

# **Riddley Walker Study Guide**

## **Riddley Walker by Russell Hoban**

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# Contents

<a href="#">Riddley Walker Study Guide.....</a>	<a href="#">1</a>
<a href="#">Contents.....</a>	<a href="#">2</a>
<a href="#">Plot Summary.....</a>	<a href="#">3</a>
<a href="#">Chapter 1-2.....</a>	<a href="#">4</a>
<a href="#">Chapter 3-5.....</a>	<a href="#">6</a>
<a href="#">Chapter 6-8.....</a>	<a href="#">9</a>
<a href="#">Chapter 9-10.....</a>	<a href="#">12</a>
<a href="#">Chapter 11-12.....</a>	<a href="#">14</a>
<a href="#">Chapter 13-15.....</a>	<a href="#">18</a>
<a href="#">Chapter 16-18.....</a>	<a href="#">22</a>
<a href="#">Characters.....</a>	<a href="#">24</a>
<a href="#">Objects/Places.....</a>	<a href="#">27</a>
<a href="#">Themes.....</a>	<a href="#">29</a>
<a href="#">Style.....</a>	<a href="#">31</a>
<a href="#">Quotes.....</a>	<a href="#">33</a>
<a href="#">Topics for Discussion.....</a>	<a href="#">34</a>

## Plot Summary

Set in the ashes of a destroyed England, 2,000 years in the future after nuclear war has demolished civilization, the novel follows the narrator and protagonist, Riddley Walker, as he seeks to uncover truth and history. "Inland," as Riddley's world is now known, has been obliterated and mankind is slowly rebuilding civilization in what reflects the English Iron Age. Villagers hunt and gather as well as mine for iron ore from the remains of ancient machines from the "Bad Time." Their folklore and mythology are taken from remnants of historical popular culture, often misinterpreted, sparse Catholic doctrine, and the Punch and Judy Show.

Riddley's twelfth birthday is his "naming day," in which he becomes a man and spears a wild boar. Three days later, Riddley's father dies and Riddley kills the leader of a wild pack of dogs, thus beginning the boy's epic journey. The folklore of Riddley's world revolves largely around the "Eusa Story," a tale which metaphorically represents the destruction of the world by nuclear force. After being inducted as a "connexion man" for his village in the footsteps of his father, Riddley seeks to connect the answers between his reality and the history which created it.

Riddley is led by a pack of wild dogs, which are deadly enemies of humans in this post-apocalyptic world, to find a young man trapped in a dungeon seeking help. Riddley saves the Ardship of Cambry, also known as Lissener, and begins a journey to Cambry to help the Eusa folk, a people who were once the rulers of the world and had the highest technology. Along the way, Riddley learns the history of the Eusa folk and their conflicts with Abel Goodparley, the "Pry Mincer" of Inland and the Ram, or governing system.

Riddley's devotion to Lissener is doubted when he meets again with Goodparley, whose insights into the history of creation, destruction and the aftermath of the world open Riddley's mind. The discovery of a powdery yellow stone creates added intensity to the search through the different parties to uncover the riddle behind folk tales based upon the "Eusa Story" and other documents from the "Bad Time." Their conquest is a search to find the secret behind the "1 little 1," which refers to gunpowder, and the "1 Big 1," which alludes to nuclear power and weaponry.

Riddley makes and loses many alliances along his journey. In the end, his "connexion," or enlightenment, relates to the fact that the most powerful are those who do not seek power at all. Riddley continues on his journey, reenacting Punch and Judy performances in a traveling entourage, accompanied by the great pack of loyal dogs.



# Chapter 1-2

## Summary

Chapter 1. The narrator, whose voice is written in a distinct dialect, begins Chapter 1 by describing his naming day at age twelve, when he killed a "wyld boar" (Chapter 1, p. 1). In describing his boar attack, the narrator says, "He done the reqwyrnt he ternt and stood and clattert his teef and made his rush and there we wer then" (Chapter 1, p. 3). Following his tale of killing the boar, the narrator goes on to relate the story called "Hart of the Wood" (Chapter 1, p. 5).

In the story, a man, wife and child are wandering through the forest starving. They don't know how to catch food and are at the end of their strength when along comes a "clevver looking bloak" (Chapter 1, p. 5). The husband and wife ask the man if he knows how to start a fire and the man replies he does, but he wants something in return for his efforts. He looks at the child, offering his cooking pot and fire if the couple will share what's in the pot. The couple doesn't think twice and agrees, killing and cutting up the child. The clever man asks only for the heart of the child and then goes away singing. The couple dies in a fire, which is why, according to the narrator, they tell you, "the allder tree is bes for charring coal" (Chapter 1, p. 6).

The narrator then returns to his story of the boar kill and describes giving some of the meat to a woman named Lorna. The narrator goes on to make love to the woman and they discuss an inner side of humankind. This conversation has an impact on the young man, as he concludes in saying, "Thats why I finely come to writing all this down. Thinking on what the idear of us myt be. Thinking on that thing whats in us lorn and loan and oansome" (Chapter 1, p. 8).

Chapter 2. In Chapter 2, the narrator introduces himself to the reader as Riddley Walker, claiming "Walking my riddels where ever theyve took me and walking them now on this paper the same" (Chapter 2, p. 10). Riddley explains it wasn't more than three days after his naming day at twelve when his father was killed in the digging at Widders Dump.

Riddley works with his father salvaging iron from ancient machinery in what is presently the English county of Kent and known as "Inland" in the novel. Riddley describes how his father's team finds a great object and is told to bring it to the surface intact. Unfortunately, during the lift, Riddley and others slip and Riddley's father is crushed by the object. Riddley is devastated by his father's death but more so for not knowing the name of the thing that killed him.

While Riddley and his coworkers are bringing his father's body home, they encounter the same pack of dogs Riddley had seen at the boar hunt and Riddley kills the leader of the pack. Riddley describes the wild dogs that have inhabited these areas for years and the mythologies about them. "There ben the dead towns all them years. Ram out poasts



in 1 part of them and dogs hoalt up in other parts. And all them years you heard storys of dog peopl. Peopl with dogs heads and dogs with peopls heads" (Chapter 2, p. 12). Riddley concludes the chapter stating his dad was 33 when he died; his mother had died of coughing sickness when he was five.

## Analysis

The narrative dialect is the first thing that strikes the reader, as it takes some amount of translation in order to understand. The narrative voice is in the first person, set from the viewpoint of the protagonist, Riddley Walker. Riddley relates his experiences in a language that, at first glance, hardly appears to be English. Upon further examination, and especially vocal pronunciation, the reader becomes more accustomed to the Chaucerian dialect of the narration. The novel's language reflects the ways that both primitive and mythic images of a linear idea of history play a role in the story.

The character of Riddley Walker appears to be older than his age, which is indicative of the shorter life span in the setting of the novel, although at this point the full reality of the setting has yet to be truly established. While the reader can certainly discern he is reading of a more primitive age than our own, it is not yet clear the setting is established in a futuristic world. This establishment of the setting is, in fact, a central element of the plot, as Riddley seeks to know what led to the dissolution of civilization and the establishment of his own.

Also in these first chapters, the theme of civilization and progress is symbolically illustrated, as the death of the last wild boar represents the passing of wilderness and the accelerating displacement of animistic religion by more sophisticated cults like that of Eusa. The reader can see through the folk-tales and stories interspersed throughout the narrative the role religion, spirituality, and symbolism play in the lives of the people of Inland.

## Vocabulary

spear, kilt, wernt, offert, woal, scrump, woodling, follering, prickt, bloaks, farness, noatis, rivver, chard, flint, clevver, roadings, whatfers, bern, biggering, aulder, kincher, girzly, berners, tel, Ardship of Cambry, hoal, millying, lorn, loan, oansome, tremmering, feart, memberment, beartht, riddels, thyme, myt, rota, jobbing, bustit, 1stman, girt, winching, leavering, wylst, treadls, jynt, larft, connexion, comping, crowdit, girzelt, plomercy, theywl, larfing



## Chapter 3-5

### Summary

Chapter 3. Riddley Walker returns to telling of the day his dad died in Chapter 3, saying they put the dead dog's head on the pole at the gate house. Lorna Elswint and the children nearby discuss the myth of the dog people, with Nimbel saying they throw a white shadow. Lorna then relates the story of "Why the Dog Wont Show Its Eyes."

