



NINE DAYS

TONI JORDAN

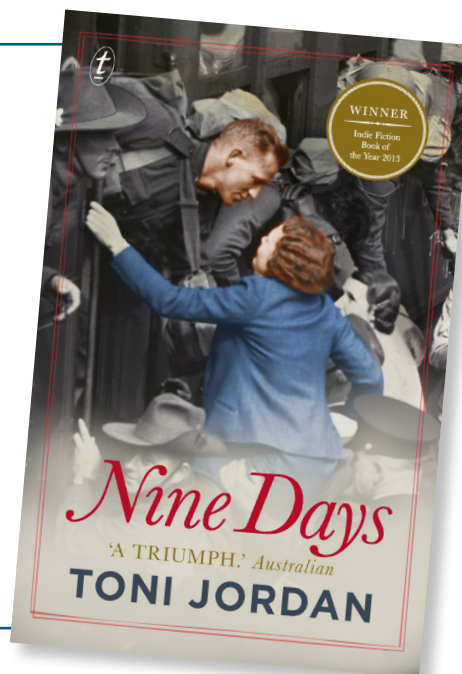


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VCE English, Units 3 & 4
or Unit 1



Index

- ▶ About the author/honours
- ▶ Assessment advice
- ▶ Pre-reading activities
- ▶ Chapter summaries
- ▶ Timeline
- ▶ Westaway family tree
- ▶ Classroom and homework activities
 - ▶ Reading journal
 - ▶ Different viewpoints
 - ▶ The world of the text
 - ▶ Characterisation
 - ▶ Possible assessment tasks
- ▶ About the author of the notes

TEXT VCE ENGLISH AND EAL TEACHING NOTES

- ▶ designed to meet the criteria of the Victorian Curriculum Assessment Authority's *VCE English/EAL Study Design*
- ▶ scaffolded to help teachers and students gradually develop their knowledge and understanding of the set text
- ▶ cater to a range of student abilities and learning styles
- ▶ contain a variety of activities to enable individual and group work
- ▶ encourage oral and written responses to the text
- ▶ guide students to develop critical and supported responses to the text
- ▶ feature ICT-related tasks
- ▶ include suggested assessment tasks as well as supplementary resources



ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Toni Jordan is the author of four novels. The international bestseller *Addition* (2008), was a Richard and Judy Bookclub pick and was longlisted for the Miles Franklin award. *Fall Girl* (2010) was published internationally and has been optioned for film development, and *Nine Days* was awarded Best Fiction at the 2012 Indie Awards, was shortlisted for the ABIA Best General Fiction award and was named in *Kirkus Review's* Top 10 Historical Novels of 2013. Her latest novel is *Our Tiny, Useless Hearts* (2016). Toni has been widely published in newspapers and magazines.

From <https://www.textpublishing.com.au/authors/tonijordan>

HONOURS

Winner, Independent Booksellers of Australia Award for Best Fiction, 2013

Shortlisted, Australian Book Industry Awards, General Fiction Book of the Year, 2013

Shortlisted, Colin Roderick Award, 2013

'Simply a joy to read.'

Courier-Mail

'Toni Jordan has written a beautiful novel which captures the loves and fears of an ordinary Australian family through hard times and better times. It reminded me of Elizabeth Stead's books.'

Australian Bookseller & Publisher

'Jordan is clear that what binds us to one another and to a meaningful life is simply valuing the life you have been given and the family that is yours and yours alone. Reading *Nine Days*, you will laugh, even cry, but you will be in no doubt that Toni Jordan uses the modern novel to reflect those tensions that exist for many of us between duty and desire.'

Australian Book Review

'Jordan's triumph is in the structure and scope of this novel set in working-class Richmond, starting and ending indeed in 1939 but spreading out an ensuing 70 years to solve a mystery and build a love story.'

Adelaide Advertiser

'This novel is a triumph. Another signal career in Australian fiction is well under way.'

Australian

ASSESSMENT ADVICE

Nine Days could be used to assess the following outcomes:

Unit 3 English/EAL and end-of-year examination

Area of Study 1

Reading and creating texts:

- ▶ Outcome 1a: Produce an analytical response to *Nine Days* (oral/multimodal or written)

OR

- ▶ Outcome 1b: Produce a creative response to *Nine Days* (oral/multimodal or written)

Unit 1 English/EAL

Area of Study 1

Reading and creating texts:

- ▶ Outcome 1a: Produce an analytical response to *Nine Days* (oral/multimodal or written).

OR

- ▶ Outcome 1b: Produce a creative response to *Nine Days* (oral/multimodal or written).

Please note: Schools must use different texts to assess the analytical and creative responses and can only assess one task in oral or multimodal form. For further information, please consult the English/EAL Study Design on the Victorian Curriculum and Assessment Authority's website: <http://www.vcaa.vic.edu.au/Pages/vce/studies/english/index.aspx>



PRE-READING ACTIVITIES

Print

<https://www.smh.com.au/entertainment/books/interview-toni-jordan-20120823-24nb4.html>

(An interview with Toni Jordan in the *Sydney Morning Herald*)

<http://australianwomenwriters.com/2012/12/angela-savage-on-nine-days-by-toni-jordan/>

(Crime writer Angela Savage reviews *Nine Days* for *Australian Women Writers*)

<https://www.nzherald.co.nz/books/news/article.cfm?id=134&objectid=10831438>

(*Nine Days* is reviewed in the *NZ Herald*)

Podcasts

<https://omny.fm/shows/the-garret/toni-jordan>

(*The Garret* podcast reviews and discusses Toni Jordan's *Nine Days*)

<http://www.abc.net.au/radionational/programs/archived/booksandarts/toni-jordan27s-nine-days/4251794>

(*Nine Days* is featured on *Books and Arts*)

Video

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=jW2TjCkWqug>

(Booktopia Presents: *Nine Days* by Toni Jordan [Interview with Caroline Baum])

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=s6J5Po-gMLw>

(Toni Jordan introduces and reads from her novel *Nine Days*)

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=bdfQGTnPGZs>

(Toni Jordan chats to Shearer's Bookshop)

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=xZA20FPsCFs>

(BWF Presents Toni Jordan)

Film

Eoin Hahessy's documentary film, *The Making of Irish Australia*, 2016, is a worthwhile reference.

Interviews

<https://www.smh.com.au/entertainment/books/interview-toni-jordan-20120823-24nb4.html>

Reading Group Notes

Access this title's notes by going to textpublishing.com.au/nine-days and selecting 'Book club notes'.

All links in this document can be accessed via the digital version of these notes at textpublishing.com.au/nine-days.



CHAPTER SUMMARIES

CHAPTER ONE: KIP

Monday 7th August, 1939

The novel's opening chapter, 'Kip' provides an initial glimpse into the lives of the members of the Westaway family, with many later details hinted at and foreshadowed. Kip narrates unfolding events as a fifteen-year-old living in 1939, allowing the authenticity of his character to transport the reader into the lanes, roads, streets and parades of the working-class inner-city suburb of Richmond, Victoria, as the inevitability of World War II ominously looms.

