

# **The Wild Robot Study Guide**

## **The Wild Robot by Peter Brown**

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# Plot Summary

Note: This study guide specifically refers to the April 2016 Little, Brown, and Company First Hardcover Edition of the *Wild Robot* by Peter Brown.

The *Wild Robot* is a children's novel by Peter Brown which recounts the year Roz the robot spends on an island. While there she befriends the local wildlife and raises a baby goose as her son. When the novel begins, a ship sinks in a bad storm off the coast of the island, leaving five crates floating on the water, each containing a robot. Four are smashed to pieces on the shore, while the fifth, containing Roz, winds up safely on shore. A gang of sea otters discovers the crate as the sun comes out. In turn, the sun provides the solar power needed to start up Roz. The otters and all the animals of the island are terrified of Roz, for they do not know what to make of her. They call her a monster. Roz knows nothing about herself other than she is a robot designed to do as she is told and to find better ways of doing what she does.

Upon seeing a camouflaged stick insect, Roz decides she will camouflage herself to better learn about the island and its animals. Roz learns how the animals behave and speak, and so she begins to emulate them. One day, Roz comes across Fink the Fox, injured by porcupine needles. Roz pulls the needles out, helping Fink and earning Fink's friendship. While climbing down the island cliffs one day, Roz accidentally falls and crushes a family of geese to death, but a single egg survives. From this egg hatches the gosling, Brightbill, so named by Roz for the baby goose's brightly colored beak. Roz seeks out the assistance of Loudwing for information on raising Brightbill. She works with Mr. Beaver and Tawny the Deer to construct a lodge for shelter and a garden for food. The animals of the forest warm up to Roz as they come to sample from the garden, and Brightbill makes a best friend in young Chitchat the Squirrel.

As time passes, the animals come to love Roz. Brightbill continues to grow, and begins to question Roz and her past. Although Roz is a different kind of mother, Brightbill still considers Roz his mother. He wants to know more about her. It is with great sadness that Brightbill must later fly south for the winter. While he is gone, Roz constructs lodges all over the island for the animals who are not able to handle the especially bitter winter. The animals are thrilled that so many of them are saved. They are very appreciative of Roz's efforts. At last, the spring comes, and Brightbill and the other migratory birds return to the island. Brightbill explains that during his travels, he discovered a factory with many robots just like Roz. A celebration is held that night to welcome spring and the return of the birds with a great bonfire. This is seen by a ship off the coast of the island.

The next morning, an airship with three RECO robots arrives to take Roz back to the factory to be reprogrammed. The animals come to Roz's defense and help to destroy the three robots –but Roz is severely damaged in the fighting. Roz realizes her only hope is to take the airship back to the factory and be repaired. If not, more robots will come and cause more destruction looking for Roz. The animals are sad to watch Roz leave, and Brightbill is heartbroken. As Roz leaves, she begins calculating a plan for

how she will escape the factory and return to the island to be with her son and her animal friends.



# Chapters 1 – 16

## Summary

Chapter 1: The Ocean – During a bad storm, a cargo ship sinks and leaves five crates containing robots floating on the water. The crates are carried toward an island. Four are smashed to pieces against the island rocks, destroying the robots inside. The fifth is washed onto the island, saving the robot inside.

Chapter 2: The Otters – A group of sea otters discovers the remains of the destroyed robots on the northern shore of the island. Then, they discover the surviving crate. They look inside as the saved robot opens her eyes.

Chapter 3: The Robot – The robot begins to activate, explaining her name is ROZZUM unit 7134, but she can be called Roz. Roz explains she will complete any task given, will improve completing tasks over time, and will stay out of the way and keep herself in working order when not needed.

Chapter 4: The Robot Hatches – While robots do not feel emotions the way animals do, Roz does feel curiosity. She is curious about the sun, which provides the solar energy to power her. With enough power, she is able to break out of the crate.

Chapter 5: The Robot Gravesite – Roz says hello to the otters, but the otters are scared and swim away. Roz then sees the remains of all of the robots on the shore and sees the word ROZZUM on one of the torso pieces. A wave knocks Roz over, causing her damage sensors to flare and her survival instincts kick in. Roz decides to leave the shore for higher ground where grass, flowers, and trees can be found.

Chapter 6: The Climb – To get to better heights, Roz must climb the island cliffs. Roz has difficulty, but upon meeting a crab and climbing as it climbs with limbs spread wide, Roz has a better time and reaches the top.

Chapter 7: The Wilderness – Roz finds herself before a forest that is filled with animal sounds, jagged rocks, and fallen trees. Roz is not comfortable in such an environment. She continues to trip and fall and get back up again. Eventually, she comes to a flat, open area covered by pine needles. Roz stops there.

Chapter 8: The Pine Cones – A pine cone falls and hits Roz. Several more fall and hit Roz, so Roz decides to find a safer place. Ahead, she sees a huge rock-like shape towering above.

Chapter 9: The Mountain – Roz climbs the mountain. She is safe from pine cones, can see the entire island, and can see the water all around. Roz realizes she is on an island with many different kinds of plants, birds, and animals. Roz is a new kind of life for the island – artificial life.



Chapter 10: The Reminder – The narrator reminds the reader that Roz has no idea who she is, where she came from, or how she ended up on the island. All Roz knows at this point is that she is home.

Chapter 11: The Robot Sleeps – Roz watches the sun set, then goes into a sleep mode where nonessential programs shut down to conserve energy.

Chapter 12: The Storm – Roz feels safe on the top of the mountain until a bad storm begins several days later. Roz descends the mountain during the storm for safety, but she is swept up in a river of flowing mud. Roz catches a tree branch and climbs into a tree to save herself.

Chapter 13: The Aftermath – Roz surveys the damage in the aftermath of the storm. Many trees have been taken down. Mud is everywhere, and there is flooding. Roz sees how well the animals have handled the storm and realizes they are experts at survival. Roz looks for shelter from the wild and discovers a cave.

Chapter 14: The Bears – Roz stomps into the cave, only to be chased away by the young bears who live inside. Roz has been programmed to stay alive, so her warning indicators give her something like a feeling of fear, causing her to run. Roz is not designed to be a violent robot, so she does not try to defend herself against the bears. As the bears attack, Roz vanishes.

Chapter 15: The Escape – Roz vanishes by leaping into the air and landing on a pine tree branch. While Roz cannot be violent, she can be annoying. She decides to drop pine cones on the bears. This makes them angry, but they are called home by their mother bear.

Chapter 16: The Pine Tree – Roz does her best to clean and maintain herself, but she soon realizes that she is getting sticky from all the pine tree resin. While Roz attempts to clean herself again, a robin, building a nest just above Roz, becomes frightened and splatters droppings all over Roz. The tree branch on which Roz is standing snaps and sends Roz to the ground.

## Analysis

When Peter Brown's novel *The Wild Robot* begins, Roz is the sole surviving robot of a shipwreck. The other four robots have all been smashed to pieces on the island's shoreline rocks. The event of Roz's survival brings to light a theme and question that Peter Brown will explore through the course of the novel –essentially, what is a life? The animals of the island are all alive, but are natural life forms. As the narrator explains, Roz is a new kind of life to the island –an artificial life. An artificial life must be a kind of life in order to survive a shipwreck.

While Roz cannot feel emotions in the same way that animals or people can, she does have an understanding of certain feelings. For example, she has been programmed to stay alive but not to be violent. What an animal might feel as fear, Roz “feels” or



recognizes as a warning to get to safety immediately. This can be seen in the two young bears who chase after Roz. As Brown will come to argue, all forms of life are important and should be protected. Roz must protect herself, for her programmed robotic instinct is to survive and say alive.

Roz's early interactions with the local animal life are all failures. All of the animals consider Roz to be a monster, and they want nothing to do with her. They run away whenever she approaches, and they all call her a monster. Because Roz cannot feel emotions, these opinions do not bother her at all. Still, she knows as a nonviolent robot that all lives matter. She would rather befriend and make peace with the local animals rather than have to constantly seek ways of surviving or running away from the animals like the bears. It is from this absence of friendship that Brown's thematic idea of friendship coming in all shapes and sizes will originate.

Roz's efforts to survive underscore the need for peace and friendship with the other animals. Since Roz's arrival on the island, the animals have fled from her. She has taken falls, tumbles, and battering from the bears. She has had droppings splattered on her, has been rained on, has fallen down in mud, and has become sticky with tree resin. The best form of survival would be to fit in and get along, rather than be forced to constantly struggle to survive. How Roz will manage to do this, or to even get ahead is not yet known.

