

# **West with the Night Study Guide**

## **West with the Night by Beryl Markham**

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## Plot Summary

*West with the Night* is a memoir of Beryl Markham, horse trainer, bush pilot, and history making aviatrix. Beryl Markham grew up in the wilds of Africa where her father raised racehorses on their farm. Beryl followed in her father's footsteps by becoming the first woman in Africa to receive her horse-training license. Fascinated with the talents of her friend, Tom Black, Beryl learned to fly and went on to become the first person to fly east to west across the Atlantic from London to North America. Although her flight ended in Nova Scotia rather than the intended New York, Beryl will always be known for her courage and her groundbreaking talents.

While searching for a fellow pilot after his plane disappeared in flight, Beryl ran into an old friend from her childhood who reminded her of their shared past. A lion once attacked Beryl. The lion was the pet of a neighbor she and her father regularly visited when she was a small child. One day, Beryl was running through the farm, intent on some berries she knew were ripe and ready to be picked, when the lion tried to make her a meal. Beryl suffered bites on her legs and back, but survived the ordeal. The lion was caught and caged for the rest of its life until the owners were eventually forced to put the animal to death.

Beryl grew up among the native peoples of Africa, spending time hunting with a local tribe as though she were one of their own. On one such hunt, Beryl was separated from the tribal men while attempted to save her dog from a warthog. Although Beryl was able to kill the hog with her spear, the dog was viciously injured and required a long recovery period. Beryl also grew up with horses, spending much of her time helping her father train and care for the race horses on their farm. One such horse frequently fought Beryl's affections, throwing her to the ground and biting her. However, Beryl eventually won over the horse and discovered that when no one was looking, the horse would serve as her protector. Years later, Beryl's father gave her a colt she helped deliver, an act that initiated her solo career as a horse trainer.

After Beryl's father lost his farm due to a drought, Beryl moved on to Molo to establish herself as a trainer. While struggling to convince local horse owners that a young woman such as herself could train a spirited race horse, Beryl met the man who would change her life, Tom Black, and one of her horses miraculously won one of the most prestigious races in the area. It was not until a few years later when Beryl met Tom Black again that he began to teach her how to fly. During this time, a good friend of Beryl's suggested that it might be possible to track elephant herds by plane for safari parties. After this friend was killed in a flying accident, Beryl took his suggestion and began to scout elephant herds for safaris as well as flying mail, passengers, and supplies around the wilds of Africa.

After Tom moved back to England and won the International Air Race, Beryl decided she, too, would like to move to England. Beryl flew the six thousand mile journey with her friend, Blix, suffering dozens of delays all through Africa due to the Italian government's tight reign on security in their territories along the African coast. Once in



England, Beryl accepted a bet from a friend to be the first person to fly from London to New York, in an east-west direction. A special plane was designed and built for the flight and Beryl took off on September 4, 1936. Beryl made it to within hours of her goal when the fuel line to her last remaining fuel tank froze and she was forced to make a crash landing in Nova Scotia. Although to Beryl the flight was not successful, she became a hero to many in her native country. Armed with the proof of her success, Beryl returned to Africa to share her glory with her father.



# Book 1, Chapter 1, Message from Nungwe

## Book 1, Chapter 1, Message from Nungwe Summary and Analysis

*West with the Night* is the memoir of Beryl Markham, horse trainer, bush pilot, and history making aviatrix. Beryl Markham grew up in the wilds of Africa where her father raised racehorses on their farm. Beryl followed in her father's footsteps by becoming the first woman in Africa to receive her horse training license. Fascinated with the talents of her friend, Tom Black, Beryl learned to fly and went on to become the first person to fly east to west across the Atlantic from London to North America. Although her flight ended in Nova Scotia rather than the intended New York, Beryl will always be known for her courage and her groundbreaking talents.

Beryl received an urgent message from Nungwe, a small mining camp, in the middle of the night to bring oxygen to a man dying of a lung disease. Beryl was reluctant to take the mission although she would normally have not thought twice. This time was different because a fellow pilot was missing and Beryl wanted to go out searching for him at first light. However, Beryl knew this sick man needed her and she decided to take the flight. Beryl, the only practicing female pilot in Africa at the time that she knew of, takes off in the dark, unafraid despite the fact that she does not have a radio. Beryl has made this type of flight many times.

This chapter touches on the theme of adventure. Already the reader discovers the dangers of flying in Africa as Beryl talked about a fellow pilot who has been missing and for whom she was hoping to search. Africa was a dangerous place, though Beryl made it clear in this chapter that to her, Africa was not the dark place that other books have made it out to be. Beryl suggested that Africa is many things to many people and to her it was not dark, but instead exciting.



# Book 1, Chapter 2, Men with Blackwater Die

## Book 1, Chapter 2, Men with Blackwater Die Summary and Analysis

Upon arrival at the distant camp, Beryl found a runway lit with burning torches. The doctor met her plane along with another white man and several Kavirondo, men of a native tribe. One man pointed out they had also hung a wind sock for her benefit. However, they had sewn the sock closed so that the wind could not flow through it. After making her delivery, Beryl had tea with Ebert, a white man at the camp. The hut was filled with makeshift furniture and old magazines, with a radio that was in pieces. The man rarely got news of the larger cities and wanted news from Beryl. Beryl was anxious to leave, however, since the sun was rising and she wanted to go search for the lost pilot, Woody.

Ebert told Beryl of a man in the camp who was suffering from Blackwater. Ebert had told this man he would ask Beryl to come talk to him. Beryl agreed because she knew the man would soon die. However, she was repulsed by his sick appearance since she had always had a difficult time around ill people. The man spoke of people he had once known, including a Carl Hastings who he swore had bet him he would never marry. Years later Beryl met Carl Hastings at a party, but the man had no recollection of the man Beryl had seen in Nungwe or of their bet.

Again, this chapter touches on the theme of adventure, showing the reader some of the real dangers of Africa, this time focusing on illness. The author's purpose here seems to show Beryl's personality in that, while Beryl was concerned with her fellow pilot lost in the wild somewhere, she also took the time to sit and talk with a dying man to ease his discomfort for a short time. This shows Beryl's personality and illustrates her desire to help people in need, and her motivations. This chapter also shows itself to be a flashback when Beryl jumped to a later date at the end of the chapter to explain that she eventually met the man the dying gentleman had mentioned and that man knew nothing of the other. The author's thought seems to be about the fleeting impact everyone has on other people's lives and how short life truly is.



# Book 1, Chapter 3, The Stamp of Wilderness

## Book 1, Chapter 3, The Stamp of Wilderness Summary and Analysis

Beryl flew out over the Serengeti Plains after taking off from Nungwe. There was a camp out there called Rothschild's Camp that had become a kind of refuge for hunting parties ever since the time it was first used by a Rothschild on a hunting trip. Beryl flew toward this area because it had been on Woody's flight plan and she knew he would be found along that flight plan somewhere. Woody had been flying a German Klemm monoplane for East African Airways that was not suited for flying in Africa because Africa was still so wild and spread out.

