

# **Tomorrow, When the War Began Study Guide**

**Tomorrow, When the War Began by John Marsden  
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# Plot Summary

Ellie and Corrie are best friends in their final year of school when they decide to skip Commemoration Day activities in favor of a camping trip. They issue invitations to a group of friends and make their plans. Among those who are going along are Ellie's neighbor and childhood friend Homer, a classmate Fiona, Corrie's boyfriend Kevin, a friend Robyn, and a classmate Lee. Ellie says that she finds Lee interesting though he isn't an intimate part of their group prior to the trip. They head to an area known as Taylor's Stitch and prepare to drop down into a rocky valley known as Hell. There's a rumor that a hermit lived there for many years after killing his wife and infant son. Ellie says that if he could get down into Hell, they can surely find a way. They do discover a way down and once there, find that there's a trail that makes the trek much easier though it is completely concealed from the road. For several days, the group takes it easy. They have water and have packed in plenty of food, so they simply enjoy their time.

One night planes fly over and the next day they head back. At Ellie's house - the first they encounter - there's no one at home and several of the dogs that are tied up outside are dead. They find similar scenes at other houses along the way and eventually realize that something horrible has happened. That makes them more cautious and they soon realize that soldiers have invaded, taking everyone who was attending Commemoration Day events prisoner. There has been some killing and the various members of the group find themselves in dangerous situations as they try to assess the situation and figure out their next move. They rule out a rescue of their families as too risky and gather up everything they can to help wait out the time until help arrives. They then return to "Hell," knowing that if they disguise their approach up Taylor's Stitch they can likely avoid detection by the military.

Over the coming days, they secretly take more supplies into their camp site. They hide supplies in various places around the mountain in case they get cut off. In a daring ploy, Lee, Homer, Ellie and Fiona blow up a bridge - an act they believe will seriously hamper the invaders' supply lines. When Corrie is shot in the back, Kevin takes her to the hospital, hoping that the enemy will take her in and save her life as the remainder of the group settles in, plants vegetables and does whatever they can to hamper the progress of their enemy. Meanwhile, several of the young people of the group pair off - Fiona with Homer and Ellie with Lee. As they look for ways to survive, they deal with the emotional upheaval, each trying to make sense of the situation and their roles in it.



# Chapters 1 through 5

## Chapters 1 through 5 Summary

Ellie writes that someone suggested that they should write down everything that's happened as a way of preserving the history of their efforts. The group chose Ellie for that task and she pledges to make her writing as honest and truthful as she possibly can. As she begins to write, she's sitting near a creek on a fallen tree and takes time to wonder why it fell. She notes that it's not rotten and then talks about the creek and the bugs she sees hitting the surface of the water. Then Ellie admits that she's writing about all these things that are unimportant to the story she's supposed to tell simply because she's having trouble starting the story. Ellie says that the story begins a few weeks earlier when she and her best friend Corrie had come up with a plan to go camping. It's December in Australia. The girls have often camped in the area, but this time they want to take the Land Rover and plan to ask Corrie's boyfriend Kevin and Ellie's good friend and neighbor Homer to go along. Ellie's parents reject the idea and encourage Ellie and Corrie to invite a couple of other girls along instead. They finally say they'll approve it if the girls include more people in the group. They plan to go to Tailor's Stitch, a long mountain range several kilometers from Ellie's home. The area is often the objective for families and kids out for a camping trip, but this time Ellie wants to go further - into a desolate area past Tailor's Stitch that's known as "Hell." The only apparent way into Hell is down a series of cliffs called Satan's Steps.

Ellie has only recently broken off a relationship with her boyfriend, Steve. Corrie and Ellie create a list of six additional people, for a total of eight. One of those is Chris Lang, but his parents plan to be out of town and they need Chris to remain at home to see after the family farming operation. Ellie finds Homer, who is working on a pipe at his family's farm. Homer agrees to go. Corrie calls and says that Kevin has also agreed to go, though it's obvious he would rather go to the Commemoration Day activities. The event, similar to a county fair, draws many of the families in the area for a carnival, livestock exhibits and arts, crafts and food contests. Next, Ellie calls another classmate, Fiona. Fiona is a small, delicate girl with wealthy parents. Fiona says that her mother wants to talk to Ellie's mother about it before making a decision. As Ellie hangs up, she catches snatches of information from the television. An angry man is shouting about the Prime Minister's lack of strength and the potential consequences of recent cuts to the country's defense budgets.

Next, Ellie calls another classmate, a boy named Lee. Lee's parents own a restaurant and Lee isn't really in Ellie's group of close friends, but she's realized that her school days are coming to an end and that there are some people she hasn't gotten to know. Lee is one of those. She considers him interesting and wants to use the trip to get to know him better. Lee hesitates, saying that he's supposed to be involved in a concert during Commemoration Day but that the trip sounds like more fun. He agrees to go. The next person Ellie calls is Robyn Mathers. Robyn leaves the phone to talk to her parents and Mr. Mathers takes the phone. Ellie convinces him that the group will be safe and



that it's time to try a bit of independence, and he seems to agree. He says Robyn can go. That Saturday, Ellie and her mother meet up with Fiona and her mother in town, and after the moms talk, Fiona has permission to attend.

In chapter two, the group plans to leave really early, but it's after ten when they finally get on the road. Ellie's father makes her promise that she'll be the only one to drive the Land Rover. It's a tremendously bumpy ride to the top of the ridge, but they make it. There, they repack their backpacks, forcing Fiona to leave several things behind in order to carry more food, and walk to the edge of the cliffs leading down to Hell. Kevin tells Ellie that he has two questions, but that only the "how" is really important, though he admits that the other is "why." As Ellie and the others look at the descent, it begins to seem impossible. They go to the top of a series of small cliffs called Satan's Steps, and Ellie has to admit that it looks pretty impossible, but Corrie says there must be a way. With that encouragement, they agree to start down with the understanding that if they became stuck they could simply turn around and climb back out. Homer starts down and they begin to work out a route. They scramble down the first of the "steps", but they're all wondering if they even can get back up. After the second, Lee says that he believes they've gone as far as they possibly can, but Ellie asks them to go one more. Then Corrie finds a trail that's little more than a tunnel. Handing her backpack to Ellie, she slithers in. Ellie follows, pushing Corrie's backpack, and the girls soon hear water. They know that they can at least stop and drink, refreshing themselves from the spring for the trek back out of Hell. Robyn wanders around a little as the others sit down to rest beside the spring, then Robyn returns with the news that she's found a bridge.

