

# **Remembering Babylon Study Guide**

## **Remembering Babylon by David Malouf**

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## Plot Summary

The story begins with a strange man walking out of the Australian wilderness, or bush, into an English settlement in the early 1860's. The settlers are suspicious of the visitor. Even though he proves he is in fact, English, he was raised by black natives and is therefore viewed by some as untrustworthy. The man, Gemmy, speaks limited English and makes some notable friends in the settlement.

The McIvor family decides to take in the visitor. The father, Jock, although reluctant at first, does grow to like Gemmy. The oldest daughter Janet also has a strong bond with him. The "adopted" cousin, Lachlan, who does not get along well with Janet, also has a friendship with Gemmy and acts as his protector.

The minister, Mr. Frazer, finds that Gemmy's knowledge is invaluable in his botany work and they work to categorize the various kinds of plants and fruits in the area. Gemmy shows him what uses the different plants have and which ones are edible. Mr. Frazer uses the information to write a report showing how the colonists can make use of the native crops. Eventually he presents the information he has gathered to the governor, but is rebuffed.

Several other settlers don't like Gemmy and see him as a "white black" and therefore a threat to their livelihood. In keeping a close watch on him, they see a meeting between Gemmy and some natives. Their interpretation of this is that Gemmy is a spy for the natives. This event puts a serious strain between the McIvors and especially Jock, who protects Gemmy, and the rest of the settlers. Eventually Gemmy is attacked and is rescued by Jock. For his own safety, Gemmy moves further out of town to live..

Gemmy believes that the papers used to record his story upon initially entering the village contain his magic and must be returned to him. He feels his energy slipping by being so far away from his native home. He gets back the papers he believes to be his, and walks back into the bush.

Years later, Janet and Lachlan reminisce about their times in the settlement and reflect how much Gemmy brought to their lives.



# Chapter 1

## Chapter 1 Summary

Three children are playing in a field near their property line (a boy and two girls). It is the mid-nineteenth century in Queensland, Australia, when settlements were isolated and still very fearful of the aboriginal, or native, population. Beyond the boundary fence, a figure came out of the swamp. At first, they think he is a native black and then realized he is white. It is his appearance and manner that reminded them of the natives they have heard of. He runs towards them, flailing his arms wildly. The two girls, Janet and Meg McIvor draw back. The boy, Lachlan Beattie, jumps into the lead and points his stick at the man, who is standing on the fence, flapping his arms like a bird. He speaks in ragged, but understandable English, "Do not shoot. I am a British object!"

He is very dirty and scrawny. The children have overheard adult conversations about the savages in the dark forests and are afraid. The man looks astonished that he has spoken. He has the dreadful odor of the swamp itself. Lachlan orders his "prisoner" to follow them and they walk down towards the settlement.

At the time, the settlement is the furthest out in the Queensland Territory. The "downtown" consists of a post office, a pub and a store. The settlers have spread out parcels of land, ranging up to forty acres in size. The spectacle of the three children and the haggard man draws a crowd when they entered the settlement. The twelve-year-old Lachlan likes the spotlight and tells his story over and over of how they had come across the strange fellow. The man smiles, showing his tooth stumps, and dances because of the attention he is getting. He has scorch marks on his chest and is missing an eyebrow. He smiles and then looks confused. Janet McIvor is annoyed at Lachlan, who keeps taking the credit for the incident.

The swamp, from which the mysterious man has walked, is unexplored. These people know very little about the natives and live in fear of them. There is some feeling of security in the light of day, but at night, the land seems wild again. Just three years ago, the settlement itself hadn't even existed. The nearest "civilization" is at the Lands office in Brisbane, six hundred miles away.

Over the course of the afternoon, the man answers some questions. His name was Gemmy Fairley. He was thrown from a passing ship sixteen years before and had lived with the blacks since then. At times, it becomes a game of charades, with Gemmy acting out the words he can't remember. The crowd likes the entertainment. Gemmy takes off his middle cloth, to the embarrassment of some and shows that the tattered garment had once been a jacket. He starts identifying body parts: arm, mouth, ear. He then wrestles a hammer from the audience and pantomimes hitting an imaginary nail.

The minister, Mr. Frazer, examines Gemmy the next day in the schoolhouse. George Abbot, the schoolmaster takes notes. Mr. Frazer asks questions and usually end up



putting words in Gemmy's mouth, since Gemmy is excited and wants to agree to almost all of Frazer's queries. George writes reluctantly. He is not happy with his role as a clerk. Some of his students press up against the windows to watch. The room is hot and, out of boredom, he begins entering some of his own phrases into the account. When they finish with the "interview," Mr. Frazer reviews the seven sheets and shows them to Gemmy. Gemmy knows what writing is, but has never learned to read. He looks over the pages and Mr. Frazer takes them back. Gemmy feels weak, as if the writing has drained the life from him. He thinks of the writing incident as magic.

## Chapter 1 Analysis

The sight of Gemmy walking out of the swamp both terrifies and excites the skittish settlers in rural Australia. The literal fear of the unknown plays a large part in the everyday lives of these people. This previously intangible fear is now represented by the strange man who has entered their midst.

The settlement is on the fringe of the known world, since most of Australia was unexplored by whites at this time, and so was perceived as vulnerable. While the man did offer some entertainment at first, the settlers quickly realized that he would be staying in the settlement. The thought disconcerted many of the settlers.

Gemmy had been raised by the aborigines and therefore is a strong believer in their customs. He feels physically weakened after his story is written by the schoolmaster. This is the result of Gemmy's belief that his thoughts have been taken from him and are now trapped, literally, on the paper.



# Chapter 2

## Chapter 2 Summary

Gemmy has a memory of lying on the beach, half in the water and covered with salt. Everything seemed to burn his body. There were naked, black women and children who had found him and given him water. He later found himself near a fire and dragged himself nearer to sit among the people. He found he could make faces to amuse them. They fed him some scraps and started preparations to break camp. When they left, he followed. They made camp later and he sat again with them. They watched him carefully, but made no effort to stop him.

Gemmy soon learned to live among them. He was fast and could grab food quickly and stuff it down when necessary. He could mimic and picked up their language rapidly. He realized how close they were to the land and how much they depended on it. Memories of his old life quickly fell away. On occasion, he would recognize an object from his past life, but was not to associate it with the English word. Gemmy would listen to the natives tell tales of how he had washed up on the beach and turned from a fish into a boy.