It is mid-winter and Kip is working as a 'stable boy in charge of horse excrement and shovel scrubbing' (page 9) for his next-door-neighbours, the Husting family. Kip looks after their horse, Charlie—a job which involves many early-morning starts. Mr Husting is kind to Kip. He gives Kip a 'secret' (page 8) shilling. This shilling plays a central role throughout the novel, helping the reader to connect characters and order key events.

Kip has given up his scholarship at the Catholic secondary boys' school, St Kevin's College, to become a 'working man' (page 4). The reason for this is not made clear. What is made apparent though, is that this was not an easy decision—Mac mocks him for '[crying] when he left school' (page 23). There is, however, a sense that this decision weighs heavily on his reputation, given his declaration that he is 'known as chief layabout and squanderer of opportunities' (page 9). In contrast, his brother, Francis 'Frank', is still a student at St Kevin's and plenty of sibling rivalry exists between the two. Francis clearly has more status in the family and receives more favourable treatment. It is obvious that Kip is very bright, evidenced by his rich and energetic imagination and the fact that he won the 'prize for English composition and art' (page 18) at St Kevin's. This magnifies the pity that he has had to give up his scholarship.

Kip lives with his mother, his older sister Connie and his brother Francis. The Westaways are not an affluent family and this manifests itself in small, descriptive details. For example, Kip shares a room with his 'Ma' and Frank, and Connie sleeps on a 'camp bed in the laundry'. Images like this serve to emphasise how small their house is. A boarder, Mrs Keith, also lives with the family. Kip's father's absence is hinted at via his description of the 'old clothes pulled out of drawers' (page 2) in the bedroom, but this absence is not explained until later in the chapter.

This chapter also tells the tale of Jack Husting, the son of Mr and Mrs Husting, who is returning home from somewhere he's been for 'eighteen months'. Class tension definitely exists with the Hustings—Ma refers to Mrs Husting as 'her ladyship' (page 14) and Mrs Husting laments the fact that her family has to 'suffer to have the likes of [Kip] hanging around morning and night and pay for the privilege' (page 7). Memories of World War I haunt Ma. She wants her boys to be 'safe in school, not running around waiting for the call-up' (page 13).

Kip's trip to the butcher for Connie introduces Annabel Crouch as a possible love interest for Kip, whereas his interactions with the local gang on the return journey allow Kip to lay bare Catholic and Protestant rivalry and the prejudice experienced by Irish Catholics. The gang, comprised of Mac, Cray, Jim Pike and Manson, deride Kip for leaving school and callously mock his father's death, as well as the financial peril the family now faces (page 24). Even though Kip is kicked and spat on, he manages to escape the gang's clutches by harnessing the speed of 'Jack Titus', the legendary Richmond footballer of the time.

The chapter concludes with Kip's fertile imagination leading to the loss of the boarder, Mrs Keith, who is far from amused when he imagines her underpants are 'American parachutists coming for Mrs Husting' (page 30) but opens the door for Connie's emancipation when she realises that without a 'boarder there's no need for [her] to stay at home' (page 35) and she can get a job at the newspaper, the *Argus* (page 36).

**CHAPTER TWO: STANZI****Tuesday 25 September 2001**

Chapter Two is also set in Melbourne, but time has been rapidly fast-forwarded. Events are unfolding at the dawn of the 21st century. Hawthorn and Malvern are the principal locations, while Rowena Parade still figures in the narrative's landscape, albeit very subtly. Unlike the first chapter, the second chapter is narrated from Stanzi's point-of-view. Stanzi is a deeply unhappy 35-year-old counsellor with an office in Hawthorn. Even though the postcode of her office makes it seem like she's a success, the leafy well-to-do locale of her practice does not mirror her inner realities. The truth is that Stanzi is wrestling with her own inner demons; her dissatisfaction with her job and her struggles with her weight are a recurring motif throughout the chapter. Indeed, Stanzi's unhappiness is mirrored in the context of the times. Even though it's the era of *Sex and the City*, it's also the era of fears about SARS, and the terrorist attack on the World Trade Centre has just occurred, although isn't referred to explicitly. Like Chapter One, the world of the text is a complex place—while Australia is physically safe, the domestic sphere of the characters is also troubled and unsettled.

The chapter focuses principally on Stanzi's relationship with her client, Violet Church, particularly in regard to her 'daddy issues...eating disorder and history of kleptomania' (page 37). Stanzi fears that Violet has stolen Stanzi's father's shilling (page 46) from her desk during a counselling session. Stanzi's fears lead her to Violet's house where she is humiliated by Violet and her father, Len Church, the nadir being the moment Violet tells Len that seeing Stanzi makes her feel 'better...[and] grateful' (page 60) because she realises, "'At least I'm not fat'" (page 61). This proves to be a major turning point for Stanzi. She realises that travelling to Violet's house was a 'violation of [their] relationship' (page 70) and that she 'can't do this job anymore' which echoes Connie's turning point and possible emancipation in Chapter One and establishes a major theme—breaking free.

Like Chapter One, Jordan is careful not to give away too much too early, instead choosing to give small hints here and there to help the reader place who Stanzi is and how she is connected to the first chapter. It's very much like a puzzle. Stanzi's father is presented as a loving father and the reader is told he is 'seventy-six' and a 'photographer'. The reader is told that Stanzi's mother is an 'only child brought up by her father who died just before she was married' (page 64) and that 'Dad was her first boyfriend and only love'. A second key talisman is also introduced to complement the shilling—'Mum's amethyst pendant' (page 63). Stanzi's twin sister, Charlotte is also introduced. Stanzi lives in Rowena Parade with twin sister Charlotte and her two children, Alec and Libby (page 66).

While the first chapter is more about the relationship between parents and sons, this chapter is very much about fathers and daughters. Even though Violet has 'daddy issues', Stanzi's relationship with her father is strong and affirming and later in the chapter Stanzi reveals her father is Kip (page 65), establishing that this novel will very much be about the slow reveal. Kip then reveals—somewhat intriguingly—that his home contains, "Fifty years of family photos, but none of Connie. If you had met her, you'd see. You look like her. Beautiful" (page 66), but the reason that Stanzi has never met her aunt and that there are no photos of her remains a mystery.



CHAPTER THREE: JACK

Sunday 25 February 1940

Chapter Three takes the reader back to Richmond before the beginning of World War II. The chapter focuses primarily on Jack Hustling as he struggles to adjust to life back in inner city Richmond, having worked for 'eighteen' months on a station (page 77). Just as Kip and Stanzi do in the first two chapters, Jack tells his own story and Jack's connection to Kip's story is revealed incrementally, reminiscent of Stanzi's chapter. Jack has been working for his uncle amongst 'horses and sheep' (page 71) and life in the family home above their furniture shop in Swan Street feels stifling in comparison. Sleeping in his childhood bed, when he has been so used to sleeping in a swag or bunk (page 71), adds to his restlessness and frustration. Richmond itself feels like a 'poor man's paddock' (page 73), the 'barrenness, the ugliness, the sad crushed spaces' and '[a]dvertising hoardings' combining to evoke intense yearnings within Jack for the 'pure air' (pages 73–74) of the country.

