

# Crow Country



## INTRODUCTION

### BRIEF BIOGRAPHY OF KATE CONSTABLE

Born in Australia, Kate Constable moved with her family to Papua New Guinea as a child, when her father was relocated there to work as a pilot. In Papua New Guinea, Kate had no access to television, and spent her time reading instead. It was during this period that her love of literature and writing developed. She returned to Australia to study law and arts at the University of Melbourne. After finishing university, she worked for several years at a record company, even as she began to establish a writing career as an author of children's books and young adult literature. Her first books were *The Singer of All Songs* (2002), *The Waterless Sea* (2003), and *The Tenth Power* (2005).

### HISTORICAL CONTEXT

Central to *Crow Country* is the long history of Aboriginals on the continent of Australia. Evidence of the presence of Aboriginal society in Australia dates back at least 40,000 years. For millennia, Aboriginals inhabited the continent, developing a culture that is one of the oldest in human history. And yet, Aboriginals' peaceful existence on the land would come to a violent end when, in 1788, white British settlers claimed the continent for their own, and set about colonizing it. Much of the Aboriginal population was decimated by diseases such as small pox brought by the Europeans, as well as the colonial wars initiated by the British which aimed at subduing the indigenous population. From the moment of British settlement of Australia, Aboriginals experienced extreme oppression and dispossession. Settlers took over Aboriginals' land, and those who survived disease and war were often forced to work either as slaves or for very low wages on the land of white settlers. Furthermore, Aboriginals had to confront repression of their ancient Aboriginal culture, in addition to racism and socioeconomic dispossession. While in recent times the Australian government has been working towards restoring some of the rights and privileges that were unjustly taken from Aboriginals, Aboriginals still occupy a second-class status within contemporary Australian society. In telling of the injustices done to Aboriginal characters such as Jimmy Raven, Walter and David in the town of Boort, Kate Constable refers to this long history of Aboriginal dispossession.

### RELATED LITERARY WORKS

Kate Constable's *Crow Country* is part of a wave of contemporary Australian Children's and YA literature that

deals with Aboriginal identity and history, and delves into the relationship between white and Aboriginal Australians. These books aim to educate young readers about legacies of injustice and discrimination that Aboriginals experienced, including land dispossession, racism, and the destruction of Aboriginal cultural heritage, which have their roots in white colonial settlement of Australia. Books that echo *Crow Country* in dealing with these themes include Sue McPherson's *Brontide* (2018), which chronicles the lives of a group of white and Aboriginal boys and the relationships that they develop with one another in school. *Catching Teller Crow* (2018), written by sibling authors Ambelin and Ezekiel Kwaymullina, explores issues of institutional racism and historical discrimination, through the story of an Aboriginal girl named Beth Teller, who, after her tragic death, returns from the afterworld to help her detective father solve a mystery that reveals deep legacies of racism and discrimination in a small Australian town. Sally Morgan's *Sister Heart* (2015) also deals with legacies of discrimination through the story of a young Aboriginal girl who is separated from the life she knows when she is forcibly taken from her home in north Australia to live in an institution in southern Australia. Like *Crow Country*, books such as *Brontide*, *Catching Teller Crow*, and *Sister Heart* explore Australian history and identity from an Aboriginal perspective, revealing the deep rifts and injustices that have framed relations between white and Aboriginal Australians.

### KEY FACTS

- **Full Title:** *Crow Country*
- **When Written:** 2011
- **Where Written:** Australia
- **When Published:** 2011
- **Literary Period:** Contemporary
- **Genre:** Children's fiction
- **Setting:** Boort, Australia
- **Climax:** Sadie finds Jimmy Raven's "special things."
- **Antagonist:** The Mortlocks
- **Point of View:** Third person

### EXTRA CREDIT

**Setting is All.** In an interview, Kate Constable states that her books usually start with a setting. She must have a strong sense of place before she can begin writing a story.

**Not Just Australia.** While most of Constable's fiction has been set in Australia, her most recent book, *New Guinea Moon*

(2013), is set in Papua New Guinea, the country where she spent a good part of her childhood.



## PLOT SUMMARY

13-year-old Sadie Hazzard must build a whole new life for herself when her mother, Ellie, moves her to **Boort**—a small town in rural Australia where the Hazzards have roots. Sadie isn't very happy to be uprooted to such a small, remote town. But things get interesting when, one day, she stumbles upon a dry lakebed located on the property of a wealthy local family named the Mortlocks. At the lakebed, she finds a mysterious **circle of stones**. It is there that the black crows, which are ubiquitous in the town's landscape, begin speaking to her, telling her that the stone circle is "Crow's place," a special place full of stories.

Things get even stranger when Sadie, visiting the stone circle again one day, has a fainting fit and finds herself in the year 1933, living in her great-aunt's body (who was named Sarah Louise but was also nicknamed Sadie). There, she meets her own great-grandfather Clarry Hazzard and her great-grandmother Jean Hazzard, as well Jimmy Raven and Gerald Mortlock—two friends of her great-grandfather's. At the time of Sadie's time travel to the past, Jimmy Raven and Gerald Mortlock are in a serious conflict over the dam that Gerald Mortlock intends to build on the family's large property of Invergarry in Boort. Jimmy Raven, an Aboriginal man who works for Gerald Mortlock and who served with him and Clarry Hazzard in World War I, wants to stop Mortlock from building the dam, as it will flood an ancient sacred site—the site of the stone circles—which is extremely important to his own Aboriginal people.

On the various other occasions that Sadie is whisked back to the year 1933, she witnesses the escalating conflict between Jimmy Raven and Gerald Mortlock. The conflict ends tragically when Mortlock murders Jimmy Raven, and then seeks help from Clarry Hazzard to cover up the crime. Clarry Hazzard, who is indebted to Mortlock because of a large financial loan he had taken from him, not only helps Mortlock cover up the murder, but involves his daughter Sarah Louise (or Sadie) cover up the crime.

In the present, the crows push Sadie to finish the "story" of Jimmy Raven, whose body, as well as the sacred Aboriginal objects he had on his person when he died, were lost after his murder. She also begins to rethink her liking for Lachie Mortlock, great-grandson of Gerald Mortlock and son of Craig Mortlock, a member of the Mortlock clan that owns the property of Invergarry on which the sacred circle of stone sits. For one thing, Lachie reveals the secret location of the stone circles—which Sadie had shared with him—with his father, even though Sadie had told him not to. Furthermore, like many of the

town's white residents, he demonstrates prejudice towards the town's Aboriginal people, treating Walter, an Aboriginal boy whom Sadie befriends, and who is the nephew of David, her mother's boyfriend, with contempt.

As Sadie overcomes her liking for Lachie, she grows closer to Walter, who, along with his uncle David, happens to be a descendant of Jimmy Raven. It is Walter to whom Sadie confides the fact that the crows are speaking to her, and it is with Walter's help that she searches for and finds the sacred objects—Jimmy Raven's "special things"—that went missing after his death. Furthermore, it is Walter who introduces Sadie to his Auntie Lily, an old woman who is Jimmy Raven's niece, and who is versed in the Aboriginal cultural heritage. Her deep knowledge of the culture helps Sadie and Walter in their search for Jimmy's things.

Sadie and Walter's search for Jimmy Raven's things risks reigniting the cycle of violence that had begun with Gerald Mortlock's murder of Jimmy Raven. The Mortlocks are not happy to have Sadie and Walter snooping around their property, and, when Lachie Mortlock catches the two in the Mortlock house one day after they break in to search of Jimmy's "special things," the confrontation ends in violence at the stone circle. Lachie is seriously wounded. However, Sadie and Walter, rather than leaving Lachie to die, seek help for him.

By time traveling to the past, Sadie manages to locate Jimmy's lost "special things," and gives them to Auntie Lily for safekeeping. Furthermore, a crow shows her and Walter the place on the dry lakebed where Jimmy Raven's body has been secretly buried. As Sadie and Walter restore his grave by putting up a grave marker, Lachie Mortlock appears. He expresses his gratitude to Sadie and Walter for saving his life when he was injured. Together, the three of them begin restoring the graveyard, which also contains the graves of members of the Mortlock family. The relationship between the youngest generation of Hazzards, Mortlocks, and Jimmy Raven's descendants is on the brink of transformation: the three teenagers are on their way to becoming friends.



## CHARACTERS

### MAJOR CHARACTERS

**Sadie Hazzard** – The thirteen-year-old protagonist of *Crow Country*, Sadie moves to the town of **Boort** in Australia with her mother, Ellie Hazzard. Her relationship with her mother is loving, but conflicted at times, given that she feels that her mother doesn't always take into account her desires and needs. Sadie's ancestors, including her great-grandfather Clarry Hazzard, used to live in Boort. Sadie is curious and courageous; although she's frightened at first when the town's crows begin to speak to her at the **stone circle**, drawing her into an old murder mystery, she becomes determined to fulfill the duty

that the crows—representatives of the old Aboriginal spirit Waa the Crow—task her with. Moreover, Sadie is driven by a strong sense of justice and morality, as evidenced by the fact that she tries to provide some kind of resolution and restitution for Jimmy Raven, who was murdered decades earlier by Gerald Mortlock. Sadie's discovery of the stone circle, and her encounter with the crows, leads her back into the history of her own family. For periods at a time, she finds herself inhabiting the body of her great-aunt, Sarah Louise "Sadie" Hazzard. It is through her great-aunt's body that Sadie discovers more about her family's history, as well as her great-grandfather's dark involvement in Jimmy's murder and its cover up. In spite of initially developing a crush on Lachie Mortlock, Sadie changes her mind about him once he proves himself to be untrustworthy by betraying the secrets that she shares with him. She challenges the town's unjust hierarchies and divisions by instead befriending Walter, an Aboriginal boy who is something of an outcast in the town and who has moved there recently, like her. Sadie turns to confiding in Walter, telling him about the speaking crows, as well as her mysterious time travel to the past. By acting with courage and integrity in both her own time and Sarah Louise's, Sadie successfully reshapes the patterns of violence and injustice that have existed in Boort for generations.

**Ellie Hazzard** – Mother to Sadie Hazzard, Ellie is flamboyant and impulsive. Her decision to move her daughter to the town of **Boort**—where Ellie has roots—leads to friction with Sadie. Ellie can often behave in a distracted way, overlooking her daughter's emotions and needs. However, she is also a warm and affectionate mother. Ellie is something of a rebel in the town, given that she repeatedly challenges its social hierarchies, divisions, and taboos. As a teenager, she dated David, an Aboriginal resident of Boort, which the town's residents frowned upon. She recommences the relationship with David upon returning to Boort with Sadie, further ruffling the townspeople's feathers. She also confronts Craig Mortlock about his violent attack on David when they were young, an attack that was partly based on discrimination against David. Ellie's intolerance of injustice, discrimination and prejudice serves as an example to Sadie, who follows in her mother's footsteps by also calling out the injustices perpetrated by some of the town's white citizens against Aboriginals.

**Walter** – An Aboriginal teenager who moves to **Boort** to live with his uncle David after he falls into trouble in Mildura, the town where he was living before. Walter is very interested in and knowledgeable about his Aboriginal heritage, and he is close with his Auntie Lily, an old Aboriginal woman who is well-versed in Aboriginal culture and religion. Like Auntie Lily, he is a descendant of Jimmy Raven. In Boort, Walter is ostracized by his schoolmates, partly because of his Aboriginal identity and partly because of rumors about his criminal past. However, he becomes Sadie Hazzard's good friend, becoming involved in her

quest to discover where Jimmy Raven's "special things" are hidden, and helping her at crucial moments along the way. He is especially invested in the search because Jimmy is his own ancestor. Walter is independent-minded, wise and unafraid, as evidenced in his act of breaking into Craig Mortlock's house to search for Jimmy Raven's things. When that action later results in Lachie Mortlock getting hurt, Walter also demonstrates his integrity by telling the truth about the incident.

**David** – Uncle to Walter, and boyfriend of Ellie Hazzard, David is an Aboriginal social worker who has lived in the town of **Boort** all his life. David is kind, supportive, and generous, coming to the aid of his nephew by allowing Walter to live with him in Boort when Walter faces trouble in his hometown of Mildura. Unlike his nephew, however, David is not especially interested in his own Aboriginal heritage. Nonetheless, he suffers discrimination and prejudice as a consequence of being an Aboriginal man, as evidenced in the hostile reaction of the townspeople when he walks into the local bar with Ellie, Sadie, and Walter one night. As a young man in Boort, he was the victim of an assault perpetrated by Craig Mortlock, partly motivated by the fact that as an Aboriginal man, David had challenged the town's taboos by dating Ellie Hazzard, a white woman. David's skills, however, play an important part in leading to some kind of reconciliation between the town's white residents and its Aboriginal residents. His success in helping to coach the town's footy (soccer) team to success works to bridge the divide between white residents and Aboriginals.

**Craig Mortlock** – Grandson of Gerald Mortlock, and member of the wealthy land-owning Mortlock family of **Boort**. Craig Mortlock and his family own Invergarry, the property on which sits the Aboriginal sacred **circle of stones** that Sadie Hazzard stumbles upon. Like his forbearer Gerald Mortlock, Craig is money-hungry and disrespectful of his land's Aboriginal cultural heritage, going so far as to want to sell some of the Aboriginal artifacts that he discovers on his land to make a profit. Furthermore, he and his son, Lachie Mortlock, desecrate the sacred circle of stones by using it as a place to drink beer with their friends. Craig also has a violent side; as a young man, he assaulted David and almost killed him, as a way for punishing David, an Aboriginal man, for going out with his white ex-girlfriend, Ellie Hazzard.

**Lachie Mortlock** – Son of Craig Mortlock, and great-grandson of Gerald Mortlock. He is heir to the large territory of land that belongs to the Mortlocks. He is on the school's footy (soccer) team and is very much into sports. He is Sadie Hazzard's love interest, although she quickly loses her desire for him when she realizes that he can be quite heartless and cruel. Lachie first demonstrates this heartlessness when he kicks Walter and Sadie out of the pool room in the bar, likely due to Walter's race. Furthermore, he doesn't keep Sadie's secret about the Aboriginal sacred **circle of stones** that sits on his family's land,

and instead tells his father about it. He also demonstrates disrespect and callousness towards the sacred site of stones when he tries to knock down one of the stones after he finds Walter and Sadie hiding there. Walter throws a clod of earth at him, which leads Lachie to fall from his bike and get injured. However, Sadie and Walter come to Lachie's aid and save his life. In doing so, they end the cycle of violence that had been initiated by Gerald Mortlock and Clarry Hazzard. Gerald and Clarry did not come to Jimmy Raven's aid when Gerald injured him, but instead hid the crime and kept Jimmy Raven's death a secret. Lachie seems to change after Sadie and Walter save his life at the stone circle. He begins a process of reconciliation with both Walter and Sadie, and promises to help them find information about Jimmy Raven.

**Jimmy Raven** – An Aboriginal man who is an ancestor of Walter, David, and Auntie Lily. He served in World War I along with Gerald Mortlock and Clarry Hazzard, and lived in the town of **Boort** following the war. As an Aboriginal man, he faces discrimination and prejudice, even in spite of his war service—the townspeople are reluctant to commemorate him on the war monument that they put up to honor veterans of the World War I. Ultimately, it is Clarry who pushes for the inclusion of his name on the war monument. Jimmy is an Aboriginal “clever man,” a person who is versed in the sacred arts of the Aboriginal people, and he keeps sacred objects, or “special things,” on his person. He attempts to stop Gerald Mortlock from building a dam that would flood the sacred **circle of stones** lying on land that Mortlock owns. However, Mortlock murders Jimmy his dissent, and Jimmy's “special things,” as well as his body, remain lost for decades until Sadie Hazzard finds them. At Auntie Lily's urging, Sadie and Walter give Jimmy a proper burial, mark his grave with a headstone, and make sure that the man's sacred objects are returned to their rightful owner.

**Gerald Mortlock** – An ancestor of the Mortlock clan, who served in World War I along with Jimmy Raven and Clarry Hazzard, Sadie's great-grandfather. When she goes back in time to 1933, Sadie learns that Gerald Mortlock and his family own much of the land in Boort, including the site on which the Aboriginal sacred **circle of stones** sits. Gerald Mortlock is irresponsible, violent, and immoral. He seeks to build a dam that would flood the Aboriginal sacred circle of stones, even though this is a sacrilege from the perspective of the town's Aboriginal residents, including Jimmy Raven. Indeed, when Jimmy Raven tries to stop Gerald Mortlock from building the dam, Mortlock murders him, and then seeks Clarry Hazzard's help in covering up the murder. Gerald Mortlock's crime and cover-up reveal the extent of his immorality. He comes to a tragic end, however—he takes his own life shortly after his murder of Jimmy Raven, quite likely because of the guilt that he felt over the murder.

**Clarry Hazzard** – Sadie's great-grandfather. He served in

World War I with Jimmy Raven and Gerald Mortlock, and returns to live in the town of **Boort** with his wife, Jean, his daughter Sarah Louise (who is also nicknamed Sadie), and his other children, including John and Betty. While Clarry is a good man, he behaves immorally after Gerald Mortlock murders Jimmy Raven, by helping Mortlock cover up the murder. He does this because he is financially indebted to Gerald Mortlock, and knows that if the Mortlocks are ruined, the Hazzards will be too. He also draws his daughter Sarah Louise into helping him cover up traces of the murder, which gives present-day Sadie (who transforms into Sarah Louise when she time travels) the opportunity to solve the mystery and attempt to make right the injustice that Clarry and Gerald committed against Jimmy.

**Sarah Louise “Sadie” Hazzard** – Daughter to Clarry Hazzard and Jean Hazzard, and great-aunt to Sadie Hazzard. Sarah, nicknamed Sadie, is a young teenager in 1933, the year when Gerald Mortlock murders Jimmy Raven. She is drawn into helping cover up the murder by her father, Clarry, who uses her to destroy traces of the crime. When the contemporary Sadie Hazzard travels to the past, she inhabits her great-aunt Sarah Louise's body, and this is how she learns about the events surrounding Jimmy Raven's murder. It is through Sarah Louise's body that Sadie also manages to locate Jimmy's “special things,” the sacred objects that he carried and which were lost after his death, so that she can return them to Auntie Lily and other members of the Aboriginal community.

**Auntie Lily** – Niece of Jimmy Raven, and relative of David and Walter. Auntie Lily is an old Aboriginal woman who lives in **Boort** is well-versed in Aboriginal history and cultural heritage. She is at first suspicious of Sadie, who is white and a stranger to the family, but, after Walter's reassurances, she comes to their aid by helping them to locate the sacred objects that were taken from Jimmy Raven after his death. When Sadie locates Jimmy's “special things,” she brings them promptly to Auntie Lily, who knows who to give them to. Auntie Lily is a guardian and protector of Aboriginal heritage.