When Beryl found no sign of Woody at Rothschild's camp, she moved north and east. Between Magadi and Narok, Beryl saw a yellow cloud begin to billow up below her. Beryl circled the cloud and discovered a herd of impala, wildebeest, and zebra running over the ground below her. The sight of the zebras reminded Beryl of a time when she was a child and she was riding Balmy, a horse from her father's farm. While they were riding, they ran into a zebra and her foal. Balmy and the zebra got into a fight, and Balmy was the clear winner. The zebra ran off but the foal followed Beryl and Balmy home. The foal became a part of the family, like a pet, until one day it simply disappeared. As Beryl watched the animals and remembered her past, she nearly missed a silver glitter below her shaped like a fresh, clear pond.

This chapter not only presents the reader with more of Africa's history and geography, but shows it from Beryl's point of view as well, from the cockpit of an airplane. The author's purpose here seems to be to show the reader Africa as Beryl saw it, from the ground and air. The author also presents another flashback here in which she talks about a zebra that adopted her when she was a child. This flashback is important because it shows Beryl's development as a child in an unusual situation. Not all children have zebras as pets. This flashback also goes to Beryl's perspective, the things that drive and motivate her.





# Book 1, Chapter 4, Why Do We Fly?

## Book 1, Chapter 4, Why Do We Fly? Summary and Analysis

Beryl eventually realized that the glint of water she had seen could not be water and turned around to investigate it. Beryl remembered too that Woody had painted his plane shiny silver. When Beryl flew over the pond this time it was clearly Woody's plane. Beryl found a place to land although she could not see movement, smoke, or any other sign of Woody near the plane. Beryl landed in a small clearing and walked over to Woody's plane. Still there was no sign of Woody. Beryl followed a path where the grass had been bent down, calling for Woody, and finally found him lying between two large boulders. Beryl pulled him out and gave him water, happy to find him uninjured and only suffering from dehydration.

While Beryl was helping Woody to her plane, a man on a horse rode up to them. This man was an old acquaintance of Beryl's, a Sikh who once worked on her father's farm. Beryl and the Sikh greeted each other with affection. Beryl discovered that her friend had lost an arm to a lion attack, reminding her of a time when she, too, had been mauled by a lion. The Sikh was equally saddened to find that Beryl had begun to fly airplanes. The Sikh offered to make tea for them and then give Beryl and Woody a ride to Nairobi on his horse rather than risk their lives on the plane, but Beryl was anxious to get Woody to a doctor.

Beryl found the missing pilot, finishing a bit of narration that began in the first chapter. Beryl helped the pilot to her plane only to run into an old friend. This friend has lost his arm to a lion attack, a statement that leads Beryl to remember an attack of her own. This foreshadows the next chapter in which Beryl moved back in time to tell the reader more detail about her childhood, including the lion attack. The author's purpose in this chapter also clearly involves introducing the reader to people who populate the author's life, including the native people of Africa. This purpose touches on the theme of friendship, showing the reader the influences the people around her have had on her life.



## Book 2, Chapter 5, He Was a Good Lion

### Book 2, Chapter 5, He Was a Good Lion Summary and Analysis

Near where Beryl's father built his farm there was another farm called Elkington's. Beryl and her father would often ride to this farm to visit its owners. Living on the farm was a wild lion that had become somewhat tame and was allowed to roam free. Beryl's father often told her stories about lions and cautioned her to be careful around the Elkington lion. One day while she and her father were visiting, Beryl excused herself to play on the property. After running past her friend, the Sikh Indian, Bishon Singh, Beryl ran into the lion. Doing as she had been taught, Beryl stopped to a slow walk and sang at the top of her lungs in order to assure the lion that she meant it no harm. However, as soon as she passed the lion, Beryl began to run again.

The lion took Beryl's actions as a threat or perhaps he simply felt like playing. The lion ran after Beryl and jumped on her back, pushing her to the ground and biting her leg. Bishon Singh, who had followed Beryl, called for help. The owner of the farm, Mr. Elkington, came with his whip, but the lion clearly did not want to be whipped that day. The lion jumped off Beryl to chase Mr. Elkington, who climbed into a tree. Bishon Singh took Beryl to the main house and informed her father of the attack. The lion left the property that night and began to kill farm animals before it was caught and caged. Years later Mrs. Elkington was forced to have the lion shot.

Again this chapter touches on the theme of adventure, taking an experience that could have and should have been presented as a tragedy and looks at it as just another experience on which to gain knowledge. The author seems to have more sympathy for the animal in this story than she did for herself. The author's purpose here seems to be to show the dangers of Africa without holding Africa accountable for what was natural and right for her to do. The author seems to be of the opinion that it was her fault for being in the wrong place at the wrong time rather than the fault of the lion for doing what simply came natural to him.

This chapter is also a flashback of sorts that moves back in time from where the author began her memoirs. The author's change of perspective is a purposeful movement that takes the reader back to the author's childhood before telling the reader how she grew up to be one of the first female bush pilots in Africa. Perhaps the author was hoping that a careful examination of her childhood would help to explain what caused her to choose to be a bush pilot in Africa.



## Book 2, Chapter 6, Still Is the Land

### Book 2, Chapter 6, Still Is the Land Summary and Analysis

Beryl's father bought the land where his farm stood because it was cheap and fertile and "because East Africa was new and you could feel the future of it under your feet" (p. 62). The farm was built with the help of the Kavirondo and Kikuyu people who once lived by the thousands in the area. After clearing the fields and building a few huts, Beryl's father built a gristmill on his farm. Most of the flour made in the mill went to the government to help provide for the workers building the Uganda Railway. Beryl's father used the money from the mill to build a sawmill. Beryl's father also built stables in which he raised racehorses.

There was another farm in the area called the Equator Ranch because the Equator crossed a corner of it. This farm was owned by Lord Delamere, a kind and generous man who was only outshone by his wife, Lady Delamere. Lady Delamere was the only female influence Beryl had in her life as a child and a close, dear friend.

Beryl had a dog called Buller, a tough bull terrier and English sheep dog mix who had survived many fights, including a near mauling by a leopard, when Beryl was a small child. Beryl and Buller would often go off hunting with the Masai Murani people. Beryl recalled one time in particular when she and Buller snuck off to join a hunting party early in the morning before Beryl's father could make her sit down for her studies. Beryl and Buller went to the village of the Murani people and waited at the hut of the Murani leaders in silence.

Beryl's father began a large enterprise when he moved to Africa, beginning not only a farm but also a business that included both a mill to make flour and a sawmill to cut wood for the trains. The author's purpose here seems to be to show the reader that her father was a smart businessman and a member of the upper social class of their native Britain. The author also introduces the Delamere's, including Lady Delamere who was perhaps the only female influence Beryl had as a child since her mother had not remained in Africa with her and her father. The introduction of Lady Delamere is important not only because it touches on the theme of friendship, but also because it goes deeper into Beryl's childhood and illustrates some of the things that perhaps turned her into such a trailblazing woman later in her life.



# Book 2, Chapter 7, Praise God for the Blood of the Bull

## Book 2, Chapter 7, Praise God for the Blood of the Bull Summary and Analysis

The leader of the Murani, Arab Maina, held up a gourd filled with bull's blood and curdled milk to drink as an offering to God for the strength to make a good hunt. After the ceremony, Arab Murani, Arab Kosky, and Beryl set out on the hunt with Buller and a pack of native dogs. Before they are very far into their hunt, they come across a reed-buck. Arab Maina kills the animal before it can complete a single leap. Arab Kosky and Beryl skin the animal and cut off some of its meat for the dogs to eat before continuing their hunt.