Jack's sense of being trapped is heightened by his family dynamics. He is an only child, and this is subtly conveyed by his description that he is the 'only nephew of a childless station owner' (page 85). His life so far seems to have involved a series of carefully orchestrated moves by his mother to keep him safe from war and away from what she considers to be the wrong type of people. This has meant that Jack has lived away from home for so long (and for so often) that her suffocating need to protect him, whilst ensuring he is socially successful, has led to nothing but disconnection, Jack ruefully reflecting: 'She doesn't know me. Not at all.' (page 72)

It is just before the beginning of World War II and the era of Menzies (page 80) and Australia's loyalty to Empire is writ large in its obedience to the King. Fears about the impending war has prompted overt displays of religious duty, inspired by the King's requests for 'prayers for the Empire, prayers that we'd defeat Germany good and quick' (pages 72–73). Jack reports that 'St Stephen's is packed to the doors' (page 73) but unlike his mother, he is neither fearful about his safety and soul, nor concerned with making social connections. Not only does Jack feel like an outsider in his own home, the idea of war has created a fierce social expectation that fit and the strong men will go to war. This pressure stems particularly from 'old timer[s]' (page 81) who fought in Pozières (page 81). Jack is questioned about being in 'civvies' [civilian clothing] and accused of being a 'spineless bloke' (page 82). Yet Jack is unperturbed by this social shaming; he feels no desire to go to war having 'seen death at close quarters' (page 80). Jack's strength of character is underlined in the fact that he feels no pressure to conform even though his peers are swept up in the excitement of joining up and the promise of seeing 'European stars' (page 81).

Chapter Three also sheds further light on the story of the Hustlings' neighbours, the Westaways, and when Jack first glances Connie Westaway '[a]cross the lane, in the tiny yard next door' (page 74) we realise that Jack is

actually Jack Hustling. Jack reveals that Kip is employed by Mr Hustling as 'day labour...an act of charity' (page 74), emphasising the power imbalance between the families. Later we connect this to the death of Kip's father, who we discover was called Tom Westaway (page 100). Jack is immediately entranced by Connie, who is 'dancing' (page 75) instead of sweeping and he declares, 'She is the loveliest thing I've seen in all these weeks I've been away from the bush' (page 76). However, the arrival of Mrs Westaway, presented by Jack as an angry and controlling figure, puts an abrupt halt to Connie's moment of happiness. Jack sums this up metaphorically when he remarks, 'The music has finished' (page 76).

Jack's mother tries to play matchmaker by introducing him to Emily Stewart whose family go to St Stephen's (page 84) and own the hardware shop on Swan Street (page 85). She is determined to see Jack married to the right girl and goes to great lengths to impress the Stewarts by putting on her 'company voice' (page 84), wearing a hat and putting on a lovely afternoon tea. This scene also allows Jack to underline his mother's intense loathing of Catholics, complicating Jack's attraction to Connie who is from the 'family of Catholics...next door' (page 85). Emily may have money, but her lack of polish is obvious when she uses phrases like 'runned out' (page 87) and her interest in washing machines is lost on Jack.

Therefore, as soon as he can, Jack arrives on the Westaways' doorstep with a basket of lemons (which he claims have come from his backyard and are a gift from his mother) wearing 'an ironed shirt and [his] good jacket' (page 91). Jack notices Kip's facial injuries confirming that Chapter Three is set in the same time frame as Chapter One.

Kip's character also receives more shading. We discover that there are six years between Jack and Kip. Mrs Westaway's physical appearance is more sharply delineated too, albeit in an unflattering way (page 92). Even though this is the first time they have seen each other since before Jack went away to school (page 74), Connie already feels connected to him, having heard him going out at night (page 97).

Unanswered questions from the first chapter are also addressed. Connie is working at the *Argus* as an assistant to the photographers (page 97). Connie's dreams of becoming a photographer are established, as are social prejudices about photography as a career—Francis declares that photography isn't 'respectable' (page 98) nor is it acceptable to be a 'girl photographer'. Instead, Francis values 'a steady job. At a desk, in the government' (page 99).

It is also revealed that Mr Westaway was a typesetter at the *Argus* and that Mr Ward, Connie's boss, took her on because he worked with Mr Westaway. Mr Westaway's alcoholism is named (page 102), providing a hint as to what led to him being hit by a tram. Mr Ward is also presented as a romantic suitor for Connie and a way



out of poverty for the family. Mr Ward also represents a path to respectability because Connie 'won't be able to work' (page 101), thus emphasising the limitations placed on Connie by her gender. The importance of Connie's marrying well to Francis' academic pursuits is also underlined— 'must go to university' (page 102). The prejudice suffered by Irish Catholics is laid bare when Mrs Husting tells Jack that 'a boarder is a respectable way for a Catholic family to improve themselves' (page 100) and that it's a lucky for Connie that her 'colouring's not too Irish'. This foreshadows what Connie will choose to jeopardise and even reject in later chapters. The value placed on breeding is also highlighted by Mr Husting's suggestion that Mrs Westaway is 'common' (page 102) and that 'layabout boys with no responsibilities, the Kip Westaways of the world ought to' (page 102) fight in the war, implying some people are more expendable than others.

The chapter ends with Jack walking the streets of Melbourne tormented by imagined images of Connie marrying Mr Ward and the suggestion that he will join up to escape news of Connie's engagement (page 104). Jack also loses his 'lucky shilling' (p.105) when his father plucks it 'right out of the air'. This is the shilling that Jack's dad gives to Kip and that Stanzi fears has been stolen by her client.

CHAPTER FOUR: CHARLOTTE Wednesday 1 August 1990

The title of Chapter Four presents the reader with another unfamiliar name: 'Charlotte'; however, it doesn't take too long for the reader to orient themselves in terms of the context and setting (and piece together how she fits into the broader story) because of the significant ground that's already been covered in the first three chapters. By this stage, the reader is familiar with the narrative's patterning and it's much easier to start putting together the bits of the narrative puzzle.

This chapter presents Charlotte's perspective on a life-changing day—the day she decides whether or not to terminate an early pregnancy (she is 'two weeks late') and whether or not she should tell the child's father. Charlotte's story is set in 1990. This is made clear by the frequent references to important world events such as the fall of the Berlin Wall and Nelson Mandela's release from prison (pages 121–2). References to Charlotte's yoga classes and corporate clients, as well as her work in an organic food shop, also help paint a portrait of a more modern world for the reader.