**The Crows** – The black birds that are a prevalent feature of **Boort**'s wildlife and speak to Sadie throughout the novel. They are representatives of Waa the Crow—the ancient Aboriginal spirit that reigns over the region of Boort and its surroundings. The crows begin speaking to Sadie at the **stone circle** and draw her into solving the mystery of Jimmy Raven's missing sacred objects, or “special things.” Once Sadie solves the mystery, she finds that she can no longer speak with or understand the crows.

## MINOR CHARACTERS

**Jean Hazzard** – Wife to Clarry, and mother to Sarah Louise, John, and Betty. She is an ancestor of Sadie Hazzard. Her husband, Clarry, keeps her in the dark about the murder of Jimmy Raven. She is also unaware of the large amount of

money that Clarry borrowed from Gerald Mortlock.

**John Hazzard** – Son to Clarry and Jean, and brother to Sarah Louise and Betty.

**Betty Hazzard** – Daughter to Clarry and Jean, and sister to Sarah Louise and John.

**Amanda Mortlock** – Wife of Craig Mortlock, and mother of Lachie Mortlock and Bethany Mortlock.

**Bethany Mortlock** – Daughter of Craig and Amanda Mortlock, and sister to Lachie Mortlock.



## THEMES

In LitCharts literature guides, each theme gets its own color-coded icon. These icons make it easy to track where the themes occur most prominently throughout the work. If you don't have a color printer, you can still use the icons to track themes in black and white.



### PREJUDICE AND DISCRIMINATION

In Kate Constable's time travel fantasy *Crow Country*, Sadie, a young Australian girl, learns about aboriginal history from the dark-feathered crows that begin speaking to her when she and her mother, Ellie, move to **Boort**—a small town in rural Australia that hides secrets about the dark past of aboriginals and white Australians in the district. On various occasions shortly after arriving in Boort, Sadie is mysteriously whisked to a past time in the town's history—often when she is wandering around historic sights, such as a monument to veterans of World War I. Sadie's experiences reveal that the historical legacies of prejudice and discrimination continue to inform relations between whites and aboriginals in the present. The novel suggests that it is only by actively forging alliances across the divide—as Sadie and her mother do—can these legacies of prejudice and discrimination be overcome.

The novel establishes that the prejudice and discrimination faced by aboriginals—who became a subjugated people in their own land once white settlers arrived in Australia—has deep roots. When Sadie is whisked back to the year 1933, she inhabits the body of her great-aunt Sarah Louise (also nicknamed Sadie), who was the daughter of Clarry and Jean Hazzard. She then witnesses firsthand the historical discrimination to which aboriginals were subjected. She learns, for instance, that the town was reluctant to put up WWI veteran Jimmy Raven's name on the war monument, in spite of the fact that Jimmy, like Clarry Hazzard and Gerald Mortlock, had fought for Australia. Jimmy is an aboriginal man who lives in Boort, and the town's reluctance to honor his contribution to the war effort is based entirely on his race. Sadie also notes that her father treats Jimmy better than most of the other

white townspeople do. Most townspeople, for instance, would never serve Jimmy tea in their best china, as her parents do when he comes for a visit. This again points to the unfair second-class status Jimmy occupies as a result of being aboriginal and underscores the novel's broader condemnation of racial discrimination.

Importantly, the historical prejudice against aboriginals which Sadie witnesses in 1933 has its echoes in the present-day world in which she lives. Ellie, Sadie's mother, tells Sadie that as a young woman she dated David, an aboriginal man who currently lives in Boort. The relationship ended, however, in part because it was frowned upon by the townspeople, who did not condone an interracial union between a white woman and an aboriginal man. David is furthermore physically attacked by Craig Mortlock, Ellie's ex-boyfriend, who is unhappy that Ellie left him for an aboriginal man. When David and Ellie reunite after Ellie and Sadie move to Boort, they again experience the town's displeasure. This is especially apparent in the scene when Ellie, David, Sadie, and David's nephew Walter walk into a pub together one night: the white townspeople seated in the pub stare at the four, clearly disapproving of the mixed group. Likewise, the ostracism and isolation that Walter faces also seems to derive to an extent from his aboriginal identity. When he joins Sadie for a game of pool at the back of the pub, the other teenagers make derogatory remarks about him before banishing him and Sadie from the table largely because of Walter's presence. The ostracism that Walter faces from the other teenagers, therefore, suggests the extent to which legacies of prejudice and discrimination continue to affect social relations between even the young white and aboriginal residents of the town.

Ultimately, the novel suggests that it is only by forging alliances across racial divides that such past and present legacies of discrimination can be overcome. Ellie and David's relationship exemplifies a bridge that links together Ellie, a white woman, with David, an aboriginal man. Although the townspeople initially disapprove of this relationship, Ellie and David nonetheless stick together, and provide support for one another. Ellie, for instance, confronts Craig Mortlock about his violent attack on David when they were younger. Likewise, Sadie becomes very close to Walter; he is the first person she confesses her secret to about the crows speaking to her, and it is with his help—as well as Auntie Lily's—that Sadie secures Jimmy Raven's "special things" and carries out the duty that the crows charge her with. The cross-cultural and cross-racial alliances that both Ellie and her daughter forge with David and Walter, respectively, expand to include others by the end of the story. For instance, after Lachie Mortlock—son of Craig Mortlock, and young heir to the wealthy land-owning Mortlock clan—reconciles with Walter and Sadie, the three of them work together to restore the destroyed graves of both Jimmy Raven and Lachie Mortlock's ancestors. Furthermore, David becomes

more accepted in the town through his coaching of the football (soccer) team. As the team's first aboriginal co-coach, David's involvement with the team leads to the forging of links between the town's aboriginal and white residents—given that the footy team is an important part of the town's social landscape. Thus, in helping lead the team—which is made up of white schoolboys—to success, David wins the respect of many of the town's white residents, compelling them to view and treat him with more respect.

Legacies of prejudice and discrimination against aboriginals in Boort run deep and shape social relations both in the past as well as in the present. Yet deep as these legacies run, the novel suggests that they are not immutable. Through the alliances that are forged between the characters of different ethnicities and cultural backgrounds—between Ellie and David, and between Sadie and Walter—the novel suggests that there is hope for a more accepting future. It is through such alliances that such hierarchies of race and culture can be challenged and overcome.



## HERITAGE AND LAND

*Crow Country* is fundamentally a novel about the conflict between two cultures over heritage and land. On one side is the ancient culture of the

aboriginal people, who inhabited Australia for tens of thousands of years before the arrival of Europeans. On the other side is the culture of the white settlers who, after arriving in Australia, subjugated and displaced many of the continent's original inhabitants. It is this conflict Sadie is drawn into when she moves to the small town of **Boort** with her mother, Ellie.

The social and economic dominance of whites means that they have the power both to confiscate and to control land, and thus to suppress the ancient heritage of the aboriginal people. Importantly, though, the novel ultimately suggests that while that aboriginal heritage can be suppressed, it cannot be erased. Instead, its power lives on in the landscape and the wildlife that inhabits it.

The social and economic power of the town's white residents is apparent in the way that they control both land and the cultural heritage that land contains. The Mortlocks, for instance, as the largest land-owning family in Boort, own the huge property of Invergarry. On this property sits the sacred **stone circle**, a site that is holy to the aboriginal people who inhabit the area. Gerald Mortlock's flooding of the stone circle in the 1930s to build a dam—in spite of Jimmy Raven's warnings and protestations—illustrates the immense power that white Australians wield over the land and, therefore, over the aboriginal heritage that sits on the land. Because they legally “own” the land, the white residents are free to do whatever they want with it—despite the fact that the very existence of these aboriginal sites reveals that the land was not empty nor free for the taking when white settlers arrived.

The Mortlocks' control over the land is not only manifest in 1933, the year to which Sadie travels to witness the terrible events around Jimmy Raven's murder, but also in the present day of Sadie's life. The Mortlocks, for instance, desecrate both the land and the heritage that it holds in several ways. After discovering that some aboriginal sacred objects sit on his land, Craig Mortlock decides to sell them to make money, and seeks the counsel of David, an aboriginal social worker who lives in Boort and who is Ellie's boyfriend, to do so. As such, Craig Mortlock views these sacred objects purely in terms of their monetary value, rather than in terms of their cultural value, as aboriginal characters such as David, Walter, and Auntie Lily do. Secondly, Craig Mortlock and his son desecrate aboriginal heritage by treating its sacred spaces—such as the stone circle—with disrespect. This is apparent in the scene in which Sadie and Walter find Craig and his son Lachie, as well as others, lounging around the stone circle, drinking beers and littering. This is also apparent when, towards the end of the novel, Lachie Mortlock chases Sadie and Walter to the stone circle after he finds that they have broken into his house, and proceeds to try and knock down one of the stones. Not only are white settlers in control of the land, but they also actively seek to destroy the heritage it possesses.

Despite the immense control that white Australians such as Craig Mortlock and his family wield over the land, however, the novel affirms that the power of the aboriginal heritage is so great that it cannot so easily be contained or mastered. Indeed, the power of aboriginal heritage manifests in the terrain itself. The crows who populate the region and who speak to Sadie remind her that Boort and its surroundings are “Crow Country”—they belong to the ancient ancestral spirit of Waa the Crow, one of the important spirits for aboriginals. These birds can be seen everywhere, and as such help keep the land's heritage alive. Likewise, the land itself seems to resist the desecration of the aboriginal heritage in the novel. Gerald Mortlock's attempts to build a dam that floods the sacred stone circle ultimately fail, as the lake that forms above the stone circle eventually dries up. The landscape itself, in other words, seemingly works to protect the aboriginal heritage it houses. There are also indications throughout the novel that the newer landscape of houses, roads, farms that the white settlers have built up has failed to erase the ancient landscape that lies beneath. It is this older landscape that the flying crow sees at the beginning of the novel, as he watches Sadie walk: “The lines of the creeks, and the bumps and sags of the hills and swamps held the stories of the country's ancient history.” As such, the lines of the terrain point to an ancient story of creation that supersedes the more recent history of white settlement in Australia. At the end of the novel, Sadie has a dream in which she sees ancient campfires “lit by people of Crow and Eaglehawk”—aboriginal people—flaming all over the land. Again, this indicates that the aboriginal heritage—as exemplified in this vision of campfires lit by Australia's first

aboriginal inhabitants—is still alive in the present, even if it is not always obvious or visible.

On the one hand, the white residents of Boort—such as the Mortlocks—exercise immense control of the land and the heritage it contains by virtue of their ownership of this land—ownership unfairly designated by the same colonialist government that pushed indigenous people out of their homes. However, the novel ultimately suggests that, in spite of the whites' social and economic control over the land, the landscape and the wildlife themselves keep alive a memory of the past and of the people who inhabited Australia long before the arrival of Europeans.



## JUSTICE AND RESTITUTION

In *Crow Country*, the heroine, Sadie Hazzard, learns important lessons about justice and injustice. When she is drawn into solving an old mystery by the speaking crows of the town of **Boort**, she becomes aware of terrible injustices that transpired in the past involving three families in the town, including her own. It is only by facing these old crimes that Sadie manages to achieve some kind of restitution for past wrongs and help the community to begin to heal. As such, the book suggests that any possibility for forward progress depends on confronting and taking responsibility for injustice.

Through her time travel to the year 1933, Sadie learns about the grave injustices that were perpetrated both by the Mortlocks and by members of her own family against the town resident Jimmy Raven, an aboriginal man. Through inhabiting her great-aunt Sarah Louise's body in the year 1933, Sadie learns that Gerald Mortlock murdered Jimmy Raven when the two got into a conflict over the flooding of a sacred aboriginal site on Mortlock's land. Jimmy had tried to stop Mortlock from flooding the sacred site, but Mortlock had refused. To her further dismay, Sadie learns that her own great-grandfather, Clarry Hazzard, helped cover up the crime by hiding Jimmy Raven's body after the murder. Because Clarry Hazzard owed Gerald Mortlock a large amount of money, capital that he borrowed to start the business from which the family makes a living, he feels obligated to help him. Clarry's financial debt to Gerald therefore clouds his moral judgement. Furthermore, he involves Sadie (in the body of her great-aunt) herself by having her help him hide traces of Mortlock's crime. As such, by time traveling to the past, Sadie comes to realize that both Gerald Mortlock and her own great-grandfather acted with great dishonor. In overcoming her own ignorance about past crimes, and confronting the role that her family played in those crimes, Sadie takes the first step towards achieving justice.

Sadie attempts to redress the injustice done both by her great-grandfather and Gerald Mortlock to Jimmy Raven. She restores Jimmy's "special things"—a series of sacred objects that Jimmy had left to Clarry for safe-keeping—to Auntie Lily, Walter's old

relative, and Jimmy Raven's niece. In doing so, Sadie also attempts to repair the "Law" that has been broken. In speaking to her, the crows often emphasize that the "Law" was broken when Jimmy was murdered, especially as his sacred objects have remained lost—in the wrong hands—for decades. As such, Sadie's act of restoring the objects to their rightful owners also represents an act of restitution of sorts. Finally, Sadie informs Lachie Mortlock, Gerald Mortlock's great-grandson, about the murder his great-grandfather committed. In this way, she challenges Lachie Mortlock to take responsibility for his ancestor's crimes, just as she takes responsibility for the misdeeds her own great-grandfather committed. Sadie's actions, therefore, emphasize the necessity of acknowledging wrongs done, even if those wrongs were committed by one's ancestors.

By revealing the truth about Jimmy's murder, as well as restoring Jimmy's sacred things to their rightful owners, Sadie confronts and takes responsibility for an injustice committed in the past, and thereby helps to bring about a semblance of justice and resolution to the story of Jimmy's tragic murder. Auntie Lily thanks Sadie for finding Jimmy's sacred things. This brings to an end a long search for the special objects which Jimmy had guarded and which were lost with his murder. Furthermore, Walter and Sadie's act of restoring Jimmy's grave in the dry lakebed, near the **stone circle**, represents a recognition and acknowledgment of the injustice done to Jimmy. The grave restoration itself therefore represents a kind of restitution, given that Jimmy's grave was never marked, as a means of concealing his murder. The marking of the grave again reflects that justice is dependant on genuine acknowledgement of and responsibility for past wrongdoing. That Lachie Mortlock—descendant of Gerald Mortlock, Jimmy's murderer—offers to help Sadie and Walter find war records of Jimmy also suggests that some of the Mortlocks acknowledge that perhaps a wrong has been done in their name. The image of the three teenagers—one related to Jimmy Raven, one to Gerald Mortlock, and one to Clarry Hazzard—working together to clean up the old graveyard suggests the possibility of reconciliation and forward progress together between the branches of the three families involved in the old crime.

In squarely facing the injustices her ancestors committed and attempting to uncover and make amends for these crimes, Sadie lays the foundation for justice and restitution in the present and future. Though Jimmy Raven's murder can never be undone, Sadie's courageous actions lead to an acknowledgement of the crime committed against him, and a return of his most cherished possessions to their rightful owners. In this way, the novel suggests that only by taking full stock of the darkness of past can some semblance of justice and resolution be achieved in the present.



## VIOLENCE AND INTEGRITY

*Crow Country* tells the tale of Sadie Hazzard, a thirteen-year-old girl who gets pulled into a decades-old murder mystery shortly after she and her mother, Ellie, move to the town of **Boort** in rural Australia. The dark history involving three families in the town—including Sadie's own—threatens to repeat itself in the present, when tensions once again erupt between the families. As the conflict unfolds, the novel ultimately suggests that violence begets violence, and that such a vicious cycle can only be broken when one acts out of integrity rather than self-interest.

Gerald Mortlock's murder of Jimmy Raven in 1933 is the first destructive event which sets a series of violent and tragic events in motion. Gerald himself commits suicide shortly after Jimmy's murder, suggesting that his violent act against Jimmy ultimately leads him to act violently towards himself. Sadie, for her part, is convinced that Gerald committed suicide because of his feelings of guilt over Jimmy's murder. Clarry Hazzard, Sadie's great-grandfather, also dies shortly after helping to cover up Gerald Mortlock's murder of Jimmy Raven. This again reflects the self-perpetuating nature of violence. Sadie herself sees that her great-aunt Sarah Louise, who also shares the nickname Sadie, and whose body present-day Sadie inhabits when she travels to the past, dies shortly after Jimmy's murder. When she travels to the past, Sadie discovers that Clarry coerced Sarah Louise into helping cover up the murder. Almost all of the Mortlocks and Hazzards who lived in 1933, therefore, experience either violent or premature deaths. This indicates that Jimmy's murder has been a catalyst for further violence.

The novel suggests that the cycle of violence that commenced in 1933 risks repeating itself in the present day, when tensions once again flare up between the three families involved. Sadie and Walter (who is a descendant of Jimmy Raven) enter into a conflict with the Mortlocks when they see Lachie and his father, Craig Mortlock, desecrating the sacred site of the **stone circle**, which sits on the dry lake bed lying in Invergarry, a property belonging to the Mortlocks. The conflict escalates when Sadie and Walter try to recover Jimmy Raven's "special things" from the Mortlocks' house and Lachie catches them. Lachie finds Walter and Sadie at the stone circle, where they go to hide. As Walter tries to stop Lachie from knocking over one of the sacred stones, Lachie has a serious accident and goes unconscious. Lachie's injury—and the danger to which he is subjected—recalls the injury Jimmy Raven sustained decades earlier, when Gerald Mortlock attacked him, and which led to his death almost exactly on the same spot where now Lachie lies bleeding. As such, the confrontation between Sadie, Walter, and Lachie echoes the earlier confrontation, and suggests that the younger generation of the three families' descendants risk repeating the same cycle of violence that their forbears commenced.

Sadie and Walter, however, make different choices from their

ancestors. By choosing to act out of integrity rather than self-interest, they manage to break free of the cycle of violence initiated by Gerald Mortlock and Clarry Hazzard. When Walter realizes that Lachie is seriously injured at the stone circle, he at first wants to leave him there. He is afraid that he will be blamed for Lachie's injury and will end up in terrible trouble. As such, Walter is initially tempted to act out of self-interest. Because of her time-travel to 1933, however, Sadie is aware that if she and Walter simply leave Lachie to die, they will be behaving no differently from Gerald Mortlock, who had left Jimmy Raven to die in 1933. As such, she insists that she and Walter must come to Lachie's aid. Walter finally agrees with her, and goes off to find help for the injured Lachie, even though he risks trouble to himself by doing so. As such, Sadie and Walter—faced with the same dilemma that Gerald Mortlock and Clarry Hazzard were faced with decades earlier—make very different choices. They choose to act not out of self-interest, but out of integrity and courage. In doing so, they create a chain of positive events both for themselves and others. They reconcile, for instance, with Lachie Mortlock, who, after having survived his injury, is grateful that they helped him, instead of leaving him to bleed to death. In this way, Sadie and Walter make choices that break the cycle of violence involving the Hazzards, Mortlocks, and Jimmy Raven's descendants. Sadie even seems to change the fate of her great-aunt Sadie; when she returns to the past and inhabits her great-aunt's body, she has her aunt act with integrity by hiding Jimmy Raven's "special things" so that they can be located in the future and be returned to their rightful aboriginal owners. In having her great-aunt do the right thing by protecting Jimmy's sacred objects, Sadie forges a different path for her great-aunt, one which sees her living a long and adventurous life. This suggests that there are indeed rewards for acting with integrity.

