

# **Ship Fever and Other Stories Study Guide**

**Ship Fever and Other Stories by Andrea Barrett**

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## Plot Summary

*Ship Fever and Other Stories* is a collection of eight short stories/novellas by the author Andrea Barrett. The stories weave historical and fictional characters, moving through the past and present. They center on themes of scientific discovery, achievement, failure, and loss.

In "Ship Fever," the title novella, Dr. Lauchlin Grant works at a Canadian quarantine station for Irish immigrants fleeing from the Great Famine. In "The English Pupil," Carl Linnaeus tries to make sense of the confusion that his life has become since his strokes and has visions about his former students and the plants that he named after them. In "Rare Bird," Linnaeus's theory that swallows hibernate under the water in winter serves as the backdrop for two displaced women who test his theory and find it false. In "Birds with No Feet," a young man travels the world collecting animal and insect specimens but finds his dreams dashed over and over again. Set in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, these stories speak of the development of science and the sociological context of the periods the characters exist in.

Barrett also includes several pieces set in contemporary times, although each also draws heavily on the past and the characters' memories. In "The Behavior of the Hawkweeds," Gregor Mendel's failure in hybridizing hawkweeds haunts a contemporary couple who are attached to Mendel's story. In "The Littoral Zone," two marine biologists examine their life-changing affair and skirt the issue of whether it was worth it. In "Soroche," a woman loses her husband and her wealth, which reminds her of the unborn child she lost years before. Finally, in "The Marburg Sisters," two sisters reflect on their shared past and have a conversation about their dying father with their already dead mother.



# The Behavior of the Hawkweeds

## The Behavior of the Hawkweeds Summary

Antonia's husband, Richard, had passed out copies of Gregor Mendel's "famous paper on the hybridization of edible peas" to his sophomore genetics class for the past thirty years. He would tell them that the paper was a model of clarity, representing all that science should be. He'd pace in front of them, speaking easily. He is sensitive about his left hand for he had been born hexadactylic and had the extra finger removed in a childhood operation.

After he had passed out the paper, Richard would tell the students the conventional narrative of Mendel's life. Mendel grew up in a small village in northwest Moravia, which was then part of the Hapsburg Empire and later part of Czechoslovakia. He studied science and taught at a high school. In 1856, he began his experiments on the hybridization of edible peas. Over the next eight years, he performed hundreds of experiments, tracing how characteristics were passed from generation to generation.

There, Richard would say the science of genetics was formed. Reaching this point in his lecture, he'd look toward Antonia in the back of the room and smile. He knew that she knew what was in store for the students at the end of the semester when he'd tell them the other Mendel story. That story is the one that she told him about: how Mendel was led astray by a fellow scientist.

Richard had not introduced Antonia to Mendel. When she was a girl, her grandfather, Anton Vaculik, worked at a nursery. He had left Moravia in 1891 and had come to America. He worked at the nursery for thirty years and everyone there called him Tony. She called him Tati, which is Czech for dad. She is named Antonia after him. At the nursery were fields of fruit trees and glass houses full of seedlings. Antonia followed Tati around, helping him as he transplanted plants and he would talk as they worked.

In 1931, when Antonia was ten, Otto Leiniger took over as the boss of the nursery. He was in his late fifties and he thought himself a scholar. He treated Tati like a common laborer. One day he caught Antonia alone in a greenhouse. She was watering small begonias and was wearing shorts and an old white shirt of Tati's. When she looked up, Otto was standing on the opposite side of a narrow bench. He pointed to the row nearest him and told her to water them since they looked dry. She didn't want to walk around the bench and stand next to him. He told her to lean over a little farther and she could reach them. Her shirt gaped at the neck and fell away from her body as she reached over and watered the flowers. He pointed to more flowers near him and when she reached over, he reached for her forearm. She was afraid of him but didn't want to get Tati in trouble.

Antonia imagines now what the scene must have looked like when Tati entered the greenhouse: Antonia bent over the narrow bench, her white shirt hanging down,



Leiniger sweating and grinding into the wooden bench. His hand is on her forearm, forcing her toward him. Even now, she doesn't know what Leiniger had in mind. She thinks that he was a lonely, old man and perhaps he just wanted to look down her shirt and have a little contact with the skin on her arm. Perhaps nothing more would have happened.

But Tati saw the worst. He called Antonia's name and when Leiniger grasped on to her arm, he flew over and jabbed his knife into the back of Leiniger's hand. Leiniger screamed and stumbled backward. A concrete block behind him caught him below the knees and he fell, cracking his head against a heating pipe.

Antonia did not tell any of this to Richard. When they met, she was working at the GE plant and Richard was finishing his thesis. During their courtship, Antonia had told Richard only the things that she thought would make him love her. On their second date, she told him that her grandfather had taught her about plant breeding, genetics, and Mendel's work. Richard had proclaimed that Mendel was his hero.

During the months before the trial, Tati slept in Antonia's room and she slept on the couch in the living room. Her mother tried to tell her that it wasn't her fault. After Leiniger died, she'd come home from school to find Tati waiting for her on the porch. He wanted to walk, and her mother wouldn't let him leave the house alone even though she rarely could go with him. So, Tati waited for Antonia.

Tati and Antonia did not talk about what had happened in the greenhouse; rather, Tati would name the ferns, mosses, and flowers. He showed her the hawkweeds. He told her that they were the weeds that ruined Gregor Mendel's life. Tati had grown up on the outskirts of Brno. He was ten when he scaled the walls of the Augustinian monastery on a whim one afternoon. As he sat atop the wall, he saw a plump, short-legged man. Mendel had helped Tati jump down.

Mendel and Tati were in a garden with fruit trees and wild vines. Where Tati landed were peas. Mendel showed him the tame fox he kept and the hedgehogs, hamsters, and mice. There were also beehives and cages full of birds. Mendel and Tati became friends, and Mendel taught the boy his horticultural secrets.

In 1866, Mendel wrote a letter to Carl Nageli, who lived in Munich and was a well-known botanist interested in hybridization. He sent a copy of his pea paper as well, hoping that Nageli could help it get some recognition. He also mentioned in the letter that he had started some experiments with hawkweeds, hoping they would confirm his results from the pea experiments. Nageli was an expert on hawkweeds and Tati thought that Mendel had included this only to gain Nageli's attention. Nageli did not reply for several months and when he did respond, he said almost nothing about the peas. He proposed that Mendel turn his skills to the hawkweeds. Mendel concentrated on the hawkweeds instead of the peas.

The experiments with the hawkweeds, which had given results with the peas, did nothing, as hawkweeds are very difficult to hybridize. Experiments failed and years were



wasted. Mendel's experiments were technically sound, but no one would know for years later that the hawkweeds did not hybridize in rational ways because they formed seeds without fertilization. Mendel gave up on science, spending his last few years as the abbot of the monastery. He died in January 1884. That same year, Nageli published a book summarizing his years of work. Many of his opinions and observations were very similar to Mendel's, but Mendel was not mentioned.

This is what Antonia told Richard about Mendel and his experiments. However, she told him nothing about the context in which she had learned it, through her walks with her grandfather while he was awaiting trial. She also told Richard that she had some papers that Tati left behind.

Antonia was not allowed in the courtroom because she was too young. The trial date was moved forward after Leiniger died, but she never learned if the court would have accepted her testimony because Tati died the evening before the first day of the trial. Her mother told her that he'd had a stroke. After the funeral, Antonia no longer went on walks, but instead did her homework by the table and helped her mother around the house.

Antonia gave Richard the yellowed papers that Tati had left her. Tati had written that it was a draft of one of Mendel's letters to Nageli. Richard couldn't believe that she had this and he cherished it like a jewel.

Antonia and Richard married and had two daughters. Richard got a good job at the college, and Antonia gave dinner parties and picnics for the alumni. Their daughters grew up and moved away. Then Antonia's world went gray for a year, although she still can't explain it. Her doctor said it was hormones; her daughters said it was her years as a housewife stifling her; Richard said she needed more exercise.

It was 1970 when a student asked what relevance Mendel's story was on the first day of class. Richard didn't answer her, hurrying through his lecture and leaving without looking at Antonia. He didn't give his other Mendel lecture at the end of the year either. Antonia was relieved, as she didn't want to perch on the window seat and hear Richard repeat the story again. She thought he muddled the dates and identified himself too closely with Mendel.

That June, Sebastian Dunitz came from Frankfurt. He and Richard had been corresponding about their common research interests, and Richard had arranged for him to visit the college for a year. He stayed with them, in one of their daughter's old rooms. He was bright and well educated. Within a month of his arrival, Richard was talking of finding him a permanent position, and Antonia was up and about, feeling better.

Richard invited Sebastian to a picnic dinner that July. As they sat eating, Richard told him that he had an actual draft of a letter that Mendel wrote to Nageli and that Antonia had given it to him. Sebastian asked how. Richard started to talk, but Antonia couldn't bear to listen to him tell the story badly again, so she interrupted, beginning the story



herself. At the end, Sebastian asked how her grandfather had come to tell her about this. She answered that it gave them something to talk about on their walks while he was waiting trial for accidentally killing a man.

Richard goes to bed soon after they return home that night. He is upset that Antonia had not told him about this, but did not want to admit to this in front of Sebastian. Sebastian and Antonia sit down to talk. He begins to tell her about the evening primroses and de Vries, but she stops him. Laying her head on his forearm, she asks him to tell her about himself. He tells her that he is flattered but that anything between them is impossible. Antonia tries to explain that she didn't mean anything, but he tells her that he has seen how she looks at him. Then, Richard comes down and asks her to come to bed. Two weeks later, Sebastian moves into an empty dorm room and is gone before the end of the summer.

