

Jackaroo Study Guide

Jackaroo by Cynthia Voigt

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Overview

Although Jackaroo is set in an imaginary feudal kingdom, Gwyn, the Innkeeper's daughter, is very much a modern heroine with an independent attitude and adventurous spirit. She lives in a world of rigid social classes where the people have no choice but to obey the rulers. But Gwyn has a compassionate nature that demands justice, and when she sees the suffering and inequity in her world, she sets out as a female Robin Hood to right these wrongs. As a result she must renounce her family, her home, and her inheritance, but she begins a new life in a new land with the man she loves.

About the Author

Cynthia Voigt grew up in New England where she attended Dana Hall School and Smith College in Massachusetts. Although she always wanted to be a writer, out of necessity she became a teacher and discovered that she loved teaching English and classics. However, Voigt continued writing despite the fact that her manuscripts were regularly rejected. Then, when she was thirty-seven years old, her first book was published. *Homecoming* was the first in a series of seven books about the Tillerman family. It was named a Best Book for Young Adults by the American Library Association and was nominated for the American Book Award. Later writings have been enjoyed by young people and praised by critics. Voigt received the Newbery Medal and the Edgar Allan Poe Award, and her books have been named as Boston Globe-Horn Book Honor Books. In 1989 she received the ALAN Award from the Assembly on Literature for Adolescents of the National Council of Teachers of English for her significant contribution to adolescent literature.

Critic Dorothy Kaufman summarizes the praise which both critics and readers have bestowed on Voigt: "Cynthia's characters are clearly drawn; her writing is sophisticated and volatile; her word choice is precise; her ability to establish intense emotional levels is keenly developed." Voigt has lived in Pennsylvania and Maryland, the setting for many of her novels. However, she now resides in Maine with her husband, Walter, son, Peter, and daughter, Jessica.



Plot Summary

"Jackaroo" is the story of Gwyn, the daughter of an innkeeper in a world resembling medieval England. In this society, many people are starving in the countryside as the Lords and Earls gather wealth for themselves. Though Gwyn herself is the daughter of a well-off household, she still has troubles of her own: the laziness of her brother, the question of who to marry. However, her own personal troubles are quickly set aside when thieves strike the area, carrying off an old couple's nanny goat and leaving them to starve for the winter.

Gwyn must forget these troubles as her father makes her and his servant, Burl, accompany two guests (a Lord and his son, who Gwyn thinks of as a "lordling") on a map-making trip in the North Kingdom. While on this trip, though, a blizzard strikes and Gwyn and the Lordling are left on their own. She leads him to safety in an abandoned house, and over the next few weeks, they become friends. Gwyn secretly discovers the costume of a mythical figure called "Jackaroo," almost a Robin Hood-type character, hidden in a cupboard, but says nothing. Upon their return to the inn, the Lord rewards Gwyn with a lot of money of her own.

Gwyn begins to dress as Jackaroo and give the money to people she considers deserving, such as a poor fiddler or a man whose family might starve due to the Earl's high tithes. However, she also sees a hut being burned to the ground and rides to the city as Jackaroo, telling the Steward to catch the men. She takes his ring as his word that he will. On the day that they are captured and hanged, along with Gwyn's uncle Win (hanged anonymously, and once a Jackaroo himself), she throws the ring at the Steward from the crowd. Convinced that he saw her friend Cam do it, he has Cam captured.

It is only when Burl and Gwyn both dress as Jackaroo to set Cam free that the citizens realize Cam is not Jackaroo. All the same, Gwyn must hide for some time, which she does at the inn under Burl's supervision. When the Lord and Lordling pass through again, she sends the Lordling a message through Burl. The Lord then announces that he will take Burl and "his lady" with him to serve at his manor.

Instead of being servants, however, Gwyn and Burl are to be innkeepers. The Lord has chosen an old hunting lodge at the edge of his property for them to keep together. At the end of the story, Gwyn realizes that she will be happy, for she loves Burl.



Part 1: Chapters 1-6

Part 1: Chapters 1-6 Summary

Gwyn, a young girl in a fictional world called The Kingdom, dons the costume of a character called Jackaroo, a Robin-Hood type figure who goes around the countryside, helping those in need. In the first section, the reader is introduced to Gwyn and her brother Tad at an event called the "Doling," where the Earl's Steward hands out food stores that the government collected earlier in the year. Though the people are unkind to Gwyn because she is the daughter of a wealthy innkeeper and should not need the supplies, she is actually collecting them for an older woman, Old Megg, who lives in a hut on her father's estate. One old woman at the Doling is particularly kind to her, and Gwyn offers to walk her home in the snow. However, when they arrive at the old woman's home, they find that her dog has been slaughtered and her nanny goat - her and her husband's source of food for the winter - has been stolen. Gwyn has no choice but to go home with her sulky brother, although she is enraged.

In Chapter 3, Gwyn reflects on the legend of Jackaroo, but does not have much time to do so. On arriving home, she talks briefly with her father's servant, Burl, who is upset that her sister, Rose, has become engaged to a man named Wes, instead of him. When she enters the house, Gwyn finds it in chaos, and is in trouble for arriving late: two unexpected guests have arrived, a Lord and his son. In Chapter 4 and 5, Gwyn and Burl go to check on Old Megg, and find that she too has been robbed. However, instead of allowing the thieves to take the inn's goats, she has set them free. Several have come back, and Gwyn has the idea to take one to the old couple, so that they might be able to survive the winter, while Old Megg goes to stay with The Weaver in town. Knowing that her parents would disapprove of her plan to give away one of their goats, Gwyn waits until Chapter 6, when she is supposed to be cleaning supplies out of Old Megg's house and sneaks away to anonymously leave a goat with the old couple.

Part 1: Chapters 1-6 Analysis

The first section of Part 1: The Innkeeper's Daughter establishes several important points that the book later develops in greater detail such as the setting, the characters, symbolism, and foreshadows the major plot points.

The setting is of great importance in the novel: the time and place (fictional and never completely specified) place constraints around the society that makes it very difficult for farmers and normal people to make a living. By beginning the action in the Doling room, the author allows the reader access into the tension and anger that such a hierarchy creates. Moreover, she introduces the characters as sympathetic, though angry, and particularly shows us an important side of Gwyn: her compassion. Though she is fierce, she helps people such as the old woman no matter how much discomfort it may cause her.



The major symbol in this section (and, indeed, throughout the book) is the landscape itself. Covered by snow and frozen, it is inhospitable to farmers and to travelers. This thaws as spring comes, later, bringing Jackaroo with it.

