

# **Cloudstreet Study Guide**

## **Cloudstreet by Tim Winton**

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## Plot Summary

Tim Winton's *Cloudstreet* is set principally in a large, rundown house at Number One Cloud Street in Perth, Western Australia. In 1944, the Pickles family of Geraldton, on the coast north of Perth, inherit the house and move there. Shortly afterward, the impoverished family subdivides the backyard and rents out half of the house to the Lamb family, who have arrived from the coastal town of Margaret River, south of Perth. Both families are large and poor, but the Lambs are energetic and resourceful, while the Pickles are generally lazy and defeated. The Lambs, led by their strong matriarch, Oriel, open a grocery store in the bottom of the house, which proves to be so popular in the neighborhood that Number One Cloud Street becomes known by one word, *Cloudstreet*. The store also dominates the uneasy relationship between the two families. The Lambs pay their rent from the proceeds, which play a large part in keeping the Pickles financially afloat. The Lambs are raucous, hard-working, and God-fearing, whereas the Pickles are more quiet, dysfunctional, and helpless. Oriel and her husband, Lester, work as a team, even though she considers him to be foolish and eventually moves herself into a tent in the backyard, where she lives throughout much of the story, which spans twenty years. Sam Pickles and his wife Dolly have a strong sexual attraction, but Dolly is unfaithful and an alcoholic, while Sam is an inveterate gambler who cannot be trusted with money.

Among the children of the two families, the most important characters are Rose Pickles and two Lamb brothers, Fish and Quick. Rose, who has two brothers, is the only daughter in her family. She is the sensible child, bright and very aware of her parents' shortcomings. Fish and Quick have a younger brother and three sisters. Fish is the funny, smart one, beloved by all, until he almost drowns in a fishing accident early in the book, and reverts to the mentality of a small boy. Quick blames himself and struggles with depression throughout the book. Fish's accident is a central occurrence in the life of the Lamb family, just as Dolly's drinking and Sam's gambling dominate the Pickles family. As the two families struggle through life over two decades, Tim Winton chronicles the changes of the children and their parents, interweaving their stories around a theme that explores the nature of good and bad luck and self-determination and inserting spiritual or ghost-like elements in the tale that reflect on this theme. Full of sadness and hilarity, despair and acceptance, and rich with Australian jargon, this novel is a memorable portrait of the rough-and-tumble rural life of that nation from the World War II years until the early 1960s.



# Chapter I

## Chapter I Summary

Cloudstreet, by Tim Winton, is the story of two poor families who share a large, decrepit house in Perth, Western Australia, throughout two decades starting in the World War II years. In a ground-floor room of the house, one of the families opens a grocery that becomes a focal point of the neighborhood. The story of the two families' struggles with poverty, gambling, alcoholism, infidelity, and tragedy is sad but also uplifted by humor, moments of hope, loyalty, and love. With the publication in 1991 of this vibrant and big-hearted novel, laced with awe and ghostly mysteries, Australian author Tim Winton solidified his position among that country's leading novelists.

A short section prior to Chapter 1 describes a group of people having a noisy, happy picnic by a river. An unnamed man leaves the group and joyfully runs to the jetty, where he precariously leans over the river, as if he will fall or jump into it. Chapter 1 begins with the awareness of a young girl named Rose Pickles that something very bad is going to happen. She is sitting near a jetty while her two brothers swim, and her intuition of trouble is like a shadow. The family already has lost their house and savings, and is living in her Uncle Joel's pub hotel. Rose thinks of her father, working on "the islands," who often talks about the shifty shadow of bad luck, and she wonders if he is squirming right now.

The scene moves to Sam Pickles, who awakes in a cot in a room with other workers. Sam can smell his dead father, an omen that probably means the shifty shadow of God, or bad luck, is nearby. He shouldn't get out of bed today, but he does. His father, Merv Pickles, was a water diviner and an alcoholic gambler who believed in luck and passed on this belief and a love of gambling to Sam. Father and son used to share a bed while Sam's mother slept in the next room, and one morning, the boy woke to find his father dead. Sam goes out to his job collecting guano from the islands by boat. Daydreaming about how he'll eat crayfish and drink beer that night, his hand gets caught in a winch, which severs four fingers. Back in the town of Geraldton, Rose goes home to the pub and enters the family's room to find a woman with her dress up, astride a man on the bed. Rose leaves. The scene shifts to Dolly Pickles, described as "a damned good-looking woman." She walks to the hospital where she finds Rose and the boys. Sam is asleep. Rose says it was four fingers and the top of his thumb. Dolly sees the wrapped right hand, Sam's working hand, and thinks she would like to buy a ticket right now, but what about the kids, and how would she live? The boys go to school, Dolly leaves, and Rose sits by Sam's bed, hating him for his uselessness but loving him, too. Everything is falling to bits, her parents fight all the time, but at least her father isn't turning mean, like her mother is.

At the pub that night, everyone talks about the bad luck of the Pickles, while Rose and the boys listen from upstairs. In bed that night, Dolly dreams of a man she had seen standing by a fence with prawns. He puts a prawn in her mouth, but it turns out to be a



severed finger. For a week, Sam recuperates in the hospital, and then a package comes from the Abrolhos Islands, where he was working. Inside is a jar of alcohol that holds his fingers, with the note, "Sam's Pickles." He laughs, and the nurse thinks he's stupid. Sam goes home, but no compensation money comes in, and Dolly is restless. At the beach, at the sound of an air raid siren, Rose and the boys jump into latrine trenches beyond the showers. The previous day, they had found the shod foot of a Japanese soldier washed up on the beach. Rose hopes her dad's luck will change but he tells her it doesn't change, it moves. By winter, his hand is healed, and he goes fishing with his cousin Joel, who made enough money betting on racehorses to buy the pub they live in, which he named Eurythmic, after a famous horse. Joel has always been lucky, and he hooks a big fish from the shore, but he suddenly has a heart attack and dies alongside the fish. Sam realizes he is crippled, broke, jobless, and now homeless. He can't decide which he should drag back first, the man or the fish.

## Chapter I Analysis

From the outset of the first chapter, which covers much ground, a powerful theme is established. Rose Pickles senses bad luck coming to her family, which already has lost almost everything in a hardscrabble existence. Her father, Sam, senses it, too, and his premonition is realized when he loses the fingers of his hand in a fishing accident. Luck, known by the family as the shifty shadow of God, is like a deity to them, or a form of fate. It is beyond control. Bad or good, it just happens, and must be accepted. This attitude goes back to Sam's father, Merv, whose job was the symbolism-charged divining, or discovery of water with the use of a wire rod, a faith-based occupation that Merv equated with luck. Sam has become a gambler, like his late father, and has lost much because of it. His wife obviously regards him as a loser and has taken up with other men. Their daughter, Rose, has begun to dislike her mother, and her love for her father is tainted by her extreme exasperation with him. In the estimation of this family, bad luck is turning everything sour, although to any outsider it would be apparent that Sam's gambling and Dolly's infidelity are not luck-related events—they are a matter of choice.

In portraying the family's condition, Tim Winton lets the reader deduce why the Pickles are in such a precarious position. He also shows that Sam's gambling habit was picked up from his father, which indicates the power of family influences on the choices people make. Before Sam suffers the "bad luck" of losing his fingers, which happens because he was daydreaming, he thinks he can smell his father in the cot beside him. Sam's father died beside him in bed, and Merv's smell represents bad luck to Sam. Rose, who also has a premonition of more bad luck coming to the family just before Sam's accident, represents the future, and the hope that the next generation can overcome or escape the bad influences of its parentage. Even so, this first chapter is full of foreboding. Bad luck, the shifty shadow of God, or just the things people do themselves has come down hard on the Pickles family. When Joel, the only lucky relative among them, suffers the ultimate bad luck of a fatal heart attack, the indecision of Sam about whether he should take home the fish or the body is a half-funny, half-sad commentary on how unlikely it is that Sam Pickles will be able to think or work his way out of his



predicament. The reader is left with little hope for Sam or Dolly, unless something good happens to them that doesn't require doing it for themselves, but young Rose is another matter. Perhaps she will find her way. The author foreshadows this possibility by showing the warmth and exasperation Rose feels toward her kindly but hapless father, which makes the reader root for her.



# Chapter II and Chapter III, pages 35-51

## Chapter II and Chapter III, pages 35-51 Summary

Chapter II introduces Lester and Oriel Lamb, described as God-fearing people, and their six children. They're fishing for prawn where the river opens into the sea. Lester has become a policeman because the family farm is on its last legs. He wades into the water with his two oldest boys, Mason and Samson. Mason, age eleven, is nicknamed Quick, because he is slow-witted, like his dad. Samson, age nine, is called Fish, because of his quick wit and alertness. Everyone loves Fish. Oriel watches as Lester and the boys bring the netted catch onto the beach, dump the prawns, and head out again with the net. They're wading, looking to her like they're walking on water, when she suddenly is startled by a terrible feeling. Just then, Fish disappears underwater. Quick staggers and falls over the net, trapping Fish in it. Lester pulls them to shore, where Oriel beats Fish's chest. He looks dead, but suddenly he screams and water shoots out of him. Deliriously happy, the family drives their old truck into town, but Quick, holding Fish's head in his lap, realizes that not all of his brother has come back.