Sebastian is back in Frankfurt and is famous now. Richard no longer teaches, having retired when he was sixty-five even though he didn't want to. When Antonia finally told him about what had happened to Tati, she didn't really tell him anything, just that two men had quarreled over some plants.

Sebastian sent Antonia a letter the summer after he left, telling her the story she'd interrupted that night in July. She still has the letter just as Richard has Mendel's. In the months after he'd left, she'd written him several letters, about Mendel and Tati. Sebastian wrote that a small museum had opened in the Augustinian monastery about Mendel. He had visited it. He wrote that he couldn't find a trace of Tati, but the wall and garden were still there. He tells her she should visit someday.

## **The Behavior of the Hawkweeds Analysis**

In "The Behavior of the Hawkweeds," as with many of the stories to follow in this book, Barrett weaves together themes of science, loss, and failure. She uses Gregor Mendel and his work as the connecting thread between Antonia's relationships with her grandfather, Tati, her husband, and Sebastian. Through Tati's recollections of working with Mendel, we see Mendel experimenting with hybridizing first peas, and then the hawkweeds. Yet, the hawkweed experiments end in failure for Mendel. He cannot reproduce the same results with them that he had with the peas. Although he does not know it, his results and theories with the peas were correct and had he chosen another plant, he would have been able to do them again.

The relationship aspect of this story also brings in the theme of loss, as Barrett will do in many of the other stories. Antonia loses her grandfather when he dies. In some ways, he sacrificed himself to save her. She is also distanced from her memories of him, not telling Richard the true story of how she came to know about Mendel and his experiments. Richard's attempts to take ownership over the story begin to grate on Antonia, taking away from her memories of her grandfather, and she seeks to reclaim them from him.



# The English Pupil

## The English Pupil Summary

It is a late December afternoon in 1777. A man tucked in a small sleigh orders his coachman to keep driving. The coachman is afraid, as his employers had forbid him from taking the sleigh beyond the city limits. At the same time, his master is dying and enjoys the afternoon drives.

Carl Linnaeus looks out from where he is wrapped in sheepskins and thinks of Lapland where he'd explored when he was younger. He had been twenty-five then and now he is seventy. His famous memory is gone, taken away by a series of strokes. Now he forgets things: where he is, the names of plants and animals, places, dates, and his own name.

The sleigh continues through the snow. Linnaeus's legs are paralyzed, along with one arm, and he can't wash or feed himself. When he falls from his armchair, his wife Sara Lisa has to retrieve him. She is back in their house in Uppsala now. His country estate, Hammarby, is waiting for him. As the door to the kitchen is wide and the sleigh is small, he motions for the coachman, Pehr, to pull it inside.

Pehr sits Linnaeus on the floor, propping him up against the wall. He is worried that he made a mistake. After unhitching the horses, he pulls the sleigh inside and lifts Linnaeus back in. He lights a fire, which soon warms the room.

Linnaeus had built the house and added several wings. On the hill, he'd built a museum for his herbarium and his insect collection as well as his rocks and zoological specimens. Pehr tells him that they should go back as Linnaeus's family will be worried. Linnaeus puffs on his pipe but says nothing. He thinks about his family

There is a noise outside, and a woman and man enter. Pehr apologizes but the woman tells him that it is not his fault. Linnaeus thinks that it is one of his daughters. She is pretty and smiling. He thinks that it must be Sophia, and he wonders if the man with her is her husband. Yet, he can't remember a wedding so he must be her fiancé. The man leans toward Linnaeus and tells him that his name is Rotheram.

Rotheram is one of his pupils, not Sophia's fiancé. His daughter says that they have been looking everywhere for him. Linnaeus thinks about his pupils, his apostles who had traveled the world. He wonders which of his pupils the man is. Then he remembers that the man said Rotheram, his English pupil. All his other pupils are dead, but they had gone out into the world, like his own eyes, hands, and feet. They had observed, and gathered, and named.

Outside the weather has turned to rain. Linnaeus thinks that Rotheram had fallen ill several years ago and been nursed back to health by Sophia, now coming and going from his house like family. Rotheram says they must leave now. Linnaeus again returns to his confused thinking about his students. He'd taught his students that generic names





needed to be clear and expressive. His students had died in this order: Ternstrom, Hasselquist, Lofling, Forskal, Falck, and Kahler. His son Johannes had died at the age of two, the year of Sophia's birth. His students had gone out, but they'd failed to return to him.

The pupils Linnaeus had sent out are all dead now. He sees a group of men appearing to the left of the fire: Lofling, Forskal, Falck, Ternstrom, and Hasselquist. Thunberg, who he'd forgotten about, is also there. Thunberg had been the most faithful about sending letters and specimens to Linnaeus. He'd been in Japan. The men begin talking to him, telling him about the places they'd been.

Sophia says that they'll go home. Linnaeus tries to remember her name again. She opens the doors while Pehr and the pupil push the sleigh outside. Linnaeus says nothing but turns to look at his students by the fireplace. In their hands were the plants he'd named for them.

Linnaeus thinks that the woman must be Sophia. She climbs into the sleigh that she'd arrived in, while the pupil climbs into Pehr's. They start off. Linnaeus looks at his pupil, remembering that he is Rotheram, the English pupil who will survive him.

## The English Pupil Analysis

Again in this story, Barrett deals with the theme of loss and science. Linnaeus, like characters in other Barrett stories, is a scientist. He seems to be interested in a wide range of plants and animals. "During his years in Uppsala he had written and lectured about the mud iguana of Carolina and Siberian buckwheat and bearberries; about lemmings and ants and a phosphorescent Chinese grasshopper" (pg. 44). He remembers naming plants after his students, who he also refers to as his apostles, and thinks that he has named thousands of plants.

The story is also about loss. Linnaeus has not only lost most of his pupils but also much of his memory. The disconnections of his thought and what he is trying to remember indicate a deep and troubling fissure for him. Whereas he was once a great scientist, famous for his mind, he now can't remember his daughter's name. Embedded in this is the man's loss of his students. One by one, they all died, except for Rotheram, in distant lands. They did his work for him, but in the end, left him alone



# The Littoral Zone

## The Littoral Zone Summary

When Jonathan and Ruby had met, Jonathan was teaching botany at a small college near Albany. Ruby was teaching invertebrate zoology at a college in the Berkshires. Along with an ornithologist, an ichthyologist, and an oceanographer, they'd agreed to spend three weeks at a marine biology station on an island off the New Hampshire coast. They'd both had spouses and children.

The days before Jonathan and Ruby became aware of each other blur. They agree that their first real conversation took place on the afternoon that had been devoted to the littoral zone. The tide was out and the students were on the apron between the water and the ledges looking at the tide pools. They remember that they were sitting on a ledge. They were twelve days into the course, and they were tired and overworked. For a half hour, they compared patches of poison ivy and other sores on their hands and feet.

The two always agree that the worst moment was arriving at the dock their final day to see their families waiting. Jonathan's wife was with their three children. Ruby's husband had parked their car just a few spaces away from Jonathan's family. Ruby's sons wore baseball caps. They pointed out their families to each other. Nothing that came would be as awful as when they first saw their families again, unaware and happy. Ruby and Jonathan separated and walked to their families, but didn't introduce them to each other. They thought their families would not see what had happened and would not remember that they'd stood for an instant together as they stepped off the boat.

For the first twelve days on the island, Ruby and Jonathan didn't notice each other. After their first conversation, they sat near each other at the faculty lectures and student presentations. These were all held in a library, separated from the bunkhouse and dining hall by a stretch of poison ivy and roses. They had each given a presentation there about their work. They laughed at others' presentations, swimming in a zone where they were more than friends but not yet lovers.

Ruby called first, a week after they left the island. She told her husband that she needed something from her office, and she drove to campus at eleven o'clock on a Sunday night. One of Jonathan's children answered her call. When Jonathan got to the phone and learned it was Ruby, he asked her about his letter. Ruby hadn't received it, and for a moment she thought he must have wrote to say goodbye. Instead, he tells her that he has to see her. Jonathan had written and Ruby had called, both independent of each other. Later, when Jonathan's daughter asked who started it, Ruby could only say it happened to both of them.

Sometimes when Ruby and Jonathan sit on their patio, they turn and see the children watching them from the window. Before the children grew, the house was filled with



children on the weekends and empty in between. Now that the children are able to come and go as they please, the house is mainly silent. When the children visit, they all spend an unhealthy amount of time talking about the past, as the children try to understand it all. They've learned to tolerate each other. When the children ask about what happened on the island, Jonathan and Ruby say that they had never seen each other before that and they fell in love there. They never give details.

Jonathan and Ruby tell each other stories of their talk by the tidal pool, their meals there, the moment in the parking lot, and the night that Ruby made her call. They console each other when their children chide them. They never reproach each other. When the tension builds between them, one of them will start a story from their past, but they never tell each other about the evening that changed their lives, because it would mean talking about what they've lost. They never mention this moment because it would mean discussing who seduced who and that would mean assigning blame.

Ruby and Jonathan think about this night when they lie silently next to each other in bed, never talking about it out loud. There had been a huge storm three nights before they left the island. Ruby and Jonathan had stayed behind in the library, each working on different things. As the wind picked up, Jonathan suggested lighting a fire. They crouched side by side, laying the fire. One of them lit a candle. One turned off the lights. One found a half empty bottle of wine. They made love and talked. They fell asleep. Ruby woke first, cleaning up the library from their night. Then she woke Jonathan, and the two went back to the rooms where they were supposed to be.