In chapter three, the group teases about those who'd wanted to turn around prior to Robyn finding the bridge. Kevin says it's lucky that he'd insisted that they go on when everyone else had wanted to wimp out. The bridge is well-constructed, though it's obviously old. They talk about the hermit who supposedly lived in the area and decide that once he'd taken care of providing food for himself, he could probably live a reasonably comfortable - though lonely - life. They almost stop in the first clearing but really want to continue exploring. There's something of a trail after the bridge and they follow that until it opens into a clearing by the little creek. That's where they decide to spend the night. There are eucalyptus trees and some saplings, but a relatively open spot about the size of a hockey field. Though they have some tents, they opt to sleep in the open. They cook a dinner of "two-minute noodles," which Fiona has never had. Ellie says that everyone stays up for awhile, talking, but exhaustion finally gets the better of them and they head to their sleeping bags.

In chapter four, everyone spends most of the next day lazing around and eating. One night Ellie wakes and has to go to the bathroom. While she's up, she sees a group of planes, flying low without lights. The next morning, she learns that there were "dozens and dozens" of the planes. They consider that the planes were probably leaving the Commemoration Day festivities, but Lee suggests that World War III has started, though no one takes the suggestion seriously. Later, Homer asks Ellie about Fiona, obviously feeling out Ellie's impression of whether Fiona might like him. Homer says he'd always thought of Fiona as a "snob," but had come to realize on this trip that she's not and that he likes her.



In chapter five, the members of the group keep saying that they're going to spend a day out of the camp, that they're going to climb up to the Land Rover for more supplies, or that they're going to explore, but they never quite get around to it. That night they play "True Confessions" around the campfire and Robyn says she wants to prolong the camping trip. Ellie plays for awhile but says she's tired and goes to bed. She says that she doesn't want to answer any questions about her former boyfriend Steve, but she has also become anxious to get home, though she can't point to a particular reason for the feeling. The next day they backtrack up the path they'd discovered and are pleased to find that it's difficult but passable. When they come out of the woods onto Tailor's Stitch, they realize why they'd never noticed the trail before. They cover a rocky area where footprints don't show and emerge into the base of a tree that has split into several forks at ground level. When the group reaches the Land Rover, they laze around for awhile. The wait chafes on Ellie, who really wants to go home but is unable to say so because she's recently been accused of being "bossy." After they get started home, they stop at a pool for a swim. Ellie isn't interested in the water and she and Lee talk some more. She admits to him that she's been edgy and he says that he's having the same kind of feelings. As the chapter comes to a close, Ellie says that she isn't certain she was really happy that day. She says that the edgy nervousness hampered her ability to have a good time, but that she's certain she hasn't been happy since that day.

## Chapters 1 through 5 Analysis

Ellie offers up descriptions of the others who are attending the campout. She says that Fiona is small and delicate, has taken ballet lessons and has all the advantages a wealthy family can offer. Kevin is a little older than most of the group and he's very stable and dependable. Ellie says that having Kevin as her boyfriend has made Corrie more self-confident and Ellie approves of the match. Ellie predicts that Kevin will eventually marry and settle down in the area, raising several children and being a farmer who is involved in the community and local livestock events. Homer is something of a clown and uses every opportunity to make it seem that his feelings are never hurt. Ellie says that he'll invite girls to taunt him, goading them on so that they insult him over and over, then laugh as if it didn't matter. Homer had been known as a prankster in school. He'd sometimes catch a worker on the roof of the school building and remove the ladder so that they had to call for help. Over the course of the coming weeks, it will become apparent that Homer has a serious side, that he's a natural leader and that he has feelings just like everyone else. Robyn is the quiet one of the group. Ellie says that Robyn is always determined and very competitive. She becomes a different person when involved in sports, but then shakes it off and congratulates everyone as soon as the game is over. Lee and Fiona are the only two of the group who live in town. Lee is somewhat sensitive and is good at music and art. He can be moody and Ellie notes that he's sometimes "sulked" for days without speaking to anyone.

Ellie tells the rumor that a man who had murdered his wife and child lived in the area off Tailor's Stitches for many years. He's known as Hell's Hermit. Some believe the story to be real, while others put it down as a legend. Robyn's finding the bridge seems to point to that rumor, though it's some time before they find the truth of this rumor. Even after

they discover that the hermit really did exist, they don't know for sure what happened to his family.



# Chapters 6 through 8

## Chapters 6 through 8 Summary

In chapter six, they arrive at Ellie's family home, the first they come to on the route down from Tailor's Stitch. The very first thing Ellie notices is that the dogs, all tied up outside the house, are dead. The only one still alive is Millie, the mother of the others, and she is in bad shape. Ellie rushes first to Millie, then yells for someone to take care of the dog before she rushes in the house. Inside, she finds nothing. There's no one home, no electricity and the telephone is dead. They begin trying to come up with scenarios to explain it but nothing explains why they would go away and leave the dogs to die. At Lee's insistence, Ellie finds a radio, but they can't pick up anything but static.

They go next to Homer's house, which is the closest of any of the group, only to find that there's no one home there either. Ellie hears the Land Rover start up and sees Lee carefully pull it around to the side of the house under a tree. Ellie realizes that he'd hiding the vehicle from anyone flying over in a plane and she yells at him to stop thinking along those lines. They consider calling for help on the shortwave radio but discard the idea as potentially dangerous. There's a milk cow that's in distress from being untended. They decide that they'll head for the homes of each in turn, starting with Corrie and Kevin.

While at Homer's house, they all stop and consider the situation and make plans for their next steps. Homer discovers that a needlepoint his mother always entered in the Commemoration Day contest has not been placed on the wall as is her habit, meaning they never returned from the event. Robyn points out that it might be dangerous to drive in the daylight when they don't know what they might be driving into. They talk a little longer, and all seven are crying by the time Lee says that he believes they have to take action as if they are certain that the country has been invaded by hostile forces.

In chapter seven, they arrive on foot at Kevin's house and discover much the same scene. There's a dead bird in a cage on the front porch, dead working dogs on chains in the front yard, and no one home. Kevin's corgi, however, is inside and is happy to see Kevin. They decide to take bikes in an effort to make better time to their next destination. Kevin's bike and those of his two brothers mean the group can double up, with one person jogging alongside. Kevin brings the dog along and Robyn jogs most of the way. They make it to Corrie's house and find a similar scene. Robyn makes everyone eat before they continue their journey, and though they have to literally choke down sandwiches, everyone feels better for it. As they are preparing to leave Corrie's house, Ellie sees a fax on the machine. It is from Corrie's father and he says that there's been trouble at the Show Grounds. He says that if Corrie finds the fax, she's to assume that there's serious trouble and that she should "go bush" until it's safe.