Chapter III begins with the story of a big, empty house owned long ago by a respectable woman who cheated several people to get it. She was lonely, rich, and visited only by an Anglican priest, who convinced her to take in Aboriginal women. She liked the missionary idea of it, and filled the house with native women whom she tried to teach to dress, walk, and go to church in the fashion of white people. The young women were desperately unhappy there, and one of them committed suicide by drinking ant poison. When the old woman found the body, she furiously showed it to the others, and then kicked them all out. A few weeks later, she died playing piano in the library, her nose hitting middle C, which rang out until rigor mortis set in and the priest found her.

In 1923, a publican from Geraldton won a small fortune betting on the horse Eurythmic and bought the big house, sight unseen, as a retirement investment. Twenty years later, his will was being read at the Eurythmic Hotel in Geraldton. Sam Pickles can't believe that Joel has died, or that the house has been left to him, with the proviso that he must not sell it for twenty years. The Pickles family goes to Perth and moves into the house at Number One Cloud Street. It is huge, empty, tattered, and strange. They clean it up and move in furniture from the pub hotel, which has been sold. Sam has received 2,000 pounds as his share from the sale, but he immediately gambles it away, and the family is broke. Dolly is disgusted, but Sam tacks up a row of tin signs in the backyard as a makeshift fence, rigs up a second outdoor privy, and puts an ad in the paper to rent half the house. The Lambs answer the ad, and move in. That night, Rose hears a door open across the hall. She peeps out her bedroom door and sees a beautiful boy in pajamas, looking at the starless sky.



## Chapter II and Chapter III, pages 35-51 Analysis

These pages deftly weave together major strands of the plot by bringing the Lamb and Pickles families to the same house in Perth. Chapter II's introduction of the Lamb family focuses on the parents and the two eldest boys, who will be the main characters in that family throughout the novel. The chapter's other central purpose is to describe the fishing accident in which Fish Lamb almost loses his life. When Quick Lamb stumbles and falls on the net, he becomes an inadvertent accomplice to the accident, because his younger brother then becomes entangled in the net. Their father also must carry some blame for the mishap, because he was in charge of the fishing and the net. These events set the stage for a major theme in the book, which concerns how the family copes with the effects of the accident on the beloved Fish. Those dire effects are foreshadowed in the final line of the chapter, when everyone is delighted that Fish has been returned from the dead except Quick, who is holding his brother's head in his lap and realizes that not all of Fish has come back.

The terrible luck of this accident begs a comparison to the bad luck of the other family, the Pickles, who bring trouble upon themselves rather than having it happen without their cooperation. Through this comparison, Tim Winton is encouraging the reader to consider the difference between what we sometimes call luck, and what luck really is. Fate, circumstance, effort, and self-discipline are all involved in this consideration, and Winton already has set up a major difference between these two poverty-stricken families in the way they think about luck. Chapter III relates the story of the house on Cloud Street almost as if it were the story of a person. Likewise, the grand decrepitude of the place is described in a way that makes it seem like a character itself. The woman who owned it is portrayed as vile, and her treatment of the Aboriginal women, followed by her own death, create an atmosphere of gloom and evil in the house that will persist through most of the novel. No sooner does the Pickles family move in than Sam gambles away all their money, which both revisits the theme of luck and establishes the conditions for renting out half of the house to the Lambs. Now the reader is hooked. What will come of the convergence of these two families? Already, the author has established characters, atmosphere, theme, and the conditions for plot complications.





## Chapter III, pages 51-80

### Chapter III, pages 51-80 Summary

That autumn, the street is full of kids from both families, but they never speak to one another, and the neighbors anticipate fights. In Europe, World War II drags on. The boisterous Lambs plant a garden and raise chickens in their half of the yard, while the Pickles quietly do nothing. The Lambs spin a butter knife to see who will wash dishes after dinner or who will win the war, and everyone laughs. Lester gets an idea to open a small grocery store in an empty room on the ground floor. Oriel is uncertain, but by the time Lester spins the knife to decide, saying "the knife never lies," she has accepted. When Dolly goes downstairs to check out the noise, she laughs at the small goods sign, yet the little store is an immediate success in the neighborhood. Oriel runs the operation as if she were drill sergeant, keeping a close eye on supply and demand. People get in the habit of stopping by for their newspapers, candy, or goods baked by Lester. Everyone begins to call the place Cloud Street, after its street address, but they pronounce it as if it were one word, Cloudstreet. People think the Lambs own the place and the Pickles are renting. Meanwhile, Quick Lamb tries to get on with his life, but the readjustment to the city is hard for him, and he is full of guilt over Fish, whom the accident has left with the mentality of a very little boy. One day, Lester meets a "blackfella" on the steps, who wants to sell him trimmed saplings to use as props. Lester says they should ask Oriel but when the two men go inside the house, the black man suddenly looks startled and races away.

Meanwhile, the Lamb girls, Hat, Elaine, and Red, quickly realize that they love the city, and that life is looking up for them. Lester and Oriel miss the country life and worry about Fish. They take him to a doctor, who says he must be traumatized, because he does not appear to be brain-damaged. He suggests seeing a specialist, but Oriel will have none of it. The war ends in Europe. Fish seems to recognize everyone in his family except his mother. He seems to be stuck somewhere, and entertains himself spinning soup bowls at the kitchen table. One day at the kitchen table, Hat asks Oriel what she did during World War I, and Oriel tells her family that she raised a family before them, when her father remarried a young teacher who left the housekeeping chores to Oriel. She did it for love of her father, who killed his only pig to use its bladder to help heal Oriel's burns after she was caught in a bushfire. She also loved Bluey, her half-brother, but he was killed in Palestine during World War I. When Quick turns twelve, Oriel bakes him a cake, but a customer comes and will pay big money for a cake, so they sell it. Oriel gives Quick money, and everyone laughs. Sam Pickles is amazed at the industry of the Lambs. Dolly kept the rent money, but Sam felt his time was coming. Dolly just yearned for the winter to be over, so she could have a good time. At night, she squats by the railroad tracks, dreaming of escape. One morning, the air is filled with the sounds of bells, instruments, and sirens. Japan has surrendered; the war is over.



## Chapter III, pages 51-80 Analysis

A major difference between the Lamb and Pickles families emerges in these pages as an outgrowth of their different attitudes about luck. The Lamb family sees luck as a game and as a force they can use, symbolized by the knife-spinning they do to make both easy and difficult decisions. To some degree, they make their own luck, by being optimistic and industrious. Bad things still happen to them, such as the accident suffered by Fish, or Oriel's loss of her beloved half-brother in World War I, but the Lambs do not allow themselves to drift along and be totally controlled by fate or circumstance. Instead, they react to whatever hand fate deals them, and try to make the best of it. Oriel is the family leader in this regard. Just as she raised an entire family on behalf of her young stepmother when Oriel herself was still a child, she now shows Lester and her children how to turn their difficult life into a better one. It is significant that she never even told her family about her earlier troubles until a daughter asked what Oriel did during World War I. Oriel is a fighter, not a complainer. Lester actually comes up with the idea to start a shop, but Oriel is the one who makes the reality of it workable. A strange note is cast into the story, however, in the incident involving the black man who turns and runs in fright as soon as he enters the house. This foreshadows troubles that the house itself, with all its sad history, will present to the two families. Contrasted to the diligence and spirit of the Lambs, Winton offers us the lackadaisical Pickles family. They bemoan luck as a determinant that cannot be influenced, and if it is bad, it must simply be endured. Similarly, they think one must wait for good luck to occur. Neither Sam nor Dolly has any hope of changing anything, and their children are naturally taking the lead of their parents. Sam's one idea, to subdivide the house and rent the other half, gives them enough income to scratch by for the time being, and it is as if their work is done. The war's end seems to suggest a new chapter in the nation's life, and perhaps in the lives of these two families.



# Chapter IV

## Chapter IV Summary

Sam takes the end of World War II as a sign that his personal luck has changed for the better, and he becomes desperate to gamble. Playing the Australian coin-flipping game called two-up, he gets so far ahead of a union boss that the man has to give him a job, working at the mint. His new work brings happiness to the family, and when Sam starts gambling on the horses again, he sticks to a horse named Blackbutt, who keeps winning. He buys Rose a wooden desk, which reduces her to tears. He wins a talking cockatoo named Sam that rides on his shoulder. Meanwhile, Quick Lamb reads lists of men missing in action and other tales of misery, all of which attract him. Carefully watching two poor brothers at school who bend far over their food when they eat lunch, he finally realizes they have no food, and are only pretending to eat. He gives the older boy, Wogga McBride, some of his lunch, and follows the brothers after school. Near their home, they're playing beside the railroad tracks when Wogga slips and is killed by the train as Quick watches. Quick closes up to the world, and even Fish cannot get a response from him. Someone talks directly to Fish, sounding like the intelligent part of him that was lost in the accident, wondering why Fish cannot help Quick, who starts clipping sad stories out of the newspaper and pinning them to the wall of his room. Lester berates Quick for caring more about Wogga than his own brother, which startles Quick, who cries at night. One early morning, Lester leaves the house, which worries Oriel. He has had a talk with Sam, who has explained his incredible lucky gambling streak, and the two have gone to the track together. They stay all day, get drunk, bet on Blackbutt, and come home big winners, but Oriel is unimpressed.