Charlotte is in her mid-twenties (page 132) and it is quickly established that she is Stanzi's sister (page 123). Charlotte is very different from her sister and this chapter enables the reader to develop their understanding of Stanzi and how her life has progressed since the end of Chapter Two, whilst developing their knowledge and understanding of Charlotte. According to Charlotte, 'Stanzi's going places' (page 127) and is 'only working as a counsellor until she saves up enough to do her PhD.' It's interesting to note how Charlotte's perceptions of her sister differ from Stanzi's negative view of self presented in Chapter 2. By contrast, according to Charlotte, Charlotte's life is a trainwreck: 'I have two casual jobs, no qualification, no money...I live in a share house' (page 127). The sisters are close, though, and Stanzi is the first person that Charlotte turns to when she suspects she is pregnant.

Charlotte's boyfriend, Craig, is a musician who also works at the organic shop. He is younger than Charlotte and resents her lack of commitment to their relationship. Like Charlotte, who grew up in the middle-class suburb of Malvern, Craig grew up in Brighton, another affluent suburb of Melbourne. Craig is a mass of contradictions, even though he pretends to be otherwise. His 'school tie still hangs in his wardrobe' (page 121) and his friends drink Crown Lager at his gigs, another indication of his comfortable middle-class background. However, even though Craig is from a wealthy and respectable neighbourhood, he is determined to reject this way of life and romanticises notions of class, telling Charlotte that he loathes 'people like that' (p.120) or the 'bourgeois' (as he calls them). This enables Jordan to hint at the differences between generations: Charlotte's grandmother was desperate to ensure her children grew up to be 'respectable' and would escape their working-class origins, and yet for Charlotte and Craig, the great prize of being middle class is viewed as a pretentious ideology.



Craig's cynicism about the 'middle class' also extends to children (page 121) which creates further confusion in Charlotte about what to do. She is much more hopeful about the times, believing, 'We are...only one decade away from a pristine millennium'. Her sister's pragmatic advice, 'It's a short operation. No fuss. Besides I'm too young and beautiful to be an auntie' (page 133) also complicates her dilemma. Charlotte also wrestles with the question of whether or not Craig has a right to know and whether or not having a child would impact on his career, even though Stanzi tells her, 'Your body, your choice' (page 134).

Another motif is introduced to complement the shilling—her mother's 'amethyst pendant on a gold chain' (page 123). Like the shilling, this motif also serves as a cohesive device but as yet its significance is only hinted at. Further details about its provenance are provided on page 142. Charlotte uses this pendant to tell if she is pregnant and its prophetic powers are revealed when she declares, 'I'm pregnant' (page 123).

Charlotte's chapter also adds further layers to the Westaway family story and provides more rich location detail about the Westaway home in Rowena Parade (page 131) where Charlotte's uncle Frank still lives. Connie's fate is revealed very swiftly, resolving the question that remained at the end of Chapter Two: Connie is not in any of the photos because she is dead. Another mystery is also resolved—Mr Westaway died from falling out of a tram and it is revealed that he and Connie 'both died within a few years of each other' (page 131) but the explanation for her death is a red herring.

Charlotte's family's success, despite the difficulty of Kip and Frank's childhood, is suggested via her descriptions of Kip's family home in Malvern—a 'sprawling Federation triple-fronter in Malvern' (page 132), a world away from working-class Richmond, therefore underlining the possibility of social mobility over generations.

Stanzi's reaction when Charlotte insists that they visit their mother, 'Oh my God...Dad' (page 129) acts as another hook. Charlotte and Stanzi's visit to Uncle Frank's house establishes further key information—Frank lives alone and has never married or had a family (page 137), their mother is Annabel (possibly the same Annabel from Chapter One) and Charlotte and Stanzi are twins (page 129). Further details are provided about how Kip and Annabel came to live in Malvern and why it is that Frank still lives in the family home (page 140) but no conversation ensues about Charlotte's pregnancy.

The chapter closes with Charlotte using the pendant to help her decide if she 'should...keep the baby' (page 142) but finishes on a cliffhanger, the reader unsure which way the pendant circled. We don't know if she will tell Craig and if she will tell her family about the pregnancy.

CHAPTER FIVE: FRANCIS Monday 2 May 1938

This is the first chapter with a recognisable character's name as the chapter title, highlighting to the reader how well they have come to know the Westaway family. This chapter allows the reader to experience Frank's perspective as teenager just before (and then after) the funeral of his father. The events in this chapter occur before Chapter One, so the non-linear structure means that the reader has to keep cross-referencing the chapter with the events of 'Kip' and 'Jack'. This chapter explores the day Frank is confronted with a series of choices, ultimately compelling him to make a choice about who he wants to be—an academic boy or a petty thief.

The chapter begins with 'thirteen [-year-old]' (page 147) Frank pretending to be Cranston [a.k.a. The Shadow], 'an American crime-busting hero, worshipped by boys the world over' (page 98). Given he criticised Kip in 'Jack' for pretending to be The Shadow, by accusing him of being 'a baby', this sets up the idea that Frank is full of contradictions. The Westaway home is full of cakes which have been dropped by from well-meaning 'friends and neighbours and people from the church and mothers from school' (page 146). The Westaway family faces a series of difficult choices, some easier to resolve than others. Tom's unexpected death means certain poverty for the family and unless they respond quickly and pragmatically they are destined for 'Those slum shacks in Mahoney Street, what they call the Valley of Death on account of the diphtheria' (page 148).

Frank and Kip are still trying to come to terms with the fact of their father's loss. Frank packs a cake in his schoolbag to distract anyone who tries to speak to him about his father and the image of him running his hands over the kitchen seat his father 'sat, every single night' is very moving. The story of Mr and Mrs Westaway's marriage is also described. It is revealed that 'Dad's people were of different persuasion and didn't approve and wouldn't even come to St Ignatius for the wedding, and that's how come we don't know our grandparents and aunts and uncles from that side. All Father Donovan asked, Ma says, was that we were brought up Catholic and went to Catholic school and Dad gave his word' (page 151). This echoes, presumably, the Protestant/Catholic rivalry set up thematically in the first chapter (and which flows on into the third) and prefaces Jack and Connie's relationship later on when people will be prepared to '[give] up everything' for love.

Mrs Westaway [Ma] is going to work as a 'housemaid in a big place at Kew' (in her mind, a respectable job—not a job 'in a common factory') (page 149) and the family 'is taking in boarder. Myrna Keith's sister-in-law, the widow' (page 150). Ma is 'close to forty' (page 148). Connie offers to get a job rather than go back to art school and Kip offers to drop out of school. Mrs Westaway tells Connie that she can look after Mrs Keith and the boys to keep the boys from 'roaming the streets like urchins'. Mrs Westaway's desperate dream that she and her family will live a respectable life is aided by kindness of the religious brothers at St Kevin's and



her local parish priest, Father Lockington. It is Father Lockington who arranges Ma's job and Brother Cusack had a word to Ma at the funeral to reassure her that, 'The scholarships keep going till you finish...and the brothers'll find whatever books you need, and uniforms, and anything' (page 150). Ma dreams of her sons going to university but doesn't have any such hopes for Connie. (The fact that Stanzi is planning to complete her PhD provides a satisfying coda to this and shows how much attitudes towards women and study changed towards the end of the 20th century.)