Thus, in this first section, Voigt presents the main character in an impossible situation. With her fierceness and compassion, we know that Gwyn cannot allow such injustice to continue around her. The introduction of the Jackaroo myth lends us some hope for the future, though the subtle foreshadowing does not yet allow us to see how this will take place.



Part 1: Chapters 7-12

Part 1: Chapters 7-12 Summary

In the second part of Part 1, soldiers are to be quartered at the Inn. While it is still winter, Gwyn works on teaching her younger brother, Tad, how to use a staff as a weapon, and they practice in the yard, as the lordling looks on. Her brother improves, but Gwyn is soon called away: her father has decided that she and Burl will accompany the Lord and his son on their map-making trip, helping them to navigate the land and look for lodgings. The group sets out to begin their journey; their first night, they stay with a farmer's family. The farmer has a young daughter called Liss, around Gwyn's age, who wants to chat and gossip. Though Gwyn finds her sweet, she has little patience for her.

In Chapter 8, the group continues their travels but hits rougher patches. Not only are settlements few and far between, but they are all growing weary. As the journey continues, a blizzard strikes. Gwyn ties the lordling to his horse with rope so that he can sleep and not fall off, riding with him, while Burl and the Lord ride the other, larger horse. Gwyn also falls asleep, and when she wakes, the group has been separated. Alone with the lordling in the blizzard, she finally finds structure and brings them inside, collapsing onto the ground.

When they wake in Chapter 9, she realizes that they are in Old Megg's house, which is still full of supplies, since Gwyn never actually cleaned the house out. Gwyn acts as his servant: while he looks at maps and drawings, she cleans out the house and prepares their meals. They still are very formal with each other, since it would be inappropriate to be too friendly. However, in Chapter 10, they grow closer; the lordling asks Gwyn about her future, which is still uncertain, as she does not wish to marry. Despite their growing friendship, Gwyn decides to keep a secret when she finds a sword, boots, and other items of a costume tucked away in one of the cupboards. Their friendship deepens in the following chapter, in which the lordling learns to chop wood and to use a staff, while he teaches Gwyn letters and how to read (a hobby that is forbidden to her as a commoner).

Finally, in Chapter 12, the weather is good enough for them to head back to the inn. The lordling wishes to play a bit and so Gwyn goes ahead into the Inn; there, the Lord approaches her, enraged, thinking that she has left his son to die. Eventually, it emerges that she hasn't; the Lord is contrite. Burl, who saved the Lord's life, welcomes Gwyn home and warns her that she must not remind the nobles of what has happened to them, and continue to act as though everything were exactly like it was before their trip.

Part 1: Chapters 7-12 Analysis

In the second half of Part 1, the author introduces characters who actually have power of a political and economic nature: the Lord and his son. These characters are the first of their class to show up in the novel and, because they are so individualized (with the lordling a curious mixture of pride and naivete, the Lord stubborn and strong), the novel hints that they will be important to the major action. In their company, and particularly in the lordling's company, other characteristics of Gwyn emerge: her industriousness, her cleverness, and her adaptability. Moreover, we see for the first time that she can escape some of the constraints of the social hierarchy, as she learns to read.

Indeed, here, the symbolism of the weather takes on its most violent form, as all four characters are trapped by the snow: that is, they are also trapped by social conventions. However, through intelligence and compassion, they are all able to survive (though Gwyn does not yet know that Burl and the Lord are safe).

As far as the plot goes, Gwyn's discovery of Jackaroo's costume, as well as her desire to keep it secret, make the earlier hints about Jackaroo that much more complex. She states no definitive plans for the costume, yet the reader must wonder what she plans to do with the items.



Part 2: Chapters 13-18

Part 2: Chapters 13-18 Summary

Chapter 13 begins the second and final section of the book, also called "Jackaroo." In this section, Gwyn is welcomed home by her family, and thanked profusely by the nobles. They leave her twelve pieces of gold; tucked inside is a message from the lordling, saying that he will never forget Gwyn. Gwyn must pretend in front of her family that she has no idea what the letters say - though she can, of course, read by this point. She also asks her father to make an announcement stating that she will not marry, much to her mothers' distress.

Some doubt is cast on Gwyn's decision when she goes to visit Old Megg in the village, to ask her about her life as a single woman. Rather than reacting positively to Gwyn's news, the old woman tells her that she would have gotten married if she could have, and that her single life had been miserable. On returning home, Gwyn is pleased to see that her brother is making progress mopping the floor: normally he is too lazy and protected to start such a task.

In Chapter 15, the Earl's Steward announces the tithe for the year: though it is high, it is half of what the farmers expected, so everyone is relieved. Gwyn wonders whether or not the Steward himself spread false rumors to exaggerate the size just so that the farmers would be grateful. Meanwhile, a fiddler begs for money from her father, who turns him down harshly. Gwyn sneaks away on her own, back to Old Megg's cottage. There, she pulls the clothes out of the cupboard and, trying them on, realizes that they hid the fact that she is a girl. She has become Jackaroo.

As spring comes in Chapter 16, Gwyn dresses as Jackaroo and goes to the fiddler her father rebuffed earlier to leave him one of her golden coins with which to pay his tithe. He is disbelieving, but very grateful. Later, she overhears the Fiddler boasting of his gain in the Inn's pub, and laughs to herself at his exaggerations of the story.

In Chapter 18, the family goes to a fair. On a hill overlooking the fair is a hanged man, who unnerves Gwyn, though nobody else appears to see him. The fair is full of dancing and singing; a group of jugglers particularly entertains them. She sees Liss, and watches a sword swallower. She notes that someone has left some poor musicians a gold coin, and deduces that it can only be Burl. A young man approaches her, thinking of proposing because of her new-found riches, but she rebuffs him and suggests Liss instead. A poor pig farmer, Am, then asks for her hand, as he is nearly destitute and a single father, but she turns him down as well.

Part 2: Chapters 13-18 Analysis

The beginning of Part 2 simultaneously demonstrates how acutely limited Gwyn's options for the future are, and offer her a way out of them in the form of Jackaroo's



character. She has decided never to marry; however, though a modern reader might be tempted to celebrate this decision, we are rebuffed by the harsh words of Old Megg, who has a miserable lifetime. We also see that other characters are equally trapped: the fiddler, who cannot raise money to pay his tithe; her father, by his inability to give money to everyone who needs it (and so he chooses to give money to nobody), and even Old Megg herself.

Jackaroo, then, represents a release from the rigid social structures. Gwyn delights in toying with these structures, first paying the fiddler enough money for his tithe. However, she also plays with the structures at the fair itself, refusing to marry, but rather playing matchmaker for her acquaintance Liss.