In this story, which Riddley relates for the reader, "back way way back befor peopl got clevver they had the 1st knowing" (Chapter 2, p. 14). A man and woman are squatting by a fire when a dog appears. The man and woman lure the dog to them and see in its eyes the light shining from the moon. This leads the man and woman to seek more enlightenment and they find a goat and look into its eyes by the moonlight. Soon the man and woman learn to pen up the goats and livestock and to harvest barley and wheat.

Eventually, civilization arises, but humans are so consumed with counting their livestock to make sure it hasn't been stolen, they no longer look at the moonlight or appreciate the dog. They decide they will create a way to make it daylight all of the time so no thieves can steal from them. In doing so, they build a massive power ring and feed numbers into machines. Then a giant flash of light turns the entire night into day and then it morphs into complete blackness. Plagues kill off the people and animals, and dogs and humans become enemies, each on guard, believing the other wants to eat them. This is why, Riddley concludes, the dog will never show his eyes now.

Chapter 4. In Chapter 4, Riddley describes his father's funeral. The burning takes place that night on the "bye bye hump" and Straiter Empe speaks for the crowd. The group holds hands as they take turns speaking of Brooder Walker, Riddley's father. Lorna Elswint, who is a "tel," meaning a type of psychic seer, steps to the front to give her words. She says, "Bond fires thats what they use to call them. Big fires they use to bern on hy groun to lite them others back to fetch us. Boats in the air o yes. Them air boats as never come back. Becaws them as got a way to the space stations they jus done ther dying out there instead of down here" (Chapter 4, p. 16).

Lorna's tel analyzes the three consecutive "signs" that have appeared in the time of grief: the death of Brooder Walker, the stillbirth of a baby in the village, and the killing of the wild dog. Afterward, the congregation returns and skins and eats the dog, according to Riddley.

Chapter 5. Riddley begins Chapter 5 by stating after Lorna's tel at the funeral everyone began looking at him differently, winking and giving him thumbs up signs. The next day after the burning of his father, "the Bernt Arse Pack follert us the woal way from How Fents to Widders Dump. New leader he wer all black and when ever I lookit back he had his head up and looking at me with his ears prickt up" (Chapter 5, p. 20).



When Riddley and the crew return to the dig site, Riddley describes staring at the "girt big thing" that had killed his father (Chapter 5, p. 21). Chalker Marchman introduces Belnot Phist, who is overseeing the dig, and Ridley and the crew begin breaking up the massive object. That day, the "Big 2 down from the Ram" show up at Widders Dump (Chapter 5, p. 23). Abel Goodparley and Erny Orfing, who are given the titles of the Pry Mincer and the Wes Mincer, perform Eusa Shows which implement many of the puppets from the Punch and Judy Show. Eusa is the protagonist in several folk tales in the novel depicting the nuclear conflict. Riddley concludes Chapter 5 saying that he will reprint "The Eusa Story" for clarity.

## Analysis

The story, "Why the Dog Wont Show Its Eyes," is thematically important in the novel. Not only does this story reveal the dissolved relationship between dog and man, it also shows metaphorically what led to this dissolution. The story's central "moral" relates to power and its dangers. With the knowledge the dog brings to humans, the humans become hungrier for more. As humanity progresses, it becomes less trusting and less trustworthy, because with prosperity comes the threat of losing that prosperity.

Metaphorically, the humans in the story seek to end all distrust by giving the world constant light. In doing so, however, they create utter destruction. The death and carnage following the implied nuclear explosion in the story has the opposite effect desired, returning mankind back into darkness, both physically and mentally. This story, as are most others in the narrative, is an attempt to explain the current state of Riddley's world and the events and human errors that led to this state. The story is considered akin to a parable with its moral lesson and use of symbolism and metaphor.

Lorna Eslwint's "tel," revealed at the funeral for Brooder Walker, is important not only because it changes the view of the townspeople toward Riddley Walker, but because it changes his own view of himself. Another important element revealed during the funeral is the symbolism in the names of the protagonist's family. "Brooder" implies someone who is pensive and thoughtful, and Brooder Walker was the village's "connexion man," which is like a male counterpart to Lorna's being the village "tel." "Riddley," on the other hand, implies someone who creates or solves riddles. "Walker" implies someone who travels. In giving the characters these names, the author creates inherent foreshadowing for the journey which Riddley will take, later in the narrative.

## Vocabulary

zanting, Black Pack, folleree, dog peopl, shadder, nickers, moony, clewverness, creaper, stoans, lissening, thowit, tords, shyning, bearths, contrack, parpety, moren, machines, straining, memberment, Master Chaynjis, naminals, groun, starveling, crookit, col, agen, onlyes, stayd, mouf, becaws, staggelt, behynt, cloudit, roun, sarvering, gallack, nebyul, connectit, leaver poal, stanning, breaaf, tern, foller, beynt, babbys, teef, aftrwds, syn,



bernt, moren, poynting, witey, earf, fynd, breaving, sydls, sholder, cleart, hossages,  
myswel, outpaths, hevvys, liket, sqware, limpit, spel, hart, mincery doss





## Chapter 6-8

### Summary

Chapter 6. Chapter 6 is titled "The Eusa Story" and begins, "Wen Mr Clevver wuz Big Man uv Inland thay had evere thing clevver. Thay had boats in the ayr & picters on the win & evere thing lyk that" (Chapter 6, p. 30). Eusa is described as a knowing man who is working for Mr. Clevver when their enemies appear, bringing war. Eusa tells Mr. Clevver that they will need war machines, boats for water and air, and bombs, referred to here as "Berstin Fyr" (Chapter 6, p. 30). Mr. Clevver responds to Eusa that there are too many of the enemy and they keep fighting these wars; why don't they just fight "1 Big 1" (Chapter 6, p. 31). Mr. Clevver tells Eusa, "Yu mus fyn the Littl Shynin Man the Addom he runs in the wud" (Chapter 6, p. 31).

Eusa takes two great dogs with him, Folleree & Folleroo, and sets out to the wood at the heart of the stone. Eusa finds the "Stag uv the Wud" and on the stag's head is "the Littl Shynin Man the Addom" (Chapter 6, p. 33). Eusa shoots the stag and takes the little man, telling him he needs to know the number of the 1 Big 1 and he must tell it to him. The little man tells Eusa the number is the same as the number of the Master Chaynjis and doesn't have a word for the number. Eusa begins pulling the man apart and "owt uv thay 2 peaces uv the Littl Shynin Man the Addom thayn cum shyningnes in wayvs in spredin circels" (Chapter 6, p. 33). Death begins to spread and Eusa kills the two dogs with him.

The splitting of the atom is illustrated in the story as white light spreads across the land. Eusa takes the number of the Master Chaynjis and runs it through the Power Ring, creating "the 1 Big 1" (Chapter 6, p. 34). After this, everything turns black and rotten. Eusa goes with his family to the captain of a boat to be taken to another land. The boatman, though, tells Eusa money is useless now, steals his wife and throws his sons off the boat before departing. Eusa and his two sons go to hide out because Eusa is afraid of what people will do to him.

One day Eusa wakes up to see the Littl Shynin Man still in two pieces coming toward him, leading the two dogs Eusa had previously shot. The little man tells Eusa his sons have gone away and "Yu let thay Nos. uv thay Master Chaynjis owt. Now yu mus go thru them aul" (Chapter 6, p. 35). He tells Eusa he and Eusa are two parts of the same thing and he can leave Eusa alone no more than Eusa could leave him alone in the forest. Eusa asks the little man, "Woan yu pleas tel me how menne Chaynjis thayr ar?" and the little man replies "As menne as reqwyrd" (Chapter 6, p. 36).