Although accepted, he was not considered a full member of their society. Gemmy was forbidden to touch certain objects and women would not associate with him. He remembered the word "boots" and his past life with some named Willett. He had nightmares and hoped he could let go of his old, troubled world and be at peace with the people here. When he heard of white spirits to the south riding large beasts and wearing clothes, he had to investigate for himself. He found an axe in the woods and the English term "axe" flashed into his brain, shocking him. He ate some corn meal he found and the magic of his youth surged through him. Gemmy felt he could get his English words back by being near the village. "He did not want to be taken back. He wanted to be recognized." He observed the settlement for several days before approaching the children who finally "found" him.

## Chapter 2 Analysis

Gemmy, although illiterate, is a quick learner. He had lived by his wits since he was a very young man and these wits aided him immensely when confronted with the aborigines. The aborigines helped him by dragging him from the beach and by giving him water, but he had to pull himself into their midst by the fire for them to notice him. He quickly realized that they were not going to take him with them when they broke camp; he had to follow on his own. He would have been left behind if he had not followed. By persisting, he found a place for himself in their group.

So the man the settlers first see was not the ignorant native he appears to be. He makes a conscious effort to approach the village and had reconnoitered for several

days before walking into the camp. Gemmy wants to experience his old "magic" and feels the words will enter him if he is close to the settlers.





# Chapter 3

## Chapter 3 Summary

The McIvor family lets Gemmy stay at their farm, in a lean-to against their hut. He helps the father, Jock, around the farm. Gemmy wants to work, but has trouble focusing for long. He can't lift much in his physical state. He quickly establishes a bond with the children who found him, especially Lachlan. The three children feel that they have a "right" to Gemmy and Gemmy doesn't mind being in their care. He teaches the girls which native roots are edible and trained Lachlan how to track animals. Gemmy works hard to please them. He instinctively feels Lachlan has power and wants to keep him on friendly terms.

Gemmy feels a connection with the older girl, Janet. At times, he believes that she can see inside him, to what he really is thinking. Her openness does not frighten him, though. He remembers her puzzled look when she saw him for the first time, perching on the fence. Lachlan, on the other hand, is easy to read. He wants authority. Janet is a mystery to him, though. She does not need witnesses to her power. It is secure.

Gemmy also likes to please the mother, Ellen. He finds that he can do things around the hut to make her life easier and she openly appreciates his efforts. Jock is fair to him, but is unsettled by his arrival. Jock feels the scrutiny of the neighbors after taking in the newcomer. He worries about staying on friendly terms with them. Some settlers think that Gemmy is a spy, sent in to pass back information to the natives. They worry that he is somehow in communication with them. Even some of the good-natured settlers find Gemmy unnerving.

Ned Corcoran feels that Gemmy is putting on an act, that he is fooling everyone with his antics. Gemmy has been with the natives since the age of thirteen. He had been white then, but is he still white after sixteen years with them? "Could you lose it? Not just language, but it. It." Gemmy's skin is white, but his facial expressions are native. He is considered black by some settlers. There is a great deal of distrust among them that his friendly, playful manner will not diffuse. He certainly moves like one of the natives. He can move quickly, without making a sound. Sometimes there is a slight movement and there Gemmy will be, grinning. Of course, Gemmy isn't the worry; it is others like him. They were the enigma and they were feared.

## Chapter 3 Analysis

Gemmy was feared because of who he is and what had become of him. Many settlers consider him a native merely because he acts like a native. As "one of them," he is not trustworthy. There are fears that he is planning, with natives lurking in the bush, to attack the settlement. The fears are backed up by an recent event that had recently been described in the story, *Comet River* (see Objects/Places). Many in the settlement



have had bad experiences, or have heard of bad experiences, with natives or other blacks.

Once at the settlement, Gemmy quickly learns to read people, just as he did with the aborigines. He tries hard to stay in favor with as many people as possible, especially the McIvors. Gemmy immediately sees Lachlan as insecure and in need of attention. He caters to this by being submissive and therefore, they get along well. Although friendly with Janet, he can't read her as the others. This both fascinates and scares him.



# Chapter 4

## Chapter 4 Summary

George Abbot tries to act older than the teenager he actually is. He carries a pipe and does not wish to be seen as a child. He does not like his position as the authority only over seven to twelve-year-old children. He teaches, with monotonous routine, from the readers and the times tables. He lashes out with his ruler to punish mistakes and this shames him greatly.

Ending up in Australia had been a fluke for him, a chance arrangement. He was appreciated and pampered as a child and was disappointed when his childish charm abruptly stopped working in his mid-teenage years. His godfather, Mr. Robinson, had paid for his schooling since his father had died. He felt indebted to him and could not argue when it was suggested he work in Australia although he had wanted to go to Africa, which he felt was more exciting.

In the schoolroom, with his fate sealed, George watches the class. He has forbidden the McIvors to bring Gemmy to school. He quickly sees Lachlan's intelligence and his desire for praise. He causes Lachlan to become apathetic by intentionally ignoring the wild waving of his hand in class.

## Chapter 4 Analysis

George Abbot is a miserable person who feels he had been coerced into moving to Australia. In this atmosphere, he routinely takes out his aggressions on his pupils. He feels a momentary surge of excitement when striking them, only to be replaced later by shame. He purposely turns Lachlan from an excited student into a bored, listless one by ignoring his need for attention.



# Chapter 5

## Chapter 5 Summary

Janet and Meg are delighted when they learn that their cousin from Scotland, Lachlan, is going to come and live with them. Lachlan's father, who was the oldest of five children, was killed in a mining accident. The McIvor girls have heard stories about life in Scotland from their mother, although they have never been there. All of the family, even the women, worked in the mines back then. Their backyard had been very small, especially contrasted with their current twenty acres in Australia. The brothers would come home from the mines so covered in black pit dirt that only their eyes and teeth showed. Ellen watched the dead-end life suck the spirit from the young men and decided she wanted out. She beams when she speaks of meeting Jock and is very excited to see Lachlan, someone fresh from the old country.

Lachlan arrives, but is ungrateful and is not interested in learning of this new land of opportunity. He begins referring back to Scotland for nearly everything, "At home in Scotland..." Janet is insulted. She feels angry that he can speak personally of Scotland, while she only knows about it second hand from her mother. Lachlan is arrogant and she aches, at times, to hit him. She does not like being relegated to the "number two" status among the children. Janet finds ways to hurt Lachlan and pushes him until he cries. Then she relents and comforts him. He does not return the affection. Even with their "at odds" relationship, they are close for brief periods of time. She tries to like him, but can't stand his dishonesty and braggart nature. She can't forgive him for his pride. If she knows something and he does not, he dismisses it as unimportant. Janet is envious that Lachlan was handsome; she doesn't consider herself pretty.