Lester closes the shop for a day and takes the family to the port town of Fremantle. In the afternoon, he buys a large skiff from a man on the beach, but it is too big to be carried by the truck. Lester decides to let Quick row it upriver to a dock at Cawley, a very long way. Quick takes Fish, and they row deep into the night. Lester comes looking for them, berating himself for his stupidity. He finds them wrapped in each other's arms, asleep in the boat along the shore. They almost made it all the way. The three get home in the morning to Oriel's relief and censorship of Lester. On Guy Fawkes Day, when Australians light firecrackers and burn a man in effigy, the Lambs invite the Pickles to their side of the house. They have great fun until it is time to burn the Guy Fawkes effigy, at which Fish becomes screamingly upset, destroying the party. Fish seems to dream of drowning, with joy, until he is dragged back to life. Sam starts to lose at the races, and blames "the Hairy Hand" of bad luck. Rose has to scour the pubs for Dolly, who frequently drinks to unconsciousness. Oriel cleans up the Pickles half of the house, which Rose hates. The Lambs get a pig they intend to butcher, but Fish likes it, and the pig survives. Fish contends that the pig talks to him. To Lester, it sounds like the pig is talking in tongues. On New Year's Day, 1949, Oriel sets up a tent in the backyard and moves in with a bed and her personal things.



## Chapter IV Analysis

Sam's correct intuition that his gambling luck will change raises the question of whether one's attitude or frame of mind can influence the course of events, or if a person actually can sense forthcoming changes. Up until this point, the book's only hint of such metaphysical leanings has been in characterizing the house almost a person, describing its creaks and sighs as if it were alive, and the fear of it demonstrated by the black man who visited. Now, the story turns even more spirit-oriented. When Quick becomes depressed by the misery of war and the abominable luck of Wogga McBride's death, a voice seems to speak directly to Fish, sounding like it is the intelligent part of him that was lost. Considering that the doctor had said Fish had no brain damage, the reader is left with a supposition that Fish's mind is intact, yet somehow is partially removed from everyday life, as if his higher intelligence has receded to some inaccessible place. When Sam's luck at the track rubs off on Lester, it begins to seem that luck is a transient, elusive, yet real thing. Lester's decision to let Quick row the new boat upriver with Fish is incredibly ill-advised, but Lester's luck holds out, and the two boys avoid disaster. Fish's screaming fit over the burning of the effigy symbolizes his closeness to the representational world of spirituality, just as Quick is representing real events by pinning descriptions of them on his wall. Just when everything has started to look up for the Pickles family, their luck begins to disappear. Sam starts to lose at the races again, and Dolly makes her own bad luck by continually drinking herself to oblivion. The introduction of the pig that Fish thinks can talk to him, and that sounds to Lester like it is speaking in tongues, is another contact being made with the unseen world of mystery and spirituality that runs alongside or is interlaced with the currents of everyday life.



# Chapter V

## Chapter V Summary

Quick is now sixteen, taller than his father, and melancholy, but a lover of the outdoors and fishing who spends much time on the river. He does not do well in school. At fourteen, Rose no longer braves the drunks to fetch her mother from the pub. Her brothers, Ted and Chub, are lazy and careless, and Rose keeps the house in order. By age sixteen, she starts to get alarmingly thin, and begins to despise her mother. Lester Lamb joins the band at the Anzac Club, for returned veterans, and is a big hit with his vaudeville act. Quick announces that he is leaving home to "go bush." Oriel protests, but the next day, Quick races out the door, bowling over Rose as he goes. Oriel decides to respond by driving a competing grocer named G.M. Clay out of business. She drives her family hard to improve their shop, and Dolly can't stand the commotion. She has taken up with a man at the pub named Gerry, but for a long while does not realize he is G.M. Clay, the competing shopkeeper. Ted Pickles, Dolly's favorite boy, has become a ladies' man. Sam, who enjoys his menial job at the mint, is coming home one day on the train when Gerry Clay's wife stops him, and tells him to control Dolly, much to his fury. Rose realizes she loves Fish, whom she likes to watch as he tries to play the piano in the library. Sam tries to get Rose to eat, but she just throws it up. Outside the house, a dark man stands watching the library. Sam walks the neighborhood, angry and dismayed about Dolly.

In November, the warm weather begins in Australia, and Lester tries to get Fish to go outside, but he just lies in bed, depressed by Quick's absence. Lester tests Fish's comprehension with simple questions that he answers, except he cannot identify his mother. One day, Rose finds Sam sitting on the edge of the bathtub with an open razor. He is despondent over his terrible luck, but she tells him people have to be their luck. In January of 1951, the Lambs succeed in driving Gerry Clay out of business, but Oriel does not yet know, and she goes to the Clays to declare a truce, but finds Mrs. Clay abandoned and distressed, which dismays Oriel. Rose daydreams about stealing Fish and running away with him. Dolly comes home, beaten up by Clay before he left. The Lambs decide to go crabbing at the river, the pig talks to itself in tongues, and Rose quits school to take a job as a switchboard girl, which she loves. A young man named Geoffrey Birch comes calling for Hattie. At the Anzac Club, Oriel meets a lonely widow named Beryl Lee, and invites her to stay at Cloudstreet. Oriel dreams about the terror of being in a dark basement at age six. When she awakes, she thinks of her difficult girlhood, and her choice of Lester as a husband. Ted Pickles leaves home, and Beryl Lee moves in with the Lambs. Quick sends a postcard saying he's all right. A big man comes to the door, cuffs Sam, and says his son must marry the man's pregnant daughter. Later, Lester daydreams of his own childhood as he gives Fish a bath.



## Chapter V Analysis

The complications and intricacies of everyday life are stitched through this chapter like a fabric, as the author goes back and forth, gathering strands of experience from one after another of the members of the two families. A few years have gone by, Quick Lamb leaves home, followed by Ted Pickles, the widow Beryl Lee moves in, Rose quits school and gets a job, Lester begins performing at the Anzac Club, and Dolly takes up with Gerry Clay even as Oriel is driving his shop out of business. As Tim Winton relates these and other events, he creates a sense of the flow of life over time, while giving himself the opportunity to add more complexity to characters the reader already knows. This not only deepens their humanity and makes them more interesting, but it also introduces shifts in their emotional lives that influence the plot. Having already fashioned the plot's core by bringing the two families together and establishing the personalities of their members, Winton now uses this chapter to enrich and flesh out his story in ways that are natural outgrowths of the characters and conditions he has created.



# Chapter VI

## Chapter VI Summary

This chapter begins with an aerial view of a young man sleeping under scrubby trees in the Outback. As the view narrows down to the young man, the narrator says he would like to "spoon up by him," and the reader realizes that the narrator is Fish's intelligent half, and the young man is Quick. He has become a kangaroo shooter, culling the animals to protect farmers' wheat. He works alone, with just a dog named Bill. The viewpoint shifts to Quick, describing how he sets up his rifle in a vice on the truck to steady his aim as he switches on a spotlight at night to immobilize kangaroos that enter a clearing to reach a pool, so he can shoot them. Afterwards, one wounded animal is thrashing. He ventures into the surrounding wheat and is kicked in the chest by the dying kangaroo. He passes out, and dreams of Fish rowing a wooden box across the wheat. Fish encourages Quick to climb into the box, but Quick can't move. Fish takes the dog, Bill, and rows away. Quick's employer, Wentworth, finds him in the afternoon, all but dead, and takes him to the farm. He awakens to Wentworth's daughter, Lucy, giving him a rubdown with goanna oil to treat the sunburn. Her massage turns erotic, and then she leaves. Quick dreams of Fish calling to him from the wooden box. When Quick recovers, he is in demand as a "roo" shooter, but he starts seeing himself in the gunsights, tearing through the wheat, running toward himself and away. It starts to affect his shooting.

Quick begins dating Lucy Wentworth, who says she wants to have a florist shop in Sydney. When the Shire Clerk catches them naked in the bush, Quick leaves town. He passes an Aborigine hitchhiking, and then sees the same man down the road. He picks him up. The man is going to Perth. Quick asks where he wants to be dropped off, and the man takes him to Cloudstreet, asking if he wants to come along. Quick drops him and races away fearfully. He drives south, to where the Lamb family once lived, in Margaret River. For about a year, he works on the farm of his father's cousin, Earl Blunt, and his wife, May. One day, he almost crashes their truck, and then decides to take a break. He fixes up Earl's boat and goes fishing. He keeps seeing figures on the shore, either a black man or himself. At night, he sees the "misery pictures" of war and desolation that he had taped on his wall at Cloudstreet. Fish begins crying at Cloudstreet, feeling Quick calling to him. When the Blunts find Quick the next day, his body is glowing, and he can't stop crying. He is white-hot. The Blunts decide to take him back to Perth, to Cloudstreet.

## Chapter VI Analysis

Just as the previous chapter concentrated on enhancing the plot and characterizations, this one deepens the book's metaphysical or spiritual mysteries. Focusing on Quick Lamb, the author begins by showing him through the eyes of a narrator who can only be Fish Lamb's more intelligent self, the part that was lost in the accident, although Fish's



identity is only suggested at first. After the kangaroo badly injures Quick, he dreams of Fish or sees him in a delirium, and Fish tries to get him into a crate that he is using as a boat over the wheat. Fish is trying to take his brother into that other country, beyond this life, but Quick is incapable of moving, both because he is physically injured and, by implication, because he is not yet ready to die. Later, the appearance of Lucy Wentworth brings Quick alive sexually, and yet as he hunts, he starts seeing himself as the hunted. He knows Lucy is not the right woman for him, and when the two of them are caught naked together, he uses this embarrassment as an excuse to flee her and the tiny town.