Chapter 7. Chapter 7 begins with Riddley returning to the night after his dad's burning. Torches are being lit to announce the opening of the Eusa Show. Goodparley tells Riddley he is sorry for his father's death and Riddley responds critically of the dig and life in general. Goodparley tells Riddley there is more to the world than just "Inland" and that the land is becoming overpopulated. Goodparley tells Riddley, "Riddley youre going



to be taking the scar you must know your Eusa. Do you have Eusa 31 in membership?" and Riddley recites the passage (Chapter 7, p. 38).

Riddley sits and listens as Goodparley and Orfing discuss the nuances of Eusa 31 and the meaning and reality of the Little Shyning Man and then go to the roof where Riddley will be scarred on his stomach as a ritual of his becoming the new "connection man" in his father's footsteps. Lorna leads the ritual by cutting into the Big 2's arms and then into Riddley's stomach. He writes in closing the chapter, "Waiting to say my 1st connection after I seen the Eusa show" (Chapter 7, p. 42).

Chapter 8. In Chapter 8, Riddley describes the performance of the Eusa Show, which is performed by Orfing and Goodparley. The show, which likens a "Punch and Judy Show," features a wooden puppet in the form of Eusa. There is comedic banter between the performers, yet the folklore which surrounds the Eusa Story is almost religious in context.

In the performance, Mr. Clever approaches Eusa, who has developed a metallic helmet box which he feeds numbers into. Through using these two heads, Eusa hopes to create "Good Time," meaning a technologically advanced place where people are happy. Eusa is warned by The Little Man Mr. Clever intends to use Eusa's knowledge to create bad time instead of good time. The show ends with more banter from the Big 2 and Eusa, and Riddley concludes it was his first show as a connection man.

## Analysis

Chapter 6 presents the first version of "The Eusa Story" in the narrative. The different stories of Eusa are central in the novel, as they form the basis of the spiritual and religious beliefs of the people of Inland. "The Eusa story," though, as a degenerate myth of the fall and of endless punishment, is not balanced by myths of creation or redemption. Therefore, the myth offers little to those who embrace it.

Another element of "The Eusa Story" important to note is the use of symbolism and numerology in the narrative. There is an almost obsessive nature within the people of Inland to decipher the meaning of numbers, and this can be seen in the story of Eusa as well. Numbers and their meaning are the way in which Eusa develops the "1 Big 1." Hobart highlights this numerological focus in his spellings and language, using words such as "any1" "every1" "2ce," and so on. While at first these words appear to be almost a form of shorthand, their significance is relative to the way in which the people of Inland view numbers, despite their lack of understanding of them.

Goodparley and Orfing are also introduced in this section. This duo represents the way the Church and State of Inland have evolved into one secretive institution. Religious and moral beliefs are instilled in the public through the form of puppet shows, similar to early Medieval Christian traveling troupes who performed throughout the villages of England and Europe. The other implication, of course, is the resemblance of the Big 2's performance of "The Eusa Show" to the sketches of Punch and Judy.



The Punch and Judy show has roots in Italian commedia dell'arte and arose in England in the 17th century. In the British Punch and Judy show, Punch wears a brightly colored jester's hat and is a hunchback with a hooked nose and jutting chin. The Punch and Judy show was not religious in nature, but focused on slapstick humor. These marionette shows were performed in empty halls, taverns, and large tents at fairs. The correlation between Eusa and Punch and Judy is not yet illustrated in the novel, but will be an important factor in the novel's plot.

## Vocabulary

ayr, lyk, qwik, enne, werkin, enemes, aul, wewl, fyn, shynin, addom, iyrn, partickler, dansing, follert, harkin, uther, clikkin, gygers, menne, smauler, bytin, crinje, wimpert, taukin, strecht, angre, nekkit, hayzel, cryd, rattelin, rattelt, peapl, lukt, poyzen, cayr, saym, dyd, famile, shor, wyf, alyv, thear, peaces, sumthing, rivvr, wisselt, nyther, hevve, uv, aul, yul, fyn, lukin, chaynjis, lissening, dumming, zantigen, childer, anrack, spottit, rizlas, innit, Inland, growings, memberment, interstit, blip, realness, terpitation, fents, mincery, binses, foolishness, pirnt, tharbing, joaky, clof, smoak, trubba, diffrents, jollyer, burrit, fearents, stan, measuring, programming, bellering, reddying, biggern, hanvil, mummeling, scatter, e qwations, low cations, nations, oansome, projeck, teckernogical, progers, sarvering, gallack seas, parper, wunner, perwel, emtit, minim, bettering, bint, woaly, holt, las



# Chapter 9-10

## Summary

Chapter 9. In Chapter 9, Riddley relates after the show, the elders of the village, of which he realizes he is now a part, go upstairs to drink. Riddley becomes hungry to be alone and goes to the roof to look at the falling rain and the night. He says, "I had off nex day no digging to do only in my head for Nex Nite and my connexion. I had a nuff and moren a nuff to connect with all I had to do wer sort it out my head wer perwel humming and spinning with it" (Chapter 9, p. 46).

The next night, Riddley reveals his "connexion" to Straiter Empy and a crowd. Riddley claims that "to my 1st connexion I dint want no 1 to think I wer trying to be a nother Brooder Walker nor I dint want to come on with nothing flash" (Chapter 9, p. 47). When Riddley begins, however, he goes into a trancelike state and believes he has told his "reveal." In the end, all Riddley says to the congregation is, "Wel you all know its Eusas head is dreaming us" much to everyone's chagrin (Chapter 9, p. 49).

Chapter 10. In Chapter 10, Riddley relates the next morning after his first connexion, he thinks perhaps it had been a dream, but realizes it wasn't when Littl Nimbel Potter sings taunting chants outside his window. Riddley goes to the divvy roof to eat with the elders, with Lorna on one side of him and Fister Crunchman on the other. Riddley describes Fister Crunchman as a "girt big red hairt bloak 1 of Empys nexters he lookit jus like his name he lookit like he cud bus rocks with his bare hans and walk thru fentses without noatising" (Chapter 10, p. 50).

Fister tells Ridley that he is perhaps too educated and that he should focus his connexions on the matters of men; Ridley acknowledges he will consider it. On the way to the dig site, the work crew sees and remarks on the new leader of the Bernt Arse pack who replaced the one Riddley killed. This dog is black, and Durster Porter insults Riddley by insinuating it might be the spirit of Riddley's father. Riddley reacts with rage and attacks Durster before being pulled off by Fister.

Riddley walks ahead of the crew after the scuffle and comes around a bend to find the black dog staring at him. Riddley stares at the dog until he hears noise behind him and sees Durster on the ground, attacked by two dogs, "his froat and his pryvits toar out and blood sperting all over" (Chapter 10, p. 53). When the rest of the crew catches up and sees the carnage, everyone wonders why the dogs attacked Durster and not Riddley who was in the lead. That night, they have a burning for Durster and Lorna's tell reveals Durster was killed because he fought first instead of waiting.

## Analysis

Riddley's failure at his first connexion is not completely a failure, as is pointed out by Lorna in this section. However, Riddley is left feeling betrayed by himself and dejected



when Fister Crunchman attempts to give Riddley advice. Fister Crunchman, incidentally, is another self-realized name in the novel, as Fister is what is referred to as a "hevvy," or dumb brute.

The reappearance of the Bernt Arse pack and its new leader is important foreshadowing in the novel. The carnage described after Durster Porter's killing by the dogs serves to illustrate the true danger these dogs possess. Unlike today's world, this is one that is inhabited by wolf-like packs that number close to forty, and which are ruthless in their hunger for flesh.

Lorna's indication in her tel is that Durster died because he came upon the dogs face-on, and attacked them first instead of seeing if they were friendly or would run away. The difference between this and Riddley's attack on the leader of the dogs is that the dog approached Riddley from behind, meaning it was likely stalking him as prey.