Over time, Lachlan sees that he will have to learn the ropes of the land and becomes skilled enough that even the adults look up to him. Again, Janet is upset that as a girl, she could never hope to show off her skills in the same manner and be rewarded for it. As a boy, Lachlan is very sure of himself. His vision for the future is clear; hers is not. Lachlan makes plans with Gemmy to travel the world. Gemmy is pleased at having a place in Lachlan's plans. They have become close friends.

Janet reads voraciously to seek some escape from her torment. Then one bright day, she loses a scab on her knee and is amazed at the pink color underneath that she has never seen before. She looks at the fields of grass and feels her life is suddenly brighter. She thinks it is "glory." In that moment, the world is open to her.

## Chapter 5 Analysis

Lachlan's arrogance is typical of the male attitude towards the new land of Australia. Most men did not take the time to see that there were things to be learned and studied, not just conquered in the new land. Lachlan will not let Janet show him anything

because in his mind, he already knows everything that is worthwhile. This infuriates Janet, who actually wants to like Lachlan, but can't get past his ego.

Scotland is a very congested, dirty place at this time. Australia is clean and new. There is space for all. Janet sees this and thinks it is terrible that Lachlan can't bring himself to appreciate this fact.



# Chapter 6

## Chapter 6 Summary

Ned Corcoran thinks that the native "problem" should be dealt with by force. He threatens to shoot any aborigine seen on his property. His comments make many others uneasy due to their bluntness, but most don't necessarily disagree with him. There are others who just want to live in peace and set up their communities. They see a future in which natives will be used as laborers or servants. These people are constantly worried about what would happen if they are wrong and the settlement is attacked.

Gemmy understands these two groups and acts accordingly. The violent-thinking ones are actually the easiest to deal with because they are so obvious. They act friendly toward him and try to get useful information about his previous life. When pressed for exact locations, he shifts landmarks to protect his previous "family." He feels a responsibility to the natives and wants to be sure that he doesn't provide the settlers with any useful tactical information. In return, the settlers belittle him and smile.

The peaceable folks are much more difficult for Gemmy to deal with. They want him to help them and it frustrates him that he can't explain to them why it isn't possible. The main problem is that there are crucial terms that simply don't exist in the English language. When he uses the native sounds, they become upset. The natives live in a way that takes in the land itself and until the settlers understand this, they will be and blind to what he tries to explain. As they become angrier, he becomes frustrated and more silent.

There was one notable exception is Mr. Frazer. Gemmy loves, explaining the native plants to the minister who seems genuinely interested. Frazer looks forward to their "botanise" sessions and sketches diagrams of the plants per Gemmy's instructions. Gemmy picks odd fruits, tastes them and then hands them to Mr. Frazer for scrutiny. Usually he tastes the fruit before licking his lips or spitting madly, depending on flavor. Gemmy is amused by Frazer's attempts to repeat the native language. It is usually wrong, but he tries hard.

Gemmy is aware of the balance of nature and keeps Mr. Frazer away from forbidden things. Several times he notices natives watching, to whom he discreetly signals a sign of respect. Other times he only senses the watchers and acknowledges them without ever seeing them. Frazer is oblivious to this.

## Chapter 6 Analysis

In some respects, Gemmy is a pawn, but is intelligent enough to be aware of this fact. Some settlers want to use him to make friendly contact with the natives, others want to use his knowledge to hunt and kill them. Gemmy is far more perceptive than he lets on and is not fooled by either group into endangering his former family. Gemmy's "ignorant looking" exterior shields him from much scrutiny because many people underestimate



his intelligence. Gemmy has a knack for summing up people by first impressions. The condescending manner that many settlers take towards Gemmy makes it easy for him to evade their questions. Since they already assume he is dumb, he doesn't mind playing the part to keep them at bay.



# Chapter 7

## Chapter 7 Summary

Jock McIvor tries continually to ease his neighbors' suspicions about his new guest. His closest neighbor, Barney Mason is not pleased to have the "white black man" living nearby. In the five months since Gemmy has joined them, he still has some unease himself about the newcomer. He is shamed that he still feels repulsed by Gemmy, as he had been on the first day. When Jock tries to assuage Barney's fears, he knows he still has some fears himself. It is important, however, to stay on friendly terms with the only neighbor within eyesight of his house. He tries his best to reassure Barney but still, Barney paces his property line, looking for incriminating signs of trespass. Ned Corcoran joins in the conversation, saying he won't feel safe with Gemmy at his house. A young man named Hec Gosper, secretly happy at seeing Jock's unease, enjoys watching him squirm under the pressure. The men wonder aloud if Gemmy is receiving "visits," much to Jock's dismay. He feels betrayed that his other friend who is present, Jim Sweetman, does not help defend his position. Jock's wife Ellen defends Gemmy and dismisses notions that she is endangering her family. She worries at night, though, when all is still and dark.

Ellen McIvor watches her husband's amusing unease with Gemmy and remembers the way he was before the last hard years. Originally, he had wanted to go to Canada, but Australia beckoned and they came here. The January summer, when they arrived in Brisbane, was muddy and gloomy. Clouds of mosquitoes made life unbearable. They were delayed in colonizing and their money dwindled. Jock became depressed and she did as well, when she gave birth to Janet but then lost her next two children. She has watched Jock's youth fading as he becomes more homesick for Scotland.

## Chapter 7 Analysis

Jock is a hard worker and a good man. He has made what he thought were some good, solid friends while at the settlement. His life seems secure. Jock is upset to see that several of these "friends" do not back him up when he needs their support. At this point he begins to question his friendships.

Child mortality rates in the mid-nineteenth century were very high when compared to modern rates. It was not out of the ordinary for couples to give birth to a dozen children, to have only two or three survive past infancy. Fatal diseases were common, as well as birthing problems caused by bad sanitary conditions.





# Chapter 8

## Chapter 8 Summary

George Abbot is out walking with a book one day when he is approached by Mrs. Hutchence. She is a reclusive lady who lives far out of the settlement and is renowned for enlisting locals for labor. She is mysterious; no one knows where she has come from, only that she has a young woman living with her named Leona. Mrs. Hutchence owns a real house, not a hut, and is continually asks the other settlers to move her furniture. The house is a wonder; people come from all around to see the first fancy "real" house in the area.