## The Littoral Zone Analysis

The title of this story, "The Littoral Zone," reflects the relationship of Jonathan and Ruby. On the island, the students were introduced to this zone where tidal pools form when the water is out. At low tide, this zone is rock and land, but when the tide comes in, the ocean covers it. Jonathan and Ruby first talk on the day that the students are examining the pools in this zone. Their relationship soon mirrors the zone as they become more than friends but not yet lovers.

Years later, after Jonathan and Ruby have crossed into being lovers and have left their spouses for each other, they still exist in a place that is in some ways like this zone. While they can talk about certain parts of their relationship and how they met and came to be, the moment that they became lovers is not discussed. They remain in a place where certain things are discussed while others are not, existing in between denial and full knowledge and acceptance.

The story also shows Barrett's familiar theme of loss. She writes that Jonathan and Ruby can't confront this one moment in time because it will mean discussing what they've lost: their marriages and to a large degree, their children. The characters chose a path and because of this, they lost much of their lives before meeting each other.



# Rare Bird

## Rare Bird Summary

It is 1762 in Kent, just outside of London. Inside a house sit a group of men and one woman. The group includes Christopher Billopp, his sister Sarah Anne, and Christopher's guests. They are talking about Linnaeus's theory that swallows hibernate under the water in winter. They discuss several other people who also claim this to be true.

Their father had educated Christopher and Sarah Anne side by side after their mother died. They enjoyed an easy exchange of ideas and books. Sarah Anne inherited her father's brain, but Christopher had gotten everything else, including their father's friends. Sarah Anne acts as a hostess, but they refuse to take her seriously. She holds her tongue this evening while they talk. Christopher had recently begun courting Miss Juliet Colden and since then, her brother has become critical of her manners. "And so here she is: learned, but not really; and not pretty, and no longer young: last month she turned twenty-nine" (pg. 61).

The men continue to discuss the swallows. Collinson says that he thinks swallows migrate. This is also what Sarah Anne believes. She tells the men that it would be possible to test the theory by catching some swallows and confining them under the water in a tub to see if they will remain alive. Christopher glares at her. She thinks that he is judging her harshly.

The men finally retreat to the library to drink wine. Sarah Anne goes upstairs. She sits in her room. She has been composing a letter to Linnaeus about the dinner conversation. She asks him if he could not offer a reward for anyone who finds a swallow under the ice. She signs the letter "S.A. Billopp" to keep him from dismissing her offhand. Soon the men will be expecting her to return for supper. She decides that she will not go down, but send a message saying she is indisposed.

Eight months later, Sarah Anne and Christopher stand on the London Bridge with Miss Juliet Colden and her brother. They've come to look at the river, covered with great pieces of ice. Soon Juliet and Christopher will be married and sharing the house; Sarah Anne will be the extra woman. She thinks that if she were alone that she'd go down to the river and look where the nesting holes are thickest to see if there are any swallows. Linnaeus has not answered any of her letters to him. Juliet talks of the wedding and just as Sarah Anne thinks she can't take it any longer, another of her father's friends accompanied by a woman comes along. He is Mr. Hill and she is Mrs. Catherine Pearce.

Mrs. Pearce comments to Sarah Anne that she was looking intently at the river as they walked up and asks what she was looking for. Sarah Anne tells her that she is looking for swallows because some people believe that they hibernate under the water or in



their summer burrows. Mrs. Pearce begins talking to her about swallows, both agreeing that statements should be based on evidence and hypotheses should be tested. Mrs. Pearce tells Sarah Anne that her father educated her. She tells Sarah Anne that she must visit her in town.

In September of 1764, the two women are at the stable at Burdem Place, testing their hypotheses. They had sent the gardener with a net to catch some swallows. Sarah Anne has finally received a letter from Linnaeus who dismissed her theories. On the floor they've set a cask, filled with water. Sarah Anne thinks that she fits nowhere except with Catherine. She fears that Christopher is preparing to ask her to curtail Catherine's visits and then to suggest that she become the governess for his planned children.

Robert returns with some swallows. Two birds are put in the cask, gasping for air. Catherine says they must leave them to see if Linnaeus is right about the birds letting themselves into the water and sleeping.

The day passes slowly. The next morning, they slip out. Sarah Anne unfastens the netting and peers down into the water. The swallows lie on the sand in the cask, but they are not sleeping and instead are twisted and sprawled. They are dead. They dissect one, looking for any organ that might make hibernation under water possible but they find nothing.

Christopher notices that Mrs. Pearce returned to London in early October and that Sarah Anne leaves a few weeks later for an "extended visit." In December, he stops by Mrs. Pearce's house but finds the house empty and the servants dismissed. Then he realizes that his sister and her friend are gone. Everyone has theories about their disappearance. Christopher believes that they boarded a ship for America. This is the vision he has when he sells Burdem Place and sails for Delaware, after Juliet and his son die.

Christopher never finds them, but America brings new things to him: he marries again and starts another family. He brought with him a portrait of Sarah Anne. Her letters are later discovered by Linnaeus's youngest daughter in their attic. He later finds Sarah Anne's journal. The last entry stated that Catherine and she were meeting in town to discuss a new experiment.

## Rare Bird Analysis

Barrett again emphasizes science in this story, as the men and Sarah Anne discuss Linnaeus's theory about swallows hibernating under the water. This story takes place before the events of "The English Pupil" although Linnaeus figures in both of them. Sarah Anne and Catherine later decide to experiment to see whether the theory is correct, both suspecting that it is not. Their hypothesis that the swallows don't hibernate under the water in winter is proved, as the birds they caught couldn't survive under the water.



The story also illustrates the gendered nature of early science. This is reminiscent of the story "The Behavior of the Hawkweeds" where Antonia is the carrier of scientific information but her husband does not take her own knowledge seriously. Here we find that Sarah Anne is dismissed whenever she tries to engage in discussions about science because she is a woman. Linnaeus ignores her letters for the most part. She and Catharine are left to conduct their own experiments, knowing that others will dismiss their results.

### Soroche Summary

Zaga finds that selling the house is easy. She doesn't tell anyone, including her stepchildren or Joel's lawyer. A few months after Joel's funeral, she sells the house and most of the furniture. She cleans out the house. Vans come for the large pieces, and the art museum comes for the pieces that Joel had bequeathed to them. On the Wednesday before her forty-fourth birthday, Zaga tackles Joel's closet. In the back, she finds a carton of souvenirs from their trip to Chile in 1971. There is a shawl, two ski caps that her stepchildren had worn, snapshots from their trip, and one picture of herself that she'd never seen. Dr. Sepulveda had taken it and told her it was for her baby. She's never seen this picture and knows that Joel must have intercepted it to spare her.

Their first day in the Andes had been euphoric. On the second day, however, the headache, stiff neck, and burning cheeks came. When she tried to get out of bed, she threw up. Her stepchildren, Rob and Alicia, had stood in the doorway, looking at her with interest but no sympathy. They moved out of the doorway but not out of earshot, so they heard when Joel asked Zaga if she thought it was morning sickness. Rob and Alicia had stormed off, unhappy.

Dr. Sepulveda came up to see her in the hotel room. They told him she was three months pregnant, but he told her that she had *soroche*, or altitude sickness, and that there was nothing wrong with the baby. He gave her two injections, returning the next morning for two more. She began to feel better.

Zaga knows that she didn't get what the house is worth, but the amount is still a lot. She moves to a furnished apartment while she tries to decide what to do. She'd made no plans for a life without Joel. They were going to travel after he'd retired young, but a spot on his aorta had opened up.

Downtown, by the art museum, Zaga finds an old building that has been converted into condominiums. She buys a two-bedroom apartment on the fourth floor. She has no guests, even though she'd been famous for her parties. She spends her days alone, with no desire to call anyone. She walks to the antique shops or to the art museum. She realizes that she doesn't see any of Joel's paintings. The woman in charge tells her that there have been financial difficulties and the expenses of cleaning and cataloguing the pieces is too much right now. Zaga offers a donation.

Three days before Zaga and Joel were to leave the Andes, a blizzard hit. There was nothing to do but wait. Joel and the children skied. Zaga sat at a table by the window in





the lounge of the hotel. Dr. Sepulveda, also trapped at the hotel, sometimes joined her. They talked about different things: Joel, Charles Darwin, and so on.

Zaga writes a substantial check to the art museum. She thinks that Joel would have been pleased. Her sister Marianna is angry with her though, arguing that Zaga could have given her some money for her children's college educations rather than to a museum. Zaga knows that she has not visited her family as much as she could; every year with Joel made her more and more uncomfortable around her family.

Zaga had not known Dr. Sepulveda well. He was a widower with three grown sons. He had an apartment in Santiago and a suite of rooms at the hotel during the ski season, which he received for his exchange of services. He didn't ask Zaga about her life, and he didn't talk about his. One day he had taken the photo of her for her baby.

Zaga continues to give money away to organizations and groups. Rob calls one day and asks her to meet a friend of his, Nicholas Bennett. She agrees. A week later, she meets him for lunch. He explains that he has recently purchased the rights to a new drug, but he needs some investors. Once the drug hits the market, the profits will be staggering, he tells her. She decides to invest with him.

Six months later, Nicholas's company goes under, and Zaga is left with so little that she can't afford to keep the condominium. She rents it to a pair of brokers and moves into the first floor of a three-story row house not far from where she grew up. She works as a receptionist for a pediatric dental practice. Everyone questions her about losing the money, including Rob who seems to forget that he introduced her to Nicholas and that he'd seemed pleased she'd invested.

