care of her, according to society.

Being taken care of is not part of Beryl's identity, so she rebels by running away to Lord D's farm, much as she had done while she was in boarding school.

Discussion Question 1

Why is Beryl uncomfortable around Jock's mother? Do you think her feelings are justified? Why or why not?

Discussion Question 2

How do you think Beryl's father feels leaving her?

Discussion Question 3

What role, if any, does Jock play in the failure of his marriage with Beryl?

Vocabulary

prosperity, manoeuvring, fondant, scabbard, ubiquitous, gutturally, mergers, impostor, herdsman, verge, chastely, coaxed, prod, exasperated, jeering, auction, livestock, fussed, sooty, porter



Chapters 17 -- 20

Summary

In Chapter 17, Lord D agrees to let Beryl train horses for him. She gets no special treatment and works hard. She starts training a horse named Dynasty in Chapter 18. Her methods draw the attention of Lord D's ranch manager, Boy Long. One night activity caused by the presence of a lion wakes her up. She talks with Boy and finds herself attracted to him even though she knows the danger of getting romantically involved with him.

One weekend, when she goes home to behave as Jock's wife, he asks her questions about whether or not she's being faithful to him and warns her that she had better not embarrass him more than she's already done. Beryl leaves as soon as she can the next day. She continues to work hard on the farm and gets her English trainer's license.

Dynasty runs a race and wins in Chapter 20. Jock tries to take all the credit. Later, at a party Lord D throws to celebrate, Beryl meets a distant relative on her mother's side, Cockie Birkbeck, and a man who is with her, Baron Bror Blixen (Blix). Later Jock catches up with her and gets angry because she's not behaving as his wife in public. The two fight and Boy comes to Beryl's defense. Jock almost strikes Boy, but walks away instead. Boy comforts Beryl and that night they sleep with each other.

The next day, in Chapter 20, Jock acts as if nothing had happened and Beryl sees Cockie again, this time with her husband, Ben. After setting a date for Cockie and Ben to visit Beryl and Jock at their farm, the two women talk about love and fidelity. During the days before their visit, Beryl continues to sleep with Boy. When the date of Cockie's and Ben's visit comes, Jock reveals that he knows about Beryl's affair with Boy in front of their guests. His actions appall everyone. Cockie tells Beryl that she has no choice but to eat humble pie.

Analysis

This section shows Beryl breaking barriers while at the same time being tied down because of her sex. Readers also see Beryl's split identity and sense her insecurities as well as her selfishness and headstrong nature.

When it comes to work, Beryl is strong and determined. She's a hard worker who succeeds because of her talents, not because of special treatment. In fact, when she goes to Lord D's she says that she doesn't want special treatment and she doesn't get any. People recognize this in her and can't help but be impressed by her horse's victory.

Still, with all of the proof of her abilities, she remains Jock's wife. Therefore, he's able to take credit for her work and when he explodes in Cockie's and Ben's presence, Cockie



tells Beryl that she has to eat humble pie even though Cockie, herself is having an affair. It's almost as if Beryl is Jack's property as the Kip women are the property of the Kip men. Jock can take credit for her hard work and she's not supposed to embarrass him. Yet he can be rude in public and it's okay.

Once again readers find Beryl striking back as the captive Paddy had struck back. Being a pliant wife is not who she is. Jock is right when he says that she has always lived by her own rules. Making her play wife is twisting her nature, making her unnatural and dangerous. His accusation actually drives her to start having an affair. His behavior in front of Cockie and Ben drives her further away. Beryl thinks in terms of her survival and happiness. It is not in her nature to back off and try to listen to Jock's pain or eat humble pie as Cockie suggests. She feels as if she's given her all to the marriage and is not willing to give any more.

Discussion Question 1

Why do you think Lord D takes Beryl in instead of sending her back to Jock?

Discussion Question 2

Why do those who know Beryl let Jock take credit for her win?

Discussion Question 3

Who's side is Cockie on? Jock's or Beryl's. Explain your answer.

Vocabulary

tarnished, bluster, indomitable, indenture, thoroughbreds, colic, paddock, tincture, commotion, compound, offhand, milling, charade, turf, jockey, conjure, contenders, tether, leverage, spoils



Chapters 21 -- 24

Summary

Beryl assures Boy in Chapter 21 that Jock will not come after him. She also makes it clear that she's only interested in a casual affair with him. She longs to know what it's like to be her own person, not defined as being someone's daughter or their wife.

One afternoon she runs into Berkeley Cole, who she hasn't seen since her coming out party. He invites her to a party at his farm. Both she and Lord D attend. Denys is there, too and Beryl finds herself attracted to him. Her attraction grows when he saves her from a cobra. She finds out that he came to Kenya to escape a definition of "what life should be." He leaves to go to Karen's farm. In Chapter 22, Berkeley warns Beryl not to fall for Denys.

Beryl sees Denys again one day. He tells her that he is staying at Karen's place. He describes her as a good friend. He also invites Beryl there, telling her that Karen has a spare small house that she can stay in.

Lord D delivers a telegram to Beryl in Chapter 23. It's from Clara, Beryl's mother, who wants Beryl to find a place for her and her two sons from her second marriage to live in. Beryl had no idea that her mother had remarried and that she had actually left Africa with another man. Lord D tells her as much as he knows and says they probably should have told her earlier. Beryl decides to help Clara because of the boys and thinking that she may see Dickie. She remembers the empty house Denys had told her about and decides to go to Karen's farm, also hoping to see Denys.

In Chapter 24, she arrives at Karen's farm and Karen instantly welcomes her. Beryl is disappointed to find out that Denys is not there, but asks her if her mother can rent the house. Karen agrees.

Analysis

This section serves to reintroduce and introduce major characters in Beryl's life, most notably Denys and Karen. Readers already have a foreshadowing of the triangle that the three will form. Denys clearly has some type of relationship with Karen, yet Beryl finds herself attracted to him in spite of Berkeley's warnings. In fact, one of the reasons she goes to Karen's farm is to see Denys.

Readers also learn more about Denys' character. He's come to Kenya to escape the definition of what life should be. Such a man is going to be hard to keep. At the same time it's easy to see Beryl's attraction to him. She sees him as a kindred spirit, a brave one at that. He's indeed from another world and reminds her much more of her father than Jock and Boy.



It's interesting that Beryl should meet Karen, who acts like a mother figure at times when her own mother actually returns. Beryl's feelings towards her mother still have not been resolved and the wound becomes worse when she finds out that her mother left with another man. Clara is selfish. It's no wonder that Beryl has so many problems adjusting to married life. She doesn't have a good role model. The people she knows don't help either. Everyone is having affairs with other people's husbands and wives and all of them know about who's with whom.

Discussion Question 1

Why does Beryl only want to have a casual affair with Boy?

Discussion Question 2

What attributes does Denys have that attract women to him?

Discussion Question 3

What would you have done if you were Beryl? Would you have helped Clara? Why or why not?

Vocabulary

gallantry, benign, slew, absurd, haggle, palpable, tethered, boggy, invent, doctored, rubbish, baffled, inevitable, twinge



Chapters 25 -- 28

Summary

In chapter 25, Beryl gets a tour of Karen's farm and the house Clare will be staying in. The two women strike up a friendly relationship. They return to the house to find Blix. Karen reveals that he's only there to ask for a divorce.

Clare arrives with her sons from her second husband in Chapter 26. Dickie is a jockey and has been living in the northern part of Kenya for years. When she sees Beryl, Clara acts as if she and Beryl have a normal relationship. She even tells Beryl how much her second husband, Harry meant to her. Beryl takes Clare and her half brothers to Karen's. Clare is polite in front of Karen, but complains about her accommodations when Karen leaves. She says that Dickie will be sending her money.

Karen convinces Beryl to stay for the night. Clara and the kids sleep in their bedrooms and Beryl sleeps on the couch. Heavy rains arrive during the night and it starts to rain in the house. Try as she might, Beryl can't keep the bedrooms dry and Clara suggests that she and the boys take Beryl's sleeping area as it is the driest place in the house. Beryl takes one of the wet beds. The next day, Karen moves the family to the main house, but Clara annoys Beryl so much that she leaves, promising to return on the weekend.

Beryl returns to Karen's farm in Chapter 27, but Clara has left with the children after only three days. She doesn't pay Karen anything. Beryl plans to leave again, but the heavy rains return. She decides to stay when she finds out that Denys is in on his way back to Karen's. That night they have dinner, Denys reads a poem to Beryl that reminds him of her and Beryl discovers that Karen and Denys are lovers.

In Chapter 28, Beryl has success with another horse. She meets Berkeley at the racetracks for a drink and he tries to warn her once again to not fall for Denys. She says she can take care of herself, but that night reads the poem Denys had recited to her.