In this instance, George has only to help her drag a large branch back to her house. They arrive and take off their shoes to enter. George is shocked to recognize most of the people already there: Gemmy, Janet and Meg McIvor and Hec Gosper. Leona is also there, although George has never met her. George is invited to stay awhile and takes an immediate liking to Leona's kind manner. Janet notices the ease in which Leona converses with Hec and George. George falters in the conversation and leaves but Leona makes him promise to return.

## Chapter 8 Analysis

Mrs. Hutchence's home become a beacon and a refuge where the "outcasts" of the community meet freely. Gemmy and Janet get to know each other much better through these meetings. George's eyes are opened to Leona's inner beauty and poise. His accidental run in with Mrs. Hutchence changes his life.



# Chapter 9

## Chapter 9 Summary

Gemmy has been with the McIvors almost a year when the "visit" finally comes. He is working on a shed when two natives manage to sneak up on him; one old and one young. He looks at them and they all sit down together. The three men sit in the cross-legged position for several minutes. The visit is watched by Barney Mason's assistant Andy McKillop. He observes the blacks for several minutes before they meet with Gemmy. After a few minutes Andy watches as they get up and Gemmy goes back to work as if nothing has happened. He is eager to tell Barney what he has seen. First, he walks over to where Gemmy is working and asks him about the visitors. Gemmy ignores him and continues to work.

Andy goes to Barney to tell him what he has seen and soon Jim Sweetman is involved in the conversation as well. Andy becomes more and more agitated each time he tells the tale. He adds that he saw the blacks give Gemmy a stone. This gives a new dimension to the story, even though it is untrue.

## Chapter 9 Analysis

The "incident" with the natives visiting Gemmy unfortunately adds fuel to the fire of the more paranoid and violent members of the settlement, causing them to win over several key, previously neutral settlers to their side. Gemmy knows that no one in the settlement would understand what has occurred between him and the natives, so he doesn't even try to explain. He sees Andy as a man who needs attention, so he doesn't give him any.



# Chapter 10

## Chapter 10 Summary

The news about the visit spreads. Jock knows about it an hour afterwards. His gleeful "friends" converge on him to ask what he thinks about the situation. Jock is disgusted by their tone. He tries to dismiss Andy's account as exaggerated, but Barney will not back down. He scoffs at men with shotguns as being afraid of a stone. In truth, though, he is scared.

Jock has changed since taking in Gemmy. His view of his community has been altered to a vast degree. He is having thoughts that are unusual for him. He looks into the hearts of his neighbors and is saddened and angered. He even begins looking at the land differently. Ellen notices this change and is upset by the rift with the neighbors, but is glad that the strife has brought them closer as a couple. They console each other now in a way that hadn't happened in years. He has started appreciating the day-to-day things she does and looks at her intensely. She feels like she did when they first met. They have long, deep conversations and speak, for the first time in years, of their two lost children, who were buried in Brisbane. He is more tender to her than she can ever remember.

## Chapter 10 Analysis

Jock is disgusted and fearful of the anger he senses growing among the settlers about Gemmy. He worries about the situation getting out of control. He is disenchanted with the sense of community he previously had enjoyed.

The rift between the McIvors and the "anti-Gemmy" settlers cause the McIvors to become more isolated from the rest of the community. In turn, this forces Jock and Ellen to lean more on each other for support, which has the positive effect of making them closer as a couple. They fall in love again. Ellen perceives this and is very kind to Gemmy.



# Chapter 11

## Chapter 11 Summary

Jock has noticed strange things happening around his property since the incident with Gemmy. When three of his wife's geese are killed, he is shaken and stops visiting other settlers. He tries not to think about which man has done it. Lachlan is furious and wants to track down the perpetrator. Gemmy becomes withdrawn since he knows that the trouble revolves around him. Then Jock sees Gemmy running from the newly repaired fence and investigates. Someone has rubbed human feces across the fence. Jock feels sick to his stomach at both the stench and the thought of one of his friends taking the time to perform such an act. He is terrified at the thought of confronting the man who has done it.

## Chapter 11 Analysis

Jock is a strong-willed man, but he does not like confrontation. He is caught between a "rock and a hard place" with Gemmy. He considers Gemmy, like Lachlan, his responsibility, and will not desert him when the situation with his neighbors becomes difficult. The incident with his fence infuriates him, but he does not even want to know who would stoop to do such a vile act. He feels betrayed and hurt.



# Chapter 12

## Chapter 12 Summary

Andy McKillop was right about the visiting blacks bringing something to Gemmy. It wasn't a stone, however. The three had sat and faced each other after initial formalities. There was silence as they felt the energy of the earth flow into them. Gemmy realized how weak he had grown in the last months. He was aware of the thinness of the air and the emptiness of the food. The absence of "his land" was slowly draining him. The blacks had brought him native soil and water. He breathed it in and rubbed it over himself, feeling suddenly refreshed. Then it was over and they stood up and the two blacks left. When Andy reeled around the corner to accuse him, the fresh air was gone in an instant. When Andy left, Gemmy sighed in disgust. He has no problem dealing with Andy's sort. If you deny them attention, they become invisible.

His dreams become disturbed with thoughts of Mosey and The Irish. They pummel and taunt him until he wakes. This time, though, it is real. A hand clamps over his mouth. The dream persists and he seems paralyzed. Unfortunately, he was awake and the small group of men have him wrapped with their arms and dragged him down the hill. They slap him and knock him down repeatedly before putting a sack over his head. Then he is in water and his head is pushed under. He hears a voice and the hands on him weakened perceptibly. Then Jock is at his side, shouting and ripping the bag from his head.

## Chapter 12 Analysis

Gemmy's views on the magic of the earth are strong because of his ties to the natives. His absence from his native earth, while at the settlement, has left him mentally exhausted. He hasn't realized this because it has happened gradually. When he takes in the magic from the native earth, the energy comes surging back to him and he realizes what living away from his spiritual home has done to him and to his spirit. This event sets into motion, especially when coupled with the later attack, Gemmy's realization that the settlement is not his true home.

Mosey and The Irish are two minor characters in the story who are referenced again in chapter sixteen. They were on the ship with Gemmy, before he was thrown overboard to end up with the aborigines. They were the two on board who treated him most cruelly.



# Chapter 13

## Chapter 13 Summary

Ellen hears bumps against the wall of the hut, which wake her. Jock goes out and is confused by the sight of a shadowy group moving away in a huddle. Janet wakes and Jock tells her that nothing is wrong, then pursues the group down the hill. Janet walks outside to join her mother in the yard. She feels calm and realizes suddenly that Lachlan is still asleep. They watch silently as Jock comes up the hill supporting Gemmy.