They continue more cautiously, leaving the dog at Corrie's house. At one-thirty in the morning, they arrive at Robyn's house. From there they can see that there are





floodlights at the Showground where the Commemoration Day festivities are held. By this time they've been to the homes of everyone except Lee and Fiona. They decide that for the sake of time, they'll split up with Homer and Fiona going to Fiona's house, Robyn and Lee going to Lee's house, and Corrie, Ellie and Kevin making a trip into town to see what's going on at the fairgrounds. They make plans to meet a couple of hours later and agree that if anyone isn't back, they're to hide out for the day with plans to meet the following night.

Corrie, Ellie and Kevin set out and when they near the Showground they try to make a plan. Despite the fact that it's more dangerous, they decide to stick together. They slip through an area, dodging the light as much as possible by running from tree to tree. When they're as near the fence as they can get without being seen, they see soldiers within the fence, obviously serving as sentries. Ellie flashes angry when she sees them and has to tell herself to remain still because she wants to run to the fence and order the trespassers out of her country. Ellie sees a former teacher come out of one of the tents, stop with his hands on his head and wait for permission to go to the restroom. Ellie, Corrie and Kevin head away from the fence and are almost to the cover of buildings when they're spotted. Soldiers start shooting at them and they run into the dark. They're being pursued and Ellie takes the lead, unwittingly leading the group into a dead end behind a house. They're trapped, but Ellie knows that the soldiers chasing them are at least a little worried that they might have weapons, so will be cautious. With the help of Kevin and Corrie, she pushes a lawn mower to a specific spot, trails a stream of gas leading to the mower and lights the trail as soon as the soldiers are close. The explosion works as planned and Ellie, Corrie and Kevin run away, though Ellie says she can hear the screams of the soldiers long past the time she should have been able to hear them. They arrive at the meeting point just at the right time and find that Homer and Fiona have found some additional bikes but that Robyn and Lee haven't returned.

In chapter eight, the group of five arrive at Corrie's house only shortly before dawn. They take turns telling about their night and Ellie says that it becomes difficult for her to fully understand that she'd probably killed the three soldiers who were pursuing them that night. Ellie is also concerned that once she tells the others that she'd killed someone, the boys of the group will elevate her actions so that they treat her like a hero and so that they try to do similar actions. When she's finished, the others are subdued and Homer consoles Ellie, saying that they're obviously involved in a war and that the "normal rules" no longer apply. Homer and Fiona describe their night, saying that they'd found a place with a great deal of dark staining that appeared to be blood. They had seen a small group of people that weren't soldiers, but the group had run when Fiona called out to them. The group then discusses their next step. At Corrie's suggestion, they decide to sleep in the cottages used by shearers during season with a sentry posted in the tree house and a car nearby. Homer suggests that they also position the bikes nearby in case they have to make a quiet getaway, and he insists they clean up the kitchen so that soldiers examining the house won't be able to tell that someone has been there.



## Chapters 6 through 8 Analysis

As the seven try to figure out what might have happened, they all think about the possibility of a war or an invasion, but none are willing to voice the thoughts and don't really even put it into words in their own minds. They all cope in different ways, and at one point Robyn says that she's sure there's a logical explanation and that as soon as they find out what it is, they'll all laugh about it. This angers Ellie almost more than the possibilities frighten her. She screams at Robyn that there's nothing that would have made her parents leave the dogs to suffer and die such horrible deaths and that there's no explanation that Ellie will be able to laugh off. Ellie is suddenly angry at Robyn, who is trying to do exactly what Ellie has been trying to do - find an explanation that isn't horrible. Fiona then gets involved in the situation and she says that there are "dozens" of explanations that are more likely than a military invasion. She says that she doesn't understand why everyone is so quick to jump to the idea of a war. When asked to outline some of those possibilities, she says that there might have been an outbreak of food poisoning at the Commemoration Day festivities, and that they're all in the hospital for that or some other mass illness. The majority of the group dismisses that as improbable. When someone mentions the planes, Fiona suggests that there's a national emergency and that everyone has gone to help, and that the planes had been called to help as well. It's during this conversation that Ellie suddenly realizes the planes she'd seen were flying very low and without lights. They can't come up with an explanation for planes flying without lights. Fiona continues to argue, saying that without the planes that had been flying over their campsite, there's really nothing to point to a major event.

When Ellie, Corrie and Kevin are headed toward the Showground to try to figure out what's going on, they know that they can't be caught. But as they're walking, Ellie makes several noises that prompts Kevin and Corrie to chastise her. Ellie says that at this point she can't really comprehend that what they're doing is a matter of life and death. Over the next few hours, Ellie will get a better grasp of the reality of the situation, but she simply can't keep from hoping that there's some logical explanation, even when things have gone this far.



# Chapters 9 through 11

## Chapters 9 through 11 Summary

In chapter nine, Fiona wakes Ellie at nine for her turn to stand duty. Corrie arrives a short time later, saying she hadn't been able to sleep. They talk about the past and their current situation. Homer joins them, also unable to sleep. Later in the day, they come together to eat and discuss what to do about Lee and Robyn. Homer suggests that two of them go back into town and hope to meet up with Lee and Robyn. It's decided that he and Ellie will go. He also suggests that the other three begin gathering supplies for the group to return to Hell. It seems the possibility of returning to Hell has been on the minds of each and they quickly agree that's the best option. They come up with a lengthy list of things to take along. When someone suggests that they take family mementos, Homer says that those things should be gathered at each house and buried.

As they are talking over the plans and possibilities, they hear a helicopter and suddenly realize that they haven't had a sentry posted. They scatter throughout the house, each taking an observation point to report what they see. The helicopter pauses for a long time, hovering a short distance from the house. Ellie suddenly realizes that Kevin's dog is outside in full view of the helicopter. She debates calling it but knows that it would happily respond to her voice and so remains quiet. The helicopter remains a few more minutes, then leaves. Homer says that they have to be more careful and tells them that they'll have to leave out dog food for Kevin's dog as well as for Ellie's, but will have to abandon them. He says they'll also have to kill the milk cows that can't be cared for. Homer takes a gun and disposes of the milk cow at Corrie's house. The five go to the shearer's quarters where they are just settling in when they hear a jet approaching fast. They watch as it deploys a pair of rockets and seconds later Corrie's house is blown to bits. The second rocket might have been aimed at the shearer's cabins, but passes by and crashes into the hillside. Corrie becomes frantic, crying and refusing to leave. Though hoping that the military won't be sending soldiers to follow up and make sure that everyone is dead, they allow her time to grieve and wait for her to pull herself together.