## Vocabulary

divvy, humminging, mummering, pist, fittit, nexters, seanyer, dint, hed, frendy, dumming, streaming, cudve, poals, raisit, nuff, veert, smoaking, shushing, askings, reveal, forage, shadders, shimmying, spattering, clof, mummel, sylents, salting, mincer, salty, shoar, behynt, raidit, craving, scratcht, styl, wayst, wylst, paintit, memberment, afeart, finger hoal, fisses, hevvy, lernt, guvner, youwl, sydlit, hy, shafs, plomercy, noatist, neverve, fastern, beleaf, livet, stanning, oansome, moren, noys, uswl, lucet, arrer, jobbing, fynding, skyd, glimmers, belching



# Chapter 11-12

## Summary

Chapter 11. In Chapter 11, Riddley describes taking off for Widders Dump with the work crew in the rain. Fister Crunchman is the only one amongst the group that does not view Riddley as bad luck and refuses the others' suggestions to leave Riddley behind. The crew doesn't see any dogs on the way to the site, but Riddley can feel the yellow eyes of the pack leader in his mind.

During the dig this day, the crew recovers the bodies of children from a long time ago. Riddley reaches down and finds a figure like that of the Eusa show, with a wooden head and hands. The puppet has gone black and the show man's hand is still inside of it. Riddley describes the figure as "crookit," with a hump on its back and a hooked nose and a little pointy hat (Chapter 11, p. 60). Belnot Phist attempts to confiscate the doll and Riddley throws Belnot to the ground and begins to run away when he sees the yellow eyes of the leader dog and decides to follow him. The dog leads him past Bernt Arse with the rest of the pack following behind Riddley.

The leader dog leads Riddley to a "dead town" where he stops and rummages at a hole. Riddley follows and hears a child trapped below. Riddley looks around until he finds a wooden trap door leading down to a cellar with another door with bars. Riddley opens the door to overwhelming stench and the kid tells him it was the guards' fault for not giving him a shovel to bury his excrement. When Riddley sees the kid, who is about as tall as he is, he sees no proper face and missing eyes and no hair.

Without knowing why, Riddley holds up the puppet doll in front of him when he sees the faceless boy, and the boy replies, "You dont have to make no Bad Luck go a way syn I aint no Bad Luck Im whats lef after the Bad Luck ben. Im pas the tern and on the way to Good Luck" (Chapter 11, p. 63). Riddley suggests they leave the place if that is the case, and they head toward the trap door. As they reach it, they hear the dogs attacking someone and see blood coming down the steps. After a brief silence, Riddley runs out followed by the boy and the black dog leader heads the way.

Riddley finally has a chance to ask the boy why he was in the hole, but the boy's response makes no sense to Riddley. The boy does mention "askings" and Goodparley. Riddley asks him "How much does it matter to Goodparley if youre gone?" and the boy replies, "Wel Im the Ardship of Cambry enn I" (Chapter 11, p. 67). Riddley discovers that the Ardship was born the same day as him, making them moon brothers, and feels a chill at the premonition sung in a children's chant by the boy.

The Ardship tells Riddley of the Eusa folk as they travel behind the great pack of dogs. The Ardship says, "Time back way back who ben the Puter Leat who ben the Power Leat in Cambry? Eusa folk is who it ben. Us the same and us to blame. Who run the Power Ring who ben too close to Power who gone Badstock crookit and seed of the



crookit? Us the same the Eusa folk" (Chapter 11, p. 70). He goes on to explain that the descendants of Eusa are the Eusa people, who have been kept alive and in secret for the past thousands of years. The Eusa people were responsible for the great evil of the world and the darkening.

The Ardship tells Riddley, "Cambry is where Im going Im going to have a nother go at that Senter Power Im going to gether with the Eusa folk Im going to try for deaper nor I ben" (Chapter 11, p. 72). Riddley tells him he will come too. Riddley asks the Ardship how he befriended the dogs and the Ardship tells him a tale of being a listener and how he "listened" in the dog.

"The Lissener and the Other Voyce Owl of the Worl" is the Ardship's story and after telling it to Riddley he tells him "Lissener is my calling name you can call me that" (Chapter 11, p. 73). Before going to sleep that night, Riddler throws the puppet doll over the wall, waiting to see if the dogs would eat it. They do not.

Chapter 12. In the deep of night, Riddley and Lissener head out of hiding with the dogs. When they reach a point that leads to Cambry, Lissener thanks Riddley and bids farewell. Riddley, however, convinces his friend that he will accompany him to Cambry.

Along the journey, Riddley relates to the reader the story called "The Bloak as Got on Top of Aunty." In this story, Riddley relates death is referred to as "Aunty," a great beast with stone bones and teeth between her legs. When you die, you must have intercourse with Aunty, whether you like it or not. Long ago, back after Bad Time, Aunty swept the land with plagues and death. One man whose wife and child died of plague was being chased by those attempting to burn out the town of disease. The man went looking for Aunty, believing it were his time to die. After he and Aunty had sex, however, the man wasn't dead and asked why. Aunty told him it was because he came looking for her, and left him. He came to the place called Hagmans II, which was so named because the man met another woman there and slept with her too. Afterward, he became weak and she related that she was Arga Warga, the sister of Aunty, and ate him up.

As Riddley and Lissener travel, Lissener again mentions the Puter Leat, and Riddley asks what the Puter Leat had been. Lissener tells him, "What Goodparley calls Eusas head which it ben a girt box of knowing and you hook up peopl to it thats what a puter ben. We ben the Puter Leat we had the woal worl in our mynd and we had worls beyont this in our mynd we progammit pas the sarvering gallack seas..." (Chapter 12, p. 80). After that point, Lissener goes into an epileptic fit and Riddler carries him to a stone ruin for shelter from the rain.

After a short break, the boys head back on their journey and Riddley keeps seeing green blips in his mind. He asks Lissener how many of the Eusa folk there were altogether and Lissener tells him there are 45 counting himself. Riddley begins to lose hope, having thought of hundreds of Eusas to back them up. Riddley asks Lissener what his plan is once they reach the senter, but Lissener only tells him he will know when he gets there.



Riddley and Lissener come upon a rubble pile of old machines, which Riddley describes as made of some type of metal that didn't rot. "Suddn when I seen the shyning of them broakin machines I begun to get some idear of the shyning of the Littl Man. Tears begun streaming down my face and my froat akit" (Chapter 12, p. 86). The boys then come upon a shelter set up with fire and cots inside the machine before heading back into the night. Riddley could see six hevvy's down below on the hill and stayed above to listen.

The boys slip away down the cliff and find a boat in the water, half filled with water. The sailor who had been sailing in it is still under it, dead. In the man's possessions, Riddler finds some hash and a few crumbly stones, which Lissener says is what he is looking for. "Hol it in your hans and you can feal it in them stoans and scrabbling to get out you can hear it hispering to its self and clacking like a skelter of crabs" (Chapter 12, p. 92). After clearing out the boat and sending the dead sailor to sea, Riddley and Lissener set off toward Cambry.

## Analysis

When the work crew begins excavating the bodies of children killed in the nuclear holocaust in Chapter 11, it imprints on the reader the sense of wonder and questioning that is surely much of Riddley's drive to uncover the truth of history. It seems evident the Widders Dump crew has unearthed the remains of a school or even a carnival that was likely annihilated in the nuclear explosion. This would also be a likely place where Riddley would find a Punch doll.

The discovery of the Punch doll, which Riddley identifies as appearing like Eusa, marks the beginning of Riddley's journey. He decides to follow the Bernt Arse Pack into the woods, knowing he could be killed at any moment. When Riddley discovers the boy in the hole, he doesn't consider the dangers of helping the boy until he is already on task. The boy, Lissener, with his eyeless face and distorted figure, reflects the images described by the children earlier in the novel discussing "dog people." Lissener also casts a white shadow.