Analysis

Readers finally get to know Beryl's mother in this section, not through the eyes of others, but through her own actions. As so much gossip takes place in town, it is important readers learn about her first hand to understand both her's and Beryl's characters. Clara is a selfish woman who thinks of nothing about her own self-preservation and comfort. Instead of being grateful to have a place to live, and to Beryl for finding it for her, she complains about its size as soon as she sees it. The spot in the house where Beryl sleeps is not good enough for her until the rains begin to fall. Then she expects Beryl to give the spot to her and for Beryl to face discomfort. This is the same way she has always treated Beryl. Clara had the comfort of living in England, financed by a new husband, while Beryl had had to fend for herself. She is so selfish that she can't even wait for Beryl's return to say goodbye to her before leaving. Her



actions foreshadow Beryl's leaving of her own son. She, like Clara, has her own reasons for doing so. Maybe Clara thought it was best for Beryl to stay with her father because her temperament was more like Charlie's, not ever thinking how Beryl would feel. That could be why she never mentions leaving and not contacting Beryl for years.

If children inherit their parent's traits either through genes or by observation, Clara's actions in a way mirror Beryl's. Beryl becomes friends with Karen, but still desires the man Karen loves. She wants to live by her own rules, but when she finds the right man (Denys) she wants him just like any woman wants a man. She's willing to throw out those that don't suit her, as she previously told Boy that she only wanted a casual relationship with him and she's ready to throw Jock away. Finally, neither woman has a head for finance. Clara depends on Dickie for money and thinks nothing of leaving without at least offering money to Karen. Beryl, at least, is willing to work for her living quarters, but she tires of hearing people talk about the financial aspects of the business.

This section also shows the love triangle that forms between Karen and Denys and Denys and Beryl. Denys sleeps with Karen while Beryl is there, but still leads Beryl on by reciting poetry to her that he knows appeals to her romantic side. Beryl might be strong when it comes to breaking barriers, but she still has a romantic side that is hard for her to keep at bay. This difference between what is acceptable for men and women when it comes to romance is a commentary on the role of women in society. Beryl has broken barriers and shown her competence in a man's world. Yet, society still looks down on her for following her romantic urges. Denys, however, is almost revered for his ability to lure women and this doesn't influence people's view of him on the business side.

Discussion Question 1

Why do you think Clara is able to act as if she and Beryl have a normal relationship?

Discussion Question 2

Would you have wanted to see the relationship between Denys and Karen first hand? Why or why not?

Discussion Question 3

Why do you think Berkeley continues to try to warn Beryl about Denys? Why doesn't she listen to him?



Vocabulary

tiered, squatters, enlisted, locomotive, hide, flustered, confine, bewildering, bout, lurching, harvest, constitution, amnesia, fetch, imminent, swivelled, buccaneer, dung, gambol, domesticate



Chapters 29 -- 32

Summary

Karen has a shooting party in Chapter 29 and invites Beryl. Beryl attends and sees Cockie there. This fact surprises her and Cockie says that she and Karen have a truce now that Karen has what she wants. She and Denys are a couple. Karen decided to have the party because she's so happy. Beryl notices how well Denys and Karen fit together, but she doesn't feel as if she fits in with the women. She feels more comfortable when she goes hunting with the men and she outshoots everyone with the exception of Denys.

In Chapter 30, Beryl and D go to a party at Berkeley's brother's estate. When it's time to leave, Beryl invents reasons to stay. That night, she sleeps with Denys, even though he questions whether it's a good idea as she's Karen's friend.

Beryl sneaks out in Chapter 31 and sees Karen and Denys again at a New Year's party that D throws. Throughout the evening, she's worried that Karen knows about her one night stand with Denys, but realizes that she doesn't know anything about it.

As Beryl leaves the party with D and Boy, Jock appears. He's drunk. He attacks D, beating him badly because he blames him for not looking out for Beryl and making sure she stayed faithful to him.

In Chapter 32 people start to gossip about the attack. Boy decides to go to Docking and marry his longtime girlfriend. He tells Beryl that she's welcome to contact him if she should ever need anything. When D gets out of the hospital, he fires Beryl because people blame her for Jock's attack on him. Beryl tries to figure out where to go with only a little bit of money.

Analysis

This section gives readers a deeper view into the Beryl's mind and highlights her contradictory character. On the one hand, she's friends with Karen who takes her in, inviting her to parties and to her house as a guest. All the while, Beryl behaves like a hunter, studying the lay of the land (observing the interaction between Denys and Karen), sizing up her competition (Karen) and her prey (Denys) and then striking at an opportune moment -- when Denys might feel confined because he's in a relationship with Karen. In these actions readers see a Beryl who continues to enjoy the thrill of the hunt, as she did when she trained with Kibii.

Beryl's insecurities also appear. She admits several times that she doesn't feel as if she fits in. Also, she been abandoned by both parents now, and even her mother twice. By scoring with Denys she might have filled a need to prove that she was worthy as a



woman, a person, not just a horse trainer. Also there's the selfish streak that she has. Karen had Denys and Beryl had to have him, too.

Then there's the guilt which makes Beryl's character tolerable and the fact that she keeps her action a secret. This truth goes back to what she told Kibii early in the novel. She could train to be a warrior in secret and it would be okay if nobody knew about her deeds because she would know.

Finally, Beryl's "betrayal" of Karen shows her inability to truly be close to women.

The role of women and the discrimination they face comes into play when Lord D fires Beryl after Jock's attack. Jock is the one who beats up D, but the community wants Beryl's head because they see her as being in the wrong for provoking Jock by having an affair. Even D, who treats her like a goddaughter sends her out on the street knowing that she doesn't have a job, doesn't have much money and, in essence, really has nowhere to go. Jock, however, continues to live his life unblemished. As a man, he had a right to fight for what was his, his wife -- his possession.

Discussion Question 1

Do you think Beryl is Karen's true friend? Why or why not?

Discussion Question 2

Why do you think Beryl has a one night stand with Denys even though she knows he's with Karen?

Discussion Question 3

Was it right for D to fire Beryl? Support your opinion.

Vocabulary

croquet, shirtwaists, fine, provincial, scrutiny, demure, incredulously, dimple, lorry, game, rash, mesmerizing, machete, quivering, shareholders, melodrama, wallop, bellowing, staggered, plasters



Chapters 33 -- 36

Summary

Chapter 33 finds Beryl in England. She first goes to Dorking and stays with Boy, who's called Casmere there, and his new wife. Then she finds Cockie. While with her, Beryl discovers that she's pregnant. She believes that the father is Denys, but knows that she must get an abortion. Cockie helps her secretly obtain one.

Beryl recovers at Boy's house, telling them that she had come down with a fever. Cockie comes to visit and Beryl discovers that an old friend of her father's, Frank Greswolde, had provided the needed funds. Cockie suggests that Frank could serve as Beryl's sponsor and Beryl agrees.

Beryl becomes Frank's "girl" and 6 months later the two of them return to Africa in Chapter 35. They go to the Muthaiga Club in Nairobi. Frank looks for his friends, members of the Happy Valley set -- a group of swingers who get high on opium. Beryl runs into Karen and finds out that Jock is in trouble for instigating another violent incident, though he never faced charges for assaulting Lord D.

Even though Frank had never forced any of the practices of the Happy Valley set on Beryl, he does so in Chapter 36. They go to the house of one of his friends and by the end of the night, everyone has switched partners. The group expects Beryl to sleep with the hostess's husband. She refuses.

Analysis

The chapters in this section demonstrate the contrast between England and Africa and continues to highlight the issues women faced during the period. They also show another side of Beryl's character.

When Beryl arrives in England she finds that things are indeed different than they are in Africa. Boy has a different name there, representing something different from what he was in Africa. It could be a side of him that his girlfriend does not even know, as she calls him by his other name. Even though she left England at an early age, Beryl is wise enough to understand the significance and calls him by the name that he uses there. As his wife only lives in the world of England, Beryl can't confide in them. Cockie knows both worlds, and, luckily for Beryl, knows how to get things done quietly in England.

The fact that Beryl is able to rely on Boy and Cockie says something about her character. She gets herself into trouble due to her headstrong ways, but someone is always there to save her. Her father's groom saves her from Paddy. Denys saves her from the cobra. Now Boy, Cockie and Frank save her. Part of her appeal could be that people still view her as a child. Cockie even says that she's only a child when Beryl says that she had brought her situation on herself.



Child or not, through Beryl readers see what women of the time had to endure and realize that while the racehorse crowd may respect her capabilities, she has the reputation of being easy. The Happy Valley group think that she might resist their ways at first, but will soon give in. She tries her best to show that she's not one of them by not wearing their uniform -- pajamas. Still she doesn't really have her own feminine identity because she wears a dress that Karen complements her on. This is similar to when she let Emma choose her coming-out dress and her wedding dress. Still, her experience with the Happy Valley group shows her strength to stand on her own two feet, no matter what the consequences might be.