The group fled when Jock neared the creek. He is happy about that cowardly act, which spares him seeing the actual culprits. Jock assists the terrified Gemmy up the slope and back towards the hut. He is furious and does something he could not have imagined doing a mere hour before. He crawls into the lean-to with Gemmy and comforts him until Gemmy sleeps. Later, Janet considers that night to be the time when she became an adult.

## Chapter 13 Analysis

Jock went against the mob mentality in fearlessly rescuing Gemmy and confronting his own worries of being outcast by the rest of the settlement. Jock was very insecure about keeping relations with his neighbors positive, but he was torn by also wanting to help Gemmy—which he knew (with the help of his wife) was the right thing to do. Jock also went against his nature to comfort Gemmy after the attack.

Janet went outside in the dark with Ellen and realized that she wasn't afraid. The night had always been a worrisome place in their minds. Janet stood by her mother and the family was strong. It was a good feeling.



# Chapter 14

## Chapter 14 Summary

Gemmy has been assisting Mr. Frazer with his botany work. He is entranced by Frazer's action of sketching plants; feeling the spirit of the effort itself. Mr. Frazer is rapidly becoming an advocate to preserve the Australian native land, instead of merely "defeating" it. He writes about using native animals and plants for subsistence, as opposed to importing everything from Europe. He feels that there is much to learn. Gemmy senses this awareness in him and is impressed by his understanding.

Mr. Frazer has sought out botany as an escape from the stress and monotony of everyday life since he was a child. He has gone on night walks most of his life and feels that Gemmy has helped him to enjoy his favorite pastime during the light of day. He spends endless hours jotting in his notebook about the wisdom of understanding the land. He sees Gemmy as an innovator of this thought process, which he hopes will catch on with more settlers. It is difficult to introduce these thoughts to others, though. Frazer is hurt by Jim Sweetman's refusal to sample a native fruit that Frazer gives him. His attempt to explain the benefits of cultivating this fruit fall on deaf ears.

When Gemmy is attacked, Frazer finds that his wife has helped arrange for Mrs. Hutchence to take Gemmy in. He decides to write a report based on his studies of native wildlife and submit it to the governor in hopes he might share his vision.

## Chapter 14 Analysis

In the 1860's, Frazer would be considered far ahead of his time in trying to understand native culture and wildlife as this was approximately the time when Darwin, who wrote "Origin of Species" in 1859, was making his study of evolution. It was not a standard practice at the time when most colonists were trying to aggressively "conquer" the land, not understand it. Frazer is a very open-minded man who Gemmy teaches to see the land like the natives see it.

The process of sketching the plants in his journal fascinates Gemmy. He sees the way that Frazer captures the magic of the plants on paper, as magic. This is similar to the way Gemmy envisions his own magic being captured by Mr. Abbot writing down his words.



# Chapter 15

## Chapter 15 Summary

Mrs. Hutchence is a beekeeper and shows Janet some of the finer points of the craft. Janet loves the work and feels at peace when she is around the small creatures. Gemmy is fairly adept at finding native swarms in the bush and has built up several hives for Mrs. Hutchence.

Janet remembers the first time she visited and saw the lady smoking the hives, dressed in her bonnet and veil. The sight had captivated her. Mrs. Hutchence was singing and Janet found that she was not afraid in the least. Almost immediately, she started assisting with the caretaking of the bees.

Janet has an incident while working with the bees. She has just taken off her bonnet and veil when a swarm comes towards her. Before she can take a breath, it is on her, covering her hands and body. She actually feels the bees; senses their contentment at being fed. It is like a dream in and she feels herself floating with them. Gemmy and Mrs. Hutchence are just a few steps away, calling to her, but the voices are somehow far away. Then, just as quickly as it had started, Mrs. Hutchence is spraying her with smoke; the bees fall off and into the frame that Gemmy is holding. Janet is surprised that they don't believe her when she says she isn't upset by the encounter. Later in life, she will surpass Mrs. Hutchence by understanding more of the bees' habits and cross breeding to create new types of bees.

## Chapter 15 Analysis

Janet finds her life's calling and has her eyes opened to Gemmy's way of appreciating the beauty of nature, when she is engulfed by the swarm of bees. Janet instinctively knows that she must not panic and gains an inner peace from the experience. This is a moment that she will always remember.

Smoke placates bees and coming in close contact with large numbers of bees is generally safe, as long as they aren't provoked. Beekeeping is considered a useful art in remote areas because it provides a secure supply of sugar.





# Chapter 16

## Chapter 16 Summary

Gemmy moves into a small room in Mrs. Hutchence's house. He has difficulty living in the small space and realizes that the chest she has given him reminds him of his troubled childhood. He remembers the man named Willett who controlled his life when he was a child in England. He was "Willett's Boy"; nothing belonged to him except by Willett's allowance. Willett worked as a rat-catcher in Regent's Park and Gemmy often had to handle the aggressive rodents. His arms were covered in sores and old scars. He lived for Willett; his life was Willett. Willett beat him a razor strap, but Gemmy loved him anyway. Willett was all he had.

There was a time after a particularly bad beating, when Willett was passed out drunk and Gemmy released all of the hunting ferrets from their cages and set a pile of garbage on fire in the center of the room. He seemed to have lost his mind to resentment and in excitement and started kicking Willett to show him what he had done. Willett didn't wake and as the fire quickly spread, Gemmy found he couldn't put it out. The room went up in flames quickly and Gemmy ran into the night.

Gemmy was attacked as he walked towards the pier, falling into a box and losing consciousness. He dreamed about Willett looking for him and later woke up on a ship. Gemmy was at sea for two years and was bullied often by shipmates, particularly Mosey and "The Irish." He was later thrown overboard and lost until the natives found him on the beach.

These memories leave Gemmy exhausted and badly homesick for the McIvors. He especially misses Lachlan. He feels more certain that his energy was left on the paper that Mr. Frazer had when he had transcribed Gemmy's arrival at the settlement. Gemmy wants to get those sheets back to retrieve his magic.

## Chapter 16 Analysis

Gemmy was frantic when he lit the fire in Willett's room. He was trying to get attention, not to kill Willett, although that is probably what he did. Gemmy may have been lucky in that if he had managed to wake Willett and had shown him that he had let the ferrets out and started the fire, Willett probably would have killed him.