## Discussion Question 1

Why does Roz find it so difficult to survive on the island? What is her biggest challenge? Why?

## Discussion Question 2

What happens when Roz attempts to befriend the animals around her for the first time? Why?

## Discussion Question 3

What do the animals of the island have to say about Roz? Why? What does Roz think and feel about what the animals have to say? Why?

## Vocabulary

robot, communicate, automatically, hatchling, etched, teeming, artificial life, nonessential, frenzy



# Chapters 17 – 32

## Summary

Chapter 17: The Camouflaged Insect – Roz is now a filthy mess. Then, she notices a stick-like insect on a tree branch. Roz recognizes the insect's camouflage –looking like a stick –helps it to survive. She hopes that camouflage will also help her to survive.

Chapter 18: The Camouflaged Robot – Roz's desire to stay alive is stronger than her desire to stay clean. She covers herself with mud, grass, ferns, and other plants. The camouflage makes her look like a part of the landscape. Blending in, she nestles into a clearing in the woods. Week by week, Roz disguises herself as a different kind of landscape and hides somewhere else.

Chapter 19: The Observations – Roz's camouflage allows her to study the island around her, from spiders spinning their webs to turtles plopping into ponds to caterpillars becoming butterflies.

Chapter 20: The Language of the Animals – Roz closely studies the birds around her, from chickadees to magpies. She watches their behavior and listens to their tweets, eventually learning their language and the language of other creatures, from salamanders to deer to porcupines to beetles.

Chapter 21: The Introduction – The animals of the island have long had the Dawn Truce, which is one hour each morning when no animal harms another and the friendly animals get together to chat. Bears, vultures, and creatures like them do not attend. Swooper the Owl speaks of the large monster that has been spotted around the island, speaking different words in animal language. Dart the Weasel is curious about this, while Digdown the Groundhog asks what the monster was saying. Swooper explains the monster was introducing herself as Roz. Roz then makes an appearance, scaring the animals but not chasing them away. Roz explains who she is and that she wants to learn the animal ways of survival, but no one wishes to help.

Chapter 22: The New Word – Roz listens to the animal conversations around her. The animals want nothing to do with Roz. However, since Roz cannot feel emotions, she does not feel badly about this.

Chapter 23: The Wounded Fox – Roz comes across Fink the Fox, who has been injured with quills trying to eat a porcupine. Roz tells Fink if he would not have attacked the porcupine, he would not have been injured. Fink explains it is because he has to eat. Roz then pulls the quills out. Fink thanks Roz and limps away, saying he owes her one.

Chapter 24: The Accident – Through the spring, Roz watches new deer being born and birds hatching. While Roz is climbing the cliffs, a downpour begins. The heavy rain adds extra weight, which causes Roz to crash down through the branches that cling to the cliff. At the bottom, Roz realizes she has accidentally killed an entire family of geese.





Chapter 25: The Egg – A lone gosling in an egg survives the accident. Roz knows that some animals must die so that others can live in the wild. Yet, she refuses to let the gosling die due to the accident. Fink heads to find the dead geese and smashed eggs while Roz puts together a new nest for the egg and climbs a tree.

Chapter 26: The Performer – Roz sets the gosling egg and nest up in a tree, where she keeps watch. Below, she sees Pinktail the Opossum play dead when attacked by a badger. Roz compliments Pinktail, who explains she pretends to be something she is not to help her survive. Pinktail is afraid of Roz at first, but she warms up when she learns that Roz will not hurt her. They become friends, and Pinktail goes on her way.

Chapter 27: The Gosling – The gosling hatches from the egg and starts calling Roz “mama.” Roz tells the gosling she is not his mother. Knowing the gosling is hungry, Roz sets off to find another goose to help.

Chapter 28: The Old Goose – As Roz travels through the woods with the gosling, curious animals stop to see what is going on. Roz explains what has happened, so all of the animals decide to help her. They point her to an old, gray goose named Loudwing who lives in the beaver pond. Loudwing will not take in the gosling because the gosling is not part of her flock. She does, however, tell Roz how to care for the gosling, including feeding him mashed up grass and insects. Roz decides to name the gosling Brightbill after the gosling’s brightly-colored beak. Loudwing suggests Roz see Mr. Beaver about a proper home.

Chapter 29: The Beavers – Roz and Brightbill head to the beaver dam to see the beavers working on their dam. She brings Mr. and Mrs. Beaver the gift of a tree to make friends and to secure help in building a home. Mr. Beaver confers with his family and decides that he will help in exchange for four more trees. Roz quickly agrees.

Chapter 30: The Nest – Roz asks for a lodge big enough for both her and Brightbill. Mr. Beaver begins planning the lodge and decides that a garden with herbs, berries, and flowers will be important for them to have as well because it will provide food and friendship with other animals. They decide to build a lodge in the woods, where Roz clears a section of trees for construction. While Mr. Beaver supervises and helps where he can, Roz builds a large lodge which comes to be called the Nest. Mr. Beaver recommends a talk with Tawny the Deer for advice on gardening.

Chapter 31: First Night – Roz builds a fire, then settles in for the first night in the Nest with Brightbill. Brightbill falls asleep in Roz’s arms.

Chapter 32: The Deer – Roz and Brightbill seek out Crownpoint and his wife, Tawny. Tawny agrees to help Roz with a garden if Tawny’s family will be allowed to eat from it. Roz agrees.



## Analysis

Since Roz is a robot who is programmed to adapt and to find better ways of doing things, it is only natural that she now finds a better way to survive. This comes through camouflaging herself and learning the ways and language of the animals who live on the island. Roz is an artificial life form, but her copying of natural life further causes the reader to question just what sort of life Roz actually is. In the end, whether Roz is artificially alive, or can be considered more naturally alive due to her ability to adapt and copy the actions of other animals, is not what matters. What does matter is Brown's thematic argument that all life is important.

Roz herself recognizes that all life is important. It is why she goes out of her way to help Fink the Fox with his injuries, and it is why she goes out of her way to save Brightbill after the accidental deaths of Brightbill's goose family. Life, Brown continues to argue, comes in all shapes and sizes and kinds –whether it is natural like the animals, artificial like Roz, or unborn and tiny like Brightbill. What is interesting is that, according to the natural ways of the wild, Loudwing is not willing to take Brightbill in because Brightbill is not a member of her own flock. Roz, however, recognizes the importance of Brightbill's life where Loudwing does not.

Already, the reader can see the beginning of a mother-son relationship with Roz and Brightbill. Brightbill already sees Roz as his mother, even though Roz reminds him that technically, she is not his mother. Brightbill does not question who Roz is, what she looks like, or what she sounds like. He only recognizes Roz as his mother. Brown here argues –and will continue to argue as a theme through the rest of the novel –that there are many different kinds of families. The family of Roz and Brightbill is not only a family that comes through adoption, but it is a family that is made up of two different kinds of life and two different beings.

Just as families come in many different shapes and sizes, so too do friendships. Roz's friendship with Fink comes through Roz helping Fink. Roz's artificial robot life and Fink's natural life demonstrate just how different two individuals who are friends can be. As Roz seeks to care for Brightbill, she strikes up friendships with Loudwing, the Beavers, and the deer, all of whom recognize that Roz can be trusted and can be a good part of the life that exists on the island. Already, many of the animals are friends despite differences in appearance and species. Roz becomes yet another different kind of species which the animals are now befriending.

## Discussion Question 1

Why does Roz save Brightbill when nobody else will? Why does Loudwing not want to save Brightbill?



## Discussion Question 2

Why does Brightbill consider Roz his mother? How does Roz feel about this? Why?

## Discussion Question 3

How does Roz attempt to fit into the island by camouflage? Why does Roz do this? What happens as a result?

## Vocabulary

camouflage, rigorous, intricate, wounded, agony, pulverized, marsupial, nocturnal, mimicked



# Chapters 33 – 48

## Summary

Chapter 33: The Garden – Tawny supervises the construction of a garden and encourages all the local animals to leave their droppings in the garden to help the soil grow rich and healthy. This allows Roz to meet many other animals and to become friends with them. From a lush meadow, Roz is directed to bring back sod for a lawn. Then, transplanted wildflowers, clovers, berries, shrubs, and herbs are used to create a garden.

Chapter 34: The Mother – Roz continues to watch over and feed Brightbill. Both Brightbill and the garden grow. Many animals come to eat from the garden, to befriend Roz and Brightbill, and to spend time with them. While out and about, other animals always say hello to Roz and Brightbill. Mother animals share motherly advice with Roz, which helps in the raising of Brightbill.