The hunting party moved into a salt-lick where they expect to find wild boar. However, on this day all was silent, confusing the hunting party briefly. When they saw the lion lounging in the sun, they understood the silence. The lion moved toward them and they toward it, a battle of wills that ended suddenly when the lion allowed them to walk away unchallenged. Beryl was disappointed because she had hoped to use her spear on the animal.

They continued to the Molo River where they stopped for a rest. They moved on until they found a field where there were warthog. The dogs scattered a group of the hogs that were in a grassy field nearby. Arab Maina threw his spear at one hog and was forced to chase it down in order to retrieve the spear. Arab Kosky and Beryl followed another pig that Buller was chasing. Beryl was concerned for Buller because she knew that he could be badly injured by these hogs. Arab Kosky, Beryl, and Buller trapped a hog in its hole and tried everything they could to get it out but failed. When they were ready to leave, Arab Kosky bent down at the hole one more time. The hog flew out and cut him on the thigh with its tusk. Buller ran after the hog and Beryl ran after Buller alone while Arab Kosky made his way back to the village for medical attention.

Beryl was able to track Buller due to his barks and from the blood trail either Buller or the hog were leaving on the vegetation. When Beryl finally caught up with the dog, she found him half dead alongside the hog. Beryl killed the hog when it attacked and sat down with her dog, waiting for someone to help. Beryl was afraid that Buller would die this time. However, when Arab Maina finally found her, he assured her that Buller would be fine in time. Beryl fell asleep while they waited for the moon to come out so they would have light to walk home by.

The theme of adventure is very evident in this chapter. Beryl went on a hunting trip with the native members of a local tribe as though she were one of their sons. These people treated Beryl as a boy, although she was neither a part of their tribe nor of the right gender. This goes again to the author's thesis that she was surrounded by men as a



child and therefore grew up to do things that were traditionally reserved for men. The theme of adventure enters this chapter not only in Beryl's inclusion in the hunting trip but the dangers she faced that day. First, there was a reed-buck that was probably big enough to kill the small child, then a wild lion, and finally a group of warthogs, one of which nearly killed her dog. This is not a happy place where Beryl grew up; it was dangerous. Beryl knew that, but to her it was all one big adventure.



# Book 2, Chapter 8, And We Be Playmates, Thou and I

## Book 2, Chapter 8, And We Be Playmates, Thou and I Summary and Analysis

Buller was taken home and slowly healed. There would be no more hunting parties, however. The First World War had begun and things began to change on the farm. Arab Maina was killed fighting in the war. Beryl had become friends with Arab Main's son, Kibii, who would often tell her of the great things he would do when he became circumcised and became a man. They would play games together as well, with Kibii teaching Beryl native games. Once, Beryl played one of these games with a Nandi boy. When she won, the boy took out his frustration at losing by stabbing her in the leg.

Kibii also taught Beryl to hunt, once taking her into the woods to convince a Wandorobo to give them poison for their arrow tips. However, the man refused. They would also attend parties and native dances at the local farms. Kibii did not like these parties and dances, but would attend anyway. Beryl and Kibii would talk often, Kibii telling Beryl his philosophies about life, including how the Chameleon caused there to be death in the world by allowing the Egret to deliver his speech of death before the Chameleon could deliver his speech of eternal life.

The author's purpose in this chapter is threefold. First, the author wanted the reader to see how the outside world had intruded upon her normal existence. The war broke out and caused tension around the farm. It also caused the death of Beryl's friend, Arab Maina. This death must have been profound for Beryl at the time. The second purpose is to introduce to the reader an important person in Beryl's life, Kibii, the son of Arab Maina. Kibii is a good friend of Beryl's when she is a child, touching on the theme of friendship. Kibii will later become an important friend and servant to her in her adulthood. Finally, the author introduces the games and philosophies that filled Beryl's life in her childhood, helping to explain how Beryl grew up to be the woman she became.



## Book 2, Chapter 9, Royal Exile

### Book 2, Chapter 9, Royal Exile Summary and Analysis

Beryl's father bought a racehorse from England who was of a long, prestigious bloodline, named Camciscan. This horse was very strong and prideful, unsure of his new surroundings and difficult to train. Beryl would clean out his stall every day and the horse would shy away to the corner of his stall the whole time she was inside it. Beryl would also ride the horse every day. One day, the horse became agitated and threw Beryl from his back, causing her to hit her head on a tree. Beryl came back a week later to resume their routine. A while later, the horse bit Beryl on the leg while she brushed him. Later, while Beryl rode the horse, he reared up and attempted to throw her again. Beryl hit him with the whip until the horse fell onto his back, nearly crushing her. Beryl caressed the horse's sore places and climbed on him again. The horse was sure Beryl loved him, but he still shied away when she came into his stall. However, one night when there was a storm and Beryl came to sleep in his stall with him, the horse stood over her during the night to protect her.

This chapter is interesting because it is written in the horse's point of view. The author states that she had often wondered how the horses at her father's farm saw things, how they felt, so she wrote the chapter the way she imagined the horses might feel. This horse is stubborn and strong-willed, fighting her until they come up with some sort of truce. The author's purpose here was more than likely to give the reader some insight into a horse's behavior in preparation for discussing her years of working as a horse trainer.



# Book 2, Chapter 10, Was There a Horse with Wings

## Book 2, Chapter 10, Was There a Horse with Wings Summary and Analysis

A horse that Beryl's father somehow bought out of Abyssinian was pregnant for the first time and Beryl was in charge of aiding with the birth. Beryl assigned two of her father's men to watch over the horse day and night for any signs of impending labor. Several weeks pass before the horse, Coquette, finally went into labor. Beryl was informed one night by one of her father's men that the horse was lying down. Beryl rushed to the horse's side with her foaling kit, concerned for the horse because it was the mare's first delivery and there was no way to explain to the animal what was about to happen. Beryl and her father's men talk while they wait for the horse to deliver. Suddenly the hoofs appear. Beryl tugged on them to help the mother until the baby was fully delivered and Beryl found that it was a colt. When Beryl stood afterward, she found her father standing at her shoulder. Beryl's father gave the horse to her. Beryl named the colt Pegasus.

The author's purpose with this chapter is to show Beryl's commitment to the horses on her father's farm and her deep affection and knowledge of horses in general. Raising horses was something Beryl grew up with, something she knew intimately at a very young age, and something that would shape the early years of her adulthood as well as the later years of her life. This chapter serves to introduce the reader to the first horse Beryl ever owned, but also introduces a part of her life the reader had not seen up to this point, and foreshadows the next few chapters within the memoir.





# Book 3, Chapter 11, My Trail is North

## Book 3, Chapter 11, My Trail is North Summary and Analysis

Due to a drought that caused production of wheat and corn to fall low, Beryl's father was forced to sell his farm after spending all his available funds to fulfill contracts for his mill. Beryl's father got a job as a horse trainer in Peru and gave her the choice of going with him or staying in Africa. Beryl chose to remain in Africa. Beryl's father advised her to move to Molo, which she did. Beryl left the farm early one morning on Pegasus, leaving her childhood, her deceased dog, and her father behind. Beryl remembered many things about the farm on her ride to Molo, including a baboon her father had befriended that she was forced to kill when it attacked her one afternoon, a fact she never told her father. Beryl also remembered a bird they once knew who had learned how to whistle for the dogs so well that one day they came when called and killed the bird. Molo was a different place, a strange place that she and Pegasus did not find familiar, but they would make a home of it just the same.