The gold coin that Burl leaves for the musicians also speaks to a similarity between him and Gwyn; where he might have acquired gold coins is a mystery, but the fact that he chooses to give them to the less fortunate, as well, signals a kinship that the book will develop in greater depth later on.



Part 2: Chapters 19-24

Part 2: Chapters 19-24 Summary

The soldiers have basically taken over the Inn in Chapter 19. Meanwhile, Gwyn continues her exploits as Jackaroo. She leaves two gold coins with Am, the pig farmer, and his family. However, as she rides away, she sees that thieves are in the area, and have set fire to a neighboring home. She goes in to find a dead couple, but a live baby. Moving quickly, she takes the baby nearby to her sister's home. Her sister, Blithe, had lost a baby the previous year, which devastated her. Still dressed as Jackaroo, Gwyn brings the new baby to her and tells her that she must raise it as her own. After some argument, Blithe finally accepts.

In Chapter 20, Gwyn decides to take her charade as Jackaroo one step further. She steals one of the soldier's horses and rides into the city. As it is Doling day, she pays all of the women present to go away, and sees the Earl's Steward alone. There, she describes the thieves to him and tells him that they must be brought to justice. He agrees, as she has him cornered with her sword. She takes the Earl's signet ring as a guarantee, telling him that he will get it back when the right three men have been hanged; this will guarantee that he does not hang the wrong people just to get it over with.

Gwyn is back at the Inn in Chapter 21, and the arrested highwayman and his keepers are arriving. When the prisoner arrives, he asks Da for something to drink, which is forbidden to him, and Da refuses. After speaking with her father, he confesses to Gwyn that the prisoner is actually his brother Win, who everyone believed to be dead. Gwyn tries to convince him to leave the Inn to Tad, instead of to her, as he had intended to do; she points out how much he has grown and how like her mother he is. Gwyn then goes into the Inn, where her elder sister has brought her new baby to introduce him. At the same time, however, Am the farmer has arrived to tell that he has been robbed; the two gold pieces that Jackaroo left him have been taken by robbers.

In Chapter 22, Gwyn uses all of her resources - the Inn's best food and wine, as well as some heavy flirting - to get the soldiers to sleep. She then goes in to try to free her Uncle Win dressed as Jackaroo, but is surprised to find that he thinks this funny. In fact, he once dressed as Jackaroo himself, which led to his capture and downfall. He warns Gwyn, without knowing who she is, but refuses to flee. He will accept his fate.

Chapter 23 covers the hangings, both of Uncle Win and of the three robbers. Because nobody knows that the man is Uncle Win, the family does not want to claim him and risk disgrace. However, Burl - as a single man - claims the body for the family, without being asked to. The three robbers are then hanged. Because the Steward found the correct three men, Gwyn knows that she must do the right thing and return his ring to him. However, she does not know how to do so without being captured herself. She therefore



throws the ring directly onto the scaffold. The Steward and his men search the audience and see nothing but Gwyn's friend Cam, who is laughing.

In Chapter 24, then, Cam is to be arrested. However, Gwyn has dressed as Jackaroo and come in to prevent him receiving an unjust punishment. She then sees Burl, who is also dressed as Jackaroo. The Earl's men chase them throughout the woods, wounding Gwyn but not harming Burl; she passes out from the pain and exhaustion.

Part 2: Chapters 19-24 Analysis

The freedom that Gwyn has previously experienced as Jackaroo is sharply curtailed in this section, as she (and others) experience the negative consequences of her actions. People have died because of her; and though she has done much good, she is still stepping out of the social order and must therefore pay. This is underscored by the appearance of Uncle Win in the picture: he is the image of what will happen to Gwyn if she continues down the path of Jackaroo. Furthermore, as we see her funds running short, the reader is led to wonder how sustainable such a life really is.

In this section, we simultaneously see Gwyn expanding Jackaroo's powers: all the more impressive, given how dangerous we have seen her future might be. She has previously used her powers just for financial good (except in the case of the baby). Here, she looks for revenge, but also justice: she searches for social good. On her return to the Inn, though, she sees that her works can also cause social evil - such as has befallen Am, who has spoken too freely about his good fortune.

For the first time, this section presents Jackaroo's powers as a mixed, and dangerous, blessing. This blessing eventually turns into a curse, as the wrong man is identified as Jackaroo; Gwyn's fight with the guards, Uncle Win's demise: all events point towards a bad ending, should Gwyn continue to "play" at being Jackaroo.



Part 2: Chapters 25-27

Part 2: Chapters 25-27 Summary

In Chapter 25, Gwyn wakes to find herself in Old Megg's house once again. Burl and Tad have brought her there to recover; the rest of the family believes that she has run away. They have had to cut her hair off because of her fever, and Burl has disposed of the Jackaroo clothes so that nobody will know the true story. However, her position is precarious, for soon the hut will be needed for seasonal workers, the pickers, who come to work the land. She thinks that she will go live in the mountains, but Burl dismisses this as unbelievably dangerous.

In Chapter 26, she goes and hides in the stables at the Inn. The family now knows that she is alive and more or less well, but cannot welcome her back publicly; the entire village thinks she has run off with Cam, who has gone to join the army. Luckily, however, she so little resembles her true self that everyone seems to believe her to be an ugly woman Burl has taken for himself.

Yet another Jackaroo appears in the town square - the Lord himself, though disguised. He proclaims that Jackaroo will no longer ride, if the Earls will accept to hear the people's grievances. He appoints Gwyn's Da as the bearer of these grievances. When the Lord and lordling pass through the Inn again as themselves, Gwyn has Burl send the lordling a message in the form of a wax "G", letting him know that she is there and in need of his help. Because of this, the Lord announces that Burl will be accompanying him home, and will bring his "woman" with him. Thus, Gwyn leaves her childhood home in the company of Burl, the Lord, and the lordling.

However, in Chapter 27, the reader discovers that she is not to be a servant, as she believed. The Lord takes Burl and Gwyn to his lands and presents them with a large former hunting lodge, which they will now use as an inn themselves. Discovering that she is in love with Burl, Gwyn accepts his marriage proposal and the Lord will marry them right there, on his land.

Part 2: Chapters 25-27 Analysis

The end of Part 2 concludes with the only happy ending left for Gwyn. Luckily, it is one that allows her both her freedom and her independence, while giving her love - the best of all worlds. The only downside is that she has had to leave her family; the literal road away from the Inn can be seen as a metaphorical road as well - the journey towards growing up.

