

True History of the Kelly Gang Study Guide

True History of the Kelly Gang by Peter Carey

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Introduction

Since the publication in 1974 of *The Fat Man in History*, Australian novelist and short story writer Peter Carey has often played with the literal truth, blurring the line between history and fiction and combining fact with fable. *True History of the Kelly Gang* (2000) is no different. It is the fictional first-person account of Ned Kelly, the notorious nineteenth-century bushranger and outlaw who is as well-known to Australians, and as fascinating to them, as Jesse James is to Americans or Robin Hood is to the English.

In *True History of the Kelly Gang*, Kelly is writing a series of letters to his unborn daughter. In these letters, he attempts to explain why he first became an outlaw—because he had no choice, he says—and provide her with a true history because, he explains, he knows "what it is to be raised on lies and silences." His own father was an Irish convict, shipped along with his mother to Australia during the Great Transportation. The past has long been dead or silenced for the transported, as if the memory of what was left behind is too painful to talk about. Kelly himself is painfully aware of what that means for him and his culture: they are a people with no cultural memory, adrift, rootless, and left without any meaningful future.

Kelly's "letters" are urgent, raw, and largely unpunctuated, but they are vivid and uniquely written. He speaks the rough language of an Irish Australian and makes easy references to stories and myths that might be lost on a contemporary audience—or on the daughter whom he addresses—if Carey were not so careful to place them in context. Carey's decision to write Kelly's story in Kelly's voice gives readers an opportunity to understand the man behind the legend.

Author Biography

Peter Carey was born May 7, 1943, in the town of Bacchus Marsh in the Australian state of Victoria. He was the youngest of three children, and his parents, Percival Stanley and Helen Jean Carey, owned and operated a local automobile dealership. Carey attended Geelong Grammar School, a private school, and enrolled in a science program at Monash University in 1961. He performed poorly there and left after his first year. In 1962, he took a job as an advertising copywriter in Melbourne, and in 1964, married Leigh Weetman. From 1967 to 1970, Carey lived in London and traveled throughout Europe. Between the time he left Monash University in the early 1960s until he left London at the beginning of the 1970s, he had finished three novels that were never published. He returned to Melbourne and took another job in advertising. In 1973, he finished a fourth novel that was accepted for publication, but Carey withdrew it before it went to press.

That same year, Carey and Weetman separated, but his career as a writer was about to take off. In 1974, his first book of short stories, *The Fat Man in History*, was published by the University of Queensland Press and earned Carey critical praise as well as an enthusiastic readership. Shortly after the book's publication, Carey moved yet again, this time from Melbourne to Sydney for a senior position in advertising. In 1977, Carey published another book of short stories, *War Crimes*, which established him as an important young writer on the Australian literary scene. It also established his signature style; he writes with a dark humor, often twists historical events, and includes absurd elements in otherwise realistic tales. *Bliss*, Carey's first novel, followed in 1981, and he adapted it for a film version, which was released in 1985. In that same year, Carey married theater director Alison Summers.

Since then, Carey has published nine more novels, including: *Illywhacker* (1985); *Oscar and Lucinda* (1988), for which Carey won England's Booker Prize, and which became a motion picture starring Ralph Fiennes and Cate Blanchett; *The Big Bazoolhey* (1995), a children's novel; *Jack Maggs* (1997), a reworking of Charles Dickens's *Great Expectations*; *True History of the Kelly Gang* (2000), which earned Carey his second Booker Prize; *My Life as a Fake* (2003); and *Wrong About Japan: A Father's Journey with His Son* (2005), a nonfiction account about a trip to Japan with his twelve-year-old son. Additionally, in 1992 he wrote the screenplay for German director Wim Wenders's *Until the End of the World*, and he has taught writing at New York University and Princeton University.



Plot Summary

True History of the Kelly Gang is a novel of historical fiction based around the life of famous bush ranger and Australian folk hero, Ned Kelly. The book is written from his point of view, as he writes to correct the events of what has actually happened, versus what is told about him by papers that had a tendency to lie. The novel starts with Ned's life as a young child, how he is forced to become a man after his father dies, and his mother selling him off to a bush ranger against his will. He learns from bush ranger Harry Power, but then eventually comes back. He tries to help his family, but is pushed away over and over, and imprisoned several times unjustly. Finally, when his family is harmed, he gives up any attempt at leading a straight life and takes on a life very much akin to Robin Hood. All this takes place from the ages of 12 to 25. Ned prepares his countrymen for a revolution, but it never takes place, as they are betrayed at its outset. Ned is eventually hung, with the famous last words of, "Such is life."

True History of the Kelly Gang is a novel written by Peter Carey, one of the most renowned Australian authors. While this sounds like a non-fiction title, the best description for this work is historical fiction, based heavily around fact. This work is based on historical facts, folk tales and research. However, told as a narrative, this novel is about the famous Australia outlaw Ned Kelly, his life and death. Ned Kelly is a real historical figure, who is a major folk hero among Australians. While it is difficult for non-Australians to understand the extent of why Ned Kelly is as popular as he is, to Australian citizens he is Robin Hood, Billy the Kid, and George Washington all rolled into one. This novel details how forces seemingly beyond Ned Kelly's control, starting with the very family he was born into, resulted in his inevitable path as an outlaw. He was a hero among common folk, particularly the Irish. Ned faced great oppression under British rulers, and his eventual capture and execution.

Written in a strong style and unique voice, author Peter Carey manages to capture the folk tale and legendary side of this story with the use of the supernatural, shifting view points and overall stylistic choices. Ned Kelly comes across as an extraordinary man, but one who is also slave to a family who will never repay his loyalty the way they should. He's a hero to the common people, but in the end, a common man who will fall to the oppressors. Alas, this is an Australian hero and legend. As such, there will not be an obvious happy ending. Most of the novel is written from Ned Kelly's own point of view, sometimes on the road, some of it in prison, some of it right before his final execution. He sees it as a gift to his daughter to know who he was and where they came from. In a sense, this serves a wider picture for all of Australia, to remember their pasts, their present, and to give them the pride and strength to take on their future.

This novel tells the life of how his mother sold him into being an outlaw, the early run-ins with the law that were actually a result of lies and corruption, and how he finally became like Robin Hood, but then met his fate at the end of a rope, as he claims was destined. Ned Kelly tries to do the honorable thing all along the way, but whether it is his family, the law, or just plain fate, he is never allowed to escape becoming an outlaw. However, he never embraces it until the very end of the novel. Ned is driven by injustices and

false imprisonment. Ultimately, he tries for a showdown, but fails and is hung. Despite this, he remains a folk hero of the common people to this day.



Unmarked Prelude

Unmarked Prelude Summary

The True History of the Kelly Gang is a novel of historical fiction based around the life of famous bush ranger and Australian folk hero, Ned Kelly. The book is written from his point of view, as he writes to correct the events of what has actually happened, versus what is told about him by papers that had a tendency to lie. The novel starts with Ned's life as a young child, how he is forced to become a man after his father dies, and his mother selling him off to a bush ranger against his will. He learns from bush ranger Harry Power, but then eventually comes back. He tries to help his family, but is pushed away over and over, and imprisoned several times unjustly. Finally, when his family is harmed, he gives up any attempt at leading a straight life and takes on a life very much akin to Robin Hood. All this takes place from the ages of 12 to 25. Ned prepares his countrymen for a revolution, but it never takes place, as they are betrayed at its outset. Ned is eventually hung, with the famous last words of, "Such is life."

There is a one and one half page prelude that is introduced before each chapter, or "parcel," as they are referred to through out the book. This prelude begins strangely. It is an eyewitness account starting in the middle of a gunfight at which point half of the Kelly gang is already wounded. The description is of something inhuman walking out slowly, being shot at dozens of times, but to no effect. The figure swears at them, occasionally fires, but acts strangely and keeps walking towards them. A man near a tree in a tweed hat watching this raises his shotgun, fires twice, blowing out both legs. The creature turns out to be Ned Kelly, covered in thick sheets of iron, but not at the legs. The man who shot him walked into the house, while others souvenir hunted. Thirteen parcels of papers are confiscated by the police that were written by Ned. The account is labeled at the end as undated, unsigned, handwritten account in the collection of the Melbourne Public Library. (V.L. 10453)

Unmarked Prelude Analysis

Though extremely short, the unmarked prelude is extremely important for what Peter Carey is trying to accomplish here, and it serves multiple purposes. For one, the next thirteen chapters of the book are all called parcels, and all written from Ned Kelly's point of view. Since Peter Carey named this novel *The True History of the Kelly Gang*, this prelude offers a degree of support to that claim, setting up the story for a first person narrative, since Ned Kelly supposedly wrote all of what is to follow. This also sets up the format for the rest of the story, and allows Carey to write this in batches across Kelly's life instead of being forced into a straight narrative, which might be harder to keep truthful, as well as interesting. This set up will also allow for a second description at the end, describing Ned Kelly's death, since obviously he won't be standing there with a pencil and paper, as he is hung. This way, all the parcels, the story from his point of view, can all be sandwiched in the middle.



Parcel 1, "His Life Until the Age of 12"

Parcel 1, "His Life Until the Age of 12" Summary

Parcel 1 is about Ned Kelly's life until the age of twelve, the age he was when his father died. Parcel 1 starts out immediately with Ned telling his daughter about her grandfather Red Kelly and grandmother Ellen Quinn (his mother and father.) The descriptions of the mother revolve around her fiery nature, strong temper, and difficult time dealing with Red Kelly, Ned's father. Ned's father spent a lot of time in Van Diemen's Land, one of the worst and most notorious prisons in a land full of bad prisons. Prison is nothing new for their family, as Ned remembers when his mother's brother was put into prison, and of the English jailor ripping apart the cake, and her trying to shove the crumbs through a two inch opening at the bottom.

At one point Sergeant O'Neil visits the home, and it is suggested that he makes an advance on Ellen. She responds by slapping him and calling him a coward. The Sergeant tries to manipulate Ned into speaking against her, he refuses, and O'Neil leaves, though forever after that he will do everything in his power to make life difficult for them. While going to see a fair with his brother, Sgt. O'Neil starts a rumor about Ned's father riding by on a horse wearing a dress and with red Indian paint on. Ned can't say anything, but a school bully, Patchy Moran, hears the story and spreads it around. Meanwhile Ned goes into a story about how his father was really fighting off an entire mob, and after a fierce night of fighting, used his wits to escape with his life. This is the story Ned wants to believe.

At school the next day Patchy Moran is spreading the story about Ned's father in a dress, Ned demands he takes it back, and Moran beats the heck out of him with only two punches. Ned fights back, and somehow gets Patchy on the ground. Bull ants start biting Patchy, then Ned, but Ned won't let go until Patchy takes it back. Bull ants are extremely dangerous, and their bites are worse than the worst wasp sting. Ned gets sick from a few bites of his own, but later his sister Maggie, who he names as his favorite, says she found something that Ned won't like. When he asks, she tells him to move the pile of stones. He does and finds a dress just like Sgt. O'Neil describes, and some face paint. Ned warns his sister to never tell anyone what they found, and then burns the dress, and leaves the chest out for his father to see, but his father never mentions it.

Ned's father is talked into selling his land to get money for a much larger purchase, and after tons of nagging from Ellen he does, but then moves them onto rented land and pisses the money away on drink, making her absolutely furious with him. Ned is humiliated, as he realizes what sort of a man his father really is.

The next major instance Ned finds a calf stuck in the mud that belongs to the Murrays. He tries to kill it, but doesn't know how to cut a jugular and so cuts its throat several times unsuccessfully, and says to this day the look on that animal's eyes haunts his dreams and he wishes he could take that one back. His sister tells, his mom pretends to



chew him out, but does all the skinning and cooking and salting of meat, and washes the blood off him gently, so Ned knew she was pleased. His father beat him so hard with a belt, that he still had marks as an adult. The police question his father, Ned admits to it trying to save his dad, so the police take his father to prison for it.

Ellen is pregnant, and while their father is in the county lock up she has the baby by herself on the table, though Ned is forced to hold her hand, and then cut the umbilical cord after sterilizing the scissors. The doctor, Mr. Irving, who is instantly described as a drunk, spreads the false rumor that Ned saw all of his mother's private area while helping out. The baby is named Grace, and Ned mentions his love for his new sister instantly.

Ned takes an alternate way to school to avoid teasing, when he sees Dick Shelton come close to drowning in a flooded creek. Ned saves him, gets solid recognition from the community, including a large meal, bath, and nice clothes from the mother. The father gives Ned a sash declaring him a hero, but becomes more and more obsessed. Finally, he decides to bail Ned's father out, to Ellen's dismay, but she can't publicly say what she feels. Ned's father comes home, uses the hidden money to get drunk, kicks Ned out of his chair, and then proceeds to laze about and die within the year. Ned says that his father and him never exchanged another twelve words between each other in the final eight months.

Parcel 1, "His Life Until the Age of 12" Analysis

Since this book is written in the format of Ned Kelly writing to his daughter, who will grow up most of her life after he is dead, it makes sense that the first chapter he would write to her would be about her family, especially her grandmother and grandfather (his mom and dad) since they were such major influences in everything that happened in his life, good and bad, though often disproportionately bad. This also sets up to show Ned Kelly as a child, how hard he fought for his family's honor, only to find out that there was not the kind of honor to be had that he originally thought, and so as a result he lost faith in his father, who had previously been his model for adulthood. Since the voice is first person, even though the first chapter is him as a youth of twelve, you still get the knowledge and distinctions of an adult re-analyzing his life. You can tell from the narrator's voice (who is, after all, "present-day" Ned Kelly) that on retrospect he thinks the world of his mother, and is less kind to his father than he may actually have been in his youth.

The finding of the dress is the loss of childhood innocence, and the myth of his father as a manly man. This sense of loss is brought through the entire chapter, with his father selling their land before pissing it all away in a bar, followed by Ned's receiving a stash, bath, and meal for saving young Dick Shelton's life, which is compared to the head of bushranger Morgan being brought into his home town. This stark contrast is apt, since his having the banner will lead to Mr. Shelton getting Ned Kelly released from prison, something his mother truly does not want, and his father will drink away all the hidden money before simply accepting his brokenness, and dying. This awakening occurs at

the tender age of twelve, and shows the reader that Ned Kelly is already hardened, has already been through more than any child's fair share of suffering, and it makes him human and easy to love before he eventually becomes an outlaw. It is a stark reminder that even legends started with childhoods.



Parcel 2, "His Life Ages 12-15"

Parcel 2, "His Life Ages 12-15" Summary

Parcel 2 begins with Ellen Quinn deciding that the Duffy Land Act is exactly what their family should be taking advantage of, and with the father dead, the entire family moves from Avenel to stay with their aunts and uncles until enough money can be raised for them to purchase their own 1,000 acres. At the Quinns' place, Ned is specially fond of his uncle Jimmy Quinn, who is described as already a little bit unhinged because of his own time spent in the penitentiary, but who is already one of the best horse thieves in Australia, good enough that no law man has been able to catch him. While they stay, Ned becomes very good at breaking in horses, and begins his own little herd, as well as a growing flock of sheep.

One night Ned's little brother, Dan, ran in, appearing terrified. He dragged Ned outside, and Ned sees the ghost of his father. At least, that is what it looks like at first glance. The apparition speaks to him, and introduces itself as his Uncle James. James is fed, and the next day works the entire day, earning the strong approval of the family. Very quickly after that, however, he chases around Ned's mother, and while the kids are forced to pick up the slack on the chores, Ned begins to hate his uncle, because he is just looking to get into bed with his mother. Finally he can't take it any longer and he attacks his uncle, who tosses him around easily like a rag doll. His mother yells for the uncle to leave him alone, and then the uncle makes a crude comment about her being a cow who would be forced to take a bull. At that Ellen attacks him high, Ned attacks him low, and that's enough to chase him out of the house. Everybody feels bad about the incident later, and tries to invite him in for dinner, but he refuses and won't say a word to Ned, and neither will Ned's brother, Dan, who clung to Uncle James, because he looked so much like their father.

That night Ned wakes up from a dream where he is burning in hell, and finds that the house is on fire. He gets up and yells at his brothers and his sisters, his mother, and his relatives. Ellen wants to go back for a tin box, but Ned tells her to leave the burning house and he gets it. Though he almost dies, he manages to slip out of the house by squirreling out a window. He sees his uncle and tries to pull him to safety, but James, drunk, hits him and throws more liquid on the fire. Ned realizes that James started the fire, and didn't care anyone knew. Ned fights him, and picks up a lead pipe to force him back, then reunites with his family.

The trial takes place, and James is convicted and sentenced by the judge to be hung. The family had to split up, and that was the first time they reunited. The boys went with the aunts and uncles to their undeveloped land and immediately started developing it, and the girls went with the mother to a nearby town to do laundry. Ned notices at the trial that their mother is wearing a dress too nice for her status or income, but he pushes the thoughts away and justifies it by believing that whatever she did, she only did, because she had to.