In chapter ten, nightfall arrives and Corrie begins to come out of her shock. Kevin and Homer go to find a couple of vehicles for them to use that night and Ellie promises to look for Kevin's dog but doesn't find any sign of it. Homer and Ellie set out for Robyn's house, where they'd split up the night before and where they hope they'll find Robyn and Lee waiting for them. They arrive but can't remember if they're supposed to meet inside or on the hill behind the house. They wait for awhile and Ellie is certain she sees movement in the house. She tells Homer it might have been a cat, to which he replies that it "could have been a platypus but I don't think so." They slip inside as quietly as they can and find Robyn, who almost shoots them in her fright. Robyn says that Lee was shot in the calf and is back in town. She says they'd encountered a dentist named Mr. Clement, who is still hiding out from the invaders and demanded that they stay away from him. Lee had been shot after their first meeting with Mr. Clement and Robyn had



pushed him into tending Lee's wounds. He'd stitched up the injured calf, provided medicine including painkillers, and instructed Robyn on the care.

They then face the decision of what to do about Lee. They consider trying to get him out of the area quietly and weigh the possibilities of a wheelbarrow or wheelchair, but know they aren't likely to succeed. They finally come up with another plan. In chapter eleven, it's shortly after three in the morning and Ellie is in a large construction truck with a bucket on the front. She waits until ten past three, as they'd agreed, then starts the truck, turns on the lights and head down the street. She arrives at Barker Street where Lee and Robyn are waiting. Robyn helps Lee into the bucket then jumps up into the cab. Ellie heads out and realizes that they've been spotted, so backs up instead of going forward. The soldiers are soon shooting at the truck and Ellie wildly turns, almost tipping the truck over. Ellie is worried about Lee but relieved when she sees Lee raise a hand and wave to her. They are being pursued and Ellie yells out to hold on, then slams on the brakes so that the car behind them crashes into them and is out of commission. They arrive at the place they'd agreed to meet Homer. Ellie parks as they'd planned, blocking the road, and Homer appears in a BMW station wagon. Several more shots whiz by and some hit the car but no one is seriously hurt.

Ellie wants only to reach their hideout at Hell and they are to stop at Ellie's house and pick up the Land Rover on the way. However, they know they can't leave the BMW parked at Ellie's house because the military might retaliate against Ellie's parents. They decide they'll stop at Chris's house and take his parents' car but still know they need to do something with the BMW. They decide to sink it and Ellie drives it off into a lake after everyone else is out. They let out a little cheer as the car disappears and Chris appears out of the bushes. Chris takes only a few minutes to decide that he'll go with the group to Hell. He tells them on the way that he'd spent his days in an abandoned, derelict shed and that soldiers had been by there often over the intervening days.

## Chapters 9 through 11 Analysis

Corrie and Ellie have been friends since childhood and they share a lot of memories. Ellie notes that they'd played with dolls and had really had fun with that, but there came a day when it was just no longer possible to capture the magic of that kind of playtime. As the two girls are in the tree house, they talk about that. Ellie says that they'd been innocent "right up to yesterday." While she admits that they'd done some growing up over the years, she says that the previous day, when they'd discovered that a hostile military had taken over their country, they hadn't really been forced into growing up. Suddenly, with the new situation they are facing, they've lost that innocent belief that they were safe and are much more mature for having been forced to face it. Ellie isn't saying it's a good thing and is sad about the situation.

As the helicopter is hovering near the house, Kevin and Homer discuss the options. Ellie says that if the helicopter lands and they're faced with soldiers, the only choice is to surrender. Homer agrees and it seems that he puts his opinion out there quickly as if to



head off any contrary opinions. Kevin, the only one Ellie thinks might disagree, says he believes that to be the correct option.

Ellie thinks there's something wrong with the fact that she's thinking about her emerging attraction to Homer. She notes that he'd always been the boy next door, much like a brother, and that he'd changed over the course of the last few days. He is more mature and self-confident and Ellie has realized that he's a handsome young man. She says that she knows this isn't at all the time to be considering her emotions, but that she can't seem to help it. It seems likely that Ellie, like many people in such serious circumstances, is acting at least partly on heightened emotions because of the emotional strain.

Ellie says that most of the students think Chris is weird, but that almost everyone agrees that he's a genius. He is musically inclined and writes poetry. When Ellie is chosen to write the history of their lives to this point, she notes that Chris might have been disappointed that he wasn't chosen. At one point later, Ellie says that Chris has shown her several of his poems, written while they are in hiding, but that she seldom really understands what they're about and isn't sure that Chris understands either.



# Chapters 12 through 16

## Chapters 12 through 16 Summary

In chapter twelve, they arrive safely at Ellie's house and she discovers that there have been looters - that some possessions are missing. While she says she feels sick about it, she also admits that she hasn't yet had time to allow the full weight of the situation to impact her. They notice that the things on their list are also missing, indicating that the other group has been to the house and packed up everything they could. There's a note on the refrigerator that says, "Gone where the bad people go. See you there!" Ellie finds the Land Rover, packed and hidden as agreed. They decide that they have to spend the day waiting for nightfall and so get some distance from the house and go to sleep. Chris, who'd had more sleep than the rest of the group, takes the first watch.

Ellie has a convoluted, confusing dream in which she and Lee are undressing each other. Ellie wakes, flushed, to find she's in the sun and that Lee is watching her. She moves to a shady spot and they talk for a time about their losses. Ellie moves closer to him and he puts his arm around her. She tells him that she'd dreamed about him and they kiss, but Ellie is confused by her feelings and decides to go check on Chris. She finds him asleep and is immediately angry. She kicks him and screams at him, telling him that he could have gotten them all killed. She invites him to shoot them all now unless he's willing to shape up and become part of the team. She's then amazed at the intensity of her anger. Ellie falls apart over the course of the evening and doesn't really regain her full consciousness until that night when they're already back in Hell. Ellie sleeps for hours and when she wakes and eats, she says that she's starting to feel that she can cope.

In chapter thirteen, Corrie goes to a relatively high spot every day and searches for stations on the transistor radio. One day Ellie looks at the radio and discovers that there are several knobs that haven't been moved and she gives Corrie a quick lesson in the short wave capabilities, saying that they can pick up stations from all over the world. With the new knowledge, Corrie tries again and they hear a man reporting on America's reluctance to become involved, the agreement to allow Red Cross teams into conquered territories and that there have been some major battles while scattered fighting continues. Then the batteries go dead.