Kip and Francis respond very differently to their father's death. Frank is preyed upon by the nasty gang of Jim Pike, Cray and Mac who show no sympathy for the family's loss. Instead, they talk the gullible Frank into joining them in 'charitable works', which turns out to be a ruse for robbing elderly people. Why Frank decides to join them is simple—it represents safety: 'No more handing over sandwiches, getting tripped, watching where I sit and where I walk' (page 155). However, Frank's hubris leads to suffering. Having thought that they'd chosen him because, 'They've noticed my potential, the big life I've got in front of me' (page 155) the truth is that they chose him because of his gullibility. In the meantime, Kip's grief leads him to leave school, despite being underage, tormented by memories of images of his father lying in state and the fact that the undertakers had to cut his father's best clothing to dress him. Frank is unable to comfort Kip in his grief, calling him a 'Piker' (page 159) rather than what he wants to say, that Kip 'needs to think of his future, of Ma's and Connie's...[that] Dad would understand'.

Instead, Frank chooses to go with the gang and it ends disastrously. They are almost caught and Frank makes a secret pledge to honour his mother's dreams for him to 'be the most serious, most studious, most hard-working boy' (page 170) and 'shoulder the responsibility for this family'. Despite this pledge, he still steals the 'purple jewel hanging on a gold chain' (page 174) from the 'old lady' whose house the gang tried to burgle.

CHAPTER SIX: ANNABEL Saturday 9 November 1946

Chapter Six is Annabel's story, and by this stage the readers are well aware of who she is and how she fits into the Westaways' story. Annabel's retelling of her day takes place seven years after Francis' story in the previous chapter, and her chapter offers a different view of the happy, attractive girl Kip encountered in the first chapter.

Annabel is the sole carer of her alcoholic father, the only reference to her mother, Meg, being 'the wedding photograph beside [her father's] bed' (page 177) and the fact that he calls her by her mother's name when he's really drunk. Annabel is trying desperately to ensure they have enough food by using the 'mock' (page 175) meat recipes from the *Women's Weekly*. Annabel tries her best to manage the household, but the rationing makes this hard, as does the financial burden of supporting her father's drinking habit. The impact of rationing on the social climate is made clear when her father wryly observes that they had better 'draw the curtain' (page 176) when they are eating their meal, just in case the 'neighbours...dob us in'—the implication being that if neighbours suspect that the 'mock' sausages are real they will assume they have been illegally gained. Annabel's disempowerment is further delineated when she explains that she lost her job 'in the munitions factory...[when] the men came home and our girls got our marching orders' (page 178) further exemplifying the social inequities of the time and the privilege of men over women.

Annabel's chapter also depicts the damaging impact World War II had on Australia's relationship with the Japanese. This manifests itself in the way Annabel talks about Japanese people. For example: 'the only countries that thought to grow it couldn't get out of the way of the Japanese' (page 176) and 'The fear of the Nips coming' (page 178). Whilst to modern ears this might seem like casual racism, it is important that these remarks are contextualised in terms of Australia's brutal and taxing war with Japan.

The terrible realities of alcohol abuse by fathers and its impact on families is a recurring theme. Prioritising caring for her father over romantic relationships has denied Annabel the freedom to marry. She is openly scorned because of her father's drinking. She is going out with Francis, and there are plenty of hints that he is about to ask her to marry him but the past and the present collide to derail this plan. Francis 'is a clerk in a law office [McReady's]' (page 184) and Kip is 'a photographer's assistant at the *Argus*', having returned from fighting in Borneo (page 184). It is revealed that the death of Ma (page 186) enabled Kip to enlist and when derided by (the still revolting) Mac for joining up late, he explains that he couldn't leave his mother after the death of Connie (p.194). What happened to Connie is still unanswered but it's clear that her death brought very public social shame on her mother (pages 186 and 196).



Francis takes Annabel to a dance where he runs into Mac, now a returned soldier. The amethyst pendant makes an appearance again. Francis gives Annabel the pendant he stole seven years ago (the same one Charlotte receives when she is eighteen) but lies and says that the old lady gave it to him. Mac threatens to tell Francis' employer the true story about the pendant after Annabel repeats the lie (page 188). Slightly drunk and fearful of being exposed, Francis berates Annabel and implies that she is stupid and that he has been 'trying to bring her up in the world' (pages 199–201). Kip intervenes and buys the necklace from Francis. He puts the necklace on Annabel, even though she had been warned earlier that wearing a necklace given to her by a man she wasn't engaged to would be social suicide (page 191).

Francis tells Annabel that he was going to ask her father if he could marry her but it's clear that this remains a family secret, given Stanzi in her earlier recount said that Kip was Annabel's first love (page 64) and that Annabel's father was 'a saint of a man'. The theme of family secrets and lies is exposed by the reality of Annabel's father's drinking. Stanzi's other reflection—that Annabel 'went from being looked after by one man straight to the bed of another. When you're beautiful, life is easy. Someone will always look after you' (page 64) exposes Stanzi's ignorance about the truth of her mother's youth and the dangers of making assumptions.

CHAPTER SEVEN: JEAN Tuesday 14 January 1941

Even though the chapter title is the first time we hear Jean Westaway's first name, it doesn't take long for the reader to work out it's now Ma's turn to tell her story. The chapter starts with death and given that Connie's death featured so prominently in the previous chapter, there is a sense that this chapter may be a reckoning of sorts. Heartbreakingly, it is revealed right from the start that Jack Husting is dead, killed in Libya. Given Kip only mentioned Jack was in North Africa in the previous chapter (pages 196–7), news of Jack's death is dispiriting in its suddenness. Again, the terrible realities of war are brought home by Jean's reflections on the fact that the Hustings only received a telegram to tell them of Jack's death. This prompts her to reflect on Tom's death and acknowledge that at least she had 'a body to bury' (page 211).

Jean also reflects on the impact religion had on her family's life and subverts the assumption most readers probably made earlier (page 151) that Tom was Protestant and she is a Catholic (page 213). Instead, it turns out to be the other way around, therefore reinforcing the recurring theme that things are never truly what they seem. The story behind how Tom came to buy the house after a windfall at the races also demonstrates the vagaries of fate.

Connie is devastated by news of Jack's death. She tells her mother, 'There's a baby' (page 215) and her mother immediately assumes the father is Mr Ward and begins making excited plans for their wedding. When Connie tells her Mr Ward is not the father, her mother still insists Connie will need to get married, emphasising the social stigma attached to being an unwed mother in twentieth century Australian society. When Connie refuses to divulge the father's name and tells her mother she is having it (page 219), her mother refuses to listen to her, arguing that there's no privacy in society and that her reputation will be ruined forever. She attacks Connie verbally, accusing her of being all manner of derogatory names (page 220). She then makes plans—denying Connie any agency or choice, a stark contrast with Charlotte's experiences in the late twentieth century. A note is sent to Mr Ward explaining that Connie has the flu and won't be at work for the week (page 223). Jean takes Connie to the same woman she has seen herself for an abortion, an allegedly respectable woman who runs a business in Victoria Street. Mrs Ottley masquerades as an elegant dressmaker (page 225) and claims to be 'Mrs' Ottley, but isn't a 'Mrs' Ottley at all (page 228).