Quick cannot escape himself, however, and the black hitchhiker is like a shadowy part of his own personality, first here, and then down the road, demanding to be taken aboard. The man leads Quick back to Cloudstreet, but Quick is not ready to return to the fold. Even so, he goes to the hometown of his youth and works for relatives, which is like going partway home. His visions of misery won't leave him, and they symbolize the guilt he still feels over the accident that damaged his brother. He keeps seeing the black man and himself, as if the suppressed side of his personality and the side that is running away were chiding him to face his troubles. Quick does not merely fall sick; he glows so brightly, and so hotly that the only response the Blunts can summon to this strange condition is to return him to his family. Tim Winton has pointed all his indicators toward this outcome, making Quick's return to Cloudstreet imperative if he is to recover his mental health.





# Chapter VII

## Chapter VII Summary

Cloudstreet is in a uproar, because today Hattie Lamb will marry her longtime suitor, Geoffrey Birch. There are noisy preparations and a wild ride to the church. Afterwards, Earl and May Blunt drive back to Margaret River. The Lambs nurse Quick for seven days, during which he is silent but glowing like mother of pearl. Oriel and Lester feel that he has gone somewhere mentally. They have a long talk on the back step, during which Oriel insists that people make their own luck, and that the strangeness around the Lamb family, of Quick aglow and of the house itself, are ordinary in this strange world. Oriel says she does not believe in country or family or love or work, which are just things a person does. She believes in eight hours' sleep and a big breakfast. Lester watches as she prepares for bed in the tent by lamplight. Over the week, Quick's glow fades. Sam Pickles comes home beaten up, owing the bookies. Lester hears about it, and drives Sam to a cabin in the bush, owned by the widow Beryl Lee, where Sam can hide out. Lester says he can use savings to pay off the bookies, which will keep that bad element away from his family. At Cloudstreet, Beryl Lee is a hard worker who is kind to everyone, but Quick cannot yet understand who she is or why she is there. Outside, Quick exchanges a few words with the pig. Lester goes to tell Dolly that Sam is safe, and that he will take care of the bookies. The two suddenly have sex on the kitchen table.

At the cabin, Sam's stumpy hand tingles, and he knows the shifty shadow of bad luck is about. At night, he sees headlights and is frightened, but it's just Lester, returning to say he has the money for Sam to pay the debt. In the morning, Beryl Lee mentions that Lester did not sleep in his bed that night. His daughter Elaine Lamb finds it strange that Beryl would have checked on Lester. Quick awakens to find Fish in bed beside him. Lester arrives, without Sam. Beryl approaches Lester in his room and tells him she knows about him and Dolly, and he should stop. He agrees. Sam stays all day in Kings Park outside downtown Perth, where Lester had left him. At night, he goes into town and gambles with the money Lester had given him. Beryl begins to fade, like a light going out. She tells Lester that she is leaving Cloudstreet to join a nunnery, because she has a crush on Lester, which surprises him. Oriel decides to go prawning on the river, even though prawns are not in season. Quick accompanies her, and they haul in a huge catch. Sam makes a killing playing two-up with Lester's money. The Pickles invite the Lambs over for a prawn dinner. Up in the library, Fish plays the piano and talks to the "shadow girl" who is always either crying or angry.

## Chapter VII Analysis

The marriage of Hattie Lamb foreshadows an upswing in the fortunes of Cloudstreet that will be borne out later in the chapter, because marriage and birth symbolize happiness and health. The ceremony and the reception also bring together the Lambs



and Pickles, a rare occurrence for the two families. The return of Quick and his odd glow spark the conversation between Lester and Oriel, in which she lays out her ideas about life more fully than anywhere else in the novel. Oriel shows herself to be practical and resourceful, yet in many ways worn down by life, as if all her idealism has been stamped out of her, leaving only grim endurance. The glow surrounding Quick seems malevolent, and its fading heralds his return to mental health. Even so, it appears that things must get worse at Cloudstreet before they can get better, to which Sam's trouble with the bookies attests. Lester's decent impulse to help Sam is then compromised by Dolly, who seems to be repaying his kindness with sex, thus putting Lester in her debt.

Meanwhile, Beryl solves her attraction to Lester by going away. In contrast to Quick, Beryl's glow seemed to be a benevolent one, perhaps of love for Lester, but it fades as she decides to leave Cloudstreet. Her glow also might be interpreted as bad, however, because she felt that her love for Lester was illicit, since he was married. When Oriel and Quick make a big catch of prawns out of season, the return of luck to the Lambs is again foreshadowed, and that luck extends to the Pickles when Sam wins a lot of money at two-up. The chapter ends, however, with a kind of reminder that all is not well at Cloudstreet. The shadow girl to whom Fish is speaking in the library clearly must be a spirit of the Aboriginal girl who committed suicide by drinking ant poison in the days when the vicious, rich woman owned Cloudstreet. The strangeness of the house, the uneasiness it can foster in its inhabitants and visitors, must be related to this sad past. Slowly, Winton has introduced the elements of a ghost story into his novel.



## Chapter VIII

### Chapter VIII Summary

Rose's work as a telephone receptionist is described in this chapter. Now twenty-four, she is young woman who would like to have a beau, and has learned from her female colleagues how to get dates by flirting on the phone. They tell young men to meet them outside the post office, near their work at department store called Bairds. If the prospective date looks uninteresting, the girl will just pass him by. Rose makes a date with a young man named Toby Raven, and when she sees him, he looks more interesting than the others. He is well-dressed, wears glasses, and seems to her like an "individual." They have lunch at a counter and chat. He makes guesses about her background and she guesses that he is a reporter. They make a date. He takes her to an out-of-the-way Italian restaurant, where the hip people go. She was right, he is a newspaper reporter. She feels out of her element, but enjoys it. They drink a lot of wine and go to his place, where she decides it is time to yield her virginity. By summer, Rose knows she is in love. By autumn, Toby goes quiet, and she learns he is writing a book of poems. She types it for him, but by spring she stops, saying she is not a typist and he is not a poet. One night, Dolly approaches Rose with a letter from Ted Pickles, who has married the girl he got pregnant, and is working as a jockey in South Australia.

Toby comes to the Cloudstreet, which Rose has never let him do. He has been invited to a party, because an editor has accepted one of his poems. They go to the party, but it soon becomes apparent that the editor has confused someone else's poem with Toby's work. When Toby realizes this, he frantically starts talking about a grotesque comedy he is working on, concerning a famous writer and a shop girl. Infuriated, Rose leaves the party. Meanwhile, Quick feels held to Cloudstreet, but cannot figure out what to do there. In the summer, he finds the old boat that he and Fish had rowed home after Lester bought it in Fremantle years ago. He decides to catch fish to sell through the shop, and his plan works beautifully. Sometimes, Lester goes out on the boat with him, and once Lester confesses his sorrow over having given up his vaudeville act at the Anzac Club, and that he feels he does not measure up to Oriel. One evening, Quick takes Fish out in the boat, and they see Rose on the bank. They have barely spoken at all over the years, but Quick and Rose share brandy and talk while Fish sleeps. Fish has grown large over the years, and has lost the beauty of youth that he had when Rose was fascinated by him as a girl. Rose and Quick are amazed to discover their mutual attraction. They go to Cloudstreet and make love in the library. Soon, they announce that they intend to marry. Six weeks later, they wed, and have a joyous reception in the Returned Servicemen's League hall.

### Chapter VIII Analysis

Rose's experience with Toby Raven is a way for the author to deal succinctly with her coming of age as a woman, and the casting about that young people often must do to



find a suitable partner. Her initial interest in him stems from his apparent worldliness, which she finds intoxicating compared to the culturally deprived life she has led. Toby turns out to be a sham, however, and Rose recognizes this in telling Toby his poetry is no good. When Dolly gets a letter from her son Ted saying that he has married and is living in South Australia, it is an indication that the lives of Rose's siblings are developing, for better or worse, while she remains relatively unchanged. When the editor at the party confuses Toby's work with that of a good poet, and Toby turns his embarrassment and disappointment into a veiled attack on Rose, she immediately drops him. The author's implication here is that Rose is better off with the honesty of her own kind than with hypocritical poseurs like Toby. Right away, she finds Quick, as if their union were fated, needing only the right time for it to occur. Suddenly, the Lambs and Pickles are related through marriage. The author has broken through the barriers he has constructed between the families. This is a major plot development, because it raises questions concerning the future interactions between the two families. They will be drawn closer by the marriage, but will it be for good or ill? Once again, Tim Winton has inserted a twist in his story that is designed to keep the reader wondering about the futures of these two struggling families.



# Chapter IX

## Chapter IX Summary

Cloudstreet is quiet with shock for a while after the wedding. On the last day of the 1950s, Rose and Quick find a flat behind a house in the Perth suburb of Mosman Park. Rose wants her own house, and they make plans to save money and buy a place. Quick was never paid for his fishing work for the family, so he decides to become a policeman, just as Lester used to be. On the day that Quick is sworn in as a constable, Rose tells him during the party afterwards at Cloudstreet that she is pregnant, and Quick is delighted. As a policeman, Quick is assigned to walking the streets, which he finds is relatively eventless. One winter morning, Sam awakens to discover his stump tingling and the smell of his dead father, signaling the arrival of the shifty shadow. He decides to sleep in. Dolly wakes with a hangover and wanders into the library, where she sees the rug shivering in a corner and smells hot bodies. She staggers out and falls down the stairs. In the tent, Oriel hears a scream, and runs for the house. The scene shifts to Lester and Sam in the hospital's emergency ward, where Dolly is getting a cast on her broken leg. At Cloudstreet, the timbers seem to be clenching, as Fish bangs on the piano and yells at two shadows to go away. Rose has a miscarriage, becomes despondent, and quits work. Sam tells Rose that Ted has died from a heart attack in the sauna, trying to lose weight to continue being a jockey. Dolly is distraught. Sam is giving all his pay to the bookies every week, but placidly accepts his bad luck. He hears Fish hitting the library walls and goes in, where he sees the spirit of a vicious old lady in white, as Fish complains that she won't let him play the piano. Rose stops eating again, and thinks miserably about the infidelities of her mother. Dolly drinks heavily and is missing for several days. Rose very reluctantly takes care of her.