Gemmy's abusive childhood translated into a tendency in adulthood to want to please people, particularly strong males like Lachlan. Gemmy learned early not to go up against aggressive males, but cater to them. He does not mind playing the submissive part. This trait not only endears him to Lachlan, but probably helped him to fit in with the aborigines.



# Chapter 17

## Chapter 17 Summary

Lachlan is not successful in relating to the other boys in the settlement. His early arrogance haunts his relationships, since many of the boys are bigger than he is. He becomes close to Hector and dislikes that the boys constantly taunt Gemmy. He stuck up for Gemmy at first, since he still considers himself as a protector. This eventually fades, as he has to send Gemmy away from the group more and more.

Then Gemmy is attacked and since Lachlan had been sleeping, he didn't find out until school the following day. He feels betrayed that he wasn't told. He also sees the pain on his uncle's face because of what had happened. When Gemmy moves out to Mrs. Hutchence's house, events calm down considerably. Still, he sees that Jock will never trust his neighbors again.

Lachlan visits Gemmy at Mrs. Hutchence's house, but feels that they have grown apart. He does not understand the group that routinely meets at her house and realizes that he doesn't belong there. When Lachlan leaves, Gemmy follows and Lachlan promises to return, but it was the last time he ever sees Gemmy.

## Chapter 17 Analysis

Lachlan is torn between wanting to fit in with his settler friends and wanting to remain Gemmy's close friend. Lachlan and Gemmy grow farther apart with age. The older boys like to make fun of Gemmy, which puts Lachlan in a difficult position. Having Hec as a best friend does not help the situation. Gemmy eventually gravitates to the Hutchence household, where Lachlan does not fit in.



# Chapter 18

## Chapter 18 Summary

Mr. Frazer went to visit the Governor, Sir George, in Brisbane after spending three years at the settlement. He tries to present Gemmy's story and tell about how Gemmy introduced him to native life. Sir George was not interested in hearing his report about rows and rows of native orchards, however. Frazer is dismissed and taken out to dinner. His vision does not fit into Sir George's view of Queensland's future.

## Chapter 18 Analysis

Sir George Bowen, Governor of Queensland, was an ambitious politician who saw Australia as another English conquest. He was very short sighted, especially when it came to hearing different opinions on how to best utilize the land. He listened to Mr. Frazer only in terms of him being a possible political threat. Once he determined no threat existed, he was not interested in what Frazer had to say about living off the continent.



# Chapter 19

## Chapter 19 Summary

Brushfires are burning back at the settlement when Gemmy comes to visit George Abbot at the schoolhouse to ask for his papers back. George has been thinking of Leona when he sees Gemmy at the window. He realizes it would be difficult to explain to Gemmy that Mr. Frazer has his papers in Brisbane. When George offers Gemmy seven sheets of homework paper, Gemmy puts them in his pockets and leaves. Gemmy walks towards the swamp as it begins to rain. He takes out the papers and lets the water wash the ink off the pages. Then the pulpy paper disintegrates and falls back to earth.

## Chapter 19 Analysis

Gemmy feels that by writing his account, Mr. Abbot had taken his magic into the papers themselves. When he retrieves the papers and destroys them, the magic returns to him. This is a typical aboriginal reaction, some tribes will not allow their pictures to be taken for fear it will also take their spirit.



# Chapter 20

## Chapter 20 Summary

Janet and Lachlan meet some fifty years later to discuss the past and especially Gemmy, who they haven't seen since he walked back into the swamp after getting his papers back. Janet lives at a convent and shows Lachlan the garden and her hives. They start meeting regularly and Janet feels an intimacy with him for the first time. Lachlan works for the ministry. Both Janet and Lachlan have been caught up in defending a naturalized German who is to be deported due to the anti-German feelings during World War I. One of Lachlan's grandsons has been killed in France and he has been going over his possessions. He says that he wishes he had visited before. They speak more of Gemmy and their earlier life together.

Lachlan started trying to find Gemmy's some nine years after he disappeared. He is in a government survey group and, when he has the opportunity, quizzes natives with his limited knowledge of their language. He hears of a so-called "dispersal" six years before in which some cattlemen killed several natives in the north country. He follows their directions and finds some small bones that appeared to be from children. He is sad and wonders what has become of his old friend.

Lachlan and Janet talk at length about how Gemmy touched them both more than fifty years before. Janet can still clearly picture Gemmy poised on the fence, as if attempting to fly.

## Chapter 20 Analysis

Lachlan and Janet look back in their old age and see how Gemmy managed to radically alter their lives for the better. Gemmy taught Lachlan how to see past his own ego and he taught Janet to see the world in its beauty. One of Janet's defining moments was of seeing Gemmy poised on the fence, frozen in time. Lachlan searches for Gemmy through the years and discovers evidence of some natives who were massacred by cattlemen, but there is no evidence Gemmy that was a victim.

The anti-German hysteria of World War I was probably more intense than the anti-native hysteria faced by the early Australian settlers. Germans who had lived in other countries for years and had nothing to do with the Kaiser regime were routinely imprisoned or deported. Many people with German or "German sounding" names changed them for their own safety.



# Characters

## Gemmy Fairley

Gemmy lived in a very abusive environment as a small child, under the control of a man named Willett. He was forced to assist in handling rats and was beaten continually. Eventually he escaped, only to end up on an oceangoing ship by mistake. Again, he was mistreated and eventually thrown overboard off the coast of Australia. Gemmy was taken in by natives who found him on the beach and eventually made a place for himself in their world. He accepted their ways and learned to understand the land and the magic behind it. After living with them for many years and nearly forgetting his earlier life, he returned to live with white settlers.

Some of the more paranoid, shortsighted settlers saw Gemmy as a threat and panicked when he was sighted talking to natives. Several of the men attacked him; he was saved by Jock McIvor. Gemmy eventually returned to live with the natives. He may have been killed in a massacre several years later. The settlers in the story never saw him again after he walked by into the bush.

Gemmy was tormented by the trauma in his life, but was extremely perceptive and learned to see through attempts to exploit him. Gemmy had learned to be at peace with nature, an ability he managed to share with several of the more open-minded settlers before leaving them.

## Lachlan Beattie

Lachlan was born in Scotland. He came to Australia to join the McIvors when his father died. He was a very headstrong boy, who took Gemmy as his own and was his protector for some time. His arrogant attitude caused rifts between Lachlan and his cousin Janet. Out of pride, he acted as if he did not like learning new things and would compare everything to how things were in Scotland. He later matured and learned to get around in the native bush lands.