The mother shows up and picks up the boys, telling them that she bought a thousand acre plot and it was theirs to develop and do with what they will. Ned proves quickly that although still young, he can work as hard as any man, and is more than capable of providing for the family on their new lot. Ned does become unhappy, as he works harder and harder for the family, suitors start appearing from everywhere. Turk Morrison, Bill Frost, Alex Gunn, and the infamous Harry Power all appear at one time or another. Harry Power was an infamous bushranger, the Australian equivalent of Billy the Kid. Ned dislikes him, because he ends up sleeping in his mother's bed. However, he likes him better than all of the other suitors.

The visitors all came frequently, bearing gifts and getting "oohs and aahs" from the family while Ned had to struggle to continue the work that they were not doing while those men were around. He did not like Bill Frost, because Bill pretended to know everything about agriculture and land management, but it was obvious he was just an ignorant boundary rider who believed himself to be far more than he actually was. Ned could not stand him, and he wasn't high on Alex Gunn, whom he thought was there for his mother, but turns out he was there for the oldest sister, Annie. The chapter ends with their announced engagement.

Parcel 2, "His Life Ages 12-15" Analysis

Many things happen in Parcel 2, and many of them are set ups for things to come. The description of Uncle James as Red Kelly's ghost come back from the dead helps set up the spiritual and folk lore traditions of Australia, of Ned Kelly, and opens the way for more such instances and incidents to occur in the future parcels (which they do.) The set-up also puts the Kellys on their own land, and starts Ellen Quinn down a path that will eventually have disastrous results for virtually everyone involved.

Though Ned's loyalty to his family appears unshakable, already questions are beginning to surface on just how much of that loyalty is actually reciprocated. Annie complains constantly and goes to Ned with such concerns, but she generally seems to think as little of Ned as he thinks of her. Likewise, though Ellen will defend Ned when push really comes to shove, she lets a lot of things get between him and her. Ned grows heavily in this chapter from a boy to a young man capable of farm work. Even though he may be able to work like a man, in many ways his mind is still boyish. He even admits this at the end of the chapter, when he describes his sister, Annie, being married. This is an important theme that carries very strongly into the next chapter.

This chapter also sets up a series of suitors competing against one another, none of whom Ned particularly cares for. It is interesting that the one he prefers of the others, will be the one his mother shucks him off on in future chapters. Though Ned works hard to make the property a proper homestead, the reader gets the feeling that the lack of obvious help will come back to haunt all of them.

This chapter sets the Kellys up on their own land, and Ellen's actions which foreshadow disaster, but perhaps most important with Parcel 2 is how it sets up nearly everything that is to follow in Parcel 3.



Parcel 3, "His Life at 15 Years of Age"

Parcel 3, "His Life at 15 Years of Age" Summary

Parcel 3 begins at Annie's wedding celebration. Annie is married to Alex Gunn, and Ned Kelly takes place in some competitions early such as riding and the long jump that he wins, but then he realizes how out of place he is. There are girls there, but he does not know how to dance, and he watches Bill Frost and his mother with increasing anger and scorn. Ellen walks over and has Ned walk with her, and asks him what he thinks of the men who have been visiting. Ned admits out of them he prefers Henry Power by far and away, his mother seems to approve, and then tells him he needs to spend some time and go on a ride with Henry. She has, in fact, sold him to the bush ranger without even telling him, in order to clear the way for Bill Frost and her to be married.

Ned goes with Henry Power, who is drunk and looks very depressed every time he looks at Ellen dancing with Bill Frost. The dialogue shows that while Henry knows the full story of what is taking place, Ned doesn't have a clue. The next morning the bush ranger makes thinly veiled references to what is happening, but Ned still misses the point and asks when he will return home. Henry swears that he will see home, though they are still talking about two different places.

They reach a shack, Henry calls it home, but Ned still doesn't quite get it. They reach the town of Wangaratha, along the Wombat Ranges, which would become Ned Kelly's home over time, and Henry buys him socks and a nice pair of boots. "Forget your mamma said he. There aint no happiness for neither of us at Eleven Mile Creek." (p. 69) Though he doesn't realize it, this is the best piece of advice Ned will receive, and true to the core. The next morning after a minor verbal scuffle, Ned gets it, and immediately views Bill Frost as the man who stole his land. He rides on with Henry, not knowing what else to do.

Henry Power robs a stage coach, but the robbery is a farce as there is virtually nothing to steal, the people being held up seem more bemused than frightened, and there is little money to take home. Ned even seems to realize that he is watching something sad as the take home amount becomes lower and lower, and so at the age of 14 ?, Ned Kelly was officially an outlaw. After the first robbery Ned discovers where his new "home" is, and Henry takes the time to point out that the wood is so thick as to be bullet proof.

That night, Henry Power tells the story of James Whitty, and how he acquires his fortune. The story goes that Whitty made a deal with the devil, and was given a bag of marbles similar to the one they acquired from the robbery. The devil said every time he needed something, all he had to do was throw one marble through a stained glass window at one particular church. When he did this the devil would grant his wish. The payment would only take place at Whitty's death, and if the devil did not deliver, then there would be no payment. Eventually James Whitty became one of the richest men in



the area, with over 10,000 acres and three prize bulls, but with his last stone left, he despaired and told his wife everything. She has a plan. He throws the last stone, the devil appears to collect his due and the wife tells James to tell the devil that he wants every lawyer to be made honest. When the devil says he can't, James is released from the deal.

A second robbery takes place, even sadder than the first one. The famous bush ranger looks more like a farce, and collects a small amount, but not even everything, and then a wealthy niece of a rich man pulls an obvious dupery over Henry. Ned even seems to realize that he is watching something sad as the take home amount becomes lower and lower and he begins to see that Henry Power is not everything the papers made him out to be. That night at a farmer's place, Ned gets into a huge fight with the farmer after the farmer makes a very crude reference about Bill Frost having intercourse with his mother. They fight, Ned almost kills him, but stops to go calm a horse.

A very strange stylistic shift occurs next. The writing appears to be third person around Ned's mother, though Ned claims that this is true, it's hard to figure out how he knows this. A run in with a Banshee occurs, and the mother attacks it with an ax, when she realizes it is after Ned. Ned gives her a lot of credit in this section, and it goes away, though both hear its terrible cry. Ted Buckley dies, not either of them, and Ned takes the horse to ride back to his family and make sure they are safe. He sees the farm is in complete disarray, that not a single piece of work has been done since he left, and so he and his brother Jem swear a blood oath that they will never let their family be put out again.

Later that night Bill challenges Ned and threatens to throw him out of the house. Ned dares him to try. Bill brushes him off, and though no threats were spoken, it was obvious what took place. Bill dislikes Ned as much as Ned dislikes him, and Bill talks about some scheme to buy cloth cheap and sell it high, enough to convince Ellen to hand over all of the butter money. Nothing comes of this, and Bill leaves for longer periods of time, taking on a pattern like the original Red Kelly, meanwhile Ellen's pregnancy grows.

Ned finds out his uncle, Jimmy Quinn, is in prison, finally caught stealing horses, and so is Alex Gunn, Annie's husband, accused of stealing sheep. Ned begins to view Alex as a good man, especially towards his family, and testifies under oath that he sold the sheep to Alex, but it did no good and he was put into prison. Ned's mom was threatened by Sergeant Whelan to not sell liquor, and so the family's run-ins with the law continue.

Ned finds a boy named Billy Gray there to help with the stumps, which is Ellen's admission that no profit was ever going to show up from the cloth idea, and others come/are drafted into helping. There is an incident with a China man that results in a scuffle and a fight, but eventually Ellen smoothes it over by giving him a jar of alcohol and a ten pound note, far more than he deserved after causing so much trouble. Despite this, the Chinese man goes to town and says Ned stole one pound from him. This leads to Ned's first time in jail, a time that he admits he was destined for, and that it did not scare him as much as he thought he would. A lawyer, Zinke, was hired by Harry



Power to help get him out of trouble, though Zinke swears that neither of them knows any escaped outlaws. They prepare for the trail, only one half hour away.

Parcel 3, "His Life at 15 Years of Age" Analysis

Parcel 3 opens up a lot of interesting routes. Ned has his first experience with the back trails that will become home, but leaves them early on after a strong fight proves that he might very well belong there. Ellen sold Ned into the bush ranger job without even telling him. In essence, she sold him to a criminal to become a criminal, and it is strongly inferred that this was done to allow Bill Frost in. This will become a recurring theme, with a mother who constantly has her son come back out of honor and love, and does not do anything near close enough to treat him with the kindness and respect he deserves. Coming back to make sure she's safe, he sees the farm in disarray, perhaps even ruins, and knows that they did nothing--they all thought he would simply provide from robbing.

The incident with the Banshee is interesting, and certainly tied to the Irish heritage. The statements about how the patron saint lost all power and died, but the Banshees thrived in this new land, speaks volumes for the lives that Irish immigrants had, and the many hardships they had to endure. This strange spiritual side seems to speak into the cultural identity, but it also foreshadows Ned's doom, and perhaps the Banshee arrives at the mother's, because she is the one who sold him into a path that could only lead to his eventual death.

Ned's like of Alex Gunn is an interesting shift, and serves in a way that allows us to trust the protagonist's judgments of other characters a little bit more, because it shows that Ned will change his opinion based on a person's actions and what they show him. So now he speaks well of Alex, particularly as a husband to his sister, but thinks even worse of Bill Frost, which allows the reader to more easily hate him, as well.

Ned begins to get the family back to something akin to the right track, though he even admits his dream is one of a mad man, though this is narrator Ned Kelly speaking about his past, not the Ned Kelly who was removing stumps and believed they would succeed. Though he did technically commit crimes under Henry Power, ironically enough Ned is locked up for a complete lie, a crime he did not commit. Ned's comments about the food being much better in prison than in real life strikes a heavy chord. He makes the statement that he was destined to end up in jail. Whether it is because he is Irish, or because of his family, it is hard to say. However, one feels that it is both. At the end Mr. Zinke comes in, completing a second circle in this chapter. The first is the mother pushing Ned away, then begrudgingly letting him back. The second is going with Henry, though without full knowledge of what or why, and then having him send a lawyer, which will then bring Ned back with him.



Parcel 4, "His Life at 16 Years of Age"

Parcel 4, "His Life at 16 Years of Age" Summary

Parcel 4 starts out with Ned already free from jail, obviously having been acquitted of all charges. He goes home, and is amazed to see how easily his mother is bullied by Bill Frost, a man who is weak and cowardly. This isn't at all like the Ellen Quinn he remembers, and Ned is furious over it. After a fight Bill declares he's leaving. Ellen says they will all starve without his wages, and demands that if Ned cares anything for her at all, that he will bring him back. Ned gets him, but warns him that if he ever abandons his mother, Ned will kill him.

Bill leaves after an announcement that he will be gone for a week on business, which is normal, but Ellen goes to bed, much like Red Kelly did after county lockup, and refuses to get up, refuses to move. She is convinced Bill is gone and won't come back, and she has simply lain down to die. After a week, when Bill does not come back, Ned is summoned by a strange boy on behalf of Harry Power. Ned goes, makes a comment on how amazing the boy was as a rider, and follows him back to the house. The boy seems odd, and Ned even comments that as the boy jumps around the chairs, he thought he touched the ceiling. However, the ceiling was thirteen feet high, so he must have been mistaken. The mother was afraid. This is also where he meets Caitlin, a girl his age, whom he holds hands with and likes.

Harry returns, informs Ned that they have to go. Harry informs Ned that Bill is having an affair, and that they have to go confront him. Ned originally meant to bring him back, but after hearing about the cheating, Harry tells him that to defend honor, he has to kill Bill Frost. They receive information on the way from a traveler on where Bill Frost is, and Harry talks to Ned about Shan, the name of the strange boy, and claims he thinks he is a "substitute." He tells a story about a baby who was taken, and another child left behind. It stopped growing at a young age and terrified everyone. It kept sewing and knitting a brilliant red cape, even though there was no red thread or yarn around the cottage. Its fingers acted like there were no bones, finally the child asks for a priest. The priest comes and the child/substitute asks if it will go to heaven. The priest answers that if it has a single drop of the blood of Adam, then it has a good chance as the priest himself. When the substitute asks if not? The priest says, then no, you can not go to heaven, and the substitute shrieks and takes off never to be seen again, the red cape was of the Virgin Mary and the blessed child Jesus.

Ned asks Harry if he believes the stories. Harry said originally no, but after seeing as many things as he had, he thought there might be truth to it. The two travel through a eucalyptus fire to the town where Bill Frost was, and Ned shows a hope that he will not have to go through with the murder, but they push on and get into town. Harry bribes a bunch of witnesses, and they find Bill in a brothel. Ned threatens him, but Bill mocks him, which is when Harry steps in with a gun and Bill looks terrified. After humiliating him and forcing him to agree to pay in support of a child, Harry decides to let him go.



Bill, humiliated, grabbed a gun and rushed them. Ned turned and fired, shooting Bill in the stomach. Ned thought he killed him, and so at 15 years old he had to become an outlaw.

Harry does some scouting for them and informs Ned that Bill bled to death. This is not true, but Ned was young and easily duped. He served Harry unquestioningly as Harry would go off every full moon to court Ned's mother, Ellen. Harry even claims to Ellen that he shot Bill. This happens over a few months. When they come into town, a rider accidentally calls Harry Bill Frost, and reveals that Bill is out of the hospital. Harry, in anger, robs him of his watch and horse, even after finding out the man is R.R. Bean, the magistrate, who also gets a good look at Ned's face. They make him walk home. Harry and Ned are at a bar, when Bill Frost himself walks in. Bill makes fun of Ned for being so gullible, and Harry and Ned get into a nasty fight which ends with Harry on the floor and Ned walking away with a gun, and with the magistrate's horse. This section takes place with the note that Ned's mother dreamed the whole thing, even as it happened.

He flees and gets to a safe area, when his uncle, Jimmy Quinn, who taught him about taming horses, informs Ned that his Uncle Jack Lloyd was falsely charged with the theft of the watch and gelding, and that his cousin, Tom Lloyd, was being charged for Ned's part of the robbery. Ned decides he can not let others take the fall, and so prepares to do the honorable thing and turn himself in.

Parcel 4, "His Life at 16 Years of Age" Analysis

Parcel 4 introduces several new folds. For one, the seemingly sudden change in Ellen Quinn is startling. With Red Kelly, and even on her own, she was a firebrand who seemed to meet the definition of a strong woman in every way. When we see her in this section, she seems more like Annie. She's whiney, wea, and has no ability to stand up for herself whatsoever. This is a very unflattering picture, but seems accurate. Bill is seen as a complete jerk, which he is, and Ned is forced into confrontation with him. The near murder reveals the hesitant character of Ned Kelly to go completely over the edge, and reveals more on the negative character of Henry Power, who manipulates Ned to serve him at will.

This eventually leads to a breaking between the two men, as Ned chooses a path away from Power, but because of the earlier incident with R.R. Bean, the magistrate, Ned will find that he does not have a choice, since his family was being framed for his part in the incident. In this way Power still exerts influence over him, even after separated. Earlier, when the traveler Mr. B ignored Ned and talked to Harry Power, this brought to light the relationship in Australia between the poor and the bush rangers. This sets up a very Robin Hood type of feel, and plays into the folk hero format.

This chapter sets up the inevitable fall into crime, since the reader knows the magistrate will not let things pass lightly, and so even though Ned makes a choice to go away from the bush ranger Harry Power, he actually has no choice in the matter.



The deterioration between Ellen Quinn and the relationship with her son is interesting. In chapter three she confronts the Banshee, but then Ned even comments that she showed more warmth towards the Banshee than she did towards him. She sells him into being an outlaw, even though he did all the work on the farm, and tried to do more work, when he came home. She screams at him to get Bill Frost back, claiming if he would ever do a single thing for her, he would do that, and he does, but none of this is credited towards him, he is only thrown under the wagon wheels again and again.

Thus begin themes that will continue further on throughout the book. Ellen Quinn will never regain her original form as an independent firebrand who will make the family a farm it can be proud of, Ned Kelly has shot a man, been involved in a robbery, and will never break away from the outlaw life, so even at the age of fifteen he is forced into a life he has seen his Irish relatives suffer from way too often. Ned Kelly often talks about destiny, but it seems remarkable how often he does not realize what was to be until after it has already taken place.



Parcel 5, "His Early Contact with Senior Policemen"

Parcel 5, "His Early Contact with Senior Policemen" Summary

Parcel 5 is by far and away the shortest chapter to date. It starts out with Ned riding home to turn himself in so the Lloyds won't take the fall. His mother calls him a fool and says they would not do the same for him if the situation were reversed. Nonetheless, he has made up his mind, and when she realizes he won't change it, the family brings out the good table cloth and candles, and they eat everything Ellen had baked, assuming he would flee for his life. This is the first time Ned meets his new sister Ellen Kelly, named after the mother, Bill Frost's daughter. The mother gives Ned his sash from when he saved Dick Shelton from drowning and wears it for when the police come to take him in.