Discussion Question 1

Why do you think Boy changed his name when he went to Africa?

Discussion Question 2

Why do you think Cockie is so willing to help Beryl?

Discussion Question 3

What do you think of Beryl's decision to have an abortion? Support your opinion.

Vocabulary

cobbles, houndstooth, oxford, balustrades, sordid, savvy, lean, balked, influenza, habitis, constricting, badgering, sentiments, daft, benefactor, stevedores, delirious, prospector, irascible, indolent



Chapters 37 -- 40

Summary

Beryl leaves Frank in Chapter 37. She goes to see Jock who finally acknowledges the fact that she's never coming back to him. He agrees to give her a divorce. Afterwards she goes to see Ruta, but he's out hunting. From there she goes to see Cockie's cousin looking for work. She gets several horses to train.

In Chapter 38, she loses the horses she worked hard to train because one gets out due to a rusty hinge and hurts itself. Before she leaves, Ruta finds her. He's looking for work and hopes she can give him some. She explains her situation. He's willing to be patient because he believes in her.

Beryl, Ruta, and his wife go to Nakuru in Chapter 39. She gets several horses to train including two she had had before but were sold. One afternoon, she goes to D's hotel looking for him, but runs into Denys instead. He tells her that Berkeley's health is failing and she goes to see him before he dies.

Beryl attends Berkeley's funeral in Chapter 40, There she finally makes peace with D who attributes her "mistakes" to her age. Denys is also there and asks her to come home with him after the funeral, but they go to the property near Karen's house, not her house. Beryl finds out that Berkeley had been involved with an African woman. She and Denys talk about their own relationship and they make love.

Analysis

Readers get a view into the minds of several characters and what draws them together in this section. The theme of racism also arises.

Beryl's determination to stand on her own two feet becomes apparent when she leaves Frank. Her training talents come through because she's able to get work. Ruta knows that she has the ability to succeed and is therefore willing to be patient until she finds her footing again. The fact that she goes to him when she leaves Frank and finally gets Jock to agree to a divorce shows that she honors their ties and views him as part of her family. The fact that he comes to her in a time of need shows that he feels the same. Their bond supports how much more comfortable Beryl is among men than women.

Readers finally know what has been driving Jock's actions. As he said when Beryl first left, he is not used to failing. He really thought that she would come back and blames himself for not trying harder. In fact there was nothing that he could have done as he never could compare to Beryl's father.



D explains why many people may forgive Beryl's actions. As Cockie said, Beryl is young and people attribute her headstrong ways to her age. It's an easy way to explain why she doesn't follow society's norms.

In this section, readers find out that Berkeley didn't follow society's norms either. He was in a relationship with an African woman. The attempt to keep Africans in their place, however, made it impossible to make their relationship public. Likewise, Ruta can only work for Beryl even though he is much wiser than she is. He can never hope to be her equal and it would be dangerous for him to even try to. This would create conflict as his identity would not match the identity society has placed on him.

Discussion Question 1

Was Jock justified in hoping that Beryl would return? Why or why not? Was there anything he could have done to win her back? If so, what?

Discussion Question 2

What was the real reason Beryl was fired for a second time?

Discussion Question 3

Is Beryl's age an excuse for her actions? Why or why not?

Vocabulary

mammoth, contrition, unfurled, irrevocably, hearth, coarsen, maligned, scabbard, moccasins, filaments, feigned, amber, humiliation, gramophone, terrain, cairn, thatched, nimble, filly, saddle



Chapters 41 -- 44

Summary

In Chapter 41, Beryl is so successful as a trainer that the race horse community starts to respect her. Even her mother roots for her at a race and praises her afterwards. Money starts coming in and she can pay Kibii. During the same period, Karen is away and Beryl continues to meet Denys with the understanding that their romantic relationship will end when Karen returns. They plan to meet right before Karen returns, but the weather is very bad on the specified day. Beryl risks her life and that of Pegasus as well to reach the meeting point. She arrives, but Denys doesn't come.

Karen returns in Chapter 42. She has a lot of problems. Denys has gone to England due to his father's health, she has agreed to divorce Blix, and the farm is having financial problems. Beryl finds out that Blix now plans to marry Cookie.

Chapter 43 returns to Beryl's horse training activities. She loses one horse, however, because the owner loses faith in her because she's a woman and another because the owner's wife is jealous of her. The race comes and she has no horse, but the racing community knows why.

In Chapter 44, the horse she trained wins in record-breaking time.

Analysis

This sections shows Denys's extreme influence on women. Beryl risks death to see him. Even Ruta thinks that she's crazy to go. Karen is distraught because he leaves for England soon after she returns and after she feels safe enough to give Blix a divorce (thus giving up the title of Baroness). Yet he does not show the same dedication to either woman. He's a no show for his last meeting with Beryl. She's not worth risking his life for. When it comes to Karen, he stays at her place, but he doesn't help her financially. Nor does he support her emotionally as he gives signs that they are together and then when she makes decisions based on that, he backs away.

Readers also realize that Beryl still faces discrimination because she is a woman trainer. Either owners continue to doubt her abilities because she's a woman, or wives are jealous of her. Her history could feed their jealousy, but it also could be fed by women not realizing that a woman can work with a man without being romantically involved with him.

Still, Beryl's horse training abilities prove to be superior because of the results and that is something no one can take from her.



Discussion Question 1

Why does Beryl's mother root for her? Should Beryl have used this as an opportunity to reach out to her? Why or why not?

Discussion Question 2

What message does Denys send by not meeting Beryl one last time before Karen returns?

Discussion Question 3

Do you think the racing community treats Beryl fairly? Why or why not?

Vocabulary

unfettered, relinquished, gelding, stoic, flush, spared, scouting, skittish, slats, gouged, callus, tentatively, fading, endurable, labours, thrum, concussing, preposterously, painstaking, ultimatum



Chapters 45 -- 48

Summary

Beryl experiences more wins after Wise Child's victory. She now trains a horse for Cockie ex-husband, Ben. She goes to meet him one day and discovers that he is now married to a woman named Ginger, whom Beryl had met previously in the novel. Ginger realizes that Beryl isn't feeling well and insists that she go to the doctor. She goes and has surgery almost immediately as she has a bad case of tonsillitis. Denys is by her side when she comes to after surgery. He's come to say goodbye as Karen shouldn't be left alone now and to tell Beryl that they must make sure that she doesn't find out about their involvement with each other.

In Chapter 46, Beryl attends one of Ginger's dinner parties and meets Mansfield Markham. Beryl attracts him immediately, so much so that he returns from a scheduled safari to ask her out. They spend time together and he proposes that he buy a farm for her. She rejects that idea and then he suggests that they be partners. Beryl realizes that he reminds her of Berkeley and kisses him.

The two get married in Chapter 47 and go to London for their honeymoon. There, Beryl watches as Mansfield reverts back to being under the control of his mother. She keeps a flame of hope that things will be different when they return to Africa when he buys a horse, as promised.

Beryl and Mansfield go to visit Karen and Denys when they return to Kenya in Chapter 48. Denys treats everyone on a cold and indifferent manner and Karen's words imply that she wonders whether Beryl had really married Mansfield out of love.

Analysis

Beryl's victory continues to highlight the part of her character that is hard working and shows how much horse training is part of her identity. The fact that she continues as an independent trainer instead of working for only one person also supports this character trait.

Still, Beryl has the contradictory need to be desired by a man as a female. In spite of her success, independence, and relationship issues, she agrees to marry Mansfield. This could be because Denys has made it clear to her that he's not available so she settles for someone who flatters her. As she's honest with him about her past, she may really think that he is like Berkley and will accept her for who she is, not who he wants her to be as Jock had done. Marrying a "Berkley" gives additional insight as to why she becomes a wife again. Berkeley was Denys's best friend and even though she was sexually attracted to Denys, she saw both Denys and Berkeley as princes. In a way by being with a "Berkeley" she's settling for second best.



Mansfield's transformation to a mamma's boy in England makes a comment about identity. Just as society tries to turn people into what it thinks people should be, people themselves often try to make themselves act in a way that's contrary to their true identity for various reasons. Yet, at some point, a trigger will release their true selves. Identity can't be caged. The trip to England foreshadows the end of another marriage for Beryl.

Discussion Question 1

Now that Beryl has proven her talents as a trainer, do you think that the race horse community is ready to see her as a trainer and not a woman trainer? Support your answer.

Discussion Question 2

Why do you think Beryl agrees to marry Mansfield?

Discussion Question 3

Why does the evening with Karen and Denys go so badly?