Chapter 35: First Swim – Roz brings Brightbill down for his first swim. There, Brightbill makes friends with all the other goslings and takes to the water easily. Roz encourages and compliments Brightbill from the shore. She cannot swim because water is dangerous to robots. Roz realizes that she has become better at surviving because of Brightbill, while Brightbill has managed to survive because of Roz. They need each other. Suddenly, Rockmouth the pike fish attempts to eat Brightbill. Roz cannot go in to save him. Fortunately, Loudwing intervenes and stops Rockmouth by smacking him with her wings. Loudwing brings Brightbill safely back to the shore.

Chapter 36: The Gosling Grows – Brightbill continues to grow. He becomes friends with more goslings and learns to speak well. He also makes friends with every animals he meets, while Roz continues to care for Brightbill.

Chapter 37: The Squirrel – Brightbill befriends a young squirrel named Chitchat, who talks and rambles a lot. Brightbill is happy to be friends with Chitchat.

Chapter 38: The New Friendship – Brightbill and Chitchat enjoy their friendship. Roz feels something like happiness knowing her son has made a good friend.

Chapter 39: The First Flight – Brightbill becomes curious about the places beyond the local neighborhood. Roz takes him for a walk across the island. As they arrive at the island's grassy ridge by the shore, a strong wind lifts Brightbill off the ground for a few moments, allowing him to soar. Roz encourages Brightbill to keep trying. After an afternoon of practicing, Brightbill gets the hang of it, and he is able to take a full flight.

Chapter 40: The Ship – The grassy ridge becomes Brightbill's favorite place to fly. While there with Roz one day, Roz and Brightbill spot a ship far out at sea. Neither have seen one before. They have many questions about the ship, such as where it has come from, where it was going, and who was on board. But, they had no answers.



Chapter 41: The Summer – The summer comes. Roz and Brightbill travel the island, meeting with friends and avoiding creatures like bears. Brightbill and Chitchat spend their days playing with acorns, watching stars, and telling stories. Brightbill especially enjoys evenings curled up with Roz and falling asleep listening to the rain.

Chapter 42: The Strange Family - One day, Brightbill comes home unhappy because the other goslings have made fun of him for having a monster mother. Brightbill asks Roz about herself, but Roz does not know who built her ow where. Roz wishes she could explain more, but she cannot. Roz explains she is not alive, but Brightbill insists she is. Brightbill questions whether Roz is his real mother. Roz explains there are many different kinds of mothers. Roz explains she might not be Brightbill's birth mother, but that she has tried to be a mother to Brightbill. Roz tells Brightbill of how he came to be raised by her. Brightbill still considers Roz his mother, and does not want to stop calling her Mama. Roz says she will not stop calling Brightbill her son.

Chapter 43: The Gosling Takes Off – Brightbill loves Roz, but his mind swings between anger and confusion as well regarding who Roz is, and where she has come from. Brightbill asks to see the destroyed robots, but Roz will not take him. He says Roz cannot fly, and cannot stop him, so he takes to the sky.

Chapter 44: The Runaway – Loudwing tells a concerned Roz that Brightbill will be fine. Loudwing explains that gosling adolescents are always moody. Still, Roz worries about what might happen to Brightbill. Roz heads to the robot graveyard, thinking that is where Brightbill will be found. She does indeed find him there, overlooking the graveyard from a distance. He apologizes for flying off, and the two agree to go down to the graveyard.

Chapter 45: The Dead Robots – Many of the robot pieces are now missing, while others are decayed and rusting. Brightbill asks about death, to which Roz explains that all living things die sooner or later, and that Brightbill should not worry about it. Brightbill notices a button on one of the dead robots, and then notices that Roz also has one. Roz tries to push her button, but finds she cannot. She offers Brightbill the chance to push her button, but he refuses because he worries it might power Roz down, and never let her turn on again. Roz and Brightbill then see sea otters nearby. The otters swim over to say hello. One introduces herself as Shelly, and explains all about how Roz first activated. This upsets Brightbill, who leaves. Roz tells the apologetic otters that Brightbill we be fine. Roz returns up the cliff, where two bears are waiting.

Chapter 46: The Fight – The two young bears who previously chased Roz from the cave now confront her, having heard all about her. They are brother and sister, named Thorn and Nettle. Thorn and Nettle say they do not like monsters getting comfortable on their island, and will do all they can to make life uncomfortable for Roz. Brightbill rushes in to defend his mother, but is smacked aside. The bears call Brightbill stupid for believing Roz is his mother, then attack Roz. Mother Bear arrives to stop her two children, but it is too late. One of Roz's feet pops off, flying into the water while sending Thorn over the cliff. Thorn manages to catch hold of a branch, stopping him from falling to his death. Nettle and Mother Bear lower Roz down to pull Thorn back up to safety.



Chapter 47: The Parade – Mother Bear apologizes for her children to Roz, but Roz says it is okay. Brightbill worries about Roz’s missing foot, but Roz says she will be okay. Mother Bear makes Thorn and Nettle promise they will never bother Roz again. Mother Bear then gives Roz and Brightbill a ride home. This attracts the attention of all the animals in the forest, who turn out to follow and see what is going on. A parade-like procession forms to follow Mother Bear until the sun goes down. Then everyone goes home. Roz believes she knows who to ask for help regarding her foot.

Chapter 48: The New Foot – Roz asks Mr. Beaver for help with a new foot. Mr. Beaver readily agrees, and begins carving out a wooden foot for Roz. It fits wonderfully. Bumpkin, Lumpkin, and Rumpkin, raccoons known as the Fuzzy Bandits, secure vines to help attach the foot to Roz. Trunktap the woodpecker finds some perfect tree resin to help everything stick. Everyone is thrilled with the result.

## Analysis

As the novel continues, the author continues to point out that friendships come in all shapes, sizes, and forms. The lodge and garden become a welcome place for the animals of the island, who visit not only to sample the fare but to spend time with Roz and Brightbill. The friendships that strike up between Roz and the other animals continue to grow in number and in strength over time. Even Brightbill himself comes to befriend a talkative young squirrel named Chitchat, who is herself very happy to have found a friend in Brightbill. The animals and Roz may all look different from one another, but this does not matter to them. They have much in common, and this is what helps to make them all friends.

Some, however, are not friendly in the same way with other animals. For example, the bears do not attend the Dawn Truce. They are predator animals through and through, and only cease their work in certain situations. One such situation will arise later in the novel. The bears demonstrate their general predatory behavior by attacking Roz. Only the intervention of Mother Bear saves Roz. Yet, as Brown reminds readers, all forms of life are important. Though the two young bears appear as villains early on, their lives will be very important later in the novel.

Meanwhile, Roz and Brightbill become ever closer as a mother and a son. Roz has frustrated days with the now-adolescent Brightbill, who wants to know more about Roz’s past and the familial relationship between them. Brightbill, despite his teenage dramatics, is very happy to have Roz as a mother and is very loving toward her. Indeed, Brightbill comes to Roz’s defense against the bears, and he will come to Roz’s defense later on in the novel. It is a clear display of love and the importance of family. It also demonstrates once more that families come in all different kinds and varieties, but it is the love and loyalty of family that matter more so than anything else.

In Chapter 42, Brightbill directly asks Roz about their family and their situation. This discussion touches on family –with Brightbill reaffirming he wants to be Roz’s son–and on the very idea of life. As Brown argues, in addition to life being important, he furthers



the argument that life can appear in many different ways. This is true of Roz. While Roz does not consider herself alive in the same way as Brightbill or any of the other animals on the island, Brightbill considers Roz very much alive regardless as to how it may be so. The scene at the robot graveyard should also be noted by the reader. The robot pieces demonstrate that even robots can “die” in a certain way when they are rendered inoperable. In a way, the robots in the graveyard were once alive. Now, in a way, they are dead.

## Discussion Question 1

How does Roz continue to befriend the other animals of the island? What is different now than when Roz first appeared that makes the animals want to be a friend to Roz? How does this difference help lead to friendship? Why?

## Discussion Question 2

How do Roz and Brightbill feel about the family they make up? Why? Do you believe Roz and Brightbill are a family? Why or why not?

## Discussion Question 3

Brightbill believes that Roz is really alive. Considering the usual definition of being alive, do you agree with Brightbill's belief? Why or why not?