Dolly wants to be friends with Rose, and wants grandchildren. At first, Rose is disgusted by her, but she softens after Dolly confesses that her own elder sister was her mother. By summer, Rose is pregnant again, and begins to dream of her own house and baby. Her youngest brother, Lon, gets a girl pregnant and is married within two weeks. Sam awakens with his stump in extreme pain. Oriel dreams of bushfires. Quick is at the building site of their new home when he is approached by the "blackfella" he knows, who tells him this is not his home, and he should go home. A huge wind rattles Cloudstreet on Christmas Eve, and blows through the rest of the Australian summer. A killer is on the loose in Perth, and no one is safe. The murderer sneaks into backyard and kills people in their sleep. Quick tries to find him, but encounters only the black man by the river, who again tells him to go home. Rose is afraid to be alone, and the couple moves back to Cloudstreet, which delights everyone. They move into the library and at night, Quick can see the shades of the woman and the girl on the wall. The murderer, now called the Nedlands Monster, continues his rampage, and the city is mad with fear. Quick makes a window in the library that lets in light and air from the backyard. Dolly has grown weak and confused by drink. The murderer is making Quick slip into his old despair, but finally the Monster is caught, just as Quick receives word at the station that his child is about to be born. He races home, but cannot get Rose to the hospital before



she delivers a boy in the library, with Oriel's help. Just before delivering the boy, Rose sees the shadows of the old woman and the girl, but they fade away, even as Fish bangs on the piano. Quick wants to call the boy Harry, and mentions that's slippery, like wax. Lester dubs him Wax Harry.

## Chapter IX Analysis

Once again, Tim Winton piles event upon event in the chapter, to create a sense of the overwhelming power, at times, of circumstances. After the wedding and the plans made by Quick and Rose for their future, the turning of luck or fate is foreshadowed by the tingling of Sam's stump and the smell of his dead father. Right after that, bad things start happening. Dolly breaks her leg, Rose has a miscarriage, Ted dies, and Lon undergoes a shotgun marriage. Sam loses regularly in gambling, and he sees the spirit of the old lady in the library, who embodies the viciousness of bad luck. Both Dolly and Rose sink into melancholy over the losses of Ted and the baby, respectively. At first, neither of them responds in a healthy way to these sad events, but Dolly's confession of her birth through incest helps both of them to recuperate, and Rose becomes pregnant again, symbolizing a rebirth of hope. The black man appears and reappears, each time telling Quick to go home, a spiritual motif through which Winton reinforces the message that Cloudstreet, in all its chaos, is the true home for Quick and Rose. When the couple does go back to Cloudstreet, in part so Rose will be safe from the menace of a murderer who is now stalking Perth, Quick can see the spirits of the old woman and the young Aboriginal girl on the walls of the library at night. This creates a question in the reader's mind about the black man, who seems to be a hidden part of Quick that tells him what is best, a subconscious influence, and yet going home to Cloudstreet only brings Quick back to the library, which is haunted by terrible events. What's more, Quick's despondence grows over being unable to capture the murderer. He has now become the character most closely associated with the spiritual world, replacing Fish, who has moved slightly offstage in the plot. Just when Quick's mental health is looking bad, the murderer is caught, and his son is born in the library. In the midst of her labor pains, Rose sees the spirits, who disappear from the library as Fish gets control of the piano again. The reader realizes that the curse of the house is being lifted even as it becomes the birthplace for a new member of the family. It would appear that the shifty shadow has moved once more, defeated by the goodness of creating a new life.



# Chapter X

## Chapter X Summary

Summer comes again, and Quick gets transferred at work to traffic detail, which he likes. Dolly and his friends from the bar coo over Wax Harry, and Lon and his bride, Pansy, have a baby girl at the hospital. Rose helps at the shop and realizes she enjoys it, despite her contentious relationship with Oriel. She begins to understand that she is an organizer and leader, like Oriel. Sam begins to slow down at work, and he realizes that he soon will have owned Cloudstreet for twenty years, which means he could sell it, by the conditions of the inheritance. The trial of the Nedlands Monster is forced off the front page by the assassination of John Kennedy, but in 1974, the Monster is hung, and Perth exults. Oriel and Lester are mortified, and when Quick doesn't understand this, Lester explains that Oriel no longer believes in the Commandments, but she still tries to do so. Lester goes to church the next Sunday, but does not know what to think. Oriel would like to move from the tent back into the house, but still does not feel that the time is right. On traffic duty, Quick finds a boy drowned in the river, who turns out to be the son of the Nedlands Monster, which affects him deeply. At the store, Lon refuses to load the truck with goods, and even threatens Oriel with a fistfight when she insists. She punches him, and knocks him down. The customers help Lon to load the truck. Quick tells Rose he needs a break, because of the Monster's dead son, and she comforts him. Fish pets the pig, as Fish's disembodied, intelligent half watches and waits.

Rose and Quick decide to take a week's vacation, during which they will drive without a plan or destination. Lester gets into the habit of praying. When Sam comes home from voting, he meets a black man who tells him he should not sell Cloudstreet. Sam asks the man how he voted, but the man walks away. Dolly takes up feeding birds. Oriel puts on a big dinner before Rose and Quick's trip, at which she asks Sam not to sell. He mentions that the black man told him not to sell, but would not say how he voted. Rose tells him that black people are not allowed to vote. Lester agrees not to sell, and the two families break into song. Fish insists on accompanying Rose, Quick, and Harry on vacation. They drive to a remote town called Southern Cross, and then camp under the stars. Rose confesses to Quick that she never wants to leave Cloudstreet, and he admits that he is delighted. Late at night, they see naked children watching them in the wheat. Fish's voice calls to him. They race home to tell the good news that they want to stay at Cloudstreet, and the two families organize a picnic at the river. They're having a wonderful time at the picnic when Fish runs to the jetty, unnoticed until too late by the others. He plunges into the river, as the voice in his head calls to him. For a moment underwater, he is a complete man who understands himself, before he drowns. Later, Oriel and Dolly dismantle the tent in the backyard and bring it inside the house.



## Chapter X Analysis

This final chapter wraps up the loose ends of the plot, and brings it around full-circle to the beginning. The birth of Lon and Pansy's daughter adds to the uplifted spirit of Cloudstreet, now that the shades of the evil past have been banished by the birth of Harry Wax. Rose's realization that she has leadership skills in common with Oriel indicates that she will take over the store, and the legacy of the two families will continue. That can only happen, however, if Sam does not sell Cloudstreet. The failure of Oriel and Lester to exult at the hanging of the Nedlands Monster brings the question of religious faith to the fore of the story. Oriel and Lester have been described as God-fearing people, but little has been made of their faith, except for Oriel's declining belief in the face of all the troubles she has had in life. The Monster, who represents ultimate evil, spurs Lester into a reexamination of his own faith. His confusion at this makes it evident that whatever comfort he might gain from prayer and church-going must be a matter of deliberate choice, which suits the novel's overriding message that people must take their own lives in hand to determine their futures. Oriel just wants to move back into the house, into the bosom of the family, but something still keeps her from doing so. When Quick finds the dead body of the son of the Nedlands Monster, it triggers all his long-held concerns about the nature of evil, of justice, and the inscrutability of fate.

The black man, who is clearly a force for good, counsels Sam not to sell Cloudstreet, which has become the only bulwark for the people in these families against the remorseless tide of bad luck and circumstance that has overwhelmed them through the years. The significance of the black man not being allowed to vote is symbolic, in that he has no "official" place in the lives of these two families, either, and yet, he influences them as a background, a kind of conscience. The naked children who appear in the field are an enigma. Do they represent innocence, or hope? Are they real, perhaps children from a local farm, or are they spirits? The author gives no clue, leaving the reader to wonder at the strangeness of everyday life, as Oriel mentioned. No sooner have the families begun to celebrate their continued unity through the decision of Rose and Quick to stay at Cloudstreet than Fish leaves them, returning to the unity of himself in the depths of the river. It does not seem like a terrible loss, because Fish is reuniting with that long-lost part of himself, and because this death was foreshadowed in the opening paragraphs of the novel. It is the signal for which Oriel has been unknowingly waiting. She now packs up her tent, with the help of Dolly, her former antagonist, and together the two matriarchs enter their home.





# Characters

## Rose Pickles

Rose Pickles is probably the central character in the novel's ensemble cast. She is a young girl when the story begins and a married woman with a baby when it ends. Tellingly, Tim Winton chooses to begin Chapter I with the thoughts and experiences of Rose, which will prove to be among the most poignant ones in the story. Rose loves her father, Sam, but from an early age is aware of his weakness and irresponsibility. Even as a child, she vacillates between wanting to comfort him and to slap him. Her attitude toward her mother, Dolly, is much less accepting. She develops an early contempt for Dolly that changes over the years to an intense anger that approaches hatred. This is understandable, because Dolly is a miserable mother who emotionally mistreats her daughter, whereas Sam is loving but useless. Even so, Rose eventually develops a better understanding of her mother, and with this understanding comes a strong measure of forgiveness. The novel follows Rose's development through puberty to young womanhood, including her attitudes toward boys and men. Rose is a reader and a thinker, although she is forced by poverty to quit school early and work on a department store's telephone switchboard. The stress of her highly dysfunctional family causes her to become anorexic, a condition that plagues her intermittently. She does not have her first serious boyfriend until she is twenty-four, and falls in love with him, but quickly abandons him when she realizes he is selfish and superficial. When Rose finally falls in love with Quick and they have a happy marriage, it seems a fitting reward for a character who has endured much and given a great deal of herself to her family. By the novel's end, it is clear that Rose, with her endurance and intelligence, will be the child to take over the store that keeps both families afloat.