Hare and Nicolson are the two police officers who interrogate Ned, using a system that is obviously bad cop, good cop as we know it today. They show, to Ned's amazement, how easy it is to alter the law, and have men swear falsely under oath to get charges dropped. Ned gives them small scraps of information, but nothing that would actually lead them to Harry Power. Ned is transported to Melbourne, where he undergoes interrogation by the commissioner, who is described as a dangerously powerful. However, in his soul, he's a cowardly man. The commissioner tries to make a bet that would have Ned give up Harry if he lost, but Ned refuses, and in response to the commissioner, states that he would like nothing more than to have his cuffs removed so they could fight man to man. Instead, the commissioner has a police officer take his place. This is Officer John Fitzpatrick, who unbeknownst to Ned, is a welterweight champion. Ned easily mops the floor with him, and then is sent back to jail.

That night John Fitzpatrick visits, and Ned remarks of him that he is a good man, and by far and away the best cop he has ever known. John smokes a cigar he stole from the mansion, and shares some lamb with the prisoner. They get along, and John warns Ned that his Uncle took the money to betray Harry Power and that as soon as the men there had no more use for him, they would throw him to the way side. John swears again and again to beware and that he will be in trouble. A little side note is given that John's brother, Alex, would eventually introduce Ned to the mother of the daughter he is writing to.

Ned is released the next morning without a fuss, and he doesn't think at the time that he should be concerned. He walks home, only to get a complete cold shoulder from his mother, then his sisters, then his brothers. Finally one brother, Jem, speaks up and says he doesn't blame him. Ned asks what is going on, and Jem claims that Ned was the one who gave up Harry Power to the authorities. Ned rushes into the house and screams at his mother, saying it was her sister that betrayed Harry. She attacks Ned, Ned takes the



shovel, her favorite weapon, and smashes it against the wall to splinters, swearing an oath on his life that he never betrayed Harry Power. He says Aunt Kate did it, and that's how she got the 500 quid.

Ellen recognizes the amount Ned quotes, and he walks out and does hard labor the rest of the day by himself. He waits and waits for an apology, and finally around dusk his mother comes out and tells him he is a good son, but that's all he gets after being called Judas by his own mother.

Parcel 5, "His Early Contact with Senior Policemen" Analysis

This chapter is a strong reflection of Ned living up to the values of honor that everyone claims to hold onto and admire, but he takes severe punishment for doing so. Though he seems to be the most generally honorable character in the book, he can not catch a break. He comes in to turn himself into the authorities to get the Lloyds off the hook. His own mother declares him a fool, saying they would not do the same for him, yet when they betray Harry and blame it on Ned, everyone believes them. Ned's own mother calls him Judas until he can prove it was not him, yet the story has already gotten around.

Here the justice system of Australia, and the head of the colony's contempt for common men is on display more than anything else. Ned is amazed over and over that men will swear on the Bible, and then lie while under oath. Charges are dropped in exchange for information, and a blatant misuse of authority is threatened to destroy his entire family, even if they did nothing.

The character of Fitzpatrick shows Ned that there are some honorable individuals, but also serves as a warning that even the honorable men in positions of power are on the lowest totem pole, and subject to the whims of everyone else. He is also used as a warning to what Ned can expect, when he reaches home. Though he lives by honor, he suffers because of it. This sets up a pattern that will continue through out the course of the book and foreshadows how much of a fallen hero Ned Kelly will turn out to be, as his commitment to honor will eventually undo him.



Parcel 6, "Events Precipitated by the Arrest of Harry Power"

Parcel 6, "Events Precipitated by the Arrest of Harry Power" Summary

Parcel 6 is also a very short chapter, in part because so little happens, but all of it is of great consequence. Ned Kelly is hated by all. Only his mother, brothers and sisters believe he is not a traitor. Everyone else believes the lies spread by his aunt and uncle. Ned is reviled even more after Harry Power is sentenced to fifteen years hard labor.

The only work Ned can find is splitting posts for the police, but since he is already hated by everyone, he figures it is good money and he couldn't see how his reputation would fall any more. His Uncle Jimmy and Pat Quinn ride up and slander Ned, act very threatening towards him. They finally leave, but the cops there, including Cons Hall, talk Ned into setting a trap, because he honestly believes they don't want him beaten up by everyone in the tavern. Ned accosts them, races back, and in the middle of struggling Quinn hits Cons in the head with a spur and gashes his head open. The two run away, but they will both receive major jail time because of it.

At the trial Ned refuses to testify against his family, saying the cops told him to set up the fight, the judge declares him as a liar, and the uncles are sentenced. His family does not give him any credit for trying to help his family out, and the cop, Cons, puts his hand on Ned's back in a friendly way so the whole town would hate Ned, and whispers that he will have him put away by year's end.

The Kellys are very poor, as even their family will no longer help them, and a man named Ben Gould gets his cart stuck, so asks to rent their land at one quid a day until he is ready to go. They agree, and he seems like an amiable fellow, so it seems to work out nicely. The next morning, a horse is on their property that belongs to the McCormicks, they have it returned, but the McCormicks race to the property and claim the horse was worked and they demand compensation. Ben, who had been in prison, is furious with the lies, and drives them both off with a bull whip. He writes a note for the husband, full of insults, attaches calf testicles to it, and then has Ned deliver it.

Ned leaves it at the wagons and heads into town, ignoring the slander and insults from the tavern. Mrs. McCormick attacks his horse, and Mr. McCormick lies with the others to say that Ned instigated a fight and slander. The cop, Cons, reads the note and asks Ned if he wrote it. Ned refuses to turn in Ben, so once again his honor results in him going to prison for six months.

He gets out at the age of seventeen, looking so much like a man that most people don't even recognize him, he reports back, and Cons promises to put him away first chance he gets. Ned meets Wild Wright, a friend of Alex Gunn. Wild had Ned borrow one of his



mares until he found the horse, but doesn't tell Ned the horse is stolen. Cons Hall stops him, pulls him from the horse, and then attempts to murder him by firing three or four shots of his revolver. The gun won't fire, and when Ned realizes what is going on, he jumps him, disarms and beats him. Cons says the mare is stolen, Ned doesn't believe him and beats him, but men watching subdue Ned, and he can't strike back because of his bond.

In court they all lied and tried to get him for horse thievery, but since he was still in prison the day it was stolen, they lie. He was given three years hard labor, even though the man who stole the horse only got 18 months. The cop was moved to a different prison for attempted murder.

Parcel 6, "Events Precipitated by the Arrest of Harry Power" Analysis

This is a fast paced chapter which has several effects. First, it leaves Ned Kelly with no one. Even his family hates him at first, and then only his mother and siblings believe him, and it is his own aunts and uncles who slandered his name. He goes to jail, comes back a man, and after only days free he is back in prison with a jail term that is ridiculous beyond any measure. This chapter shows that even if Ned Kelly has not made the decision yet to go all the way off the cliff into full outlaw status, that it is inevitable since everyone else is out to get him.



Parcel 7, "His Life Following His Later Release from Pentridge Gaol"

Parcel 7, "His Life Following His Later Release from Pentridge Gaol" Summary

Parcel 7 begins a little oddly, and it begins with the perspective of Ned's mother and a man showing up who claims his name is Kevin the Rat Charmer. He promises for payment to charm all the rats away, Ellen Quinn scoffs the dirty, smelly man off, and he says that she will be sorry. Sure enough, a plague of rats descended on them that very night, and baby Ellen, Bill Frost's daughter, dies.

During this time the police officer Cons Flood, the very one who has made it his life mission to but Ned in prison as often as possible, seduces Annie while Alex Gunn is still in prison, and gets her pregnant. Annie dies giving birth. Jem is convicted of cattle theft that the author suggests he did not commit, and is sent to prison. All this is brought to bear in summary, when Ned writes, "One morning in the summer of 1872 my mother were 42 yr. old she had 2 sons in prison also 1 brother & 1 uncle & 1 brother in law. 2 of her beloved daughters was buried beneath the willow tree and God knows what worse were on the way." (Chapter Seven, p.175)

George King was an American traveler who came to ask for grog in the same way that Kevin the Rat Charmer did, and while Maggie is defiant, Ellen orders her to fetch the grog. Ellen originally believed that was the day when the curse finally departed them. George King stays around and is going to marry Ellen, despite only being half her age, about the same age as Ned. He tries to suggest a plan to steal a lot of horses, Ned's mother tries to encourage him to go along, and Ned refuses, not wanting to go back to prison. He asks where his seventeen horses were, and was told they were stolen, but there was nothing he could do about it, because Constable Flood stole them.

Ned says he becomes addicted to danger, and he takes a dangerous job cutting down giant Eucalyptus trees, but he finds it only feeds his rage. He mulls over Wild Wright, who gave him the stolen mare that resulted in him going to jail, and he decides that he needs to get revenge. Ned's main friend during this time is Tom Lloyd, who though the son of the traitor uncle, Ned refers to as his best friend past, present, and forever. Ned starts making fun of Wild's retarded brother, Dummy, because he knows that will get Wild in a murderous rage and force the fight he wants.

Ned moved to a saw mill literally 200 miles away from his family to avoid the gossip and horse thieving. Him and Tom slowly start raising horses on the side, everything legal and level, and then finally he eventually heads home after almost two years to see what has happened. He believes he's racing his mother at home, but when the horse throws her he finds out it is a boy in a dress, the boy's name is Steve Hart, and he is a friend of



Dan Kelly. Ned lets him go, and then goes into town and finds out Wild Wright is waiting for him in town.

Ned heads into Eleven Mile Creek and runs into Mr. Edward Rogers, owner of the barroom who arranges for an official fight in a week. The entire town is there on that day, and though Wild Wright was much bigger and stronger, Ned could hit harder than his size and he was much faster. They fought like crazy and the rain got worse and worse. Ned says he doesn't remember anything about the fight, only the version Joe Byrne tells over and over again. In the end Ned told Wright they were even, then knocked him out with one last uppercut. Ned Kelly might have been viewed as a traitor before that day, but after the fight he was viewed as a hero to absolutely everyone.

Eventually him and Wild became friends after that, though Ned says Wild soon was caught and sent to prison. Ned and Tom continued to run their horse business, and as he said before, he would not go to Eleven Mile Creek for two years as long as George King was stealing horses. Ned and Tom ran a good business, he worked at the saw mill and enjoyed two years of peace and quiet, but then he sees how bad a group Dan falls into and is forced back into everything.

Parcel 7, "His Life Following His Later Release from Pentridge Gaol" Analysis

This is one of the few parcels where Ned himself does not seem to be that badly off. The death of his older sister and youngest sister is sad, but he probably had the least connections with them. He gets out of prison, and though George King throws him way off, he decides he will let whatever they are doing be and he pulls himself away from their plans. He is not interested in being a horse thief, he is interested in staying out of prison. Ned works hard and honestly, though the rage caused by injustice simply will not go away.

Ned gets a steady job, and ends up in a fair fight with Wild. This is important, because it may be the very first time he gets to fight to defend his honor and fight and injustice done to him and not become the worse off for it. In fact, he becomes a hero in the entire town for that week because of winning the fight. His honor restored (even though it should never have been lost,) he wins a victory, and by wearing the colors of the Irish he now appears as a symbol for the first time of an Irish triumph over oppression. Ned then takes a job 200 miles away to insure that he will not be drawn into thievery and such by his family, and he enjoys quiet years. During this time he learns the stories of Irish heroes and folk heroes, in whose footsteps he will eventually be forced to follow. Yet, once again, what will bring him back will be his family, specifically seeing the condition of his brother, Dan and Ned. He'll know that the time is coming that he will have to return. This parcel ends on a note of sadness, reinforcing the idea of a reluctant hero.



Parcel 8, "24 Years"

Parcel 8, "24 Years" Summary

Parcel 8 illustrates Ned Kelly being drawn back into the happenings of his family, which will eventually lead to the end of his quiet life. Ned runs into Dan, extremely drunk and with a group of loud mouthed boys, and finds that Dan has become a drunk and a rogue, who has broken off from his family. Ned argues with him, and Ned tries to keep them out of trouble since the cops follow. Dan swears up and down how great a horse thief George King is and mocks Ned, telling him that their mom, Ellen, is his girl friend, a really disturbing statement. Ned sends him off with some money, and knows the group known as the "Greta Mob" is really just a bunch of harmless boys, but that the rich squatters will not tolerate them for long.

Ned is falsely accused of stealing a horse. When brought to trial, the man with the stolen horse swears up and down that he has never seen Ned, and that Ned did not steal his horse, which was true. In thankfulness, Ned found a loose bull and gave it to the man out of gratitude. The police decide since an Irish man has a bull, it must be stolen. So, they put a warrant out for Ned's arrest, claiming it was Whitty's. Whitty is one of the rich squatters, along with McBean, who are making life hell for all the poorer people. Because of a severe drought the squatters claimed all public land and common area, and when Tom and Ned's horses wander into the common area, they are impounded for Whitty.

Ned broke the lock and took back only his horses, a crime he was charged for and that a warrant was put out on, but Ned stands by his statement that his entire life he did not believe that was a crime. Constable Flood accuses Dan of stealing the horses, severely injures and burns him and then threatens war. Ned bandages Dan's wounds, tells the mill he quits, and knows at this point he will spend the rest of his life fighting them. Ned even writes to his daughter, "He (Dan) explained his injury also reported Flood's threat and I wondered who could be so stupid to think they could hurt my family without no fear of justice. (p. 199)"

In response, Ned goes through the back parts of Witty's land, sees all the great horses and decides he wants to steal them all. To do this, he knows he needs to go to George King, as much as he dislikes the man, and learn everything he knows from the Native Americans of North America to steal those horses. George agrees, saying they will split 50/50, though he still makes some crude remarks about Ned coming back for his girl friend (Ellen, his mother.) This makes the entire situation very odd and awkward. George teaches him what he knows, and they agree to split the profits on those horses 50/50.

Meanwhile out in the country along the Wombat Ridges, away from prying eyes, Ned and a group of close friends and others staying away from the law begin to clear fields and build camps in the wilderness away from everyone else, hidden. This seems to be



going well, though one time Dan Kelly and Steve Hart show up wearing stolen dresses. Ned becomes extremely angry and knocks both of them around before taking the dresses and heading back to town to return them. The woman screams to her husband that she wants him charged, but her husband is Alex Fitzpatrick, John Fitzpatrick's brother.

Alex welcomes Ned Kelly in, and has the woman, Mrs Goodman, model dresses. She offers to dance with Ned, who declines, because he does not know how to dance, but she is offended and eventually will create fake rape charges that will result in Ned's brother going to jail. Alex takes Ned to a house with girls, which is where Ned meets Mary Hearn, his daughter's mother. This is the first time he dances, and the first time he makes love to a girl. There is also some heavy foreshadowing, as Ned writes of the event, "No matter what skullduggery and death Fitzy later caused no matter how great a coward & liar he proved himself I still believe he never wanted no more than this in life and when he danced with that bosomy Belinda at Mrs Robinson's there were no malice in him." (Chapter 8, p.210)

Ned falls in love with Mary and end up buying her a dress as a gift. She returns the affection that he shows to her. He goes back to camp and has an argument with Steve Hart, who is increasingly getting on Ned's nerves. After an argument they take the blacksmith out of camp. Alex Fitzpatrick meets them on the way and pulls Ned aside. He tells Ned not to fall in love with Mary, and also says he is in love with Ned's 14 year old sister Kate.

Ned introduces Mary to his mother, but they get an incredibly cold and frosty reception. He finds out later that Mary's baby is George King's. Ned asks Mary to marry him, she seems to agree. When Ned finds out that the baby is King's he wants to go kill him, but Alex has her drug him to prevent him from murder, and gives false charges of drunkenness. He is easily bailed out, and then Ned goes after George, anyway. Gets there to find his mother already abandoned, the house looks destroyed, and his horse blown in half by the shotgun.

Ned and Mary continue to grow close, though Mary hates Fitzpatrick but Ned refuses to end the friendship, pointing out that for someone like him having a constable as a friend was invaluable. While going to the station to try and get Steve Hart off the hook for stealing a saddle, Alex informs Ned that a warrant is out for Dan for breaking and entering, stealing, and intent to rape. Alex says they all know it is crap, but if he turns himself in, all the charges will be forgiven at trial and then they will go after Mrs Goodman for perjury. Ned trusts him, and Dan agrees. At the trial Dan is cleared of all charges, but then the magistrate decides to give him three months for damage to property, and Ned states that as the moment that his friendship with Fritz ends.

After Dan gets out he is in terrible shape, and Ned takes him to the Wombat Ranges with him, because the police were desperate to arrest anyone they could because of a budget crisis. Ned sees Kate sitting on Fritz's lap and tells her to get off. She says she and Fritz will marry, Ned informs her that he already has two other women, including one pregnant. Ellen hits him with a shovel, and when he goes to draw his gun, Ned



shoots him in the wrist. Despite this, they let him leave and even treat the wound before letting him go, and Joe Byrne accurately predicts that Constable Fitzpatrick will eventually turn them all in.

Parcel 8, "24 Years" Analysis

Parcel 8 is longer, and full with a large series of events. Probably the most important theme throughout this chapter involves Constable Alex Fitzpatrick. While in the beginning he seems like a true friend, and very favorably compared to his brother, John, by the end he is shown a coward and a traitor, and he has no hesitation to throw Ned and his family under the wagon wheels, even after they grant him mercy.