By choosing to act with integrity and courage, rather than out of fear and self-interest, Sadie and Walter create a very different outcome for themselves and for others. Gerald and Clarry's violence against Jimmy Raven begets further trauma and death. Sadie and Walter, on the other hand, end the cycle of violence first perpetuated by their ancestors, and in doing so suggests that the key to peaceful progress is integrity and benevolence.



## SYMBOLS

Symbols appear in **teal text** throughout the Summary and Analysis sections of this LitChart.



## THE STONE CIRCLE

The stone circle that Sadie stumbles upon when she wanders onto the dry lakebed on the Mortlocks' land in **Boort** represents the sacred Aboriginal

heritage. As the crows that speak to Sadie inform her, this stone circle is “Crow’s place”—it is associated with the ancient ancestral spirit of Waa the Crow, a spirit that is important in Aboriginal culture and religion. The site of the circle, therefore, with its ancient upright stones, is a space that embodies Aboriginal sacred beliefs. It is for this reason that the Mortlocks’ desecration of the site—first in the 1930s, when Gerald Mortlock builds a dam that floods the circle, and in the present day, when both Craig Mortlock and his son Lachie desecrate the site by using it as a leisure space—is such a sacrilege. As white Australians, the Mortlocks have no conception of the spiritual value and importance of the stone circle for Aboriginals. It is left up to Sadie and Walter to protect the site, as it is these two characters who realize the value and importance of the stone circle as a sacred Aboriginal place.



## BOORT

The town of Boort represents a microcosm of the country of Australia. Particularly, the town embodies the socioeconomic divisions and hierarchies that exist between white and Aboriginal Australians. The prejudice that Aboriginal characters such as Jimmy Raven, David, and Walter are subjected to in Boort reflects wider national patterns of prejudice and division. This is exemplified, for instance, in the fact that the town is reluctant to include Jimmy Raven on its World War I monument, in spite of his service during the war. Walter and David also face their share of discrimination in the town—as when they receive hostile stares and looks when they enter the town pub. The prejudice that Jimmy, David, and Walter experience alludes to historical discrimination and prejudice faced by the country’s Aboriginal inhabitants. Furthermore, the socioeconomic inequality that exists between the white and Aboriginal residents of Boort reveals the gap that exists between these two groups; white Boort residents such as the Mortlocks wield an immense amount of socioeconomic power because of their legal ownership of much of the land around the town, while Aboriginal characters such as Jimmy Raven and Walter are socioeconomically disadvantaged and dispossessed. This is reflected in the fact that Aboriginal characters must fight for physical access to, and protection of, their Aboriginal heritage—such as the **stone circle** that sits on the Mortlocks’ property—even though they have a claim to this heritage, and the land in fact belonged to them before it belonged to white settlers such as the Mortlocks. As such, Boort’s economic and social fabric—which privileges whites over Aboriginals—embodies the wider unjust economic and social hierarchies of the Australian nation.



## QUOTES

Note: all page numbers for the quotes below refer to the Allen & Unwin edition of *Crow Country* published in 2011.

### Chapter 1 Quotes

●● It wasn’t until the last rock was clean and Sadie stood back to survey her work, that she noticed the carvings. The marks were almost blurred into the stone: indistinct, powerful, immeasurably ancient.

**Related Characters:** Sadie Hazzard

**Related Themes:**

**Related Symbols:**

**Page Number:** 6

### Explanation and Analysis

Shortly after moving to Boort, Sadie goes in search of a secret man-made lake. But when she arrives at the lake, she finds that it has dried up, to reveal an ancient circle of stones that had been hidden underwater. After clearing dust off the stones, Sadie realizes that they are engraved. The stones that make up the circle, as well as the engravings etched on them, suggest that they are a relic of the ancient and prehistoric culture of the Aboriginals—the people who inhabited Australia at least 40,000 years before the arrival of Europeans.

The stones, therefore, attest not only to the existence of this culture, but also to its very deep roots in the ancient past. Sadie’s discovery of the stones also indicates that the landscape of Boort is not what it seems on the surface—it has many layers. While the stones had been hidden for decades by a man-made lake, they are now revealed, and in being revealed, they suggest a history and a story that have previously been hidden.

### Chapter 2 Quotes

●● But the crow could read the old signs, the old stories. They might be hidden, but they had not vanished. Crow was hidden, too, but he was not gone. Crow was awake. Now it would begin.

**Related Characters:** Sadie Hazzard, The Crows

**Related Themes:**

**Related Symbols:**

**Page Number:** 13

### Explanation and Analysis

A crow watches Sadie from the sky as she enters her house, shortly after her discovery of the circle of stones on the dry lakebed. As it looks down on the landscape of houses, roads and telephone poles, it discerns signs and stories that lie beneath.

These signs and stories allude to the ancient existence of the Aboriginal people, whose presence predates that of the white settlers—as well as the roads and houses they built—by millennia. The crow’s point of view on the landscape, therefore, alludes to the fact that there are many layers of meaning to the landscape, some less obvious than others. Furthermore, the reference to “Crow” waking points to the ancient Aboriginal spirit of Waa the Crow, one of the ancestral spirits of the Aboriginal people, who is credited, along with other ancestral spirits, with creating the world as well as the Aboriginal people. That Waa the Crow is now waking suggests that he is not gone, or dead—he is still sovereign over the land and the people whom he has created. He still has power to make things happen, as suggested in the words “Now it would begin.”

### Chapter 4 Quotes

“David and I,” Ellie said in a low voice, “well, we used to go out together.” She glanced about, but there was no one within earshot. “Years ago, before I met your father. But it was - difficult.”

“Because he’s black?”

“Yes, partly. Mostly.”

**Related Characters:** Sadie Hazzard, Ellie Hazzard (speaker), David

**Related Themes:**  

**Related Symbols:** 

**Page Number:** 25-26

### Explanation and Analysis

Shortly after Ellie introduces Sadie to David, an Aboriginal man who lives in Boort, and his nephew Walter, Ellie explains to her daughter her history with David. In the supermarket, Ellie tells Sadie that she had dated David when she was a teenager living in Boort.

Ellie’s confession that it was difficult dating David because

he was black points to the racial tensions that exist between Aboriginals and white people in Boort, and more broadly in Australia. Aboriginals are not viewed as equals to white people in Boort, and mixing between the two is taboo. As such, Ellie’s statement that it was “difficult” dating David mostly because he was black suggests that the couple confronted significant disapproval from the townspeople because of the mixed-race relationship. The tensions that exist around relations between whites and Aboriginals have a history that stretches back to the dispossession of Aboriginals by white people. This occurred when white settlers arrived in Australia and proceeded to subjugate Aboriginals. The legacy of this dispossession clearly still frames relations between the two groups, given that whites assume a position of superiority to Aboriginals. The difficulties that David and Ellie ran into while dating, therefore, point to deep historical rifts that shape relations between the two groups.

### Chapter 6 Quotes

“This is a secret place, a story place.” The crow tilted its head. “Crow’s people came to this place. Now they are gone. The stories are always. Who tells Crow’s stories now? Where are the dreams when the dreamers are gone? Where are the stories when no one remembers? [...] Country remembers. Crow remembers.”

**Related Characters:** The Crows (speaker), Sadie Hazzard

**Related Themes:**   

**Related Symbols:** 

**Page Number:** 42

### Explanation and Analysis

On a Saturday afternoon, as Ellie takes a call from David, Sadie leaves the house and goes back to the circle of stones, located in the dry lakebed in Invergarry. As soon as she arrives there, a crow appears and begins speaking to her.

Sadie has returned to the site to confirm whether crows have actually begun speaking to her, or whether she has dreamed it all up. On this visit, the speaking crows reveal the extent to which Sadie’s reality is altering as a result of her encounter with the stone circle. This change, in turn, suggests the power and the force of the stone circle as a sacred site of the Aboriginal people. The crow’s statement that it is a “secret....story place” confirms this—the site clearly holds a meaningful position within Aboriginal

culture. And yet, the Aboriginal people who came to this place, or Waa the Crow's people, are now gone. This points to the annihilation to which Aboriginals were subjected, with the arrival of white settlers who took over the land and violently removed them from it. However, the crow's words also allude to the fact that, even though the Aboriginal people who once occupied this site have disappeared, their stories haven't. These stories are embodied in the country, or the landscape, and they are kept alive by the ancient Aboriginal spirit of Waa the Crow, who still prevails over the land.

## Chapter 7 Quotes

☛☛ As Sadie whipped the newspaper off the table, an upside-down headline caught her eye – something about a person called Hitler. Her heart gave a peculiar involuntary skip. The date was printed at the top of the page. *Friday June 23, 1933.*

**Related Characters:** Sarah Louise “Sadie” Hazzard, Sadie Hazzard

**Related Themes:** 

**Related Symbols:** 

**Page Number:** 47

### Explanation and Analysis

While visiting the stone circle located on the dry lakebed one day, Sadie collapses and wakes up to find herself in a different world. It is only when she glimpses the newspaper in the kitchen of the family home of the Hazzards that she realizes she has traveled from the present to the past—all the way to the year 1933, where she finds herself inhabiting the body of her great-aunt, Sarah Louise, who was also known as Sadie. She has, in other words, traveled back into the history of her own family, and of the town's conflicts.

Sarah Louise/Sadie's astonishment at seeing the date on the newspaper is justified, because she finds that her world has been turned upside down in all sorts of ways—even time is warping as a result of her discovery of the stone circle. Her time travel to the year 1933 suggests that the relationship between past and present is fluid and complex. Time is not entirely linear; it can move backwards or forwards, and one can find oneself inhabiting a strange space in between times or moving back and forth between past and present. In a broader sense, Sadie's travel to the past points to the way in which history and heritage continue to frame the present. Sadie had thought that the past was past, but her

time travel proves that the past is still very much alive, and it shapes her own reality in ways she could not have even imagined.

## Chapter 8 Quotes

☛☛ [...] Dad had fought the whole town council, when the war memorial was built, to have Jimmy's name put on it, too. They said it couldn't be done, because Jimmy hadn't enlisted in Boort; he'd joined up down in Melbourne. But Dad said he belonged in Boort as much as anyone, and deserved to have his name up there with the rest. After all, Bert Murchison had joined up in Melbourne, too, and no one said *he* should be left off.

**Related Characters:** Jimmy Raven, Clarry Hazzard, Sarah Louise “Sadie” Hazzard, Sadie Hazzard

**Related Themes:**    

**Related Symbols:** 

**Page Number:** 54

### Explanation and Analysis

Sadie has traveled back to the past, to the year 1933, to inhabit her great-aunt's Sarah Louise's body. In that time, Clarry Hazzard is her father. Sadie, as Sarah Louise, recalls that the town council had not wanted to include Jimmy Raven's name on the memorial that commemorated veterans of World War I, even though Jimmy had fought in the war along with other townspeople. Clarry Hazzard had stood up to the town council, making the case for including Jimmy in the war memorial.

Though the town council claims otherwise, it is clear that the unstated reason for its reluctance to include Jimmy is his race—he is not considered to be equal to the white men alongside whom he fought in the war. This instance of discrimination points to just how deep prejudice against Aboriginals runs in the town of Boort. Even a war veteran is unjustly discriminated against, just because of his race. This exclusion is ironic particularly given that, as an Aboriginal man, Jimmy is, in a sense, more of an “Australian” than the white people—his people's roots in the land and the country extend much further back than those of the white settlers who seek to exclude him from the war memorial. Jimmy's exclusion from the memorial also points to how Aboriginal people are victims of social violence through institutionalized discrimination and the daily injustices that they suffer as a result of their identity.

## Chapter 9 Quotes

☝☝ Her legs shook; her whole body was racked with shudders. [...] She never should have brought Lachie here; she should have protected the secret. *Crow's place*.

"Lachie," she said, with sudden desperation. "Listen, you can't tell anyone about this place."

[...] "Okay, mate. It's your special place, is it? I won't tell anyone."

*Not my special place*, thought Sadie. *It belongs to the crows*. But she didn't say it aloud.

**Related Characters:** Lachie Mortlock, Sadie Hazzard (speaker), The Crows

**Related Themes:**  

**Related Symbols:** 

**Page Number:** 67-68

### Explanation and Analysis

During a footy game, Lachie chats with Sadie and suggests that they go somewhere else to pass the time. Sadie suggests the dry lakebed, which sits on the property that Lachie's family, the Mortlocks, owns. When they arrive at the lakebed, Sadie reveals the hidden location of the stone circle to Lachie—Lachie is impressed by the site, as he had not known about the stone circle before.

Sadie's sudden regret over revealing the secret location of the stone circle to Lachie suggests that she feels she is betraying the sacred Aboriginal heritage that the site represents. As the speaking crow has told her, the site belongs to the ancient ancestral spirit of Waa the Crow, and to his people, and not to her. As such, it is not her right to share this place with others, as she does with Lachie. And yet, Sadie's attraction to Lachie blinds her and leads her to act recklessly by disclosing the location of the stones. This is one of the few instances where Sadie behaves without integrity, putting her own desires above other considerations.

## Chapter 10 Quotes

☝☝ "Life's not fair." Jules wrenched Sadie's cue from her. "Go on, piss off with your abo boyfriend."

A ripple of nervous laughter ran around the annex. Sadie heard someone mutter *something-lover*.

"Like her mother," murmured someone else.

**Related Characters:** Walter, Sadie Hazzard

**Related Themes:**  

**Related Symbols:** 

**Page Number:** 76-77

### Explanation and Analysis

One night, Sadie, her mother Ellie, her mother's boyfriend David, and his nephew Walter go out to the local pub for dinner. There, as a mixed group of white females and Aboriginal males, they face hostility from the pub-goers. When Sadie and Walter go to play pool in the backroom with the other teenagers, they are shunned and excluded from the pool table.

Jules, one of the teenagers at the pool table, refers to Walter as Sadie's "abo boyfriend." This is a derogatory term, connoting Walter's Aboriginal identity. Furthermore, by referring to him as Sadie's boyfriend, Jules seems to imply that there is something wrong in the mixing of white and Aboriginal people. This is confirmed when the other teenagers snigger and say that Sadie is "just like her mother," who, is, of course, dating David, Walter's uncle. In making references to Walter's race in this derogatory way, and in making offensive remarks about the relationships Sadie and her mother have with Aboriginal men, the teenagers reveal their deeply prejudiced attitudes. Like the other adults in the pub, they express racist views that diminish the humanity of Aboriginal people and even hint that violence against Aboriginal people might be acceptable. Thus, Walter's experience with the teenagers reflects the extent of the discrimination and prejudice that many Aboriginals face at the hands of the white residents of Boort. This prejudice is reflected across generations.

## Chapter 12 Quotes

☝☝ "Well, it is his land, Jimmy," said Clarry. "Why shouldn't he build a dam if he wants to?"

[...]

"No!" Jimmy broke away; Sadie could see the fierce light in his eyes. "No. He mustn't do that." [...] "It's like - it'd be like me settin' that church on fire." Jimmy flung out his arm in the direction of the little weatherboard church. "What would you say if I set the church on fire, hey?"

**Related Characters:** Jimmy Raven, Clarry Hazzard (speaker), Sarah Louise "Sadie" Hazzard, Sadie Hazzard, Gerald Mortlock

**Related Themes:**   

**Related Symbols:**  

**Page Number:** 90

### Explanation and Analysis

Sadie has again traveled back to the past, to the year 1933, where she inhabits the body of her great-aunt Sarah Louise (Sadie), and where she witnesses the history of her own family. In this past, she also witnesses a conflict between Jimmy Raven and Gerald Mortlock unfold, over a dam that Mortlock wants to build on his land, which would flood the sacred stone circle that is extremely hallowed to Aboriginals. Sadie, in the body of Sarah Louise, watches as Jimmy tries to make her father Clarry understand why the flooding of the site is such a sacrilege.

Clarry's assertion that Gerald has a right to build a dam on his own land shows how ignorant and naïve he is. The land that Gerald wishes to flood has not always belonged to him. Before it did, it belonged to the Aboriginal people, who, as Jimmy asserts, also have a claim to it. In equating the sacred site with a church, Jimmy attempts to convey to Clarry—in the terms of his own (white) culture and religion—how hallowed the site is for Aboriginals. Flooding the site with water would be like burning down the town church, an act of obvious violence that would be taken as sacrilege by the town's white, Christian residents. Accordingly, Jimmy's agitation here, as well as his struggle to convey to Clarry the sacredness of the site Gerald wishes to flood, points to the difficulties that Jimmy confronts in making white residents like Gerald and Clarry understand his culture and his point of view.

### Chapter 13 Quotes

☝☝ “Can’t take discipline, though, that’s the trouble,” said Craig. “Brains aren’t wired up that way. Brilliant, quick, amazing skills, but unreliable. Can’t turn up to training week in, week out. No commitment, no discipline.”

**Related Characters:** Craig Mortlock (speaker), Sadie Hazzard, Ellie Hazzard, David

**Related Themes:**  

**Related Symbols:** 

**Page Number:** 98

### Explanation and Analysis

Sadie, Ellie and David go to the town pub, where they bump into Craig Mortlock and the rest of his family. The group takes to talking about the troubles of the Boort footy team. When Craig discovers that David had coached the footy team in the town of Mildura, he states that the team—which was mostly made up of Aboriginal boys—was talented, but couldn't “take discipline.”

Craig's comments about the Mildura players reflect his deep prejudice towards Aboriginals. He speaks of the players in stereotypical ways. Being black, they are supposedly undisciplined, in spite of their natural gifts. Craig's comments thus betray an understanding of Aboriginal players as less than white players, who are supposedly more capable of discipline and commitment than Aboriginals. After Craig makes these comments, David rightly takes offense, understanding that Craig's words reflect the prejudiced attitudes that many, if not most, white Australians convey towards Aboriginals. It's also notable that Craig behaved violently toward David when the two men were younger, which suggests that there's a connection between this kind of hateful speech and severe physical violence toward Aboriginals.