The tone of this chapter is much sadder than in the previous chapters due to the subject matter. Beryl and her father were forced to give up the farm because of a drought that made it nearly impossible for her father to fulfill his contracts for flour from his mill. This failure causes Beryl to have to move on, to leave her father to his new job in Peru in order to find her own path; in essence, being forced to grow up and move out on her own for the first time. Beryl is an adult now, beginning her own life, and this chapter begins the narration of this new point in her life, this new direction full of new possibilities.



# Book 3, Chapter 12, Hodi!

## Book 3, Chapter 12, Hodi! Summary and Analysis

Beryl has established herself as a horse trainer in Molo. Many of her father's servants have followed her to Molo and work cleaning the stalls, but Beryl wished that she had a servant who could help her train the horses. Beryl sat alone in her hut one night writing a letter to her father when someone arrived at her door. It was Arab Ruta, who she once knew as Kibii. Arab Ruta had grown up and become a man by the traditions of his tribe. Now Arab Ruta would like to work with Beryl and the horses. Beryl was saddened by the change in their relationship with her as the master now and Kibii the servant, but she was happy to have her friend back and to have help with the horses.

Beryl's stables became full and her life busy. One day, she was riding Pegasus on the road when she came across a man working on the engine of his car. Although she did not know this man, Beryl stopped to offer help. The man did not need her help, but they talked for a while about cars and airplanes. The man, Tom Black, had learned to fly in the war and greatly enjoyed it. Beryl would meet this man again a few years later and he would change her life.

The author's purpose in this chapter is to introduce new characters. The author introduces Arab Ruta, who is Beryl's childhood friend, Kibii, all grown up. This is important because Beryl has begun her first career, horse training, and she will need Arab Ruta's help with this endeavor. The second character introduced is Tom Black. Although this does not seem significant at first, the reader quickly discovers that this is the man who will teach Beryl how to fly, the man who will change her life and help her walk into the history books. This chapter foreshadows later chapters in which Beryl will meet this man again and they will begin to change each other's futures.



## Book 3, Chapter 13, Na Kupa Hati M'zuri

### Book 3, Chapter 13, Na Kupa Hati M'zuri Summary and Analysis

Beryl was in the Muthaiga Club the night before the Saint Leger horse race, attempting not to get too nervous about the race. Two horses that Beryl trained will be in the race the next day: Wrack, a horse Beryl trained until a few weeks before when the owner decided Beryl was too young to be a good trainer, and Wise Child, a filly whose first trainer was inexperienced and caused tendon damage in her front legs from working her too hard on a hard track. Beryl was concerned that, although she had worked hard with Wise Child and prepared her well, her legs would fail her during the race.

Beryl prepared the horse for the race with Ruta, more nervous than ever when she watched her move out to the field next to Wrack. Eric, Wise Child's owner, has made a bet for the two of them, confident that Wise Child will win. Beryl was not so confident. When the race began, Wrack moved into the front as expected. However, Wise Child quickly closed the distance and took the lead. Near the end, it appeared that Wise Child's legs were about to give out on her, but Wise Child gave it all she had and won the race. Eric retired Wise Child after the race.

The author's purpose in this chapter was to show what a great horse trainer Beryl was in her early days. The author wants the reader to know that Beryl did not turn to flying because she was a bad trainer but because she had accomplished one of the highest goals of her profession and was ready to reach some higher goals. Beryl took an injured horse and turned her into a race winning horse. Beryl performed an amazing task by training Wise Child to win that race. The tone of this chapter is excited, nervous, but not pompous. The author does not pat herself on the back, though she does give the horse a lot of credit for the win. This goes to Beryl's personality, her motivations, and her character elements. Beryl did not feel this was her accomplishment as much as the horse's, although it was an amazing accomplishment for both.



## Book 3, Chapter 14, Errands of the Wind

### Book 3, Chapter 14, Errands of the Wind Summary and Analysis

Airplanes were beginning to make their presence known in Africa, although they were still a novelty. Back in Nairobi, Beryl watched a plane land and the pilot turned out to be Tom Black. Tom had brought a man who had been mauled by a lion after making the mistake of stopping to photograph the animal after he and his companions had shot it. One man died and this man was near death. It was while visiting with Tom this time that Beryl decided she wanted to learn how to fly. Ruta was supportive of her decision.

The author's purpose here is to show how Beryl began her second career as a pilot. Tom rescued a man who had been mauled by a lion the man thought was dead but was not. It was not so much the story that attracted Beryl, but the idea of flying around the African wilds and helping people. These are two character elements that the author has previously established in other chapters; therefore, the reader should not be surprised to see them come into play in this chapter.



## Book 4, Chapter 15, Birth of Life

### Book 4, Chapter 15, Birth of Life Summary and Analysis

Tom began to teach Beryl how to fly. Tom had never taught anyone to fly before and found it difficult to explain things that were rooted in intuition and instinct. Tom taught her to trust in her compass above all else and he refused to speak to her while they were in the air because he wanted her to learn by making mistakes. As part of Tom's job as managing director of Wilson Airways, Tom was required to scout new routes. One time while he was teaching Beryl, they were flying back from one of these scouting missions and Beryl had control of the plane. They were flying toward a mountain and Beryl could not get the plane to gain altitude no matter what she did. Tom eventually took the controls and later explained about downdraft.

Eighteen months after beginning lessons, Beryl got her B license giving her the right to take on passengers and cargo. Beryl had given up horse training altogether, except for Pegasus. Ruta had come with her to Nairobi, caring for the plane as he had the horses. It was also during this time that Beryl lost a close friend. Denys Finch-Hatton was another Englishman living in Africa. Denys was a White Hunter who could also fly. Denys suggested to Beryl that it might be possible to scout elephant from an airplane for safaris. Denys asked her to fly with him to Voi to check out his idea. At first Beryl agreed to go, but after Tom asked her not to, Beryl decided to stay on the ground and catch up on her flying logs. A few days later Beryl learned that Denys' plane crashed upon takeoff in Voi.

The author's purpose here is not only to inform the reader as to how Beryl learned to fly, but to once again touch on the theme of adventure and show the reader how dangerous flying can be. The author learned how to fly by instinct, thanks to the careful or uncommunicative teachings of her good friend Tom Black. Instinct was an important part of life in Africa; therefore, this way of learning to fly was something Beryl quickly understood and was able to implement. The death of her friend was tragic, though the tone of the story is almost as whimsical as the rest of the book, and it served as a reminder of just how deep Tom's instincts went and how dangerous flying can be. There is also foreshadowing in this story. If the reader will recall, Denys went to Voi in order to discover if scouting elephants from the air was possible. This is something that will be touched on again later in the memoir.



# Book 4, Chapter 16, Ivory and Sansevieria

## Book 4, Chapter 16, Ivory and Sansevieria Summary and Analysis

Many months later, Beryl received a letter from Tom, who had moved to England, asking her not to scout elephants from the air. Tom was concerned that the areas in which Beryl needed to fly did not have safe landing areas and that she could crash or be stranded for long periods of time. Beryl wrote back that she was careful, but she had one more job to do and she intended to do it. Beryl has gotten a telegram the same day from Baron von Blixen making the final arrangements for a safari he has organized. Beryl loaded up her plane with supplies and flew out to Blix's camp.