## Vocabulary

peculiar, defecating, lagged, rambles, sweltering, mother, family, inoperative





# Chapters 49 – 64

## Summary

Chapter 49: The Flier – With Roz’s encouragement, Brightbill becomes a better and better flier. He is not the strongest or the biggest, but he becomes the smartest, learning how to fly the way other birds do as well as geese. He teaches these tricks and techniques to other interested goslings.

Chapter 50: The Button – Roz and Brightbill decide to try out the button on the back of Roz’s head. The button powers Roz down, which worries Brightbill. Brightbill quickly starts Roz up again, who says she feels as if no time has passed at all. Brightbill says it felt like forever to him.

Chapter 51: The Autumn – The autumn comes on. As frost comes to the island, the animals grow more fur and prepare for the coming winter. The geese are preparing to leave the island for winter.

Chapter 52: The Flock – Brightbill asks his mother if it is true what the other goslings are saying about leaving the island for the winter. Roz explains that it is true. They go to see Loudwing for more details. Loudwing explains that the geese will leave the island for four or five months, depending on the weather. Roz explains that instincts help animals survive and that Brightbill must follow his own instincts to fly south. Brightbill says he will worry about Roz while he is away.

Chapter 53: The Migration – The geese begin to gather for the migration south. Chitchat promises to watch after Roz while Brightbill is away. Brightbill is invited to join the family of the largest goose, who will be leading the island's goose population south. Brightbill and Roz hug goodbye, and Roz watches as the geese take flight. She watches them until they disappear in the distance.

Chapter 54: The Winter – The winter comes, and the island is very quiet. Roz curls up in the Nest, shuts the door, and spends many days in slumber. The Nest collapses around her, prompting Roz to take a walk. She finds many animals, including Dart the Weasel, frozen to death. The narrator explains to the reader that the winter is beautiful but also ugly. Roz returns and sets to work to repair the Nest and build a fire.

Chapter 55: The Lodgers – Roz invites Chitchat to stay with her in the rebuilt Nest, for Chitchat is very cold and has been covered in ice. Pinktail, Fink, Digdown, the Fuzzy Bandits, a turtle named Crag, a family of hares, and many other animals come to share Roz’s home for the warmth of the fire. Prey and predator alike cuddle up close to each other for warmth. All animals agree to a proposed truce by Roz.

Chapter 56: The New Lodges – Roz decides new homes must be built for the animals to survive the winter. She sets to work with all the animals to build new lodges. Many are





built across the island, and the animals come to warm themselves in the lodges through the winter.

Chapter 57: The Fire – Strange sounds from a lodge on the other side of the beaver pond wake everyone up. Broadfoot the moose gallops past, saying they put too many logs in the fire pit and that the lodge has caught on fire. Roz rushes into the fire to save a baby hare. Roz launches herself into a tree to shake the snow from the branches to smother and put out the fire. The animals work together with Roz to build a new lodge where the old one has burned down.

Chapter 58: The Conversations – Inside the lodges, thanks to Roz's truce, the animals get along well. However, when they are outside, they act as normal. The animals pass their time inside the lodge by having friendly, optimistic conversations about Brightbill and the migrated geese. Others, like Digdown, worry their lives are almost up. Digdown wishes she could have helped more animals and done more good. All the animals are very grateful to Roz, crediting her with saving half the island. Crag the turtle, who is ninety-three, says that the summers have gotten hotter, the winters colder, and the storms fiercer over time. Also, he believes the water level is rising. He explains the island was not always an island, but once a mountain that all the animals sought refuge on during the flooding.

Chapter 59: The Spring – The spring slowly returns. The snow begins to melt, and life returns to normal for the warmer months. The spring blooms and buds appear.

Chapter 60: The Fish – Rockmouth the pike fish attacks the tail of Paddler, son of Mr. and Mrs. Beaver. Roz catches Rockmouth and puts him in a large puddle until Rockmouth explains himself. Rockmouth explains he used to live in the river, but he has been trapped in the pond thanks to the beaver dam. Though it does not give Rockmouth the right to attack others, Roz agrees to help make things right by taking Rockmouth to the river.

Chapter 61: The Robot Stories – Stories of Roz helping free Rockmouth and helping other sick and injured animals spread across the island. Roz begins to mimic the actions of the animals, sunbathing with lizards, leaping with deer, and singing with birds. The spring is very wild for Roz.

Chapter 62: The Return – On a quiet spring afternoon, the geese return. Brightbill and Roz are very happy to see one another again.

Chapter 63: The Journey – Brightbill explains the long trip south and the difficulty they had flying through bad snow storms. Brightbill explains he came across a farm with greenhouses tended by robots just like Roz. A farm cat named Snooks introduced herself to Brightbill but warned Brightbill to stay out of sight because some humans are not friendly. Brightbill explains he explored further, finding a barn full of caged chickens, pigs, sheep, and cows. Outside, a human farmer shoots and kills many of the geese to frighten the flock away. Among those killed was the leader, Longneck. Brightbill goes on to say that he took command of the geese. They arrived in a city, where a friendly



pigeon named Graybeak guided them. After telling Graybeak about Roz, Brightbill and the others were brought to a factory that produced robots exactly like Roz.

Chapter 64: The Special Robot – Roz and Brightbill sit and think about humans, Longneck, cities, farms, and factories. They wonder where Roz truly belongs. Brightbill explains he has seen many other robots, but none like Roz. He realizes that Roz is special.

## Analysis

As Brightbill grows, Roz continues her work as a mother, doing her best to prepare Brightbill for the day when he will eventually have to leave the Nest to fly south for the winter. It is very sad when the day arrives. Brightbill is heartbroken that he will have to leave Roz for four or five months. What is interesting is that, even though robots cannot feel in the same way as animals, Roz's concern for Brightbill is a kind of caring. Roz will miss Brightbill, and she will worry about how he is doing the entire time he is gone. By following his instincts, Brightbill's decision to fly south with the other flocks of geese has important consequences.

Because Brightbill flies south, he is not around for the very bad winter that follows. During the course of the winter, many animals die because they were not expecting or prepared for such bitter cold. Roz comes to the rescue by sheltering animals in the Nest and then going on to construct dozens of lodges around the island for the animals to use as shelters. She saves countless lives, and all of the animals thank her for the shelters and for her friendship. In so doing, Roz creates an even closer, better friendship with the many other animals on the island. She has put her newly learned survival skills to good use by building the lodges and the fires to help save the other animals. Helping others is very important, argues Brown.

Roz's decision to build lodges to help save the animals underscores another theme in the novel. All life is important, Peter Brown argues. It would have been very easy for Roz to refuse to build any other shelters, let alone allow other animals into her own shelter. However, Roz recognizes that the lives of the other animals are invaluable; therefore, they must be saved, too. Roz believes all lives matter. Even the predatory animals who take shelter in the lodges agree not to harm other animals while they are in the lodges because their lives matter that much. Outside in the snow is death, something symbolized by the snow itself and by leaving the lodge.

When Brightbill and the other migratory birds return at the end of the winter, Brightbill brings some fascinating news. He has discovered the factory that constructed and shipped Roz. This solves the mystery of Roz's origin, though questions about whether Roz is actually alive or not are already generally settled. It is already known that Brightbill considers Roz to be alive and that the other animals have come to see Roz as one of them. Though she might not fit the usual definition of life, Roz is still a life of some kind. She is worthy of respect, praise, and friendship. Brightbill asserts that he



has seen many robots, but that there is only one robot just like Roz. That robot is Roz herself. She is unique.

## **Discussion Question 1**

How does Roz help the other animals to survive the very bad winter? How do the animals react to Roz's generosity? Why?

## **Discussion Question 2**

What does Brightbill's discovery of the factory and other robots do to his opinion about Roz? Why?

## **Discussion Question 3**

In what ways does Roz prove that all life matters during the winter? How do the animals feel about the lives of their fellow animals through the course of the winter? Why?

## **Vocabulary**

migratory, instinct, hibernation, prey, predator, remedied



# Chapters 65 – 80

## Summary

Chapter 65: The Invitation – At the next Dawn Truce in the Great Meadow, Roz proposes a one-time Evening Truce, or the Party Truce, at which all the animals are invited to attend a party.

Chapter 66: The Celebration – Animals gather that evening at the Great Meadow. A great bonfire is built, and the animals and Roz celebrate by leaping, jumping, flying, and dancing around. Out on the sea, a ship sails by, sees the fire and Roz, and continues on.

Chapter 67: Sunrise – By dawn, everyone has gone home to sleep. Roz and Brightbill remain in the meadow. It is then that Brightbill sees an airship coming their way.