The theme of injustice, and how the rich get to run over everyone else, continues throughout this section. Ned is forced to steal his own horses back even though no man is supposed to be able to own common ground. This makes him a wanted man forced to run from the law, and when his brother is in trouble, Fitzpatrick talks them into turning himself in. Even though promised no punishment, Dan gets three months in jail. Thus, in a single parcel, he meets his future wife, tries to give Fitzpatrick the benefit of the doubt, and then they turn back into enemies once again.

The dialogue between some characters almost seems to suggest a strange Freudian or Oedipus themes between Ned and his mother, although these are left out in the open for the reader to deal with, and never delved into deeply.

The main even of Parcel 8 comes back to Fitzpatrick, who is hit by a shovel by Ellen, because he promised to marry Kate, whose virginity he took, even though he has two women elsewhere, and when he is stupid enough to draw his gun, Ned shoots him in the wrist. They wrap the wound and let him go, but Joe Byrne tells them what they all already know. Fitzpatrick will sell them all out, which he does, and this is the final push where no matter what happens, Ned can never be anything than an outlaw, especially since the police don't want to capture him. Now, they want to kill him.



Parcel 9, "The Murders at Stringybark Creek"

Parcel 9, "The Murders at Stringybark Creek" Summary

The beginning of Parcel 9 begins with Ellen Quinn sitting on the porch, waiting to be arrested. She is arrested, Constable Fitzpatrick lies about what happened, and Sir Redmond Barry, the same magistrate who sentenced Ned's uncle to death for burning down the house sentences Ellen to three years in prison and takes away her baby. Ned and Dan offer to turn themselves in if she is released, but Barry calls them louts who will be taught a lesson and refuses. When Ned hears this, he swears to do the same back to Barry. Wild Wright comes out to camp and warns them that Sgt. Kennedy and some others are planning to hunt them down. He has a fancy .52 Caliber repeating rifle, and has undertaker straps being made. He does not intend to capture them, he intends to kill them.

Ned and Joe spy on the constables, and see that there are four of them. The next morning there are only two at camp, and so Ned, Dan, Steve, and Joe ambush them. They demand surrender, but one constable goes for his gun and Ned is forced to shoot, and kill, him. McIntyre, the one still alive, is scared to death, but they let him live. They demand surrender from the two who come back, but they attack and both end up shot and killed. McIntyre runs. Once the scene is finished, they burn the hut, the one that Harry Power had promised Ned would always protect him, and they begin their retreat deeper into the Australian wilderness.

The gang come to Aaron Sherritt's land. Aaron is a friend, particularly of Dan and Joe more than Ned, but he refuses to give them away and lets them treat Dan, who reveals only after the fact that he was shot during the fight. Aaron refuses to get involved, but then they continue on. Ned, Dan, Steve, and Joe are the base of what will become known as the Kelly Gang. They know they have to cross the Murray River, but they simply can not find a good route. When Joe Byrne finally does, he sees the cops on the other side, who all open fire. Joe goes down the flooded river while the others hide. The constables leave, and at first Ned, Dan, and Steve are convinced that Joe must have drowned, but they meat back up.

Meanwhile, Mary was threatened by Fitzpatrick and runs with her child. Katie, Ned's sister, takes her in before she even knows who Mary is. The police charge the house, and grab the baby and small children. They use them as human shields and scream for Ned to come out, or they'll blast him. They refuse to believe the women, and then they abuse the baby and slap around the women before they finally understand that no one else is there, and Mary puts a curse on the constables.



In the end Steve knows about an underwater ledge to cross a river that no one else does, and gets them across without having to deal with any of the constables. A woman recognizes them, and Ned knows they've been put up for murder, so they hurry away from town.

Parcel 9, "The Murders at Stringybark Creek" Analysis

The magistrate's absolute contempt for Ned, Dan, and other "louts" is a shared feeling that shows why the law, the rich, and the squatters are so set against the poor and the Irish. This attitude makes it extremely obvious why an outlaw could easily become a beloved hero of poor folk all through the country.

Ned's refusal to murder the police straight out is admirable, but in the end he has no other choice and thus his fate is sealed. They came to murder him, and he got them instead. The constables using infants as human shields while searching for him is detestable, and one feels that the curse Mary puts upon the constables is very well deserved. This shocking disregard for the poor and "criminals" speaks volumes about the society, and makes it very easy once again to paint an outlaw as a hero.

This is also the birth of the Kelly gang, though Ned won't say that until a future parcel. Ned, Dan, Steve Hart, and Joe Byrne are all stuck together on this now, and they will have to push through if there is any hope to surviving. There is revenge to be had, a family to defend, and this chapter shows how each step of the way, even to killing, it was not the willful act of an outlaw, but of a boy become a man who was pushed and fought and dragged into it against his will, with no chance to escape.



Parcel 10, "The History is Commenced"

Parcel 10, "The History is Commenced" Summary

This parcel begins with Ned checking in on Mary. She read the newspaper accounts of the "murders" and was angry at Ned, not sure what to think. Ned tells his side of the story, how the newspapers lied, and she believes him. Ned reads the papers about the inquiry, and goes back to Mary and writes the true account of everything that happened. He also finds out that she is pregnant with his child.

While Ned is away, the constables close in on Dan, Steve, and Joe. Dan and Steve grab dresses from the wife of the man who put them on, yelling "sons of Sieve" the entire time, and lose complete support from them. The man who put them up even calls them disgraces to bush rangers, and even goes so far as to tell them he hopes they die. From a hidden vantage point, Joe sees two black trackers, and knows they have to deal with them. Dan goes with him, and Joe sneaks up on the two, who agree to lead all the constables off course, which they do.

Ned fled the hut with Mary and George, and so at first Ned, Steve, and Joe can not find them. There are constables searching the countryside everywhere, and so they can not stay around and they continue in hiding and moving. All of them meet up on the way to Moyhu, and while Ned laughs and seeing the two boys show up in dresses, Mary faints. When she comes to, she attacks Steve viciously, and refuses to let up, even when Ned and Joe both think she goes too far. Finally, she tells them who the Sons of Sieve are, pointing out that she is true Irish, immigrated, not colonial.

Mary tells a memory of how her father, the blacksmith, had to take care of a beautiful horse, and the night the men show up as the Sons of Sieve they dress the horse up like the lord they do not like and start beating it and torturing it. They jab it in the guts with a sharpened stick so intestines come out and, when her father tries to stop it, they beat him badly and threaten to kill him. He scoops her up and barricades in the house, but she points out that the Sons of Sieve are cowards and hated, and that you need the people to love you, not fear you. Being horse people, all the men are affected by this.

The next morning Ned uses the freezing creek to break the baby's fever and realizes that he can not just have Mary and the baby keep traveling after him. They have to arrange something different. Aaron Skilling shows up and gets Joe high on the opium, then tries to talk Ned into talking Joe out of staying. Ned says Joe can leave any time that he wants. After this conversation Ned has the revelation that Harry Power had it wrong and that the bush doesn't protect anyone, people did. You had to pay them more than the reward money would, and they would protect you. This revelation leads Ned to realize that they need to rob banks and give the money away.

The section on the bank robbery is shown in the book by the official newspaper report of the account, with Mary occasionally making her own comments or scrubbing out some



lines. The robbery is a smashing success, they acquire over 2,500 pounds, and all the hostages they held at the waylay station hear Ned's side of the story, and see the piece of undertaker strap left over. They believe their side of the story, and so their reputation grows. This all happens because of a hostage, Stephens, who used to be a constable and questions Kelly point blank.

The end of the chapter they show off to their former hostages on how well outbackers can ride, and they are applauded by all of them.

Parcel 10, "The History is Commenced" Analysis

This parcel shows the shift that led from Ned Kelly, fugitive, to Ned Kelly bush ranger. His revelation about the people and his need to fight the injustice merge to create in him the idea and the drive that would make them "a gang." The robbery, and the realization of needing to buy the hearts of the common people are the two parts that really emerge out of this chapter. There is also the split in loyalty. As much as Ned wants to be with Mary and George all the time, he knows he can not drag them along, but he has an obligation to his men, as well, not to mention being honor bound to rescue his own mother. This frustration continues, refusing to allow Ned any moment's rest, but he presses on and not only is the robbery a success, but the end of the chapter shows them winning the hearts and minds, as well.



Parcel 11, "His Life At 25 Years of Age"

Parcel 11, "His Life At 25 Years of Age" Summary

Parcel 11 is home to two main events. One is an argument between Ned and Mary that results in Mary leaving him. The other is the famous event of the Kelly Gang taking over the entire town of Jerilderie.

The beginning of the chapter shows the constables' and local politicians' desperate reaction to prove they were doing something about the Kelly gang, in which they arrested twenty-one people and put them in prison just for knowing Ned Kelly. A few really were Ned Kelly's friends, a few were simply unlucky enough to have been at the same wedding as him ten years before. The gang takes advantage by chipping in to do field work when harvest time came, and they won themselves allies and places to hide all through that part of the country.

The politician Cameron received Ned's letter and read it. There is nothing made about how he reacts, though he gave it to the papers who all refused to publish the contents, simply deride Kelly and his attempts on a national level. Ned is furious, and he gets into a fight with Mary, because they have the money to go to the United States, but he won't leave as long as his mother is still in prison. Mary says they can always send for her later, but Ned refuses. She leaves.

Ned and his group rob the bank in Jerilderie. They eventually take over the small town. He was carrying a 58 page letter of the true events that really took place, and not the police stories. He keeps looking for a printer, but the printer is the only person in town who gets away. His wife is brought down and she takes the letter and a five pound deposit and agrees to the job. Two weeks later they come back only to find out that they handed the letter over to the police. The wife gives back the five pounds, and argues that he wanted it to the government anyway.

Ned spits at them that if they had bothered to read the letter, they would know he was not a murderer and that he would not harm either one of them, though they deserved it, and then his group leaves, with Ned beginning another letter, refusing to just go away.

Parcel 11, "His Life At 25 Years of Age" Analysis

Though the action sequences are taking up more and more of each novel, the in depth and behind the scenarios tend to dry up. The big confrontation is between Ned and his wife, and though he loves her he refuses to leave without his mother, which brings back the strange Freudian/Oedipus themes that tend to pop up throughout the novel. Ned refuses to leave without her, so Mary leaves without him, saying he will die if he stays, and she refuses to stay and see him murdered.



His constant attempt to print the truth is thwarted at every turn, which maddening for him, also suggests the power that he knows he has, because so many are desperate to see that his version of the events never gets out before he is caught and executed. Their daring capture of the town of Jerilderie adds to their legend, though Ned's use on more and more newspaper clips as opposed to writing out suggests in a sense that the noose is tightening and thus he must hurry, which is the truth of the matter.



Parcel 12, "Conception and Construction of Armour"

Parcel 12, "Conception and Construction of Armour" Summary

Ned finally gives up on writing letters. Fighting emotional stress, bad weather, disease, and always being just a few steps ahead of the trackers, he realizes he has lost faith that anyone in the government will do anything, and he only writes at all, because he wants his daughter to know who he is.

Ned receives a spring telegram from San Francisco saying he is a father. He celebrates, standing on one leg on his horse and shooting guns in the air. Joe, Steve, and Dan think he goes insane until Kate shares the news, and the entire area breaks out in a huge celebration. The end result is that Tom Lloyd is arrested as a lieutenant to Kelly, even though he has never broken the law.

They are in hiding again, and Ned gets the idea for the armor suits from a cabin he is staying in. The cabin is full of papers, all twenty years old from the United States civil war. He reads about the iron clad the Monitor, and gets the idea to build armor. Joe comes back with the news that Aaron has betrayed them all, and they are forced to flee, but have the idea to build the armor. Joe's is made first, and he moves around, then shoots himself in the head. He is amazed, when it actually works.

They recruit men in their own county to make armor of their own and write "blood letters," declaring that all police, all associated with the police, and all the people causing injustice had better flee, or else they would come after them and give them what they deserved. Joe wrote such a letter to Aaron, personally, and promised that he would flee. Two weeks later news arrived that Aaron was camping out in a cave with several police. Joe says he must not have got the letter, Dan says he did. Joe asks why he's still there, and Dan answers him, "Aaron says he plans to shoot you and eff you before your boy has grown cold," (Chapter 12, p.44) Joe replies that Aaron is a dead man.

Parcel 12, "Conception and Construction of Armour" Analysis

This is the point that would make Ned Kelly a legend among Australians even after he was gone. No one will give them justice, so he rallies the persecuted to prepare for battle. Farmers everywhere should make armor and prepare to be called on for a final battle. Aaron's betrayal is not surprising, though it further brings along the point of how the men who talk so sweetly turn out to be turncoats against their own kind. This is

leading to an inevitable showdown, and the swift narration and shorter lengths of each parcel add to that effect.



Parcel 13, "His Life at 26 Years of Age"

Parcel 13, "His Life at 26 Years of Age" Summary

This section is hard to keep track of, as dream and reality tend to mix and blend together, and the section ends rather abruptly. Dan and Joe murder Aaron, the informant, and it is implied the constables who stay there, as well, though this is never confirmed. Ned and Steve have two rails removed from the tracks, knowing that constables were going to be loaded up on the train.

The other part is about a dream he had of freeing his mother, with ironclads everywhere and a long dialogue with a school master reading out of Shakespeare's famous play, Henry V, particularly the references to St. Crispin's Day. There are cheers, and a promise from the schoolmaster to write Ned's history, but this all feels like a dream. Still, two pages of Henry V are included in the parcel that Ned Kelly wrote, and he wrote that in the dream the schoolmaster ripped them out for him to keep - so who is to say? The lines are blurred, and the chapter ends with the school master's promise to eventually write the history.

Parcel 13, "His Life at 26 Years of Age" Analysis

This is a strange chapter. The early revenge and call to action would seem to lead to the showdown that was bound to happen, but then dream and reality mix once again and make one indistinguishable from the other. While the entire rest of the chapter after removing the railroad tracks reads like a dream, the two pages of Shakespeare suggest that such an event happened, though the reader is left in doubt. The sudden abruptness of the chapter suggests surprise while the author is writing it, which leads to the last two sections of the novel, neither authored by Ned Kelly. The later sections reveal that Crunow in fact did manipulate Ned Kelly.



"The Siege at Glenrowan"

"The Siege at Glenrowan" Summary

Thomas Crunow betrays Kelly and stops the train before it crashes, saving over thirty policemen and sending them back to the station. He betrays them, but is so condescending that he thinks nothing of it, or of any of the people who hate him for it. The fight ensues, and the police murder any hostages who come out trying to get away. Ned attacks, but is shot and captured, Joe is killed, and Steve and Dan are both killed. Somehow the building is burned out. There is not mention of survivors, giving the feeling that the hostages may have been burned to prevent the story from getting out.

"The Siege at Glenrowan" Analysis

This is the confrontation, and though the armor may have been a good idea, it simply was not enough and in the end the Kellys, betrayed, are killed. Thomas Crunow is the traitor, and granted government protection though he releases that though called a hero, no one really means it, and as he actually reads Ned Kelly's letters he becomes more and more obsessed with the Kelly Gang and telling their story. This is labeled as a twelve page pamphlet that was printed the year after Curnow's death.



"Death of Edward Kelly"

"Death of Edward Kelly" Summary

This summary is a very factual straightforward event of his hanging. Ned's last words are, "Such is life," spoken as the noose is placed around his neck. His final requests are to be buried in consecrated ground, and to have his mother released. Both are denied.

"Death of Edward Kelly" Analysis

The final part of Ned Kelly's legend is his death, so it had to be reported. His last words, "Such is life," are a stunning resignation to the thought that imprisonment and death are just pre-destined for all the Irish of Australia, who weren't willing to sell out their fellow people.



Characters

Ned Kelly

Ned Kelly is the hero of this novel, and a legendary figure in Australia. Much like Robin Hood, the law, British rulers, and his pursuers see him as nothing but a murdering butcher, a horrible criminal. To the common and oppressed people he is a hero who moved from beyond mortality into the history books as a legend. Ned is the oldest boy in a large family, though he has an older sister, and when his father dies young and his mother leads the family from one disaster to another, he is a strong boy who fills into manhood at a very young age and is always there to help his family.

Ned becomes an outlaw, tutored under the wing of Harry Power, who is perhaps the most famous outlaw of the time. Ned falls into this life with talent, and though he is naturally talented in lawful areas, the hatred of the Irish held by law enforcement and the upper class seem to doom Ned to the start to a life of banditry, jail, and death, three things that he said he was destined for. Ned is a very lovable hero because of his loyalty. Though his family betrays him many times, he always comes back, always tries to help them, and refuses to go away even after all the hardships and heart aches they put him through.

Ned grows far beyond the legends of his tutor, Harry Power. He is seen as a traitor for betraying Power, though it was his uncle, and he spends several years in prison. When he gets out a bare fist fight with Wild Wright redeems his honor and makes him a hero. He tries to live a quiet life, but when the police steal his property and harm his family, he goes into the bush ranger life, swearing to avenge them. He takes this role unwillingly, but is bound by honor to do so. His brother, Dan, is with him, as are two others, and though for a short time they are living Robin Hoods, like Harry Power before him, they are betrayed. His friends and his brother die, he is wounded and caught, tried, and executed, but remains a major folk legend in Australia to this day.