### Chapter 14 Quotes

☝☝ “Wah!” The crow reared up angrily, wings outstretched, and Sadie shrank back. “Do you have no Law? When a man is killed, the death must be punished. When precious things are stolen they must be returned. Are you an infant? Do you know nothing? Tell the story; tell Crow what you see!”

**Related Characters:** The Crows (speaker), Jimmy Raven, Sadie Hazzard

**Related Themes:**    

**Related Symbols:** 

**Page Number:** 107

### Explanation and Analysis

One night, as Sadie enters her house after a game of pool in the pub, a crow appears. It confronts her about not keeping the secret of the stone circle to herself—given that Sadie had recently shared the secret with Lachie. The crow is also angry that Sadie still refuses to complete the story that Waa the Crow—the Aboriginal ancestral spirit—has charged her with resolving.

The crow's emphasis on a “Law” and its comments that a

man has been killed and things have been stolen reinforces the idea that a serious crime has been committed. The crow's words, furthermore, highlight the notion of justice—that what has been taken must be given back in some form, either through punishment (in the case of murder), or through restoration (in the case of the stolen things). The crow, of course, is referring to the murder of Jimmy Raven by Gerald Mortlock, as well as the disappearance of his sacred special objects after his death. Both violations have gone unaddressed since Jimmy's death decades earlier. By telling Sadie that she must tell the story, the crow charges her with the responsibility of playing a part in delivering some justice for the wrongs done in the past. This directive emphasizes that acting with integrity is a way of balancing out both injustice and violence, and that later generations have a responsibility to resolve the destructive patterns begun by previous ones. The novel suggests that this is particularly true for racial conflicts like the one that led to Jimmy's murder.

## Chapter 15 Quotes

☝☝ “For our people, the land was created long ago, in the time of the Dreaming, when the ancestral spirits moved across the country. They made the hills and the rivers, the swamps and the waterholes. That's why our spirit ancestors are so important. They make the land, and the land belongs to them, and they make us, too [...] round this country, everything belongs to Bunjil the Eaglehawk, or Waa the Crow.”

**Related Characters:** Walter (speaker), David, Ellie Hazzard, Sadie Hazzard, The Crows

**Related Themes:**  

**Related Symbols:**  

**Page Number:** 116

### Explanation and Analysis

After an art show at the school, where Walter exhibits a painting showing his Auntie Lily with the totem of a crow, Sadie, Ellie and David listen as Walter speaks about Aboriginal history.

Walter's words demonstrate why ancestral spirits such as Bunjil the Eaglehawk and Waa the Crow are so important to Aboriginals. These spirits are creation spirits, which have created not only the land, but also the people on it. His words that the “land belongs to them” highlight the idea that, contrary to the assertions of people like the Mortlocks,

the land doesn't belong to the white settlers who took it over by force, but rather to the spirits that created it. They are its ultimate masters and rulers. The time of the “Dreaming”—the time of the creation of the land by the spirits—confirms the ascendancy of these spirits. Walter's revelation that the area around Boort belongs largely to “Waa the Crow” also allows Sadie to make sense of the speaking crows which have led her to enter into the history of her own family. It is Waa the Crow—one of the guardian spirits of the land—who is compelling Sadie to unravel the mystery of Jimmy Raven's murder, as a means of achieving some sense of justice and restitution, which suggests that one important role of the land is to uphold a just society.

## Chapter 16 Quotes

☝☝ Craig leaned into David's face and lowered his voice. “Found something very interesting on my land. Aboriginal artefacts. Wondered if you could tell me what they'd be worth.”

**Related Characters:** Craig Mortlock (speaker), Lachie Mortlock, Sadie Hazzard, David

**Related Themes:**  

**Related Symbols:** 

**Page Number:** 120

### Explanation and Analysis

After a footy game, Craig approaches David to ask him about the value of Aboriginal relics he has found on his land. Craig refers here to the sacred circle of stones. His son, Lachie, has clearly revealed the location of the site to his father, even though he had promised Sadie that he would not do so.

Craig's comments indicate that he is only interested in the monetary value of the site—he has no interest in its cultural or spiritual value. Craig's approach to the sacred circle reflects the general ignorance of white Australians, and specifically residents of the town of Boort, when it comes to Aboriginal cultural heritage. Rather than attempting to learn more about what the site might mean or signify, and what value it has for the Aboriginal people whose culture it embodies, Craig immediately focuses on monetary gain. Craig's attitude furthermore exemplifies that of his forbears—the white settlers and colonialists who arrived on the continent and proceeded to settle and exploit the land and its people largely for profit. Like these forbearers, Craig only thinks about profit and is comfortable in the habit of

oppressing Aboriginal people for his own gain.

## Chapter 17 Quotes

☞ Mr Mortlock's hand shot out and twisted into Dad's shirt. "I've killed the bugger, Clarry. I've gone and killed him."

**Related Characters:** Gerald Mortlock (speaker), Sarah Louise "Sadie" Hazzard, Sadie Hazzard, Clarry Hazzard, Jimmy Raven

**Related Themes:**    

**Related Symbols:**  

**Page Number:** 129

### Explanation and Analysis

Sadie has again been whisked back to the past, to the year 1933, where she inhabits her great-aunt Sarah Louise's body and lives as the daughter of Clarry Hazzard. One night, Gerald Mortlock appears at the family home, dirty and covered in blood. There, he confesses to Clarry that he has just killed Jimmy Raven, after they got into a heated confrontation over the dam that Gerald wants to build on his land, and which Jimmy wanted to stop him from doing. This is because the dam would flood the sacred circle of stones—an Aboriginal hallowed site located on Gerald's property.

Gerald's murder of Jimmy Raven indicates that a cycle of violence has commenced. After this murder, several violent and tragic events also take place: Gerald takes his own life and Clarry dies soon after, and the conflict continues in Sadie's present through the tension between the Mortlocks and the Hazzards. Gerald's recourse to terrible, and fatal, violence in the disagreement with Jimmy alludes to the violence to which not only Gerald, but also white settlers more generally, subject Aboriginals. Australia's own recent history is built on the violent subjugation of Aboriginals by white settlers, and Gerald's murder of Jimmy recalls this history. Gerald is clearly shaken by the murder, and yet the fact that he felt free to inflict such violence on Jimmy in the first place also reveals his sense of entitlement, as well as his devaluation of Aboriginal lives such as Jimmy's. Gerald can murder Jimmy because he believes that Jimmy's life is worthless and believes that he will not face retribution for doing so.

## Chapter 18 Quotes

☞ "Why are you doing this, Dad? Why?" And then Sadie's voice had risen to a scream, and Dad grabbed her arm and shook her.

"Be quiet, Sadie, for God's sake!"

"It's not right, Dad, you know it!"

"I have to help Gerald; I promised I'd look out for him."

"And what about Jimmy? Didn't you promise him, too?" Her voice rose, shrill, hysterical. "Jimmy was murdered! Gerald Mortlock should hang for this!"

Dad slapped her face.

**Related Characters:** Clarry Hazzard, Sarah Louise "Sadie" Hazzard (speaker), Gerald Mortlock, Jimmy Raven, Sadie Hazzard

**Related Themes:**  

**Related Symbols:**  

**Page Number:** 135

### Explanation and Analysis

Sadie is living as Sarah Louise, her great-aunt, in the year 1933, where she witnesses Gerald Mortlock's revelation that he murdered Jimmy Raven. Gerald Mortlock then lures Clarry, her father, into helping hide evidence of the murder, including Jimmy's body. Sadie, as Sarah Louise, realizes this is terribly wrong and confronts her father about his role in hiding the crime. Clarry, however, does not react well to his daughter's rebellion.

That Clarry slaps Sarah Louise/Sadie when she confronts him about the immorality of his actions is significant, for it alludes to the way in which violence begets violence. Gerald Mortlock's initial violent action—his murder of Jimmy—is leading to more violence. Jimmy's body is violated for a second time when it is hidden by Clarry, rather than being given to Jimmy's family for proper burial. Furthermore, the crime itself leads Clarry to inflict violence on his daughter, by slapping her, even though Sarah Louise/Sadie is courageous and right in pointing out to him that he is behaving in an immoral way. Clarry chooses to help Gerald Mortlock because he owes Mortlock a debt—and will be financially ruined if Mortlock is punished for the crime. Clarry, in other words, puts money and his own self-interest above morality, and as a result of compromising his integrity in this way, he ends up behaving violently towards his own daughter.

## Chapter 20 Quotes

☞ “You should be pleased! Look at all these people, experiencing a bit of Aboriginal culture!” He waved his arm at the men sprawled against the rocks, their boots resting on the carvings, their cans tossed into the centre of the circle.

**Related Characters:** Craig Mortlock (speaker), Walter, Lachie Mortlock, Sadie Hazzard

**Related Themes:**   

**Related Symbols:** 

**Page Number:** 157

### Explanation and Analysis

Soon after confessing to Walter the secret about the stone circle and how the crows speak to her, Sadie takes him to the site that sits on the dry lakebed located on the Mortlocks' land. However, when they arrive, they find Craig and Lachie Mortlock lounging around the sacred stones, drinking beer and littering, their friends riding trail bikes around the rocks. Sadie confronts Craig about his desecration of the site, but he only responds with more insolence.

Craig's statement that his friends are experiencing "Aboriginal culture" is offensive, as the people congregated at the site aren't experiencing it so much as desecrating it. As a hallowed place, this is not a place where people are meant to entertain themselves, or to drink and spend their leisure time. Craig's response to Sadie, therefore, is intentionally insulting, as it reflects his complete lack of respect, and proper appreciation for, the Aboriginal heritage that sits on his land. Craig cannot be entrusted to protect this heritage. His lack of respect for the site represents the larger lack of respect that white Australians often betray towards Aboriginal culture. That he feels free to behave this way also indicates that he's never experienced retribution for taking such actions; it's common for crimes like this one to go unpunished.

## Chapter 21 Quotes

☞ “The story goes on, as it always goes on. The Law is broken and there is punishment. The dead cannot live again, but what was taken from the clever man must be returned. When the Law is broken the world is broken. The circle must be joined again.”

**Related Characters:** The Crows (speaker), Lachie

Mortlock, Craig Mortlock, Jimmy Raven, Walter, Sadie Hazzard

**Related Themes:**    

**Related Symbols:** 

**Page Number:** 165

### Explanation and Analysis

After Sadie and Walter's confrontation with Craig and Lachie Mortlock at the stone circle turns heated, Sadie and Walter escape by running to Sadie's house. On the way there, they can hear Craig, Lachie and their friends shooting at the crows that have gathered in the sky to protect Sadie and Walter. As they finally arrive at home, a crow appears to Sadie and Walter, its wing broken and bleeding, and speaks to them.

The crow's words emphasize the idea that a "Law" has been broken. The clever man it refers to is, of course, Jimmy Raven, who was killed by Craig Mortlock and whose sacred objects were taken from him. Furthermore, the crow's bleeding wing reflects the killing of the crows that Craig and Lachie had just participated in, as well as the sacrilege they have carried out against Aboriginal people by treating the sacred site as a place of leisure. The crow's words and its injury reveal all the ways in which terrible damage and violence has been done against both Jimmy Raven and the sacred circle of stones, as well as the crows themselves. The crow thus functions as a messenger from the realm of Aboriginal spirits—and specifically as a representative of the spirit Waa the Crow—to remind Sadie and Walter about the necessity of attaining some kind of justice and restitution for the wrongs that have been carried out in the past and continue to be carried out in the present.

## Chapter 24 Quotes

☞ “We can't leave him here!” Sadie was weeping. “If we leave him here, he will die!” She tried to lift Lachie's head. He moaned, his face drained of colour.

*The story tells itself again...*

The three of them were in the grip of Crow's story, just as Gerald and Clarry and Jimmy had been. But Crow couldn't see, Crow couldn't help them. Sadie was the only one who knew; it was all up to her.

**Related Characters:** Sadie Hazzard (speaker), Jimmy Raven, Clarry Hazzard, Gerald Mortlock, Walter, Lachie Mortlock

**Related Themes:**  

**Related Symbols:**  

**Page Number:** 199

### Explanation and Analysis

When Sadie and Walter break into the Mortlock house in search of Jimmy Raven's sacred objects, they are caught by Lachie. He follows them to the stone circle, where Walter throws a clod of mud at Lachie. Lachie falls off his trail bike and seriously injures himself, becoming unconscious. Fearing the repercussions, Walter tells Sadie they should just leave Lachie and run.

Sadie's insistence that they cannot leave Lachie reveals her courage and integrity at this moment of crisis. Even though she knows she, and especially Walter, might be blamed for Lachie's injury, she decides they cannot abandon him. Furthermore, her realization that she, Walter and Lachie are playing out a variation of the story that once took place between Gerald Mortlock, Clarry Hazzard and Jimmy Raven suggests that the violence of the past risks repeating itself in the present. Gerald and Clarry behaved without integrity in relation to Jimmy, an innocent man murdered by Gerald whose death was furthermore concealed by Clarry. Sadie realizes that if she and Walter abandon Lachie, they will be behaving with just as much immorality as Gerald and Clarry did towards Jimmy. Sadie also realizes that it is up to her and to Walter, to break the cycle of violence initiated by Gerald and Clarry. This necessitates acting with integrity and morality by coming to Lachie's aid.

## Chapter 27 Quotes

☛☛ Sadie edged closer to the bed. She pulled out the battered cigarette tin - heavy, so much heavier than it should be - and held it out. "I found it. His special things, the secret things. They're in there."

[...]

"Good girl!" [Auntie Lily] let out a deep sigh. "Go on, you go. I look after this now."

**Related Characters:** Auntie Lily, Sadie Hazzard (speaker), Jimmy Raven

**Related Themes:**    

**Related Symbols:**  

**Page Number:** 223

### Explanation and Analysis

Through her time travel to the year 1933, where she inhabits the body of her great-aunt Sarah Louise, Sadie manages to locate Jimmy Raven's special things—sacred objects which he had on his person when he was murdered by Craig Mortlock, and which disappeared after his death. In the present time, Sadie digs up the special things and takes them to Auntie Lily for safekeeping.

Sadie's act of returning the special things to Auntie Lily is significant on a number of levels. First of all, it points to Sadie's own integrity and courage. Sadie has successfully carried out the task charged to her by the crows, of 'finishing' Jimmy's story by finding his lost sacred objects. This was a difficult journey for Sadie, who often felt lost and overwhelmed on the way. The fact that she succeeds ultimately is a testament to her perseverance and how such integrity is necessary to interrupt cycles of violence. Secondly, her act of returning the things to Auntie Lily—a descendant of Jimmy Raven's—suggests that some sense of justice and restitution has been achieved. Jimmy's special things should have been passed on to his relatives when he was killed, but they weren't, because Gerald Mortlock and Clarry Hazzard concealed his murder. By returning his things to Auntie Lily, Sadie passes them on to those to whom they rightfully belong and who know how to protect the sacred objects. In doing so, she achieves a degree of restitution and justice, and she also takes action against her society's destructive prejudice toward Aboriginal culture.

☛☛ Sadie knew that she was gazing down at ancient campfires, lit by the people of Crow and Eaglehawk, night after night, generation after generation, millennium upon millennium; that the time of electric lights was only a blink in the long dream of this land's story. The secret magic of this country lay hidden, buried under buildings and blood; but it had never gone away, and it would never disappear.

**Related Characters:** The Crows, Sadie Hazzard

**Related Themes:** 

**Related Symbols:** 

**Page Number:** 224

### Explanation and Analysis

After returning Jimmy Raven's special things to Auntie Lily,

Sadie falls asleep and dreams that she is riding on the back of a huge crow flying over the land at night. As she looks down, she sees lights—campfires—dotting the landscape.

The vision of campfires that Sadie sees in the dream harks back to an ancient time, long before the arrival of white settlers, when Aboriginals were the only inhabitants of the land. Indeed, Sadie's understanding that these are the "people of Crow and Eaglehawk" affirms the idea that it is these people who have a true claim to the land, given how far into the past their roots reach. By comparison, the "time of electric lights," or the time of white people, seems like a "blink." Furthermore, Sadie's sense that the "secret magic of this country" "had never gone away, and it would never disappear" alludes to the idea that the power of the Aboriginal heritage lives on. While white settlers have attempted to wipe out Aboriginal culture, it continues to survive—and this is evident in Sadie's own encounter with the Aboriginal heritage in the town of Boort, as exemplified most powerfully in the sacred circle of stones.

## Chapter 28 Quotes

☛☛ "Bethany reckons he killed himself. Our great-grandpa," said Lachie. "Because of the war. Posttraumatic stress or whatever. It was years after he came back. The family made out it was an accident. But Bethany thinks it was because of what he'd seen. What he'd been through."

*What he'd done*, thought Sadie.

**Related Characters:** Lachie Mortlock (speaker), Bethany Mortlock, Jimmy Raven, Gerald Mortlock, Sadie Hazzard

**Related Themes:**  

**Related Symbols:**  

**Page Number:** 231

### Explanation and Analysis

Shortly after recovering from his injury, Lachie finds Sadie and Walter near the site of the stone circle, where they are restoring Jimmy Raven's grave. There, he expresses his gratitude to them for coming to his aid when he was injured. Sadie confronts Lachie about his family's dark past, revealing to him that his great-grandfather Gerald Mortlock had murdered Jimmy Raven. Lachie, however, is not quite ready to accept such an unpleasant truth about his ancestor. Nonetheless he confesses that his great-grandfather probably killed himself.

While Lachie seems to want to believe his sister Bethany's explanation that Gerald's suicide was the result of war trauma, Sadie knows better. She knows that Gerald was driven to suicide because of his murder of Jimmy Raven. In spite of successfully concealing this murder with the help of Clarry Hazzard, Gerald most likely couldn't live with the guilt. Gerald's suicide also indicates how, in killing Jimmy, Gerald initiated a cycle of violence that ultimately made a victim of him as well. Because he acted immorally, without integrity, Gerald paid a heavy price in terms of guilt, and ultimately, through death.

☛☛ Together they planted [Jimmy Raven's] marker in the ground at the place the crow had shown them.

"I should have brought some flowers or something," said Sadie.

"Next time," Walter said.

"Give us a hand?" Lachie called.

The three of them moved around the tiny graveyard, straightening the fallen crosses, digging them more firmly into the ground.

"That's better," said Lachie at last, and wiped his forehead on his sleeve. "Maybe we should build a fence round it or something."

"We'd help you," said Sadie.

"Make a real headstone for Jimmy, too," said Walter.

"Yeah," said Lachie.

**Related Characters:** Lachie Mortlock, Walter, Sadie Hazzard (speaker), Clarry Hazzard, Gerald Mortlock, Jimmy Raven

**Related Themes:**   

**Related Symbols:**  

**Page Number:** 232-233

### Explanation and Analysis

Sadie and Walter finish preparing a grave marker for Jimmy and plant it into the earth above his grave. Lachie, who has appeared at the graveyard to thank Sadie and Walter for saving his life after his injury on the trail bike, begins fixing up the graves of Mortlocks—his ancestors who are buried in the same cemetery as Jimmy Raven. Sadie and Walter then commence helping him, and the three of them agree to fix up the graveyard properly for all of its dead inhabitants.