The kinship between Riddley and Lissener is important. Both of these boys have lost their fathers to violent means, and the relationship they form as "moon brothers" is an illustration of the theme of brotherhood in the novel. Riddley will go on to meet other "moon brothers," and each of these relationships will form a part of his identity.

Riddley's story, "The Bloak as Got on Top of Aunty" is a story about avoiding fate and about humility. The man in the story goes looking for death, which does not take him because he was looking for it. Then, however, when he gloats about having cheated death, he is gobbled up.

Lissener's descriptions of the Puter Leat and the Eusa folk are important because they refer directly to our world today. The Puter Leat refer to "computer elite," and by Lissener's description, his people were the ones who developed airplanes, boats, machines, and ultimately, nuclear power. Lissener's people punished Eusa and Lissener





relates a story of Eusa never introduced to Riddley in the puppet shows. In this way, Lissener is opening Riddley's mind to understand the complexity of history.

The substance found by Riddley and Lissener in the boat will prove to be a central plot focus. These powdery rocks will be part of the "1 little 1" and the "1 Big 1," which the characters seek to understand.

## Vocabulary

hoap, startit, qwyet, greyness, yellerness, noatist, muck, levver, yunges, mytve, figger, groan, parper, smyling, mouf, crookit, hookit, witey, allowit, interstit, crowdless, qwipt, barsets, youwl, wunnering, crumbelt, terbel, ruffing, poast, liffit, peast, arga warga, jaggit, stations, nuff, lam, fealys, vackt, nexters, creaper, drenching, peltering, durdling, greanish, pong, progammit, askings, senter, Puter Leat, jumbl, Ardship, sharna, pax, col iron, rune, nylan, cruciboal, radiant, sylents, grooling, smarling, blackent, follerme, colourt, blip, Fork Stoan, fancy, longern, thunner, litening, jynt, gethering, mullerplying, vydit, sarvering gallack seas, serkits, worrit, clyming, ballsy, wivvering, neadntve, feabl, breaving, sying, machines, bearthing, userel, gunge, hispert, hist, hidey, hash, rizlas, arrers, hooker, drifting



# Chapter 13-15

## Summary

Chapter 13. In Chapter 13, Riddley states that he had never been to Cambry before but knew

it was a bit further from Fork Stoa. As the boys travel and talk, it dawns on Riddley he and Lissener are like the two sons of Eusa, and the boys weep at the thought. They decide to part and better their chances, with Lissener going forward to Cambry and Riddley heading to find Belnot Phist in the hopes he might be able to help them.

Riddley heads back to Widders Dump and considers what he will do when he gets there. He passes through a place called Mr Clevvers Roaling Place, where Riddley hears the voice of Fister Crunchman. As Riddley listens, he listens to Fister saying he doesn't feel right about something and the voice of Straiter Empy saying, "For his oan good and all" (Chapter 13, p. 102). Riddley slips away feeling good for having passed through. Riddley swims across a great ditch to enter Widders Dump. Just as he begins to wonder if he is walking into a trap, he is grabbed from behind.

Chapter 14. Riddley is brought into a room by the hevvy who has him from behind and Riddley is surprised to find Goodparley and Belnot Phist. Belnot's face is whiter than usual, and Riddley wonders if the two of them get out of this alive if they might one day be friends. Goodparley retells the events of Riddley's day, including his find of the storm-wrecked boat. Goodparley demands to know what Riddley got from the boat, and Riddley, fearing Goodparley will get hold of his puppet doll, offers up the bag of stones without contest.

Goodparley asks Riddley what he thinks the stones are and takes them from him. Riddley states, "I hadnt seen them in the lite befor. Yeller they wer. Broakin bits of yeller stoa" (Chapter 14, p. 114). Goodparley responds to the sight of the stones, saying, ""Wel you foun your self a sweets place did you and sweeter nor honey you foun yourself the yellerboy stoa the Salt 4" (Chapter 14, p. 114).

Goodparley sends Phist out of the room and marvels at Riddley's abilities, likening his actions of the day to the folk song "Fools Circel 9wys." Goodparley says, "Words in the air pirnt footsteps on the groun for us to put our feet in to" (Chapter 14, p. 115).

Goodparley relates another story of Eusa and his hope to bring about the rising of Inland and then shows Riddley a paper which reads "The Legend of St Eustace" (Chapter 14, p. 118). This passage, which is written and reads in the style of modern English, begins "The Legend of St Eustace dates from the year A.D. 120 and this XVth-century wall painting depicts with fidelity the several episodes in his life" (Chapter 14, p. 118). After reading it, Riddley marvels that he doesn't even know half the words, asking,



"Whats a Legend?" (Chapter 14, p. 119). Goodparley attempts to explain the passage to Riddley, obviously and humorously misinterpreting more of the text than not.

Goodparley goes on to reveal that years were once counted in numbers, but the last number recorded before Bad Time was 1997. As the reality of the situation dawns on him, Riddley asks, "Dyou mean to tel me them befor us by the time they done 1997 years they had boats in the air and all them things and here we are weve done 2347 years and mor and stil slogging in the mud?" Goodparley replies this is fact, and time has slunk them back for some reason, perhaps due to the "barms" (bombs) that poisoned the land or the hole made in the "O Zoan" (Ozone).

Riddley asks what will happen to Lissener and Goodparley tells him he will go on doing what he's been doing: asking for the answers. Goodparley tells Riddley his understanding of the story of St. Eustice and its connection to the Eusa Story is in Riddley's father's first connexion: "A littl salting and no saver" (Chapter 14, p. 127). He goes on to describe the sulphur brought by Riddley as "salt 4" or salt divided by two.

Finally, Goodparley realizes he still hasn't emptied Riddley's pockets and pulls out the puppet doll and begins to weep. He says, "theres a working in this it aint jus happening randem theres too many things be twean us" (Chapter 14, p. 128). Goodparley tells Riddley the figure is named "Punch" and is the oldest figure of the past that exists.

Goodparley goes on to tell Riddley that as a young boy he lost his parents in a woods fire and met an old man who took him in and introduced him to this very doll. The old man taught Goodparley the standard format of the Eusa Show based on ancient Punch and Judy routines. Goodparley performs one of these Punch and Judy shows for Riddley, telling him he will apprentice just as Goodparley did.

When the show ends, Riddley sits staring at the empty space and the smoke and flames on the curtain. Goodparley tells him he will never reveal the show to anyone but him. He and Granser, the old man who raised him, are the only ones who knew it. Riddley asks what happened to Granser and Goodparley tells him he killed him on his twelfth birthday. It is discovered Riddley and Goodparley share the same birthday, and Goodparley goes on to say on that naming day Granser took Goodparley to a tavern where seven rowdy blokes were touching him and wanting to start trouble. Granser gave him to the men for the night, who raped him repeatedly. The next day, Granser told Goodparley he wouldn't let him move out on that day because he'd been sleeping with boys on his naming day, and that's when Goodparley stabbed him to death.

After another rendition from the Eusa Story, Riddley determines he's not going to leave Phist alone and runs for the gate house. He sees Phist running at him and blazing in light. He had been pulled up by a rope over a beam and his head was down. When questioned of what the dying boy whispered to Riddley, he replies, "He dint say nothing only that yellerboy stoan wud be my onwith then he dyd" (Chapter 14, p. 146). Goodparley returns Riddley's weapons and tells him to leave and go as he pleases. Riddley turns his feet toward Cambry and as soon as he crosses the clearing the dogs are all around him again.



Chapter 15. Chapter 15 is subtitled "Roothing with 'Eusa 7' in my mynd," and Riddley thinks of the dogs Folleree and Folleroo as he heads toward Cambry. Along his way, Riddley encounters an old man with a hunched back who he believes to be Granser, the man who raised Goodparley. The man denies this title, claiming instead to be Drop John the Foller Man. Riddley shares a cryptic conversation with the old man before heading onward.