Chapter 68: The Recos – The airship nears. It is piloted by robots like Roz. They are stamped with the names RECO 1, RECO 2, RECO 3, and so on. The airship lands in the Great Meadow, and the RECOs emerge. Roz goes to say hello.

Chapter 69: The Defective Robot – The RECOs say hello, and they say that they have arrived to collect all ROZZUM units. Roz says she will go nowhere without answers. RECO 1 explains that a year ago, a cargo ship carrying five-hundred ROZZUM units sank. All units except five were retrieved from the ocean floor. Four of the remaining are destroyed, while Roz is the last. RECO 1 explains that Roz is property of TechLab Industries. As such, she will be taken back to the factory and refurbished. Then, she will be sent to work on a work site indefinitely. Roz insists she lives on the island, but RECO 1 threatens to deactivate Roz if she does not come along. When Roz continues to ask questions, RECO 1 calls her defective and calls for her deactivation. Brightbill flies in to defend his mother, but Roz tells him what is going on and tells him to go to safety. Other animals overhear, and the call across the island comes that the animals must unite to save Roz. Roz runs.

Chapter 70: The Hunt Begins – While the geese distract the robots, Brightbill flies around behind them to find their power buttons, but cannot see any. The RECOs beat back the geese, then split up to begin searching for Roz.

Chapter 71: The Forest Assault – RECO 3 heads into the forest. Swooper leads the attack on RECO 3, who becomes bogged down in mud. The birds swoop in and cover RECO 3 with droppings, The Fuzzy Bandits rush in and snatch away RECO 3's rifle. Broadfoot then kicks RECO 3's head off with his back legs, destroying RECO 3.

Chapter 72: The Mountain Rumble – RECO 2 searches along the mountain, entering the bear cave. The bears attack. RECO 2 fires his rifle, causing a rock avalanche that tears off one of his arms. Mother Bear is injured, but she will recover. She urges Thorn and Nettle to continue on in the attack. RECO 2 is knocked into the river, and then logs



are used to send RECO 2 over the waterfall. Nettle is nearly pulled over with him, but escapes just in time.

Chapter 73: The Chase – RECO 1 studies the remains of the bonfire, then loses contact with RECO 2 and RECO 3. RECO 1 recognizes he will have to hunt down Roz on his own. RECO1 spots Roz and chases after her. He falls into a deep pit, twists his leg, pounds it back into place, then launches himself up to continue the chase. The animals rush to attack, pelting RECO 1 with flaming pine cones, tripping him up with vines, and smashing him with rocks. Still, RECO 1 continues to chase Roz, all the way to the robot graveyard. He finds robot pieces, but no Roz. Suddenly, a mass of seaweed rises up and grabs his rifle.

Chapter 74: The Click – Roz and RECO 1 both struggle for the rifle, but RECO 1 overpowers Roz. The rifle goes off, sending RECO 1 and Roz flying. All of Roz's limbs are blasted off. RECO 1 is only slightly damaged and proceeds to push the button on the back of Roz's head.

Chapter 75: The Last Rifle – With Roz deactivated, RECO 1 begins collecting the scattered robot parts from the wreck the previous year. Brightbill sneaks in to reactive Roz, explaining quickly what has happened. She tells him to run. RECO 1 catches Brightbill and prepares to crush him. Roz begs RECO 1 not to hurt Brightbill. A swarm of vultures fire RECO 3's rifle at RECO 1, having been taught by the geese how to shoot a rifle after their own experience with a human. Brightbill flies to safety while RECO 1 crumples to the ground. As RECO 1 dies, he tells Roz that more RECOs will come and that the Makers will not let her go. He tells her to go to the airship, with all of the robot parts, and that the ship will know what to do.

Chapter 76: The Broken Robot – All of the animals try to repair Roz, but they are unable to do so. The animals are very sad, but Roz does not mind because she can still talk, listen, and see.

Chapter 77: The Meeting – The animals of the island carry Roz and her parts up to the Nest where they settle her inside with a fire and Brightbill. Roz calls for a meeting of her oldest and closest friends, including Fink, Swooper, Tawny, Loudwing, and others. They discuss what to do and how to keep the island safe. The next morning, Roz addresses all the animals of the island. She thanks them for their friendship and their battling on her behalf. Roz explains that to keep the island safe she must leave so more RECOs do not come. The only way Roz has a chance of being repaired, she explains, is to return to the Makers.

Chapter 78: The Farewell – The animals gather the robot remains sadly. The parts are put into the airship. Roz is put in last. Roz says goodbye to all the animals. Then, she says goodbye to Brightbill. She tells Brightbill that he is her son and that she will do all she can to return to the island because it is her home. The door to the airship closes.

Chapter 79: The Departure – The airship leaves the island and heads south.



Chapter 80: The Sky – As the airship flies away, Roz thinks about everything that has happened to her. The narrator explains that, perhaps, Roz’s robot ability to learn helped her to become a wild robot, or maybe she was defective after all and so learned how to be a wild robot. Roz wonders what the future will hold, but knows she must find a way back home to her son. She begins computing plans to be repaired and to escape.

## Analysis

The importance of friendship matters like never before in this section of the novel. The ominous cargo ship that appears offshore after dark serves as a sign of danger to come. When the RECO robots arrive to force Roz to go back with them, the animal friends of the island rally to Roz’s defense. They battle the robots with everything they have. Roz has saved their lives through the winter, and Roz has become such a good and important friend that the animals cannot bear the thought of an island without her. They cannot bear the thought, especially, of any harm coming to Roz. Even the bears put aside their predatory nature to save the life of Roz by working with the other animals to fight the RECO robots.

The animals come to recognize that Brightbill’s observation about Roz being a unique robot is very true. Even the RECO robots themselves recognize something different about Roz. Whether this is due to her adaptive programming or a defect, they do not know and do not care. They have a job to do, and that is all they will do. The animals realize they have someone amazing in Roz and recognize that Roz, alive in a different way than they as animals, is also alive in a different way than the robots who have come to force her to return to the factory. Helping others is important, Brown argues, and this is very true of the help that the animals attempt to give Roz by defeating the RECO robots and trying to repair Roz themselves.

Unfortunately, the only way for Roz’s life to be anything like it was is to return to the factory on her own to be repaired. She recognizes –as do all the other animals –that this might lead to reprogramming. Roz could lose every bit of who she was before. It is a risk Roz is willing to take in order to protect the island, for she knows more robots will come if she does not leave. On the flight back to the factory, Roz is already planning on how she will escape and return to the island. Though she wants to return because the island is full of animals who are her friends and the island is home, more importantly Brightbill is her son and she wants to be back with Brightbill.

## Discussion Question 1

Why do the RECO robots come to the island? How does Roz react to their mission? Why?



## Discussion Question 2

What do the animals of the island do when confronted by the RECO robots? Why do they do this?

## Discussion Question 3

Why does Roz decide to leave the island in the end? How do the animals, especially Brightbill, feel about this? Why? How does Roz feel about this? Why?

## Vocabulary

indefinitely, refurbish, defectiveness, deactivate, nimble



# Characters

## Roz

Roz, formally known by her robot name and identification ROZZUM Unit 7134, is the only surviving robot of a shipwreck off the coast of the island. Roz is solar-powered and has been programmed to be nonviolent, to keep clean, and to stay alive. Roz's primary functions are to perform assigned tasks and to find better ways of performing them. Roz attempts to befriend the animals of the island early on, but she is unable to do so. She decides to camouflage herself to blend in and have a better chance at survival. By staying hidden by the camouflage, she can also learn about the behavior and language of the animals.

When Roz accidentally kills a family of geese, she comes to be the mother of the surviving baby goose, Brightbill. This, in turn, helps her to befriend the other animals of the island as she seeks out their advice and help in raising Brightbill. Roz comes to consider Brightbill her son. She helps him learn how to fly, and she sadly watches him leave for the winter. Through the especially bitter winter that year, Roz builds a number of lodges to save the lives of countless island animals. The animals, in turn, defend Roz against the RECO robots that come to take her back. Roz is badly damaged during the event, leading her to decide to return to the factory in the hopes that she will be repaired and can escape to return to Brightbill, the island, and her friends. As Roz returns to the factory, she begins planning how to do this.

## Brightbill

Brightbill is a young goose raised by Roz. Brightbill is the only survivor of a family of geese accidentally crushed to death by Roz. Brightbill is so named for his brightly colored beak. Brightbill considers Roz his mother from the start, and he comes to love Roz deeply. Brightbill does not care that Roz looks different or is a different species. He only cares about the love Roz gives him as a mother. Brightbill comes to Roz's defense a number of times, including against the bears and later against the RECO robots. Having seen other robots on farms and factories, Brightbill comes to realize that Roz is a unique robot and she is a special mother. He is heartbroken when Roz decides to return to the factory because she might never return.