Lachlan worked for the Australian government ministry as an adult. He sought out Gemmy, but never found definitive proof of what happened to him. Lachlan and Janet became good friends when they were much older.

## Jock McIvor

Jock was the head of the McIvor household at the settlement. He was married to Ellen. They emigrated from Scotland to Brisbane where they had four children although the middle two children died at birth. Janet was the oldest child, followed by Meg. Jock took in Lachlan after his father died in Scotland. Although Jock was uneasy with Gemmy, he



learned to accept him. Eventually he chose to protect Gemmy over his own interest in maintaining good relations with his neighbors.

Jock was a brave, hard-working man who didn't like confrontation. He worried about how his neighbors perceived him. Although tough, he could be sensitive at times. Jock had grown distant from his wife, but became closer after taking in Gemmy.

## **Janet McIvor**

Janet was born in Brisbane, Australia. She was a young girl coming of age in the Australian outer settlements. She was the daughter of Jock and Ellen and had a younger sister named Meg. Janet was a very strong-minded girl who was at odds with her cousin Lachlan at times. She was a caring and sensitive person who felt a genuine affection for Lachlan, but couldn't tolerate his arrogance. She was very close to Gemmy and felt she shared a special bond with him.

Janet developed a liking for beekeeping, which gave her a new appreciation for nature and it became a lifelong hobby for her. She was in contact with Lachlan later in life because of a political issue and they became reacquainted.

## **Mr. Frazer**

Mr. Frazer was the Minister of the settlement and part time botanist. He was a reclusive, quiet married man who took an immediate liking to Gemmy. Frazer was one of the more open-minded members of the settlement. He tried to understand Gemmy's view of nature and ended up under his tutelage.

Gemmy was amazed to find someone interested in what he knew; Frazer drew diagrams of plant life in the area, per Gemmy's instruction. Mr. Frazer had plans to introduce native produce Australians, instead of using imported British stock. He approached the governor of Queensland with his findings and was rebuffed.

## **George Abbot**

George was raised by his godfather and had wanted to travel to Africa, but was made to take a position in Australia. He later regretted doing so. George was schoolmaster at the settlement who wrote the notes of Gemmy's initial interview. George was miserable teaching in Australia. He took out some of his anger on his students, through both physical punishment and mental cruelty.

When George became infatuated with Leona Gonzales and his attitude became more positive. After being pressured by Gemmy, George gave him back papers to satisfy his need for his "magic words." George was the last settler to see Gemmy before he walked back into the wilderness.



## Sir George Bowen

Sir George Bowen was Governor of Queensland. He was a busy, self-centered politician who was not interested in other views on how to colonize "his" territory. Notorious for riding a chariot around the streets of Brisbane, Sir Bowen was married to Lady Bowen, Roma Diamantina. He was also known for climbing mountain peaks noted in ancient Greek mythology.

Bowen received Mr. Frazer from the settlement, but did not listen to his views about taking advantage of Australia's natural resources. Bowen was of the mindset that "his" territory needed to be made European.

This character is based on Sir George Boyen, who served as the first governor of Queensland and had a controversial premier named Herbert. He arrived in Queensland in 1859 and served as governor from 1860-1866.

(Short History of Australia, 2002)

## Barney Mason

Barney mason was the McIvors' closest neighbor and Jock's antagonist throughout most of the novel. He called Gemmy a "white black" and did not trust him. Barney believed that Gemmy was a spy from the natives. He was a racist, which was fairly common at the time. Barney was also a hothead who jumped on the fact that blacks, whom he called "myalls," visited Gemmy. He instigated the mob that tried to drown Gemmy in the creek.





# Objects/Places

## Comet River

Comet River is a reference to the largest massacre of whites in Australian history. It happened in an area called Springsure, near the Comet River in 1861. The exact location was called Cullin-la-Ringo. The event is sometimes referred to as the "Cullin-la-Ringo" massacre. Nineteen people were killed by Kairi warriors in a brutal, sudden attack. It must be noted that whites were routinely killing Aborigines at the time and this was rumored to have been a reprisal.

(Walkabout, 2005)

## Myall

Slang for native Australian black, or Aborigine, as they came to be called.

## Botany

The study of plants in biology.

## The Bush

Australian slang for a very remote area.

## Bowen

The nearest town to the settlement in the novel (12 miles). Located on the northeastern coast of Queensland.

## Brisbane

Capital city of Queensland. Approximately 600 miles from Bowen.

## Queensland

Australian state (roughly the size of France and Germany combined) located in the northeast corner of the country.

## **Regent's Park**

Large park in the greater London area.



# Themes

## Aboriginal Culture

The Aborigines are a developed and mostly peaceful people that the Europeans ravaged with both violence and disease in their colonization of Australia. They believed in magic based on nature and the earth. Their belief was that there were spirits that needed to be respected or feared and magic that needed to be replenished when necessary. The earth was believed to give energy to those who understood it. Those who understood this concept could see much more in the Australian scenery than those who did not.

The aborigines had a very complex culture that was not understood by the settlers. They had very complex skills, used for hunting and communication, that the settlers could have learned from. Gemmy noticed natives several times on his walks with Frazer and made discreet signs of acknowledgement, which the natives returned. Frazer never saw any of this, because his senses, unlike Gemmy's, were not trained to notice. Gemmy knew that the natives could sense his aura.

Gemmy wholeheartedly believed the aboriginal concept of oneness with the earth. He felt his energy draining and it was replenished when he was visited, in chapter 12, by some aborigines with native earth. He was extremely perceptive of the world around him and was very agitated by his belief that the paper containing his initial interview with the settlers, held his magic. When given back papers, though not the real ones, his act of washing away the writing returned his magic.

## Ignorance, Fear and Racism

All of the settlers had some degree of fear about living in isolation and near the unpredictable natives, whom they didn't understand. This underlying fear of the unknown was handled in many ways.

Several settlers, such as Andy and Barney, decided that the natives were the enemy and, as such, they should be destroyed. The natives, including Gemmy, were seen as a threat and were not to be trusted. There were racist overtones to this; Gemmy was considered "black" since he had picked up many of the native traits after living with them for so long. There were real reasons to fear, the incident at Comet River, where nineteen white people had been killed by native blacks, had just occurred only a few hundred miles away and was fresh in the settlers' minds. The paranoia is described at first in chapter one and in more detail in chapter four. "For at any moment, this was the fact of the matter, they might be overwhelmed." In actuality, there is some evidence that the Comet River incident was provoked by whites killing blacks, but this was not taken into account.