By ridding the world of Jackaroo's two costumes, Burl has closed that path to them. Later, as they see the Lord acting as Jackaroo, they realize that it is perhaps a vocation only for those rich and powerful enough to risk it and not meant for peasants. The Lord, here, is the perfect incarnation of Jackaroo: both fearsome and awe-inspiring, he is both

representative of power and of the best possible uses of power, as incarnate in his gift to Gwyn and Burl.

Both Gwyn and Burl have gone beyond their stations in life: Gwyn to achieve freedom, Burl to marry above himself and to become a property and business owner. It is important, however, that they have broken through existing social structures only with the help of a powerful figure who is part of that structure. This is a character-driven book and the Lord in fact, serves as the central point around which the other characters turn, although they do not always realize it.



Characters

Gwyn

The heroine of the book, Gwyn is a sixteen-year-old girl when the story begins. She is the middle child, and has one older sister, one younger sister, and a younger brother. Nevertheless, she is fierce and independent. Her father intends to leave his Inn to her, rather than to her brother, despite the custom of the times and region, because of her cleverness. She is also beautiful, although this is never directly stated. Instead, Voight implies it through the reactions of other male characters to her. She has a strong distaste for injustice and the kind of poverty she sees all around her. Because of this social conscience, she jumps at the chance to become "Jackaroo," the mythical folk character who helps those who need it. She is lucky enough to have found "his" costume, as well as to receive a reward of twelve gold coins for protecting the young son of a lord. Having renounced marriage, Gwyn is not sure what she will do with the rest of her life, even after having become Jackaroo, for she does not have the means to let the fantasy go on forever; moreover, she learns that Jackaroo often ends up in the hands of the law and suffers, sometimes by being hanged. Nevertheless, her independence and intelligence allow her to escape from her part of the Kingdom to go away with the Lord's son she saved. He and his father set her and Burl up in an old hunting lodge that they may use as an inn, allowing Gwyn not only independence and more freedom than she otherwise would have had, but also protection from being caught as Jackaroo.

Burl

Once purchased by Gwyn's father (Da) at a market as an indentured servant, Burl has chosen to remain with the family over the years, for they treat him well. He now earns a small wage. He is a hard worker, unlike Gwyn's brother, and Gwyn wishes that he might be able to inherit the inn, though she knows it is not possible. Down-to-earth and respectable, Burl only breaks from this character when Gwyn is in danger, or he needs to act as protector. For example, he leads the Lord through a blizzard and is fierce in his struggle to get him home. Similarly, he dons the costume of Jackaroo when Gwyn's friend is falsely identified as the bandit, so that he will be arrested in his place. Generous to a fault, Burl gives money to beggars and performers at the fair the family attends. He similarly covers up for Gwyn when she uses the horses at the inn, and later the horses of the soldiers who are stationed there. Later, when Gwyn must run away to save her life, he goes with her, providing her cover and eventually proposing to her. Though it is clear that he loved her all along, Gwyn only realizes at the end of the book that she loves him, as well.



Uncle Win

This is Da's brother and Gwyn's uncle. Originally the "golden boy" of the family, Uncle Win was once engaged to Gwyn's mother and set to inherit the inn from his father. However, he also dressed as Jackaroo in his spare time and went around the area saving the citizens; it is strongly implied that the costume Gwyn has found originally belonged to him. When the prisoner arrives to be quartered at the inn on the way to his execution, the family slowly realizes that he is none other than Win. Knowing this, Gwyn tries to save him, dressed as Jackaroo. However, knowing that Jackaroo is a myth (having played him himself), Win just laughs and tells her that he has accepted his fate. He goes to his hanging peacefully; Burt claims the body for Gwyn's family, without letting on why he is doing so.

Da

This is Gwyn's father and the owner of the inn.

Gwyn's mother

Married to Da, she was originally engaged to Win.

Tad

This is Gwyn's younger brother.

Rose

Gwyn's younger sister; engaged to Wes.

Blithe

This is Gwyn's older sister who is married.

Joss

This is the name of Blithe's dead son also the name given to the son that "Jackaroo" gives her to rear instead.

Old Megg

This is an unmarried woman who lives in the shack on the inn's property.



Cam

This is the son of the weaver who flirts with Gwyn.

The Lord

This is a traveler passing through the inn who gets stuck in the blizzard with Burl.

The Lordling

This is the Lord's son who gets stuck in Old Megg's cabin with Gwyn during the storm.

The Weaver

This is Cam's mother who used to own property that is now part of the inn due to her poverty.

Am

This is a pig farmer who proposes to Gwyn for her money. She gives him two gold pieces as Jackaroo instead.

The Steward

This is the Earl's representative to the people.



Objects/Places

The Kingdom

This is the setting of Jackaroo and other novels in this series. A map is provided at the beginning of the book. The action in the book takes place in the middle of the Kingdom, though there is also the North Kingdom and the South Kingdom

Jackaroo's costume

Gwyn finds this hidden at Old Megg's house. She later discovers that there are many other similar ones throughout the Kingdom.

The Ram's Head Inn

This is Gwyn's childhood home.

The Falcon's Wing Inn

This is the inn in the South Kingdom that Burl and Gwyn will run together.

The Fair

This is the place where Gwyn buys presents for her sister's wedding, sees Burl leave the coin.

The Hanging

This is the place where the entire family goes to see Uncle Win hanged.

Gold Coins

This is the very rare and valuable currency that Gwyn receives twelve for protecting the Lordling during the blizzard, and subsequently gives them away.

Nanny Goat

The old couple's goat is stolen at the beginning of the story. Gwyn replaces it with one from the Inn to provide them with food.



The Doling

This is an occasion when the Steward, on behalf of the Earl, doles out food rations to the starving citizens of the Kingdom.

The Steward's Ring

Gwyn, as Jackaroo, takes the ring as proof that the steward will find the right men to hang. When she returns it, throwing it back at him at the hanging, she realizes that she has given herself away.

Slate

The Lordling originally teaches Gwyn to write on a slate that can be erased.

Candle Wax

Later, Gwyn communicates to the Lordling in candle wax, sending him a "G" or the first letter of their names to let him know she is all right.

Writing

A symbol of power, usually forbidden to the lower classes. However, the Lordling teaches Gwyn letters and writing.

Old Megg's Home

This is the place where Gwyn and the Lordling take shelter from the blizzard and eventually become friends.