The members of the group, now faced with the irrefutable truth that they are involved in a war, have to decide what to do. Homer says that they have to decide whether they are simply going to hide until the war is over or if they're going to try to make a difference. He points out that some of the soldiers they've seen were very young, probably no older than the members of Ellie's group. They admit that they're afraid, but also that they're worried about their families. Ellie cites the fact that they'd seen a former teacher who looked well-fed and didn't seem to be in immediate danger. Fiona, who is probably the wealthiest of the group, says that she'd be willing to give up all the possessions and live in a cardboard box in order to have her family safely returned. Fiona also says that





she's sure each of the parents would say that they shouldn't risk their lives and would encourage them to lay low until the situation resolves itself. But she says that she isn't sure she could live with herself if she did that. They agree that they'll begin by trying to gather some facts and will assess the situation at the fairgrounds first.

They decide to set up a camp in Hell at their current location but to scatter food packages and other supplies around the area in case they are cut off from this camp. There will be a group sent to town to look for information and to look for any groups of people the military hasn't yet found. Corrie suggests bringing in some hens for eggs, goats and lambs. They talk about the natural resources they might be able to use for food. Kevin and Corrie plan to go to the Showground and Robyn and Chris will look around town. They plan to put a few items under the Masonic Lodge building and, if caught, will claim they've been hiding there. Those remaining in Hell would be charged with getting more supplies to the camp and preparing packets to hide around the area.

In chapter fourteen, they bring in some chickens, wire for a small pen, and feed. They find a Bible at Robyn's request. At the camp, Lee asks Ellie why she's avoiding him and she tells him she's confused, though it seems to make him angry. In truth, she struggles with her attraction to Homer and her jealousy that Homer is attracted to Fiona. To herself, Ellie admits that Lee is so intense that she is afraid. After their conversation, Ellie walks off down the creek, intending to explore at least a short distance. It seems impassable and walking down the middle of the creek bed is the only option. Ellie struggles along until she sees roses growing at the side of the creek. She then sees the remains of a house and knows she's found the hut the hermit lived in. Inside she finds little of interest other than a trunk, but even that contains only a few items. Outside, Ellie finds mint and daisies as well and wonders about the man everyone believed to be a cold-blooded murderer and his apparent efforts to surround himself with beauty.

In chapter fifteen, Ellie uses the seeds taken from the potting shed of a neighbor and Ellie, Homer and Fiona establish some small vegetable patches with broccoli, peas, silberbeet, lettuce and broad beans. As they continue to work, Ellie knows that their plan to become more self-sufficient is a long way from complete. Lee is starting to move around more and Ellie takes him to see the hermit's house. They find a box and discover that his name was Bertram Christie. He was a decorated soldier and had lived at Mt. Tumbler when his young wife, Imogen Mary Christie, and their three-year-old son, Alfred, died. As Ellie and Lee read the papers they discover in the box, they find court documents that offer to possible explanations for the deaths of Imogen and her son. It's possible that there was a fire and that Imogen and Alfred were badly burned. Their suffering was intense and there was no medical help in the area, which prompted Bertram to shoot both, putting an end to their horrible suffering. The other option is that Bertram shot them both then started a fire in an effort to cover up the crime. The documents indicate that there's no way to be certain which scenario is correct.

In chapter sixteen, a letter from Imogen's mother to Bertram indicates that he was found not guilty of the murders but was ostracized by the community, which prompted his decision to go into hiding. When Lee and Ellie return to camp, it's obvious that Fiona



and Homer have entered into an agreement with their relationship. They are curled up together but Ellie notes that they seem nervous.

## Chapters 12 through 16 Analysis

After the group hears the radio broadcast, they are almost speechless, but Ellie says that they are asking each other some difficult questions. None of them is well-informed about national politics or the political situation that had been heating up as they were preparing to go on their camping trip. Ellie says that she now wishes she'd paid more attention so that she could make better sense of the broadcaster's words. She predicts that the others are thinking along the same lines. The members of the group talk about their impressions, and it's Robyn who says that the people of Australia have lived on acres of empty land, each family and individual compiling wealth, and that the people of other countries who had so little land were sick of the inconsistency. Robyn's take on the situation later seems to be at least somewhat accurate, but her willingness to consider this side of the situation immediately incites the anger of others of the group. Some point out that their families have worked hard to accumulate the land and to make their property pay off. It's an age-old argument and one that has prompted more wars than just this one.

Ellie is conflicted over her feelings for Homer but eventually comes to realize that she's experiencing a physical attraction for Homer that has emerged only because she's seen him in a different light. She also realizes that she's jealous of Homer and Fiona and their budding relationship. When Fiona asks Ellie for advice, Ellie tries to be helpful despite her own conflicted emotions. Her realizations on this front help solidify her feelings for Lee.

Lee apologizes for having tried to push Ellie and she tells him that one of her concerns is what would happen if they did try to make a relationship work and it failed. She says that they are pretty much trapped into being a group and that it would put a strain on the group if the two of them found out that they weren't compatible as a couple. Lee counters that Ellie is trying to rationalize what should be a decision of the heart. She also seems to consider his words and later apparently comes to realize that he's right. Lee seems surprised but pleased when Ellie kisses him on their trip back from the hermit's hut. That kiss seals their relationship.

Ellie thinks about Bertram's situation and compares it to her own. She says that she has "blood on my hands," and can't completely resolve whether she's guilty for her role in the deaths. She struggles with the question of whether it meant she was not guilty because she'd done it to protect her own life, or that she's guilty because she'd valued her life above the lives of those soldiers who were chasing them. While the answer might seem clear-cut to some, it's evident that Ellie is struggling with the issue and will continue to do so for some time.





# Chapters 17 through Epilogue

## Chapters 17 through Epilogue Summary

In chapter seventeen, Robyn, Corrie, Chris and Kevin return safely and relate the events of their days away. Robyn says she learned that the hospital is in operation, that they are treating people who are ill or injured, and that at least two of those involved in the lawn mower explosion died of their injuries. The soldiers are apparently very conscious of the fact that their actions will be evaluated by the Red Cross and are trying to make sure things don't overly brutal. Despite this good news, they also reveal that there have been about forty deaths. Robyn and the others are hidden in a house when a detail of civilians arrive with orders to clean it up for habitation. They talk to people they know and learn some important details, including that the prisoners are being well fed. The prisoners are also going to be sent to the country to get the farms back in working order. The invaders apparently plan to "colonize" with their own countrymen and to put all the former landowners into menial jobs. They also report that there's no chance of attacking the Showgrounds or of getting anyone out. Ellie admits to herself that she's glad that task has been "firmly squashed."

In chapter eighteen, Homer says that there are some new decisions to be made. They can remain as they are and wait out the war, try to rescue their families or just create problems for the military. They admit that waiting isn't a bad idea but none of them is happy with the idea of simply sitting with no purpose other than survival. They admit that they can't breach the security of the Showground and so drop that idea and take on the third. They set up a couple of objectives and decide that Fiona, Lee, Homer and Ellie will make a trip out the following night.