When Riddley and the dogs enter Cambry and the Ring Ditch where the standings of the Power Ring once stood, Riddley attempts to imagine the ring in his mind and its eruption of the 1 Big 1. Riddley feels the power of the earth and thinks "Power wantit what ever cud happen to happen. Power wantit every thing moving frontways. The same as Goodparley wantit. The same as I wer wanting then" (Chapter 15, p. 155).

Entering the ruins of the Canterbury Cathedral, Riddley is overwhelmed by a vision of a female divinity and writes his first original story about stones, and how they want to be listened to. A strange face appearing in the ruins is referred to as "Greanvine" by Riddley. Riddley tries to put the pieces together but is distracted worrying about his moon brother, Lissener. Finally, he heads to Fork Stoan to try to find and help him.

## Analysis

Riddley is unsure of what he overhears between Fister and Straiter Emphy in Chapter 13, but the indication is a conspiracy is taking place. This will later be confirmed when Goodparley's men turn against him.

Belnot Phist represents another potential "moon brother" to Riddley, although there is never an opportunity for this relationship to play out. Instead, Riddley is introduced to a great amount of knowledge from Goodparley, connecting Eusa to St. Eustace and to Riddley's father's connexions. The folk song "Fools Circel 9wys" will also prove to be important in the plot and symbolism of the novel, as the events of the plot and the locations of the setting reflect the words of the children's rhyme.

Goodparley's interpretation of "The Legend of St Eustace" in Chapter 14 is crucial to Hobart's themes of history, religion, and interpretation. Goodparley misinterprets the meaning of the text, while at the same time incorporating it into the current Eusa mythology. The reader cannot help but question our own vision of the past and the ways in which misinterpretation has led us astray in culture and beliefs. The final year of Earth as we know it is also revealed in this chapter, when Goodparley states the last date recorded was 1997. Hobart intentionally set the novel approximately 2,000 years in the future because that is the relative number of years since the last Iron Age.

In this chapter as well, Riddley is introduced to the true identity of the Punch doll. Goodparley relates the history of Punch and Judy, enacting a skit for Riddley, and effectively demonstrating the correlation between the Eusa Show and the Punch and Judy show.



Goodparley's story of Granser has the effect of creating empathy in both the reader and in Riddley for Goodparley while presenting Granser as a monster of sorts. This will be important in Chapter 15, when Riddley meets Granser walking through the woods.

## Vocabulary

forkt, Power Ring, blyn, stummel, winch, roap, farring, progamming, poasyum, datter, vantsit, theary, slyding, ryving, cloudit, chaymber, outers, scattert, nexy, glewt, vy brations, weaping, parbly, memberty, wewd, myndit, nemminy, vack, bilt, air boats, rottinness, blyn, faggers, Phistwl, norf, wes, unspoak, dwindling, persner, fantstyt, sydling, leggers, holler, batcherd, pontsing, freshening, compoun, nindicater, witem, userel, dantsing, weare, blackent, minim, interstit, persoon, depicts, fidelity, episodes, wooded, landscape, hamlets, creatures, meanders, quarry, possessions, martyrdom, renouncing, outcasts, torrents, recovered, victorious, brazen, magnificent, swanking, putta, neadful, sossage, myswel, breaf



## Chapter 16-18

### Summary

Chapter 16. Chapter 16 begins with Riddley still questioning the motives of Goodparley and his resemblance to the figure of Greanvine. Late at night, Riddley sits with the Punch doll on one hand and the Greanvine face on the other. Riddley begins to enact a skit between the two characters that takes on a life of its own. Afterward, Riddley presses on to Fork Stoan, led by the pack of dogs.

When Riddley arrives in Fork Stoan, he sees Goodparley hung up the same as Belnot Phist had been hung, with his hands behind his back. Orfing and his hevvy's, as well as The Ardship and the Eusa folk, are looking on. Riddley enters and cuts down Goodparley, slipping the sulphur powder in to the fit up, thinking it had already been searched. Riddley asks Orfing, "Is this HOAP OF A TREE then?" and Orfing replies that it is (Chapter 16, p. 175).

The Eusa folk begin strange chanting and passing Goodparley from one to the next as the Ardship says, "O no we wunt chop the Pry Mincer like he choppt my father we wunt never do that. Onlyes thing wewl do is make him lissen bettern what hes done so far. Hes all ways telling and asking yet he dont never lissen to no 1 nor nothing" (Chapter 16, p. 177).

Goodparley is taken by the mob of Eusa folk and blinded. He then falls to the ground by Riddley, who holds him up as he asks Orfing to keep his life. Orfing assents and Riddley and Goodparley make their way through the woods, led by the dogs. Goodparley asks where they are going and Riddley tells him they are going to see Granser because he is a healer. Goodparley argues that Granser is dead, but is assured by Riddley he has met him in the woods across the river from Good Mercy.

Riddley and Goodparley arrive at Granser's cabin in the woods and stay there for a time recuperating. During this time, the three discuss the children's folk song regarding the yellow stoan, and it is discovered the "Hart of the wood is the chard coal" (charcoal) and the other ingredient is sulphur (salt 4). Goodparley presents Granser with the yellow stone, asking him if he will know what to do with it.

Granser takes the stones and goes into his hut. Riddley goes and watches as Gander pounds the sulphur into powder and then the charcoal. Lastly, he grinds white crystals that look like salt and mixes the potion. He tells Riddley he must say some secret words and tells him to step away, which Riddley does. Suddenly, a loud boom is heard and Riddley runs back to see the hut completely in smithereens. Granser is dead and his head is on a pole, which Riddley runs and tells Goodparley. Goodparley doesn't respond and Riddley realizes that a hole from Granser's potion explosion had driven straight into his skull.



Riddley goes to the head of Granser on the pole and asks what it all means. Granser's reply appears in Riddley's mind: "What if its you whats making all this happen? What if everything you think of happens?" (Chapter 16, p. 195). Riddley walks back to the fence where the dogs are whimpering in mourning, and slings up his bundle and walks away.

Chapter 17. In Chapter 17, Riddley is walking again towards Cambry. Riddley stumbles upon the realization that instead of the phrase "THE ONLYES POWER IS NO POWER," "the not sturging for Power thats where the Power is" (Chapter 17, p. 198). Riddley then encounters Orfing, who has fled and is hiding out after his time with the Eusa folk has become out of hand.

Despite their conflicts in the past, Riddley decides to take to the road with Orfing, forming a puppet show called "The Punch Show." They begin their travels heading to Weaping, where they are confronted by Rightway Flinter about the death of Goodparley.

Chapter 18. In Chapter 18, Riddley and Orfing continue to struggle with Flinter to enter the settlement of Weaping and Flinter finally relents. Orfing and Riddley perform "The Punch Show," which begins well but is cut short when an audience member attempts to protect Pooty's baby by physical force. Major calamity is averted, however, and Riddley and Orfing depart with their entourage.

## Analysis

Riddley becomes aware that something is awry with Lissener when the other half of the Bernt Arse Pack returns to him. This sends Riddley to Fork Stoan, where he discovers Goodparley tied up and tortured. The grizzly scene depicts the Eusa folk as somewhat monstrous ghosts and Orfing as a traitor. However, Goodparley has in fact tortured and killed the Eusa folk for years, so their retribution is justified.

When Goodparley is blinded, he has served his sentence for his abuse to the Eusa folk. Goodparley is then led by Riddley to see Granser where he will heal. This brings Goodparley full circle to the boy who left his adopted father. Unfortunately, the "1 little 1" is discovered by Granser and recreated, killing himself and his adopted son.

These events lead Riddley to his essential "connexion" in the novel: the realization the most powerful are actually those who do not seek power at all. Hobart concludes the novel with Riddley continuing on his journey, now alongside Orfing, spreading entertainment in the form of the Punch Show.