Setting

Neither the time nor the geographical location of Jackaroo is ever specifically identified, but we learn in the opening pages that women are in a subservient role. Gwyn first appears among the other women who have come to the Doling Room to receive a portion of the food being distributed to the needy. She knows that "men don't come to the Doling Room. The shame would be too great for man to carry."

This is a society of unbending rules and fixed class structures. The Lords, the Earls, and the King are the ruling class; the "people" are their subjects who have no choice but to pay their taxes and obey the laws of the rulers.

Gwyn lives at her father's inn, and her family has more wealth and security than most of the "people" who live in huts and suffer much when crops are poor and taxes are high. Gwyn's home is in the Northern Kingdom which is bounded by mountains, forests, and a river. It has a harsh climate with cold winter blizzards. It is in this medieval setting with its feudal caste system that Gwyn decides to take on the role of Jackaroo.



Social Sensitivity

Voigt creates a vivid picture of medieval life, the hard work, the harsh environment, the rigid class system, and the violence and suffering that was a part of that life. In one of the first episodes in the book, when Gwyn helps the old woman with her basket of food, they come upon a scene where the violence has already occurred. The old woman's husband is a helpless invalid; he was injured long ago when a horse rode over him while the Lord's were hunting. And now, while he was alone, three robbers had stolen their only goat and killed their dog, which they left lying in the snow outside the hut.

Later, when Gwyn travels with her family to the fair for a day of weddings and festivities, she looks up to see the body of a man "hung from a scaffold, its head down, turning in the wind. Its hands were bound behind it, and it looked, at the distance, like a broken doll or scarecrow."

As Jackaroo, Gwyn comes upon another hut that has been invaded by robbers, but this time the hut and its inhabitants have been set afire. Inside the hut she finds the body of a woman whose "hair had already caught fire.

Flames danced around her face and crawled along the floor to her bloodstained chest." Then Gwyn sees the burned body of a man just before the walls cave in on it.

Gwen hears the villagers talking about a highwayman who is being "journeyed" through the towns and villages as a warning to anyone who would be tempted to disobey the laws.

He finally appears before the inn with a rope around his neck, his hands tied behind, and his feet dragging in exhaustion. By the time Gwyn goes to his hanging, she has learned that the highwayman is her uncle and that he too once played the part of Jackaroo. On the day of his execution, both the people and the rulers have gathered to watch. Voigt shares this scene with her readers: "The executioner slid the bolt open. The trap door fell away. The body plummeted down and hung. . . .

The head lolled sideways, the feet kicked, and then the body rotated gently at the end of the rope."

Scenes of violence are painted with clear and specific details, but they are not over emphasized. They are interwoven throughout the text as they are a part of the daily lives of the characters. It is essential that Gwyn see these scenes for they provide her motivation to assume the role of Jackaroo and, later, to abandon it.



Literary Qualities

The novel is divided into two parts, and their titles reflect Gwyn's changing role: Part I, "The Innkeeper's Daughter," and Part II, "Jackaroo." In Part I, Gwyn's role as a woman, the daughter of the innkeeper, is clearly established.

When she returns from a long journey through the snow to the Doling Room, she is still expected to work at the inn, carrying trays of food, bringing in fire wood, and grooming the horses—all before she can have her own dinner.

When the Earl and his son demand her services as they travel through the countryside, she walks while they ride, they speak as she listens, and she serves their meals before she eats her own.

But even in Part I her role as Jackaroo is foreshadowed. As she stands in the Doling Room and looks at the women in ragged clothes and tattered shoes filled with straw, she feels guilty for having a warm cloak and sturdy boots. Out of sympathy for one of the older women, she offers to carry the woman's food basket. As they walk together, the woman recalls tales of Jackaroo, a legendary hero of the poor whom she claims to have seen once long, long ago. She asks Gwyn a significant question: "There's no one then, bold enough, brave enough to stand for the poor when the Lords get greedy, or when times are bad?" At this point Gwyn can answer only with a shrug.

When they reach the hut, Gwyn sees what happens when the poor begin robbing the poor. Thieves have broken in and stolen a goat, the only source of milk for the old woman and her husband. Gwyn is not content until she has found a way to replace the goat, but she does so anonymously, hoping the old woman will think it was Jackaroo. Later, when Gwyn finds the clothes of Jackaroo hidden in an old cupboard, most readers will guess that she will eventually wear the clothes and take on the hero's role.

Part I has prepared Gwyn emotionally for her new role: She sees the need of a champion for the people and she feels isolated from her own family. In Part II, her transformation into Jackaroo is gradual and believable. First she goes back to the hut where she and Gaderian were snowbound, the hut where she had discovered a hidden cupboard which held the traditional costume worn by Jackaroo. She tries on the clothes and practices walking in the boots while carrying a heavy sword. In her first venture into the world as Jackaroo, she has no horse. She simply walks to the home of a poor fiddler and gives him the silver coin to pay his taxes. She is elated by her new role: "Gwyn swept the hat off and made him a low bow. Then she turned abruptly and entered the woods." But she needs a horse to make her role complete, so she leaves the inn at night, borrows a horse from her father's stable, and rides through the countryside, distributing money to the needy, saving the life of a small baby, and manipulating the justice system to bring three guilty men to trial. Gwyn recognizes the conflict of her two roles: "Often, in those days, she felt like an actor masquerading as the Innkeeper's daughter. Gwyn felt as if she were two people."



Gwyn is not the only character who plays two roles. The theme of masks and masquerading is woven throughout the novel. After her threatened execution, not only Gwyn but also her parents silently agree to pretend there has been no change in their relationship. They pretend they did not abandon her to the Lord's sword; she pretends it did not happen. Later, when she looks at her father, she sees a prosperous man who works hard and provides for his family, but she knows that others see him as a greedy man who takes advantage, buying up the holdings when the poor cannot pay their taxes. "She did not know which was the true, which the false innkeeper.", Gwyn is not the only one who rides as Jackaroo. Burl dons the costume when he thinks Gwyn is in danger.

And the Lord himself returns as Jackaroo to issue his demand for a new system of justice. Gwyn recognizes the voice behind the mask: "But she had not thought that the Lords, too, would go outside their own lives to ride as Jackaroo." And finally, the Lord returns as himself, the Earl of Sutherland, to carry out his own plans.

"Gwyn smothered a laugh. There was so much masking and masquerading going on, it was a wonder the world didn't just crumble apart like an overdone pastry."