Red Kelly

Although he is not around the novel past the first parcel, Ned Kelly's father does play an important role in what develops. His actions early on embarrass Ned, and force him to become a man early on. Red's death leads to Ellen's charging every which way, including into the mess that ends in her selling Ned into crime. Red's early experience with prisons also marks him, and his family, so that the law was always watching them, always fighting with them. Though not very helpful in life, his death still manages to be far more devastating to the remaining family.



Ellen Quinn

Ellen is Ned Kelly's mother, to whom he always shows a great deal of respect and commitment, even when those traits are not returned. Ellen starts out as a very strong independent woman, but as the work goes on she seems to become weaker and weaker, not only in physical strength, but in emotion, in character, and in about every way. Although she is the catalyst for much of the tragedy that will end up befalling the Kelly family, Ned refuses to abandon her, and stays loyal to the very end, which is part of the reason why he eventually falls. As she weakens she marries men she shouldn't, starting with Bill Frost and going onto George King. She will be put into prison for hitting Constable Alex Fitzpatrick with a shovel. Ned refuses to leave Australia until she is released, a decision that will result in his death.

Uncle James

Uncle James looks a lot like Red Kelly, and first appears around the family after Ellen Quinn and the kids moved with their aunts. He goes after Ellen, trying to woo her. Ned gets angry and attacks him. James beats him, then retreats, as Ellen and Ned both attack. He responds by burning down the house, even though everyone was inside. Fortunately, nobody died, but he was sentenced to die for his crime. The death sentence was later commuted.

Dan Kelly

Dan Kelly is the youngest brother of the family. He does not seem nearly as close to Ned as Jem is, and he takes the death of their father, Red Kelly, harder than any of the other children. As a young kid, he supports Uncle James. He becomes wild and unmanageable growing up, which leads to Ned coming back, and Dan is considered part of "The Kelly Gang." Dan stays with Ned and grows into a man. They fight and flee together, though he is killed at the final showdown at Glenrowan.

Ann Kelly

Generally referred to as "Annie," Ned generally does not paint a very flattering picture of his sister. Annie is the oldest sister of the family, and is known for always being worried or complaining. On the homestead, Annie always complained that the cops were coming or some other worry at least once a week. She always had a problem with something or other. Ned indicates that she was not the most healthy of girls, and that if she ran, you could hear her knee bones click. Early on, she is married off to Alex Gunn, who Ned originally mistook as a man looking to marry his widowed mother. She later cheats on him and has an affair with Constable Flood. He gets her pregnant, and she dies in childbirth.



Harry Power

Harry Power is a famous bush ranger, when Ned is young. Ned's mother sells him into an apprenticeship with Harry, who is also trying to court Ellen Quinn, but is fairly unsuccessful in doing so. Harry is loved by the common people, but is fairly simple and draws a lot of contempt, even from those he robs. Eventually he and Ned get into a fight, and Ned's uncle betrays him to the constables, who give him fifteen years in prison.

Aunt Kate

Aunt Kate is married to Jack Lloyd. Early in the novel, she and Aunt Jane work the boys like slave labor, while their mother tries to scrape together a living from the laundry. Aunt Kate works them hard, but seems fair, until Jack Lloyd betrays Harry Power. He and Aunt Kate spread the slander that it was Ned, even though Ned turned himself in to get Jack and their son, Tom, off the hook.

Maggie Kelly

Maggie Kelly starts out the book as Ned's youngest sister, though Grace is born later. Ned remarks that Maggie was always his favorite, though she discovers the chest that hid their father's secret of a woman's dress and Indian face paint. Ned threatens to kill her, an empty threat, if she ever told, and he burns the evidence. Maggie never tells, and is hurt by this threat, but she is the catalyst that teaches Ned the truth about his father.

Grace Kelly

Grace is the youngest sister. Ned has to cut the umbilical cord after she is born, and Ned talks about loving her as if she were his own. Grace is one of the youngest girls, and suffers horribly like the rest of the family. However, it is too young to really break away from anything.

Sergeant O' Neil

O'Neil is a haughty constable, who spreads the story of Red Kelly wearing a dress. He tries to seduce Ellen Quinn, while her husband is in prison. He goes out of his way to harass the family and is directly involved with Ned's first experience of being sent to prison.



Bill Frost

Frost is one of the suitors for Ellen Quinn's hand after Red Kelly dies. He tries to woo her while the Kellys are developing their land claim of 1,000 acres for the first time, and Ned does not like him, though Annie does. He wears a tweed jacket all the time, even during summer. Frost makes many remarks about the ignorance of Australians, and how they do not understand how to farm the land correctly. Ned is with Harry Power, when he learns that Frost got Ellen pregnant, and she, in fact, sold him off to Harry Power in order to clear the way for Frost to move in. Ned thinks of Frost as the man who stole his land.

Kate Kelly

Kate Kelly is one of Ned's sisters. She is a younger sister, and will eventually get involved with Constable Alex Fitzpatrick, against Ned's wishes. When they find out about the other two women, this leads to the mess that puts Ellen Quinn in prison and leads to Ned Kelly's final push into becoming a bush ranger. Later on, Kate will provide shelter for Mary and baby George, and will outlive both of her brothers.

Dick Shelton

Dick is the boy, who almost drowns. When Ned is twelve, he sees Dick trying to save his straw hat from a flooded creek, and ends up rescuing the boy after he falls in. Dick's mother and father are extremely thankful, and Ned is awarded a sash. A side effect of Dick falling in the creek is that it eventually leads to Esau Shelton getting Red Kelly out of jail, something that Ellen Quinn does not want. However, she can not refuse the offer. In a roundabout way, Ned saving Dick turns out to hurt the family.

Mr. Esau Shelton

Shelton is the father of Dick Shelton and makes a wonderful sash for Ned Kelly saluting his bravery and good nature. He becomes more and more obsessed with how close his son came to dying and ends up paying 25 pounds to release Red Kelly from prison. Even though this is not what Ellen wants, she can not protest. Though Mr. Shelton works with the best of intentions, it brings more harm and misery to the Kelly family.

Alex Gunn

Alex marries Annie, the oldest Kelly sister. At first, Ned does not like him, though he tends to tolerate him more than the others. Alex marries Annie, and after a time, Ned changes his mind and comes to see that he does like Alex because of his good character. However, Alex is sent to prison for stealing sheep, despite Ned's assertion on the stand that he sold the sheep to Alex.



Jem Kelly

Jem is the second oldest brother, younger than only Ned. He is a good kid, and a strong boy. When Ned tries to help rebuild the farm after Bill Frost lets it fall in disrepair, Jem helps out, and continues to try to lead. He's eventually put into prison for stealing a horse saddle, at which point he disappears from the rest of the narrative.

James Whitty

Whitty is one of the Squatters. He is as rich as R.R. Bean and just as ruthless. He accuses the Kelly family many times of theft, when they haven't done anything, and rules the area like a tyrant, claiming common land, common cattle, and having the constables send to prison anyone who stands in his way.

Mr. Zinke

Mr. Zinke is a lawyer who originally works for Harry Power. He gets Ned off the hook once, and is used to defend Ned's family after that. He seems like a genuinely good individual who tries to defend his clients to the best of his ability.

Jack Lloyd

Jack Lloyd is the uncle falsely charged with theft of watch and horse from R.R. Bean. He would betray Harry Power to collect several hundred quid. As he was released before Ned Kelly, he would spread the slander that it was Ned who turned Harry into them, causing Ned to be the most hated man in the area.

Tom Lloyd

Tom Lloyd is the cousin falsely charged with Ned's role in the robbery. He is Ned's best friend, and even after his father, Jack, betrays Ned and Harry Power, Tom and Ned remain close. They work together, raise horses together, and are always close. Ned even refers to Tom as his best friend, past, present, and forever. Tom is eventually arrested and sent to prison under false claims that he is one of Ned Kelly's lieutenants.

Shan

Shan is the boy Harry Power sends to fetch Ned Kelly from MacGuire's place. The boy is odd-looking, and the best rider that Ned has ever seen. At the house, he plays on odd game, and Ned swears his fingers stretch to the thirteen-foot ceiling. The mother is afraid of him, and Harry admits that he thinks Shan is a "substitute."



Caitlin

Caitlin is the daughter at Maguire's farm, the first girl Ned Kelly ever shows interest in. She walks with him and holds hands. He wants to say good-bye, but Harry Power rushes them off to go and murder Bill Frost. This is the first time Ned is attracted to any female, and though the connection is not made, her description almost fits that of a younger Mary, who would become his wife.

Maguire

Maguire is the farmer who Ned beats badly, because he delivers the news of Bill Frost impregnating his mother. The farmer delivered the news in such a crude way that Ned attacked, and had to be beaten off with a log. Later, Ned would find out his name was Maguire, and his daughter, Caitlin, would be the first girl he shows interest in.

R.R. Bean

Another hated squatter, Harry Power robs R.R. Bean of a family watch and horse. This is the first time Ned's face is spotted and against better judgment, even after knowing who the man is, Harry robs him anyway. This results in the law's eventual war with the entire Kelly family.

John Fitzpatrick

A cowardly magistrate in Melbourne brings in John Fitzpatrick, and Ned is forced to fight him, and beats him handily. John was a welterweight boxing champion, and he befriends Ned, sharing with him some lamb and begging him to turn Harry in, because his uncle is going to and blame it on him. John is referred to as the only cop that Ned will ever count as a good man.

Nicholson and Hare

Nicholson and Hare are two cops, who are always chasing Ned. They harass his family, they interrogate Ned, when they are going after Harry Power, and in the final shoot out Ned at least gets some revenge, when he shoots Hare and kills him with the first shot.

Ellen Frost

Ellen is the baby daughter of Bill Frost. Ned comments on her being gold, even though the source was crap. He does not hold Bill's sins against her. She is not long for the world, however, as Kevin the Rat Charmer's curse will lead to her death.



Mr & Mrs. McCormick

Just after Ned gets out of prison, a horse strays onto the Kellys' property that belongs to the McCormicks. Jem gives it back, but they claim they worked it, and are trying to take advantage of the fact that Ned just got out of prison, and there is no man on the property. They attack Ned's horse in town, which results in Ned getting pulled into Mr. McCormick. They file trumped-up charges with Cons Hall, who is happy to put Ned back in prison after one day out.

Cons Hall

Cons Hall is the dishonest constable, who hires Ned for a short time after everyone is convinced he betrayed Harry Power. He then turns on him to both make the common people hate him, and to shove him into prison every chance he got an excuse.

Ben Gould

Gould is a jovial man, who stays with the Kellys for a while until the mud hardens. However, he also has a hard edge from prison. Gets nasty with the McCormicks, who piss him off for trying to take advantage of the Kellys, but his antics result in Ned going back to prison.

Wild Wright

Wild Wright gives Ned a stolen horse after he gets out of prison, without telling him it is stolen. This results in Ned getting three years in prison. Coming out, Ned provokes Wild to a fight, and they have a bare knuckles boxing match that is the talk of that entire section of the country. Wild loses, but out of respect, they eventually become friends. The consequences of this friendship result in Wild going to prison just for knowing Ned. The fight Ned wins makes him a hero, and seems to erase the shame of the Power slander.

Pat Quinn

Pat Quinn is one of Ned's uncles, who gives Ned hell for betraying Power. Ned induces him to follow him back to the police station, where the police set a trap. Quinn seriously wounds a police officer and ends up being sent to prison for it.

Kevin the Rat Charmer

Kevin is an odd figure. He's a traveler, who smells bad, and threatens to charm rats for Ellen Quinn, even though she doesn't have any. He threatens her, and warns her to hire him. She refuses, and he curses her. He is never tracked down, though all seem to



know of him. When rats infest her property, a daughter dies, and Jem goes to jail, he is the most hated name on her lips.

George King

King is an American about Ned's age, who marries Ellen, when Ned gets out of prison. George learned to be an expert horse thief from his time in the Americas, though Ned wants nothing to do with that at first. He comes back and learns George's secrets to get back at the squatters. George leaves his mother.

Constable Flood

Constable Flood steals Ned's horses, while he is in prison. He fills Ned with an incredible rage against injustice that will eventually push him completely over the edge into the bush ranger life. Flood also seduces Annie, who dies giving birth to his child, and injures Dan badly while accusing him of stealing horses. Ned swears revenge on him for this, though it seems it never happens.

Joe Byrne

Joe is one of Ned's best friends, and a man who is an integral part of the Kelly Gang. He advises and guides Ned, often with information that Ned should listen to, but tragically doesn't. Joe is adamant after the bank robbery that they should leave Australia and go to California, but he refuses to leave until Ned does, and Joe ends up dying as a result.

Steve Hart

Steve is one of Dan Kelly's friends, who refuses to leave him, when they are considered one outlaw band. At first him and Dan wear dresses based on the "Sons of Sieve" reference, but once Mary tells him the story he stops. He is a loudmouth, but loyal, and sticks with them until the very end where he is killed in the shootout at Glenrowan.

Mary Hearn

Mary Hearn is an Irish immigrant introduced to Ned by Alex Fitzpatrick. The general assumption is that she is a prostitute, but Ned falls in love with her, and she with him. Mary will have his child, a daughter, to whom all those parcels were written for. She leaves Ned, when he refuses to leave without his mother.



Sir Redmond Barry

Barry is a haughty justice, who sentenced Ned's uncle to death, Ellen's mother to prison, and calls Ned and his brother Dan a bunch of louts who should be taught a lesson. This man is the epitome of racist arrogant justice run amuck and represents in person the hardships of all common Australians.

Aaron Sherritt

Sherritt starts off as one of Joe Byrne's best friends and says he supports Kelly, though he betrays them both. He provides opium for Joe and keeps trying to convince him to leave the gang. Later, when he informs against them, Joe kills Aaron himself.

Thomas Crunow

In the end, Crunow is the schoolmaster who convinces Ned to let him go home to his books and properly start writing Ned's history down. He deceives them, and then betrays them by warning the incoming train of the missing rails and that the Kellys are there. He expects to be called hero and is amazed at the lack of a response. As he actually reads the manuscript, he admires them more and more and becomes obsessed with the Kelly Gang. It is suggested that he kept the parcels and straightened them all out over time.

Stephens

Stephens is a former cop, who questions the gang during their first robbery. It is at this time that Ned gets to tell his side of the story about the murders and shows them the undertaker strap, which convinces everyone that they are telling the truth. It is Stephens' direct questioning of Ned which leads to this taking place, and he says he believes Cameron, the politician, to be a fair man, which leads to Joe and Ned writing letters to him.

Cameron

Cameron is a politician, who makes statements about inquiries into police wrongdoings, but then does nothing about it. He is a hope to Joe and Ned to resolve things peacefully, but fails them on that note, as well.



Objects/Places

Avenvel

Avenvel is the original town Ned grew up in. They moved from here after Red Kelly dies, but this is the setting of the first couple of parcels.

Wombat Ranges

Wombat Ranges are the back trials, hills and mountains that Harry Power teaches to Ned. This is the outback that bush rangers can hide in, and part of the reason that Ned manages to hide for so long from his pursuers.

Bullock Creek

Bullock Creek is the cabin where Harry Power originally takes Ned after Ned is sold into an apprenticeship. Harry called it the perfect defense, but Ned later burns it, seeing it as a hole for dogs to run into.

Duffy Land Act

The Duffy Land Act of 1862 offered plots of a thousand acres to any immigrants, who could scrape together a decent amount to purchase it. This seemed like a great deal, but much of the land was incapable of supporting what they were required to grow, and led to indentured servitude to many of the squatters.

Banshees

Banshees were women spirits of Irish legend, whose cries always came before death was to follow.

Eleven Mile Creek

Eleven Mile Creed is the town where Ellen Quinn buys 1,000 acres, and the Kelly family moves there to claim their own plot.

Eudora

Eudora is the location of the first bank robbery performed by the Kelly Gang, which gives them the money to become Robin Hood-type heroes



Sons of Sieve

The Sons of Sieve were Irish men, who would smear their faces and dress in dresses. They terrorized the common people and countryside, particularly those who they said were helping the powers over them. Steve and Dan copy this legend, until Mary sets them straight.

Glenrowan

Glenrowan is where the final shootout takes place. Ned Kelly is captured, and everyone else is killed.

Gaols

Gaols were nasty prisons known for extremely hard labor and miserable living conditions.



Themes

Racism

A prevalent theme through this novel is how racism plays a factor in the everyday lives of many of the citizens. The squatters, the police, the law, the politicians are all distinctly "British." The highest an Irishman can seem to go is the police, and even then they are at the whim of all the British ahead of them. The family one is born into, especially if that family is Irish or viewed as thieves, in many ways predetermines the lives that they will have. Red Kelly is a thief out of the gaols, and so it is absolutely no surprise to Ned that he is arrested and sent to prison repeatedly for crimes he is actually completely innocent of.

The racism is a class system, as the Irish are not allowed to get rich, and are in fact harassed repeatedly, when they even try to break even. Even those that seem to build up some degree of wealth (such as Tom Lloyd) and do it legally are not protected. If they are Irish they can be bullied, perjured against, beaten, or even shot for no apparent reason and with little consequence. For defending himself against murder and having a stolen horse in his possession, Ned gets three years. For trying to murder and Irish thief, the constable gets moved to a different town. This is not justice.