This chapter begins by fulfilling the foreshadowing of the chapter before with regard to the elephant scouting. Beryl had decided to fulfill Denys' desire to scout the elephants from the air and was making good money at it, although Tom had told her it was dangerous. This goes to Beryl's character, showing her stubborn side. This chapter also sets up the next few in which the reader will tag along as Beryl goes on safari with Blix.



# Book 4, Chapter 17, I May Have to Shoot Him

## Book 4, Chapter 17, I May Have to Shoot Him Summary and Analysis

Beryl had the opinion that it was crazy for men to hunt elephant, considering the size difference between the two animals. Beryl also mentions that elephants appear to bury or hide their dead because the only dead elephants anyone has ever seen have been the ones killed on safari for their tusks. Beryl believed that these stories were just legend designed by the imaginations of people who hunted their ivory. Beryl was the first person to scout elephant by plane and she noticed that the elephants would attempt to guard the male elephants, the ones with the best tusks, from the plane in order to protect themselves from the humans.

After arriving at the camp, Beryl and Blix climbed back into the plane in order to scout the elephant herds in the area. The idea was to find an elephant herd with two or more males with large tusks within walking distance of the camp. Beryl had heard from the native trackers that there was a herd less than twenty miles from camp with two good bulls. Beryl flew in that direction and found them right where they were supposed to be. After surveying the area, Beryl turned the plane around to return to camp. Three miles from camp, they saw two bulls. Upon landing, they decided to walk back and scout the two, with Makula, a native scout.

When they approached the elephants, Makula disappeared, leaving them to their exploring. Beryl and Blix walked around the elephants, attempting to see their tusks, when one of the elephants became aware of them by scent. Elephants are blind at a great distance, so Beryl and Blix dropped to the ground hoping the elephant would not be able to see them. They crawled to what they thought was a safe distance, but rose to find the elephant only a few feet away. Beryl stood behind Blix who had a gun. Blix hesitated to kill the elephant. Finally, the elephant screamed and then ran off with his companions. Back at camp Beryl asked Blix why he did not shoot the elephant and he explained that the elephant was meant for the client, Winston Guest.

The author's thesis here is about the hunting of animals. Beryl was of the opinion that hunting animals was a natural state of things, that there was nothing cruel about it. Beryl did not see the point in hunting elephants, but did not think it was much different from hunting birds, fish, or lions. Beryl also thought of the animals as intelligent and mysterious, putting most of this mystery down to the imaginations of men who made money from the ivory they stole from the beasts.

Beryl and Blix find themselves in a situation in which either they kill an elephant or they are trampled to death. Beryl felt that Blix should have killed the elephant, but Blix held off because the point of the safari was for the client, Winston Guest, to kill the



elephants. This section of the chapter touches on the theme of adventure. There is nothing more adventurous than facing down a bull elephant and living to tell about it. Not only that, but also this chapter hints at Beryl's femininity for the first time in the memoir. Beryl clearly thought that Blix should have killed the elephant if for no other reason than to protect her. Blix was the man, protecting Beryl. This will be the only time in the memoir that Beryl will suggest that her feminine gender was something that should afford her protection from her male counterparts.





# Book 4, Chapter 18, Captives of Rivers

## Book 4, Chapter 18, Captives of Rivers Summary and Analysis

Blix told the story of their near death experience with great narration and believable tension. Winston killed the elephant and found the elephant's size to be wanting. Beryl and Blix took to the skies again and found a large bull elephant near a place called Ithumba. The camp packed up to go after this bull elephant almost immediately. Blix, Winston, and fifteen porters took off on the fifteen-mile trek to find the elephant with the intention of moving on to Ithumba the next day and establishing a new camp there. Beryl decided to fly to Nyeri to have repairs done on her plane and to meet the new camp at Ithumba in three days.

Beryl went to the coffee plantation, Seramai, owned by a friend, J.C. Carberry, for the repairs. Carberry was pilot before the First World War and he had a good mechanic. On the third day, Carberry gave Beryl a bottle of gin for a member of Blix's party. Beryl flew to Ithumba and found the camp without too much trouble, but Blix and his group had not arrived. Since they had taken little food with them, Beryl set out to find them. It took a while for Beryl to find them, but eventually she saw smoke from their fire. Beryl saw the airstrip they had cleared for her and thought that it looked too rough and too short. Beryl sent down a message saying she would return when they lengthened the airstrip.

This chapter introduces a new character that will prove to be an important figure later in the memoir. It also introduces new terrain to the already rich descriptions of Africa. The theme of adventure again shows itself here as Beryl's friend, Blix, has gotten himself lost or otherwise marooned in the wilds of Africa while attempting to make his way to their new camp in Ithumba. Just as Tom Black predicted in an earlier chapter, Beryl has found herself in a situation where she might have to land in an area that is not adequate to her needs. This foreshadows the next chapter in which Beryl will be forced to land in order to help her friends.



## Book 4, Chapter 19, What of the Hunting, Hunter Bold?

### Book 4, Chapter 19, What of the Hunting, Hunter Bold? Summary and Analysis

Blix and Winston continued to build up the fire and wave so frantically that Beryl realized they were in real need of her landing. Beryl landed on the airstrip, afraid of the damage that might be done by the roots and stumps that the plane stumbled over. The plane stopped without damage, however. The two men took the bottle of gin meant for another man and shared it while they told Beryl how they had run out of food and the porters had gone on strike. Blix and Winston had cleared the airstrip themselves, a feat difficult enough for men used to hard work.

Despite their mutiny, Blix was concerned about his porters. Blix insisted that Beryl take Winston back to camp and return with food before taking him to camp. Beryl did this and then returned a third time for Makula. Makula refused to enter the plane in the beginning, being a native man who feared such technology. The safari would need Makula, however, so Beryl insisted, finally getting the man into her plane. Makula flew the whole distance with a blanket over his head. That night, Beryl thought about her life in Africa, about Tom in England, and decided she would like to go back to England for a while. Beryl asked Blix to come with her. Beryl visited her father before leaving. Beryl's father mentioned his amazement at Tom's successful win of the International Air Race.

Beryl, once again touching on the theme of adventure, rescues Blix and Winston after they found themselves stranded without food. The men are a mess, but glad to see her and the bottle of gin she carried in her plane. Beryl, despite the dangerously short runway, managed to land and take off three times in her rescue efforts, taking both men to safety as well as their scout, and bringing food for the porters who had gone on strike. This story, about the porters and their strike, shows the deep character of Blix in a way that had not been seen in previous chapters. Despite the porters' refusal to help build the runway, leaving Blix and Winston to do the difficult work, Blix was still concerned for their welfare. Blix demanded that Beryl take Winston to safety and bring back food for the porters before his own rescue could be discussed. When Beryl decided she wanted to return to England, she decided to take Blix with her, almost as if on a whim, foreshadowing the next few chapters. Beryl also went to visit her father before leaving, underscoring the close relationship they still have with each other and perhaps foreshadowing Beryl's desire to achieve the same sort of greatness Tom achieved in order to win her father's praise.