Gwyn has always seen Burl in the role of servant. It is not until the close of the novel that he is unmasked and she sees him as the one who fulfills her own prophecy; that is, he is the one man she could marry. Early in the novel, while attending a fair, Gwyn notes that above the crowd of merrymakers, on the wall of the city, hangs the body of a man executed by the Lords and left as a warning to all who would break the laws. No one else at the fair seems to notice him; but Gwyn does, and, even though she has vowed not to marry, she promises herself, "If there were a man who also saw the body hanging above the walls, then that man she might make her life with." When Burl proposes to her, she remembers her promise and recalls that Burl was the one man at the fair who had noted the hanging figure and told her why the man had been executed—he had 3410 Jackaroo struck a soldier. Gwyn had not seen behind Burl's mask as a servant; now she realizes he is the man she should marry.



Themes

Social Justice

One of the most important aspects of "Jackaroo" is the search for social justice. In a society suppressed by a rigid structure in which everyone is subject not only to the king, but also to his Earls and Lords, many people suffer, especially during a hard winter such as that depicted in the book. Many people confront tragedy through no fault of their own: thieves take away the old couple's nanny goat, the weaver loses her holding after her husband dies, and many go hungry and must present themselves at the "doling," which is viewed almost as a kind of begging. In such a society, a myth such as Jackaroo would be welcome: a mysterious stranger provides social justice of his own kind. As the novel progresses, this is exactly what Gwyn ends up doing. She always uses the Jackaroo guise to restore what she (and the reader) see as justice. She gives coins to poor farmers, a baby to her sister, and helps many who cannot help themselves. However, with the power for justice also comes great responsibility, which Gwyn does not initially realize. However, farmers who brag too much are robbed, and a certain amount of violence befalls those among them who speak too loudly of what Jackaroo has brought them, as thieves come to take it for themselves.

Disguise

Many characters in "Jackaroo" are not what they seem. The most important of these, of course, is Jackaroo himself: not really one person, but rather a concept, embodied by a variety of people in order to restore justice to the kingdom. Jackaroo exists only through the disguises scattered around for those brave enough to pretend to be him. Gwyn finds that she is more herself as Jackaroo than she is trying to fit into the social role that her family has ordained for her. She is not the only character who puts on a disguise over the course of the book: her Uncle Win has also been disguised as Jackaroo, and is now in the "disguise" of a poor trapped bandit, so as not to bring shame on the family. Burl, as well, dons Jackaroo's outfit, to save Gwyn, revealing a side to him that he had previously hidden (making his stoic every-day manner almost like a disguise in itself). Furthermore, Gwyn's father acts proud and rich as the head of the family, and yet he also worries about the future of the inn. As the novel progresses, we also learn that he feels he's always been "second choice," as it was his older brother Win who should have married Gwyn's mother and inherited the inn.

Freedom

Within the rigid hierarchy that the book describes, some characters have far more freedom than others. Nevertheless, each character is trapped by various outside forces to a certain extent. Gwyn is trapped by her gender, and finds some freedom: first in the form of Jackaroo, and then by running away with the Lords and with Burl. Burl, on the



other hand, can only gain freedom from his life as a servant by accompanying the Lords. Conversely, Win refuses the freedom that Gwyn offers to him, seeing it not as freedom but rather just as a way to keep on running from the law. Characters like Gwyn's father or the Steward, while they may seem better off as they have more money, are equally trapped within their roles: Gwyn's Da feels he cannot give money to a man who begs from him, or he will have to give it to everyone, while the Steward acts only on the Earl's orders. Nevertheless, they do have some flexibility in their roles, as the Steward proves when he follows Gwyn's/Jackaroo's orders to hunt down the three thieves. Of course, in the case of the majority of the novel's characters, they are trapped by poverty, which they can do little or nothing to overcome, greatly limiting their freedom. In the end, the novel seems to promote the idea that, though we all have barriers to overcome, we are only as trapped as we make ourselves, to the extent that we accept our social roles. In Voigt's world, any amount of freedom is the ultimate gift.



Themes/Characters

Gwyn, the innkeeper's daughter, is a nonconformist. She rebels against the traditional role which she is expected to play as a woman. If she does not marry a man of her father's choosing, she has few options—to live alone, dependent upon the charity of others, or to go as a servant for a lord. Neither of these roles appeals to Gwyn who reaches a turning point in her life, one that causes her to break with her family and to feel even more isolated and somehow different.

While taking care of the young son of a Lord, Gwyn and the boy become snowbound and are forced to spend many weeks in an isolated cabin. To help pass the monotonous hours, the young lord, Gaderian, teaches Gwyn to read and write. They both know they are breaking the law and agree to tell no one what Gwyn has learned. When the storm ends and they are able to return to the inn, Gwyn arrives first while Gaderian playfully hides in the snow. The Lord, believing his son has been abandoned, puts a dagger to Gwyn's throat and is about to execute her while her family watches in shame, making no attempt to rescue her. When Gaderian suddenly appears, Gwyn's life is spared, but she cannot forget that her family had been willing to renounce her. Although they all try to pretend that nothing has changed, Gwyn knows this is not true, and "it frightened her to realize how little she belonged here, in the one place where she belonged more than anyplace else."

Gwyn is compassionate as well as independent and has a strong sense of justice. Early in the novel her sympathetic nature is established when she offers to carry an old woman's basket as they return from the Doling Room.

Her sense of justice is outraged when they reach the old woman's hut and discover that her only goat has been stolen and her dog was killed while her invalid husband could do nothing to stop the thieves.

Despite her estranged feeling, Gwyn is not indifferent to her family. Her ties of love and loyalty remain strong.

When her adventure as Jackaroo brings her into conflict with the law, she hides her identity to protect her family.

When she has an opportunity to escape to the Southern Kingdom, she finds it hard to leave her father, mother, and brother and the inn which has been her home. But her independence gives her the strength for this new adventure.

Although Gwyn is the main character and the focus of the story, Burl, the servant who loves her, is always in the background of her adventures. Burl is quiet, calm, and dependable. Both his deep voice and sturdy body are strong and reassuring. Purchased as a young boy to work at the inn, he is a loyal and valued servant. When Gwyn, as Jackaroo, is in danger, he too dons the hero's costume and comes to her rescue. When



she is injured, he nurses her back to health. When she is forced to leave her home, he travels with her.

And when she begins a new life in the Southern Kingdom, he marries her.

Gwyn's life is also intertwined with the Earl of Sutherland and his son, Gaderian. The Earl is cold and haughty; he is ready to execute Gwyn when he believes his son is lost. But he is honorable; when he learns the truth, he acknowledges his error and promises to be a trusted ally. In the end he repays his debt by helping Gwyn to escape from the Northern Kingdom and providing a place of refuge, a home in the South.