Connie's despair moments before the abortion, 'It's all I have of him' (page 230) is in stark contrast to Jean's grim determination and pragmatism. Jean reassures Connie that visiting a woman like Mrs Ottley to deal with an unplanned pregnancy is normal. She argues that 'half the married ladies of Richmond have lain on that little bench at one time or another' and that it's 'part of being a woman' (page 230). Jean's response underlines the terrible options for women in terms of healthcare at the time and the oppressive and judgemental views



of the society in which they lived. Connie's experience is presented as degrading and dehumanising. Her mother is unable to stay with her and is told, 'Don't get settled...This isn't the MCG. We've got no room for spectators' (page 231) and Connie is offered alcohol instead of an anaesthetic. Jean leaves Connie alone and wanders the streets, reliving the trauma of Tom's death. This awful reality partially explains her inability to show Connie any compassion.

Jean's solution to Connie's problem ends tragically with Connie bleeding to death on the footpath on the way home from the unsafe medical procedure, and Jean leaving her in a panic.

Connie's dying words before Jean flees: 'I decided. I wrote to him. He was going to come back to me and I'd be here and the baby'd be here and we'd be both be waiting' emphasises the loss. There's no suspense for the audience at all, dramatic irony has reared its cruel head—we know what Connie's fate will be and we can guess that Jean's words, 'I'm only going to be gone for a minute' (page 239) are similar to what we've heard before—complete self-deception.

All that remains is the mystery of what is in the 'biscuit tin' (page 238) and how Connie and Jack got together given the last time we saw them together was in "Jack".

CHAPTER EIGHT: ALEC Thursday 27 April 2006

Chapter Eight is told from the point of view, Alec, Charlotte's teenage son—the unborn baby from "Charlotte". Alec's story is the most contemporary and centres on the day he avoided being in a fatal car accident and discovers a photo of Connie and Jack in a biscuit tin in the brickwork of Rowena Parade. Rowena Parade now belongs to Charlotte and Stanzi because Frank has decided to live in a nursing home (page 252) and Alec and Libby are raised by Stanzi and Charlotte. This enables Jordan to showcase how family structures have expanded and changed over time.

Alec is an angry and frustrated young man who feels trapped by his mother's views and choices. He doesn't have a phone, or an Xbox (page 42) and in his words feels like a 'Lep. Per'. Alec's relationship with his fourteen-year-old half-sister is similarly strained and is captured in the kind of typical teen speak reserved just for siblings. For example, 'You absolute prick' (page 244) and other such gems such as: 'Libby gives me her fuck off and die look' (page 245). Even though Charlotte's family is very different from the nuclear family of her grandparents' generation there seems to be a suggestion that families are complicated and can suffer from unhappiness no matter what the set-up is. Unlike Jean, who lived her life fearing the judgement of others, Charlotte isn't plagued by any such sense of shame or embarrassment about being single and about her children having different fathers. This reflects changing and more open attitudes about parenthood, marriage and what constitutes family.

Alec's unhappiness also stems from his absent father, 'a hairy old blues musician who lives on an avocado farm near Mullumbimby' who 'sends [him] birthday cards at random times of the year' (page 248). Sadly Craig's attitude to children didn't mellow with time and Libby's relationship with her father, Ben, amplifies Alec's feelings of disappointment. Ben is a 'hot-shot Singaporean software designer' and Libby visits him 'for two weeks in the Christmas holidays, but that's it' (page 248) so there is a sense that even though Charlotte felt empowered to make her decisions about having a family, the fathers have been largely absent and have had the freedom to make other choices. Perhaps this could be read as a comment about how free women really are in the twenty-first century.

Luckily for Alec though, Kip has been a wonderful and devoted grandfather, rescuing Alec from being (according to Alec): 'the kid without the father' (page 262). In fact, Kip's gift of a Nintendo DS (page 256) on the sly inadvertently leads him to a photo of Connie and Jack hidden by Connie so many years ago in the brickwork of the house. This photo shakes Kip to the core. This is the photo on the front cover of the book and Kip reveals that he has kept Connie's secret until this moment (page 259). Kip urges Alec to, 'Never let anyone say goodbye...without kissing them' (page 261) demonstrating the impact Connie's sudden death has had on him and underlining the importance of never taking life and precious connections for granted.



Kip accidentally leaves the photo at Rowena Parade and Alec resists the urge to go on a joyride to Rye with friends rather than comply with his mother's request to ride the photograph over to his grandparents' house. Tragically, his friends never make it to Rye because they are killed in a car accident. Thankfully cruel fate has not visited the Westaways again, even though it has visited heavily upon Alec's friends.

CHAPTER NINE: CONNIE Wednesday August 14 1940

Fittingly, the final chapter belongs to Connie and Jack, even though it seems that we finally have a reasonably complete grasp of their story. Narrated from Connie's point of view, the chapter is a passionate retelling of their one and only night together just before Jack leaves for war and their final goodbye on the station platform, including the story behind how the photo in the biscuit tin came to be taken. And it's a relief and uplifting that the novel ends with Jack and Connie alive and full of hope and feeling empowered.

Connie is the one who ultimately decides she doesn't want to miss out anymore, declaring, 'all my life I've had nothing I've desired and I've given up having desires at all' (page 285). So, feeling like she is 'queen of a distant land and everything is at my command' she takes the lead and they have sex, leaving her feeling that 'No other living soul has ever felt this way' (page 287). Connie is very much in control in this scene and freely explores her own sexuality with a sense of wonder, delight and desire.

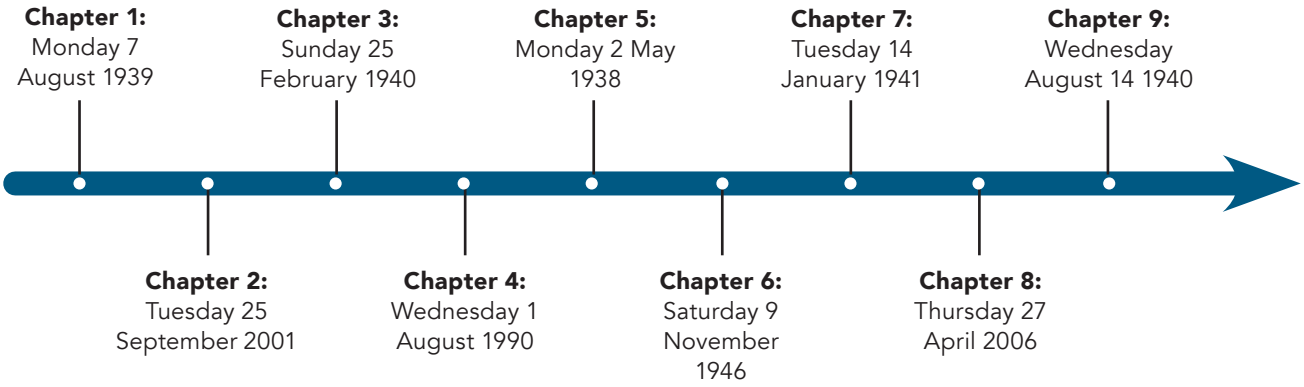
Connie and Jack plan to reunite when he returns in what he hopes will only be a few months and he leaves her with the tantalising promise that he '[has] one thing to ask [her]' (page 288).