## Chitchat

Chitchat is a young squirrel that is the best friend of Brightbill. Chitchat is a talkative, sweet, and kind squirrel that loves to spend her days with Brightbill. She promises to help watch over Roz when Brightbill goes south for the winter. She is one of the animals that Roz shelters and saves in her lodge.





## **Fink**

Fink is a fox that is the first animal to befriend Roz. Having been injured by a porcupine while hunting, Fink collapses on a log in agony with porcupine quills stuck in his face and paws. When Roz removes the quills, Fink thanks Roz and becomes friends with her. He is one of the animals who helps to defend Roz later against the RECO robots.

## **Loudwing**

Loudwing is an elderly goose who befriends Roz when Roz asks for advice on raising Brightbill. Loudwing will not take Brightbill in since he is not a member of her personal flock, but she does consent to providing whatever help she can to Roz regarding the raising of Brightbill. Loudwing goes on to become one of Roz's dearest and closest friends.

## **Mr. Beaver**

Mr. Beaver is married to Mrs. Beaver. Together with their three children, they live in the beaver pond. Mr. Beaver is approached by Roz for help in constructing a lodge. He agrees to help her build a lodge in exchange for Roz's help in felling trees for the dam. Mr. Beaver goes on to supervise the construction of Roz's lodge and recommends consulting Tawny for a garden.

## **Tawny**

Tawny the deer is the wife of Crownpoint the deer. Together, they have a family. Tawny becomes one of Roz's closest friends when she helps Roz plan and plant a garden. Tawny and her family become regular visitors at the garden, not only to sample the plants but to spend time with Roz.

## **The Farmer**

The farmer is the only example of a human being the animals directly confront in the novel. While flying south, Brightbill and the other geese end up on a farm populated by robots working in greenhouses. A human farmer with a gun oversees the greenhouses. The human farmer does not want the geese around and shoots a rifle which kills several geese and sends the rest away. The farmer inadvertently teaches the geese how to use a weapon, which they later use to defend Roz on the island.

## **RECO 1**

RECO 1 is the lead RECO robot sent by airship to retrieve Roz from the island. RECO 1 is unflinching from his assigned duty. Designed for battle, RECO 1 is difficult to defeat,



but he is taken down by a blast from a rifle fired by the geese. RECO 1, in his final moments of operation, tells Roz her only hope of repair is to return to the factory by airship. It is advice that Roz ultimately takes.

## The Makers

The Makers are spoken of but never seen, and are highly influential human beings in the novel. The Makers own and operate the factory, where they design and produce the robots that become those like Roz and RECO 1. The Makers are very careful about their products and profits, and so send RECO robots to recover the robots lost at the bottom of the sea by the island, and later send three RECO robots to retrieve Roz from the island.



# Symbols and Symbolism

## Winter Snow

Snow falls during the winter in the novel. Both winter and snow symbolize death. The snow falls during the winter when the world turns gray, cold, and lifeless. The snow also comes to claim the lives of many animals on the island because they freeze to death. The snow temporarily disorients Brightbill and the other geese as they fly south for the winter, putting their lives in grave danger. The snow is only countered by the lodges that Roz builds to save the animals and by the arrival of warmer temperatures in the spring.

## Trees

Trees cover much of the island on which Roz finds herself. Many animals live in the trees, and the trees themselves give Roz great trouble at first. She attempts to find safety and shelter in the trees, but her weight causes her to crash down through the branches. The trees' sticky resin dirties Roz. Roz later gives felled trees to the Beavers in exchange for Mr. Beaver's assistance with building a lodge for her and Brightbill.

## Pine Cones

Pine cones are used as weapons by the animals of the island and become something natural from which Roz believes she must survive. Early in the novel, pine cones naturally fall from the trees above and hit Roz, causing her to run for shelter. Later in the novel pine cones are set on fire and thrown at the RECO robots by the animals of the island.

## Robot Pieces

Robot pieces are the remains of the four robots that do not survive being washed ashore. The pieces prove that even robots can die in a way because they are no longer alive like artificial life that is still intact and functioning. This demonstrates to the animals that robots, though they have the potential to live forever as artificial life forms, can still be destroyed and rendered inoperable, or "dead."

## Sunken Robots

Sunken robots litter the ocean floor just off the coast of the island. The sunken robots – numbering 495 – were part of the shipment in which Roz was included on the cargo ship that sank during the bad storm. Since the robots are so valuable and the Makers are so concerned about product and profit, they organize a salvage expedition to



retrieve the 495 sunken robots. This search leads them to Roz and the four destroyed robots on the island.

## Stick Insect

A stick insect is discovered by Roz soon after she arrives on the island. The insect gives her the idea of camouflaging herself in order to survive. The stick insect has the appearance of a stick or a tree branch, which makes the insect hard to find by predators. Roz decides to begin camouflaging herself for two reasons. First, it will help her survive. Also, by staying out of sight, she can observe the ways and the words of the island's animals better and learn how she might better fit in with her fellow residents.

## Rifles

Rifles are carried by farmers and the RECO robots in the novel. The farmer uses a rifle to kill some of the geese traveling with Brightbill. He hopes that will scare the other geese off his property. This teaches the geese how to use a rifle. When the RECO robots arrive to take back Roz, they also carry rifles. The geese are able to gain possession of one such rifle, and they use it against RECO 1 to stop him from hurting Roz any more.

## First Cargo Ship

The first cargo ship that appears in the novel carries five-hundred ROZZUM robots. It sinks off the northern coast of the island in a storm. Five crates containing ROZZUM robots survive the sinking and are washed ashore. Four are destroyed in the process. Only Roz's crate survives. The first cargo ship and its contents are later salvaged by the Makers and their recovery robots.

## Second Cargo Ship

The second cargo ship arrives at the scene of the sinking of the first cargo ship. It serves as an omen of danger. The second cargo ship arrives to collect the sunken robots. While there, it sees Roz on the shore and sends word back to the Makers at the factory that Roz is still operational.

## The Airship

The airship is an airplane-like craft with the ability to hover, land, and take-off vertically. It is piloted by three RECO robots, though it is also capable of flying itself. The airship is taken to the island to force Roz back to the factory. When Roz is badly damaged and the three RECO robots are destroyed, Roz is brought aboard the ship by the animals.

The airship flies her back to the factory of her own free will. While aboard the airship, Roz plots how she will make it back to the island.



# Settings

## The Island

A never named island is the main setting of the novel. According to the history kept by the turtles, the island was once part of a mountain range that was flooded by rising sea levels and worsening storms. The island, then a mountain, appeared when the waters rose. The island is populated by a diverse population of animals, ranging from foxes and bears to squirrels and hares.

Much of the shoreline of the island is rocky, while most of the interior of the island is full of forests and small meadows and clearings. It is off the coast of the island that the first cargo ship sinks at the beginning of the novel, leading to Roz being washed ashore. The island is difficult for Roz to handle at first because it is wild and full of unfriendly animals. As time goes on, Roz gets used to the island and befriends the island's animals. As a result, she comes to see the island as home while raising Brightbill. At the end of the novel, when she is forced by the Maker to return to the factory to be repaired, she decides that she will do whatever it takes to get back to the island.

## The Nest

The Nest is the lodge constructed under Mr. Beaver's supervision for Roz and Brightbill. The Nest is a beaver lodge-styled home that is large enough for Roz, Brightbill, and any company that comes. It is so named after the kind of nest that Brightbill would have otherwise grown up in with his birth mother. Roz and Brightbill spend many happy evenings there, cuddled up before the warmth of a fire. During the bitter cold winter, the Nest becomes a refuge for many other animals, such as Chitchat, who did not anticipate the winter getting so bad. Roz comes to build dozens of other Nest-like lodges across the island for other animals to escape the cold of the winter as well.

## The Great Meadow

The Great Meadow is the largest and most beautiful meadow found on the island. It is where most of the animals congregate every morning to chat and visit during the Dawn Truce, an hour when no animals are allowed to harm other animals. The Great Meadow is ultimately visited by Roz, who frightens off the other animals until they realize she means them no harm. Roz comes to visit with the other animals at the Great Meadow over the course of the novel, including the final truce where a party is held in the evening around a roaring bonfire.