Gaderian, the Earl's son, is a frightened young boy, forced to play the role of a cold and aloof member of the ruling class. Snowbound in an isolated cabin, he still demands that Gwyn enact the role of servant, but at night he cries in his sleep as he dreams of his mother's death. When he can stand the monotony no longer, he begins to talk to Gwyn as a person, not as a subject, eagerly questioning her about her life at the inn, sharing his own experiences, and teaching her to read. Like his father, he remains loyal and eventually helps Gwyn to escape to the Southern Kingdom.

Gwyn's family, although minor characters remaining in the background of her adventures, are clearly portrayed as real people, neither all good nor all bad, but a convincing mixture of both.

Da is a prosperous innkeeper, envied by some for his vast holdings, but respected by most for his fair dealings.

He loves Gwyn and is willing to name her as his heir, passing over his only son. He urges her to think carefully about her decision not to marry, but is willing to abide by her choice. And, in the end, under the Earl's direction, he agrees to renounce the holdings he has claimed through other men's misfortunes. Gwyn's mother is more critical than Da; she has a sharp tongue and is quick to point out Gwyn's flaws and the problems she is causing the family.

But she works hard to make the inn prosper and never complains that the man she married was her second choice. Tad, Gwyn's young brother, has been spoiled by his parents who feared for the health of their only son. But it is Tad who helps Burl to nurse and feed the injured Gwyn. As Tad gradually assumes the work of the inn, even Gwyn realizes he is the appropriate heir.

The themes of the novel are implied through the causes which Gwyn champions: a woman's right to be free and independent and everyone's right to justice under the law. First, Gwyn chooses not to marry, then she assumes the role and clothes of a man, and finally, she agrees to marry but only to a man of her own choosing. Marriage does not mean she has relinquished her freedom; Burl knows he will not have a subservient wife, but he will not try to change her.

Although Gwyn and Burl have been exiled from their home in the Northern Kingdom, the novel ends on an optimistic note, suggesting that life will now be better for the people.

As Jackaroo, Gwyn had risked her own life to bring three thieves and murderers to justice. The Earl of Sutherland approves of her action and, therefore, establishes a new system of justice, allowing the people to bring their concerns before the Lords.



Style

Point of View

The story is told from the third-person and limited point of view. Though the reader sees the events through Gwyn's eyes, the third-person narration allows us to see these events as objectively presented, and eliminates the possibility of an unreliable narrative. This makes the social injustices of the setting all the more enraging, as we both understand the objective reality and Gwyn's response to it. Furthermore, the limited narration makes Gwyn's actions seem reasonable and even inevitable for the reader: as we become further enmeshed in her world we see the Jackaroo disguise as one of her only means of escape, and the narrative encourages the reader's support of Gwyn's antics. However, because the narration is limited, it also allows for surprises and even shocks. When the group is lost in the blizzard, the reader cannot know if Burl and the Lord are safe, as Gwyn does not know herself. We also cannot know what will happen to her if she continues as Jackaroo, until she discovers Uncle Win's fate along with the reader. The point of view thus creates a believable world that is at once objectively described and emotionally powerful.

Setting

The setting of Jackaroo is never precisely given; it is a novel in "The Kingdom," which seems to be a medieval region much like one might have found in England centuries ago. However, though this is closest to what the present-day reader would expect, the novel is never given a specific setting beyond this, and places are always described in terms on The Kingdom itself: the North Kingdom, the South Kingdom, and so on. Voigt gives the reader clues: Gwyn refers to "miles," when walking (not using the metric system), implying that she is certainly in an Anglophone country. Moreover, the language (see below) mimics patterns of earlier English usage. Within this setting, the map at the beginning of the novel provides a tool for the reader to get acclimated in the world of the book. This map shows The Kingdom bordered on all sides by woods, and by a large body of water to the East (beyond the woods). A river running from South to North, then splitting like a Y, divides The Kingdom in half. The imprecise language on the map (including "Many Days' Journey" a couple times) reinforces the rudimentary maps the Lord is creating during his visit to the Ram's Head Inn. Combined, these elements give the reader the sense of a place that is at once familiar and unfamiliar, both historical and fantasy.

Language and Meaning

For the most part, the book is told in straightforward English, much like today's standard English. However, certain expressions and phrasings recall the Middle Ages and earlier periods in history, such as "Osh aye," or "Da," which the characters often use. These



expressions, similar to ones currently used, reinforce a sense of familiarity within the foreign world of the book. Language, and particularly titles, also plays an important role where the characters are concerned. For example, the Lordling is offended when Gwyn forgets to call him "My Lord," even when they are stranded together in the middle of a blizzard. This insistence on formality highlights the hierarchical structure of The Kingdom's political system. It is also partially through language that Gwyn can assume the character of Jackaroo. Not only must she lower her voice, but she speaks only a few words, to keep herself mysterious (and to hide the fact that she is a girl). This draws attention to the nobility of Jackaroo, very much unlike Gwyn, who chatters often to the other characters in the story. Normally when she speaks, though, Gwyn is very straightforward, while she finds that she must be more vague and mysterious as Jackaroo. This difference highlights the importance of language for creating character, as the characters are defined not only by what they do, but also by their words. For example, when Blithe comes with her new baby, she insists verbally that the baby is her own. The language exchange between her and her mother shows that she is creating her actions by repeating what she will do, reinforcing the commands of Jackaroo.

Structure

The book is divided into two sections: Part One, The Innkeeper's Daughter, and Part Two, Jackaroo. They roughly divide the novel in half, and are composed of several labeled chapters each. The labeling of the sections highlights one of the most important aspects of the book: Gwyn's transformation within a rigid social structure. To describe the first part of the story as being about "The Innkeeper's Daughter" demonstrates that she is not only a child, but also thought of as belonging to someone else - hardly a person in her own right. In addition, the fact that her father is referred to as "the Innkeeper" underscores the importance of occupation to social standing in the world of the novel. However, the second part, "Jackaroo," shows Gwyn coming into her own. The title of the second part indicates that Gwyn has found an identity of her own - even if she has, in part, borrowed it from others who came before her time. The progression of these two sections demonstrates that Gwyn is growing up throughout the book; in addition, she is forging an identity of her own - partially shaped around being "The Innkeeper's Daughter" and partially around "Jackaroo." Interestingly, she will have to renounce both of these identities to survive by the end of the book; but this renunciation leads her to a happier life than she could otherwise have expected.



Quotes

"It was not their fault that their family's luck held good; but this was not the place to display good fortunes" (Chapter 1, p. 3).