Zaga remembers how miserable she had been on that trip to Chile. She'd lost the baby after the trip. She'd written to Dr. Sepulveda about the stories he'd told her and what they meant but never got a reply. She'd blamed everything for the loss of the baby. Joel had led her through their house, telling her that his ex-wife wasn't coming back from France. He asked her if she could be happy raising Rob and Alicia, saying that it was too late for him to raise more children. Tired and heartbroken, she'd gone along.

### Soroche Analysis

Although the story does not contain a strong scientific theme beyond the story Dr. Sepulveda tells about Darwin, it does continue Barrett's theme of loss. Throughout the story, Zaga loses virtually everything. During the course of the narrative, we find that she has lost the child that she was carrying when the photograph was taken. Her husband soon announces that he doesn't want to go through having any more young children, but is content with the two that he has from a previous marriage.

As the story opens, we learn that her husband has recently died. She sells the house that he had built for her and that she'd decorated. Then after the company that she invests with goes under, Zaga loses the life that she used to lead and her new apartment, which she is forced to rent. She endures her losses with a certain degree of passivity, accepting the situations that she finds herself in.



# Birds with No Feet

## Birds with No Feet Summary

It is 1853 and Alec Carriere lies in his hammock on a breezeless night. He thinks about how the treasures packed in the holds will change his life. He's collected beetles, butterflies, spiders, moths, bird skins, snakeskins, and bones. These are all from the Amazon. Mr. Barton, his agent in Philadelphia, has sold his first set of specimens for a good price, and Alec imagines that this one will set him free financially to pursue his studies in peace.

Before sailing for the Amazon, Alec worked in a shop making leather valises. The shop was not far from his parent's tavern in Germantown. When he was younger, he'd go every few months to the Academy of Natural Sciences where a few of the members would help him with his clumsy skins and mounts. By the time he was sixteen, his father was trying to make him abandon his hobby. He almost gave up, but then he received William Edwards's book *A Voyage Up the River Amazon* as a gift. The book seemed to open a door for him, as Mr. Barton said that because so few specimens from the Amazon had reached North America yet, the prices were high on these things.

Alec wrote to Barton, who gave him letters of introduction to traders, and he packed his things and sailed out on a merchant ship. He saw wondrous things. He met Alfred Wallace there. Wallace wasn't famous then; he was just another collector. Alec was lonely and happy for the company. Wallace was just about ready to leave to sail home, but he and Alec showed each other what they had both found. When Wallace left, Alec collected more fervently. Now the results are below him, and he imagines what it will be like to arrive at his parent's tavern in a new suit and with lots of money.

Then a cabin boy runs up to Alec's hammock and shakes him awake. There is a fire on the boat. Alec stumbles from the cabin with only the most recent volume of his journal and the clothes on his back. He can't believe that this is happening. Several months after meeting Wallace, he'd heard that the ship Wallace was on burned, destroying his collections and specimens. Alec had believed that he would be protected because of that: it couldn't happen twice. Yet, now it is. He thinks that maybe some of the birds can be saved, but the men are pushing Alec toward the boats. He sees his animals lined up on the last scrap of wood and pleads for the men to try to save them, but he can only get the sloth to leave with him. He reaches home but has nothing to show for it since the sloth later died on the voyage.

Recuperating at his uncle's house, Alec learns that Wallace has published two books about his travels and the exotic palms. Alec reads them, thinking that he and Wallace had shared a terrible thing. He writes to him and Wallace writes back, telling Alec that he plans to go to the Malay Archipelago and suggests that Alec might go there as well. His mother helps him plan secretly.





Wallace and Alec did not travel together in the Malay Archipelago, and Wallace did not really take Alec under his wing. They were in different positions now than they had been in the Amazon, since Wallace had since gained more resources and a sixteen-year-old assistant to help him.

During the wet season of 1855, Alec is in Sarawak, in Borneo. He hears of a house party at the bungalow of Sir John Brooke, the English Rajah of the region. He is not asked to the party, and he doesn't suspect that Wallace is there. He's having a lot of luck. He glimpses reddish-brown apes swinging through the trees and he kills one. He has obtained already four full-grown males, three females, and several juveniles. He shoots another female but finds its little infant. He brings the orphan back to camp with him, not able to abandon it. He doesn't feel guilty about killing its mother because that was part of his work.

Alec learns that Wallace is at the Rajah's bungalow, staying on alone after the holidays and everyone else has left. Alec goes there. Wallace has the ague as well, desperately ill and in bed. When he is able to get up, Alec is delirious. They alternate periods of fever but finally after large doses of quinine, they are well at the same time. They sit on the veranda and talk about what they've found so far. Wallace says that he doesn't see how men can believe in the permanence of species, as they seem to constantly be producing new varieties. He wonders if there's a method "by which species undergo a natural process of gradual extinction and creation?" (pg. 113). Wallace shows him a new butterfly, and Alec shows him Ali, the little orangutan. The ague strikes both the following day. It also strikes Ali and the little infant orangutan dies.

Alec learns later that during this time of fever, Wallace writes a paper on the possible origin of species by natural succession and descent. Alec has been tossing on his sweaty bed, mourning Ali, and sorting and arranging his collection to send to Mr. Barton.

"Here is one: Two human beings, coincident in time and space, cannot simultaneously think the same thought; one always precedes the other" (pg. 116). Wallace always precedes Alec, except for one case. Alec was the first to bring back a living specimen of the paradise birds, and he thinks that he was the first American to see them in their native lands.

Alec and Wallace didn't cross paths again in the Malay Archipelago. Alec learns that his mother is ill, his brother has married, and his father has taken all but a pittance of the money from the amount for which Mr. Barton had sold his specimens. Mr. Barton also tells him in his letter that Wallace has written another paper on the origin of species and has mailed it to Darwin for comments. He wonders why he has not formed all he's seen into a grand theory like Wallace.

Alec thinks about some specimens that he'd seen in the Philadelphia museum called the bird of paradise. He remembers them because they were beautiful, but they also had no wings or feet. He thinks that he'll try to find these birds, as the specimens would be well sought after. He arrives in the Aru Islands, and the islanders take him to see them.



Alec sees a dozen gathered together deep in the forest. Of course, they have both feet and wings. The theories about these birds are wrong. He prepares specimens of them, preserving their natural characteristics. Rain, fungus, and ants plague him. He salvages four crates of skins and three living specimens. He finds fruit and insects for the birds to eat as he makes his way to Singapore. On his way to Bombay, the birds droop in the absence of insects, but Alec finds that they like cockroaches.

Back in Philadelphia, Alec learns that Wallace is on his way to England with his own birds of paradise. Wallace's birds are given to the Zoological Gardens. Alec has returned to a country at war, and his crates lay unexamined at the Academy of Sciences. He writes to Wallace again, telling him of the fate of his birds, how his mother died, how his father lost all the money that was rightfully Alec's, that Mr. Barton enlisted in the army, and so on. He thinks that he was never the scientist that he thought himself to be. He readies for another journey and thinks about the animals he's collected. They are all gone now and will not rise.

## **Birds with No Feet Analysis**

In this story, Barrett again turns toward the theme of failure. Although Alec travels widely and collects many things on his travels, he feels that he has failed. Wallace has looked at his own collections and come up with a theory about the origin of species. He and Wallace are together during this time, both suffering from ague. While Alec is mourning Ali and trying to recover, Wallace is writing a paper about this theory, even though he too is having periods of fever. Alec wonders why it is that Wallace has done this, while he doesn't see beyond the pieces of his collection.

Although Alec and Wallace start from similar positions, Wallace ends up more successful both financially and in terms of contributions to science than Alec. They both have collections destroyed in a fire. From there, however, their situations diverge. Alec's family takes his money, which would have allowed him to hire an assistant and otherwise help his collecting. Wallace writes his paper and gains a measure of recognition. When Alec finds the great paradise bird and returns to the United States, determined to show how the theories are wrong, he is met by civil war and a country that is concerned with other things.



# The Marburg Sisters

## The Marburg Sisters Summary

The Marburg girls' mother, Suky, told them stories. She told them how their father had named them red and white: Rose and Bianca. They were inseparable in their youth. Their mother was killed when they were ten and nine. They became wild, and the neighbors referred to them as "the Marburg sisters." They helped out in the winery when their father let them, and he gave them a chemistry set one Christmas. They studied biochemistry in college, sharing lovers and books. They wrote papers together in graduate school before Bianca dropped out. Rose now studies enzyme structures and kinetics at a research institute. Bianca does different things and travels widely. This is the short version that they give to strangers

One night in August 1980, they try to find their way back to each other. Bianca drives across states, thinking about the dead. She goes to Rose. Rose leads her into her lab, but she doesn't bother to explain the gadgets since Bianca already knows what they are. Rose has had a rule for some time that separates her from Bianca: she refuses to dwell on their past. Bianca says that she called their father, who recently announced that he is getting married and is thinking about selling the winery. Bianca convinces Rose to camp out in her lab for the night.

The sisters eat what Bianca has with her. When it starts to rain at midnight, they drop through the window, running across the wet grass to the creek. While they lay in the creek, a dog appears and then leaves. They go back to Rose's lab. Bianca pulls out some mushrooms and minces them. She cooks them. Rose then hears Suky's voice; Bianca asks her if she's heard it and she can't deny it. The rest of the night is lost to them, as they can't remember much of the rest. They might have called their father.

The next morning, Rose wakes and Bianca is gone. She comes back later with food. When they tell this to strangers, they stop here. Time passes. They meet occasionally, mostly just talking on the phone. One year after that, they return to Hammondsport for the anniversary of their father's death. They do not tell anyone what happened.

