

Gool

Maurice Gee

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Recommended for Upper Primary/Lower Secondary

Resource Kit Contains

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Praise

'A biological and psychological horror story, even scarier than its predecessor. Gee's imagination is as fierce as ever. The descriptions of the gools did evoke real fear.'
Herald on Sunday

Synopsis

Gool carries on from the thrilling story of *Salt* where Hari, Pearl and Tealeaf struggle successfully with the powers of evil in the city of Belong.

Here, it is Hari's daughter, Xantee who, along with her friend, Duro and the inseparable cousins, Sal and Mond, return to the city in order to find the mother gool who is terrorising the whole land with her hatred and cruelty. The gool adds another dimension of horror to the story as she and her children do not have a human form but instead have a cold, destructive shape, a frightening presence of evil. A gool has twisted a tentacle around Hari's neck and if Xantee and Duro cannot get rid of it, Hari will surely die. And, of course, if the gool dominates the world with its destructive hatred, the earth as a whole will be destroyed.

As well as the gool, there is also the problem of the cruel and warring leaders of the city, Keech and the Clerk, who first appeared in *Salt*. They too must be overcome if there is to be any hope of salvation for the world. Xantee and Duro, together with their friends from the Dwellers and the sometimes dangerous help of Hari's aggressive and wild father, Tarl, have a seemingly impossible and always spine-chilling task in front of them.

About the Author

Maurice Gee is one of New Zealand's finest writers. He has written more than forty books for adults and young adults, and has won several literary awards. His young adult novels include *The Fat Man*, *Under the Mountain* and *The Salt Trilogy*. Maurice lives in Nelson, on New Zealand's South Island.

Themes

1. The novel continues the theme of the power of hatred to destroy the world and the strength and courage it takes for goodness to prevail over evil.
2. It explores the power of love, both in the developing relationship between Duro and Xantee and in the closeness of the two cousins. There is also a protective and nourishing love amongst the families of the Dwellers.
3. It explores the importance of gentleness, thoughtfulness and pity, and their power to disarm hatred.
4. It portrays goodness as intelligent while hatred and evil are stupid and self-destructive.
5. The novel examines the futility of continuing conflict. Conflict only delivers a greater thirst for power and a more destructive form of hate and envy and cruelty.

Language

If you have read *Salt* you will have seen the powerful language that Maurice Gee uses both to create suspense and to evoke very powerful pictures of the world. You will see more of this wonderful imagery throughout the book and will be encouraged to create images of your own.

Again you will be led to think about the characteristics of the writing which make it so exciting and sometimes so horrifying

Close study of the text

Chapter 1

What is the atmosphere in the early pages of the book? Why was Hari not worried about his journey?

Who were the Peeps?

Describe the characters of Xantee and Lo. How do they differ from each other?

Describe the 'thing' that dragged Sal and Mond away. Why is it that something with no face and no recognisable form is more frightening than a creature with recognisable features and shape? Think of other creations in books or films which are like this.

On p9 there are the words hurling, screamed, lurch, shock, wrap, plunging, frowning, etc. What effect do these words have on the tension of the passage?

What happened to Hari and how did he escape?

Chapter 2

What marks were left on Hari and the two cousins by the gool? What makes them more scary than more conventional injuries like scratches and bruises?

How are the injuries treated? Why was Xantee not comforted by the fact that the creature on Hari's neck was very afraid?

How do we know that Xantee has had a happy childhood? Write a short description of an imaginary day in her childhood. Or perhaps draw a picture of the place where she grew up.

What important rule did Xantee learn about 'speaking'?

Why were Keech and the Clerk more dangerous than animals in the jungle?

Chapter 3

How was Tealeaf different from the rest of the Dwellers?

Explain in your own words what is meant by *behind every kindness cruelty lurked*. (p26)

Why is it necessary to destroy the necklace?

What do you think is the relationship at this time between Duro and Xantee?

What is happening in the Ceebeedee and the Burrows?

Where did the gools come from and what do they aim to do?

Draw a comic strip or write a story with illustrations which tells the story of Barni the fisherman.

Why is it so important to find Tarl?

If you had an extraordinary power what would you like it to be?

Why did they need to find the boy who killed Pearl's brother?

Chapter 4

Why was it necessary to go to the city?

Why weren't Sal and Mond allowed to leave the ship?

Do you, like Duro, feel pessimistic when Sal and Mond decide to go by themselves? Why do you feel this way?

Why do the Peeps leave them?

What has kept them safe in the jungle?

Chapter 5

Look at the beautiful image of the waterfall in the opening words of the chapter. Notice the contrast in the imagery. Does this mirror the contrasts in the ideas in the book?

The Peeps are in perfect harmony with their world. How will they help Xantee, Lo and Duro? How did they light the way?

Why does Xantee feel there is too much of everything?

Describe the gool on the mountain—what it sounds like, looks like and smells like.

What happened to Lo?

Chapter 6

What is so frightening about the jungle? Draw a picture of the jungle wall, including the things that are so threatening.

What does Xantee mean when she says she has to empty her mind?

Describe some circumstance in your life when you might feel you had to unclutter your mind.

Xantee is careful and thinks before she acts. Duro is something of a 'loose cannon'. What sorts of things does he still have to learn?