## Vocabulary

luce, dowitz, floppit, unner, happening, hispering, shadders, wivvering, twissit, mincery, yellorboy, sweetent, poal, wester, shyning, slubbering, moaning, plomercy, terbeles, broakin, stroaking, aulders, picters, chard coal berner, cernlyve, coppises, clof, seakerts, kirstels, glimmering, humminging, driffing, nekkit, spirit, parbly



# Characters

## Riddley Walker

Riddley Walker is the protagonist of the novel and the novel's narrator. At the beginning of the narrative, Riddley is twelve years old and it is his "naming day," meaning the day he begins adulthood. Riddley loses his father to an accident only three days later and shortly afterward begins his epic adventure. Riddley is highly intelligent amongst his people and is granted ascendancy as the next "connexion man" in the village, following in his father's footsteps.

Riddley kills a wild dog, the leader of the Bernt Arse Pack, on the day of his father's death, and describes the antagonistic relationship between dogs and man since the Bad Time. However, once Riddley begins his journey, he finds himself surrounded by the Bernt Arse Pack and befriended by its new leader, a large black dog with yellow eyes.

Riddley's journey is a journey for knowledge. He seeks to find understanding of the history of Inland and his people. As Riddley travels and meets different companions, he is presented with a more complex view of the world than he ever expected. In the end, Riddley realizes that power is not found in the powerless, but true power is found in those who needn't seek it at all.

## Brooder Walker

Brooder Walker is Riddley Walker's father. Three days after Riddley's naming day on his twelfth birthday, Brooder Walker is killed in an accident at Widders Dump. Brooder Walker works, along with his son, on a team that salvages iron and metals from ancient machinery from before the Bad Time. During this particular dig, the supervisors request the giant object found be excavated whole. In the process of bringing the object to the surface, Riddley slips, causing others on the team to slip, and Riddley's father becomes trapped under the object which kills him.

## Straiter Empy

Straiter Empy is one of the crew members who works with Brooder and Riddley Walker at Widders Dump. At Brooder Walker's funeral burning, Straiter is the first to speak on behalf of the crowd.

## Abel Goodparley

Abel Goodparley is the "Pry Mincer" of Inland who stages the Eusa shows along with the "Wes Mincer," Erny Orfing. Good-parley has knowledge which he shares with Riddley regarding the search for the "1 Big 1" and the "1 little 1." Late in the novel,





Riddley realizes that Goodparley is not his enemy and he helps Goodparley escape from the Eusa folk after being blinded.

## Erny Orfing

Erny Orfing is the “Wes Mincer” of Inland and acts as the son figure to Abel Goodparley. Later in the novel, it arises that Orfing has been plotting against Goodparley and leads him into a trap wherein Goodparley is blinded by the Eusa folk. In the end of the novel, Riddley befriends Orfing and the two begin traveling together while producing the “Punch Show.”

## Fister Crunchman

Riddley describes Fister Crunchman as a "girt big red hairt bloak 1 of Empys nexters he lookit jus like his name he lookit like he cud bus rocks with his bare hans and walk thru fentses without noatising" (Chapter 10, p. 50). After Riddley's failure of a first connexion, Fister tells Riddley that he is perhaps too educated and that he should focus his thoughts on the matters of men and leave the talking to women-folk.

## Belnot Phist

Belnot Phist is introduced as the overseer of the dig on the day of Riddley's father's death. Chalker Marchman introduces Phist, who is described by Riddley as "a littl nothing looking witey bloak dint look no moren 10 years old. It wernt the shortness of him I aint a tall man my self but this 1 he lookit like his dad pult out too soon when they ben making him" (Chapter 5, p. 21). Phist later appears in the narrative when he is killed at the compound of Abel Goodparley.

## Lorna Elswint

Lorna Elswint is described as a "tel woman" whose role is to explain signs, often referring to the sections of the Eusa story. Lorna has a friendship and a sexual relationship with Riddley and is the one who foresees his greatness in her tel at the funeral of Brooder Walker.

## The Ardship of Cambry/Lissener

Riddley first encounters Lissener when he is led to the boy trapped in an underground dungeon by the leader of the Bernt Arse Pack. When Riddley sees the kid, who is about as tall as him, he sees no proper face, noticeably missing eyes, and no hair. Lissener, also known as the Ardship of Cambry, tells Riddley of the Eusa folk of whom he is descended. "Time back way back who ben the Puter Leat who ben the Power Leat in Cambry? Eusa folk is who it ben. Us the same and us to blame. Who run the Power

Ring who ben too close to Power who gone Badstock crookit and seed of the crookit?  
Us the same the Eusa folk" (Chapter 11, p. 70).

## **Eusa**

Eusa is the protagonist in the mythology and folk tales in the novel depicting the nuclear disaster. In the first story of Eusa printed in Chapter 6, Eusa is described as a knowing man who is working for Mr. Clevver when their enemies appear, bringing war. Eusa tells Mr. Clevver that they will need war machines, boats for water and air, and bombs, referred to here as "Berstin Fyr" (Chapter 6, p. 30).

Author Russell Hoban states in the Afterword that Eusa was meant to represent the typical mindset of contemporary society. Eusa is also a reference to Saint Eustace, whose painting in Canterbury Cathedral was the author's inspiration for writing the novel.



# Objects/Places

## Inland

Inland is the setting of Riddley Walker. "Inland" is a futuristic England, 2,000 years in the future after a nuclear war destroyed civilization as we know it.

## The Bernt Arse Pack

The Bernt Arse Pack are a great pack of wild dogs which appear throughout the novel, first when Riddley kills the boar and second when Riddley kills the pack leader. Later in the novel, Riddley comes to befriend the wild dogs and travels with them and his companion Lissener.

## The Eusa Story

The Eusa Story is the backdrop of the folklore and mythology of Riddley's people in Inland. The mythology of Eusa was likely derived from the Cathedral of St. Eustice, which was Hoban's inspiration for the novel.

## Bad Time

Bad Time refers to the period in history when the atomic disaster took place. During Bad Time, humans, animals and plants were largely wiped out by plagues and sickness.

## Widders Dump

Widders Dump is the location where Riddley works with his father before his father's death in a dig accident. Riddley continues to work at Widders Dump after his father's death until he is drawn by the Bernt Arse Pack into his journey.

## The Power Ring

The Power Ring refers to the location where the Ring Ditch is now in the novel. Back in Bad Time, the people built a great Power Ring which was the epicenter of the atomic explosion.

## Cambry

Cambry is the location that once was Canterbury in the novel. Cambry is located in the center of Inland and is described as a forest of half-ruined columns and arches.

## **Punch Puppet**

Riddley discovers, amidst the wreckage of the dig site, a blackened Punch puppet which strikes him by its resemblance to the Eusa figure. It is immediately after discovering the Punch puppet that Riddley embarks on his journey.

## **Puter Leat**

The Puter Leat refers to the "Computer Elite," in the language of Inland. This term refers to those who existed before Bad Time and their technological abilities.

## **1 Big 1**

1 Big 1, in the Eusa Story, relates to Eusa's attempts to find nuclear power.



# Themes

## Mythology and Folklore

Mythology and folklore are central themes in *Riddley Walker*. The beginning of the novel introduces the story of "Hart of the Wood," and thus establishes the moral perspective of the world of Inland and its inhabitants (Chapter 1, p. 5). From there, Hobart expands the mythological and spiritual elements through the many variations of Eusa's story. The spiritual vision of the world of the inhabitants of Inland is relatively bleak, as the Eusa mythology offers only damnation without redemption.

Russell Hobart drew on many different religious and mythological sources in creating the world of Inland, including Catholicism, Celtic religions, and English pop-culture. The combination of these proves to be a metaphor of contemporary society. As Hobart presents the misinterpreted texts of the past through Goodparley, the reader must question what the author is saying of contemporary religion and culture. How correct is our vision of history? How intermingled with history is our vision of religion?

## Power and Destruction

Power and the destruction that arises from it are another central theme in the novel. "The Eusa Story" is an example of allegory which examines power in the narrative, and Riddley's journey is another example of the theme of power. When Riddley learns that Abel Goodparley is on the verge of rediscovering the secrets of the "1 little 1," he asks himself why anyone would not wish to recapture the power of the earlier age. Riddley recognizes his own desire for the lost knowledge of destruction.