As in any place where racism is institutionalized, a great anger builds up against it, and against those who put those prejudiced rules into place. This is why bush rangers could maintain such popularity among the common people and hide for years. Ned constantly talks about how his path is inevitable, how the hardships of his people are inevitable, but that doesn't mean it is defeatist; on the contrary, the theme of racism is what provides the sparks that create men such as Ned Kelly.

Outlaws as Heroes

The Outlaw as a hero theme does not just belong to Ned Kelly in this book. Harry Power, though in many ways a liar and incompetent, is also beloved by the people of that area before he is betrayed. In a place where the law is unfair, the law abuses the majority of the population, and "the law" and "justice" have absolutely nothing to do with each other, then it makes sense that an outlaw would be a hero, since an outlaw would be someone fighting against a force that is already inherently unfair. Many other outlaws are mentioned throughout this book. Robin Hood is the obvious one that pops into mind, and that is famous world wide, but Kelly also mentions Rob Roy, a famous Scottish outlaw who protected his family, attacked evil occupiers, and in the end maintained his honor and avenged the wrongs done to him and his clan.

There are no heroes working for the law in this story. The police are corrupt hooligans used by squatters to abuse the common population. The squatters often don't even view the Irish as human beings, and the politicians talk like politicians and then send



constables to the people's oppressors to help them stamp out a rebellion. At the end though a rebellion never has a chance to take place, it is no coincidence that virtually every farmer is willing to volunteer and wait for the right time. They have all been oppressed and abused, and so when someone finally shows up as an outlaw, but even more importantly, as an outlaw who gives back the wealth and help to those wronged, then they will be viewed not only as good men, but as heroes. Only they bring hope and hope of justice to a place that knows too little of either.

Irish Themes and Culture

Though this is an Australian tale played out by Australians, it is impossible not to notice that almost all the common people often consider themselves Irish. Joe Byrne, when arguing with Mary Hearne says they are all Irish, and Mary points out that she is Irish, and they are colonials. There are mentions of St. Bridget, of Banshees, and of other distinctly Irish traditions, such as the "Sons of Sieve" and the general view point of all of them.

Part of the reason for this is that many of the convicts shipped to Australia by Great Britain, or immigrants who were "encouraged" to move elsewhere were from Scotland and Ireland, both similar Celtic areas, both with similar culture, though Australia and a great many more Irish. As these are both fiercely independent groups with a strong identity, it makes sense that they would still think of themselves along that same line, and since the laws in Australia instituted racism against the Irish, it only made sense that they had to stick together in that identity, since they were already going to be persecuted for that identity.

Ned Kelly towards the end of the novel even refers to Irish battles such as Vinegar Hill or the Eureka Stockade, Irish uprisings with farmers with pitchforks gunned down brutally. These are still the references in Ireland, but Kelly says "we." This sense of national identity draws them together, and is important to understand that in a land with a history of convicts, outlaws, and persecution, that the move from one such place to another across the world really wasn't that big a leap at all.

Post-colonialism

Colonialism is the use of economic, political, and social policies to maintain or extend control over jurisdictions and peoples that lie outside the nation exercising such power. In the second half of the nineteenth century, the era in which *True History of the Kelly Gang* is set, Australia was struggling to emerge from its colonial past with England and from its own history as a penal colony where English and Irish criminals were sent. In *True History of the Kelly Gang*, the tension this effort generates is made evident in the endless conflicts between the mostly Irish selection-holders, or homesteaders, and the English squatters, landlords who own the larger tracts of property. More particularly, the conflict is evident in the constant, almost daily disputes that pit the Kellys and the Quinns against the local police force, which is staffed by and represents the interests of



the English. Ned Kelly is highly alert to the perceived English superiority, and he alludes to it often. While in custody at the Benalla Police Station, he observes that Superintendent Hare is "posh spoken[, sitting] grimly behind the cedar desk trying to frighten me with his blue English eyes.... When he stood up it were like seeing a tapeworm uncurl in your presence." By the end of the novel, Kelly's struggle has enlarged to include a recognizable political dimension. He says this of the relationship between his gang and the poor, Irish, and dispossessed of Australia: "[W]e was them and they was us and we had showed the world what convict blood could do. We proved there were no taint we was of true bone blood and beauty born."

The Outlaw as Hero

Who cheers on the outlaw? Certainly not those who hold and wield power; by definition the outlaw is working against those interests. Across time and cultures, it is the poor with whom the outlaw's adventures resonate; for example, Robin Hood in England, Jesse James in the United States, Pancho Villa and his peasant armies in Mexico, and Phoolan Devi, the "Bandit Queen" in India. All were cheered on by farmers, miners, and others working menial jobs, for whom the outlaw represented an opportunity to retell their own stories, reshape the myths they believed about themselves, and participate in heroism. Outlaws stand up for the oppressed and fight back against the oppressor. For many Australians in the late 1870s, particularly those of Irish descent, Ned Kelly was exactly such a figure—one on whom the aspirations of an entire class could be pinned.

Because Australia was founded as a penal colony and many of its citizens carried the "taint" of convict blood, Kelly's story is particularly potent. Peter Carey's *Kelly* certainly recognizes the importance of stories people tell about themselves and their history, especially in the case of a people who have been denied a sense of history: "That is the agony of the Great Transportation that our parents would rather forget what come before so we currency lads is left alone ignorant as tadpoles spawned in puddles on the moon." This understanding is the real impetus, or inspiration, for Kelly to commit his story to paper for his unborn daughter. In the first paragraph of the first "parcel" Kelly writes,

I lost my own father at 12 yr. of age and know what it is to be raised on lies and silences my dear daughter ... this history is for you and will contain no single lie may I burn in Hell if I speak false.

Home and Domesticity

Although Ned Kelly at times seem to enjoy the mythical aura developing around him—especially late in *True History of the Kelly Gang*, once his trajectory has been fully established—he never fully embraces it, either. Kelly believes he is the victim of fate, of circumstances completely beyond his control: he was born to Irish parents in Australia; he is falsely accused of crimes he did not commit; and he is apprenticed to the bush-ranger Harry Power. As Kelly repeatedly tells the reader in a number of different ways,



all he ever really wanted was a place to settle down and make a quiet life. In fact, it is for love of his home and family, and out of desire for a quiet and trouble-free life, that Kelly commits his first crime, killing a neighbor's calf so that the family has something to eat.

The most obvious and consistent pattern in the novel is that of Kelly's forced removals from and attempts to return to his home. Upon one such return and finding that the farm and his family are both in disarray, Kelly says, "All my life all I wanted were a home." Similar thoughts occur to him often, whenever he feels most estranged from his family and from society. On the other hand, he is able to make a home of sorts in the natural world, in the bush around Power's old cabin at Bullock Creek. His language when he describes moving across the plains or through the Wombat and Warby mountain ranges is so evocative that it is difficult to believe he does not quite feel at home there: "I never seen this country before it were like a fairy story landscape the clear and windy skies was filled with diamonds the jagged black outlines of the ranges were a panorama."

Style

Points of View

The point of view shifts a few times in this story. While most of it is first person point of view from that of Ned Kelly, the author uses third person newspaper accounts (marked up by one character or another with sarcastic remarks, corrections, and other comments), and dreams that occasionally read in the third person. This brings a very legend and folk tale feel to the story, even as all the facts are marched out and put on display. Most of this is Ned looking back on his life and writing to his daughter, which also muddles the voice since the narrator is the main character at say, 25 years old, making reference to what was happening when he was 12, and sometimes the two mix so the reader is not even quite sure which Ned's point of view is really looking through.

Despite these occasional shifts, many of which occur in a way that link Ned Kelly and his mother together, the point of view is almost always distinctly Ned, looking back at his life and writing to his daughter. The early chapters he addresses his daughter directly quite often, suggesting that early on he is writing those chapters in retrospect, specifically with the purpose of talking to her directly through his story. Later on the chapters become shorter and the lines rushed, suggesting that he is more on the run. The point of view shifts for the beginning and end, since Ned can't really give his point of view on being captured or hung. In this case they are from the records and accounts of any individuals who were there.

Setting

The whole of this story takes place in Australia, most of it even in one particular province of the territory. While the first town we see Ned Kelly in is Avenel, that is only there for a parcel or two before he is moved to Eleven Mile Creek, which aside from prison and a couple of "quiet years," would be where the rest of the story, and his life takes place. All the towns mentioned are generally within a forty mile range, and this makes sense since as a bush ranger he would need to stay in an area familiar to him. The timeframe is in the late 1880s. This is when Australia is still a British colony and a long way from sorting itself out as a nation. Ned is in a poor Irish family, spat upon by all of society, and marked as thieves, which dooms him to a life of run-ins with the law. Prison is more of his adult life than freedom, a depressing fact which adds to the reader's sympathies.

It is also very much worth noting that the names of certain prisons often appear just as often as the names of towns in the area. Van Dieman's, for example, seems a bigger part of Ned Kelly's life than his home town, and every prison with a name has a list of men who were wrongfully imprisoned. For the Irish settler, the prisons were institutions, maybe even more so than their own homesteads.



During the 1880s to be Irish, to be poor, was a double curse in Australia. Ned Kelly was born into a family already labeled as "thieves" and often he suggests that being wrongly imprisoned and executed was inevitable, pre-destined from before he was even born. This was a time, when there was no such thing as justice. The law was probably the biggest perpetrator of the unfair and hellish conditions many Australians lived in.

Language and Meaning

The language is fairly smooth, but uneducated which makes sense since Ned dropped out of school at a young age and therefore would not have an educated voice. One of the most interesting aspects is that curse words such as "fuck" and "shit" will actually be replaced throughout the entire manuscript by "adjectival" "effing" "eff" and "s." Words like "bastard" and "buggar" will be shown as "B-----d" and "b-----r." This shows an obvious concern for his daughter, whom he expects to read these parcels, and shows a lot of care taken, something that help makes Ned a father as well as a good man, two points that are important when trying to make a hero out of an outlaw.

The combination of the smoothness of language versus Ned's lack of education is explained near the end with the suggestion that the school master who betrayed Ned and his gang to the police was also the man who eventually came to admire them enough to clean up Ned's manuscripts and put them in readable form before he died. This would explain the dichotomy since Ned's voice remains, but the educated Thomas Crunow would clean up the obvious grammar and structure deficiencies to allow the reading to go smoothly.

The language used often refers to Irish, showing that in Australia injustice was so rampant that even Australians still viewed themselves as Irish since at least there they would have some kind of an identity or connection with the past.

Structure

The structure of the book is one brief summary that describes the battle in which Ned Kelly is captured, thirteen "parcels" from varying times in Ned's life that make up the main body of chapters, a summary of Thomas Crunow's part in Ned Kelly's capture (he is later revealed as the likely editor and proofer of this manuscript,) and a brief description of Ned Kelly's execution, including his last words. This structure allows Ned Kelly to tell most of the story, yet have the details of his capture, death, and surrounding circumstances that he would be incapable of telling us.

Since the bulk of this story is supposed to surround Ned Kelly, this is a good use of structure since we get to see things through Ned's eyes and are therefore privy to events and pieces of information that no one else would know. This allows the reader a deeper experience with the story. Organizing the book into parcels also allows for only the most important sections to be covered. While three years in prison is traumatic, is there really anything to write about that? By going by parcels, the reader is allowed to understand the implication of what prison does to Ned, without having two hundred



pages on a monotonous prison experience, or without an awkward "three years later" type of scenario.

Having Ned's own words blocked in also gives a strong beginning to leap in, and a strong end to tie everything else, working out to a nice tied together plot.

Epistolary Novel

True History of the Kelly Gang is an epistolary novel, one in which the story is carried forward by letters written by one or more of the characters. Although, strictly speaking, what Ned Kelly writes are not letters but bound parcels, the novel is in effect one long letter to his unborn daughter.

The effect of an epistolary novel is to impart a sense of immediacy and verisimilitude, or the appearance of truth and realism in fiction or drama. It accomplishes this because Kelly's letters are written in the thick of the action, with no time to even punctuate sentences. Contributing to this sense are the librarian's careful notes at the beginning of each parcel, such as note at the beginning of Parcel 13: "*On page 7 the manuscript is abruptly terminated.*" Carey has placed a note at the beginning of the novel suggesting that the manuscript can be found at the Melbourne Public Library under a particular call number, but there is no actual library of that name. In addition, the use of the epistolary form places the action of the novel even more convincingly in the nineteenth century, as epistolary novels were a common form of literature at that time.

Most importantly, what *True History of the Kelly Gang* gains in its use of the epistolary form is the uninterrupted and unfiltered voice of Ned Kelly. The text is rendered as he himself spoke, in the language and with the word choices of a perceptive and sensitive, if not formally educated, Irish Australian man of the nineteenth century. It is largely unpunctuated and at times poetic. Carey based Kelly's voice in the novel on an existing document, the "Jerilderie Letter," an 8300-word document by the real, historical Ned Kelly, in which he tells of his exploits and the reasons for his actions.

Picaresque Novel

In addition to being an epistolary novel, *True History of the Kelly Gang* is also a picaresque novel. The picaresque novel is usually structured in episodes, not unlike a television or radio show, and tells the story of a rogue, or rascal, who makes his living by his wits rather than through ordinary employment. Often times, these novels are autobiographical. The picaresque form dates to ancient Rome. One of its most best-known examples is Miguel de Cervantes's *Don Quixote*.

Folktale

True History of the Kelly Gang is a kind of folktale, a narrative that develops over the course of many years through repeated retellings. Although the story of Ned Kelly is not



properly a folktale—because folktales usually deal with myths, legends, fables and tall-tales—it nevertheless incorporates some elements of the folktale. Kelly's story has been passed along orally as much as in written form, leaving open the probability of cumulative authorship, where each teller contributes something to the story. Also like a folktale, it tells the story of a larger-than-life character who accomplishes tremendous deeds, though in this case the character was a real person and not fictional.



Historical Context

The Great Transportation

Britain began sending its convicted criminals to Australia and surrounding islands in 1788 and continued to do so until 1868, when the last prisoners arrived. By that time, over 150,000 convicts had been "transported." More than a third of them were Irish, like Ned Kelly's parents, and almost all of them came from the lower classes. Very early on, as the convicts completed their sentences and were released, they came into conflict with squatters, freemen who were granted rights to almost limitless tracts of land to raise grazing livestock. Because the convicts were mostly unskilled and uneducated—only half could read and write—there were few opportunities open to them, and the task of building a new society proved difficult. Like any free people, they wanted land, opportunities, and rights. The squatters opposed this, and so hostilities developed between the two groups. The squatters hoarded the land as much as possible, claiming more and more from what had been the "commons," or public lands for the use of all. They impounded stray farm animals that wandered from the former convicts' farms, heightening the existing tensions between the two groups. This situation pitting the ex-convicts and their descendants, especially the Irish convicts, against the English squatters is the source of nearly all Kelly's problems in *True History of the Kelly Gang*. For instance, R. R. McBean's vast landholdings seem to lie between Kelly and wherever he wants to go, surrounding and nearly engulfing Kelly and his family.

Australian Lore

Carey begins *True History of the Kelly Gang* with an epigraph—an inscription on the title page—from American author William Faulkner's novel, *Absalom, Absalom!*: "The past is not dead. It is not even past." With that, Carey appears to be making a case for Ned Kelly's story having some ongoing relevance for modern readers. Although Carey has lived in New York for a number of years, he experienced two formative events, both of which occurred in the 1960s in Australia, that led him to fictionalize the true story of Kelly, a story Carey has called a "powerful foundation myth." First, he saw a series of paintings by artist Sydney Nolan with Ned Kelly as their subject. Later, he read Kelly's fifty-six-page "Jerilderie Letter," the document in which the historical Kelly tries to explain his actions, what drove him, and what he wished for the future even on the eve of his capture and execution. Carey says that Australians still respond to this story so powerfully because Kelly was neither debased nor broken by his experiences, and that he was in a sense triumphant—qualities Australians value even today and which continue to influence the way they think about themselves and their countrymen.

Critical Overview

Peter Carey's *True History of the Kelly Gang* was published simultaneously by Faber and Faber in the United Kingdom and by Knopf in the United States in January 2001. The novel received almost universally favorable reviews in Australia, the United States, and the United Kingdom, from reviewers writing for mainstream publications as well as those writing for a more academic audience.

Almost all of those reviewers remarked upon what Anthony Quinn, writing in the *New York Times Book Review*, called Carey's "fully imagined act of historical impersonation." Quinn is here referring to Carey's deft channeling of the voice he first encountered in the historical Ned Kelly's "Jerilderie Letter," the bushranger's own handwritten and wildly poetic account of his exploits, which Carey adopts and adapts to suit his own purposes in *True History of the Kelly Gang*.

While the last section of the novel is certainly driven by plot, most of the first part of the book seems episodic, with events only loosely linked one to another. Many critics have felt that this does not matter. As Thomas Jones put it in the *London Review of Books*, "The first two thirds of the novel is driven not by the shape of the narrative—it is too fragmented and disconnected for that—but by the blood pressure of the prose. The language is rich but never cloying; the unpunctuated syntax virtuoso."