This final scene of the novel suggests reconciliation and restitution. Finally, Sadie and Walter—with the help of a

crow—have found the location of Jimmy’s buried body, a location that had been a mystery for decades thanks to Clarry Hazzard’s concealment of the body. The act of marking the grave thus represents an act of respect towards Jimmy, as it is an acknowledgment both of his life and death. It is also an act of restitution, as Sadie and Walter finally give Jimmy the grave marker that he should have been given decades earlier, when he was murdered.

That the three teenagers take to restoring not only Jimmy’s grave, but also the graves of dead Mortlocks, points to the ways in which this generation of Hazzards, Mortlocks, and Jimmy Raven’s descendants are beginning to heal and

reconcile. The teenagers have begun to leave the violence and racism of their ancestors behind them. Instead of battling each other, as Gerald Mortlock, Jimmy Raven and Clarry Hazzard had done, they are depicted in this scene as cooperating with one another, paying respects to their ancestors even as they fashion a different, more peaceful future for themselves. Notably, their action centers around respecting and sharing the land itself, in this case through the graveyard that their ancestors share. By focusing this moment back on the land, the novel emphasizes how it connects and supports all the characters and all the residents of Boort.



## SUMMARY AND ANALYSIS

The color-coded icons under each analysis entry make it easy to track where the themes occur most prominently throughout the work. Each icon corresponds to one of the themes explained in the Themes section of this LitChart.

## CHAPTER 1

A crow flies high above a winter landscape. He spots a girl (later revealed to be Sadie) walking alone through the landscape, leaving a town behind her. The crow cries out, and the girl looks up.

Hearing the crow, Sadie looks up and says, “stupid bird.” She has just moved to the small town of **Boort** with her mother, on the shore of Little Lake Boort. However, today, Sadie is on her way to another lake, a secret one outside of town, where her mother used to bring Sadie and her cousins when they visited. Her mother had loved it here, which was why she moved Sadie to Boort.

Sadie walks on, following a sign, looking forward to seeing the lake at any moment. Suddenly, she stops and gazes down at a valley—the lake has disappeared, revealing only a bed of mud. Sadie walks along the lakebed, listening to the crow crying overhead. As Sadie explores the lakebed, she finds a small graveyard, and then a group of **stones** standing in a ring. The stones are ancient, and there are carvings on them.

Sadie notices the crow standing nearby. Suddenly it speaks, telling her, “This is Crow’s place.” The crow tells her that Waa the Crow is awake, and that now it begins. Baffled, Sadie asks *what* will begin, and the crow answers with a riddle: it tells her that the beginning and end are “always the same.” The crow also tells Sadie that Waa the Crow has work for her. It then unfurls its wings and vanishes into the sky.

*By emphasizing the point of view of a crow looking down on the land, the book’s opening foreshadows the importance of land and landscape as a theme in the narrative.*



*The switch to Sadie’s point of view continues an emphasis on land and landscape. Sadie is in the process of exploring the town’s landscape, and her search for the secret lake outside of Boort suggests that the landscape has secrets and mysterious aspects that are not immediately obvious.*



*The discovery of the graveyard and circle of stones along the dry lake bed again suggests that the landscape hides secrets which may not be immediately discernible. The graveyard and circle of stones had been lost beneath the water of the lake, and are now revealed only because the lake has dried up.*



*The speaking crow reinforces the impression that all is not what it seems in the landscape. The lake has disappeared to reveal strange monuments, and now birds are speaking to Sadie. Also, the crow’s statement that this is “Crow’s place” suggests that the spot Sadie has found has a special significance. In speaking of “Crow” with a capital “C,” the crow refers to the ancestral Aboriginal spirit of Waa the Crow, an important spirit in Aboriginal culture.*



---

## CHAPTER 2

---

Sadie, unsettled by the encounter with the speaking crow, hurries across the lakebed and down the path back to **Boort**. On the way, she passes paddocks and the abandoned railway station. Not in a rush to go home—she had a fight with her mother earlier—she lingers beneath the town’s World War I memorial, reading inscriptions. She sees her own and her mother’s last name: Hazzard. Sadie carries her mother’s last name because her parents never married, and her father left them. Her mother, Ellie, told Sadie that the Hazzards have lived in Boort since “forever,” and here Sadie finds proof.

Sadie is disappointed by **Boort**, especially as it is not the paradise of trees and creeks that Ellie promised, but rather a lonely town of “parched yellow paddocks and empty roads.” Sadie and her mother have been here for a month already, and Sadie still doesn’t feel at home. Her mother found a nursing job at the local hospital.

The crow, perched in a tree, watches as Sadie continues walking the road along the lake and enters a house. The crow takes in the landscape, which is covered by the new marks of “roads, railway tracks, electricity towers, boundary fences.” These are the marks of settlers who cleared the land upon their arrival, building new things on top. But the crow can still discern “the old signs,” which are no longer obvious, although they are still there.

---

## CHAPTER 3

---

When Sadie enters the house, her mother, Ellie, scolds her for not explaining where she was going. Ellie says that at 13, Sadie should be behaving more responsibly. Sadie snaps back that if she is that old, her mother should have consulted her about the important life decision of moving to **Boort**. Trying to make amends, Ellie hugs and kisses her daughter, and suggests they go and catch the end of the footy (Australian rules football) game—Boort school kids are playing against Wedderburn. Sadie grudgingly agrees to go.

*The name “Hazzard” on the World War I monument indicates how far back the family’s roots reach in the town. The Hazzards have lived out their history in Boort. That Sadie’s mother never married and gave her own last name to her daughter also indicates that Sadie comes from an unusual family set-up—having been raised by a single mother, her upbringing is somewhat unconventional.*



*Sadie’s disappointment in Boort suggests that she does not feel connected to the place where her family has roots. As such, she is alienated from the land that she should feel at home in. This suggests that her relationship to the land and heritage that Boort represents is more complicated than that of her mother, who spent her childhood and adolescence there and feels ‘at home’ in the landscape in a way that Sadie doesn’t.*



*In looking down upon the scene, the crow discerns two layers to the landscape. One layer indicates the history of the white settlers who arrived in Australia relatively recently. But beneath their roads and railway tracks are “signs” that point to the existence of a much older history.*



*The tensions between Sadie and her mother are revealed in this scene. Clearly, Sadie feels great resentment towards her mother for moving her to Boort. Sadie doesn’t always feel that her mother pays adequate attention to her needs and feelings. In assuming that her daughter would be happy to move to Boort, Ellie did not take into account the fact that Sadie doesn’t view Boort as a place of heritage in the way that Ellie does. Ellie grew up in the town, while Sadie hasn’t. The mother and daughter’s contrasting attitudes to the town suggest that heritage is built through experience in, and emotional connection to, a place.*



On the way to the game, Sadie mentions to Ellie that she saw their family name of Hazzard on the war memorial. Ellie tells Sadie that her great-grandfather, Clarry Hazzard, fought in World War I. He survived the war and returned to Boort to run the town shop.

At the game, Ellie and Sadie eat sausages as they watch. Sadie's attention is caught by one of the players. Ellie strikes up a conversation with the boy's parents, who are cheering him on. Ellie recognizes the woman, Amanda. Amanda introduces her husband, whom Ellie didn't recognize at first but also knows—he is Craig Mortlock. Sadie lets the three adults chat as she watches player number 29, Amanda and Craig's son, whose name is Lachie Mortlock.

After the game, Sadie and her mother walk back home. On the way, Sadie mentions that she saw the Mortlock name on the war memorial, too, and her mother tells her that the Mortlocks own half the town, including a large property on its edges called Invergarry. Sadie realizes that the dried lakebed she visited earlier must lie on the family's property of Invergarry.

*Sadie is beginning to learn more about her ancestors who lived in Boort. Although she is not happy to be in the town, the move to Boort is allowing her to discover her family history.*



*Sadie's focus on Lachie indicates that she is instantly attracted to him. In spite of her dislike of the town, she nonetheless starts to form connections to people in Boort. Her mother's re-acquaintance with Amanda and Craig Mortlock further reminds the reader that Ellie has roots in the town—old relationships and acquaintances are being reawakened.*



*Like the Hazzards, the Mortlocks have a long history in the town, although they are clearly much wealthier given their ownership of so much land. The fact that the dry lakebed exists on their property raises the question of whether they are aware of the stone monument that Sadie stumbled upon there.*



## CHAPTER 4

On her way back from school, Sadie stops at the hospital where her mother works. As she waits for her, she sees an Aboriginal boy named Walter, who goes to her school. Like her, he is new to the town. There have been rumors that he'd been in trouble with the police in Mildura, the town he lived in before coming to **Boort**.

Ellie finally appears. Tagging along is another man, David, whom Sadie's mother introduces her to, telling Sadie that she used to know him ages ago. He is a social worker in the district. Impulsively, Ellie invites him and Walter to the house for dinner. On the way to the supermarket, Ellie discloses to Sadie that she and David dated when she was young, but that the relationship was complicated—mostly because David was “black”—an Aboriginal.

As Ellie hectically prepares dinner at home, Sadie goes into the backyard. Soon, Walter joins her. She finds out that Walter is David's nephew, and that Walter's mother sent him down to **Boort**. He has some family in the area. He mentions that things weren't good in Mildura, and Sadie wonders whether the rumor that he stabbed someone there is true. Still, she realizes she likes Walter. Eventually, the back door opens and David calls in the kids for dinner.

*While Walter, like Sadie, is new to Boort, one significant difference between the two is that Sadie is white and Walter is Aboriginal. Walter's troubled history also indicates that he has had a turbulent experience in his past life in Mildura.*



*Ellie's confession to Sadie that she had dated David but that the relationship was complicated because David was an Aboriginal, or “black,” alludes to the racial tensions that exist between white and Aboriginal residents of the town. Clearly, Aboriginals like David and Walter occupy a different social status than the town's white residents, and mixed-race relationships seem to be frowned upon by white people.*



*Sadie and Walter's conversation in the backyard suggests the beginning of a friendship. In spite of the rumors about Walter's violent past, she likes him. Sadie is beginning to develop relationships and connections in Boort, although she is still unhappy about her mother having made her move here.*



## CHAPTER 5

One evening, Ellie tells Sadie she can't be bothered to cook, and so they head down to the pub for dinner. At the pub, they run into Craig Mortlock. Ellie encourages Sadie to go to the backroom and join the kids from school who are there. When she does so, Sadie sees Lachie Mortlock, along with some of the older kids from school, playing billiards. Sadie gets drawn into a game and impresses the boys. Lachie approaches her and chats with her, but then Ellie calls Sadie for dinner.

Over dinner, Ellie talks about the Mortlocks, remembering the times when they would go together to Lake Invergarry. Sadie confesses that she visited that very lake the other day, and notes that it's all dried up now. Sadie also tells her mother about the **stone circle** that she found there, and asks if her mother wants to have a look. Her mother says no, because the lake gives her the creeps. Even though her mother tells her to keep away from the lake, Sadie knows that she must go back to ascertain whether the crows had actually spoken to her there, or whether she had dreamed it all up.

*Sadie's ability to impress the teenagers with her pool-playing skills, as well her conversation with Lachie, suggests that she is beginning to find her feet in Boort. Her social relationships are expanding. These relationships that Sadie begins to establish indicate that a sense of connection to a place, a location or a landscape, depends to a large degree on the relationships that one builds there.*



*That Sadie chooses not to disclose everything to her mother about what she saw and heard at the lake—particularly the speaking crows—indicates that she doesn't quite trust her mother. This points back to the tensions that exist between Ellie and Sadie. However, Sadie's confidence in her own perception of reality is shaken, as she feels the need to return to the lake to confirm whether her encounter with the speaking crows was real or imagined and to better understand how the landscape around her really works.*



## CHAPTER 6

On a late Saturday afternoon, as Ellie takes a call from David, Sadie leaves the house for Lake Invergarry. She wants to find the **circle of stones**, but can't remember where it is exactly. Suddenly, she notices a crow swooping over her and crying. She follows it, and sure enough, it leads her to the circle of stones.

Sadie finds the crow waiting for her. Saying that it has a story to tell her, the crow explains that the **circle of stones** is "a secret place, a story place," and that Waa the Crow's people were once here, but that they have disappeared. The crow says the story it is about to tell belongs to Crow as well as Sadie, and that Sadie must finish the story herself. When Sadie asks questions, the crow grows impatient. Then it unfurls its wings, from which darkness streams. The earth trembles, and there is a sound like thunder. Sadie runs. It is night.

*Sadie's decision to go back to the lake on her own points to her strong sense of curiosity and her lack of fear. The appearance of a crow also signals the significant link between these creatures and the circle of stones.*



*The relationship between the crows and the circle of stones is explicitly revealed when the speaking crow informs Sadie that the stone circle belongs to a supernatural being, Waa the Crow, and the Aboriginal people who venerate him. In this encounter, the crow also charges Sadie with the responsibility of finishing a story, thus making her an active agent in that story—although Sadie herself doesn't yet know what this story is about.*



## CHAPTER 7

Sarah Louise runs in the darkness. Soon, she spots some faint lights in the distance, which, as she approaches, she recognizes as lamplights. She realizes that she is dressed differently than she was a few moments before—now she wears a blue cardigan, and is carrying a basket of eggs. It dawns on her that she has become a different person. While this astonishes her, it does not alarm her, and she makes her way to her house.

*Sadie's reality seems to be altering. Suddenly she realizes that she is wearing different clothes—and is in fact a different person, though she herself doesn't yet know that she has turned into her great-aunt, Sarah Louise, who was also nicknamed "Sadie." Sadie is therefore both herself and someone else.*



Sarah Louise lets herself into a busy kitchen, where Mum is cooking and John is poring over his schoolbook. Her mother instructs her to mash the potatoes, so she can go look in on the baby. Sarah Louise—who is nicknamed Sadie—busies herself with chores about the kitchen, all the while feeling that her thoughts are not her own. Mum reappears with a baby, and calls Betty and Clarry. It dawns on Sadie that Clarry is her father.

As Sarah Louise clears the table for dinner, she picks up a newspaper. There is a headline about Hitler, and the date on the paper is Friday, June 23, 1933. Suddenly Sadie feels faint, realizing that she has time-traveled to the past. Mum instructs her to sit down, and Sadie sits besides the girl Betty who has just appeared.

Dad, or Clarry, appears in the room, and the family all sits down. His presence has a calming effect on the children, including Sarah Louise. They all joke about Sadie's undercooked peas, which she boiled earlier.

After dinner, Sarah Louise sits in a chair by the stove. Her mother Jean goes upstairs to put the younger children to bed. Sadie listens to Clarry and John wash up and speak about cricket, and then she drifts off to sleep. In a dream, she finds herself in a dark night, where there is fire and dancing and singing. She sees a black-beaked figure emerging out of the night, its cry ringing out.

## CHAPTER 8

Sarah Louise wakes up to find herself alone in the kitchen with Jean and Clarry. Someone knocks at the door, and when her dad opens the door, Jimmy Raven, an Aboriginal man who is the Mortlocks' stockman, walks in. The three adults, who seem to have forgotten about Sarah Louise's presence in the chair, exchange small talk. Sarah Louise notices that her parents serve Jimmy tea in good china, unlike most of the other townspeople, who would never serve an Aboriginal man in good china.

*The appearance of new people whom Sadie nonetheless seems to be familiar with—Mum, John and Clarry—and who are clearly familiar with her, indicates that she has entered into a life of another person. She is, in fact, now another “Sadie”—her great-aunt Sarah Louise, who was also known as Sadie.*



*The newspaper date reveals the extent to which Sadie's reality has altered. She has traveled back decades into the past. Thus, time itself is beginning to unfold in unexpected, and mysterious, ways.*



*While Sadie is shocked to realize she has time-traveled to the past, the scene that unfolds around her—a family dinner—is very conventional. Clearly the rest of the family members have no sense that Sarah Louise is now not only herself, but also another person—Sadie Hazzard from the future.*



*The fire that Sadie sees in her dream alludes to a time before electricity when people lived by the light of campfires. The black-beaked figure, of course, recalls the crows. As such, the dream seems to allude to the Aboriginal past, which seems to be closely linked with the crows and perhaps with Sadie's present.*



*As an Aboriginal man, Jimmy would not be accorded equal respect and courtesy by white residents, and this is indicated by the fact that most white residents of the town wouldn't serve him on good china. That Clarry and Jean do suggests that they are not as prejudiced as the other white townspeople.*



Finally, Jimmy addresses Clarry, saying he wants to ask him something. He refers to Dad by the name “Lofty,” the nickname Clarry went by in the war. Jimmy and Dad served together in the war, and Dad fought the town of **Boort** to have Jimmy’s name engraved on the war monument. Clarry was eventually supported by Gerald Mortlock, a powerful man in the town who also served in the war along with Clarry and Jimmy. Gerald also gave Jimmy work at Invergarry after the war.

Jimmy then begins to share his troubles. He poses a hypothetical dilemma to Clarry: if Clarry had been given something sacred to look after, and he knew that someone was going to do something that would destroy this sacred thing, what would Clarry do? Clarry says he would move the thing, but then Jimmy says this thing can’t be moved.

There’s another knock on the door. This time it is Gerald Mortlock, who seems somewhat surprised to see Jimmy in the room. Jimmy immediately rises to his feet and says he has to go. Gerald sits down, making himself comfortable in the room, and asks why Jimmy is visiting. Clarry says he just dropped by to say hello.

Jean interrupts the conversation, asking if Gerald Mortlock needs something. He asks for a box of matches, and she goes to the front of the store and gets it for him. He then leaves, after complimenting Clarry on his lovely wife. After Gerald Mortlock’s departure, Clarry is slightly shaken. He tells Jean that he and Jimmy and Gerald were all mates during the war, but that things between them have changed drastically.

Clarry and Jean suddenly notice that Sarah Louise is still in her chair and ask her if she’s feeling well. She is about to say that she’s fine, when darkness suddenly plunges over her. She presses her hands against her eyes, and when she opens them, she finds that it is broad daylight and she is sitting in the lakebed, covered in mud. A crow is perched on a dead tree not far away, looking at her.