In chapter nineteen, the four move out and are almost caught when they walk within plain view of a foot patrol. A sound startles the soldiers, who stop and spin around, only to discover that it's a rabbit. Ellie and the others manage to remain frozen in place when the soldiers shoot the rabbit and march on. They look around at several places and then Homer asks to go to the Heron, a river named for a local person. They watch as convoys travel across a bridge - the only option for this direction without going many miles out of the way. They sleep that day at a house in the area and that afternoon Homer suggests that they blow up the bridge. He says they can get a tanker truck from a petrol distributor name Curr's. He and Lee can drive cattle up the road which will scare the soldiers off the bridge and distract them enough for Ellie to drive the tanker underneath. Then, using a rope as a fuse, she can ignite the truck, destroying the bridge. Homer suggests that they use motorbikes to get away from the scene. Surprisingly to Ellie, Lee agrees with the plan, saying that he's been ashamed of having let down the group by getting shot and that this will restore his pride.

In chapter twenty, Ellie and Fiona get the truck and head out as planned. There are some problems as Ellie tries to figure out how to work the brakes, but she eventually gets it worked out and they set up to wait for Homer's signal. In chapter twenty-one,



Ellie and Fiona are waiting for a convoy to pass over the bridge. The plan is for Homer and Lee to drive the cattle over the bridge right after the convoy in order to ensure that a convoy won't be arriving behind them, trapping the two boys. But hours pass and a convoy never appears. When Fiona and Ellie see frantic movement on the bridge, they realize that the stampede is coming. Ellie and Fiona get the truck under the bridge without being seen. Ellie grabs the rope that she's had submerged in the tank and runs with it. There are several shots but they miss. Fiona lights the rope, which works like a wick. The truck explodes seconds later as the soldiers jump from the bridge.

In chapter twenty-two, the girls meet back up with the boys and they discuss the events of the night. Homer says that they'd lost communication and had wanted to call the whole thing off when the hoped-for convoy didn't appear. However, without the ability to tell Fiona and Ellie the change in plans, they'd known the girls would be in even more danger and so had taken the initiative and driven the cattle in anyway. Homer says they'll know for the next time not to put so much faith in a mechanical communication device. They use the bikes to get back to Ellie's house where they plan to stash the bikes and pick up the hidden Land Rover. There, they find Kevin holding Corrie, who has been shot in the back. She has blood bubbling from her mouth. Kevin says he and Corrie had planned to go get some ferrets from his uncle's house which they then planned to use to hunt rabbits. They hadn't seen the soldiers but had apparently attracted attention and been shot at, with Corrie taking a bullet. Homer says that someone has to take her to the hospital, leave Corrie in the seat of the car, ring the bell and run away. Kevin objects, saying that he is Corrie's "mate" and can't leave her. He says he'll take her to the hospital and face the consequences. He drives away, carefully avoiding the rough places in the drive.

In the epilogue, Ellie says that the story hasn't yet ended. She says that they are on the way toward being self-sufficient and still hope to get ferrets and nets in order to trap rabbits. She says that the members of the group get along though they sometimes "drive each other crazy." She ends by saying she hopes they can survive.

## Chapters 17 through Epilogue Analysis

When Chris, Corrie, Robyn and Kevin return, they have several items with them. Ellie is somewhat upset to discover that Chris has picked up alcohol and cigarettes. She says that their taking items that were necessary for survival didn't feel as wrong as Chris's decision to pick up these items, which were obviously meant only for pleasure.

Ellie notes that Fiona is "utterly elated" as she rushes back from lighting the rope that causes the tanker to explode. Ellie says that she worries that Fiona might be a "secret pyromaniac." Later, Homer is describing the sight of the explosion and Ellie wonders the same about him. An interesting comment appears as Ellie is describing the getaway from the bridge. She says that she and Fiona grab the motorbikes and that Fiona is whooping as they make their escape. Then Ellie writes, "And yes, I admit now that we were the ones who did the wheelies on the seventh green of the golf course. I'm sorry. It was very immature of us." This seems to be another example of the coming of age

theme. Ellie seems to be comparing their actions here with their actions that day, when they were having fun on the golf green, but is also pointing out that their lives have changed dramatically over the intervening time.



# Characters

## Ellie

Ellie is the girl who, along with Corrie, comes up with the idea for the camping trip. Ellie is a natural leader and tries to reconcile being the leader with being "bossy," as some accuse. Ellie is determined to find a way into the area known as "Hell" and is grateful when another member of the group supports that when it seems impossible. As it turns out, this is a very positive move because the group ends up setting up a long-term camp in the area when the country is invaded and all the local residents are taken prisoner. As they are returning home after the camping trip, Ellie is nervous and worried but finds herself unwilling to press the others to return more quickly because she doesn't want to be called "bossy" again. Ellie is chosen by the group to record the events as they happened in an effort to have their history set down on paper. She pledges that it will be honest and says that some of the others aren't happy with the result. Ellie is the first to kill another person and she feels a conflicted guilt over her actions. While they are on the camping trip, she realizes that Homer is no longer the "boy next door" but has grown into an attractive and interesting young man. She struggles with her emotions because she is also attracted to another member of the group, Lee, who returns her affection. Ellie eventually pairs off with Lee.

## Homer

One of the original seven, he is known as a clown. He and Ellie live near each other and have grown up together. Ellie refers to Homer as "brother", though they are not related by blood. In school, Homer had developed a reputation for teasing others and for making fun of himself. Ellie says that Homer would taunt the girls at school into making rude comments about him, putting on a front that indicated that it didn't hurt his feelings. Homer pairs off with Fiona, though he is obviously very conscious of the fact that Fiona's family is much wealthier. Homer is not exactly the kind of person who would have been expected to be a leader but he takes that role very easily and the others, recognizing that ability for the first time, allow him to lead in many situations. Homer believes that the main thing for the group to do is to remain together and to keep their numbers as strong as possible. Toward that end, he mounts a daring rescue of two of the members of the group and wants to leave an injured girl at the door of the hospital with the hope that she'll be cared for. It's Homer's idea to blow up the bridge.

## Fiona

One of the original seven-member camping party, Fiona is small and delicate but strong and determined. Fiona's family is wealthy and Ellie realizes that little in Fiona's life has prepared her for the labor and danger they face after the invasion, but Fiona faces it as



well as any of the group. Fiona is attracted to Homer, but it takes some time for her to admit and act on her feelings.

## Lee

A member of the original seven, Lee lives in the town of Wirrawee. His parents own a restaurant and the group frequents that establishment. Ellie notes that Lee doesn't usually spend a great deal of time with her friends but that he is an interesting person and she decides to invite him on the camping trip in order to get to know him better. Lee and Ellie become a pair.