However, later in the novel Riddley transforms his philosophy from "THE ONLYES POWER IS NO POWER," to "the not sturging for Power thats where the Power is" (Chapter 17, p. 198). This realization of Riddley's expresses hope that mankind can eventually learn to turn from the struggle for power and, thus, destruction.

## Friendship and Brotherhood

Riddley's journey in *Riddley Walker* is one of becoming a man. After losing his father, Riddley is initially alone; he feels like an outsider amongst the village elders to whom he has ascended. However, when Riddley chances fate by following the black leader of the Bernt Arse Pack, Riddley encounters friendship for the first time. Riddley then meets Lissener, who becomes (or simply is) Riddley's "moon brother," meaning they share the same birthday—on the second full moon of the year.

Riddley's next moon brother becomes Goodparley, who also shares the same birthday, and who shares much of the curiosity and desires of Riddley. Goodparley's motivations, however, are more corrupt than Riddley's, and lead to his ultimate demise. Riddley

considers the fact Belnot Phist might be another moon brother, but he never has the opportunity to know whether that is true or not because Phist is killed in the same chapter.

Ultimately, Riddley's truest companions end up being the dogs of the Bernt Arse Pack. The dogs, unlike most of the humans in the story, appear to truly understand Riddley's philosophy of power and the importance of not seeking it. In the end of the novel, Riddley is again accompanied by a companion, but moreover, his traveling "Punch Show" is escorted by the great pack of dogs.



# Style

## Point of View

Riddley Walker is written in first-person point of view in the past tense. The perspective of the novel comes from the protagonist, Riddley. At the onset of the narrative, Riddley describes his twelfth birthday, his “naming day,” when he became a man. The character of Riddley indeed thinks much like an adult as opposed to a child in the story, and it is easy for the reader to forget that this perspective comes from a twelve-year-old.

Riddley expresses his internal thoughts in the narrative and surmises the thoughts and intentions of others, but the perspective is limited and not omniscient. This perspective gives the reader more suspense, as events as perceived by Riddley can be more clearly realized by the reader who understands the course of the history of Inland more than the main character.

## Setting

Riddley Walker is set place in Inland, a post-apocalyptic vision of England, approximately 2,000 years after nuclear war demolished civilization. The central region of Inland is called Cambry, a futuristic Cambridge. Hoban has created in this setting, a second Iron Age; however, the inhabitants of Inland mine for iron and other metals from the dilapidated remains of machinery from what is referred to as the “Bad Time.”

The landscape described by Riddley includes many “dead towns,” or areas which were affected greatest by nuclear fallout. There are outposts set up by government operatives in some of these areas, and packs of wild dogs roam the landscape. Dogs and humans have become enemies in the post-modern world, and those, such as Lissener and Riddley, who befriend dogs are often ostracized from society or distrusted.

## Language and Meaning

Riddley Walker is narrated by Riddley, who writes in an invented form of English, ideated as a futuristic version of a Kentish dialect. The language is a central element of the novel and language itself relates to the novel’s themes of interpretation, history and mythology. While initially difficult to read and understand, the reader acclimates to the almost foreign language, especially when reading the work aloud, as the words are written semi-phonetically.

Many modern words in Riddley’s world have changed in meaning, as have many of the place names. While the language is a projection of how contemporary linguistics might apply in the future, it also creates suspense as the reader comes to understand some of the references of which Riddley is unaware.



On the subject of Riddley's language, Mr. Hoban says in the Afterword, "As much as possible I tried for more than one meaning in the words. For example, when Riddley says, 'I wer the loan of my name,' he means that he is the lone carrier of his name, living on borrowed time. Life among his people is usually hard and short (Afterword, p. 235).

## Structure

The novel is comprised of eighteen chapters. Structurally, the narrative follows a semi-traditional plot trajectory, including exposition (Chapters 1-10), rising action (Chapters 11-15), climax (Chapter 16), and denouement (Chapters 17 and 18). A variance of this structure is the interspersing of folk tales, myths, and Riddley's internalized thoughts. These external narratives relate to the action but step away from it in terms of plot progression.

Structure also plays a thematic role in the narrative, as the author questions our linear view of history. Time does not jump forward or backward in the novel, but the novel's focus is in investigating the past; therefore, as the plot progresses forward, Riddley understands more of the past.





## Quotes

Jesus has said: Blessed is the lion that the man will devour, and the lion will become man. And loathsome is the man that the lion will devour, and the lion will become man. – Gospel of Thomas, Logion 7.

On my naming day when I come 12 I gone front spear and kilt a wyld boar he parbly ben the las wyld pig on the Bundel Downs any how there hadnt ben none for a long time befor him nor I aint looking to see none agen. (chapter 1)

Walking my riddels where ever theyve took me and walking them now on this paper the same. (chapter 2)

There ben the dead towns all them years. Ram out poasts in 1 part of them and dogs hoalt up in other parts. And all them years you heard storys of dog peopl. Peopl with dogs heads and dogs with peopls heads. (chapter 2)

Bond fires thats what they use to call them. Big fires they use to bern on hy groun to lite them others back to fetch us. Boats in the air o yes. Them air boats as never come back. Becaws them as got a way to the space stations they jus done ther dying out there in stead of down here. (chapter 4)

The Bernt Arse Pack follert us the woal way from How Fents to Widders Dump. New leader he wer all black and when ever I lookit back he had his head up and looking at me with his ears prickt up. (chapter 5)

Wen Mr Clevver wuz Big Man uv Inland thay had evere thing clevver. Thay had boats in the ayr & picters on the win & evere thing lyk that. (chapter 6)

Yu let thay Nos. uv thay Master Chaynjis owt. Now yu mus go thru them aul. (chapter 6)

Cambry is where Im going Im going to have a nother go at that Senter Power Im going to gether with the Eusa folk Im going to try for deaper nor I ben. (chapter 11)

Follery Digman dog et. Ender Easten kilt in a digging. Belgrave Moaters dead of the coffing sickness. Ferny Carpenter took off by a feaver. And here come Riddley Walker walking thru that dead town dark with his blyn moon brother. (chapter 12)

No 1 uses the old place names now they ben unspok this long time but mos of them are stil there in the places. You know Cambry ben Canterbury in moufs long gone. (chapter 13)

O no we wunt chop the Pry Mincer like he choppt my father we wunt never do that. Onlyes thing wewl do is make him lissen bettern what hes done so far. Hes all ways telling and asking yet he dont never lissen to no 1 nor nothing. (chapter 16)



# Topics for Discussion

## Topic 1

Discuss the characteristics of Riddley in Riddley Walker. What makes Riddley stand out amongst the people of his village? What differences exist between Riddley and most twelve-year-olds? How does Riddley understand the world and its history at the beginning of the novel?

## Topic 2

How are the themes of mythology and folklore illustrated in the novel? What is their significance? What do you think Russell Hobart is saying about contemporary religion through the work?

## Topic 3

Discuss the significance of Lorna in the novel. What relationship does Lorna have with Riddley? How old is Lorna? How is Lorna regarded by the other villagers?

## Topic 4

Compare Inland to England today. How does Russell Hobart's futuristic vision of England differ from its contemporary reality? How does Inland relate to the previous Iron Age?

## Topic 5

Discuss the character of Goodparley in the novel. How does Goodparley relate to Riddley? What is Goodparley's ultimate objective? Does he meet that objective? What was Goodparley's relationship with his adopted father like?

## Topic 6

Compare and contrast the characters of Goodparley and Lissener in the narrative. Are the actions of each of these characters justified? Why? Why not?



## Topic 7

Discuss the symbolic meaning of the Bernt Arse Pack. When do the dogs first appear in the narrative? What is the meaning of the change in leadership amongst the pack after Riddley's father dies? How does Riddley relate to the black leader of the pack?