The girls think that Suky once said to look into the water and spin the surface with their hands and at the base of the hole would be what they needed. So they did and saw Grandpa Leo's face. Today, they spun the water and saw Suky. They talk with her about their father and what happened before his death.

Rose and Bianca had gone to see him before he died. They slept downstairs in the house their father and his wife had rented. They had rushed to Hammondsport to find him alone with his dogs. The dogs are gone now, but the sisters don't want to talk to Suky about it. They had left behind men to come to their father's side. His wife left behind half of what she had, and the sisters weren't sorry to see her go. His wife had



begged him to sell the winery but, it hadn't turned out as she envisioned. She went to Syracuse to work during the week, returning to the rented house on weekends.

The sisters didn't know what to do. They had a father who couldn't care for himself or the dogs, but they had lives and jobs. The sisters argued while they stayed: about what they should do for him and how they should do it. They think they abandoned him. He died on an August weekend. They were not there. His wife was there.

When they went back for the funeral, his wife was furious with them for coming to visit and then that they couldn't stay. She wouldn't let them into the rented house. They drove up to the lake and slept outside. They wanted to take the dogs, but his wife wouldn't let them. Last week, the girls decided to come back. They rented the boat and spun the water. Were they really talking to Suky and Suky talking to them? Bianca says yes, but Rose says maybe. They leave the next day and go to their respective homes.

Now Bianca is gone. She fell in love with a landscape painter and moved to Costa Rica, to a house with no phone. Rose moves back to Hammondspport. She teaches chemistry at the high school and moves into a house with Harry Mazzullo and the white dog. Harry was their father's lawyer. The white dog is one that their father cherished. "I live with Harry because of the way he absorbed my story; because he was good to my father near the end; because he tells me tales about my father's last days that I would otherwise have no way of knowing. Tit for tat, my secrets for his" (pg. 152). Bianca and Rose had thought that their father's wife had hired the nurse who came for several hours a day when their father was sick. Harry tells Rose that it was a group of her father's friends who did.

The people in town remember the sisters coming, but they forget now that they left. No one knows that they slept on the hill before the funeral. They blame anything strange on his wife. The white dog and Rose share the secret that their pasts are lost to everyone but them. The dog has attached himself to her. She has tried to describe it all to Bianca in letters, always leaving out that she shared their deepest secret with Harry. Bianca writes that she doesn't think about these things anymore.

## The Marburg Sisters Analysis

Barrett uses a number of different perspectives in this story. Barrett begins by using a third-person point of view that introduces the reader to Rose and Bianca. They are close but separate during college, each going their separate way. This perspective illustrates both the separation but also the connection that they still share.

Barrett then moves to a first-person perspective that seems to come from both Rose and Bianca. This perspective is used as the sisters are talking to their mother through the water and it illustrates their closeness. The voice is not one or the other of the sisters, but both as one.

Finally, the point of view shifts to Rose, and we hear the rest of the story through her. The sisters have now lost both of their parents. They also lose each other to a large

degree. Rose chooses to move back to their hometown, to rediscover the past. Bianca doesn't agree with this, arguing that the past should be left in the past. Their positions on this have switched since the beginning of the story. The first-person perspective from Rose's point of view illustrates the separation between them over this.



# Ship Fever

## Ship Fever Summary

Dr. Lauchlin Grant received a letter from Arthur Adam Rowley, telling him about Arthur Adam's experience in Ireland where he is reporting on the famine. Lauchlin reads the letter to Susannah, Arthur Adam's wife. He adds in several lines that aren't in the letter about how Arthur Adam wishes Susannah to forgive him for writing infrequently and that she is in his mind always.

When they were young, Lauchlin and Susannah lived next door to each other. After her parents and his mother had died, she'd gone to live with her aunt and uncle. He was sent to cousins in Montreal. He hadn't seen her for many years, during his medical training and postgraduate studies in Paris. On his return to Quebec two years ago, he'd found her again. She was now married to Arthur Adam Rowley, a journalist. Although Lauchlin is jealous, he and Arthur Adam have become friends. This also means that he can see Susannah frequently, but he does not reveal his feelings for her.

They talk about the hospital. Susannah wishes that Lauchlin were still working there. He quit because the director wouldn't let him do anything but bleed people. He has worked at an immigrant hospital supported by Susannah's aunt and uncle. Now he studies the nature and uses of alkaloids. When he laments that his practice isn't doing well and sarcastically says that he wishes he were more like her husband, Susannah tells him to do something.

Annie Taggert, the Rowley's parlor maid watches Lauchlin leave. She had overheard much of the conversation and the letter he'd read from Arthur Adam. She'd left Ireland almost twenty years ago, and she remembers what it was like there and on the ship voyage over to Canada.

Two weeks later, Lauchlin is in his house. He thinks that Susannah was right when she called him useless. A few days ago, he'd talked with Dr. Perrault, his father's friend, about his desire to find something to do that combined his interests in research and preventive medicine with patient care. Dr. Perrault had seemed enthused. He hasn't gone to Susannah during the two weeks. He decides to open the mail and finds a letter from a Dr. George Douglas asking him to come to the Quarantine Station that summer to work. Dr. Perrault has recommended him.

Lauchlin catches his first glimpse of the island, not more than three miles long, with a fort and a hospital. He did not call on Susannah before he left; instead, he'd sent her a brief, business-like note. A man, who introduces himself as Dr. Jacques, hurries him off the ship. As they rowed away from the ship, Lauchlin notices that the water around them is streaked with straw and items floating past. Dr. Jacques explains that this is how the ships are cleaned. The captains tell the passengers that they won't be kept in quarantine if the steerage looks clean.



The next half hour passes quickly. Lauchlin and Dr. Jacques board a ship, and Dr. Jacques barks out questions about whether there is sickness onboard and how many people had died on the voyage. He explains to Lauchlin that the hospital is already overcrowded and so they can only take the worst cases while the rest are cared for onboard. They descend to the hold where scores of men, women, and children huddle together. Dr. Jacques looks over some of the passengers and tells Lauchlin that they have ship fever. Lauchlin says it is typhus.

On the second ship, the passengers are not as sick as the first. They are well enough to stand and dress themselves. They are waiting on the deck to be reviewed and are disappointed when they are told that they will not be immediately going to Quebec or Montreal.

On the third ship, the passengers are much worse. The captain died four days before reaching Grosse Isle. They had buried 107 people at sea. Lauchlin and Dr. Jacques descend to the hold. When Lauchlin leans down to separate two people who are mashed together, he finds that they are dead. Dr. Jacques arranges for people to help get the dead bodies off the ship. They form a chain, carrying the bodies to the boats, which will take them to be buried. The eighteenth body he lifts is a young woman. As he grasps her, she moans, still alive.

The woman, Nora Kynd, hears Lauchlin's voice through her deliriousness. She had fallen sick before the ship had reached Anticosti Island, but she'd tried to stay on deck as much as possible. One of her brothers brought her food, and the other water. She knew she had black fever, just like all the people dying below her in the ship. She'd collapsed at some point. She hears the man exclaim that she is alive. She is not aware of Dr. Jacques argument with Lauchlin that there is no room for her or her brothers' cries when they assumed she was dead or when they discover she is alive.

Lauchlin tells her brothers that he's taking her to the hospital. Dr. Jacques is unhappy about this, telling Lauchlin that there are others sicker. He refuses to let her two brothers come, saying that they will leave on the steamer for Montreal the next day. Finally, Lauchlin leaves for the island and is taken to Dr. Douglas at last.

Lauchlin writes in his diary about what happens on the island. Three days after his arrival, another seventeen ships anchor. By May 26, there are thirty ships. There are more than a thousand fever patients on the island, jammed into the hospital, in the sheds that used to be used to quarantine patients, in tents, and even in the little church. Dr. Douglas sends an official notice to Quebec and Montreal, warning that an epidemic is likely to occur in both places. There are fourteen doctors on the island, when twice that number would not have been enough. Dr. Douglas tells Lauchlin that he is most needed on the island, carrying for the sick there.

Nora Kynd is recovering, virtually a miracle given the conditions. Lauchlin moves his books and supplies from the place where the doctors sleep to a closet in the church. He continues to sleep at Mrs. Caldwell's but now has a small space to read and write in relative silence. Nora Kynd is well enough now to walk about. She is from a rural are of





Ireland, not far from where Arthur Adam was. She tells Lauchlin about her grandmother who treated people with the fever in the past.

By the end of June there are close to two thousand sick on the island, with hundreds more ill on the ships. Between Nora's story and his own research, Lauchlin doubts that the fever is transmitted by dirt or filth. He thinks that the fever is carried not only on the bodies of the sick but also on their clothes and other materials that they touch. Lauchlin thinks that trying to clean the bedding and clothing may help. Dr. Douglas has ordered that passengers should be removed to the island temporarily while the holds are washed and aired. Seven of fourteen doctors are now sick.

At the beginning of July, prisoners from the city jail arrive to dig graves and work as carters and attendants. Lauchlin travels back to Quebec. He is to try to obtain food, medicine, tents, and bedding from the Board of Health. First, however, he goes to the newspaper office to place an ad looking for information about Nora's brothers. The Board of Health is more angry than sympathetic and they are more concerned with the outbreak of fever in the city. He learns that clothing and provisions meant for Grosse Isle have been diverted to the city instead.

Lauchlin winds up at the Rowley's door. Annie Taggart greets him, telling him that Mr. Rowley is still abroad and Mrs. Rowley is out. She agrees to let him wait, but only if he cleans himself and leaves his clothes outside. She gives him a blanket for cover and says that she will go to his house for clothing. Annie gets some food from the market and then visits Lauchlin's home to get some clothing for him.