# Book 4, Chapter 20, Kwaheri Means Farewell

## Book 4, Chapter 20, Kwaheri Means Farewell Summary and Analysis

Beryl and Blix left early one foggy morning from Nairobi on their six thousand five hundred mile trip to England. Beryl had flown this route before, solo several times, so this trip was not historical. At the time, women were not allowed to fly solo between Juba and Wadi Halfa without permission from the RAF, because it was a swamp that would leave a pilot stranded without hope of rescue if he or she were forced to land. Beryl had flown the route solo several times. Beryl and Blix flew a thousand miles a day for three days before being forced to stay grounded for a week in Cairo. They needed permission to fly over Italian held territories and it took them six days to achieve this permission. After landing in Cairo on the first night, Beryl received a prediction from the customs official that fancied himself a fortuneteller. The man told Beryl she would fly over great water to a strange country.

The author's purpose in this chapter is to share with the reader how difficult it was to fly from Africa to England, mostly because of the red tape one must ford while flying over territory controlled by different countries. To a bush pilot, allowed to fly almost anywhere, this must have been frustrating to Beryl. This chapter also foreshadows the next in which Beryl and Blix must wait for permission to continue their flight out of Cairo. Also foreshadowed here is Beryl's flight over the Atlantic as the fortune-telling customs official tries to tell her fortune despite Blix's cynicism.



# Book 4, Chapter 21, Search for a Libyan Fort

## Book 4, Chapter 21, Search for a Libyan Fort Summary and Analysis

In the past, Beryl had always gotten permission to fly out of Cairo quickly due to an official she had known. However, this official was not in town that week, so Beryl and Blix were forced to get a hotel room and wait. Blix passed the time drinking with friends who happened to be in town. Blix could normally drink his friends under the table, but on the fifth night they were in town, Blix met up with someone who could match him drink for drink. Early the next morning, Blix knocked on Beryl's door and told her a head had rolled from a body. Beryl, having no idea what he meant, let him into her room. Blix explained that he was walking home from the bars when he saw a head lying at his feet. Certain that it was just a hallucination; Blix began to walk past it. However, other people on the street could clearly see the head. Blix picked it up when he realized that a man had been hit by a tram. They received their okay to fly out that day.

They landed in Amseat, where they once again had to receive permission from the Italian government to continue. After some confusion among the officials, they were finally allowed to continue, but they were told they would have to circle over three forts. Beryl searched out and found the first two, but was tired when it came to the last and decided to skip it.

Blix's experiences after his drinking binge is simply a funny story told with a tone that belies the seriousness of the situation and the amusement with which one would probably tell such a story at a party. Beryl related the story within her narration as though she were telling about navigation and flight logs. The story is funny, even when told in such a deadpan way, and it again goes to the character of Blix, a man who likes to have a good time and who is truly grounded in this world.

The trouble they have with the Italian government foreshadows the next chapter in which they continue to have this bureaucratic difficulty. Beryl was an obedient person, but even she did not see the point in circling the three forts and chose not to do so with the last. This goes to the absurdity of the requests and the difficulty of flying through Africa at the time.



# Book 4, Chapter 22, Benghazi by Candlelight

## Book 4, Chapter 22, Benghazi by Candlelight Summary and Analysis

They land in Benghazi late in the evening. The officials appeared to not know about the forts they were supposed to circle and there was no punishment for their failure to circle the last fort. However, they have to go through so much paperwork that it was very late by the time they are released to find a hotel. All the hotels in the area are full and they are forced to take two rooms at a local brothel. While helping the madam make dinner, Blix learned her life story, including the fact that she was stolen as a small child and that she would like to return to her home country. Blix told Beryl that he intended to give the woman some money to help with her journey home.

Several days later they left Africa with some regret, Beryl convinced that the Africa she had once known would forever be lost to her and that should she return she would not find the same world she had grown up in. They continue on to Cagliari where they are detained for two days because the officials do not believe Beryl was a woman. Once they left Cagliari, they flew into the only bad weather of the trip. There was a thunderstorm and, unable to turn around, Beryl was forced to fly over the clouds. They made it safely to Paris and the following day there were in London.

This chapter is the closing of a circle that began at the beginning of the memoir. Beryl's life had begun once she arrived in Africa, and Africa was all she had ever known. Now, as she flew out of the country she loved, she knew she would never return to find it the same way it was when she grew up among its wilds. Beryl did eventually return to Africa but it was not the same, due to technological advances. The end of the chapter in which Beryl related the bad weather they hit between Cagliari and Cannes foreshadows later events in which Beryl was again forced to face difficulties in the air.



# Book 4, Chapter 23, West with the Night

## Book 4, Chapter 23, West with the Night Summary and Analysis

Beryl got a phone call early in the morning letting her know that this day would be the best weather for a flight she had planned between London and New York. Beryl was about to embark on a historic flight from east to west over the Atlantic, nonstop and solo. The idea had begun at a dinner party when someone suggested to her friend Carberry that he finance such a flight. Carberry did, commissioning a special plan be built with fuel tanks all around the fuselage in order to provide the plan with enough fuel for the flight. Beryl oversaw the building of the Vega Gull at the Percival Aircraft Works in Gravesend, attempting to ignore the implications of the name Gravesend and the translation of the name of Carberry's farm, Place of Death.

Jim Mollison, the first man to fly solo from Ireland to Canada, gave Beryl his watch and Brian Lewis gave her a life jacket, which she left behind. Jock Cameron, the mechanic, gave Beryl a sprig of heather. Beryl climbed into her plane late that evening and took off. There was some concern that the plane would be too heavy to fly with all the fuel tanks, but it took off just fine. The first time Beryl had to switch over the fuel tanks, the plane lost altitude quickly before the engine came to life again. However, she continued her flight until she was down to the final tank. Within sight of Cape Breton, the plane began to sputter as though it was running out of fuel, but the tank had just been switched. Beryl did all she could to keep the plane in the air, but the engine finally cut out and she was forced to crash land in a swamp in Nova Scotia. Beryl hit her head on the windshield and cut her forehead. A local farmer later found Beryl. Beryl was disappointed and felt the flight was a failure.

This is the chapter that finally discusses the event that made Beryl Markham a person the average reader might want to read about. Beryl Markham was the first person to fly from east to west, from London, across the Atlantic. Although Lindbergh had flown west to east nine years earlier and Mollison had flown from Ireland, Beryl was the first to fly from London. Beryl had the headwinds rather than the tail winds that aided Lindbergh's flight, so it was a significant flight without even taking into account that Beryl was a woman. This is where the theme of overcoming obstacles comes into the narration. Beryl, without consciously intending to, had driven over many obstacles that kept women out of planes in her time and ways of thinking that continue to keep women from making great strides in all modern advances. Beryl was a pioneer. Ironically, she thought of her flight as a failure.



# Book 4, Chapter 24, The Sea Will Take Small Pride

## Book 4, Chapter 24, The Sea Will Take Small Pride Summary and Analysis

Beryl boarded a boat to return home to Africa with a folder full of articles and letters about her flight. Beryl arrived in New York and later in London after her flight and found she had become a celebrity. The only thing to take the shine from her newfound fame was the death of Tom Black. Tom had been killed during her historic flight. Tom was preparing for another air race when an RAF bomber hit his plane. The plane was gone as well. Carberry sold it to a man who allowed it to deteriorate.

