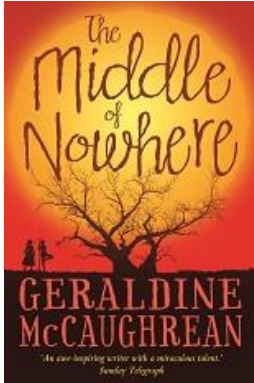


## TALKING POINTS CILIP Carnegie Medal Shortlist 2015



### THE MIDDLE OF NOWHERE By Geraldine McCaughrean



#### The beginning

What clues does the cover give you about the story you are about to read?

Geraldine McCaughrean has written an introduction about the relationship of fiction to real places. Did it make you think differently about your reading knowing that it is based on a real place?

The piano arrived too late to stop the sky falling in. How does that work for a first sentence?

#### The setting

The book is set in a place that is desolate and remote. But is Telegraph House a happy home for Comity, all the same?

Why do you think Geraldine McCaughrean chose such a remote setting for this story?

What are the most important ways in which her life there is different from yours here?

The book includes a glossary of local words. How did you feel about having this unfamiliar language mixed into the book you were reading?

#### The characters

What do you think of Quartz Hogg when you first meet him? How is he different from Herbert Pinny? At what point do you realise (or does Comity realise) what a nasty piece of work he is?

How does Hogg manipulate Herbert Pinny?

Fred has a very distinctive way of talking. Quite unlike the other characters. Can you find some examples?

How does Fred feel about the Missus and the family?



## The story

The piano is mentioned in that very first line . does it have any symbolic significance after that?

Why does Comity distort the truth, or sometimes tell outright lies, to her grandmother and cousins? (She certainly feels quite differently about her family to the way Fred feels about his ancestors, doesn't she?)

The hunt after the party is one of the most shocking parts of the book, but what about when Comity gets home afterwards . were you surprised at what she finds, and how the story changes?

At the end of the book, a lot happens in just a few pages . the soldiers arriving, the family showing up, Fred reappearing; so what did you think of the ending? Was it surprising? Emotional? Satisfying?

## Attitudes towards others

Comity knows she's supposed to look down on the Aboriginals, but does she? Which other characters have the most respectful attitudes towards those who are different from them, and who has the worst prejudices?

What does Comity think of the Ghans, like Moosa Rasul, and the camel trains?

What does Comity mean, and why is it significant for this story?

How does Comity feel about Jesus and religion? (And how does Fred feel?)

Do you think the book has a message about friendship and family? Both are important in the book, but they're complicated, too.