Some reviewers have registered mild complaints. Besides calling *True History of the Kelly Gang* "an undeniably impressive novel ... a stylistic tour de force," Douglas Ivison in the *Journal of Australian Studies* also addresses what he considers a flaw: that Carey never addresses the larger social and political implications of Kelly's status as a folk hero. Ivison points out that the "contradictions in Kelly's character ... go largely unexamined," and that Kelly, despite the gritty realism evinced in Carey's prose, "remains in the world of romantic myth."

Complaints such as those have been few, and *True History of the Kelly Gang* has succeeded both critically and commercially—it won the 2001 Booker Prize and has so far been Carey's best selling book. "Even if Australian critics are ashamed of Ned Kelly," John Banville writes in the *New York Review of Books*, "they can still take nothing but pride in Peter Carey."

Criticism

- Critical Essay #1
- Critical Essay #2
- Critical Essay #3



Critical Essay #1

Kelsay is a novelist and instructor of English composition. In this essay, Kelsay considers Ned Kelly's place in the Australian imagination.

In 1786, the English government was exhausted by an increase in crime that was the inevitable by-product of industrialization. Technical and mechanical innovation had resulted in urbanization, the mass movement of people from rural farming areas into cities. Some members of Parliament and other spokesmen for the government began to discuss the possibility of "transporting" convicted criminals to faraway penal colonies in England's newly acquired South Pacific lands—New South Wales, in present-day Australia, and Van Diemen's Land, now known as Tasmania. Two years later, with a load of human cargo, eleven convict ships set sail for lands that were at that time almost entirely unknown by Englishmen. This practice continued unabated for the next eighty years, and by the 1860s and 1870s—the time in which Peter Carey's *True History of the Kelly Gang* is set—a great number of Australian freemen carried the "taint" of convict blood but were nevertheless angling for advantage in this strange new world.

The situation was ripe for conflict. After the imprisoned had served their sentences and been released as free men and women, they expected, quite understandably, nothing less than the full rights and responsibilities extended to every other non-convict who had landed on the island-continent's shores. Approximately one-third of the newly free were of Irish descent and harbored deep resentments toward the English, their former jailers and tormentors, who now governed and enforced the laws of Australia. And many grown men and women who had never been convicted of any crime were the sons and daughters of those who had. It was into this situation that Ned Kelly, himself the son of Irish convicts, was born in 1855.

From the contempt that is heaped upon him by his English schoolmaster to the abuse he suffers at the hands of a local police officer, Carey's Ned Kelly is shaped by forces over which he has little or no control. Yet, as Carey himself has pointed out in interviews, Kelly is never brutalized or diminished by oppression and injustice. Because of this, many Australians identify Kelly as exhibiting quintessentially Australian characteristics: independence, pride, resilience, self-determination. Kelly is repeatedly arrested unjustly and tossed into jail, but those experiences only serve to shape his understanding of class divisions and clarify his sense of himself and his place in the world, such as when an arresting constable expresses his scorn and loathing for the sixteen year old Kelly and his kind:

He answered he would gaol my mother if he so chose and all my brothers & uncles & cousins and he did not care if we should breed like rabbits for he would lockup the mothers & babies too.

It is sentiments like these, delivered with frank and casual contempt, that finally cause Kelly to rebel; to take his fate into his own hands and become, finally and quite self-



consciously, an outlaw attacking the established order, or as Kelly himself puts it, "the terror of the government being brung to life in the cauldron of the night."

Kelly's growing self-awareness and class consciousness lead him to a new understanding of himself—as Graham Huggan says in *Australian Literary Studies*, Kelly begins to "envision himself as an actor in a violent history of his own making." Even as a boy of fifteen, Kelly has a sense that he is participating in his own creation. In the dispiriting aftermath of a botched stagecoach robbery, he stoops to pick marbles from the dust, which amount to his and his mentor Harry Power's entire haul. Much later, reflecting back on that day, Kelly writes, "That was the moment by the law I made myself a bushranger as well."

Toward the end of his story, as the forces of the state that are arrayed against him grow in strength, Kelly's sense that he is engaged in a creative act intensifies. Having withdrawn to the bush for safety with his gang, where they busy themselves making a shelter, gathering food and cooking, he says, "We was building a world." Later, as the climax of the novel approaches and after Kelly sets a trap for the authorities, he observes that "the police was actors in a drama writ by me." Of course, by then he's also read the novel *Lorna Doone* and studied the plays of William Shakespeare—so it is not much of a wonder that Kelly has such a well-developed sense of the dramatic. And it is even less of a wonder that he would find support among

men forced to plant wheat then ruined by the rust men mangled upon the triangle of Van Diemen's Land men with sons in gaol men who witnessed their hard won land taken up by squatters men perjured against and falsely gaoled men weary of constant impounding on & on each day without relent.

To this day, it is among those harder types—the farmers and truck drivers and other working people of contemporary Australia—that the strongest sympathy for Kelly's long-ago-lost cause is found, at least in part. In an interview with *The Observer*, Peter Carey said that "you rarely lose marks in Australia for outwitting the police." Americans are not unfamiliar with this type of anti-hero, one who embodies admirable qualities, sometimes a great deal, as well as qualities that are almost always condemned, sometimes quite forcefully. Kelly's place in the Australian consciousness is similar to that of Jesse James, the nineteenth-century bank- and train-robber whose exploits were closely covered by the newspapers of the day, and who was adored and even cheered on by many ordinary Americans. James, like Kelly, always claimed he had been forced into the outlaw's life by corrupt authorities. But Carey cautions against carrying the comparison between James and Kelly too far. In his interview with *The Observer*, he says he tells his American friends that a better comparison is to Thomas Jefferson, because "that is the sort of space Kelly occupies in the national imagination," that of a founding father dear to the history of a nation.

Moreover, while Jesse James's legend and legacy seem to be fading somewhat in the American imagination—books and movies chronicling the outlaw's life have slowed to a trickle—the figure of Ned Kelly continues to interest Australians. Robert Drewe's novel *Our Sunshine* was published in 1991, and less than ten years later Peter Carey's



Booker Prize-winning *True History* appeared. In addition, there have been numerous biographies published just in the past decade, and even some graphic autobiographies (in which the story is told in pictures or drawings rather than text) aimed at readers as young as eight or nine. Cinema, too, has embraced Kelly—Mick Jagger of the Rolling Stones starred as the outlaw in a 1970 film about Kelly, and another version starring Heath Ledger, Orlando Bloom and Naomi Watts appeared in theaters in 2003. And although they are not films about Ned Kelly specifically, it is impossible to imagine the three *Mad Max* films if Kelly had never lived. Max, after all, is forced against his will into the brutal life he leads, wears makeshift, rigged-up body armor, and never hurts anyone who does not clearly deserve it—all essential elements of the Kelly legend.

In their daily lives, Australians are surrounded by reminders of Kelly: historical displays, museum exhibits, and even businesses like souvenir stands and dry cleaners that have been named after the outlaw. New South Wales, which was Kelly's home state, where his name and image are most common, and where his presence most keenly felt even today.

But there are those Australians—often those who are more educated, more affluent and well-traveled—who are discomfited by their countrymen who celebrate the life and exploits of a bushranger and outlaw, and who insist on his status as a national hero. Thomas Curnow, the schoolmaster in *True History of the Kelly Gang* who betrays Kelly and winds up in possession of Kelly's manuscript, says,

What is it about we Australians, eh? he demanded. What is wrong with us? Do we not have a Jefferson? A Disraeli? Might not we find someone better to admire than a horse-thief and a murderer? Must we always make such an embarrassing spectacle of ourselves?

If pride in Kelly is indeed an embarrassment, then the answer is yes. But Carey has called the story of the historical Ned Kelly a "powerful foundation myth," by which he may mean that it is a story that Australians have been telling themselves for more than a century and which they may need to keep telling. As Carey and his Ned Kelly character both know, the loss of a cultural memory amounts, in essence, to the loss of oneself: "Our parents would rather forget what come before so we currency lads is left alone ignorant as tadpoles spawned in puddles on the moon."

Source: Michael Kelsay, Critical Essay on *True History of the Kelly Gang*, in *Literary Newsmakers for Students*, Thomson Gale, 2006.

Critical Essay #2

In the following excerpt from his critical essay, Banville looks at Carey's use of voice to capture the character of the narrator.

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Source: John Banville, "The Wild Colonial Boy," in *New York Review of Books*, Vol. 48, No. 5, March 29, 2001, pp. 15-16.



Critical Essay #3

In the following excerpt, Gaile examines Carey's mixture of truth and fiction about one of Australia's most infamous outlaws

'Such is life,' said Ned Kelly on 11 November 1880, before the hangman put the noose around his neck. 'Such is life,' wrote Joseph Furphy in his classic Australian novel roughly two decades later, paying homage to Kelly's famous last words. Over the past 120 years, Kelly's life has intrigued more creative writers, artists, journalists, historians and film-makers than any other historical figure since European settlement. Each publication and recreation of the life of Kelly adds a new layer to the historical mist. The 'true history' becomes more and more inaccessible—with Ned receding into his ironclad armour.

In *True History of the Kelly Gang*, Carey reinvents the life of the man who can always provoke a passionate public debate, even in the third millennium. Scorned by some as a horse-thief and murderer, and admired by others as an icon of Australianness, Kelly is one of Australia's most controversial historical figures. The public reveres him for embodying a number of Australian virtues: he was loyal to his mates, displayed a healthy disrespect for the establishment, and was forever rising from the fight against the authorities, in the fashion of a true Aussie battler. He has certainly found great sympathy with his latest fictional re-creator, Peter Carey.

Carey has already tested the boundaries between fact and fiction. In *Illywhacker*, his notoriously unreliable, 139-year-old narrator Herbert Badgery dismantles official ('factual') Australian history as nothing but fictions, or even lies. *True History of the Kelly Gang* has the same kind of postmodern playfulness: real life merges with the fictional reality of the novel. Carey creates a near-perfect illusion of reality, and almost manages to dupe the reader. 'The undated, unsigned, handwritten account' opening the novel, he wants us to believe, is collected in 'Melbourne Public Library'; Carey even gives the accession number 'V.L. 10453.' What may be obvious to the Australian reader causes the non-Australian reader to pause and at least think twice here: there is, of course, no such document in 'Melbourne Public Library'. There is not even a library of that name in Melbourne—Carey has been spinning a yarn once again.

Despite all its flurry about fiction and historical facts, Carey's novel is, generally, true to life: Carey retells the history of the Kelly outbreak, mostly as we find it in the history books. But he adds something that academic studies of Ned Kelly lack: the human perspective. The outlaw's flawed grammar, his imperfect punctuation and his rambling style create a natural immediacy between reader and fictional character, and often reveals an unexpected imagistic beauty: 'In a settler's hut the smallest flutter of a mother's eyelids are like a thin sheet rattling in the wind.'

Carey's Australia has not overcome the social injustices of the 'system' yet. After the end of convictism and transportation, the colony of Victoria, in Ned's words, is still 'ruled like Beechworth Gaol.' The oppositions between convict and jailer have only been



replaced by new—and no less harsh—ones. In *True History of the Kelly Gang*, colonial small-town life lacks any air of romanticism. It is marked by the constant struggle between the haves and the have-nots, between poor selectors and insatiable squatters. We encounter Ned's family engaged in a struggle for survival, fighting against an unrelenting nature as much as against the authorities.

It is the 'historic moment of UNFAIRNESS', in Kelly's words, that unites all Australians and gives *True History of the Kelly Gang* a larger, political dimension. Carey's protagonists are 'burnt and hardened by the fates.' There is a sad inevitability in Ned's fall, earning him a good deal of sympathy with the reader, and yet Ned Kelly, in fiction and reality, was undoubtedly responsible for the death of three troopers.

What makes Kelly so controversial even today is his social-revolutionary appeal. As the British historian Eric J. Hobsbawm tells us in his 1969 classic *Bandits*, Kelly classifies as a social bandit, an avenger of the lowest and poorest, and can be compared to such fabled outlaws as the American Jesse James, the Mexican bandit-revolutionary Pancho Villa, the Indian 'Bandit Queen' Phoolan Devi, the above-mentioned Robin Hood, as well as the German Schinderhannes. In the hands of Carey, the Kelly Gang—'[t]hem boys was noble of true Australian coin'—has clearly discernible political ambitions.

Although purporting to be solely a 'true history', Carey's re-enactment of the Kelly outbreak is also a huge imaginative accomplishment. Carey has reinvented parts of his nation's history before, dismantling historical myths and lies in *Illywhacker* and *Oscar and Lucinda*. Never before, however, has Carey engaged so closely with real historical figures. As he depicts the historical reality of life in colonial Victoria, Carey inscribes into his nation's history what the patchwork of Australia's transported cultures has always seemed to lack: a mythology.

Carey has said in a recent interview that *True History of the Kelly Gang* is 'the book I've waited my whole life to write'. Carey stages the life of Ned Kelly, has him make his own history. To Ned, it seems, the police are nothing but 'actors in a drama writ by me.' With all its veracity, we must remind ourselves that Carey presents to us a postmodern innuendo: after all, the stage manager is Peter Carey, and Ned is nothing but an actor in a drama writ by the real-life author.

Source: Andreas Gaile, "Peter Carey, *True History of the Kelly Gang*," in *Meanjin*, Vol. 60, No. 3, September 1, 2001, pp. 214-219.



Quotes

"At the very hour I stood before the scholars in my sash the decapitated head of the bushranger Morgan were being carried down the public highway--Benalla--Violet Town--Euroa--Avenel--perhaps it would be better had I known the true cruel nature of the world but I would not give up my ignorance even if I could. The Protestants of Avenel had seen the goodness in an Irish boy it were a mighty moment in my early life." Chapter 1, p. 32

"You may think it strange that a man can survive transportation and the horrors of Van Diemen's Land and then be destroyed in a country lockup but we cannot credit the tortures our parents suffered in Van Diemen's Land--Port Macquarie--Toongabbie--Norfolk Island--Emu Plains. Avenel lockup were the final straw for your grandfather he did not speak more than a dozen words to me from that day until his death." Chapter 1, p.35

"I were 12 yr. and 3 wk. old that day and if my feet were callused one inch thick and my hands hard and my labourer's knees cut and scabbed and stained with dirt no soap could reach yet did I not still have a heart and were this not he who give me life now all dead and ruined? Father son of my heart are you dead from me are you dead from me my father?" Chapter 1, p.35

"When the older men in the district went off shearing at Gnawarra my brother Jem and I done the same at home me working the springback shears with Jem standing ready with the tar pot to dress their injuries. So you can see I had become a very serious boy it were my job to replace the father as it were my fault we didn't have him anymore." Chapter 2, p. 41

"I received a new blue shirt and corduroy trousers in a parcel my mother were given by Father Wall in Benalla these clothes belonged previously to a man knocked from a horse when night riding. He were 18 yr. old when he died, but his trousers fitted v. well." Chapter 2, p. 52

"I had thought myself full growed but now I seen the truth it were a mighty shock I were trying so hard to be a man I had kept myself a child. Looking at my sister I saw how her cheeks glowed her bosoms pushed out against her blouse I blushed to think the things they would now be allowed to do together." Chapter 2, p.61

"You are a liar you don't yet know what it can do for you but you will wash your mouth with soap and water and say to me Harry you let me off that day when I were ranting like a mongrel about things I knew nothing of.

"Yet for all the pain he caused his tone of voice were becoming almost kindly although arriving at the door he did pronounce one more lecture." Chapter 3, p.78



"And how is Harry said she is he well? She did not demonstrate none of her feelings towards me. In truth she had been more forthcoming with the Banshee." Chapter 3, p.94

"The mother and the son stood separate in the middle of the home paddock the chooks all droopy and muddy the pigs with their ribs showing through their suits the waters of the Eleven Mile already receding leaving the spent and withered oats lying in the yellow mud. The son felt himself a mighty fool he'd been bought and sold like carrion." Chapter 3, p.95

"As the poor pay fealty to the bushranger thus the bushranger pays fealty to the poor." Chapter 4, p. 116

"Put it on she said her eyes was fierce and brimming. I done what she wished and when I had girded the sash around me I sat down once more and then my mother sat by my side and took my hand and stroked my wrist. Thus we waited for the cruel morning when we would harvest the bitter crop sowed on our land by Harry Power." Chapter 5, p.142

"My daughter please understand I am displaying your great uncles in a bad light they was wild and often shicker they thieved and fought and abused me cruelly but you must remember your ancestors would not kowtow to no one and this were a fine rare thing in a colony made specifically to have poor men bow down to their gaolers." Chapter 6, p.157

"She run back to her boy husband as for me I remained a long time under the stars in the very place I so long imagined whilst locked in my blue stone cell but all the dreams which had comforted me in prison was now turned to manure beneath my boots." Chapter 7, p. 179

"All my life all I wanted were a home but I come back from Pentridge Gaol to find the land I had laboured on become a stranger's territory. George King were welcome to it I didn't care but there was also 30 thoroughbred horses which was my rightful property so when I discovered they was missing I sent word to my mother asking what she done with them. I learned they was stolen and the thief were beyond the law he were Constable Flood of Oxley. That injustice put me in a rage nothing would ease but danger I now craved it like another man might lust for the raw burn of poteen." Chapter 7, p. 179

"Finally our mares in foal strayed onto the common land so the mongrel Whitty impounded them. Now Tom and me had fed them horses at great expense paid for the stallion and otherwise invested considerable funds. When Whitty locked them in the pound I decided to show him he did not own this earth. I didn't burn his oats or nothing all I done were break the lock at the Oxley Pound and take back what I legally owned this did not seem a crime to me not then or now." Chapter 8, p.198

"Never having been a thief before I were surprised to discover what a mighty pleasure stealing from the rich could be." Chapter 8, p. 202



"Come on damn it Kelly we'll surround the b-----ds. If we don't get them weapons now we deserve to die.