*That the town was reluctant to include Jimmy’s name on the war monument is further indication of the ways in which Aboriginals are discriminated against in Boort. Even though Jimmy had served in the war like white men such as Clarry and Gerald, the town is resistant to honoring his service, and it takes the intervention of others for him to get his due.*



*Jimmy’s statement that the “thing” that must be protected is sacred suggests that it has a very important spiritual value. This in turn indicates that Jimmy, as an Aboriginal man, is trying to save some spiritual or sacred element of Aboriginal culture that is under threat. Jimmy’s desire to protect this sacred Aboriginal object alludes to the way in which Aboriginal culture is consistently treated with disrespect and ignorance by white Australians. Clearly, Jimmy fears that violence will be done to this sacred object—it is in danger of being destroyed. The fact that the “thing” Jimmy refers to can’t be moved also reveals that it is very closely tied to land—it is located on the land in such a way that its very identity is tied to the landscape.*



*Jimmy’s decision to leave immediately after Gerald arrives suggests that Jimmy does not feel as comfortable around Gerald as he does around Clarry—even though he served with both men during World War I. Some kind of unease seems to exist between Jimmy and Gerald, and it may be due to racial tension or prejudice.*



*Clarry’s comments to Jean after Gerald’s departure affirm the fact that not all is well between the three men—even though they were once close. Clarry senses that something is amiss between Jimmy and Gerald, but he can’t quite put his finger on what the problem is, and this unsettles him.*



*Sadie’s sudden transition to present time—just as she is about to answer Clarry and Jean’s question in the body of her great-aunt Sarah Louise—indicates how little control she seems to have in directing the changes that affect her since her discovery of the stone circle. She is in the grip of forces beyond her control, though she doesn’t yet understand how these forces connect to the land and her family’s heritage.*



## CHAPTER 9

When Sadie finally arrives home, Ellie reprimands her, demanding to know where she's been and angry that Sadie is coated in mud. Ellie reminds her daughter that they're going to a footy game soon. When Sadie goes to shower, it dawns on her that at the lake, she left her body for a few hours and "inhabited someone else's." She realizes that the crow sent her back to the past, into the "history of her own family."

Sadie and her mother drive to a nearby town where the footy game is taking place. As Sadie leans against a fence, Lachie Mortlock comes up behind her. As always, she is nervous being around him. Lachie doesn't want to hang around for the game, and he suggests they go somewhere else. Without intending to, Sadie suggests the lake.

Sadie climbs up behind Lachie on a trail bike, thrilled to be so close to him. They bump their way to the lake, and Sadie points out the place with the **stone circle**. Lachie is impressed by the stones—he's never seen them before, and thinks they're a burial site. Sadie tells him that he's wrong, but doesn't reveal what the crow has told her—that this is a "a secret place. A story place."

Suddenly, Sadie feels very nervous about having brought Lachie to the **stone circle**. She asks him to promise not to tell anyone about this place. He makes fun of her for wanting to keep the place a secret, but then draws close to her, and tells her that now it will be their special place. Sadie almost swoons at the close contact with Lachie. She doesn't care that she can hear crows crying angrily. She is happy.

*Sadie only begins to make sense of what happened to her after she returns home. Rightly so, she connects the crows with these changes—they are the ones who have sent her back to delve into, and experience, the history of her own family in 1933. The crows have set a chain of events in motion, which Sadie only half-understands at this point.*



*Sadie's nervousness around Lachie suggests how attracted she feels to him. Her desire to become close to him is indicated by the fact that they go to the lake—a location which has a special significance for her, given all that has taken place there.*



*That Sadie reveals the location of the stone circle to Lachie suggests an impulse on her part to trust him. She has not disclosed the specific location of this site to anyone else. Sadie's attraction to Lachie is thus leading her to divulge her secrets. In doing so, however, Sadie seems to be privileging her own desires and impulses over the protection of the site—which, as the crow has told her, is a "secret" place of Aboriginal heritage. In this regard, she seems to compromise the heritage that the site embodies by thinking about herself first.*



*Sadie's sudden uncertainty about revealing the site to Lachie indicates that she is mistrustful of her own judgment. The crows' angry cries in the background suggest that they do not approve of Sadie's decision to let Lachie into the secret, while Sadie's decision to ignore this sign from the natural world foreshadows that there may be negative consequences following her decision.*



## CHAPTER 10

Lachie and Sadie return to the footy game just as it's finishing. Her mother says that David is coming over tonight, and they will get dinner at the pub. Later that evening, both Sadie and Ellie are surprised when David brings his nephew Walter along. When they all arrive at the pub, there is an uncomfortable silence as the other patrons stop their conversations and stare at the white woman and her daughter stepping in with the black man and his nephew. Sadie thinks she hears Craig Mortlock making fun of her mother. The four settle down in the back bar, where, after a wink from David, Sadie begins to feel more comfortable. Sadie wants to be as brave and bold as David, and so she invites Walter to go play pool with her in the pool room.

In the pool room, Sadie begins to play pool with Walter. Just as they're beginning the game, Lachie Mortlock and a group of other teenagers come from outside. One of the teenagers tells them to leave the table. Sadie hopes that Lachie, who is watching the scene, will come to their defense. Instead, Lachie calls Sadie and Walter "kids," and tells them their turn is over and they must leave. He glares at Walter as he speaks.

Walter confronts Lachie, telling him to watch his tone. As Walter and Sadie are leaving, she hears the gang making derogatory remarks about her and Walter, calling Walter her "abo boyfriend." People also make fun of Sadie's mother for dating David. Sadie is enraged, but Walter leads her away.

## CHAPTER 11

Sadie, Ellie, David, and Walter leave the pub after the meal and return to Ellie and Sadie's place. As Walter and Sadie sit watching television, they hear David and Ellie arguing in the kitchen. After David and Walter leave, Ellie, distraught over the fight with David, tells her daughter that she needs to tell her about the past. Sadie is suddenly nervous, wondering if her mother means the past of the 1930s, which she has visited.

*The silence and stares that greet Sadie, her mother, Walter and David as they enter the pub point to the racial tensions that continue to permeate social relations in the town. Clearly, many people in the town do not approve of this mixed group of whites and Aboriginals. However, Sadie takes courage from David, who confronts the hostility with confidence.*



*The hostility that Sadie felt amongst the white adults at the front of the bar is mirrored by the behavior of the white teenagers. Lachie's behavior is an indication that he can't be trusted. While Sadie expects him to defend her, he instead acts just as rudely as his peers towards her and Walter. This moment suggests that racial prejudice is everywhere in the town, even among young people whom Sadie otherwise likes.*



*The derogatory remarks that the gang makes about Walter being an "abo" (Aboriginal), confirm that the teenagers reflect the same attitudes of prejudice that their parents do. They, too, are hostile towards Aboriginals, and towards white people who mix with them.*



*The hostile experience that Sadie, her mother, David and Walter faced in the pub clearly leads to tensions between Ellie and David, who are now dating. This recalls the fact that, when Ellie had dated David as a young woman, the couple had also faced complications because of their mixed-race relationship. The experience in the pub suggests that the attitude of the townspeople hasn't changed much since David and Ellie's youth.*



But Ellie speaks of a more recent past: she tells Sadie that she used to date Craig Mortlock, when she was in her late teens. Craig had been serious about Ellie, but then Ellie met David and knew she couldn't marry Craig. In response, Craig retaliated against David. One day, David went to Lake Invergarry to fish with a friend. There, Craig and his gang beat David up and almost killed him. Ellie says that after that, she ran away from **Boort**. She feels guilty about letting David down. Sadie suggests that she should fix things with David, and Ellie gets up to call him on the phone.

*Craig's violent attack on David when they were young is partly motivated by jealousy over Ellie's rejection, but it is also motivated by prejudice towards David as an Aboriginal man. The extreme violence of the attack suggests that Craig felt a certain impunity in attacking David, because David is Aboriginal. By dating a white woman who was also Craig's ex, David, as an Aboriginal man, had challenged taboos, and Craig had clearly felt entitled to punish him severely for it.*



## CHAPTER 12

The next day, Sadie realizes that she's lost her gloves. Upon admonishment by her mother, she agrees to go back to search for them at the pub, even though she is reluctant to go outside alone in the dark. Sadie makes her way to the pub and finds them in a gutter outside the pub. On her way back home, she stops at the war monument and looks into the old shop, which is boarded up. She thinks it's strange that she's been inside the shop in a different time period. Just then she hears a crow, and feels dizzy. Darkness closes in around her, and she staggers and falls.

*Sadie's trip in search of her gloves has an eerie feel, because of the darkness. Her reluctance to go outside alone suggests her awareness that there are forces beyond her control, which are affecting her in drastic, mysterious ways. Indeed, just as she is reflecting on her time travel to the past, these forces again come into play, as she hears a crow and feels darkness closing in around her. The landscape that Sadie inhabits reveals itself again and again to be full of strange and powerful currents that pull her in unexpected directions.*



When Sarah Louise rises, she is in the kitchen doorway behind the shop. She is throwing out washing-up water when she hears voices. It is Gerald Mortlock and Jimmy Raven, arguing. Jimmy Raven is telling Gerald that what he wants to do is wrong; Gerald responds by saying it is his land, so he can do what he wants with it. The fight is interrupted when Clarry appears. Gerald tells Clarry that Jimmy is telling him that he is not "allowed" to dam his own creek. Gerald warns Jimmy to watch himself and refers to him as "boy," a derogatory term.

*The tensions between Jimmy and Gerald that Sadie glimpsed in her previous visit to the past are clearly reaching a climax now. Sadie, in the body of her great-aunt Sarah Louise, begins to learn that their conflict is one over land, and Gerald's decision to dam part of his property, which Jimmy doesn't approve of. In referring to Jimmy by the derogatory term "boy," Gerald shows that he is just as prejudiced as many of Boort's other white residents.*



Gerald Mortlock leaves and Sarah Louise listens as her father, Clarry, questions Jimmy Raven about his conflict with Gerald. Jimmy tells him that Gerald wants to flood the valley and that this would be sacrilege, like setting fire to the church in town. The valley is a "meeting place" for his Aboriginal people, Jimmy says, "a holy place." Clarry doesn't quite understand why Jimmy is so upset, and goes back inside.

*Jimmy's words to Clarry reveal that Gerald is about to commit a serious crime against the heritage of the Aboriginal people to whom Jimmy belongs. Jimmy tries to make Clarry understand by comparing the sacred site to a church, and yet Clarry reveals himself to be quite close-minded and ignorant in not being able to see Jimmy's point of view. This indicates the extent to which not just Gerald, but also Clarry and other whites are unable to view things from any perspective other than their own. Jimmy's analogy about burning the truth also hints that this prejudice is closely linked to the possibility of literal violence.*



Sarah Louise then calls Jimmy from the darkness. She tells him that she thinks she understands what he's saying. Jimmy tells her he's not from the **Boort**, that he comes from way down south, but that he knows the valley is a special place. Its people are not there to protect it, so he feels a special responsibility to do so on their behalf.

*Sadie, as Sarah Louise, understands Jimmy's concerns, unlike her father and Gerald. Jimmy's words to her indicate that he is trying to do his duty by the Aboriginal people who once lived in the area, even though he himself comes from elsewhere in the country. As an Aboriginal man, he feels the impulse to protect their land and heritage against white prejudice—as embodied by Gerald and even Clarry—that would violate and destroy them.*



## CHAPTER 13

Sadie dreams that she is walking across a plain at night. She sees a huge crow, crying, its eyes revealing a very deep grief. Sadie wants to comfort the crow, but when she tries to touch it, it disappears.

*The dream of the crying crow conveys a vision of loss and sadness. The crow's sorrow can be seen to embody grief over the violent destruction of Aboriginal culture.*



On Saturday, Ellie and David go to watch the footy game while Sadie stays at home. She is bored, but she is afraid to visit the **circle of stones** again, given her dream about the crow. When Ellie and David return, they all decide to go to the pub, and Sadie is happy to join in after a dull day.

*Sadie's reluctance to visit the stone circle suggests that the dream she had is an indication that all is not well at the site. She senses that something has happened there, or will happen there, that will lead to grief or even violence.*



At the pub, Craig and Amanda Mortlock and their kids, Lachie and Bethany, take the table next to Sadie, David, and Ellie's. When Craig and Lachie start talking about footy and Lachie tells his father they need a new coach, Ellie interrupts and suggests David, who had been a coach down in Mildura before he moved back to **Boort**. Craig acknowledges the Mildura players were great, but then makes derogatory comments about how the players, who were Aboriginal, couldn't "take discipline." Tension escalates between David and Craig, especially when Craig suggests that David's nephew Walter isn't doing so well in Boort.

*The casual racism of the town's white residents is reflected in Craig's comments about the Aboriginal players of Mildura. Craig's statement that the players were undisciplined feeds into stereotypes of Aboriginals as lazy and rebellious. Because David is aware of the connotations of Craig's statement, tensions escalate between the two and David unfairly loses out on a coaching opportunity for which he is clearly well-qualified. Furthermore, Craig attacks David's own nephew Walter, implying that Walter isn't doing well in the town because he is Aboriginal.*



Ellie comes to Walter's defense, pointing out that people in the town always say that "black boys *make trouble*, but white boys just *have accidents*." Ellie then refers back to the incident at the Invergarry Lake, when Craig nearly drowned David. Ellie, David, and Sadie rise to leave.

*Ellie calls out Craig on his prejudice, pointing out how white boys and Aboriginal boys are spoken about and treated differently in the town. She points to Craig's own bad behavior in the past towards David, as an example of how it is actually often white boys, not Aboriginals, who cause trouble—trouble that can easily escalate into violence. It's also noteworthy that Craig never faced retribution for his behavior and that he still holds the land that doesn't rightly belong to him, which indicate how unjust the racial structures in the town are.*



Just as they make it outside, Lachie catches up with them. He tells them that Craig says he's sorry for offending David, and implores David to coach **Boort**'s footy team, the Magpies. David says he'll think about it. Lachie then asks if Sadie wants to play pool. She wants to say no, but before she can, her mother agrees to let her stay. David and Ellie leave, and Lachie guides Sadie back into the pub.

*It's not clear whether Craig's apology—delivered by Lachie—is entirely sincere or not, or whether it is offered only so that David is wooed into coaching the footy team. That Sadie feels the impulse to say no to Lachie's offer to spend time together reveals that her feelings towards him are changing—and not for the better—after his bad behavior towards her and Walter in their previous encounter at the pool room. This change indicates that racial injustice can have negative consequences for all kinds of interpersonal relationships.*



## CHAPTER 14

After the pool game, Lachie walks Sadie home in the darkness. She is happy—she and Lachie won the game, and she impressed his mates with her skills at the pub. On the way, he tells her that she shouldn't mind the way his father behaved towards David—he's just not used to being around “blackfellas.” Sadie feels uncomfortable when she hears this word—she notes that while it's fine when David and Walter use it about themselves, it doesn't sound right when a white boy like Lachie uses it. She confronts Lachie about not standing up for her and Walter in the pool room the other night, and he says that it wasn't about Walter being black, it was about Sadie and Walter taking over the pool table. Sadie wants to believe him, but isn't sure.

*Lachie's use of the word “blackfellas” reveals how, even as he attempts to excuse his father, he himself exhibits some of the same insensitivity and discourtesy that his father shows in his attitude towards Aboriginals. Unlike Sadie, Lachie seems unaware of the fact that some words—such as “blackfellas”—should not be used by white people to talk about Aboriginals, even if Aboriginals use them to describe themselves. This insensitivity also casts doubt over his explanation of why he was rude to Sadie and Walter. While he denies being motivated by prejudice, Lachie exhibits some of the same attitudes as other white residents of the town, including his father.*



Lachie leaves. As Sadie walks through the backyard to her house, a crow appears suddenly, and she screams. The crow asks her why she has not kept his secret, and she apologizes for showing Lachie the **stone circle**—although, she says, it's on Lachie's land anyway. The crow mocks her when she says that the land is Lachie's.

*In confronting Sadie about her betrayal of the secret of the stone circle, the crow indicates that Sadie is culpable, given that her divulgence of the site to Lachie may potentially endanger it. Her answer to the crow also suggests her naiveté. The land technically belongs to Lachie's family, but the existence of the stone circle in fact affirms that it is not only Lachie's family who have a claim to the land—clearly others came before them. It is for this reason that the crow mocks Sadie's answer.*



The crow tells Sadie to tell the story, but Sadie, terrified, doesn't know what this means. The crow tells her that she can see what is hidden from Crow. He mentions that a man has been killed, a Law has been broken, and “the death must be punished.” He also mentions “precious things” that have been stolen. Sadie asks the crow if it means the story of Clarry or Jimmy Raven. The crow again tells her she must finish the story—for the “past is never over; it is never lost. It circles.” The crow flies off. Sadie hears her mother calling her and looks around.

*The crow again charges Sadie with the responsibility of finishing the story, though it doesn't explain entirely what this story is—only hinting at aspects of it. Here, Sadie is forced to confront the reality that it is up to her to unravel the riddles that the crow presents her with. What is clear is that a terrible, violent crime has been committed. Somehow, she has a role in addressing this crime and ensuring that justice is served. The crow's remark about the nature of the past also reinforces the idea that heritage is inescapable and cyclical.*



## CHAPTER 15

Ellie is worried about Sadie, who has been a bit out of sorts the past week at school and at home. Meanwhile, Sadie keeps thinking of the crow's words: "When the Law is broken there must be punishment!" She keeps dreaming that she is looking for something and running. At school, she's been noticing crows following her everywhere. Still, Sadie tells her mother that she wants to go to the school's art show that night. David and Walter will be there, as Walter has a piece in the show. Ellie tells her that David helped coach the boys' footy practice last night.

At the art show, Ellie, Sadie, and David look at Walter's painting. Ellie and Sadie are very impressed—the painting is of Auntie Lily, Walter's relative. As she looks at the painting, Sadie notices a crow in it. When she asks David about it, he says it is Auntie Lily's totem. Just then, they are interrupted by Craig Mortlock. He's very happy with the way David coached the boys the previous night and tells David that maybe he will have a permanent position as coach, though David insists he only wants to give a hand to the team.

Sadie and Ellie end up in David and Walter's kitchen for dinner. The conversation turns to the totems that Walter mentioned earlier, and Ellie asks him about them again. Walter says that some of what he is about to tell them is secret. But he assumes that they know about the Dreaming—the time, long ago, when ancestral spirits walked across the land and created it and its inhabitants. Walter says that in the area of **Boort**, "everything belongs to Bunjil the Eaglehawk or Waa the Crow." David mentions that one of the creeks in the area used to be called Crow Creek, but now it is known as Cross Creek. He tells Sadie that "whitefellas" changed the name because they thought crows were unlucky. Ellie adds that there's a church there now, and perhaps the name changed when the whites built a church there.

Walter says that his people have lived "in this country for forty thousand years, maybe more." And they survived because they "knew how to live with the land, not fight it." Walter adds that his people are still surviving, despite the arrival of the white men. David wonders whether Bunjil and Waa are still surviving, and Sadie cries out they are. Ellie and David laugh at her, but Walter only looks at her intently.