The other servants seem to forget that Lauchlin is in the house. He let himself out of the storeroom and slipped into the library, feeling self-conscious with only the blanket around him. He falls asleep. When he wakes, Susannah is there, unaware that he is in the house. They talk about the fever, his work, Arthur Adam, and the work she is doing. He falls asleep there again later. The next morning he goes to his house to boil his clothes and writes to his father that he needs to arrange to have the house looked after.

Nora has trouble recognizing Lauchlin when he returns. They talk about his trip and what she has been doing. He begins working all the time. Ships continue to arrive. Nora thinks that Lauchlin believes himself to be invincible. By the end of July, the doctors abandon quarantine. When the passengers are inspected, those with fever are brought to the island. Those who appear even remotely well are sent on to Montreal. Lauchlin writes to government officials at night, trying to get provisions and help. He gives up sleep almost entirely. A new hospital is almost complete. Almost 80,000 immigrants have arrived since May, and 2,500 have died on the island.

Lauchlin becomes sick. The doctors come when they can, but it is Nora who tends to him. When his fever is high, he cries out for Susannah. Lauchlin is aware that he can no longer move his legs. He thinks back over his life. "The room was dusky and no sun streamed through the window; he understood for the first time that these people he'd been caring for were, if not exactly him, extensions of him, as he was an extension of them" (pg. 239).





The number of sick has diminished to sixty and only three ships are waiting at anchor. The quarantine station is closed on October 30; the same day that Nora leaves the island. Arriving in the city, she makes her way to the Rowley's house and knocks on the door. Annie Taggert opens the door. She asks to speak with Mrs. Rowley, but Annie tells her that she is not available. Mr. Rowley is home however, and Nora waits for him. He tells her that Mrs. Rowley is ill with the fever. She tells him how she met Lauchlin and how he'd cared for her. She gives him a few personal items that Lauchlin told her he wanted Susannah to have. She doesn't give him the journal however, thinking that there might be something in it to bring the couple sorrow.

Nora ends up in the kitchen with Annie and the other servants. She tells them about her time on Grosse Isle, and Annie and Nora talk about Ireland. Nora tells her that she is going to Detroit.

## Ship Fever Analysis

In some ways, "Ship Fever" uses the familiar themes of Barrett's other stories. Lauchlin is a doctor but also a scientist, studying diseases and trying to find new ways of preventing and curing those like ship fever. We see in him a certain sense of failure over his relationship with Susannah and with the growing epidemic that he is powerless to stop. In the end, he dies. Nora, also, experiences not only the loss of Lauchlin but also that of her brothers, who she will more than likely never see again.

In other ways, though, the story ends a book that has reverberated with themes of loss and failure with a degree of hope. The epidemic has ended. Although a great many individuals died, including Lauchlin, the quarantine station has closed as the number of infected individuals has lessened. Nora also leaves to begin a new life. Although she has lost both her brothers and Lauchlin, she is looking for a fresh start, a new place and a new life. There is the hope that she will find both.



# Characters

## Antonia

Antonia is the narrator in "The Behavior of the Hawkweeds." She is Tati's granddaughter and Richard's wife. As a child, she would go to the nursery with Tati and help him with his work. After the accident with Leiniger, Tati and Antonia used to walk after she finished with school. He told her about how he had met Mendel. He also gave her a draft of a letter that Mendel had written.

When Antonia met Richard, she told him about how Tati knew Mendel. She also gave him the draft of Mendel's letter. They married and had two daughters.

## Tati

Tati was Antonia's grandfather in the story, "The Behavior of the Hawkweeds." His given name was Anton Vaculik, but Antonia called him Tati. He grew up in Moravia, on the outskirts of Brno. He first met Mendel when he was ten and climbed over the walls of the monastery.

Tati left Moravia in 1891 and settled in New York, working at a nursery in Niskayuna. He was skilled at propagating plants and grafting trees. When he thought that Leiniger was behaving inappropriately with Antonia, he jabbed his knife into Leiniger's hand. Leiniger fell over and hit his head, and Tati was charged with his murder. While he was awaiting trial, he and Antonia walked and he told her about knowing Mendel. He gave her a draft of a letter that Mendel had written. He died the night before the trial was supposed to start.

## Gregor Mendel

Mendel was born in a tiny village in northwestern Moravia, which was then part of the Hapsburg Empire. At twenty-one, he entered the Augustinian monastery. In 1856, at thirty-four, he began experimenting with the hybridization of edible peas. Over the next eight years, he did hundreds of experiments, tracing how characteristics were passed through the generations of plants. He was a plump, short-legged man with glasses.

Mendel met Tati when Tati scaled the walls of the monastery. Mendel showed him the animals that he kept and taught him about horticulture. Mendel wrote to Carl Nageli about his experiments, but Nageli told him to concentrate on hawkweeds instead of the peas. The experiments didn't work because hawkweeds don't hybridize in the same way, and Mendel eventually gave up his experiments. He died in 1884.



## Richard

Richard is Antonia's husband in "The Behavior of Hawkweeds." He was born with six fingers on his left hand, but had the extra one removed in a childhood surgery. He teaches at a college. Every year on the first day of class, Richard tells his students about Mendel and passes out copies of Mendel's paper on the hybridization of edible peas. He brought Sebastian Dunitz from Frankfort to the United States to work with him but arranges for that to end after he thinks that Sebastian and Antonia are having an affair.

## Carl Linnaeus

Linnaeus is the once famous scientist in "The English Pupil." He has had a series of strokes that have made his memory fade. He often forgets where he is, the names of plants and animals, faces, places, dates, and sometimes his own name. His legs are paralyzed as well as one arm, his bladder, and part of his face. He is married to Sara Lisa and they have five children and another son who died at the age of two.

In the story, he has his coachman take him to his country estate, Hammarby, even though they have been told not to leave the city limits. After they arrive, Linnaeus's daughter, Sophia, and one of his pupils, Rotheram, show up to retrieve them. Linnaeus spends the time there thinking about his former students who are all dead now. He hallucinates that they are in the room with him, holding the plants that he named for them.

## Rotheram

Rotheram is Carl Linnaeus's English pupil. He and Linnaeus's daughter arrive at Hammarby to take Linnaeus back to the city. Linnaeus is confused about who he is at times during the narrative, thinking that he is his daughter's fiancé.

## Jonathan

Jonathan is one of the main characters in "The Littoral Zone." He taught botany at a small college near Albany before the summer trip to the island. He was married with three children.

Jonathan and Ruby fall in love on the island. After they return, he mails her a letter, telling her that he had to see her, but she calls to talk to him before receiving the letter. He eventually leaves his family to be with Ruby. They talk about how they met, but don't discuss who started the affair the night in the library for it will mean thinking about the things they've lost.



## Ruby

Ruby is one of the main characters in "The Littoral Zone." She taught invertebrate zoology at a college in the Berkshires before the summer trip to the island. She was married with two children.

She and Jonathan fall in love on the island and eventually leave their families for each other. Now they reminisce about how they met and the first phone call, but they don't talk about who began their affair the night in the library.

## Sarah Anne Billopp

Sarah Anne is twenty-nine in 1762, when "Rare Bird" takes place. Her mother died when she was very young and her father educated her along with her brother, Christopher. She questions Linnaeus's theory that swallows hibernate under the water during the winter. She thinks that they migrate during the year. After meeting Catherine, the two experiment with this theory and discover that swallows do not have any way of surviving under the water. She and Catherine disappear from London.

## Christopher Billopp

Christopher is one of the characters in "Rare Bird" and is the brother of Sarah Anne. He is critical of Sarah Anne, thinking that she is too forward and not as elegant as Juliet, his wife to be. He marries Juliet but is left a widow after she and their son die. He moves to the United States, thinking that Sarah Anne may have gone there after she disappeared, but he doesn't find her. He starts another family.

## Catherine Pearce

Catherine meets Sarah Anne on the London Bridge in the story "Rare Bird.." Together, they test Linnaeus's theory that swallows hibernate under the water during the winter. After discovering that they cannot survive underwater, Catherine and Sarah Anne disappear together and are not heard from again.

## Zaga

Zaga is the main character in "*Soroche*." In the past, she and her husband had taken a trip to Chile with her two stepchildren. She was three months pregnant at the time and while there, she developed *soroche*, or altitude sickness. While the others skied, she sat in the hotel lounge and wished to go home. Sometimes Dr. Sepulveda came to sit and talk with her.



Now Zaga's husband has died. She sells their house and moves to a condo. She makes an unwise investment with someone that her stepson introduces her to and she loses most of her money. She is forced to rent out her condo and take a receptionist job. She returns to the neighborhood that she grew up in and reconnects to her family, although her stepchildren remain distant.

## Dr. Sepulveda

Dr. Sepulveda sits and talks with Zaga while she is visiting Chile in "*Soroche*." He diagnoses her with altitude sickness, or *soroche*. When he sits with her, he tells her stories about Charles Darwin and others. He takes a picture of her and mails it to her. She later finds it and realizes that her husband intercepted it after she lost their baby.

## Alec Carriere

In "Birds with No Feet," Alec is inspired to travel to the Amazon and later other places to collect animal, bird, reptile, and insect specimens to sell to museums and collectors. During his first trip to the Amazon, he meets Alfred Wallace, another collector. On the trip home, the ship that Alec is traveling on catches fire, destroying the specimens that he had collected.