## Quick Lamb

Mason "Quick" Lamb is the eldest son in the Lamb family. His nickname is a small joke, because he actually is not a quick thinker, although neither is he dim-witted. He is merely a bit ponderous, and does not do well in school. Quick is good with his hands and loves the outdoors, especially the river. Over the course of the novel, he works as a kangaroo shooter, a farmhand, a fisherman, and a policeman. Quick is plagued by guilt over the accident suffered by his little brother, Fish, which left him mentally handicapped, even though Quick was not directly responsible for it. Throughout the book, he must cope with gloominess over all the misery in the world, which at times overwhelms him to the point of disablement. Quick also develops an attunement to paranormal phenomena. He sees things that others do not see, and seems capable of perceiving inhabitants of a world beyond the grave, or from somewhere beyond this world. When he becomes involved briefly with a young woman, it is she who takes the initiative. Later, when he and Rose realize their mutual attraction, their love affair and marriage are a refuge for Quick, whose emotional fragility and extrasensory perceptions make it important for him to have support from someone with her feet firmly on the



ground. Quick is a likeable character, fairly quiet and essentially a loner, but a gentle man with a big heart. It is clear he will be an attentive father and a good husband.

## Sam Pickles

Sam Pickles is the head of the Pickles family, and the one who officially inherits Cloudstreet from his cousin. Sam knows he is an ineffectual fellow, foolish and slow. He is a joker, loves his family, and is kind, but he suffers from a fatal attraction to gambling that is made even worse by his conviction that luck comes and goes in waves of good and bad, and there is nothing he can do about it. He reacts to this conviction by gambling with glee and excitement when he feels that his luck has changed to a good streak. The worst thing is that when he is convinced his luck is on a bad streak, he does not stop gambling. He simply accepts the losses, day after day, year after year, as a fate that he cannot escape. When he loses most of the fingers of one hand in a work accident on a boat, his ability to be of use to the family is badly compromised, but a run of gambling luck brings him a job sweeping up at the mint that he keeps for many years. Much of that time, he gives his weekly pay straight over to the bookies. Sam's reaction to the infidelities of his wife, Dolly, is mostly to ignore them. Any anger he feels is fleeting, and he does not confront her. His resigned attitude and inability to make any positive changes in his life are deeply frustrating to his daughter, Rose, and incur the contempt of Dolly. Sam is not a bad man, yet the way he lives is extremely damaging to himself and his family.

## Dolly Pickles

Dolly Pickles is Sam's wife and the mother of his children. She is a beautiful woman when the book opens, although by its end, she has deteriorated to an alcoholic hag in her sixties. Dolly is deeply embittered by the circumstances of her life and the choices she has made. She constantly wishes she could go away somewhere, but has no idea where that would be, or how she would live. Initially, she salves this bitterness by having affairs with other men, and reveling in her physical beauty. Gradually, the bars she frequents to meet men lead her into more and more drinking, until alcohol rather than affairs becomes the focus of her life. Rose and others often have to go searching for her, and find her unconscious or delirious with drink. As she grows old, Dolly begins to run out of steam. She stays home more often, and becomes a little less caustic toward others. Her relationship with Rose, which originally was competitive from Dolly's point of view, finally becomes more maternal as Dolly realizes she needs the affection of her family. Of all the main characters in the book, Dolly is probably the most unlikeable, yet late in the book, Tim Winton offers a partial explanation for her behavior, when Dolly reveals to Rose that her own sister was her mother by her father. This softens Rose toward Dolly, but the character nevertheless has been so self-involved and nasty throughout the book she is not redeemed in the reader's eyes. Ultimately, she is an incarnation of the ugliness and damaging nature of extreme self-pity.



## Oriel Lamb

Oriel Lamb, the mother of the Lamb children and Lester's wife, is the strongest character in the book. A kind of field general to the Lamb family, she orders them all about, organizing everything, and surmounts all obstacles in their difficult life. She does not particularly mind being poor, and accepts hard work as her lot. Oriel begins the novel as a God-fearing woman, but sad events in the family's life gradually cause her to lose her faith, despite her continuing struggle to gain it back. She actually has trouble believing in anything other than getting enough sleep and having enough to eat. She sees no intrinsic value in work, family, or love, considering them simply to be duties she must fulfill. The true sadness of Oriel's life consists of this lack of something in which to believe. Even so, she is a survivor, and without her industriousness and leadership, it is hard to imagine how the Lamb family, or the Pickles family, would have gotten along during the two decades covered by the novel. Oriel is a good person whose spirit was never broken by hard circumstances, but who lost her faith in God and humankind.

## Lester Lamb

Lester Lamb is Oriel's husband and the father of the Lamb children. Originally a farmer, he lost the family farm under unspecified circumstances that appeared to be related to hard economic times. He then works as a police constable, and when the family moves to Perth early in the novel, he becomes Oriel's helper in the store. Lester is actually the one who dreams up the idea of opening the store, although Oriel quickly adopts the plan and makes it her own. Lester becomes the chief baker and ice cream-maker, both of which skills bring in a great deal of trade. He believes in God and generally stays out of trouble, although Sam Pickles induces him to drink and gamble on rare occasion, and Dolly Pickles seduces him. Oriel regards Lester as a fool, and he does display significant lapses of judgment throughout the book, although "fool" is perhaps a harsh descriptor. He loves performing, and the greatest joy he has in the novel occurs during the years when he sings and plays instruments in his own vaudeville act at a local club. His children seem to love him, but he does not play a highly influential role in their lives, as a dispenser of wisdom or someone to whom they can turn in an emergency. Oriel far overshadows him in that regard, and he keenly feels his shortcomings in comparison to her competencies. Toward the end of the book, Lester reexamines his faith, and begins to pray and attend church, making him the only member of the two families who turns toward religion for solace.

## Fish Lamb

Samson "Fish" Lamb is the second son of the Lamb family. At the beginning of the book, he is the unnamed character who runs to the river and looks ready to dive or fall into it. At the book's end, it is made clear (and has long been evident) that Fish is that person, as he falls into the river and drowns. Fish's accident while fishing in the river, which occurs early in the novel, results in apparent brain damage, and he has the mind of a small child throughout the story, even as he matures into a young man. Physically, he



changes from a beautiful boy to a large, sloppy man, but he retains a joyful nature. He is also subject, however, to fits of fear and rage, and loss of control of his bodily functions. Before the accident, Fish was beloved by everyone for his wit and energy. Throughout the novel, the intelligent part of Fish that was lost in the accident periodically appears to speak to Fish and to the reader as a narrator from somewhere beyond this world. That voice is one among several devices that create an otherworldly atmosphere in the book. Fish is treated well by everyone in the Lamb family after the accident, and is briefly beloved from afar as a boy by young Rose Pickles, but his emotional life in the novel is understandably less developed than that of other main characters. At the end, his death is clearly a release from this world for him, and a relief for the others, however unwanted it is by them.

## **Ted Pickles**

Ted Pickles is one of the Pickles' sons. He grows up to be a bit wild, gets a girl pregnant, is forced to marry her by the young woman's father, and lives in South Australia. He does not play a large role in the plot and eventually the family receives a message that he died of a heart attack while sitting in a sauna, attempting to sweat off enough weight to allow him to continue working a jockey. His mother Dolly is crushed and angered by his death, because Ted was her favorite.

## **Chub Pickles**

Chub Pickles is the other Pickles son. He is lazy and achieves nothing throughout the book. Mostly, he just eats and sleeps, and rarely says anything or participates in the family activities in any notable way.

## **Hattie Lamb**

Hattie Lamb is one of three Lamb sisters. She marries a young man from the town of Pemberton named Geoffrey Birch. Hattie's notable characteristic is that she is a remarkably good marbles player.

## **Red Lamb**

Red Lamb is another sister. She is a short-haired tomboy who does not marry and becomes quite good at boys' games.

## **Elaine Lamb**

Elaine Lamb, the third sister, has a boyfriend for more than five years during the course of the novel, but they never marry. Elaine seems to have a migraine headache almost all the time.



## Lon Lamb

Lon Lamb is the youngest child in the family. He is a baby when the novel opens, and at the end, he gets a girl pregnant and is forced to marry. The couple has a baby girl. Lon's main scene in the book occurs when he refuses to help at the shop and when his mother insists, he challenges her to a fistfight. She slugs him, knocking him down, and when he gets up, he does the work.

## Merv Pickles

Merv Pickles is the father of Sam Pickles. Merv has already died when the novel opens, and has a role in the book only through Sam's memories and the occasional sensation he has of smelling his dead father, beside whom he slept when he was a boy. Sam found Merv dead in bed beside him one morning. Merv's job was finding water with a divining rod, a luck-based occupation through which Sam learned his ideas about the shifting nature of good and bad luck.

## Geoffrey Birch

Geoffrey Birch is the handsome young man from Pemberton who marries Hattie Lamb.