Lachlan's arrogant attitude when he first moved to the settlement was typical of the overall, mostly male, view. He wanted to superimpose his Scottish life over his Australian life. Anything he didn't already know wasn't worth knowing. He eventually learned bush craft skills (chapter five), but in a way it was conquering the bush, not learning from it.

Other settlers, like Janet, Frazer and Ellen had some fear of the natives and the bleak isolation, but didn't have animosity towards them. They made strides to understand the land and the culture they had walked into.

## Nature v. Colonization

The underlying opinion of "settling" was to "conquer" the land. This was a rather narrow-minded view; because there was much to be learned from the natives who knew all of the good plants, hunting patterns, and other things. Gemmy was instrumental in opening many eyes and hearts to the natural side of things. He personally showed Mr. Frazer various plant species and explained what was edible. Frazer put much of this information into his report that he used, unsuccessfully, to influence the governor. Janet had her epiphany about nature when she was working with the bees in chapter fifteen. Even Jock had a moment when he stopped and saw the beauty of the land around him.

These opinions about learning from nature were by no means the norm. At the time of this story, Darwin had just finished his "Origin of Species" and the naturalist movement was in its infancy. Most of the colonists simply had no desire to learn from the new land. They preferred importing English fruits and grains as opposed to learning how to work with native species. This attitude also applied to the "shoot first, ask questions later" attitude when natives, who didn't understand the concept of European property rights, not believing that land could be owned, "trespassed" on settlement land.



# Style

## Point of View

"Remembering Babylon" is told in the second person. The story is about an English boy named Gemmy who is taken in by the aborigines and later tries to return to his old culture. It shows how shortsighted the colonists' views are in settling Queensland and how little they regarded what already existed there. Gemmy manages to touch the lives of many people and awakens them to what is around them before he returns to the aborigines.

## Setting

The main setting of the story is in mid-nineteenth century Australia, where the English are attempting to settle their "new" land. Most of the story takes place in the settlement itself, near the coastal town of Bowen. There are also some events that take place in the capital city of Brisbane, in Scotland and at sea. The entire time span of the story is from approximately 1845 to 1917.

## Language and Meaning

The language and meaning of the story is taken chapter by chapter through different character interactions with Gemmy and from Gemmy's own view. Much of the language used is guttural Scottish, in which the pronunciations are more important than the spelling. The part that nature plays in everyone's life becomes the meaning of the story, as Gemmy slowly wins converts to his way of thinking.

## Structure

"Remembering Babylon" is divided into twenty chapters. Chapter one consists of Gemmy emerging from the swamp and meeting the settlers. Chapter two describes how he came to live with the aborigines as a youngster. Gemmy and the McIvors are discussed in chapter three. Chapter four delves into George Abbot's background. Lachlan's arrival is detailed in chapter five. The settlers' varying perceptions of Gemmy are explained in chapter six. Chapter seven is about the Jock and his neighbors' conflicts over Gemmy. It also covers the McIvor family background. Mrs. Hutchence and Leona are introduced in chapter eight. Andy sees Gemmy's "visit" from the natives in chapter nine and starts spreading the news, which puts Jock on the defensive in chapter ten. Jock's neighbors start reprisals in chapter eleven. Gemmy's perspective of the "visit" is described in chapter twelve, as well as the attack on him. Chapter thirteen details the McIvor's perspective on the attack. Frazer's botany work with Gemmy is explained in chapter fourteen. In chapter fifteen, Janet learns the beekeeping trade. Gemmy's early life under Willett is detailed in chapter sixteen. Lachlan's strained

relations with Gemmy are examined in chapter seventeen. In chapter eighteen, Frazer tries unsuccessfully to excite the governor about his nature studies. Gemmy leaves the settlement in chapter nineteen. Chapter twenty is a follow-up with Janet and Lachlan, fifty years later.



## Quotes

"There was just one of them; and the thing, as far as he could make it out through the sweat in his eyes and its flamelike flickering, was not even, maybe, human." Chapter 1, pg. 2

"To the north, beginning with the last fenced paddock, lay swamp country...The land to the south was also unknown. Settlement up here proceeded in frog-leaps from one little coastal place to the next. Between lay tracts of country than no white man had ever entered. It was disturbing, that: to have unknown country behind you as well as in front." Chapter 1, pg. 8

"So he began his life among them, doing what he had always done. It was all he knew. Since he had somehow found his way into the world, his object, like any other creature's, was to stay in it and by any means he could." Chapter 2, pg. 21

"For her, too, he thought, it was that moment when she had first seen him balanced up there on the fence that she was looking towards and he felt in the concentration of her gaze that he hung there still. Something, in that moment, had been settled between then, as it had between him and the boy." Chapter 3, pg. 36

"She would have forgiven him all if he had shown any sign of humbling himself. She was full of affection, she wanted to love him and longed for some softening in him that would allow it without loss of pride. But first he had to admit need and he would not. Everything she and Meg knew and he did not, was not worth the knowing." Chapter 5, pg. 57

"We ought to go out and get rid of 'em, once and for all. If I catch one of the buggers round my place, I'll fuckin' pot (shoot) 'im." Chapter 6, pg. 62

"His way with people he did not want to deal with was to pretend they were not there. He looked right through this fellow now, this Andy and he was gone. He disappeared into the glare off the wall." Chapter 9, pg. 97

"Till they arrived no other lives had been lived here. It made the air that much thinner, harder to breathe. She had not understood, till she came to a place where it was lacking, the extent to which her sense of the world had to do with the presence of those who had been there before..." Chapter 10, pg. 110

"We have been wrong to see this continent as hostile and infelicitous, so that only by the fiercest stoicism, a supreme resolution and force of will and by felling, clearing, sowing with the seeds we have brought with us and by importing sheep, cattle, rabbits, even the very birds of the air, can it be shaped and made habitable. It is habitable already." Chapter 14, pg. 129



## Topics for Discussion

Why did Gemmy leave the aborigines to join the settlers?

Who was Jock's closest friend in the settlement? Explain why.

Why did many of the settlers fear Gemmy?

Explain why Gemmy needed to get the papers back from his interview with Mr. Abbot.

Why did Gemmy leave the settlement?

Explain the relationship between Janet and Lachlan. Why did the relationship improve when they were much older?

How did Lachlan mature at the settlement in the time span from Gemmy's arrival to Gemmy's departure?

What was Mr. Frazer's purpose in visiting the governor? Why wasn't the governor interested in Mr. Frazer's report?

Contrast aborigine versus European culture as described in this novel.