"That was a dangerous envy to be spoken aloud, that envy of the lords, warm and safe in their castles, well fed, with soldiers to protect them" (Chapter 1, p. 5).

"Will he be Jackaroo then, think you" (Chapter 2, p. 19).

"You've a sharp eye as well as a good heart, Innkeeper's daughter" (Chapter 2, p. 25).

"From the north the Kingdom was like a walled city, with the mountains preventing entrance...Nobody knew anything of the lands beyond the mountains" (Chapter 5, p. 51).

"Do you think there's trouble coming?"
"Trouble's here, Innkeeper's daughter"
(Chapter 5, p. 57).

"Gwyn took the Lordling by the arm and pulled him behind her toward the hut" (Chapter 8, p. 100).

"You could come and serve us. Except, we wouldn't be able to talk like this. We're never alone with a servant, you know."
"Besides, I'd make a terrible servant," Gwyn agreed, though she smiled at the kindness of his intention" (Chapter 10, p. 133).

"GWYNIDONOTFORGETYOU DONOTFORGETMEGADERIAN" (Chapter 13, p. 172).

"If Old Megg knew about the secret cupboard, and its contents, she would keep her secret" (Chapter 14, p. 180).

"Her feet planted wide apart, she raised the sword to the sky. 'Jackaroo,' she said, her voice a whisper" (Chapter 15, p. 197).

"She could not see him from where she stood, but he dangled at the edge of the fair, and she did not forget that. Let others forget" (Chapter 17, p. 218).

"Little was said more than those two words, 'he rides,' but there was wariness on all faces" (Chapter 20, p. 252).

"Your brother? I didn't know you had a brother."
"Aye, you did know. It's Win."
"But he's dead"
(Chapter 21, p. 277).



Topics for Discussion

Would you consider Gwyn to be a feminist? Why or why not? Use examples from the book to support your answer.

Though "The Kingdom" is fictional, can it be said to resemble a particular time or place? Where, and why? What might Voight's reasons for using this setting be?

What happens to Jackaroo after the end of the story? Does the author give any sense that he will continue?

Jackaroo is a myth, much like Robin Hood. Why do you think this myth arose - did Jackaroo come from the myth, or did the myth come from the first "real" Jackaroo? How is it important to the people of the kingdom? What is its purpose?

What is the significance of lodging, and particularly inns, to the story? How can they be read as metaphorical, and what is their overall importance to the main characters of Jackaroo?

When they are together in Old Megg's hut, the Lordling teaches Gwyn how to read. Why is this subversive? What commentary does this make about the power structures visible in the book?

Why is everyone so shocked when Gwyn announces that she will not marry? Contrast this with her ultimate acceptance to marry at the end of the book - what has changed, both in the circumstances and in the character herself?

Compare and contrast Uncle Win and Gwyn's father. How are they similar? How are they different?

Why does Uncle Win not escape when given the chance? Discuss his choice in terms of power structures, legends, and other themes present in the book.



Essay Topics

1. Are Gwyn's adventures as Jackaroo believable? If yes, what makes them so? If not, why are they not plausible?

2. Gwyn's family did not come to her defense when the Lord, believing his son was dead, threatened to kill her.

Do you condemn or excuse them? Consider the time in which they lived and explain your answer.

3. The story has a happy ending with Gwyn and Burl married and living safely in a new country. Is this ending believable? Explain your answer.

4. Who understands Gwyn better, her mother or her father? Defend your answer with evidence from the novel.

5. When Gaderian taught Gwyn how to read, he was breaking the law. Why would the rulers make such a law? Has there ever really been such a law?

Where? When? Why?

6. Consider the character of Tad, Gwyn's young brother, noting and identifying how he changes as the story progresses. Are these changes believable? Explain your answer.

7. Is there too much violence in the story or is it essential to the plot? Identify specific episodes and defend your answer.

8. Voigt never tells the reader much about Gwyn's appearance. Why has she omitted these details?

Ideas for Reports and Papers

1. Read an account of the adventures of Robin Hood. Compare this legendary hero with Jackaroo, noting similarities and differences.
2. How accurate is Voigt in portraying the medieval era in regard to (1) class structure, (2) government, or (3) culture? Base your evaluation on documented research.
3. Read the sequel to this novel, *On Fortune's Wheel*. Compare the two heroines, Gwyn and Birle, noting similarities and differences.
4. Based on your understanding of Gwyn and Burl, write another chapter in which they begin their new life in a new land.
5. Analyze the character of Gwyn, the Innkeeper's daughter. In what ways is she a product of the time in which she lived? In what ways is she a very modern heroine?

Further Study

Campbell, Patty. "The Young Adult Perplex." *Wilson Library Bulletin* (March 1986): 50-51. The author analyzes elements of fantasy as they appear in novels such as *Jackaroo* which are written for young adults.

Clark, Hattie. Review. *Christian Science Monitor* (November 1, 1985): 81. The reviewer praises the author for effectively using character, setting, and theme to tell an engrossing story.

Kaufman, Dorothy. "Profile: Cynthia Voigt." *Language Arts* 62 (1985): 876880. Based on an interview with Voigt, Kaufman discusses the source of Voigt's characters and plots and the importance of writing in her life.

Nelms, Beth, and Ben Nelms. Review.

English Journal 75, 2 (1986): 106. The reviewers recommend the book, noting the development of Gwyn's character and role in Parts I and II.

Review. *Booklist* (September 15, 1985): 126. The reviewer notes Voigt's strength in character development.

Voigt, Cynthia. "Cynthia Voigt." In *Speaking for Ourselves*. Edited by Donald R. Gallo. Urbana, IL: NCTE, 1990, 217-218. Voigt emphasizes the normality of her life, noting that writing is the most exciting part.

Related Titles

On Fortune's Wheel was published five years after Jackaroo. In this novel Birle, the granddaughter of Gwyn and Burl, lives an equally adventurous life.

Because her grandparents had taught her to read and write, Birle is able to survive when she is sold as a slave and serves as secretary and scribe for her master. When Birle meets the grandfather of Orien, the young Earl that she will marry, she discovers he knew her grandparents. The old man is Gaderian, now an elderly ruler, who remembers Gwyn, the young girl who saved his life. The most recent addition to this series of loosely connected novels is *The Wings of a Falcon*. In this adventure story, the hero, Oriel, meets Beryl, the granddaughter of Birle and Orien. By the end of the novel, Beryl has become the wife of the Earl of Sutherland, the role which her grandmother Birle had rejected many years before. The three novels can be read independently, but when read in sequence, readers make interesting connections which enrich their literary experience.



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