## Corrie Mackenzie

Corrie is Ellie's best friend. Ellie and Corrie have plans to travel together after high school graduation. Corrie is willing to do whatever is necessary and she is out with Kevin, searching for ferrets, on the night she's shot in the back. Corrie is taken by Kevin to the hospital and her fate is unknown.

## Kevin

A member of the original seven, Kevin is a stable person and Ellie says she expects that he'll grow old as a farmer in the area, taking over the tasks of farming and community being done by his father. Kevin is a little older than the rest of the group and he's paired off with Corrie.

## Chris

Originally meant to be one of the group that camps out, Chris is not allowed to go because his parents are going to be out of the country and he's needed at home. Chris hides out after the invasion and meets up with Ellie and the others when they come to his house looking for a car. Chris is considered odd by many of the students, though most agree that he's also a genius. He's musical and writes poetry and Ellie notes that he might have been disappointed that he wasn't chosen to record the history.

## Robyn Mathers

Another member of the original seven, Robyn has trouble talking her parents into letting her go, but Ellie convinces Mr. Mathers that it's a safe trip and a good idea. Robyn has a very competitive nature and is the most religious of the group.



## Ellie's Father

He is initially against allowing Ellie to go camping with Corrie, Homer and Kevin. He tries to convince them to choose a closer place to camp but relents, though he insists that there be a larger group. He's a farmer and is captured at the Commemoration Day event.

## Steve

Ellie's ex-boyfriend. He doesn't appear during the story except in Ellie's memories. When Lee expresses an interest in Ellie and she puts him off, Lee wonders if it means Ellie is still interested in Steve. She admits to having been very involved with Steve at one point but doesn't seem to be heartbroken over their breakup.



# Objects/Places

## Wirrawee

The town near where Ellie and the others live and where the majority of the residents are when the army takes them prisoner.

## Tailor's Stitch

The name of the ridge along the edge of the drop off known as "Hell" and where the group was camped when the army invaded.

## Hell

The name given to the large valley at the bottom of Tailor's Stitch, it's where the group sets up their base camp after the invasion.

## Satan's Steps

The name given the group of cliffs dropping from Tailor's Stitch into Hell.

## Hell's Hermit

The name given the man that some people believe lived in the area known as "Hell" after he'd killed his wife and small son.

## Commemoration Day

A holiday of sorts, it's the day the army invades.

## The Showground

Where the Commemoration Day activities are held and where the prisoners are held after the invasion.

## The Heron

The river where a single bridge provides passage for the invading army; this is the spot where Ellie, Fiona, Homer and Lee blow up the bridge.

## **Curr's**

The name of the company that has the tanker trucks that Ellie uses to blow up the bridge.

## **Mt. Tumbler**

Where the man known as "Hell's Hermit" is from.





# Themes

## Self-Preservation

The members of the camping group are shocked to discover that there's been a life-altering event while they were away and it takes them only a short period of time to realize that they have to be careful if they expect to survive. When they have been to a couple of houses, discovered that no one is home and that no one has been home for several days, they begin to look at possibilities. When it becomes clear that they might be in danger themselves, they put off their instinct to rush to town in favor of a more cautious action. They remain inside until dark, hide their vehicle and then move carefully toward town. When Ellie and her group are discovered by soldiers, they realize that they are probably going to be killed. When Ellie inadvertently leads the group into a dead end, she comes up with the plan to blow up the lawn mower. They do so and Ellie learns later that at least a couple of the soldiers were killed in the explosion. Ellie struggles with the idea and can't quite come to terms with the fact that she had the right to defend herself. She questions that, saying that she isn't certain she has the right to put her life above those of others. Ellie eventually comes to terms with this, at least to some degree. Others also struggle to some degree, though most have definite opinions about their situation. When it becomes clear that the invaders have attacked in order to gain control of the vast properties in the country, Fiona says she would give up her family's wealth in order to have her parents back. This is another example of the theme, only in her case she is willing to be deprived of the comfortable life in order to save the lives of those she loves.

## Coming of Age

Coming of age is a theme seen from early in the book, though the impact of the war absolutely speeds the process for the entire group. Ellie begins by pointing out to her father and to other adults that she and the others of the group are of an age to test their wings. They all seem to feel a little more adult as they tackle the climb down into the area known as Hell. When they return to their homes and discover that war has erupted in their absence, the members of the group are suddenly thrust into adult situations and they mature quickly, each in his or her own way. Ellie and Corrie spend some time together, reminiscing about their childhood. They note that they slipped quickly from one stage to another and Ellie says that one day she simply realized that there was no magic in playing with her dolls. Homer is another example of this theme. Ellie notes that Homer is quickly accepted as the leader in many situations and that it's because everyone sees this sudden maturity. In Homer's case, it seems that he'd always had the capability of acting mature but had chosen to be the class clown. Other members of the group also mature.



## The Need to Take Action

The need to take action is a theme that drives the group almost from the beginning of the story. As they are facing the descent into Hell, some of them seem ready to give up without making their destination but others - including Ellie - are driven to the action. A more notable example of the theme is seen when the group has realized the situation and have regrouped in Hell. Homer tells them that it's time to decide what they want to do and says that there's really nothing disgraceful about remaining where they are and waiting for the situation to resolve itself. Homer isn't recommending that but seems to offer it because he knows that the alternatives are dangerous. Fiona points out that their parents would all say that they should protect themselves at all costs, but she says that they must decide for themselves. Several of the group realize that they can't stand the idea of doing nothing and they eventually come to the conclusion that they have to take some action, even if it's a relatively minor role in the military events surrounding them. That seems to be what drives them to blow up the bridge. After that feat is accomplished, Lee says that he is again able to feel pride in himself and Ellie realizes that Lee had been ashamed of the fact that he got shot and was unable to do his part in the group's efforts while he recovered.



# Style

## Point of View

The story is written in first person from Ellie's perspective. This means the story is somewhat limited but the author gets around this by having Ellie relate the stories of what others endure as those stories were told to her. The reader should be aware that because this is presented from Ellie's perspective, there may be points that are not true to the story. As is always the case, a person's perspective is affected by her background and morals. In this case, the story is further impacted by Ellie's memories. For example, she relates specific events days after they happen, which means she may not remember every detail as clearly as she indicates. It's left to the reader to decide if this is the case and whether it's important to the overall story. It should be noted that others of the group read Ellie's account and at least some of them aren't happy with it. It could be because Ellie does honestly reflect the events, even when those events are less than flattering to her friends. It may also be that some disagree with her perspective or her memories. This perspective is somewhat limited, though not as much as it might have been. The use of the word "I" throughout the story is probably an effort to make the story more believable by putting the reader in Ellie's place.