Having convinced Mr Ward that a photo of the 'embarkation of the part of the second AIF for North Africa would make a fine photo for the *Argus*', Connie, accompanied by Kip, who 'has the day off from the Hustings' (page 289), sees Jack one last time. Connie is lifted to kiss Jack as he departs, and Kip takes a photo without telling Connie.

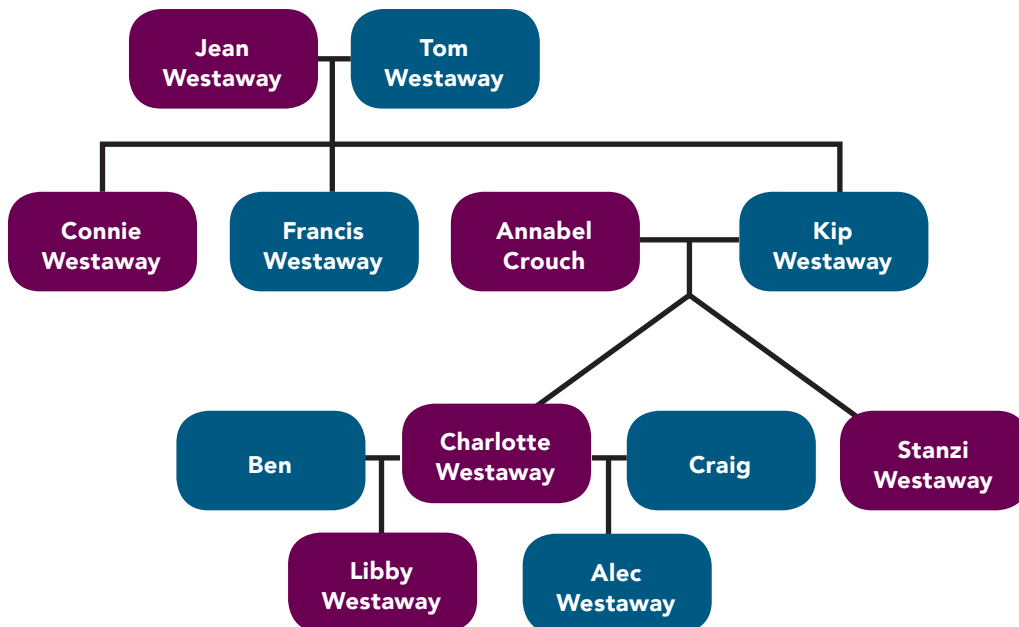
The novel ends with Connie feeling she has finally had something that she wanted (page 293) and that, 'Everything will be alright' (page 294). Even though this does not lessen the tragic circumstances of her short-lived optimism—and her and Jack's deaths—at least there is a some consolation that she did experience a moment of pure happiness, however fleeting.



TIMELINE



WESTAWAY FAMILY TREE





CLASSROOM AND HOMEWORK ACTIVITIES

READING JOURNAL

At the start or end of each class, ask students to write for five minutes, recording brief responses to *Nine Days*. Ask them to reflect on their earlier responses in relation to their later responses. What do they notice about their different responses? What do they think has influenced similar, deepened or different conclusions?

DIFFERENT VIEWPOINTS

Use the Visible Thinking routine: 'Perceive, Know about, Care about' (Harvard Visible Thinking Routine) to develop students' understanding of the different viewpoints Jordan tries to convey in her text. http://www.visiblethinkingpz.org/VisibleThinking_html_files/03_ThinkingRoutines/03g_CreativityRoutines/StepInside/StepInside_Routine.html

For example:

- ▶ Ma Westaway's views on her neighbours, work, education and pregnancy
- ▶ Jack's views on the city
- ▶ Kip's views on the city
- ▶ Mrs Husting's views on Catholics, war and marriage
- ▶ Charlotte's views on pregnancy
- ▶ Stanzi's views on education.

THE WORLD OF THE TEXT

Investigate the following people, places, events and abbreviations/nicknames. Summarise your findings into three dot points and include an image or symbol to support your understanding.

1. People

Mr Chamberlain

Mr Menzies

Hitler

The King of England (George VI)

G-Men from America

Christian Brothers, St Kevin's College

Faithful Companions of Jesus (nuns)

The Good Shepherd sisters in Abbotsford 219

Jesse Owens

Jack Titus

Decima Norman

Bradman

Mawson

2. Places

RICHMOND:

- ▶ Rowena Parade
- ▶ Lennox Street
- ▶ Swan Street
- ▶ Bridge Road
- ▶ Church Street
- ▶ Lanes
- ▶ Coppin Street
- ▶ MacRobertson Bridge
- ▶ Gipps Street
- ▶ Elm Grove
- ▶ Mary Street
- ▶ The Vacluse
- ▶ Victoria Street
- ▶ Punt Road
- ▶ The Yarra River
- ▶ The Tannery



St Kevin's College
 St Ignatius Church, Richmond
 St Stephen's Church, Richmond
 IXL Factory
 Bryant and May
 The Tannery
 The Royal Botanic Gardens
 The slum shacks in Mahoney Street (the Valley of Death)
 Malvern
 Toorak
 Kew
 Hawthorn
 Pozières
 County Cork
 Solomon Islands
 Borneo
 North Africa
 Libya
 Vic Market
 MCG
 The London Tavern, Richmond
 St Kilda
 MacRobertson Bridge
 Cricketer's Arms

3. Events

The Great War
 World War II
 Rationing
 Religious sectarianism in Australia (Protestant and Catholic)
 Diphtheria outbreak in inner-city slums
 The fall of the Berlin Wall
 9/11 attacks
 Nelson Mandela's release from jail
 SARS epidemic
 Anthrax letters

4. Popular culture

Phantom comic
 The Shadow
 King Kong
 sherbet bombs & jersey caramels
 corned beef
 cauliflower cheese
 bread and dripping
 Melbourne trams and trains
 George's (retail)
 Cricket
 Malvern Star bike
 Catalogue (racehorse)
The Herald
 Melbourne Bitter
Women's Weekly
 The *Argus* newspaper
 CURRENCY:
 ▶ shilling (page 6)
 ▶ pounds (page 203)
 ▶ ha-penny (page 209)
Sex and the City
 McReady's
 Leggett's

5. Abbreviations/nicknames/sayings

The dunny cart
 Civvies
 Commos
 Ruskis
 Micks
 Nips
 'Like a fishwife'
 Lord Muck



Going deeper

Mapping Kip and Jack's Melbourne

Using the clues provided by the text, develop a walking tour (real, virtual or digital) of Kip and Jack's Melbourne or a video blog of yourself (or a small group) retracing Kip and Jack's Melbourne. You could even add in further details of the Westaways' Melbourne in later generations.