Vocabulary

validating, gymkhanas, malaria, ailments, plagued, flush, presumptuous, solicitousness, spoils, plaintive, cabled, kohl, gauntlet, sentries, transfixing, imperious, spine, roan, glinted, sham



Chapters 49 -- 52

Summary

Beryl hires her father to train horses in Chapter 49. Ruta is still with her as well. Charles comes with Emma who gets on well with Mansfield. The horse Mansfield bought, Messenger Boy, presents training challenges, yet Beryl continues to train him even though Mansfield worries about her safety. She tries to get him to understand that it is her job and tries to keep the peace by giving Mansfield a kiss after they argue.

The issue of her looking after herself not only for her sake, but for the sake of others comes up again when the couple goes to the club in Nairobi and discover that someone Beryl knows through Karen, Maria Carberry, has died in a crash while giving flying lessons. While there, they also find out Edward, Prince of Wales, and his brother Henry, Duke of Gloucester, are coming to Nairobi and that Denys is preparing a safari for the royal brothers. The thought of leading a royal safari does not thrill Denys. Karen is upset with the whole situation. She is no longer a baroness and won't be welcomed to the part at the Government House as a divorced woman. What makes matters worse is that Denys won't marry her even though he sees how important being included in the festivities is to her. She realizes that if he won't marry her now, he never will.

In Chapter 50 Beryl discovers that she's pregnant and is worried about how things will change. Mansfield tells her that they will change, but tries to soothe her.

Beryl tries to hide her pregnancy in Chapter 51 while Mansfield wants to announce it. Mansfield is excited about the royal dinner party while Beryl wants to get out of going. Finally she agrees to attend to keep the peace. At the party she flirts with Harry (Henry's nickname) and invites the royal brothers to the farm. When they come, she flirts with both of them and rides Messenger Boy. When they leave, an infuriated Mansfield confronts her about her actions and says that she should go to England until the baby is born to avoid a scandal that his mother may hear about. Beryl reluctantly agrees.

Karen holds a party for the royals before they leave on the safari in Chapter 52. A few days later, Beryl goes to say goodbye to Ruta and tell him she's pregnant. Ruta has already figured it out, but her father doesn't yet know.

Analysis

This section draws comparisons between Beryl and Paddy. When Mansfield had first met Beryl she was docile, much as Paddy had been when he was first taken in by Lord D. Mansfield and Beryl played together, as Lord D had played with Paddy. The couple went out on dates, he admired her as she changed a tire. Beryl was something that would make Mansfield identity in Africa complete, much as Paddy enhanced Lord D's African identity.



As Lord D was twisting Paddy's nature by feeding him meat and an enclosed area to roam in, Mansfield was twisting Beryl's by giving her a farm, letting her hire her father and Ruta and buying Messenger Boy. A twisted nature is dangerous, as Beryl's father had said about Paddy and Beryl strikes back by riding Messenger Boy while pregnant and flirting with the royal brothers. In the end, Mansfield tries to lock her up by sending her to England as Paddy had been locked up after attacking Beryl.

This section also foreshadows an abnormal relationship with her child. Beryl had wanted to hide her pregnancy and rode even though she knew her actions could cause a miscarriage.

Once again, Beryl finds herself standing up for her own identity which doesn't fit what society thinks it should be for a woman. Mansfield doesn't realize how important her job is to her. He thinks that having the fittings around her job would be enough -- a farm, good trainers, and good horses. She could supervise. However, it is the thrill of the hunt that excites Beryl, not just watching others bring in the prizes.

Indeed, her rebellion is in sharp contrast to Karen's behavior. She's also a strong woman but is now suffering because she desires inclusion in a world that Beryl could care less about and society is snubbing her. She would love still having the title of Baroness or simply to be a married woman in order to attend the party that's being given for the royals. Even though she's able to give a party herself, it's not the same. She wants to fit in.

Both women suffer from discrimination because they don't fit the expected identity of women. Beryl won't slow down as Mansfield wants her to do and Karen is divorced and as such, society can't present her to the royals. Society punishes both of them simply because they are women.

Discussion Question 1

Why might Beryl have continued to train Messenger Boy when she knew that Mansfield worried about her safety and later the safety of the baby?

Discussion Question 2

It's sometimes said that the traits couples love about each other when they first meet are the things that they grow to hate the most. How does this apply to Beryl's and Mansfield's relationship?

Discussion Question 3

What kind of mother might Beryl be?



Vocabulary

schemed, progeny, weathered, hobbled, coerced, obstinate, conventional, fiasco, spurned, direct, forbearance, swaddle, strode, astride, transfixed, notoriety, irrevocably, furlongs, mollify, speculation



Chapters 53 -- 57

Summary

In Chapter 53, Beryl travels to England alone. Mansfield joins her later. The baby, Gervase, is born with a missing anus and rectum. The baby survives the days before surgery and in Chapter 54, the day before his surgery Mansfield visits Beryl to tell her that he thinks it's best for the baby to recover in Swiftsden, near his mother. He says that he's not sure whether he's going back to Africa and expresses doubt about his decision to marry Beryl. After he leaves, Prince Harry comes by to see how she is. His visit sets off a new round of gossip.

Gervase's surgery takes place in Chapter 55 and he survives. Rumors swirl about Beryl's relationship with Prince Henry. Beryl won't refute them and her lack of action infuriates Mansfield. His family comes to an agreement with her in which they pay her enough for her to live on for the rest of her life if she leaves and only occasionally visits her son in England.

Beryl finds peace in watching the planes at the Aero Club in Piccadilly. She runs into Denys there in Chapter 56. He is there to get his flying hours in and he's bought a plane, the Gypsy Moth. He encourages her to take flying lessons and the two continue to meet for lunch over the next few weeks.

In Chapter 57, when she returns home, she tells Ruta that she's tired of racing and wants to learn how to fly. He says he's going with her. They move to the Muthaiga Club and one day she runs into Karen. They catch up. Karen is not happy about Denys's plane.

Denys returns to Kenya a few months later and Beryl hears that he and Karen have broken up and that Karen may have to sell the farm. Denys comes to see her a few nights later. She asks him to teach her how to fly and says she's going to learn how to do it anyway when he returns. They agree to get back together when he returns in three months.

Analysis

It's ironic that Beryl now leaves her own child, as her mother had left her. In this case though there's a reversal of countries. This section makes one wonder if Beryl is still rebelling against the idea of motherhood and only now playing a role because she thinks that this is what she should be doing and she is sad to see that the baby has health issues. She says that she only cares about what is important for him, but she did not exhibit such emotions when she was pregnant. Also, her treatment of Prince Harry, knowing that gossip about her and the princes was the reason she was in England, seems to suggest that she was looking for a way out.



Another ironic point is that Beryl's baby is born damaged, in much the same way as Coquette's first foal had been. In that instance, the natural environment was fighting against man. In this case, Beryl's own nature is fighting against society.

She instigates war against society's norms when she refuses to deny the rumors. Her point is that it shouldn't matter, but the point is that it does. Once again, she's left in the cold, although with more money this time and a home to go to, while the rest of society moves on unscathed.

Mansfield has been fighting his nature, but now he's tired. He has no more energy to try to tame Beryl and after this last issue, is ready to set her free, unlike Lord D did with Paddy.

Beryl has always wanted to set her own path and now she's looking to the sky to do that. Now that she's free, she runs into another free spirit at the perfect place for the two of them, an airport.

Beryl's attempt to be free often hurts others, like Mansfield and her son. The same is true of Denys. Even though Karen's farm needs funds, he continues to refuse to help her. Instead he takes his money and buys a plane, symbolizing the need to get away and be free.

Like Mansfield, Karen is tired of trying to tame the wild. She lets Denys go and looks at letting her farm go as well.

Discussion Question 1

Does The conversation Mansfield has with Beryl the day before their son's surgery surprise you? Do you think he would have behaved the same way if they had been in Africa instead of England? Support your answer.

Discussion Question 2

Does Beryl really think that the baby comes first? Support your answer.

Discussion Question 3

Why is Beryl so keen on flying now?

Vocabulary

confinement, lavish, befitting, quivered, sedated, recuperated, fretting, wily, midst, crimson, ludicrous, implored, propriety, solicitors, hangars, clambering, courtesan, wager, grovelling, jacaranda



Chapters 58 -- 62, Epilogue

Summary

In Chapter 58, Karen finds Tom Campbell Black, a part owner of one of the horses she had once trained and asks him to teach her how to fly. The challenges of flight makes it seem as if this is what she should be doing, and when Denys returns she tells him that she wants to get her B-class license. Having it would make her the only professional woman pilot in Africa.