He were not wrong yet I couldn't bring myself to that next step in my life so we returned to Bullock Creek still undecided." Chapter 9, p.248

"In that fragrant chapel with God as my witness I swore and oath that if Mr Cameron's character were as Joe Byrne had warned and if he did not soon release my mother then I would burst the prison walls asunder and take her back myself." Chapter 10, p.297

"The bush protected no one. It had been men who protected Harry and it were a man who betrayed him in the end. Harry always knew he must feed the poor he must poddy & flatter them he would be Rob Roy or Robin Hood he would retrieve the widow's cattle from the pound and if the poor selectors ever suffered harassment or threats on his behalf he would make it up with a sheep or barrel of grog or fistful of sovereigns." Chapter 10, p.298

"And here is the thing about them men they was Australians they knew full well the terror of the unyielding law the historic memory of UNFAIRNESS were in their blood and a man might be a bank clerk or an overseer he might never have been lagged for nothing but still he knew in his heart what it were to be forced to wear the white hood in prison he knew what it were to be lashed for looking a warder n the eye and even a posh fellow like the Moth had breathed that air so the knowledge of unfairness were deep in his bone and marrow." Chapter 10, p.312

"To Hell with all traps I hate them. Everything I had they took from me." Chapter 11, p.323

"Doubtless he considered himself a brave fellow to face the Kelly Gang but he were a coward to his trade as printer he were honour bound from ancient time to let the truth be told but instead he give it to its enemy." Chapter 11, p.331

"Joe were a very tough nut but not the only one next day I ordered Maggie and Kate to bring additional recruits. The British Empire had supplied me with no shortage of candidates these was men who had had their leases denied for no other crime than being our friends men forced to plant wheat then ruined by the rust men mangled upon the triangle of Van Diemen's Land men with sons in gaol men who witnessed their hard won land taken up by squatters men perjured against and falsely gaoled men weary of constant impounding on & on each day without relent. Maggie & Kate led these troops to secret places and once they had sworn their oath upon my Bible we showed them why they need no longer tremble before the law. We wasn't men with pikes no more and would not repeat the tragedies of Vinegar Hill or the Eureka Stockade." Chapter 12, p. 342

Adaptations

- The 2003 movie *Ned Kelly* portrays the legendary story of Kelly and his gang. The movie was adapted from a novel about Kelly by Australian writer Robert Drewe. It stars Heath Ledger as Ned Kelly and Orlando Bloom as fellow gang member Joe Byrne. It is available on DVD from Universal Home Entertainment.
- *True History of the Kelly Gang* (2001) was released in an unabridged version on audio cassette by Audiobooks. It is narrated by Gianfranco Negroponte.

What Do I Read Next?

- Michael Ondaatje's novel *The Collected Works of Billy the Kid* (1970) is similar to *True History of the Kelly Gang* in that Ondaatje writes, at times, from the outlaw's point of view. In form, it intersperses journalism with poetry and autobiography, using a number of different narrators.
- *Jack Maggs* (1997), by Peter Carey, is also a historical novel. It is not set in Australia but one of its central characters is transported as a convict before returning to England.
- Ron Hansen's *The Assassination of Jesse James by the Coward Robert Ford* (1983) tells the fictionalized story of the American outlaw who, like Ned Kelly, was a hero to some and a criminal to others.
- *Wainwright the Poisoner* (2000), a novel by Andrew Morton, tells the story of a famous nineteenth-century prisoner who was transported to Tasmania. Like *True History of the Kelly Gang*, it is written in the form of an apologia, or an explanation for why Wainwright did what he did.
- Winner of the 1993 PEN/Faulkner Award, Annie Proulx's *Postcards* (1993) is the story of Loyal Blood and his family in the mid-1900s. After Loyal accidentally kills his girlfriend, he is forced to roam about the United States, separated from his family and never truly finding a place to call home.
- Cormac McCarthy's *All the Pretty Horses* (1993) follows the journey of John Grady Cole and his friend Lacey Rawlins as they cross the Mexican border in search of adventure. They find love, death, fear, joy, capture, and redemption in this coming of age novel.



Topics for Discussion

This novel seems inundated with traditional Celtic culture, some Scottish, mostly Irish. How does this add to the sense of the story? Why do you think it belongs here?

Obvious discrimination occurs in this book against Irish settlers on a frequent basis. How does this add to the novel? Does this add to the actual feel of Australian history?

How does Ned Kelly's rapid deterioration between him and his father affect both characters? How far lasting is this influence on Ned?

Ned's loyalty to his mother is unwavering, even after she and the family take so much from him and then seem to leave him out to die. What's to be made of this loyalty? Why does he still hold it?

A lot is made of fate, destiny, or even pre-destination in this novel. How do you think Ned Kelly's views on destiny affect his actions, or views, on what transpires in his life? Is he right? Was there no way to avoid what happens?

What is Harry Power's role in all of this? How is one man so influential?

What is the law like in Australia? Is there any true hope of justice? Why or why not?

Does the background of this story sound familiar? How does it compare to apartheid in South Africa, or the Civil Rights movement in the United States? What does this say about the struggle for justice in general?

- It has been remarked by critics that *True History of the Kelly Gang* seems to be at least partially indebted to novels and films about the American West. Watch Sam Peckinpah's classic 1973 movie *Pat Garrett and Billy the Kid*. Write a one-page paper comparing Peckinpah's Billy to Peter Carey's Ned Kelly. Consider and compare these two characters' motivation for their actions.
- Ned Kelly is so popular in Australia that muffler shops and burger stands are named after him. Though some Australians are ashamed of his legacy, many still see Kelly as a hero to the oppressed. What does Kelly do in the novel that might account for his ongoing status as a folk hero? Write a five-paragraph essay explaining Kelly's legacy to someone who has never heard of him. Use at least three specific examples from the book as evidence.
- Ned Kelly says his history will "contain no single lie may I burn in Hell if I speak false." But is Kelly an entirely reliable, truthful narrator? In *True History of the Kelly Gang* the reader is presented with only one point of view—that of the storyteller. First-person narrators can alter their stories to cover up mistakes and embarrassing incidents, or make themselves look better than they really are. Write a one-page paper explaining how the other side might view Kelly. How would a policeman's or government official's account of Kelly's activities differ from Kelly's parcels?



- Ned's writing is largely unpunctuated and frequently ungrammatical, but it has an urgency and vibrancy that demand the reader's attention. Write a two-page short story or a fourteen-line poem in the voice of someone you know well who does not speak the same way you do. Be respectful, and try to really listen to the person as you write. What does his or her speech tell you about that person? What does listening tell you about yourself?
- The epigraph to the novel is from William Faulkner's *Absalom, Absalom!*: "The past is not dead. It is not even past." Why does Carey use this for his epigraph? What does this quote mean, and what are its implications? Write a one-page essay explaining how the quote is relevant to the story of Ned Kelly.

Further Study

Drewe, Robert, *Ned Kelly*, Penguin Books, 2004.

Drewe's novel about Ned Kelly is considered the first on the subject of this legendary Australian. His account of Kelly's life was adapted into the 2003 movie *Ned Kelly*.

Hugh, Robert, *The Fatal Shore: The Epic of Australia's Founding*, Vintage, 1988.

First published in 1986, *The Fatal Shore* tells the story of Australia's founding and history as a penal colony for English and Irish convicts.

Flannery, Tim F., *The Explorers: Stories of Discovery and Adventure from the Australian Frontier*, Grove Press, 2000.

The Explorers is a collection of first-person accounts about the discovery and exploration of Australia, from early accounts in the 1600s to recent stories of adventures still to be had in the continent's outback.

Kelly, Ned, "Jerilderie Letter," Alex McDermott, ed., Faber and Faber Ltd., 2001.

Peter Carey was inspired to write *True History of the Kelly Gang* after reading Kelly's original letter stating the motives, purpose, and hopes behind his actions.



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Introduction

Purpose of the Book

The purpose of Novels for Students (NfS) is to provide readers with a guide to understanding, enjoying, and studying novels by giving them easy access to information about the work. Part of Gale's "For Students" Literature line, NfS is specifically designed to meet the curricular needs of high school and undergraduate college students and their teachers, as well as the interests of general readers and researchers considering specific novels. While each volume contains entries on "classic" novels frequently



studied in classrooms, there are also entries containing hard-to-find information on contemporary novels, including works by multicultural, international, and women novelists.

The information covered in each entry includes an introduction to the novel and the novel's author; a plot summary, to help readers unravel and understand the events in a novel; descriptions of important characters, including explanation of a given character's role in the novel as well as discussion about that character's relationship to other characters in the novel; analysis of important themes in the novel; and an explanation of important literary techniques and movements as they are demonstrated in the novel.

In addition to this material, which helps the readers analyze the novel itself, students are also provided with important information on the literary and historical background informing each work. This includes a historical context essay, a box comparing the time or place the novel was written to modern Western culture, a critical overview essay, and excerpts from critical essays on the novel. A unique feature of NfS is a specially commissioned critical essay on each novel, targeted toward the student reader.

To further aid the student in studying and enjoying each novel, information on media adaptations is provided, as well as reading suggestions for works of fiction and nonfiction on similar themes and topics. Classroom aids include ideas for research papers and lists of critical sources that provide additional material on the novel.

Selection Criteria

The titles for each volume of NfS were selected by surveying numerous sources on teaching literature and analyzing course curricula for various school districts. Some of the sources surveyed included: literature anthologies; Reading Lists for College-Bound Students: The Books Most Recommended by America's Top Colleges; textbooks on teaching the novel; a College Board survey of novels commonly studied in high schools; a National Council of Teachers of English (NCTE) survey of novels commonly studied in high schools; the NCTE's Teaching Literature in High School: The Novel; and the Young Adult Library Services Association (YALSA) list of best books for young adults of the past twenty-five years. Input was also solicited from our advisory board, as well as educators from various areas. From these discussions, it was determined that each volume should have a mix of "classic" novels (those works commonly taught in literature classes) and contemporary novels for which information is often hard to find. Because of the interest in expanding the canon of literature, an emphasis was also placed on including works by international, multicultural, and women authors. Our advisory board members—educational professionals—helped pare down the list for each volume. If a work was not selected for the present volume, it was often noted as a possibility for a future volume. As always, the editor welcomes suggestions for titles to be included in future volumes.

How Each Entry Is Organized



Each entry, or chapter, in NfS focuses on one novel. Each entry heading lists the full name of the novel, the author's name, and the date of the novel's publication. The following elements are contained in each entry:

- **Introduction:** a brief overview of the novel which provides information about its first appearance, its literary standing, any controversies surrounding the work, and major conflicts or themes within the work.
- **Author Biography:** this section includes basic facts about the author's life, and focuses on events and times in the author's life that inspired the novel in question.
- **Plot Summary:** a factual description of the major events in the novel. Lengthy summaries are broken down with subheads.
- **Characters:** an alphabetical listing of major characters in the novel. Each character name is followed by a brief to an extensive description of the character's role in the novel, as well as discussion of the character's actions, relationships, and possible motivation. Characters are listed alphabetically by last name. If a character is unnamed—for instance, the narrator in *Invisible Man*—the character is listed as “The Narrator” and alphabetized as “Narrator.” If a character's first name is the only one given, the name will appear alphabetically by that name. • Variant names are also included for each character. Thus, the full name “Jean Louise Finch” would head the listing for the narrator of *To Kill a Mockingbird*, but listed in a separate cross-reference would be the nickname “Scout Finch.”
- **Themes:** a thorough overview of how the major topics, themes, and issues are addressed within the novel. Each theme discussed appears in a separate subhead, and is easily accessed through the boldface entries in the Subject/Theme Index.
- **Style:** this section addresses important style elements of the novel, such as setting, point of view, and narration; important literary devices used, such as imagery, foreshadowing, symbolism; and, if applicable, genres to which the work might have belonged, such as Gothicism or Romanticism. Literary terms are explained within the entry, but can also be found in the Glossary.
- **Historical Context:** This section outlines the social, political, and cultural climate in which the author lived and the novel was created. This section may include descriptions of related historical events, pertinent aspects of daily life in the culture, and the artistic and literary sensibilities of the time in which the work was written. If the novel is a historical work, information regarding the time in which the novel is set is also included. Each section is broken down with helpful subheads.
- **Critical Overview:** this section provides background on the critical reputation of the novel, including bannings or any other public controversies surrounding the work. For older works, this section includes a history of how the novel was first received and how perceptions of it may have changed over the years; for more recent novels, direct quotes from early reviews may also be included.
- **Criticism:** an essay commissioned by NfS which specifically deals with the novel and is written specifically for the student audience, as well as excerpts from previously published criticism on the work (if available).



- Sources: an alphabetical list of critical material quoted in the entry, with full bibliographical information.
- Further Reading: an alphabetical list of other critical sources which may prove useful for the student. Includes full bibliographical information and a brief annotation.

In addition, each entry contains the following highlighted sections, set apart from the main text as sidebars:

- Media Adaptations: a list of important film and television adaptations of the novel, including source information. The list also includes stage adaptations, audio recordings, musical adaptations, etc.
- Topics for Further Study: a list of potential study questions or research topics dealing with the novel. This section includes questions related to other disciplines the student may be studying, such as American history, world history, science, math, government, business, geography, economics, psychology, etc.
- Compare and Contrast Box: an “at-a-glance” comparison of the cultural and historical differences between the author’s time and culture and late twentieth century/early twenty-first century Western culture. This box includes pertinent parallels between the major scientific, political, and cultural movements of the time or place the novel was written, the time or place the novel was set (if a historical work), and modern Western culture. Works written after 1990 may not have this box.
- What Do I Read Next?: a list of works that might complement the featured novel or serve as a contrast to it. This includes works by the same author and others, works of fiction and nonfiction, and works from various genres, cultures, and eras.

Other Features

NfS includes “The Informed Dialogue: Interacting with Literature,” a foreword by Anne Devereaux Jordan, Senior Editor for Teaching and Learning Literature (TALL), and a founder of the Children’s Literature Association. This essay provides an enlightening look at how readers interact with literature and how Novels for Students can help teachers show students how to enrich their own reading experiences.

A Cumulative Author/Title Index lists the authors and titles covered in each volume of the NfS series.

A Cumulative Nationality/Ethnicity Index breaks down the authors and titles covered in each volume of the NfS series by nationality and ethnicity.

A Subject/Theme Index, specific to each volume, provides easy reference for users who may be studying a particular subject or theme rather than a single work. Significant subjects from events to broad themes are included, and the entries pointing to the specific theme discussions in each entry are indicated in boldface.



Each entry has several illustrations, including photos of the author, stills from film adaptations (if available), maps, and/or photos of key historical events.

Citing Novels for Students

When writing papers, students who quote directly from any volume of Novels for Students may use the following general forms. These examples are based on MLA style; teachers may request that students adhere to a different style, so the following examples may be adapted as needed. When citing text from NfS that is not attributed to a particular author (i.e., the Themes, Style, Historical Context sections, etc.), the following format should be used in the bibliography section:

“Night.” Novels for Students. Ed. Marie Rose Napierkowski. Vol. 4. Detroit: Gale, 1998. 234–35.

When quoting the specially commissioned essay from NfS (usually the first piece under the “Criticism” subhead), the following format should be used:

Miller, Tyrus. Critical Essay on “Winesburg, Ohio.” Novels for Students. Ed. Marie Rose Napierkowski. Vol. 4. Detroit: Gale, 1998. 335–39.

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Malak, Amin. “Margaret Atwood’s “The Handmaid’s Tale and the Dystopian Tradition,” Canadian Literature No. 112 (Spring, 1987), 9–16; excerpted and reprinted in Novels for Students, Vol. 4, ed. Marie Rose Napierkowski (Detroit: Gale, 1998), pp. 133–36.

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Adams, Timothy Dow. “Richard Wright: “Wearing the Mask,” in *Telling Lies in Modern American Autobiography* (University of North Carolina Press, 1990), 69–83; excerpted and reprinted in Novels for Students, Vol. 1, ed. Diane Telgen (Detroit: Gale, 1997), pp. 59–61.

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The editor of Novels for Students welcomes your comments and ideas. Readers who wish to suggest novels to appear in future volumes, or who have other suggestions, are cordially invited to contact the editor. You may contact the editor via email at: ForStudentsEditors@gale.com. Or write to the editor at:

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