## Wagga McBride

Wagga McBride is a boy Quick knows in school. Wagga and his brother always bend over their food, and Quick finally realizes this is to disguise the fact that they are only pretending to eat, because they have no food. He gives them food and follows them home one day, only to witness Wagga being hit and killed by a train as he and his brother play beside the tracks.

## Old Wentworth

Old Wentworth is the farmer for whom Quick Lamb is working as a kangaroo shooter when he gets kicked in the chest by a wounded kangaroo and is severely injured.

## Lucy Wentworth

Lucy Wentworth is the daughter of Old Wentworth, who tends the injured Quick and leads him into an affair with her. Lucy has a mean temper and can be highly critical of Quick, who eventually leaves town, ending his rather loveless relationship with her.



## **Beryl Lee**

Beryl Lee is a widow whom Oriel Lamb meets at the Anzac Club. Oriel immediately recognizes that Beryl is lonely, and invites her to stay at Cloudstreet. Beryl, a hard worker and a kind woman, stays there for some time, but eventually confesses to Lester that she has a crush on him and therefore she must leave the house. She enters a Catholic convent.

## **Gerry Clay**

Gerry Clay is the owner of a shop that starts up near Cloudstreet in competition with it. He begins an affair with Dolly Pickles, who initially does not realize that he is the G.M. Clay who owns the competing shop. After Clay is driven out of business by Oriel Lamb, he beats up Dolly and leaves town.

## **Mrs. Clay**

Mrs. Clay is Gerry Clay's wife. Before Oriel realizes that Gerry has closed his shop and has left town, she goes to see the Clays, intending to call a truce. She meets Mrs. Clay, who is distraught by her husband's departure, which makes Oriel feel extremely guilty.

## **Uncle Joel**

Uncle Joel is the cousin of Sam Pickles who owns the house on Cloud Street, leaving it to Sam after Joel dies of a heart attack. Joel is always referred to by the Pickles as the only lucky one in the family, although he died young.

## **Eurythmic**

Eurythmic is racehorse upon which Uncle Joel bet. His winnings allowed him to buy a pub hotel in Geraldton where the Pickles family lived before they moved to Perth.

## **Earl and May Blunt**

Earl and May Blunt are cousins of Lester Lamb. They own a farm in Margaret River where Quick Lamb works for about a year, until he gets sick and is returned to Cloudstreet by the Blunts. They work Quick hard, and the suggestion is that they take advantage of him as a laborer.



## **Pansy Mullet**

Pansy Mullet is the humorous name of the young woman who Lon Lamb marries after she becomes pregnant.

## **Harry Lamb**

Harold Samson Lamb, or Wax Harry, is the baby son of Rose and Quick. He gets the nickname because Quick says he is slippery like wax when he is born.

## **Merrileen-Gay Pickles**

Merrileen-Gay Pickles is the name of the baby born to Lon and Pansy.

## **The Nedlands Monster**

The Nedlands Monster is the name given by the media to a family man who becomes a mass murderer in Perth, terrorizing the city until he is caught and hung. To Quick Lamb, who is a policeman at the time, the Nedlands Monster represents all that is wrong and evil about the world.

## **Toby Raven**

Toby Raven is a newspaper reporter whom Rose meets through her job as a switchboard operator. He becomes her first lover, but she drops him after she realizes that he is pretentious and can be emotionally cruel.

## **The Black Man**

The black man, also called the "blackfella," is a mysterious man who keeps appearing to various members of the both families, each time counseling the person he sees to go home or to keep Cloudstreet intact. He symbolizes a voice from within each person, or perhaps is a spiritual guide of some sort. His message is always the same.



# Objects/Places

## Cloudstreet

Cloudstreet is the one-word name given by neighbors of the house at Number One Cloud Street in Perth where much of the novel's action takes place. Cloudstreet is actually the familiar name for the shop on the ground floor, but everyone in the two families who live there come to refer to the house itself by the same name.

## Geraldton

Geraldton is the town on the coast of Western Australia where the Pickles family lives before they inherit the house on Cloud Street and move to Perth.

## The Abrolhos Islands

The Abrolhos Islands are a small chain of islands off the coast of Western Australia, where Sam Pickles is working when his hand is caught in a boat winch and most of his fingers are severed.

## The Eurythmic Hotel

The Eurythmic Hotel is a pub hotel in Geraldton where the Pickles family lives before moving to Perth. The hotel is owned by a family member, Uncle Joel, who won the money to buy it while betting on a racehorse named Eurythmic, after whom he named the pub.

## Margaret River

Margaret River is the town on Western Australia's southern coast where the Lamb family lives and farms before they move to Perth.

## Fremantle

Fremantle is a seaside west of Perth, where the Lamb family goes for a daytrip vacation after Lester Lamb wins money gambling. He buys a skiff there.

## Crawley

Crawley is a town on the Swan River in Perth. It is the destination of Quick and Fish Lamb when they try to row their father's new boat from Fremantle upriver.





## **Mosman Park**

Mosman Park is the suburb of Perth where Oriel and Rose rent a flat after they are married.

## **Subiaco**

Subiaco is a Perth suburb that has the nearest shops to Cloud Street, across the railroad tracks.

## **The Anzac Club**

The Anzac Club is a club in Perth for war veterans where Lester Lamb performs a vaudeville act for several years. It is also where Oriel Lamb meets Beryl Lee, who comes to live at Cloudstreet for a while.

## **Pemberton**

Pemberton is the hometown in Western Australia of Geoffrey Birch, who marries Hattie Lamb.

## **Bairds**

Bairds is a department store where Rose Pickles works for several years as a switchboard operator.

## **Southern Cross**

Southern Cross is a small Outback town where Rose, Quick, Fish, and the baby, Harry Wax, go for a brief vacation, although they end up camping outside town.

## **Two-Up**

Two-Up is an Australian coin-flipping game of chance. It is one of Sam Pickles' favorite forms of gambling, and once during the book, he wins big at it.



# Themes

## Luck and Circumstance

Easily the central question in this book is how to think about luck. The lives of the Pickles and Lamb families are regularly afflicted by sad circumstances over which they have little control, but they also make their own luck, both good and bad. Some of the family members let life happen to them, neither questioning nor trying to change whatever comes. Sam Pickles is the foremost example of this poor attitude toward the unpredictability of life. An inveterate gambler, he keeps betting even when he is convinced he will lose, never considering it might be better to stop. His wife, Dolly, is another example of a person who allows to herself to be controlled by her darker instincts. She drinks excessively and has unsatisfactory affairs, both of which activities do great damage to herself and her family, yet she does not try to change. Rose, the daughter of these two, is among the characters who realize that each person's obligation in life is to react to unfortunate events in ways that are aimed at making improvements. She does not rebound immediately from debilitating events; like all the other characters, she often is beaten down by them, yet she eventually comes back fighting, which is the crucial difference between her and her parents. In the Lamb family, Lester rarely has the ability to respond to bad luck with ingenuity or resolve, but his wife, Oriel, is a master at it. Rose and Oriel know that the "shifty shadow of God," as Sam Pickles and his father call luck, is a bad description, because each person does have a measure of control over life that must be exercised. This book's message is that giving in to bad luck is giving up on life.

## The Other World

What may be beyond this life is a theme that has captivated humans since the beginning of storytelling. Tim Winton does not try to answer this question completely. He strongly suggests that consciousness of our world exists beyond it, but he takes care to make it possible that other explanations could be given for the strange things that occur in the book. For example, Fish Lamb is apparently brain-damaged after he almost drowns, yet when his parents take him to a doctor, they are told that he probably is only traumatized. This is significant, because if there is no physical damage to his brain, then a voice that speaks to him throughout the novel might actually be in his head rather than coming to him from beyond this world. Nevertheless, other things happen in the book that suggest paranormal communication. A pig appears to speak to Fish, and both Quick and Lester seem to think it sounds like it is speaking in tongues. A black man who appears to several characters might be real or might be an emissary from beyond the grave, because he appears and disappears in unsettling ways. When Quick Lamb is working as a kangaroo shooter, he frequently sights down the gun barrel at himself running scared through wheat fields. Several characters see a group of naked children in the wheat fields at night, who might be spirits or not. The house on Cloud Street seems to creak and moan in odd ways, and crying is heard through the walls. Most



disconcerting of all is that several characters see ghostly shades on the walls of the library, where two deaths took place before the families moved into Cloudstreet. At long last, these ghosts seem to disappear when Rose's boy is born in the library. Winton's take on all this, suggested through his characters, seems to be that very strange things can and do happen in everyday life. In a sense, this world is otherworldly; it's all a matter of perception.

## House and Home

As the saga of two families who share the same house for twenty years, Cloudstreet is all about the importance of home. Tim Winton injects drama into this benign theme by making home a very difficult place in which to live, for everyone in both families. Home is often the last place these characters want to be, while at the same time, it is the only place in which they can see themselves being. Often, they do not seem able to decide if Cloudstreet is enfolding or entrapping them. The house where they all live is symbolic of their family lives, because the love they feel for one another is tempered by frustration, anger, and despair. Just as Cloudstreet itself is ramshackle from the moment they move into it and never is significantly upgraded, the fractious relationships between the family members never improve appreciably. Even so, Cloudstreet grows on the two families, and the place they originally had disdained becomes a kind of treasure to them. Similarly, the huge irritations and shortcomings these dysfunctional families endure throughout their lives are overcome, in the end, by the love their members feel for each other. When Rose and Quick marry, thus uniting the families by law, they break open a window in the dark library at the center of the house, opening it to the light. The families, which had kept away from each other most of the time over the years, begin to mingle. The birth of Wax Harry, the first child from this union of the families, chases away the darkness of the past, embodied in the spirits that seem to haunt the library, completing the "ownership" of Cloudstreet by the Pickles and Lambs. When Sam Pickles considers selling the place, everyone convinces him not to do so, and he is happy to comply. The old house, so long an enemy and a fright to them all, has finally become their true home. In the last scene, even Oriel Lamb packs up her tent in the yard and, with Dolly's help, moves back into Cloudstreet.