*Sadie is clearly haunted and troubled by the crow's allusion to some terrible crime that has been committed. Her dream that she is looking for something also indicates that she feels a responsibility to discover how she is connected to these violent events and how she can help create justice. The crows that follow her in school also represent a constant reminder that Sadie has a task that she can't avoid forever.*



*The crow in the painting of Auntie Lily suggests to Sadie that Walter, as well as Auntie Lily, may know something about the crows that she doesn't. Furthermore, David's revelation that the crow is Auntie Lily's totem indicates that crows have a special sacred value or meaning to Aboriginals. While Sadie may have begun to guess this as a result of her encounter with the crows, Walter's painting provides confirmation.*



*Walter's speech about the Dreaming, and the ancestral spirits of Bunjil the Eaglehawk and Waa the Crow, harks back to a time long before the arrival of white settlers. His words further allude to the special significance of crows in Aboriginal culture. These birds are clearly representatives of the ancient ancestral spirit of Waa the Crow. The change in name of Crow Creek to Cross Creek points to the ways in which white settlers have attempted reconfigure and rename the ancient landscape that was inhabited long before their arrival. Notably, everyone takes it for granted that the white people have not faced any restitution for the injustice they perpetrated.*



*Walter's statement that Aboriginals have been inhabiting the country for 40,000 years points to just how old the Aboriginal claim to the land is. It is a claim that predates white settlement by many millennia. In affirming that Bunjil and Waa are still surviving, Sadie indicates that she is beginning to realize—through her interaction with the crows—that the Aboriginal ancestral spirits are in fact still alive, even though white people generally deny their existence.*



## CHAPTER 16

To everyone's surprise, the **Boort** footy team wins the next game, thanks to David's coaching. All the Boort supporters are ecstatic. After the game, Craig Mortlock comes up to Ellie, David, Sadie, and Walter, who are all in attendance. He tells David that he found some Aboriginal artifacts on his land, and he wants to know how much he could sell them for. David tells him to tread carefully—the site might be protected. Craig grows angry, saying the whole country is a sacred site. Walter says that it is, indeed, all a sacred site.

Realizing that Lachie told Craig about the **stone circle**, Sadie finds him standing with his friends and confronts him. She tells him that he had promised the stone circle would be their secret. Walter follows her. Lachie tells her the stone circle isn't hers, it's on his family's land—the Mortlocks have owned the land for a hundred and fifty years. Walter leads Sadie, who is crying, away.

## CHAPTER 17

Ellie sends Sadie to the supermarket to buy some things before it closes. In the supermarket, Sadie faints, and soon after, she finds herself in the year 1933, as Sarah Louise. She's in the Hazzards' shop with Jean, her mother, counting money. As Jean tells Sadie to lock up, Gerald Mortlock barges in, covered in blood. He says he needs Clarry to help him.

Sarah Louise rushes to find her father, Clarry, whom she brings back to the shop front. Gerald Mortlock is slumped on the floor. Clarry tells Jean to go look after the kids, but tells Sarah Louise (referring to her as Sadie) to stay, as he might need her help. Gerald announces that he "killed that bugger." It emerges that he is talking about Jimmy Raven—whom he killed, supposedly by accident. Clarry and Sarah Louise are shocked. Gerald tells Clarry that he left Jimmy by the **stone circle**.

Clarry leaves Gerald Mortlock in the shop, locks up, and takes Sarah Louise with him. They arrive at the **stone circle**, where they hear a groan. They find Jimmy Raven and tell him that they'll get help, but Jimmy says he's "done for." He takes something out of his pocket and gives it to Clarry, telling him to take care of it and to hide it well. An owl calls, signaling death. Jimmy dies. Sarah Louise tells her dad they need to call the police, but Clarry says no.

*Craig's revelation that he has discovered Aboriginal artifacts on his land suggests that he knows about the stone circle. His interest in ascertaining the value of these artifacts reveals the extent to which he is driven by money. His only interest in these artifacts seems to be what they may be worth. He does not seem to be curious about the cultural value of the artifacts and whether they truly belong to him, which again shows how casually white people in Boort are accustomed to dominating Aboriginal people.*



*Lachie's assertion that the site of the stone circle belongs to his family because it is on their land shows what little regard he has for the aboriginal claim to the land, even though this land belonged to aboriginals long before it belonged to the Mortlocks. Indeed, the stone circle is itself a testament to this ancient claim to the land.*



*Again, Sadie finds herself whisked to the past, which continues to be more connected to her present than she ever expected. Gerald Mortlock's appearance indicates that something has gone terribly awry. Some sort of violence or accident has taken place, as his desperate, bloody state indicates.*



*Gerald's confession that he has killed Jimmy Raven suggests that a cycle of violence has commenced—Gerald has taken the life of an innocent man. By referring to Jimmy as a "bugger," which can be read as a derogatory term, Gerald also reveals his disrespect towards the very man whose life he has just ended.*



*Jimmy's death by the stone circle alludes to his own strong connection to the sacred site as its protector and defender, even as the circumstances of his death reinforce that his identity as an Aboriginal person puts him at constant risk. Jimmy's action of entrusting Clarry with his special things before dying also suggests that he trusts Clarry to do the right thing; clearly, he views Clarry as a friend who may be able to bring about retribution for the injustice of Jimmy's death.*



## CHAPTER 18

In tears, Sarah Louise angrily makes her way home. She can't believe that her father, Clarry, wants to hide the crime—to bury Jimmy's body without telling anyone. Sarah Louise challenged him, asking him about Jimmy's family. She shouted at him that Jimmy had been murdered, and that Gerald Mortlock should be hanged for it. In response, her father slapped her. He told her that he owes Mortlock money, and if Mortlock gets in trouble, Sarah Louise's family is finished financially. They have the shop business thanks to Gerald's money (though Jean doesn't know this). Sarah Louise arrives home, walking through the kitchen. She tries to reassure her unsettled mother and siblings that all is well.

Sarah Louise goes to the shop, where she finds Gerald Mortlock still slumped over, though he manages to ask her where Clarry is. She tells him that Jimmy is dead, and that her father is burying the body. She finds being in Mortlock's company unbearable. She is enraged and disgusted by him.

Still, Sarah Louise helps clean up Gerald Mortlock, as Clarry instructed her. Mortlock tells her that the murder was an accident—that Jimmy had been wild, rushing him, shouting about the dam and how it couldn't be built. Mortlock says he had to defend himself, and that the gun went off accidentally while he was struggling with Jimmy.

Finally, after midnight, Clarry returns. He is ashen, and his clothes are dirty. Clarry tells Gerald Mortlock that he buried Jimmy's body in the Mortlock family graveyard. Sarah Louise wants to weep—she knows that Jimmy “should have been buried near the **stones**, under the trees, in the heart of the bush,” not with the Mortlocks. She hears a crow shriek. Sadie wakes up, on the ground in the supermarket, with Mrs. Fox, the supermarket cashier, peering down at her.

*Sarah Louise/Sadie's realization that Clarry will not, in fact, act honorably and bring Gerald to justice. In spite of the trust Jimmy has put in Clarry, Clarry will betray him. Her father is motivated by his own self-interest—protecting his financial security by aiding Gerald Mortlock—rather than by doing the right thing. In confronting her father about his immoral choices, Sarah Louise/Sadie shows herself to be both more courageous and more moral than her father is. Still, Clarry's decision makes it clear just how rare it is for white people to stand up for the rights of Aboriginal people, even when something as serious as murder is involved.*



*Sadie, as Sarah Louise, is in a difficult position: on the one hand, she doesn't agree with her father's action of hiding the violent crime. On the other, she is compelled by her father to help Gerald Mortlock. Her feelings of disgust towards Gerald suggest how terrible she feels about helping him, but she nonetheless sees herself as powerless to change the destructive societal patterns of which she is a part.*



*In explaining the murder to Sarah Louise, Gerald seems to be trying to justify himself. But his account is questionable: if the murder was indeed an accident, why is he so eager to cover it up, and to have Clarry help him hide all traces of the crime? The dam's connection to the murder also reinforces how the land and different people's claims to it can have very powerful consequences for everyone who lives there.*



*Clarry's burial of the body—amongst the Mortlocks, no less—reveals his final betrayal and corruption. By choosing to help cover up the murder, he takes the side of the oppressor—Gerald Mortlock—over the side of the victim, Jimmy Raven. Even though Sadie, in the body of Sarah Louise, is still a child, she seems to be the only one guided by a moral sense and an understanding of the sacred nature of the land.*



## CHAPTER 19

Ellie sits on the edge of Sadie's bed at home. She is worried about Sadie, and after her fainting spell at the supermarket, wants her to get a check-up at the hospital. Sadie says no, and that she just needs to stay home for the day. Ellie tells Sadie if she really does hate it in **Boort**, then they can move. But Sadie tells her that actually, she likes Boort and wants to stay. Privately, she thinks that now she's inherited the other Sadie (Sarah's) body and gotten to know Clarry and Jean, she can't leave.

The next day, on Saturday, David and Walter come over. Ellie and David stay behind to paint Sadie's room, while Sadie and Walter go out for a walk. As they walk, Sadie feels glad to have Walter with her. She takes him to the town cemetery. There, she begins looking at gravestones. She freezes when she sees Gerald Mortlock's gravestone, listing his date of death as 1933—the same year as the murder of Jimmy Raven. Then, she looks to the next headstone. It lists Clarence Hazzard. She is breathless as she realizes Clarry died only a month after Gerald. She grows dizzy when she uncovers another inscription on the gravestone: Sarah Louise (the other Sadie), who died in 1934. The words “*When the Law is broken there must be punishment*” keep going through Sadie's head.

Walter tells Sadie that he had dreamed of her before he met her—he had dreamed that she could speak to crows. Sadie tells him that she can, and then everything comes tumbling out: she tells him about the crows coming to her, the **stone circle**, and her travels to the year 1933, including how she becomes “the other Sadie.” Throughout it all, Walter listens attentively. Finally he says they must go look at the lakebed, to find where Jimmy Raven is buried.

## CHAPTER 20

When they're almost at the lakebed, Sadie and Walter hear trail bikes. When they arrive at the **stone circle**, they find Craig Mortlock, Lachie, and others lounging about the stone circle, beer cans in their hands. Sadie is distraught and tells Craig Mortlock they shouldn't be there, as this is a special place, not a picnic ground. Craig Mortlock is dismissive and insulting, asking whether she's been taking lessons from her “boyfriend,” Walter. He is also disparaging towards the stone circle, telling her it's not a special place, as it's not worth any money, and that his mates are enjoying “Aboriginal culture.”

*Sadie's travels to the past—as well as the terrible things she has seen there relating to Jimmy Raven's murder—are clearly taking a toll on her. And yet, Sadie's desire to remain in Boort also suggests that she is becoming invested in the town, and, specifically in her own family history and its consequences.*



*Sadie's discovery of the three gravestones of Gerald, Clarry and Sarah Louise is shocking mainly because it reveals that all three lost their lives prematurely—and within months of Jimmy Raven's murder. The words that come to Sadie's mind then, about how there must be punishment when the Law is broken—words spoken to her by the crows—suggest that Gerald, Clarry, and Sarah Louise perhaps came to early deaths as a kind of punishment, or retribution, for their role in Jimmy's murder and its cover-up.*



*Walter is the first person to whom Sadie confesses the truth about the crows speaking to her, as well as her travels back to the past. This points to a growing bond of trust between the two teenagers. This bond in turn points to an alliance that crosses racial and cultural boundaries—given that Walter is Aboriginal and Sadie is white. Unlike many of the other white townspeople, Sadie is capable of forging bonds across these divides. By offering to help and participate in Sadie's quest, Walter also reveals himself to be deeply invested in achieving some kind of justice and restitution for Jimmy.*



*Craig, his son Lachie, and their friends desecrate the sacred site of the stone circle by turning it into a leisure ground. Furthermore, Craig's insulting response to Sadie further reveals his complete lack of respect for the Aboriginal heritage which sits on his land. Craig can only understand the value of the site in terms of money, and because the site is not worth any, he treats it as worthless. This reflects his ignorance and insensitivity towards Aboriginal culture.*



Walter tells Craig and the others that they have no respect. Sadie points out that this land belonged to Walter's people way before it belonged to the Mortlocks. Craig and Lachie Mortlock disagree, saying they've owned the land for five generations, while Walter isn't even from the area. Craig Mortlock tells them they're trespassing. Sadie tells him that his grandfather, Gerald, killed a man by the name of Jimmy Raven here.

*Craig and Lachie understand land only as private property—they think that because they “own” the land on which the stone circle sits, it belongs to them. Sadie and Walter, however, rightly point out that this land belonged to others long before it belonged to them. Sadie’s revelation of Gerald Mortlock’s murder of Jimmy is also significant here, as she seeks to confront the Mortlocks with their own crimes and, perhaps, begin to seek justice for them.*



Things escalate, and Walter and Lachie get into a physical fight. Sadie silently appeals to the crows for help. Suddenly, hundreds of crows appear in the sky. They come closer and closer, descending on the dry lakebed. The men and boys are frightened. Walter and Sadie run away. At the edge of the lake, they finally stop and look back. In the distance, they hear gunshots and see the cloud of crows scattering, some falling from the sky. Sadie wants to stop them, but she knows there is nothing they can do.

*The men’s shooting of the crows is a further act of violence that they carry out against Aboriginal culture. In Aboriginal culture, the crows are special creatures, representatives of the ancestral spirit Waa the Crow. Crows are venerated as a result. The violence that the men direct towards the birds reveals, again, their disrespect and violence towards Aboriginal culture.*



## CHAPTER 21

On the way back from the lake, after the encounter with Craig Mortlock and the rest, Sadie blames herself—she feels that she shouldn't have called the crows, who only ended up being shot at by the men. Sadie and Walter arrive back at the house. Just as they are about to enter, a crow appears. One of its wings is bleeding. The crow tells her that “the Law is broken,” and that “What was lost must be found.” Sadie, again, doesn't know what the crow is talking about and implores it to tell her. The crow tells her she must find the place where her story joins with Waa the Crow's story, and only then will she find what is lost. It tells her that the crows will help her. Then it disappears.

*The injured crow that appears to Sadie and Walter recalls the violence that has been done to the sacred stone circle and to the crows themselves, by the Lachies and others throughout history. In reminding Sadie that a Law has been broken, and that something that has been lost must be restored, the crow emphasizes that Sadie herself has a role to play in the restoration of justice. The crow—as a representative of the spirit Waa the Crow—highlights justice and restitution as important values.*



Sadie turns to Walter and asks him if he heard the crow speak. He says yes, but when she asks whether he saw that its wing was hurt, Walter says he didn't see a crow but a man with a bleeding arm. He says it was a man and a crow, a “messenger from Waa, the Crow.” Like Sadie, he couldn't make much sense of what the crow was saying—only that “something was stolen from the clever man.” Walter tells Sadie that his Auntie Lily can help them. Reluctantly, Sadie realizes that they need help, as she still doesn't know what the crows want from her.

*Walter is the first person other than Sadie who hears a crow speak. However, he sees the crow as a man, whereas Sadie sees it as a bird. The crow’s dual identity both as man and bird suggests its links both to the human realm and the realm of animals and spirits. In identifying the man/crow as a messenger from Waa, Walter rightly associates the crow with the Aboriginal ancestral spirits that preside over the land. Its injured arm/wing alludes to the violence committed against these Aboriginal spirits and the heritage they represent. Furthermore, the crow’s emphasis on the theft from the clever man again highlights that a wrong has been done, which must be corrected through justice and restitution.*



Sadie goes inside, and sees that her room is freshly painted thanks to Ellie and David, who have left for a footy game. She thinks about Jimmy Raven's death; the story of his murder was hidden, but it still existed. Walter comes into the room and tells her that he will go see his Auntie Lily the next day, and Sadie is welcome to come, too.

*In dwelling on the fact that the story of Jimmy's murder still exists, even if it is not widely known, Sadie seems to be arriving at an awareness of the ways in which reality can have many layers. Beneath the surface of reality, there are often other, more invisible truths. Sadie's thoughts here reflect how prejudice and injustice are often hidden as well, but that doesn't mean they're not significant.*



## CHAPTER 22

As a way of covering up the real reason they want to speak to Auntie Lily, Walter tells David that he and Sadie are doing an oral history school project. David and Ellie drop off the kids at Auntie Lily's house. At the house, Sadie follows Walter to Auntie Lily's room. She is an ancient old woman, who is half blind. Sadie listens as Walter tells Auntie Lily about the **stone circle** and the crows, and about what the crow said to him and Sadie in Sadie's backyard: that there had been a clever man, and that something was stolen from him that needed to be returned. Auntie Lily's expression changes. She tells Walter that her uncle was a clever man, who was killed by someone, and that his body was never found. She also says her uncle appeared to her aunt in a dream to tell her what had really happened.

*Auntie Lily's confirmation that she was related to a man who was killed, and whose body was never recovered, seems to illuminate more of the puzzle that Sadie and now Walter are attempting to solve. It is quite possible that the "clever man" Lily refers to is Jimmy Raven. Furthermore, Lily's assertion that her uncle had been a "clever man" suggests that he had some special status within the culture, as a guardian of the Aboriginal heritage and its sacred traditions. He was not just an ordinary man, but one who perhaps had special, secret knowledge considered to be deeply valuable.*



As she listens to Auntie Lily, Sadie realizes that the "clever man" Lily refers to is Jimmy Raven. When Sadie mentions this out loud, Auntie Lily suddenly turns on Sadie. She seems to be offended and commands Sadie to go stand outside. Sadie leaves the room; she feels ashamed at having offended Auntie Lily, and yet she thinks that the crows came to her without her asking. As she stands outside, Sadie puts together the pieces based on what she has just heard from Auntie Lily. She is sure Auntie Lily's uncle was Jimmy, and that after his murder, something was taken from his body.

*Lily's admonishment of Sadie by sending her out of the room suggests that Lily doesn't quite trust Sadie. After all, Sadie is white, and as an Aboriginal woman, Lily's experience with white people has most likely taught her not to trust them. Thus her action of sending Sadie away points to the distrust that Aboriginals feel towards whites. The revelation that Jimmy is connected to someone in the present day also shows how the repercussions of injustice can persist through generations.*



Walter finds Sadie and tells her to come back into the room. Inside, Auntie Lily asks her whether it's true, as Walter says, that the crows talk to her. Sadie says yes. She again names Auntie Lily's uncle as Jimmy Raven, and tells her that his wife's name was Netta. Auntie Lily nods, and asks Sadie if she has some "blackfella" blood in her. Sadie says she isn't sure—she doesn't know much about her father's side of the family.