## Setting

The book is set in modern day, though there are some modern-day conveniences missing, such as cellular telephones. Ellie mentions video games and the various members of the group have radios, televisions and telephones. It could be that the rural area is not conducive to cell phones. When Ellie, Homer, Fiona and Lee go to blow up the bridge, they communicate by walkie-talkie, but one of them fails. The time setting is probably around the time of publication which is in the 1990s. There are several specific physical settings, though the most important is an area known as Hell. This is a valley off a mountainous track known as Tailor's Stitch. The property is reached by traveling through land owned by Ellie's family. The discovery of a way into Hell is fortuitous because it provides the group with a hiding place after the foreign army invades. An author's note at the back of the book indicates that he used a real place as inspiration for the setting. That place, called "Hell" in this book according to the author's note, is actually "Terrible Hollow" and it's located in the Australian Alps. The author changed all the names. Tailor's Stitch is really Crosscut Saw and Satan's Steps are really Devil's Staircase. The author notes that the legend of a hermit who lived in the area is also real. While the author points out other specific areas used as inspiration for the settings, he says that similar locations can be found throughout Australia.



## Language and Meaning

The story is written in a straight-forward style and the action flows quickly, meaning it's easy to remain interested and to follow the story. There are some words specific to the setting that may be unfamiliar to some readers. For example, the members of the group talk about the need to become self-sufficient and toward that end they bring "chooks" into the camp. "Chook," according to a glossary at the beginning of the book, is merely another word for "chicken." Other words used in a similar fashion are "shank's pony" which means "walking," "grog" which means "alcohol," and "bush" which refers to the wilderness of the country. In an effort to avoid confusion, only the more common words are used throughout this study guide. There are also some words that are spelled with what is generally referred to as European spellings. For example, "colonized" is spelled "colonised." There is also a tendency to spell Mr. without the period at the end, so that it appears as "Mr" in the text. There are some areas of extensive description and some readers may feel bogged down in the details. For example, the trek down into Hell for the first time is an involved, lengthy ordeal. The description may become tedious but is likely meant only to make the reader understand that the climb was steep and treacherous.

## Structure

The book is divided into twenty-two chapters. The chapters vary greatly in length. For example, chapter eighteen is only nine pages in length. Chapter fifteen is nineteen pages and chapter seven is twenty-two pages. The first chapter begins with Ellie introducing herself and explaining that she's been chosen to write the history of the group. She says she doesn't know how to begin and spends some time writing about the scenery but admits that it's a delaying tactic meant to avoid getting started on the task at hand. The first chapters go over the camping trip, how the members of the group came together, and identify the various young people and their lives. In chapter five, the group prepares to return home. In chapter six, they return to Ellie's house and discover that there's no one at home and that several of the working dogs tied up outside are dead. In chapter seven, they have come to the conclusion that there's something terribly wrong and they stay put until nightfall before going on to the homes of the others. Over the next two chapters, they explore and discover that they've been invaded by a foreign military and that the situation is extremely serious. In chapter eleven they mount a daring rescue, and over the next several chapters they set up their headquarters in Hell and work to make themselves as self-sufficient as possible. The book is the first of a series and the person who is looking for closure will be disappointed. There is an epilogue but it is only two pages and offers little in the way of information. The book also includes a look at the next book, several pages that give the reader a clue as to what to expect in the second book of the series.



## Quotes

"I think we should give it our best shot. Let's make like dressmakers and get the tuck in there."

Chap. 2, p. 20

"We'd talked them into coming, we'd promised them a good time, and it was our idea to take the plunge into Hell. If we had a miserable failure I'd feel awful."

Chap. 2, p. 23

"It was about a half hour from the swimming hole to home. I don't know if I was happy that day - those tense and edgy feelings were getting stronger and stronger - but I do know I've never been happy since."

Chap. 5, p. 53

"I mean I knew in my logical mind that such things were logical outcomes of invasions and fights and wars, but my logical mind was in a little box. My imagination was in another box entirely and I wasn't letting one transmit to the other."

Chap. 7, p. 77

"It was getting hard to remember that this fast-thinking guy, who'd just spent fifteen minutes getting us laughing and talking and feeling good again, wasn't even trusted to hand out the books at school."

Chap. 8, p. 101

"I don't want to be a dead hero."

Chap. 9, p. 112

"If we had Lee in a wheelchair or a wheelbarrow and we were pushing him down the street and a patrol appeared, what could we do? Push harder?"

Chap. 10, p. 134

"They wouldn't want us dead in exchange for them living. In a way, we're what gives their lives meaning. But we can't be bound by that."

Chap. 13, p. 169

"No, I just think that for some things, for example, like someone, for example liking me, you're being too careful and calculating. You should just go with the feelings."

Chap. 15, p. 196

"I too had blood on my hands, like the Hermit, and just as I couldn't tell whether his actions were good or bad, so too I couldn't tell what mine were."

Chap. 16, p. 211

"He said they're going to colonize the whole country with their own people, and all the farms will be split up between them, and we'll just be allowed to do menial jobs, like



cleaning lavatories I suppose."  
Chap. 17, p. 221

"The only thing Homer left out was the way he'd wept when he'd found us both safe. I saw the sweetness of Homer then, that he'd had as a little guy, but which some people probably thought he'd lost as a teenager."  
Chap. 22, p. 271



## Topics for Discussion

Who is Ellie? How does she come to be camping with a group of friends? Describe where Ellie wants to go. Why does she feel responsible for the camping trip? Describe the camping trip. What happens during the trip that gives them a clue that something might be wrong?

Describe the series of events that occur when the group returns from their camping trip. How do the members of the group interpret each event? What major clues lead them to realize the extent of what happened?

Who are the seven members of the original camping trip? Describe each. Who becomes the eighth member of the group? Why is he not a member of the original seven? Describe the status of each as the book comes to an end.

What are the strengths and weaknesses of each of the eight members of the group? Compare any two members of the group. How do these strengths and weaknesses impact the group as a whole?

Describe the area where the camping trip is to take place. How do they find their way in? What do they discover once they're there? Describe how they set up a headquarters there. Why do they choose that spot? What are the strengths and weaknesses of that location?

What is Commemoration Day? How does that play into the plans of the invading army? What is the role of the Showgrounds in the story? Describe what the group sees at the Showground. Is this reassuring? Why or why not?

Who is the Hermit of Hell? How does Ellie learn more about him? What does she learn? What question remains unanswered? What do you believe about the Hermit? Why do you believe this? How does Ellie compare herself to the Hermit?