The slums of Melbourne

The following resources can be used to develop a deeper understanding of the slums of Melbourne.

<https://blogs.slv.vic.gov.au/such-was-life/the-slums-of-melbourne/>

<https://www.heraldsun.com.au/news/victoria/haunting-images-of-the-streets-that-were-once-home-to-melbournes-slums/news-story/8929dd97a96343ae9de160c637a16c0c>

<https://cv.vic.gov.au/stories/built-environment/the-unsuspected-slums/>

<https://cv.vic.gov.au/stories/built-environment/the-unsuspected-slums/richmond-the-childrens-playground/>

Religious sectarianism in Australia (Protestant and Catholic)

The following resources can be used to develop a deeper understanding of religious sectarianism

<http://www.abc.net.au/radionational/programs/archived/rnafternoons/sounds-of-then:-orange-and-the-black/7912224>

https://www.sydneycatholic.org/people/bishop_julian_porteous/addresses/2008/20081016_1598.shtml

<https://theconversation.com/marrying-across-australias-catholic-protestant-divide-88075>

Rationing

The following resource can be used to develop a deeper understanding of rationing during WWII.

<https://www.awm.gov.au/articles/encyclopedia/homefront/rationing>

Connie's pregnancy

The following resources can be used as a starting point to developing a deeper understanding of the perilous situation Connie find herself in and who the Good Shepherd Sisters in Abbotsford were (page 219).

<http://www.dailylife.com.au/news-and-views/news-features/australias-horrific-abortion-history-20150320-1m3yuw.html>

<https://abbotsfordconvent.com.au/about/history/timeline>



CHARACTERISATION

Use the questions below to develop notes on the following characters. Support each of your observations with an illustrative quote:

- ▶ Kip Westaway
- ▶ Francis (Frank) Westaway
- ▶ Connie Westaway
- ▶ Jean 'Ma' Westaway
- ▶ Mrs Ada Husting
- ▶ Jack Husting
- ▶ Stanzi
- ▶ Charlotte
- ▶ Alec
- ▶ Annabel Crouch

1. Name of character (Does his/her actual name seem significant?)
2. Appearance
3. Does Jordan's description influence the reader to endorse or condemn this character?
4. Personality
5. Values (as revealed by behaviour/actions, responses or dialogue)
6. Views/attitudes (as revealed by behaviour/actions, responses or dialogue)
7. Traits
8. Interests
9. Outlook i.e. worldview (How would the character describe the world they live in? What words would you use to describe their worldview/outlook on life?)
10. Personal history—What events from the past seem to have influenced the development of this character?
11. Who is this character in relationship with / connected to? What is the nature of this relationship?
12. Are any of these close relationships?
13. How would you describe the quality of the relationship this character has with other (specific) characters?
14. Which of these relationships change?
15. Which key moments influence this change? (Turning points)
16. Do any of his/her values change over the course of the narrative?
17. Which settings (places) do you associate with the character? How does the character feel in this setting? What might this setting symbolise about the character?
18. Do any of his/her views change over the course of the narrative?
19. Think about the fate of this character. Do you think the character is rewarded or punished in some way for the values he/she possesses?
20. Which values seem to be important to Jordan?



POSSIBLE ASSESSMENT TASKS

CREATIVE TEXT RESPONSE

Nine Days lends itself beautifully to the creative text response task. Students could explore many silences in the text or add to the text/explore gaps in the novel. Students also have a wonderful opportunity to write in a variety of forms. Some suggestions appear below.

Exploring a silence

There are many characters who are largely hidden figures in the text. What perspectives could they bring to key events in the novel?

- ▶ Mr Ward
- ▶ Brother Marlow, Brother Rahill, Brother Cusask (the brothers from St Kevin's College)
- ▶ Father Lockington
- ▶ Mr Husting
- ▶ Libby Westaway
- ▶ Annabel Crouch's father
- ▶ The old lady robbed by Francis
- ▶ Ben
- ▶ Craig

Filling a gap/adding to the text

There are many gaps in the story that could be filled, including letters/notes that are referred to that we never see. There is also plenty of backstory that could be added to the text.

Here are some suggestions:

- ▶ Tom Westaway bought Rowena Parade with the winnings from a horse race. What were his great hopes and why did things go so terribly wrong for him?
- ▶ Jean Westaway gave up her own religious tradition to marry Tom. How difficult was this to do? Why wouldn't his family come to the wedding?
- ▶ The inquest into Connie's death would have been reported in the paper. Write a series of reports about the inquest.
- ▶ Alec reports that Stanzi has become a personal trainer. What happened to her plans to complete her PhD?
- ▶ Annabel lost her job in the munitions factory to make way for the returning soldiers. How did she and the other girls who lost their job feel about this? Try to provide further insight into this moment.
- ▶ Connie wrote to Jack to tell him about the baby and he wrote back. What did the letters say?

- ▶ When did Kip become a photographer? What motivated him to become a photographer?
- ▶ Libby visits her father for two weeks every Christmas. What are these visits like for her?

ANALYTICAL TEXT RESPONSE QUESTIONS

Nine Days can also be assessed as an analytical text response and Unit 3 and 4 students have the option of writing on *Nine Days* in their final examination.

Some suggested topics appear below:

How does the structure of the text influence the reader's response to Connie?

'*Nine Days* is more about loss than it is about hope.' Do you agree?

'Connie's fate is determined by others.' Discuss.

'At its core, *Nine Days* is a story about moral conundrums and moral hypocrisy.' Discuss.

'*Nine Days* shows that sometimes things make more sense from a distance.' Discuss.

'*Nine Days* is equal parts hope and despair.' Discuss.

'*Nine Days* offers a panoramic view of a changing Australia.' Discuss.

'*Nine Days* shows that despite the march of time, modern life is still essentially bleak.' Discuss.

'*Nine Days* shows that the march of time makes the world a better place.' Discuss.

"It means nothing that these people have vanished into thin air and will never be seen again." *Nine Days* is about death, but it is also about life.' To what extent is this true?

"How I hate that man. Dying and leaving me alone to look after everyone." Jean has no control over her life.' Discuss.

'In *Nine Days* the strong suffer because of the inadequacies of others.' Do you agree?

'*Nine Days* is a powerful examination of the web of human connection.' Discuss.

'In *Nine Days* the men's lives are just as miserable as the women's.' Discuss.

"It seems that all my life I've had nothing I've desired..."

In *Nine Days* it is the women who have little or no control over their lives.' Discuss.

"That's the only reason I leave her." In *Nine Days* deception is a means of survival.' Discuss.

How does the use of multiple narrators influence that reader's response to *Nine Days*?



ABOUT THE AUTHOR OF THE NOTES

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