Now that Denys is no longer with Karen, Beryl and Denys rekindle their romance and in Chapter 59 they go on a small safari together. Beryl sees Karen again in Chapter 60. She is selling the farm and going back to Denmark. She warns Beryl that she will never truly have Denys as she never had.

In Chapter 61, Denys crashes his plane and dies on a flight that he had invited Karen and then Beryl on. Both women had declined his offer, Beryl due to a feeling Tom had had.

Karen honors Denys's wish in Chapter 62 and buries him on her farm. After the funeral, Beryl talks to her father about flying and decides that it's what she needs to do now.

In the Epilogue, readers return to her attempt to cross the Atlantic. The engines kick in and she succeeds in making the crossing, even though she doesn't land in New York as planned.

Analysis

In this section, readers understand that Beryl needs challenges and then once she decides she's going to do something, she goes all the way to break barriers. Now she's taking on flying and wants to get her B-license. It's interesting that her father influenced her to become a trainer and Denys and Tom influence her decision to fly. She breaks barriers following paths that men set her for her. Each time she finds something new, she feels as if this is what she was meant to do. This fact raises the question of whether she was ever truly happy even though she was accomplished. Did she ever find what she was meant to do?

Readers also realize how Beryl fought with her feelings for Denys. She knows his character, yet she keeps on asking him whether he could imagine a life with her. He always brings it back to the present. Her wish to cage him is ironic as she, herself, so strongly resisted the cages other try to put her in.

In a way, Denys's death is a blessing, as it allows both women to move on. Karen finally has him in death as she never had him in life and Beryl flies, partly in his honor and to bring his dream to life.



Discussion Question 1

Do you think that Beryl thought that she could have had Denys? Support your answer.

Discussion Question 2

What significance does the name of Deny's plane, Gypsy Moth, carry?

Discussion Question 3

Do you think Beryl ever truly found where she was meant to be? Support your answer.

Vocabulary

ramshackle, compass, downdraughts, alkali, jangling, ventured, singe, translucent, granite, premonition, altitude, unflinchingly, redemption, clamouring, implacable, jarring, thrashing, canvas, peacock, bog



Characters

Beryl Markham (maiden name Clutterbuck)

Beryl is the story's main character. She's a strong woman who becomes the first female racehorse trainer in Kenya and the first woman to make a solo flight across the Atlantic from east to west. At the age of 4 her mother abandons her and this action serves to shape her life in many ways.

When she realizes that her mother has gone for good her father consoles her as best as he can and then sets her on her own two feet. That, in addition to the fact that she spent her early years learning how to hunt with African boys training to be warriors, sets her on a path of practicing the art of survival. She marries her first husband, Jock, not out of love, but because she saw him as her best option when her father announces that he is leaving and she knows that Emma is going with him. She later accepts Frank as a sponsor. She goes to England with Mansfield because the alternative meant possibly losing the farm and having to raise a child alone. Finally, after her actions have disastrous results, she shows up on the doorsteps of friends whom she has a pretty good idea will take her in. This could have been a trait she inherited from her mother, who had no problem asking Beryl to find a place for her and her half brothers to live when she returns after years of not contacting her at all.

Fighting for survival can make one selfish and fiercely independent because this is the only way one can survive in a harsh world. Still, while Beryl used people when she needed them, she strives to stand on her own two feet and works hard to be the best at whatever she attempts to do. She gains respect in the world of racehorse training and later in the aviation world. When she sets out to achieve something like win a race or get a license, she works hard and succeeds.

Beryl's early independence has a dark side, however, for while she radiates confidence on the outside, she's also insecure. When she goes to parties, she doesn't feel as if she measures up to the other women in the way they dress and their knowledge. Her insecurity could explain her constant need to sleep with men even when she is married as well as her relationship with Denys who she knows is involved with Karen, a woman who is supposed to be her friend. She also seems to always have to prove herself when she's with men. She desires to work in the world of men and to break barriers that women have never broken before. In addition, she leans on people for strength such as Kibii and Cockie.

Her lack of an example of a happy marital relationship is also partly to blame on her inability to have a happy marriage. Both her mother and her father are selfish. Her mother is not happy and leaves with another man. Her father cares more about the farm than keeping the family together. All around her she sees married couples waiting for divorces so that they can marry someone else. She grows up thinking that people follow their animal desires. Add that to her need to be independent (a form of self protection)



and it's no wonder that she has unsuccessful marriages. In addition, she has no idea of how to be a mother because she has never seen a good mother in action.

That's not to say that she doesn't look for one, for herself. The women who are Beryl's friends are more like mother-figures. Lady D, Karen, and Cockie treat her more like a child who needs direction than an equal. Her own mother, though, is lost to Beryl as she never forgives her for abandoning her.

One person she truly loves is her father and she compares the men she meets to him. Unfortunately, none of her husbands can compare. However, Denys Finch Hatton inspires her in much the same way that her father does. As a result she does feel real love for him, telling him that he had made her who she was.

Beryl's upbringing gives her a true love for the land, animals and Africa, but it also ensures that she will never be a proper English woman, making Africa the only place she can ever live.

Denys Finch Hatton

Denys is one of the men, other than her father, that Beryl truly loves. He is also someone who no woman can tie down although they try to. Karen is one of those women and in the novel it seems as if he comes as close as he can to committing to her. However he's simply incapable of giving his all to her, as many such as his friend Berkeley think, or maybe Beryl's presence keeps him from doing so.

With Beryl, Denys finds another person who is not accustomed to a conventional lifestyle and does not want to get married. On their first meeting, he introduces her to poetry and continues to do so throughout their relationship. This is one of the things that attracts her to him. He also introduces Beryl to the idea of flight. He's attracted to Beryl's wild spirit, noticing how she rides horses and her shooting abilities.

Even though his romantic relationship with Beryl starts while he's with Karen, he does care enough for Karen to keep his and Beryl's relationship quiet, focus on Karen as much as he's emotionally able to when the two of them are together, and to give her a ring. Yet, when Karen really needs him to show his love, he doesn't. He lives on Karen's farm and loves it enough to want to be buried there, but does nothing financially to help save it. He knows how important it is for her to fit into society, but won't marry her when she gives Blix his divorce, thus leaving her an outcast when the royal visit occurs. When Karen finally realizes that he won't give her the commitment she desires, he quickly turns his attention to Beryl while still leading Karen on. He had asked Karen to accompany him on what turned out to be his final flying trip before asking Beryl.

Denys' friendship with Berkeley is strong and he honors ties with his family, going to England when his mother dies and when his father's health fails.



Karen Blixen

Karen is Blix's wife (until she gives him a divorce towards the end of the novel) and Denys' lover. She also becomes Beryl's friend, although their relationship is not one of equals. She often refers to Beryl as a child and is more of a motherly figure than an equal. When Beryl arrives on her farm unannounced, she welcomes her. She agrees to provide lodgings for Beryl's mother. She invites Beryl to parties and to her house to stay on various occasions and she also warns Beryl about Denys after the two separate.

Karen is different than the other characters in that she is Danish, not British, and she is the one who runs the farm. However she still values the same social protocols as the British. She remains married to Blix because he gives her the title of Baroness and there can be only one of those. She does not want to suffer from society's rejection when she is no longer a baroness, but a divorced woman. Her worse fears come true when the royals come to visit and her role is only peripheral.

Even though she is married, the love of her life is Denys. Yet, he refuses to truly commit to her even though he gives her a ring. Berkeley remarks that it can be adjusted to fit the finger of any woman. She finally realizes that he will never commit to her when he refuses to marry her after she grants Blix a divorce. He also doesn't help her with her financial problems even though he lives on the farm and his family has money.

Whether or not she knows that Beryl has slept with Denys or not, she does know that she's attracted to him and in her motherly role, she tries to warn Beryl of what to expect.

The characters in the novel who know her view her as a brave woman.

Kibii (Ruta)

Kibii is a member of a Kipsigis tribe that "adopts" Beryl after her mother abandons her. He becomes her childhood friend. Social norms, however, force them to part ways as they get older. Years later, after he has passed into manhood and has been given the name of Ruta, they reconnect. His presence gives Beryl strength as she overcomes challenging situations such as having no horses to train and wanting to get her flying license. She considers him, his wife, and his son to be part of her family and Kibii (Ruta) stands by her in the later years even though he doesn't always approve of her choices in men.

Lord Delamere (D)

Lord Delamere and his wife (Lady Delamere) are the Clutterbuck's closest white neighbors when they first move to Kenya. He becomes a close family friend and takes on the role of Beryl's godfather. He hires her as a trainer when she leaves Jock to strike out on her own, giving Beryl her first big break. Later, however, he bows to social pressure and fires her after Jock assaults him, accusing him of not keeping an eye on



Beryl and making sure that she remained faithful. Still, D forgives her for her indiscretions and throughout the course of the novel tells her that she can always come to him if she needs help.