Describe in your own words Tarl and his dogs.

Chapter 7

Why did Xantee and Duro need Tarl to go with them?

How do you feel about Tarl? Do you trust him?

Chapter 8

This chapter describes the desolation of the city. How do you imagine Tarl, Duro and Xantee will survive in this environment?

Chapter 9

Xantee felt cold. What two things did the cold represent?

Where did they go to hunt for the books?

How did they find out where Keech and the Clerk were?

Describe Keech. Where does his power lie?

Why does Tarl need to see Keech?

What is Xantee's attitude towards killing? How does it differ from that of Duro?

What were the words which summed up everything she had been taught by Tealeaf?(p126)

How is the tension sustained in this chapter, particularly in the second half?

Whose was the voice that was guiding them? Where was he taking them?

Why do you think Tarl finds it so difficult to be grateful?

Chapter 10

Tell Danatok's story in your own words. Would you like to live that kind of life?

What is the voice that Keech hears on p136?

Have you ever looked up at the stars when you've been in the country, away from the reflection of city lights?

Describe what it was like and how it made you feel and read again the wonderful description on p137.

Chapter 11

Tarl goes away and Xantee feels she may never see her grandfather again.

Why wouldn't the city people see much value in books?

What do you think happens to a society where music and art and books don't exist any more?

Describe the Ceebeedee under the Clerk.

What qualities did Xantee have which made it possible for her to find the story of Barni?

Describe in your own words the Fish People.

Who is represented by the red and white stars?

Chapter 12

How do Xantee and Duro differ in their approach to dealing with Keech and the Clerk?

Describe Keech as we see him on p161. Do you think he shows any leadership qualities?

How did Xantee feel about her grandfather?

Why was Xantee so opposed to killing?

The Clerk is described as being like a baby. Do you feel pity for him or are you repelled by him?

Why does Xantee think he is more dangerous than Keech?

The Clerk says he doesn't care about what the gool does to the world. He is the epitome of selfishness; if something doesn't hurt him it doesn't matter what it does to any body else. Do you think there are some people today who don't care about the damage humans are doing to the world. What can be done to persuade them to care?

Why does Xantee say that Keech and the Clerk feed the gool?

What is her message for the Clerk? Do you think it will work?

Why was she so horrified to realise that she had the power to kill the Clerk?

Chapter 13

The day was clear and sunny but the presence of the gool was in the air. How does the gool affect the people?

Xantee pitied the gool. What does this show us about her?

Why was Xantee unable to hunt the gool down?

When Keech and the Clerk join together to defeat Xantee the fighting is horrendous and the ending is like that of a classical tragedy. Why is the end of this fight tragic rather than purely triumphant?

Chapter 14

They follow the smell of the dying gool to Ottmar's place

In what ways was the mother gool different from her children?

Danatok says that the gool hurts us just by being herself. What does this mean? Can we hurt one another just by being ourselves?

The door was stiff; its hinges groaned. And something else groaned, low in the safe. The sound made Xantee's skin prickle and her mouth go dry. It did not come from grief or anger or any emotion she could recognise. It was a sound no one was meant to hear, from a darkness no one was meant to see.

The hinge ran free, the door clanged open and a concentrated beam of hatred shot out and knocked Xantee and Danatok off their feet. It rolled them like logs on the floor.(p191)

Look at this section of the book (p191) closely and read it out loud. What is it about the rhythms of the words and the images it presents which makes it so horrifying?

Look at the physical description of the mother gool on pp192-193. What is it about the physical description that makes her so repulsive?

What do you think she symbolises and why is she so powerful?

Duro is all for action, but Xantee says you can't force people to act in a certain way. Why was it futile for Duro to try to kill the mother gool?

What proved to be the only weapon against the gool?

Chapter 15

This chapter ties up the loose ends of the story. Do you find the ending of the story satisfactory? Is there anything you would have wanted to be different?

ACTIVITIES

Debate

The gool's hatred is no worse than the hatred of humans towards each other that has led to so many disasters in the world.

Essays

- It is impossible to overcome evil with evil. How is this shown in this novel?
- Xantee thought that it was impossible to force the gool to change. If the gool represents hatred and selfishness how do we persuade people to care more for others and for the world around them.

General discussion

What are the elements that you think would make an ideal world?

How is the story of *Salt* woven into this book?

Characters

Who was your favourite character? Describe him or her and explain why you like them.

Below is a list of characters and underneath is a list of human qualities. Try to match up the characters with their qualities. You may use the qualities more than once.

- The gool
- Danatok
- Tarl
- Duro
- Xantee
- Sal and Mond
- Hari
- Keech
- the twins
- the Clerk
- Lo
- Pearl

perseverance; cruelty; intelligence; coldness; loyalty; impulsiveness; a killer instinct; pity; closeness; a dark power; selfishness; wisdom; greed for power; mother love; bravery; compassion.

Creative Writing

Gool is full of wonderful images or word pictures.

She had opened Pearl out like folded paper and allowed the child to become a woman.

Rivers bent like knives, with flowering trees at their edges, coloured like rust.

Coldness, like a flattened dome, uncoloured and painful to the eyes, floated on a pillow of grey mist.

Choose ten of the images in the book that you particularly liked. Think about what makes them so effective and then write ten word pictures of your own and share them with the class.