## The Robot Graveyard

The Robot Graveyard is located on the north shore of the island. It symbolizes that even robots can die in a way. It is off the north shore of the island that the first cargo ship sinks, leaving five crates afloat on the surface of the water. Four of these crates are smashed to pieces, along with the robots inside them, on the shore. The fifth, containing Roz, survives. The broken robot pieces form what Roz and the other animals call the Robot Graveyard. Brightbill visits the graveyard with Roz to get a better idea about robots and Roz, but the visit only makes Brightbill sad. RECO 1 later chases Roz into the Robot Graveyard where she attempts to hide from him, but it is there that RECO 1 nearly destroys Roz before being destroyed himself.

## The City

The never-named city is located south of the island by many miles. Brightbill and his fellow geese pass through the city while heading south. There, they come across the TechLab Industries factory where Roz was first created. Brightbill and the others see many more robots being built and packaged for sale, enabling them to realize just how different Roz is from the other robots in the world. It is from the city that Brightbill and the geese continue south before heading home in the spring. After returning home, they share information about the city with Roz and the other animals.



# Themes and Motifs

## There are many different kinds of family.

In his novel *The Wild Robot*, Peter Brown argues that there are many different kinds of families. Families may have members who do not look like each other and may not even be of the same species, but that does not matter. Love, loyalty, and caring are the important things. In the novel, families take many different forms, but all have the same purpose in love, loyalty, and caring.

Across the island, the reader discovers many different families. There are families of beavers, deer, birds, geese, bears, and so on. None of these families look like other families, but they are still families. For example, bird families and bear families do not look like each other, but they are still families. These creatures recognize other species besides themselves as having families. Sometimes, groups of families come together, such as in the flocks of geese. Other times, families prefer to be by themselves, such as with the bears.

Some families have members that do not look like each other at all. This is true of Roz and Brightbill. When Roz accidentally kills Brightbill's family, she decides to care for Brightbill and to raise him. Brightbill comes to see Roz as his mother, while Roz comes to see Brightbill as her son. Even when some of the other goslings make fun of Roz for being Brightbill's mother, Brightbill does not waver in his love for his mother. When the bears, and later the RECO robots try to harm Roz, Brightbill flies to her defense.

Ultimately, the other animals of the island come to see Roz and Brightbill as mother and son. Roz, as somewhat of a single mother to Brightbill, confers with other mothers on teenage animal behavior. She does her best to support Brightbill in the ways that other animal mothers do. She helps teach Brightbill how to fly, and she encourages him to follow his instincts when it comes time to fly south for the winter. When Roz travels to the factory, her thoughts are of home, friends, and her son. As the novel ends, Roz is planning how to make it back to the island to see Brightbill again.

## All forms of life are important.

All forms of life are important, argues Peter Brown in his novel *The Wild Robot*. The island is full of many different kinds of life. Some are big and strong, while some are very small and very delicate. Regardless of size, all of these lives matter.

In nature, some animals must die so that others might live. In this case, it is that they matter in death as much as in life, such as when Fink the Fox must kill to eat meat to survive.

When the novel begins, the other animals of the island do not know what to make of Roz. They are concerned about the new, large, metallic, artificial life form among them.





Until they learn that Roz is concerned about them and does not wish to hurt them, they refuse to make friends. The first friend Roz makes is Fink, who is suffering from porcupine quills. Roz goes out of her way to remove the quills and help Fink, demonstrating that his life matters to her. Fink begins to spread the word about Roz, but not all of the animals are convinced right away.

More animals are convinced when, after the accidentally killing of Brightbill's goose family, Roz decides to raise and care for Brightbill. Brightbill, who at that point in time is an unborn gosling, matters just as much as the other creatures on the island. Roz proves it by deciding to save him and raise him when no one else will. Brightbill would have been helpless as a newborn gosling had it not been for Roz believing that his life mattered.

When the winter comes on, many of the animals are not expecting such bad weather. This leads to many of the animals freezing to death in the bitter cold. Roz begins taking in animals to stay with her in her lodge to warm themselves by the fire. She then begins building lodges around the island so that many more animals may warm themselves by the fire and survive. Roz, who is no danger of freezing to death, goes out of her way to save the natural animals who all stand a chance of dying without proper shelter and warmth. She sees that their lives matter and are important, so she endeavors to save all she can. The animals are grateful to Roz, and they become better friends with her. When the RECO robots arrive to take Roz back, the animals of the island risk their own lives and commit to war against the RECO robots in order to save Roz's life. They have come to view her life as just as important as their own.

## **Friendships come in many shapes and sizes and are very important.**

Friendships come in many shapes and sizes and are very important, argues Peter Brown in his novel *The Wild Robot*. Friendship is a very important and very worthy thing, especially because it recognizes importance in the lives of those that others have befriended. This is true of Roz and the animals of the island.

When the novel begins, the animals of the island have no idea what to really make of Roz, except to be afraid of her. She is a large, metallic form of artificial life they have never before experienced, and so they flee from her whenever she approaches. However, when Fink is helped by Roz following his run-in with the porcupine, he realizes Roz is not dangerous. He befriends her and begins spreading the word about her. When Roz comes to care for Brightbill, she seeks out help from Loudwing. Loudwing recognizes that Roz does not wish to harm anyone, so she not only lends her advice but her recommendations on whom to consult.

Roz goes on to ask for help from Mr. Beaver and Tawny the Deer regarding her lodge and accompanying garden. Mr. Beaver and Tawny quickly become friends with Roz as they get to know her, and the garden becomes a gathering place for the animals. There, they visit with Roz and sample from the garden. As they do so, they become close



friends with Roz. At the same time, Brightbill becomes best friends with Chitchat. The animal friends that gather around Roz are from all different species. Some, like the squirrels, are small and swift. Others, like the deer, are large and graceful. Nevertheless, they are all friends.

During the bitter winter that follows, the friendship between Roz and the animals proves to be so important that it saves lives. The winter happens to be especially brutal, for which many of the animals are not prepared. As such, Roz invites her animal friends into her home for shelter and warmth, then goes on to build many more lodges across the island to ensure that the other animals may survive the cold and snow. She sees their lives as worthy of saving. She recognizes the importance of their lives. In the spring, when the RECO robots arrive to drag Roz back to the factory. Her animal friends rally to her side and attack the RECO robots to stop them. The animals recognize the importance of Roz's life, in addition to valuing her friendship.

## **Life can come in various kinds.**

Life can come in various kinds, argues Peter Brown in his novel *The Wild Robot*. In the novel, there are two general kinds of life, natural life and artificial life. Brown argues that both artificial life and natural life exist.

Natural life in the novel includes the animals that populate the island, such as Brightbill, Loudwing, and Tawny. Artificial life in the novel consists of Roz, for she has been built by the hands of the Makers rather than reproduced the way of the animals. In the novel, Brightbill directly asks Roz if she is alive. Roz explains she is not because she is a robot, but Brightbill insists that she is, saying that she moves, talks, thinks, and cares for him like a true, living mother.

The narrator speaks of Roz's life throughout the novel. The narrator notes in several places that Roz will feel something similar to a feeling like a person or an animal would, but not in the same way or for the same reason. For example, Roz's programmed response for surviving dangerous situations is a computer oriented warning, rather than an actual feeling or sense. Though not identical, this desire to survive is similar to an animal's impulse for survival which is driven by feeling fear and panic.

Though Roz represents a different kind of life, it is a form of life that survived the shipwreck. The robots that did not survive were tossed by waves against rocks on the shore. They are now inoperable, lying in broken, lifeless pieces. Roz has a power button that can shut her down, which is similar to either death or sleep (depending on whether or not Roz is turned back on again). Roz is threatened with reprogramming by the RECOs, which would essentially mean she would "die," as she would no longer be the same robot she is now.

In the end, Roz decides to return to the factory, knowing her life hangs in the balance. She must protect the lives on the island by returning to the factory to be repaired. It is possible that when she is repaired, her memory will be erased. If that happens she will



no longer remember who she was on the island or her son Brightbill or all the animals she has come to love. If and how she will return to the island as the same robot that boarded the airship to leave is uncertain at the end of the novel.

## Helping others is important.

Helping others is important, argues Peter Brown in his novel *The Wild Robot*. Helping others, which is a form of kindness, makes the world better and makes life easier. In bad situations, helping others can mean the difference between life and death.

When the novel begins, the other animals are too afraid of Roz to help her to adjust to life on the island or to befriend her. When Roz discovers the injured Fink the Fox, Roz goes out of her way to help Fink by removing the quills that have injured him. Fink then goes on to tell the other animals about Roz. When Roz accidentally kills the goose family of Brightbill, Roz goes on to raise Brightbill on her own as Brightbill's mother. This decision to help Brightbill is the difference between life and death for Brightbill.