Later, Wallace suggests that Alec might want to go to the Malay Archipelago, where Wallace will also be. The two men meet up again, while they are both suffering from ague. During this time, Wallace writes about his theories on natural succession and descent.

Alec decides to try to find a bird of paradise, which had no wings or feet, that he'd seen in a Philadelphia museum. The islanders take him to see the Great Paradise birds, and Alec discovers that they have both wings and feet. The theories about them had been wrong. He takes some specimens and several live birds, which he keeps alive by feeding them cockroaches all the way back to the United States.

## Alfred Wallace

In "Birds with No Feet," Wallace is a collector who Alec meets on his first trip to the Amazon. He and Alec correspond after Alec's specimens are destroyed in the ship's fire. Wallace suggests that Alec go to the Malay Archipelago where he is also headed. They meet up there while they are both sick with ague.

During this time, Wallace thinks that there must be some mechanism whereby species undergo a natural process of extinction and creation. He constructs a theory about natural secession and descent and writes several papers on it.



## Bianca

Bianca is one of the sisters in "The Marburg Sisters." She is one year younger than Rose. The sisters were very close when they were younger, but Bianca dropped out of graduate school and is unhappy with Rose because Rose doesn't want to dwell on the past.

She visits Rose in her lab one night and the two of them reconnect. They go to visit their dying father, staying and caring for him for a time. Eventually, they leave and return for the funeral, although their father's wife will not let them in the house. The sisters talk to their dead mother on the one-year anniversary of their father's death and tell her about what happened.

Bianca falls in love with a landscape painter and moves to Costa Rica. She no longer wants to talk about the past with Rose.

## Rose

Rose is one of the sisters in "The Marburg Sisters." She works in a research institute outside Boston, studying enzyme structure and kinetics. She and Bianca were close when they were younger but have drifted apart due to Rose's unwillingness to dwell on the past.

After Bianca visits her in her lab, they go to visit their dying father. They stay for awhile, caring for him, but eventually leave. They return for the funeral and after their father's wife refuses to let them in the house, they sleep outside by the lake. One year later, they visit the town again and talk to a vision of Suky in the water.

Rose moves back to Hammondsport. She teaches Chemistry at the high school, and she moves in with Harry Mazzullo, her father's lawyer and friend. He has her father's white dog and Rose bonds with the dog. She tells him all her secrets, even about spinning the water and talking with Suky.

## Suky

In "The Marburg Sisters," Suky is Bianca's and Rose's mother. She is dead at the time that the story takes place. The sisters have a conversation with her after spinning the water and looking through it to see her face.

## Lauchlin Grant

In "Ship Fever," Lauchlin is a doctor in Quebec, Canada. He is intelligent and kind, wanting to make a difference in the lives of others. He is in love with Susannah Rowley, who he grew up with, but she is now married to another. He agrees to work for a



summer at a quarantine station on Grosse Isle. Immigrant ships are stopped there, and the sick are taken care of before they reach the cities of Montreal and Quebec.

On the island, Lauchlin rescues Nora and cares for her as one of his patients. He is torn by the sickness and death that he sees there. He works long hours and sacrifices himself in order to help others. He makes a trip back to Quebec for supplies and provisions but finds that the administration there does not want to help. He sees Susannah and talks with her, still not telling her how he feels. He returns to the island and works even harder, sleeping very little. He comes down with ship fever. Although Nora tries to nurse him back to health, he dies.

## **Susannah Rowley**

In "Ship Fever," Susannah and Lauchlin had grown up together, but were separated after her parents and his mother died. She had gone to live with an aunt and uncle. When Lauchlin found her again, she was already married to Arthur Adam Rowley.

Susannah dresses simply, even though she and Arthur Adam were wealthy, and she cares for the sick and the poor. She is hurt that her husband does not write more to her and that he is gone often. After Lauchlin leaves for Grosse Isle, she begins volunteering at the hospital that he used to work for. When Nora comes to give her Lauchlin's possessions, she is told that Susannah is sick as well.

## **Nora Kynd**

Nora is a young Irish woman who is immigrating to Canada because of the famine and conditions in Ireland. She is traveling with two younger brothers. She becomes sick with ship fever during the voyage, and when Lauchlin finds her and takes her to the hospital, she is separated from her brothers who are forced to continue on to Montreal.

Nora gradually becomes well on the island. Hoping that her brothers might try to find her there, she remains after she is well to help care for the sick on the island. She and Lauchlin become friends, talking often. She tells him about her family and her past in Ireland. He also helps her place an ad in the newspapers for information about her brothers.

When Lauchlin becomes sick, Nora cares for him. After he dies and the quarantine station is closed, she travels to Quebec to bring his personal belongings to Susannah Rowley. At the Rowley house, she gives some of the items to Arthur Adam but keeps Lauchlin's journal so as not to hurt the couple. She talks with Annie and tells her that she is going to try to find a fresh start in Detroit.



## **Annie Taggert**

Annie is the Rowley's parlor maid. She is protective of the house and of Susannah and Arthur. She came from Ireland about twenty years ago and is suspicious of and annoyed by the newcomers.

## **Arthur Adam Rowley**

Arthur Adam is Susannah's husband and a friend to Lauchlin. He is a journalist, and for most of the story, he is in Ireland reporting on the conditions there. He meets Nora when she comes to give Lauchlin's personal items to Susannah.





# Objects/Places

## Moravia

Moravia was located in the Hapsburg Empire and later became part of Czechoslovakia. Gregor Mendel and Tati from "The Behavior of the Hawkweeds" grew up here. In the Augustinian monastery, Mendel did his famous experiments on hybridizing peas and later, he tried to also hybridize hawkweeds although he was not successful with this.

## Hawkweeds

Hawkweeds are extremely hardy weeds, growing where the soil is too poor for other plants. They are related to asters, daisies, dahlias, thistles, and burdocks. After Nageli tells Mendel to concentrate on hybridizing hawkweeds, Mendel experiments with them but fails to get the expected results, as hawkweeds don't hybridize in rational ways.

## Hammarby

In "The English Pupil," Hammarby is Carl Linnaeus's country estate. He pleads with his coachman to take him there even though they are not supposed to leave the city limits. Once there, his daughter and his English pupil, Rotheram, come to get them. Before they leave, Linnaeus has visions of his former students and the plants that he named for them.

## Burdem Place

In "Rare Bird," Burdem Place is the home of Christopher and Sarah Anne Billopp. It is here that Sarah Anne and Catherine test Linnaeus's theory that swallows hibernate under the water during the winter. They discover that this theory is not true. Catherine and Sarah Anne disappear soon after. Christopher eventually sells Burdem Place and leaves for America.

## Malay Archipelago

In "Birds with No Feet," Alec and Wallace both collect specimens here. They meet up while they are both suffering from ague. Wallace constructs his theory of natural succession and descent here.



## **Aru Islands**

In "Birds with No Feet," Alec travels to the Aru Islands to find the great paradise bird, which is believed to have no feet. He discovers the birds and finds that they do have feet, but that someone had preserved a specimen without them leading to the theory of the birds having no feet. He takes back specimens to the United States.

## **Hammandsport**

In "The Marburg Sisters," Hammandsport is the town where Bianca and Rose grew up. They return here to care for their dying father and for his funeral. Rose ends up moving back, giving up her life in Boston.

## **Grosse Isle**

Grosse Isle is the location of the quarantine station in "Ship Fever." It is a small island, and as the ships continue to arrive, it becomes overcrowded with the sick. Lauchlin works at the station as a doctor, and after Nora recovers, she stays on to help as well.



# Themes

## Science

One of the themes that winds throughout the stories in *Ship Fever and Other Stories* is the love of science. All of the stories involve science and the excitement for discovery. The characters prize scientific knowledge and seek to add to that knowledge. Alec in "Birds with No Feet" seeks to expand scientific knowledge by collecting species from distant lands and bringing back specimens to the United States. Sarah Anne and Catherine in "Rare Bird" test the hypothesis that swallows hibernated under the water during the winter. They believed that this idea was false and set out to test it, with no other motivation other than finding the truth.

This love for science was evident in the characters despite their time period or their social standing. In several of the stories, marginalized or socially disadvantaged individuals sought lives revolving around science and discovery. They engaged in science for differing reasons beyond their love of the topic: fame, money, to help others, curiosity, and so on. George Mendel in "The Behavior of the Hawkweeds" is interested in how plants hybridized and he conducted experiments on that. Lauchlin Grant in "Ship Fever" sought to find new ways of preventing diseases in order to help people. Others engaged in science, in part, in order to find money or fame. This is what Alec sought in "Birds with No Feet." Although he loved what he did and was genuinely interested in it, he also collected specimens to make money and support himself.

Yet, the stories also illustrate that this passion for science does not shield individuals from other hardships and heartache. Carl Linnaeus in "The English Pupil" illustrates this well. For all his fame and love for science, he is left unable to remember most of it. Although he was once a famous scientist and highly regarded, after his strokes, he becomes a shell of that, unable to remember his own name at times.

## Loss

Virtually all of the stories in this collection include a loss that the characters experience, either during the course of the story or in their memories. Relationships end, family members drift apart, and people get sick and die. In these cases, those who experience the loss must find some way of dealing with it.

In "Ship Fever," loss is everywhere. As the immigrant ships arrive at the quarantine station, families are broken as the sick are brought to the island while those not deemed as sick are sent on. Many individuals died from ship fever either on the voyages or on Grosse Isle. Nora loses her two brothers when they are forced to travel on without her. When she tries to find them later through the newspaper ad, Lauchlin is told that many people have placed similar ads without responses. The sense of loss is further accentuated when Lauchlin dies.