Charles Clutterbuck

Charles, or Clutt as he's called by everyone, is Beryl's father. He brings his family to Colonial Kenya and sets up a farm. He trains racehorses by trade. His wife and Beryl's mother, Clara, leaves two years later taking their son, but leaving him with Beryl.

He doesn't send Beryl to school like the other white children. Instead he lets her run free, training with the Kipsigis boys and eating with Kibiis' family. During her adolescent years, however, he begins to think that he has not given her what she needs to navigate adulthood. So he brings in governesses, tutors, and a housekeeper/mistress in an attempt to tame Beryl. Financial troubles cause him to have to sell the farm and he goes to Cape Town to train horses. While he offers Beryl the opportunity to come with him and Emma, he also offers the choice of marrying Jock.

He and Beryl reunite as trainers when she gets her own farm and while he doesn't understand her need to fly, he support her decision.

Lady Delamere (Lady D)

Lady Delamere is D's wife. Beryl goes to her for advice because she is strong and wise. Her physical condition is not as strong, however, and she dies while Beryl is away in boarding school. Mostly due to her insistence, everyone keeps the real reason Clara left Kenya from Beryl.

Clara Clutterbuck (Kirkpatrick)

Clara is Beryl's estranged mother. She leaves 4-year-old Beryl in Africa with Charles to move back to England with another man. Other than sending Beryl a box of sweets months after she leaves, she has no contact with Beryl until she's looking to come back to Africa after the death of her second husband. She follows Beryl's success, but never creates a motherly bond with her.

Emma Orchardson

Emma is a woman Charles brings into the household under the pretense of being a housekeeper, but she is really his mistress. Her husband has left her for a local woman who is pregnant with his child. Her interactions with Beryl center around trying to get Beryl to act like a lady and Beryl resents her. She is behind the string of governesses Beryl has, Beryl's stint at boarding school and perhaps Beryl's decision to stay and



marry Jock instead of going to Cape Town with her father. She also instigates Beryl's coming out party where Beryl first meets Denys and Berkeley.

Boy Long

Boy is D's ranch manager and becomes Beryl's lover when she goes to work for D after leaving Jock. After Jock's attack on D, Boy goes back to England and marries his longtime girlfriend. He remains friends with Beryl, however, and helps her when the scandal caused by her affair forces her to go to England. Boy and his wife also host her as she recovers from her abortion thinking that another illness has caused her state.

Berkeley

Berkeley is Denys' best friend and later becomes one of Beryl's close friends. He tries to warn her about getting involved with Denys. His weak heart kills him at a young age, but Beryl still thinks of him. In fact, one of the things that attracts her to Mansfield is his similarity to Berkeley.

Jock Purves

Jock is a neighboring farmer who's attracted to Beryl. He makes his attraction known during her coming out party and becomes her first husband. When she decides to leave, he refuses to give her a divorce and takes credit for her winnings. He beats up D and later instigates another violent altercation. Finally, he realizes that Beryl is never coming back and gives her a divorce.

Mansfield Markham

Mansfield is Beryl's final husband in the novel and the father of her only child. His desire to live a life that's different from the coddled existence he experienced in England attracts him to Beryl and Africa. Because of him, Beryl is able to reunite with her father. The gulf between his mother's expectations and Beryl's behavior proves to be too much, however, and he and Beryl separate, with him and his mother taking custody of Beryl's son. Mansfield continues to care for Beryl financially and does not rush to push for a divorce.

Cockie Birkbeck

Cockie is a distant relative on Beryl's mother's side and sees Jock's reaction to Beryl's affair with Boy the first time she and her husband, Ben, visit Jock and Beryl at the farm. Cockie, who is having an affair with Karen's husband, Blix, gives Beryl advice. Later Cockie helps Beryl when Beryl escapes to England and helps her get an abortion.



When Karen grants Blix a divorce, she marries him and takes on the role of Baroness that Karen valued.

Bror Blixen (Blix)

Blix is a Baron who is married to Karen, but in love with Cockie. He leads safaris sometimes along with Karen's lover, Denys. He has a reputation of seducing the women who go on safari with him, but he's serious about Cockie. He marries her when he finally gets his divorce.

Frank Greswolde

Frank is an acquaintance of Beryl's father and provides the funds she needs to get an abortion. He becomes her sponsor and she becomes his girl. They stay together until he takes her to a swingers party where she's meant to sleep with the host's husband.

Tom Campbell Black

Tom teaches Beryl how to fly and saves her life by asking her not to fly with Denys on what turned out to be a fatal flight.

Doris Waterman (Dos)

Dos is Beryl's friend from boarding school. Even after Beryl leaves, they remain in contact. Dos informs Beryl about Emma's material situation and Emma's relationship with Beryl's father. She also serves as a sounding board during the first part of Beryl's relationship with Jock and gives her the type of advice any teenage girl following the social norms of the time would give.



Symbols and Symbolism

Flying

Flying represents Freedom to Beryl.

Green Hills

Green Hills is another representation of freedom for Beryl. She has other farms throughout the course of the novel, but this is the only one in which she experiences true freedom with the man she loves, her father.

Africa

Africa represents beauty and freedom to the characters in the novel. While there is a code of conduct, it is less strict than the one found in England.

England

England represents confinement and conformity for the characters in the novel. The characters may roam in the bush for months in Africa, but when they go to England they take on official roles. Boy Long even has a different name in England and Beryl dresses and behaves differently when she is there. When in England, Mansfield reverts to his childhood self even though he longs to be different.

The Ring Denys Gives to Karen

Denys gives Karen a ring, but it is made of soft gold that he can shape to any woman's finger. This fact symbolizes that he cannot commit to one woman. When he has finished with one, he can simply use the same ring on the next one.

Charles Placing Beryl on Her Own Two Feet

When Charles places Beryl on her own two feet, readers realize that she is going to have to be self-sufficient. She must find her own way and survive using her own skills. Her father will not provide much, if any support.

Paddy

Paddy represents the idea that one's nature can't be changed. People try to change Beryl's nature and the results lead to disaster.



Emma

Emma represents the hypocrisy that exists in the colony. The women look down on her because her husband left her for a pregnant African woman, yet many of them are having affairs themselves. For her part, she tries to turn Beryl into a proper woman even though she is living in a questionable relationship with Beryl's father.

Messenger Boy

Messenger Boy represents Beryl in her marriage to Mansfield. He buys her by giving her a farm (even though they are partners) and he tries to tame her, as people try to tame Messenger Boy. Finally, Mansfield's mother convinces him that he will never "break" Beryl.

Denys

Denys is a symbol of the force of nature. He is something that can't be controlled or contained.

The Name of Beryl's plans (The Messenger) and Denys's Plane (Gypsy Moth)

The Messenger represents what Beryl did in succeeding in her flight. She gave the world a message about the ability of women. The Gypsy Moth reflects Deny's nature and what happened to him in the the end. Like a gypsy, he wouldn't settle down and like a moth that gets too close to the light, he crashed and burned.

The Book's Title

Circling the Sun not only brings to mind the image of flying, but it also represents how Beryl lived her life, often flirting with danger (the Sun) a bit too much and coming close to getting burned.



Settings

The Messenger

The Messenger is the plane that helps Beryl send of message of the power of woman and the place in which se feels free as the novel ends.

Green Hills

This is the farm Beryl grew up on. As she grew up, she felt as if this was the place she was meant to be. It is the only farm that readers see her on in the novel in which she is free to be herself and is truly happy.

Nairobi

Nairobi represents the "society" for the colonist. It is where Beryl's boarding school is located and where she has her coming out party. One has to behave when they are in Nairobi.

England

England represents conformity and confinement. Beryl feels uncomfortable every time she goes there and everyone takes on a different persona when they are there. Denys wants to escape it to escape what one should be.

The Various Farms

Beryl goes to various farms throughout the novel and the farmers have a hard time. Karen finally has to sell hers. The farms represents man's attempt to tame the very thing they claim to move about Africa -- its wildness and nature. Nature fights back though, sometimes driving the farmer back to a civilized world that is natural for them.



Themes and Motifs

Freedom

Freedom is a theme that appears throughout the novel. First of all there is Beryl who constantly fights for her own freedom and then there is the theme of Africa's freedom.

When Beryl's father sets her on her own two feet, he sets her up for a life in which she has to learn how to survive on her own. She sputters at first, but then learns how to stand on her own two feet with the help of the local Kip families. They, and her father, allow her to be trained by the side of the boys, not with the women who were basically the property of the male population. She runs free, loves her life and flourishes. Yet, once she becomes an adolescent, everyone expects her to suddenly follow the rules, if not that of a perfect English woman, at least that of the perfect English woman in Kenya.