This chapter simply brings an end to the story of Beryl Markham up to this point in her life. Beryl returned home to show her father the wonderful thing she had done and to share her newfound fame with him, the one constant in her life, the closest man in her life. The death of Tom Black must have been devastating to Beryl, though the tone of the book does not change when she mentions his death. The death of the airplane seemed to affect her more, since the tone when she speaks of the plane is darker, sadder. The saddest tone of all, however, is when Beryl mentioned Africa. Beryl would never get over the changes in her beloved Africa.



# **Characters**

**Beryl Markham**

**Tom Black**

**Blix**

**Kibii, Arab Ruta**

**J.C. Carberry**

**Denys Finch-Hatton**

**C.B. Clutterbuck**

**Bishon Singh**

**Lord and Lady Elkington**

**Arab Maina and Arab Kosky**





# Objects/Places

## D.H. Gypsy Moth

Tom Black taught Beryl how to fly in a D.H. Gypsy Moth.

## Avro Avian

The Avro Avian is a small two-person plane that Beryl flew in Africa when she was a bush pilot.

## The Messenger

The *Messenger* was the specially designed airplane, a Vega Gull, that Beryl flew from London and crash landed in Nova Scotia.

## German Klemm Monoplane

German Klemm Monoplane is the name of the plane Woody was flying for the East African Airways when the plane failed and he was stranded for three days. Beryl made it clear in her narration that the Klemm was not suited for flying in the largely unpopulated areas of Africa.

## Nandi Murani

The Nandi Murani was a native tribe of African people who lived near the area where Beryl's father had his farm. Beryl spent most of her childhood playing and hunting with the people of this tribe.

## Elkington's Farm

Elkington's Farm is where the tame lion once lived that mauled Beryl when she was a small child.

## Nairobi

Nairobi is the capitol of Kenya in East Africa. Beryl lived most of her life in and around Nairobi.



## **Nungwe**

Nungwe was a small mining town west and south of Nairobi when Beryl was a bush pilot.

## **Njoro**

Njoro, near Nairobi, was where Beryl's father built and ran his farm from 1902 until its bankruptcy in 1920.

## **London**

London is a city in England. This is where Beryl began her historic flight.

## **East West Flight**

In 1927, Charles Lindbergh flew from west to east over the Atlantic for the first solo non-stop flight between North America and England with the wind at his back. In 1932, Jim Mollison flew solo from east to west from Ireland to Canada into a headwind. In 1936, Beryl Markham was the first person to fly solo, non-stop east to west, leaving from England.

# Themes

## Adventure

The main theme of the book is about adventure. Beryl Markham's life is set out within the pages of the book like one long adventure, beginning with the search for a downed pilot, suggesting the danger of flying in the wilds of Africa, and ending with a historic flight that ended before its scheduled landing. Beryl was a woman who lived with the natives of a foreign land, hunting in near nakedness beside tribal leaders, killing the dangerous hogs of the region with her own spear and being mauled by wild lions. There was nothing about Beryl's life that was not an adventure.

Even the tone of the memoir suggests that life was nothing but one new challenge after another to Beryl. Beryl talked about raising horses with her father, about falling off the horses and learning to read their spirit. Beryl talked about training horses to win the biggest races in Africa and then moving on to be the first pilot to scout elephants from a plane for the many safaris that took place in Africa in those days. Beryl became bored with these pursuits and decided to move back to England, quickly becoming embroiled in a plan to be the first person to fly from London to New York, nonstop. Beryl talked about all these things as though it were as simple as deciding what to have for lunch. Beryl's tone throughout the book is straightforward and almost whimsical, discussing a world that no longer existed for her.

Adventure is about doing things never tried before, about doing things that involve risk. Everyday living for Beryl involved risk, if the reader is to believe the stories Beryl weaved throughout her narrative. Beryl was mauled by a lion, stabbed by a native boy, thrown from countless horses, and rescued downed pilots. Beryl was an adventure, from the moment she began to walk and talk.

## Overcoming Obstacles

In the society of the early 1900s, there were certain understood etiquettes that people followed. Men were supposed to work for their income, though if they were of the upper classes, they were not to work at manual labor. Women were expected to dress nicely, speak softly, and spend their days spreading charity and planning parties. Women were not supposed to wear trousers, fly airplanes, and pilot historical flights.

Beryl, despite never mentioning the obstacles she must have faced within society, lived her life the way she wanted to and not to anyone's expectations but her own. Beryl grew up in Africa among men since her mother was not living with the family in Kenya. Beryl played with the sons of the local native tribes, lived around animals as diverse as horses and lions, and spent her days with hunting parties rather than tutors. Beryl was a free spirit, allowed to roam the wilds of Africa with little restriction. This created for Beryl a world in which she felt she could do anything she chose to do. Beryl did just that.



Beryl became one of the first women in Africa to receive a license to train horses and one of the horses she trained won a prestigious race in Africa despite having previous tendon injuries. Shortly after this, Beryl became one of the first women bush pilots in Africa and the first to scout elephants for safari parties. Beryl did not just overcome obstacles; she plowed over them as though they did not exist. Beryl was a role model for women the world over and appeared to be unaware of her leadership. Beryl never mentions within her memoir the struggles she undoubtedly faced while achieving each of her goals, but the example she left behind will continue to inspire her readers, men and women alike, for many years to come.

## Friendship

Another important thematic element to this memoir is friendship. Beryl had many friends in Africa during the period in which her memoir takes place. Many of these friends are directly responsible for many of Beryl's accomplishments. Tom Black, her flight instructor, was not only responsible for Beryl getting her pilot's license, but he was also her inspiration for attempting her historic flight. Blix was another friend who encouraged Beryl to scout for elephants for the many safaris he planned and guided during his time in Africa. Blix also accompanied Beryl on her flight from Africa to England shortly before her historic flight.

Beryl had many other friends; some were friends of her father who had direct influence on her success as a horse trainer. Another friend encouraged her and paid for her plane when she made her historic flight. Others helped her with her planes and her animals, and others taught her many things that she carried with her throughout her life, including the words of wisdom shared with her by the leader of a tribe near her father's farm in Kenya.

Friendship influenced and shaped Beryl, helping her to become the person she was. Beryl gave credit to many of these friends throughout her memoir, making it clear to the reader that her successes were a combination of things, not only her skills and luck. The deepest friendship Beryl seemed to have was the one she shared with her father. Beryl spoke of her father with great affection throughout the memoir, never analyzing or describing in great detail their unique relationship, ending the book with her desire to show him her success in the form of all the letters and articles written about her historic flight.

# Style

## Perspective

This book is a non-fiction memoir of the life of Beryl Markham, a horse trainer, bush pilot, and groundbreaking aviatrix. Beryl was a British citizen who, from the age of three, grew up in Kenya, or as it was called at the time, British Africa. Beryl grew up among the natives of the area and the animals indigenous to the area, causing her to have a very unusual childhood. Beryl was also one of the first women to receive her horse training license and then to also receive her commercial pilot's license. Beryl overcame many obstacles that other women of her time were forced to face and lived an adventurous life.

Beryl's reasons for writing this memoir were to celebrate her life, share with others her experiences, and share her experience of being the first person to fly east to west over the Atlantic, from London to New York. Although Beryl failed in her intended destination, she found herself an object of fame and glory after her flight, something that both surprised and delighted her. Beryl had become a part of history and she chose to write this book in order to make sure her version of events became another part of that history.