*In asking Sadie whether she has some "blackfella," or Aboriginal blood in her, Lily indicates that Sadie's access to the realm of the Aboriginal spirits—through the crows—must indicate some blood connection to Aboriginals. This suggests that there may be more to Sadie's heritage than she realizes. She may not be completely white, and as such her family history and background may be more mixed than she had assumed. As such, Auntie Lily's comments imply that often, there is in fact more to one's heritage than meets the eye.*



Auntie Lily then says that her uncle Jimmy had special, sacred things, which no one was allowed to see or touch. Her uncle's things were stolen, perhaps used by someone who wasn't supposed to use them. Auntie Lily tells Walter and Sadie to find Jimmy's special things, as well as his body, and to give him a proper burial. She tells them that when they find his things, they should bring them to her immediately—she will know who to give them to.

*Because of her age, and her special knowledge about Jimmy's story and about Aboriginal culture, Lily proves to be an important mentor and guide figure both for Sadie and Walter. She is depicted as a guardian and protector of the Aboriginal heritage. Like the crows who speak to Sadie, Lily emphasizes the importance of attaining justice and restitution for her uncle Jimmy. She realizes that her uncle, like so many Aboriginals, suffered and lost his life because of prejudice—as an Aboriginal man, his life was perceived to be less valuable than that of a white person.*



Outside, Sadie tells Walter she must go back to 1933, to the night of the murder, to find out what happened to Jimmy's special things. Walter guesses the Mortlocks have them, which is why that family has been visited by bad luck: Gerald Mortlock died, they've lost a lot of their money, and their dam dried up. Sadie suddenly remembers that Craig Mortlock mentioned the other day that he had "some Aboriginal bits and pieces lying around." Walter says they must break into their house to find the things.

*Walter's plan to break into the Mortlocks' house is daring, but also necessary. In actively participating in helping Sadie on her quest, Walter proves himself to be a valuable support, and an ally. The alliance between Walter and Sadie spans the racial and cultural divide, in that both characters—an Aboriginal person and a white person—unite in seeking justice for a terrible wrong done to Jimmy, who suffered prejudice as well as violence because of his Aboriginal identity.*



## CHAPTER 23

A week later, on the day of the footy match, when they know the Mortlocks as well as Ellie and David will be at the game, Sadie and Walter break into the Mortlocks' house. Sadie grows terribly nervous as they move through the numerous vast rooms of the house. She has no idea how they will find what they are looking for. But then Walter calls her to the pool room. There, hanging on the walls, are old family photographs and family relics. In a large glass case, displaying stuffed wallabies and the bleached skull of a bird, they spot a pile of bones in the shadows. They are both shocked.

*In breaking into the Mortlocks' house, Sadie and Walter risk themselves—they are, technically, breaking the law, and it is for this reason that Sadie feels so nervous, even though she's working toward justice more broadly. Their discovery of bones hidden in the shadows of a glass case raise many questions: who do these bones belong to? How did the family get a hold of them? And do they have a right to keep them? The bones suggest, indeed, that 'skeletons in the closet' lurk within the Mortlock family past.*



Just then, Lachie Mortlock catches them in the room. He came back for his footy boots (soccer cleats), which he had forgotten. He calls them thieves and says he will call the police. Walter stands his ground, even though Sadie is terrified. Still, she asks him where the bones in the glass case came from, and he can't answer. Walter and Sadie dash for the kitchen and run as fast as they can away from the house, as Lachie pursues them.

*By threatening to call the police, Lachie frames Sadie and Walter as criminals, or as trespassers and burglars, and yet he seems unwilling to confront the legacy of seemingly violent crime that exists in his own family—crime suggested by the mysterious pile of bones that sits in his family's glass case.*



## CHAPTER 24

As Sadie and Walter run, they can hear the sound of Lachie's trail bike—he will catch up with them. Sadie is desperate, but then a crow appears in the sky. She begs the crow for help, and indeed, the crow leads her to the dried lakebed, and **the stone circle**. Walter and Sadie take shelter in the stone circle. Crows begin to perch on top of the stones, watching. Still, they can hear Lachie's trail bike coming closer and closer.

Lachie appears on the edge of the lakebed on his bike. As Sadie and Walter watch in horror, Lachie begins to drive his bike into one of the stones, again and again, trying to topple it.

Sadie yells at Lachie to stop, but he refuses. Walter picks up a clod of dried earth and throws it at Lachie. It hits him, and Lachie loses control of the trail bike and goes flying. Sadie runs over to Lachie, noticing the blood trickling down his face. Sadie is immediately reminded of Jimmy Raven's corpse. Walter wants to leave Lachie there, afraid that he will be blamed for Lachie's injury or even death. But Sadie says they must help him. Sadie realizes that she, Walter, and Lachie "were in the grip of crow's story, just as Gerald and Clarry and Jimmy had been." Suddenly, Sadie can hear the crows, and the sky goes black.

## CHAPTER 25

Clarry calls to Sarah Louise. It is 1933, and she is standing in the shop with Gerald Mortlock and her father, shortly after Jimmy's murder. Gerald is telling Clarry that he knew he could count on him. Clarry asks if they are "square," and Gerald says yes. After Gerald leaves, Sarah Louise looks at her father and realizes that she will never be able to look at him in the same way again.

*The appearance of the crows in this scene reaffirms their position as guides and protectors of Sadie and Walter, as well as messengers of Waa the Crow. On the other hand, the threatening sound of Lachie's trail bike, quickly catching up to them, affirms Lachie's position as their enemy and persecutor. It's also notable that this is the site of the violence that occurred against Jimmy Raven—cycling back to the setting suggests that similar events may occur in the present and highlights the deep connections between different eras.*



*Lachie's action of attempting to topple one of the sacred stones shows just how violent and callous he is. He directs his rage at Sadie and Walter into the desecration of the circle of stones, a site which Sadie has explained to him and his father has a sacred significance to the Aboriginal people. This moment also underscores just how little Lachie understands about the power of the land to affect his life and others'.*



*The terrible injury that Lachie suffers constitutes a kind of retribution for his desecration of the circle of stones. And yet, Sadie's insistence, in spite of Walter's pleas, that they must help Lachie reveals her compassion and wisdom. She realizes that if they do not come to Lachie's aid, they will be repeating the cycle of violence initiated by Gerald Mortlock and Clarry Hazzard, decades earlier. Sadie seems to realize that in order to break the cycle of violence, she and Walter must make different choices—by acting out of integrity rather than out of self-interest.*



*Sarah Louise's disappointment in Clarry reflects her recognition that her father has behaved without integrity, in an immoral way, by choosing to help Gerald Mortlock cover up the murder of Jimmy rather than exposing it and seeking justice for Jimmy. In doing so, her father has put his own self-interest above integrity and has perpetuated a cycle of violence against Aboriginal people.*



Clarry goes to bed, and Sarah Louise throws Gerald Mortlock's bloodied clothes into the fire. As she empties the pockets of her father's trousers, which he has given her to wash, she draws out a small bundle wrapped in what seems like possum fur. She realizes it is the bundle that Jimmy Raven entrusted to her father as he was dying. Sarah Louise is torn about what to do—to keep the bundle or to burn it. She can hear crows crying.

*In discovering the special things that Jimmy had left to her father right before his death, Sadie, in the body of Sarah Louise, is confronted with a choice: she must decide how best to act. Her urge to burn the things suggests that, in spite of her moral impulses, she is fearful and is therefore tempted to take the easier path, by simply destroying Jimmy's things. This temptation shows how easy it is for a person to get caught up in societal patterns of violence and injustice, even when they genuinely wish to behave with integrity.*



Suddenly, Sadie, in the body of Sarah Louise, realizes that she is herself, Sadie from the future, daughter of Ellie Hazzard. Although Sadie was always somewhat aware of this while inhabiting the past, this knowledge seems to rise concretely to her conscious mind at this moment. She puts Jimmy's bundle in a tin can and goes out into the darkness. At the foot of a tree, she buries the tin with Jimmy's things, marking the tree trunk with an "S": "S for Sadie, S for secret, for stones, sacred stone, S for sorry." She begins to feel delirious and tired, and wants to rest, but she knows that she cannot stay out in the darkness. She falls and decides to rest for a while, as the darkness closes over her.

*Sadie's explicit awareness that she is Sadie from the future—and not Sarah Louise "Sadie" of the past—frees her up to exercise more agency. While Sadie had always been aware on some level that she was still herself when traveling to the past to inhabit Sarah Louise's body, here this knowledge becomes more concrete. As Sarah Louise, Sadie chooses to act with courage and integrity, rather than out of self-interest or cowardice. This change suggests that understanding how unjust acts reverberate through time is a key component of learning to behave morally.*



## CHAPTER 26

Sadie wakes up to Walter calling her name. He is peering over her anxiously. She sees Lachie still on the ground, bleeding. She tells Walter they must get help, and tells him to take Lachie's bike to go as quickly as possible. Walter goes off on the bike, leaving Sadie to look after Lachie. Finally, she hears the crows crying, along with engines approaching. She is relieved that Walter and others are back.

*In continuing to insist that they must help Lachie, Sadie reveals herself to be dedicated to doing the right thing. She insists on behaving with integrity in this moment of crisis. As such, she acts as an example of how to break violent cycles and foster justice even in situations that are morally complex.*



David stands with Sadie and Walter in the lakebed, watching as Lachie's parents drive away with Lachie and Ellie, who is accompanying them to the hospital. David tells Walter and Sadie that he is proud of them for getting help after finding Lachie lying there in the dirt. Walter corrects David's misconceptions. He tells him that he and Sadie broke into Lachie's house to look for the things Auntie Lily had asked them to find, but Lachie caught them. Lachie then followed them to the **stone circle** and got hurt when Walter threw a clod of earth at him. Sadie tries to defend Walter, but Walter blames himself.

*By confessing to David the truth about his role in Lachie's injury, Walter chooses to follow Sadie's example and to act with integrity. Walter, as well as Sadie, could have lied about the events that occurred in Lachie's house and at the stone circle, and yet Walter chooses to tell the truth, knowing that doing so can have profound consequences for both himself and other people—even people living generations later.*



David asks Walter what he wants to do, and Walter says he has to speak to Amanda and Craig Mortlock. David tells him that the affair might end up with the police. Again, Walter emphasizes that it wasn't Sadie's fault, even though she insists she was also involved.

*Again, Walter reveals his integrity when he says that he would like to confess the truth to Lachie's parents, knowing that he may have to face the police as a result. This is especially significant because it's clear by this point that, as an Aboriginal person, Walter may face unjust and even violent treatment from powerful groups like the police.*



As Walter and David are leaving, Sadie says she must stay behind, and that she knows where to find the "special things" that Auntie Lily asked for. David and Walter leave, and Sadie turns to a crow that has been watching her. "I'm ready now," she tells it, and she follows the bird as it leads the way.

*Sadie has used her time travel to the year 1933 well—as a result, she now knows where Jimmy Raven's special things are buried, so she can restore them to their rightful owners. In locating these things, she has lived up to the challenge the crows have set her and demonstrated how to use her heritage and connection to the land for good.*



## CHAPTER 27

Sadie finds the tree on which she (as Sarah) had etched an "S" in 1933. A crow watches her as she digs and digs. Finally, after much digging, she finds the metallic cigarette tin that she had concealed Jimmy's things in before she buried it under the tree. She remembers that Auntie Lily warned her to bring the sacred items to her without looking at their contents.

*Sadie's digging up of Jimmy Raven's special things represents the beginning of her fulfillment of the obligation that she has been entrusted with, both by the crows and by Auntie Lily. By further adhering to Lily's instructions not to look at the things, she shows her commitment to respecting to these obligations to the letter. Sadie, in other words, approaches the Aboriginal heritage—embodied by Jimmy's things—reverentially, recognizing its deep spiritual value. In this way, her attitude contrasts with that of her forbears Clarry and Gerald, who treated this heritage with disdain.*



A crow leads Sadie to Auntie Lily's house, as Sadie has forgotten the way. She arrives at the house exhausted, and is let in to see Auntie Lily. She tells Auntie Lily that Jimmy's special things are in the tin box and gives it to her. Auntie tells her she's a "good girl," and that she will look after the things from now on.

*In restoring Jimmy's things to Lily, Sadie achieves some kind of restitution for the injustice that had been committed through his murder. While Auntie Lily had once been hostile to Sadie, her declaration that Sadie is a "good girl" reflects the fact that her opinion has changed—Sadie has proven herself to be an ally, who has acted with integrity in bringing back Jimmy's things. This shift shows how a commitment to justice can undo some of the effects of societal violence and foster positive relationships between different racial groups.*



Outside the room, Sadie is so exhausted that she slumps against the wall. She falls asleep and dreams that she is riding on the back of a massive crow, which is flying over the land. She can see dots of light twinkling on the ground below. Sadie realizes that she is looking “down at ancient campfires, lit by the people of Crow and Eaglehawk, night after night, generation after generation, millennium upon millennium.” She realizes that the “secret magic” of the land is still there, even though it has been buried beneath new construction and violence. She tells the crow to tell Waa that “his stories aren’t forgotten.” Later that evening, as Ellie tucks Sadie into bed after picking her up from Auntie Lily’s, she notices a black feather in her hair.

*Sadie’s dream of the campfires affirms the Aboriginal claim to the country—Sadie realizes that she is looking down on thousands of generations of Aboriginals who had inhabited the land long before the arrival of the Europeans. The feather that Ellie finds tucked in Sadie’s hair indicates Sadie’s own position as a bridge between the ‘real’ world and the Aboriginal spirit world of Waa the Crow, which is still very much alive. Sadie has functioned to connect the worlds of the past and the present, the spirit world and the real world, and the novel implies that such connection is crucial in interrupting cycles of violence and injustice.*



## CHAPTER 28

Sadie and Walter walk along the lake bed, looking for Jimmy’s grave. Walter is skeptical that they will find it, but Sadie tells him that the crows will show them. They find burial crosses dispersed all over the ground. A crow appears just then, and hops forward, stopping at the spot where Jimmy’s grave is. Sadie paints a sign with the words “Jimmy Raven, A Clever Man,” as Walter digs a hole for the grave marker.

*Sadie and Walter pay their final respects to Jimmy by providing his grave with a marker—something which was never done, given that the location of his corpse was hidden by Clarry Hazzard. This is a final act of restitution that Sadie and Walter carry out, one which signifies an acknowledgement of Jimmy’s valuable life and violent death, as well as his connection to this sacred land.*



As they work, Lachie shows up. His head is bandaged, but he tells Sadie and Walter that he had a head scan and he will be fine. Sadie apologizes for breaking into his house, and Lachie expresses gratitude to them for getting help for him when he was injured. He asks them what they are doing, and Sadie, hesitant at first, tells him the story of Gerald Mortlock’s murder of Jimmy Raven, and how her own great-grandfather Clarry helped cover up the murder.

*Lachie’s gratitude reflects the fact that by acting with integrity and coming to his aid, Sadie and Walter have broken the cycle of violence initiated by Gerald Mortlock and Clarry Hazzard. The three teenagers are interacting peacefully. Furthermore, in confronting Lachie with Gerald’s murder of Jimmy, Sadie challenges Lachie to take responsibility for the wrongs and injuries done by his ancestors, particularly toward Aboriginal people and their sacred land.*



Lachie is not happy to hear his great-grandfather Gerald was a murderer. But Sadie points out that even good men do bad things, including her great-grandfather Clarry. Lachie says that his sister Bethany thinks his great-grandfather Gerald Mortlock killed himself because of his war trauma. Sadie thinks, though she doesn’t say it, that Gerald killed himself because of “what he’d done.”

*Lachie is still reluctant to take responsibility for the wrongs done by his forbears, which shows how hard it can be to face the injustices passed down through generations. That Gerald killed himself is news to Sadie—it confirms to her that he met a tragic end as a result of the crime that he had committed. Ultimately, he was driven to pay a heavy penalty for Jimmy’s murder, by taking his own life. This revelation indicates that violent, unjust relationships between people—especially people of different races—have negative consequences for everyone, even the people who have more power.*



Lachie tells them they can put up Jimmy Raven's grave marker. He sees more knocked down burial crosses belonging to dead Mortlocks, and begins tidying up the graveyard. Together, the three also put up Jimmy's marker, which Walter has decorated with a black feather. Walter and Sadie help Lachie as he tidies up the rest of the crosses. Lachie tells them that that he can help them find Jimmy Raven's World War I records on the internet if they want to find out where he came from. Before Lachie leaves for a footy game, the three agree to meet for a game of pool soon, and Sadie is astonished to see Walter and Lachie grinning at each other.

Sadie and Walter go to have a look at the **stone circle**. From a distance, a crow watches Sadie and Walter. Walter wants to catch the footy game, and Sadie says she will follow in a minute. When he leaves, she turns to the crow. She tells him that she had gone to visit the other Sarah Louise's grave again, but it was gone. And when she asked her mother about her great-aunt, her mother told her that she had been an incredible woman who had many adventures around the world and lived a long life. Sadie asks the crow if she's changed history, or if Waa changed history by taking back Sarah Louise's punishment of early death. The crow only answers "Waaah!" Sadie can no longer understand its speech. She says goodbye to the crow, who rises into the air and laughs down at her.

*The image of the three teenagers working together to tidy up the graveyard reveals just how far this generation has moved from its forebearers. Sadie and Walter's courageous acts have led to an end of the cycle of violence commenced by Gerald Mortlock and Clarry Hazzard. The descendants of Gerald, Clarry and Jimmy are cooperating, rather than fighting. Furthermore, Lachie's willingness to help Walter and Sadie find out more about Jimmy also suggests that he is, perhaps, on his way to acknowledging the wrongs done by his family in the past.*



*By making moral choices while inhabiting her great-aunt's Sarah Louise's body, Sadie seems to have transformed her great-aunt's destiny to one full of adventure and success. The crow, however, neither confirms nor denies this—now that Sadie has fulfilled her obligations, her ability to communicate with the crows has ended. Nonetheless, Sadie now knows that Waa the Crow looks over, and protects the land and the heritage it contains. She also knows that beneath the surface of her everyday reality, a deeper, more ancient reality lurks.*





## HOW TO CITE

To cite this LitChart:

### MLA

Abbas, Fatin. "Crow Country." *LitCharts*. LitCharts LLC, 10 Apr 2019. Web. 8 Jun 2020.

### CHICAGO MANUAL

Abbas, Fatin. "Crow Country." LitCharts LLC, April 10, 2019. Retrieved June 8, 2020. <https://www.litcharts.com/lit/crow-country>.

To cite any of the quotes from *Crow Country* covered in the Quotes section of this LitChart:

### MLA

Constable, Kate. *Crow Country*. Allen & Unwin. 2011.

### CHICAGO MANUAL

Constable, Kate. *Crow Country*. Crow's Nest, New South Wales, Australia: Allen & Unwin. 2011.