Roz is helped by the other animals when they learn that she is going to raise Brightbill. Loudwing helps by lending advice about raising a gosling. Mr. Beaver directs and helps participate in the building of the lodge for Roz and Loudwing. Tawny helps Roz to plant a garden, which will bring friends to visit and allow other animals another source of food. As she raises Brightbill, Roz helps Brightbill learn how to fly. This allows Brightbill to survive the winter by flying south.

When the winter comes on, many of the animals are not prepared for the bitter cold. Many animals freeze to death. Roz invites many animals into her lodge to keep warm, including Chitchat. By helping these animals, Roz ensures they will live rather than die. Roz goes on to build many more lodges for the other animals across the island, ensuring that they will survive rather than die. The animals across the island later come to help defend Roz against the RECO robots by destroying them. The animals save Roz, but are unable to help put her back together. As a result, they must sadly watch her go, even though she promises to return.

# Styles

## Point of View

Peter Brown tells his novel *The Wild Robot* in the third-person, omniscient narrative mode. The narrator not only tells the story of Roz as she comes to the island, but he also directly addresses the reader many times throughout the novel. This is done for two reasons. First, directly addressing the reader creates an intimate setting, as though the narrator is telling the story to the reader in person. Second, the narrator usually addresses the reader when important contextual information is being given. This ties into the narrator's omniscience, knowing everything at all times even when the characters of the novel do not. For example, the narrator directly addresses the reader when he says, "I should remind you, reader, that Roz had no idea how she came to be on the island... As far as Roz knew, she was home. (24)" This is sharing important information with the reader about the events known only by the narrator, not the characters in the story. Elsewhere in the novel, the narrator relates other important things which the characters are unaware of, such as the second cargo ship spotting Ros on the island when Ros has no idea she has been spotted. This leads to the arrival of the RECOs, which adds to the sense of drama for the reader.

## Language and Meaning

Peter Brown tells his novel *The Wild Robot* in language that is simple, personal, and straightforward. This is done for at least three reasons. First, the novel is aimed at an audience of children, so the vocabulary used in the novel must be easily understood by that age level. Second, the main characters of the novel are a task-performing robot and animals with only a wild education. As such, their language is simple and straightforward. Third, directly addressing the reader and using the pronoun "you" allows the narrator to provide contextual information that only the reader and the narrator may know. This adds drama to the novel by alerting the reader to dangerous and ominous things that the characters do not know. An example of this is when the second cargo ship appears.

## Structure

Peter Brown divides his novel *The Wild Robot* into eighty consecutive, numbered, and titled chapters ranging from 1 to 80. Most chapters consist of only two or three pages, with each page ranging from only a few lines to a paragraph in length.

The chapters are peppered with illustrations. Each chapter receives a title relating to the events that occur within the chapter. For example, Chapter 48: *The New Foot* deals with the efforts of several animals to build Roz a new foot when the young bears detach her old foot. Then, Chapter 74: *The Click* deals with Roz's power button being clicked by RECO 1 to power her down.

In most chapters, the author includes his own illustration that depicts an event or a scene. In Chapter 25: The Egg, a picture of an egg lying among fallen leaves on the ground is presented. In Chapter 53: The Migration, an illustration is presented of Roz standing in a tree watching Brightbill and the other geese migrate south for the winter.



## Quotes

And then came the last crate. It followed the same path as the others, but instead of crashing against the rock... it soared through the air, spinning and glistening until it slammed down onto a tall shelf of rock. The create was cracked and crumpled, but the robot inside was safe.

-- Narrator (Chapter 1 paragraph 3)

**Importance:** When the novel begins, a cargo ship containing hundreds of crates full of robots sinks. Only one robot in one crate survives to land safely on the island. The others are destroyed. This leads the reader to want to know more about the robots and their past –particularly the surviving robot, Roz.

Hello, I am ROZZUM unit 7134, but you may call me Roz. While my robotic systems are activating, I will tell you about myself.

-- Roz (Chapter 3)

**Importance:** When a gang of sea otters discovers the surviving crate, they witness Roz activating herself. Roz explains some very basic things about herself, telling the otters she will tell them about herself. Ironically, Roz knows very little about herself, including her past. It will be something she will attempt to find out in the coming chapters.

As you might know, robots don't really feel emotions. Not the way animals do. And yet, as she sat in her crate, Roz felt something like curiosity.

-- Narrator (Chapter 4)

**Importance:** Although robots do not have feelings the way that animals and people do, robots can be curious in a way. This is true of Roz, who identifies the sun as the sun, as it gives her power and the ability to operate. This will pave the way for Roz to begin to wonder about herself, and her past.

The island was teeming with life. And now it had a new kind of life. A strange kind of life. Artificial life.

-- Narrator (Chapter 9)

**Importance:** The narrator reveals to the reader that the island on which Roz has found herself is full of every kind of imaginable life. Roz, however, is a different kind of life because Roz is artificial rather than natural. Roz, at the moment, does not distinguish herself from the life around her.

I should remind you, reader, that Roz had no idea how she came to be on the island... As far as Roz knew, she was home.

-- Narrator (Chapter 10)

**Importance:** When Roz awakens, she has no idea about her past. She has no clue about being built in a factory, packaged, shipped, and nearly being destroyed in a storm.



To Roz, the island is home and she is a natural part of it. This quote is also important because it demonstrates the narrator's omniscience, and the reader's omniscience, in which both reader and narrator know things the characters of the novel do not know.

A new word was spreading across the island. The word was Roz. Everyone was talking about the robot. And they wanted nothing to do with her.

-- Narrator (Chapter 22)

**Importance:** Roz's first attempts to befriend the animals of the island do not go well. The animals want nothing to do with her. Some dislike her, while others do not trust her. Because Roz cannot feel emotions, she does not feel badly about this. The narrator explains this is for the best. It also ensures that Roz will be able to try again—such as when she helps the injured Fink.

It was amazing how differently everyone treated Roz these days. Animals who once ran from the robot in fear now stopped by the Nest just to spend time with her.

-- Narrator (Chapter 34)

**Importance:** Roz's decision to raise and care for Brightbill brings her into contact with many other animals, including Mr. Beaver, who helps build the Nest, and Tawny, who helps build the garden. Because of these good experiences and because all animals are free to frequent the garden, Roz and Brightbill make friends with all the other animals. Roz comes to fit in, and is reassured that she is doing a good job raising Brightbill.

In a way, Roz needed Brightbill as much as Brightbill needed Roz.

-- Narrator (Chapter 35)

**Importance:** Roz and Brightbill are not only like a mother and a son, but they are also dependent on each other. Because of Brightbill, Roz has learned how to survive better and has befriended the animals of the island. Because of Roz, Brightbill has not died and is growing into adulthood. The two form an unusual family, but a family, nonetheless.

The robot wanted to explain things to her son, but the truth was that she understood very little about herself. It was a mystery how she had come to life on the rock shore. It was a mystery why her computer brain knew certain things but not others.

-- Narrator (Chapter 42)

**Importance:** When some of the other goslings make fun of Brightbill for having a robot as a mother, Brightbill asks about Roz's past. Roz knows nothing of her past, except her life on the island. Brightbill's curiosity awakens a curiosity in Roz to want to know more about what happened in the past.

"We're a strange family," said Brightbill, with a little smile. "But I kind of like it that way.

-- Brightbill (Chapter 32)



**Importance:** When Brightbill is made fun of by some of the other goslings for having a robot monster as a mother, he asks Roz about her past. Roz has little she can tell him, but she does say that she is not his biological mother. Brightbill does not care about this, because in his eyes Roz is still his mother. He knows they make a strange family, but he is happy with it because he knows how much he and Roz mean to one another.

You are my son, and this is my home. I will do everything in my power to return.  
-- Roz (Chapter 78)

**Importance:** After Roz and the animals of the island battle and defeat the RECOs, Roz knows she must leave. If she does not, more RECOs will come to the island and further damage everything. Roz tells Brightbill she will do all she can to return because he is her son and the island is her home.

Brightbill had been Roz's son from the moment she picked up his egg... He was the reason Roz lived so well for so long... She would find her way back home.  
-- Narrator (Chapter 80)

**Importance:** Here, the narrator explains Roz's thoughts and considerations as the airship takes her back to the factory. The most important part of her experience on the island has been to become a mother. It is primarily because of Brightbill and everything he means to her and has made possible in her life that she vows to return to the island.