In "The Behavior of the Hawkweeds," Antonia loses her grandfather when he dies just before his trial is to start. She keeps this loss a secret from her husband. In "*Soroche*," Zaga loses her husband and in cleaning out their house, she is reminded of their unborn child who died as well.

In other stories, loss comes in the form of relationships that end or drift apart. Jonathan and Ruby in "The Littoral Zone" sacrifice their families to be together. While their relationship continues, it strains the relationships that they have with their children. Rose and Bianca in "The Marburg Sisters" also experience a fissure in their relationship with each other. Although they have been close at some points in their lives, they eventually drift apart as Rose wishes to think about the past and their father, while Bianca wants to put this behind her.

## Failure

Another theme that runs through many of the stories in this collection is failure or the inability to attain a goal or dream. The stories present a number of different instances of this, from the personal to career disappointments. The characters are affected by these failures, questioning themselves and wondering how their lives might have been different.

There are several instances of personal disappointment in the stories. In "Ship Fever," Lauchlin returned to Quebec to find Susannah married to Arthur Adam. He tries to keep his feelings for her hidden but this takes a toll on him. He is unable to fulfill his dreams with her. In "*Soroche*," Zaga's husband tells her after their unborn child dies that he doesn't wish to have any more children. Although she is not happy with his decision, Zaga goes along with this, caring for his two children from a previous marriage. Finding the picture of herself in Chile, she is reminded again of the child she lost and the life she might have had.

Professional failure and shattered dreams also figure in a number of the stories. "The Behavior of the Hawkweeds" gives the account of Gregor Mendel who unsuccessfully tries to hybridize hawkweeds. Although he has hybridized peas and is onto something, he abandons his experiments when he cannot get the hawkweeds to hybridize. In "Birds with No Feet," Alec suffers several misfortunes. His family takes the money he has earned, leaving him with nothing; the ship he is traveling on burns, causing him to lose the specimens that he has collected; and he fails to come up with any theory from his travels and collections, unlike Wallace who writes several papers on the origins of species. Compared to Wallace, Alec feels like a failure who has wasted his time.

# Style

## Points of View

Barrett writes from several different perspectives throughout the pieces in *Ship Fever and Other Stories*. Although each of the stories is typically told from one perspective, several of the stories use multiple perspectives. "The Marburg Sisters" for example uses both third- and first-person points of view. Barrett's shifting between the two illustrates the closeness and separation of the sisters within the story. In "Ship Fever," the majority of the story is told in the third-person point of view with the exception of Lauchlin's diary entries, which are told from his perspective.

Barrett uses the different points of view depending on the story and the characters. Each of the points of view accomplishes something different for the stories. With the first-person, the reader is able to see the thoughts and feelings of one character, seeing the events and people through them. In "Ship Fever," for example, Lauchlin's diary allows the reader to see the events through his eyes as a doctor. The third-person point of view allows the reader a greater overview of the events and can take in the perspectives of multiple characters. In "Rare Bird," this perspective gives the reader the thoughts of Sarah Anne and of her brother, Christopher, after Sarah Anne has disappeared.

## Setting

Each of the stories in *Ship Fever and Other Stories* is set in a different location. These range from Europe to South America to North America to the Malay Archipelago. The stories also range from the eighteenth to the twentieth centuries.

The stories all move in a somewhat linear fashion, with flashbacks and memories of previous occurrences. In "The English Pupil," Linnaeus has hallucinations about his former students and the plants that he named for them, and in "Soroche," Zaga thinks back to her trip to Chile.

## Language and Meaning

Barrett uses simple language throughout *Ship Fever and Other Stories*. She does not include any violent or vulgar language. There is also no strong language. The themes of scientific discovery and experimentation coupled with relationships and loss make the stories more suitable for older readers.

The settings and time periods, while important to the stories, do not prohibit the readers' understanding of the stories if they are unfamiliar with the settings or historical individuals. Barrett provides enough of a context within each story for it to be comprehensible on its own.

## Structure

*Ship Fever and Other Stories* is comprised on eight stand-alone short stories. The book also includes a list of other books by Andrea Barrett.

Each of the stories has its own set of characters and its own plot. One character (Carl Linnaeus) is found in two stories: "The English Pupil" and "Rare Bird" where he is mentioned by the main characters. The stories take place in different settings and in different time periods.



## Quotes

"Leiniger screamed and stumbled backward. Behind him was the concrete block on which I stood to water the hanging plants, and that block caught Leiniger below the knees. He went down slowly, heavily, one hand clutching the wound on the other and a look of disbelief on his face. Tati was already reaching out to catch him when Leiniger cracked his head against a heating pipe." *The Behavior of the Hawkweeds*, pg. 17

"His once-famous memory was nearly gone, eroded by a series of strokes-he forgot where he was and what he was doing; he forgot the names of plants and animals; he forgot faces, places, dates. Sometimes he forgot his own name. His mind, which had once seemed to hold the whole world, had been occupied by a great dark lake that spread farther every day and around which he tiptoed gingerly." *The English Pupil*, pg. 35

"In the hands of his lost ones were the plants he had named for them: *Artemisia*, an umbelliferous plant, and *Osbeckia*, tall and handsome; *Loeflingia*, a small plant from Spain; *Thunbergia* with its black eye centered in yellow petals, and the tropical *Ternstroemia*. There were more, he couldn't remember them all. He'd named thousands of plants in his life." *The English Pupil*, pg. 46

"But there is one story that they never tell each other, because they can't bear to talk about what they have lost. This is the one about the evening that has shaped their life together." *The Littoral Zone*, pg. 55

"I was looking for swallows' nests. Some people contend that swallows spend the winter hibernating either under water or in their summer burrows." *Rare Bird*, pg. 69

"The next morning, when they slip out again before breakfast, the board over the tub is bare. Sarah Anne unfastens the netting, removes the dripping board, and peers into the water. The swallows lie on the sand. But not wrapped serene in a cocoon of wings; rather twisted and sprawled. She knows before she reaches for them that they're dead." *Rare Bird*, pg. 75-6

"Now she spent days alone in her new place and felt no desire to call anyone. She walked to Rittenhouse Square. She haunted the antique shops on Spruce and Lombard and then spent hours moving knickknacks here and pillows there. Silence, idleness, solitude." *Soroche*, pg. 84-85

"Despite her promise to Marianna, Zaga continued to give money away. It was a fever that came over her. It was a burning in her fingertips, which could only be relieved by writing checks." *Soroche*, pg. 95

"Beetles and butterflies and spiders and moths, bird skins and snakeskins and bones: these were what he'd collected along the Amazon and then guarded against the omnivorous ants." *Birds with No Feet*, pg. 103



"Not until later did he learn that somewhere during this long run of fever-soaked days, Wallace had written a paper on the possible origin of species by, as he put it, *natural succession and descent-one species becoming changed either slowly or rapidly into another...Every species has come into existence coincident both in time and space with a pre-existing closely allied species.*" *Birds With No Feet*, pg. 115

"And of course they had feet, strong and pink and sturdy. The theories about them, Alec learned, had only been misinformation. He was one of the first to see how the islanders, preparing skins for traders, cut off the wings and feet, skinned the body up to the beak and removed the skull, then wrapped the skin around a sturdy stick and a stuffing of leaves and smoked the whole over a fire." *Birds with No Feet*, pg. 119

"A year after that, though, we returned to Hammondsport for the first anniversary of our father's death. What happened then is not a part of our history. We swore we'd never tell anyone and still can hardly mention it between us." *The Marburg Sisters*, pg. 137

"This dog and I share a secret: our pasts are lost to everyone but us. I remember who I was as a girl, but everyone seems to have entered into a conspiracy to deny that that girl was me, as they deny their knowledge of what I did while my father was dying." *The Marburg Sisters*, pg. 157

"The nineteenth body, almost crushed beneath the eighteenth, was another young woman, perhaps twenty-two or three. Her hair was very long, matted around her face and neck. Lauchlin had to move the hank aside before he could grasp her shoulders. His mother had had hair like this, black and heavy and perfectly straight; for an instant, as he touched it, he could see her face. It took him a second to realize that this woman's flesh was still warm." *Ship Fever*, pg. 182

"That day she saw for the first time the wild energy and obsession that overtook him. He'd worked long hours before, but now he seemed to work all the time. He was with his patients when she arrived in the morning and still with them, or bent over his books, when she left late at night for the small room he'd found for her in one of the village boarding houses." *Ship Fever*, pg. 224

"I am being torn to pieces. Wherever I am, whatever I do, means only the neglect of someplace else I need to be and something else I ought to be doing. I have given up sleeping almost entirely and no longer miss it." *Ship Fever*, pg. 231





## Topics for Discussion

Compare and contrast how the various characters respond to losses in their lives. Which characters do you think responded the best to their loss?

In "Birds with No Feet," compare and contrast Alec and Wallace. What circumstances led to their lives turning out so differently?

In "The Marburg Sisters," Rose and Bianca try to deal with their pasts in various ways. Discuss their feelings on this and how their opinions change. Do you think it is better to "dwell" on the past or to ignore the past?

From "Ship Fever," discuss what it was like for Irish immigrants who were trying to escape the Great Famine by coming to Canada. What hardships did they likely have to endure?

In "Rare Bird," Sarah Anne feels that her ideas are not taken seriously. Why do you think this is? Back up your answer with examples from the story.

In "The Behavior of the Hawkweeds," why do you think that Antonia does not tell Richard the true story of how she came to learn about Mendel?

What is a littoral zone? How does it come to symbolize Jonathan and Ruby's relationship in "The Littoral Zone?"