Beryl's intended audience was more than likely her friends and family, as well as other adventurers who might follow in her footsteps. Beryl wrote the book in such a way that there is no suggestion that what she did in her lifetime was anything heroic or special. In fact, Beryl's narration suggests that everything that happened in her life was just the result of hard work and happenstance. Beryl simply shares a story and gives the impression of having wanted to set the record straight without any embellishments or suggestions of grandeur.

## Tone

The tone of Beryl's memoir is subjective, as would be with any autobiographical work. Throughout the book, Beryl discussed her childhood and early adulthood in Africa, her adopted country. Beryl spoke of the country with great affection, implying to the reader that it was quite normal to have lions living in your front yard. Even when discussing times of tragedy, Beryl wrote with a sense of whimsy that implied to the reader that she never really blamed her environment or the animals of the wilds for the sorrow they brought to her world.

This tone makes it easy for the reader to get lost in the narration and to feel as though they know the Africa in which Beryl grew up. This tone also takes the tragedy from Beryl's experiences. There is one point in which Beryl described how, when she was visiting a neighbor as a small child, she was attacked and mauled by a lion. Not only does Beryl not dwell on the viciousness of the attack, but she showed more grief for the



fate of the lion in her narrative than she did for her own body. Beryl never told the reader the extent of her injuries, nor did she dwell on her recovery or her physical pain. In this way, the tone of the book shows the reader that Africa and its animals were much more important to Beryl than her own experiences.

Toward the end of the book Beryl began to spend more narrative space on her own thoughts and feelings, sharing with the reader her experiences as she came to the point of making a historical flight and as she made the flight. Beryl never does get overly emotional throughout her narration, but she does add such rich detail in the final chapters that the reader can feel her disappointment at having missed her planned destination at the end of her historic flight. The tone changed at this point, becoming less whimsy and more dramatic. However, the moment the flight was over, her tone once again assumes an almost cynical tone as Beryl talked about her trip home to show her father her accomplishment. Beryl has returned to the child, her father's daughter within these final paragraphs of her story.

## Structure

The book is divided into four parts and twenty-four chapters. The first part of the book takes place in the years shortly after Beryl began to fly as a bush pilot and before her historic flight. During the course of this first part, Beryl met an old friend, leading her to remember her childhood. This transitions into the second part of the novel in which Beryl discussed her early childhood. The next part covers Beryl's early adulthood shortly after her father's farm went bankrupt, and how she became a horse trainer in another part of Africa and met Tom Black, who taught her how to fly. The final part of the book covers Beryl's decision to move back to England and her decision to make her historic flight, and the flight itself.

This structure is straightforward, although the timeline is smudged at times, causing the reader to wonder how much time has passed between chapters. Beryl does not stop her narration to mention dates or her own age; therefore, the reader is often unsure of what year the narration takes place in or at what age these things occurred within Beryl's life. There are also certain facts within Beryl's life that she often neglected to mention within her narration, including three marriages, two of which occurred during the narration of her memoir. However, the structure is solid and easy to read overall, leaving the reader with a clear and honest tale of one woman's life in Africa.



## Quotes

"How is it possible to bring order out of memory?"

Book 1, Chapter 1, Message from Nungwe, p. 3

"Moreover, it seemed that the printers of the African maps had a slightly malicious habit of including, in large letters, the names of town, junctions, and villages which, while most of them did exist in fact, as a group of thatched huts may exist or a water hole, they were usually so inconsequential as completely to escape discovery from the cockpit."

Book 1, Chapter 3, The Stamp of Wilderness, p. 32

"Why I ran at all or with what purpose in mind is beyond my answering, but when I had no specific destination I always ran as fast as I could in the hope of finding one--and I always found one." Book 2, Chapter 5, He was a Good Lion, p. 57

"I drove the blunt end of my spear into the ground and stood beside it, waiting for the door to open." Book 2, Chapter 6, Still is the Land, p. 70

"There are doubtless better answers, but somehow, nowadays, I prefer Kibii's." Book 2, Chapter 8, And We Be Playmates, Thou and I, p. 97

"A bank clerk handles pounds of gold--none of it his own--but if, one day, that fabulous faery everyone expects, but nobody ever meets, were to give him all this gold for himself--or even part of it--he would be no less overjoyed because he had looked at it daily for years."

Book 2, Chapter 10, Was There a Horse with Wings? p. 115

"Kibii into Arab Ruta--Beru into Memsahib!--this stilted word that ends my youth and reminds me always of its ending--"

Book 3, Chapter 12, Hodi!, p. 134

"How can I compare a race like this to music? Or how can I not?"

Book 3, Chapter 13, Na Kypa Hati M'suri, p. 151

"Tom Black, who liked Life too much to be patient with Death, squatted on his heels through the long afternoon, solaced by an occasional jigger of tepid whiskey, while a pencil of smoke rising from the pyre wrote endlessly its dismal little tale in disturbing and legible script."

Book 3, Chapter 14, Errands of the Wind, p. 161



"In the morning I will be off, but we have said nothing of goodbye. We have learned frugality--even in this." Book 4, Chapter 19, What of the Hunting, Hunter Bold, p. 217

"On the following morning I did step out of a plane at Floyd Bennet Field and there was a crowd of people still waiting there to greet me, but the plane I stepped from was not the Gull, and for days while I was in New York I kept thinking about that and wishing over and over again that it had been the Gull, until the wish lost its significance, and time moved on, overcoming many things it met on the way." Book 4, Chapter 23, West with the Night, p. 258

"And so the little freighter sat upon the sea, and, though Africa came closer day by day, the freighter never moved. She was old and weather weary, and she had learned to let the world come round to her."

Book 4, Chapter 24, The Sea Will Take Small Pride, p. 261





## Topics for Discussion

Do you think Beryl's gender was ever an obstacle to her? Do you think Beryl's gender factored in her decisions in any way? If so, why does Beryl not discuss her gender and its obstacles in more detail within her memoir? Do you think Beryl's memoir would have had the same tone had it been written in a later decade, such as during the sexual revolution?

Why do you think Beryl decided to learn to fly? Beryl suggested that her native friend thought of her planes as he did the horses. Do you think Beryl thought the same way? Do you think Beryl's decision to fly her historic flight was taken as lightly as she portrays in the memoir?

Discuss Beryl's idea of scouting elephants for safaris. Was it a good idea? Why did Tom not want her to do it? Was scouting elephants more dangerous than delivering mail to outposts? Why or why not?

Discuss Beryl's historic flight. Was it a success? What made it a success? Did Beryl's gender have anything to do with the fame she achieved afterward? Did it detract from her success? Why did she not make the flight a second time?

Compare and contrast the flight Beryl made with Blix from Africa to Britain and the historic flight Beryl made from London to Nova Scotia. Beryl spent more time talking about her trip with Blix than her historic flight in this memoir. Why do you think that is? Do you think the first trip held more nostalgia for Beryl, more history in her eyes as a successful flight?

Compare and contrast Africa and Britain. How do you think Beryl's life would have been different had she grown up in Britain? Did her childhood affect her later behaviors? Do you think Africa is the reason Beryl learned to fly and why she took her historic flight?

Discuss the tone of this memoir. From the narrative tone, do you believe Beryl felt her historic flight was as important as her other accomplishments? Beryl spent little time discussing the historic flight as compared to other events in her life. Do you think this is because of the low importance she personally placed on it? Do you think the tone of book stresses the perils of Africa or the important gender obstacles overcome well enough?