

ENGLISH TEXT SUMMARY NOTES  
**“Blueprints for a Barbed-Wire  
Canoe”**

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SAMPLE

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## AREA 1:

# READING & THE STUDY OF TEXTS: BLUEPRINTS FOR A BARBED-WIRE

## CANOE

### *Chapter 1* GENRE

*Blueprints for a Barbed-wire Canoe* is a novel of prose fiction. It is a political novel, which reflects social concern about the power and effects of deception by authorities, thus it provides a warning about overdevelopment and suburban expansion in Australia. The characters may be viewed as representatives of ordinary members of contemporary Australian urban community.

Though the text presents a realistic setting, on another level it is an allegorical fable that contains illusive, fanciful images, such as the barbed-wire canoe, that serve as symbols of impossibility. In *Blueprints of a Barbed-Wire Canoe*, Macauley uses allegory to show the attempts of European settlers to tame the Australian landscape and build their dream homes. As an allegorical fable or modern myth, it is characterized by multiple layers of meaning, but presents a clear moral about Australian culture and the historical desire to shape the Australian landscape to certain desires. The characters represent different aspects of Australian society. European migrants are symbolized by Vito and Marie-Claire. Beaurocratic authorities are represented by Layland and Loch, while Slug represents the opportunistic members of society.

## *Chapter 2*

# **STRUCTURE**

*Blueprints for a Barbed-Wire Canoe* contains fifteen, untitled chapters. The traditional plot structure elements of introduction, complications, climax and conclusion are rearranged. The first chapter reveals the tragic climax of Jodie's death. Both the physical plans and rationale of the Outer Suburban Village Development Complex are introduced in detail in Chapter 2. The six remaining residents, who are central to the plot, are introduced in Chapter 3. The complications surrounding Michael are described in Chapter 4 and the themes of love and family arise. Jodie's arrival in Chapter 5 complicates Bram's psychological existence and also has a significant effect on the residents of *ur*. The ensuing plot complications are the created by the construction of the tip, visits from the authorities, Layland and Loch, as well as the departures of Slug and then Vito. As Bram's despair and Michael's madness escalate, the encroaching freeway and ensuing confrontations serve as an alternative plot climax. The deaths of Nanna and Dave begin the conclusive plot descent towards the ultimate death of *ur*. In the final chapters, the story returns to Jodie's death in the creek and finally Bram's cycle of hopelessness ends when he achieves closure on the events at *ur* by documenting a record of the housing estate experiment. The conclusion is positive as he prepares to leave *ur* with the hope of finding happiness and the intention of living actively, rather than passively.

Macauley uses long paragraphs, which include long conversations that are smoothly inserted in to the prose, without visual differentiation to the narration of Bram. The conversations expose the development of the plot and characters. Jodie's conversation with Bram explains Michael's motivations. Bram experiences an overwhelming sense of nausea after he speaks with Alex about the intentions to destroy *ur*. Loch's long speech to Bram reveals the mistakes and mistreatment by the authorities regarding the village.