Emma places the first set of limitations on Beryl by making her wear shoes, a dress along with ribbons in her hair, and not allowing her to eat with her hands, kill snakes or moles, or eat with Kibii and his family. Beryl fights for her freedom by making it difficult for Emma to teach her. She then fights the stream of governesses and tutors who try to limit her. She even goes as far as to place a black mamba in the bed of one of her governesses. She finally thinks she's won her freedom when there are no more governesses and tutors to teach her, only to have to fight again when she's sent to boarding school. There she fights against her limitations by running away and becoming a bad influence, riling up the other students. When her father meets her train when she's sent home, his expression shows that he realizes that formal education is not going to work for her.

Later Beryl suffocates in the role of a wife and the thought of being a mother. Dos and others tell her that she needs to find someone to take care of her. She, however, insists that she can take care of herself and she wants to continue to be free to stand on her own two feet as she had been raised to do. No one listens to her, forcing her to fight against the limitations that inhibit her freedom in married life. She leaves Jock to train horses and when he doesn't fulfill her sexually, she finds someone who does. She defies Mansfield by riding even when she's pregnant.

Freedom for Beryl means living by her own rules and Africa represents freedom for her in the sense that this is the only place she can do that. Still, even in Africa, people limit her. So she feels the most free when she's with animals. Later she's able to find freedom through flying, where the only limits are the air itself.

Beryl longs for freedom in a country where her kind, the British, take away freedom from the country itself. Lord D's activities exemplify this fact. His actions rob both people and animals of their freedom. He owns Paddy, a lion that he and his wife raised as a small cub. Paddy is cute and playful when he is small, but once he becomes an adult, his true



nature emerges and he hunts, as lions do. But instead of letting him go, Lord D keeps him in captivity, even after he attacks Beryl. Being attuned to nature and Africa because of her upbringing with Kibii, Beryl realizes how much Paddy longs to be free. Lady D turns a deaf ear to Paddy's cries for freedom and they don't resonate with D either.

Lord D also works to limit the freedom of the Asians who have started making their way in Africa and Africans as well.

Racism and Discrimination

The theme of racism threads its way throughout the novel. European settlers come to Africa to make their fortunes with inexpensive land and/or to escape the confines of English society. However, their arrival creates issues. There is already an indigenous population and others, such as the Asians, are looking to do the same thing as the English. In an attempt to keep their control over their settlements and power, British inhabitants fight to create a society that keeps Asians out and Africans in their place.

Lord D is one of these people and when readers see how he treats Paddy, it's not surprising that he is. He first takes in Paddy as a cub. Paddy is cute, cuddly, and relatively harmless. Lord D plays with him. All is good and well. Then Paddy grows up and wants to hunt and be the king of his own domain. He is a lion after all and his land is Africa. Lord D wants to keep control, however, and keeps Paddy caged even after Paddy has attacked Beryl and he hears him howl for freedom.

Keeping control is also Lord D's aim in becoming a member of the coalition that wants to fight off Indians and Asians while not minding Africans as long as they acknowledged that they are inferior and don't want too much land.

Everyone knows that Kibii and his family are not inferior to any of the white families as evidenced by the fact that Beryl is allowed to grow up with the Kips as a child when rules are more relaxed (much like Paddy) but had to have a different relationship with Kibii when she was older because the Kips had to remember their place so that the white settlers could keep their control and power. They had to be caged in as Lord D had done with Paddy.

To make sure everyone followed the rules imposed by the English, they look down on known relationships with native Africans. Such relationships could even lead to death. Kibii could be killed for having a romantic relationship with Beryl. Colonists looked down on Emma not because she is living with Charles and not married to him, but because her husband had had a baby with an African woman. Berkley has an African Girlfriend, but keeps the affair secret.

The governor, Sir Robert Coryndon, realizes what is going on and tries to restore a fair balance in the colonies. He is pro-Asian and pro-African. Beryl also sees how unfair the situation is for the Africans. She likes being with the Kips and goes there for comfort, like when Coquette's foal dies. She approaches Kibii sexually thinking that he's like any other but she can satisfy her curiosity with, and she considers him to be family,



something she never considers her own mother to be. Berkley's secret relationship makes her feel sad and she asks Denys, who knew about it, if he thinks such relationships will ever have the ability to be public. Still, she's too young to have an influence and the colonist are too enamored with the idea of control to let the natives be equals.

Identity Crises

Much of the conflict in Beryl's life arises from the issue of her identity - who she is and who she is supposed to be. On the surface, the conflict is between her and society. At times, however, the conflict takes place within herself.

Beryl's mother's abandonment of both her and her father at such an early age leaves her unsteady at first. Her mother left an impression on Beryl and her absence hurt her. She looks for her to return and feels devastated when she doesn't. The only way she can deal with the pain was to push her memory to the recesses of her mind. Beryl's identity might have been different if her mother had stayed, but instead of being shaped by a British mother and father, the Kip families establish her identity when they adopt her. Instead of making her learn the role of the women in the village, they allow her to train with boys destined to be warriors. Her father plays his role by delegating her upbringing to the Kip families.

Perhaps because Beryl realizes that she's going to have to stand on her own two feet to survive, she embraces her identity. She sees herself as part of the bush. The farm and the bush makes her feel alive and there is nowhere else she'd rather be.

Her life is idyllic while she's a child. Once she becomes an adolescent, however, expectations change and conflict enters Beryl's life because who she is is contrary to who she's supposed to be.

She's the daughter of a white landowner which means that she should not be playing with Kibii and eating with his family. Kibii's family raises him in accordance with social norms. As a result, he is comfortable with his and Beryl's changing relationship. He in fact, alerts Beryl to the need to behave within the reigns of society. He willingly walks behind her and tells her that any hint of a romantic relationship between the two of them would get him killed.

Beryl is also a woman which means that she should be wearing dresses and ribbons in her hair and trying to find a man to take care of her instead of galloping and running around barefoot and in pants in the bush. She should also get a proper English education.

None of these social realities coincide exactly with Beryl's sense of self. She rebels by making it hard for Emma to teach her, running governesses and tutors away and causing so many problems at her boarding school that it finally expels her. Her actions exasperate both her father and Emma. When he picks Beryl up from the train station after she's expelled, her father has a look on his face that shows that he's given up



trying to educate her. Emma constantly tells Beryl that she should try to be social and make herself attractive to men. Dressing like an English lady is so foreign to Beryl that she lets Emma choose her coming out dress. Later when she goes to Indina's house with Frank, she wears a dress she feels comfortable in because Karen had complemented her on it.

More conflict arises during Beryl's marriages. Being a passive wife is not part of her identity. Neither is giving herself for the sake of another. Therefore, when she sees that things are not working for her, she leaves Jock and she continues to ride a wild horse even when she knows she's pregnant. Her life becomes so full of conflict that it turns scandalous and she loses her job and has to escape to England until talk settles down.

Still, even though she rejects the typical role of a female and considers herself to be a free spirit, there is a romantic in her and also some femininity. She enjoys it when Lady D brushes her hair and when it comes to Denys, she understands his nature, but deep down fights with the feelings she has to have him as her own -- making her like the other women he encounters.

In the end, it's the natural forces of being who she is and not giving in to society's expectations that makes her character and thanks to her talent in her chosen professions and personality, she's able to avoid the tragic consequences such as suicide or mental illness, that engulf many literary figures who suffer from the same type of identity disconnect.

Man Versus Nature

As she grows up with the Kip families, Beryl says that she feels as if she's part of her natural surroundings. Can a human, however, really ever be one with nature? Kibii realizes that nature has its own reasons for things being the way and are, and he often imparts his wisdom on to Beryl. For example, when the ants devour Coquette's foal, Beryl wonders what the point is of such insects. She thinks they are useless. Kibii, however, says that their use is not for man to know.

The British settlers continuously try to control nature and nature continuously fights back. Beryl notes this when she describes the early days on the farm. Nature later fights back when the ants attack Coquette's foal. Karen has problems on her farm due to natural elements. Ostriches attack her garden and Karen has bad luck with the coffee beans, causing her to have to finally sell the farm. Heavy rains and drought also take their toll on the farmers.

Nature also fights back when the colonist try to confine it's elements. Lord and Lady D can't contain Paddy's true nature. Beryl's father predicts Paddy's attack on Beryl by saying that it's unnatural to try to make an animal behave like a pet cat. On the surface it may seem to work, but in reality all that one has done is twist something natural into something unnatural and one can never trust an unnatural thing. Disaster also befalls Karen's owl which gets tangled in the cords and dies.



Human nature is something else that man can't control judging by the characters in the book. Emma, Beryl's father and Beryl's husbands all try to control her nature, but much like Paddy, she strikes back. She refuses to study, she has affairs while she's married, she continues to train on a wild horse even though her husband expresses his concern, and she rejects motherhood -- allowing her mother-in-law to raise her child.