# Style

## Point of View

The author makes sophisticated use of point of view in this novel. Indeed, it is sometimes difficult to know who is narrating the story, or through whose eyes certain events are being witnessed. Rather than a mistake or a shortcoming, this manipulation of viewpoint is evidence of Tim Winton's command of his material. His employment of several ghostly or paranormal elements in the plot enables him to tell some of the story from the viewpoint of a character beyond this world, who the reader recognizes must be a part of the consciousness of a living character in the book, Fish Lamb. On a few occasions, Winton breaks out of the omniscient narrator's voice to speak directly to the reader, addressing him or her as "you." Sometimes, readers might be uncertain whether they are being addressed by the author or by the character through whom the author is speaking, but this doesn't affect the authenticity of the story or create confusion that interrupts the narrative flow. The author enters the minds of numerous characters, describing how they think and feel about circumstances. Accordingly, the point of view seems almost beyond omniscience, if that is possible. It achieves an energetically free-roaming that seems boundless.

## Setting

The novel has a brief opening section at an unspecified location on a river, which the reader later learns is the Swan River in Perth, Western Australia. The scene then shifts to a town on that state's coast called Geraldton, where the Pickles family lives. It then shifts south to another coastal town called Margaret River, where the Lamb family lives. Next, the Pickles family moves to Perth, to a house at Number One Cloud Street, where they are joined by the Lambs. This becomes the main locale for the story, although various characters occasionally are followed into the Outback for brief periods. Cloudstreet, however, as the building is familiarly known, becomes almost a character itself in the story, partly because it appears to be haunted by uneasy spirits of two previous occupants who died there, one driven to suicide by the other. Another reason for the house's significance as a setting is that the two families live there together for twenty years and become fond of the ramshackle place despite its many drawbacks, including only one bathroom. They associate many experiences in their lives, both good and bad, with this house. In the end, when the possibility of selling the place arises, nobody wants to let go of it. They all want to continue living there, because it has come to represent family and continuity to them. It also contains a shop that keeps the families financially afloat. Tim Winton's decision to name his novel after its principal setting is the first and most prominent indication of the importance to the story of Number One Cloud Street.



## Language and Meaning

Winton's prose is heavily colloquial. Much of the Australian slang would be incomprehensible to American readers if it were out of context, and occasionally it can be hard to guess what words mean even in the context of a sentence. Winton's work had been published in United States before this novel appeared, but he clearly is more concerned about authenticity than about potentially widening his audience by increasing the accessibility of his prose. The effect of the jargon is powerful. Many of the words, such as "drongo," "dag," "dill," and "galah," not only situate the characters in a distinct place, but show much about how they view the world, including their often crude sense of humor, their self-image as downtrodden strugglers in life, and their conviction that the rich or otherwise fortunate are no better people than they are. Another unusual aspect of Winton's prose in this novel is that he does not use quotation marks. All the characters' speeches are integrated into phrases or sentences that describe what they are doing while they speak. The reader must pay attention to know when a character is talking or merely thinking, although when the sentence structure makes this determination particularly difficult, Winton helps out by putting thoughts in italics. He uses place names in Western Australia to help create atmosphere, but again, makes little effort to situate these places for readers unfamiliar with that country. He also refers occasionally to politics or other current events in Australia in ways that indicate an assumption that the reader would have some familiarity with them. Such methods make the book parochial, in a sense, as if it were written solely for Australians, and yet the overriding concerns of the characters, and the events of their lives, are universal. The result is a strong feeling of looking at the lives of people at a certain time in one of the world's most isolated cities.

## Structure

This novel has ten chapters, each one marked only by a roman numeral. The first chapter is preceded by a brief scene, which foreshadows a major event that is revisited and finalized at the end of the final chapter. Each chapter is broken up by numerous subheads that give a notion of what the next section will contain, much like a subhead in a magazine story. These subheads are not uniformly placed, and the sections that they precede vary greatly in length, from a few lines to numerous pages. In temporal terms, the story progresses chronologically, over twenty years, with no flashbacks or flash-forwards. Any information about the background of the older characters' lives is given through conversation or reminiscence, rather than placing the reader in that different time. In narrative terms, the story has a patchwork structure comprising two central strands woven together throughout the book. The central strands, which are the Pickles and Lamb families, are further divided into the threads of the individual stories of the family members. In particular, the stories of Sam Pickles, Dolly Pickles, Rose Pickles, Oriel Lamb, Lester Lamb, Quick Lamb, and Fish Lamb are told in detail, interwoven among each other and among less prominent stories of other members of both families. The stories of non-family members are also told, usually when these individuals come into contact with one or more of the family members. Those threads of the fabric usually



appear most prominently in only one chapter, although they might reappear briefly elsewhere in the book. Sometimes, only a paragraph of a character's story will be given, followed by a short section on another character, and then perhaps a longer section involving several characters. This structure, which requires the author's close attention to numerous subplots, helps to keep the story's entertainment level high by regularly introducing new developments in the various lives it follows.



## Quotes

"He believed deeply in luck, the old man, though he was careful never to say the word. He called it the shifty shadow of God."

Chap. 1, p. 10

"All his life and all his next life he'll remember this dark, cool plunge where sound and light and shape are gone, where something rushes him from afar, where, openmouthed, openfisted, he drinks in river, whales it in with complete surprise."

Chap. 2, p. 29

"Sam Pickles started the day with a smoke on the back step before he went out walking. You'd think he was a one-handed brain surgeon the way he concentrated on the task."

Chap. 3, p. 75

"They rattled and prattled with gossip and rubbish, and yes, even their mouths were like horny beaks, and their tongues like dry, swollen fingers."

Chap. 4, p. 105

"Then they were through into the afternoon sun again, with the river wider, gentler, with boats moored at the shallow edges of the channel where grass came down the banks to sandy beaches littered with wrecked bikes and prams amid up-washed mussel shells and tidal hedges of weed."

Chap. 4, p. 110

"By the embankment, as the trains swept by, Oriel Lamb wept the sound of a slaughteryard and the grass bowed before her."

Chap. 5, p. 173

"They were roughmouthed and irritable, with the eyes of roughed cattle."

Chap. m5, p. 181

"Down at the river where the fish are leaping and the sea has turned back on itself and the trees shake with music."

Chap. 6, p. 218

"You can't steer if you're not goin faster than the current. If you're not under your own steam then yer just debris, stuff floatin."

Chap. 7, p. 230

"The strong are here to look after the weak, son, and the weak are here to teach the strong."

Chap. 7, p. 269

"The bride steps up, white as her outfit, to meet the groom who wears a smile that looks borrowed."

Chap. 8, p. 320



"The river runs louder than a train on the midday air and the lost dead are quaking like sunlight."

Chap. 9. p. 335

"Sun poured careless into the quiet yard where vegetables teemed in the earth and fruit hung, where a scarfaced pig sang sweetly at the sky and a small congregation amassed in the light."

Chap. 10, p. 425





## Topics for Discussion

After the accident in which he almost drowns, Fish Lamb starts hearing a voice. He also has conversations with the Lamb's pet pig, and he sees ghostly shadows on the wall of the library. These occurrences are open to interpretation. What do you think they signify, concerning the mysteries of life?

Quick Lamb seems to be very emotionally susceptible to miseries, such as the deaths and injuries of World War II and the murders committed by the Nedlands Monster. He is often depressed, and even when he is in a good frame of mind, he worries that his low mood might return. Why do you think he is like this, and what does it tell you about the way his family lives?

Rose Pickles has a complicated relationship with Oriel Lamb, who becomes her mother-in-law. She resents early attempts by Oriel to clean up the messy Pickles living areas at Cloudstreet, but as the story continues, she seems to be both irritated and impressed by Oriel. What do you think is going on in Rose's mind and in her development as a person that is demonstrated by her attitudes toward Oriel?

Dolly Lamb is a bitter and selfish person, but the reader eventually learns that her birth was the product of an incestuous union. This knowledge helps her daughter, Rose, to understand Dolly better. Did that information make you feel more forgiving toward Dolly? Describe the change in Dolly in her later years, and tell what you think it means.

Lester Lamb makes some significant errors in judgment in the story. For example, he lets Sam Pickles talk him into gambling family money, and he lets Quick and Fish row a skiff far upriver by themselves. Oriel regards himself as foolish, and yet he is steadfast and kind. How do you think his relationship with Oriel has influenced the sort of person he is, and the decisions he makes?

Oriel Lamb announces at one point in the story that she has given up belief in practically everything, yet she still works hard and never gives up trying to improve the family's life. All she believes in, she says, is eight hours of sleep and a big breakfast, yet she still attempts to follow the tenets of the Bible. What do you think her attitude about religion, and her struggle with belief in anything else, say about the person she has become?

The house at Number One Cloud Street is initially not attractive to anyone in either the Pickles or the Lamb family, but by the end of the novel, everyone is fond of it. The place has become home to them over the decades and, as such, they associate it with family. Discuss the parallels between Cloudstreet's shortcomings and strengths, and those of the two families who live in it.