

SAMPLE

ENGLISH TEXT SUMMARY NOTES  
**“Inheritance”**

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**AREA 1:**  
**READING & RESPONDING:**  
**INHERITANCE**

*Chapter 1*  
**GENRE**

*Inheritance* is a family saga that explores three generations of a rural Australian family. Despite being a quintessentially Australian play, *Inheritance* explores universal aspects of family, such as rivalry and heartbreak. The characters are drawn together to Allandale, the family farm, to celebrate the eightieth birthday of the twins, Dibs and Girlie. Amid preparations for the birthday party, Rayson reveals her political themes and issues.

The play is an Australian drama, which explores and captures Australian contemporary culture from a rural perspective. It is set in the Australian outdoors, in the Mallee region in northwestern Victoria. The Australian bush setting differs from Rayson's usual choice of a city setting. The authenticity of the setting is strengthened by Rayson's use of Australian vernacular to construct the dialogue. The dramatic aspect of *Inheritance* is based on the question of who will inherit the farm. As the characters interact around this plotline, speculation grows regarding the person who will inherit the farm. This focus exposes other issues, such as discrimination, globalization and 'Pauline Hanson' politics.

Rayson explores political malaise in *Inheritance*, thus the play is also an important work of political theatre. Rayson spent two years investigating and researching the elements of her play to produce engaging, realistic and naturalistic theatre. She poses challenging questions with the aim of uncovering complex truths about the human world to a mainstream audience.

## *Chapter 2*

# **STRUCTURE**

The play consists of two acts. The prologue, acts and epilogue span forty-five years. The threads of the story are gathered together around the main plotline which is established in Act One, Scene Eleven, when William speaks to Dibs about the plans to sell the farm. At times, the characters directly address the audience and reveal their perspectives, memories and feelings about the past and present situations.

Rayson integrates flashbacks and anecdotes within scenes to present significant events which have shaped the characters, particularly Dibs and Girlie. Thus, the plot and characters are delineated and the structure is economical. The brevity of many scenes emphasizes each piece of the puzzle and offers clear insight into the values and circumstances surrounding individuals. There are frequent sharp cuts to different locations including the Hamilton house, the Delaney house, the farm paddocks and sheds and the main street of Rushton. The selected locations intensify the shortcomings and longings of the different characters. Nugget often appears in outdoor scenes whereas Dibs is often in the kitchen. The use of various tools as props, such as a spanner, wheelbarrow, rope and whip, add authenticity and ruggedness to the rural, farm setting.

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