Denys is another character who refuses to let anyone tame him. He lives with Karen, but goes off on safaris at his will and often crosses her presence towards the end of their relationship. When she returns after a long absence, they only spend a short amount of time together before he leaves.

Mansfield tries to change his nature by marrying Beryl and moving to Africa. Once he is back in England and under the influence of his mother and the rigid norms of English society, he can't shake off his true nature and finally bows to it, allowing his mother to make the decisions that rule his life.

Beryl has better luck with her horses in Africa than farmers have with their farms because the animals are more native to the land than the farms. Still, she has problems with finances throughout her life because talk of finances are not part of her nature. She's bored when her father and Lord D start negotiating a price for Coquette, so she leaves, precipitating Paddy's attack. Mansfield writes the check for the stallion she wants. She simply chooses it. She finally learns that her earnings could dry up at any time and strives to do a better job of preparing for downturns.

All in all, the message readers are left with is that Beryl's father was right. Trying to change something's nature whether it be nature itself, an animal, or a person, only leads to a twisted form of the prior existence and this is something that one can never trust.

The Role of Women in Society

The theme of the role of women in society runs throughout Beryl's story. Beryl is a tomboy. She grows up with her father and trains with the Kip boys. She also grows up with animals and nature. This is the life she learns to love. Her father doesn't see anything wrong with her upbringing until a woman, Lady D, brings up how Beryl looks. Then he suddenly thinks that she should behave like a girl which meant taking on a totally different identity. Girls wore dresses, they didn't run in the bush, and they learned how to attract men. They looked for someone to take care of them instead of taking care of themselves.

This view forces Beryl into an early marriage, one in which she didn't know how to be the little wife who had children and waited for her husband to do everything for her. She only knew how to be Jock's equal as she had always tried to be in her relationship with men. This role, however, did not fit his view of a woman's role. It made him look like less than a man, so their relationship failed.

Her father did have faith in her talents and even though he encouraged her to get married, he also encouraged her to get her training license. In that world, she gained



the respect of men, still she was a woman in her social life and society held her accountable for things, such as Jock's behavior, that they would not have held a man accountable for. Horses were taken from her in some instances because of her sex. She also had to face the jealousy of at least one woman who did not understand her love for her work, not her husband.

Beryl was not the only woman who took on a role that was normally reserved for men. Karen ran her own farm. Yet when the royals come to visit, she's judged as a woman, not a well-respected land owner. She was no longer a baroness as she had to marry into the title and she was divorced.

Society could not present that sort of woman to the royals. Yet the brothers themselves were known as playboys. But for men, it was okay. Society scorned Emma because of her husband's actions. It scorned Beryl because of her husband's actions. Yet playboys, like Denys, were heroes.

The "smart" women knew the rules and the right way to break them. Beryl, however; refused to follow even these rules and that led to scandal and conflict in her life. In the end, she manages to break through the glass ceiling and send the message that women aren't frail creatures that need to follow rules set by them. Women can take care of themselves and be successful following their own rules.



Styles

Point of View

The author uses a first person perspective in the narrative, letting Beryl tell her own story. This voice allows readers to connect to Beryl and support her even when her actions may be controversial. At the same time, when she's defending her own actions, readers have to consider rather or not her renditions are accurate and throughout the entire novel, readers must also remember that this novel is historical fiction, so the author combines real events with her imagination. The voice of Beryl is thus fused with that of the author which may create a connection that isn't totally authentic.

Language and Meaning

As the narrator loves the natural beauty of Africa, is a horse trainer, and later a pilot, the language changes depending on where she is and her phase of life. When talking about Africa, the narrator uses vividly descriptive vocabulary allowing readers to picture the backdrop like something out of the scene of a movie. When in England, the narrator's language changes in accordance with the strict rules of English society. It becomes more formal and darker. During the horse training phase of Beryl's life, there is the presence of language related to that subject. During the aviation phase the language switches to the vocabulary of flight. The vocabulary also mimics the language of the times and British spelling as opposed to American spelling appears as Beryl is British.

Structure

The novel's structure is similar to that of a movie. It starts with Beryl having engine problems during her record-breaking flights and as she thinks of Africa, the narrative transports the reader there, seeing Beryl's life as she might remember it as she faces death. Then, when the narrative reaches what fueled her love for flight, fuel starts feeding her engine and readers finish her record-breaking flight with her.

Her life is divided into three parts. mirroring three phases in her life. The first part covers her life up to the age of 16. The second part covers her first marriage, early race horse training success, and her world collapsing when she has to go to England due to scandal. The third section covers her coming back to England, more race horse success, her life with Frank, her second marriage and her learning to fly. Denys and Karen weave throughout her life during the least two sections.



Quotes

Those things are as real as anything else, though, and I'll have to fly through them. Straight through the sickening dips and air pockets, because you can't chart a course around anything you're afraid of.

-- Beryl (Prologue paragraph 4)

Importance: This quote shows Beryl's attitude when it comes to overcoming challenges. One has to just keep on moving forward, a perspective that she adopted early in her life after her mother abandoned her.

He scooped me under my arms, grazed my drying tears with a quick kiss, and set me on my own two feet.

-- Beryl (chapter 1 paragraph 17)

Importance: Beryl's father's actions set the tone for her life. He did not really know how to comfort her. Instead he set her on her own two feet, meaning that she was going to have to be self-reliant.

But sometimes everything has to end and the bottom drop out and every light fizzle and die before a proper beginning can come along."

-- Beryl (chapter 2 paragraph 1)

Importance: Here Beryl is talking about how the Kip families helped her move on after her mother left. But this process repeats often in her life. Her new beginning as a trainer really takes off after the scandal with Jock attacking D and her being fired. Her new beginning with flying starts after her marriage with Mansfield ends, but really moves forward after Denys' death.

Maybe that's the secret to surviving all sorts of trouble, knowing who you are apart from it, i mean.

-- Beryl (chapter 25 paragraph 9)

Importance: Beryl always has a pretty good idea of who she is and what she wants. For her, this quote turns out to be true because no matter what happens she stays true to herself and manages to come out okay if not on top.

The real question is whether or not you're willing to risk what it takes to be happy.

-- Karen (chapter 25 paragraph 61)

Importance: Both Karen and Beryl do risk what it takes to be happy. Karen does so in her relationship with Denys and admits this after he dies. Beryl does so in rejecting her relationships with her husbands and her relationship with Denys as well. Other characters living in Africa do the same as they risk things to get out of marriages and move into new ones. Mansfield tries, but in the end retreats back to England and his old self.



Maybe our mistakes make us who we are.
-- Denys (chapter 40 paragraph 26)

Importance: Some of Beryl's finest moments come after she has made what society views as mistakes. Without these things happening to her and her realizing that they are mistakes for her, she may never have gone on to break the barriers that she did.

I've sometimes thought that being loved a little less than others can actually make a person, rather than ruin them.
-- Beryl (chapter 46 paragraph 37)

Importance: Beryl is referring to herself and how being abandoned by her mother and ignored at times by her father forced her to stand on her own two feet and created her character.

Softness and helplessness got you nothing in this place. Tears only emptied you out.
-- Beryl (chapter 5 paragraph 18)

Importance: Beryl learns this lesson early in life when she realizes that her mother is not coming back. Even though she says it much later when Coquette's foal is stillborn, it is something that carries her through life. Whenever she's in a situation that makes her unhappy, she doesn't sit around and feel sorry for herself. She packs her bags and looks for what will make her happy.

You can feed it fresh meat so it never learns to hunt and brush its coat so that it carries a human smell wherever it goes -- but know that what you've done is twist something natural into something else. And you can't trust an unnatural thing.
-- Charles (chapter 5 paragraph 32)

Importance: Charles is talking about Paddy, but it relates to how people treated Beryl and Denys. They try to tame them and instead of turning them into what they want them to be, they strike back as they try to reach their natural states.

Sometimes I've thought it's only our challenges that sharpen us, and change us too...
-- Beryl (Prologue paragraph 3)

Importance: Beryl is always looking for challenges and she feels most alive when she's preparing for and in the midst of them.

Do you know any poetry?
-- Beryl (chapter 10 paragraph 87)

Importance: Beryl asks Jock this question after she meets Denys and Berkeley who she considers to be like princes who have opened a new world to her. Her question foreshadows that her relationship with Jock will not be a happy one. There is no way he can compare to these two worldly princes.



He'll be sorry he missed such a friend.
-- Jebbta (chapter 37 paragraph 28)

Importance: Beryl had thought that she and Ruta had drifted away from each other and that they would never again reclaim the closeness they had as children. This relationship did last, however, and turned into one of respect and trust.