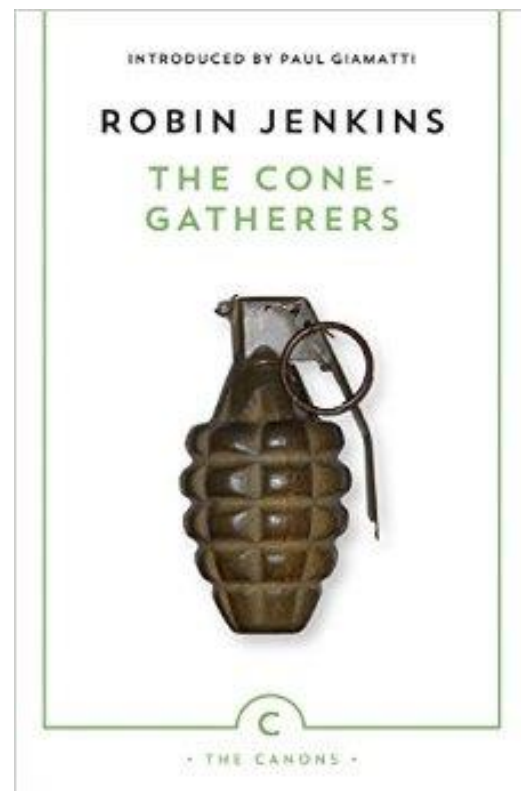


The Cone Gatherers



**New Higher
Revision Pack**

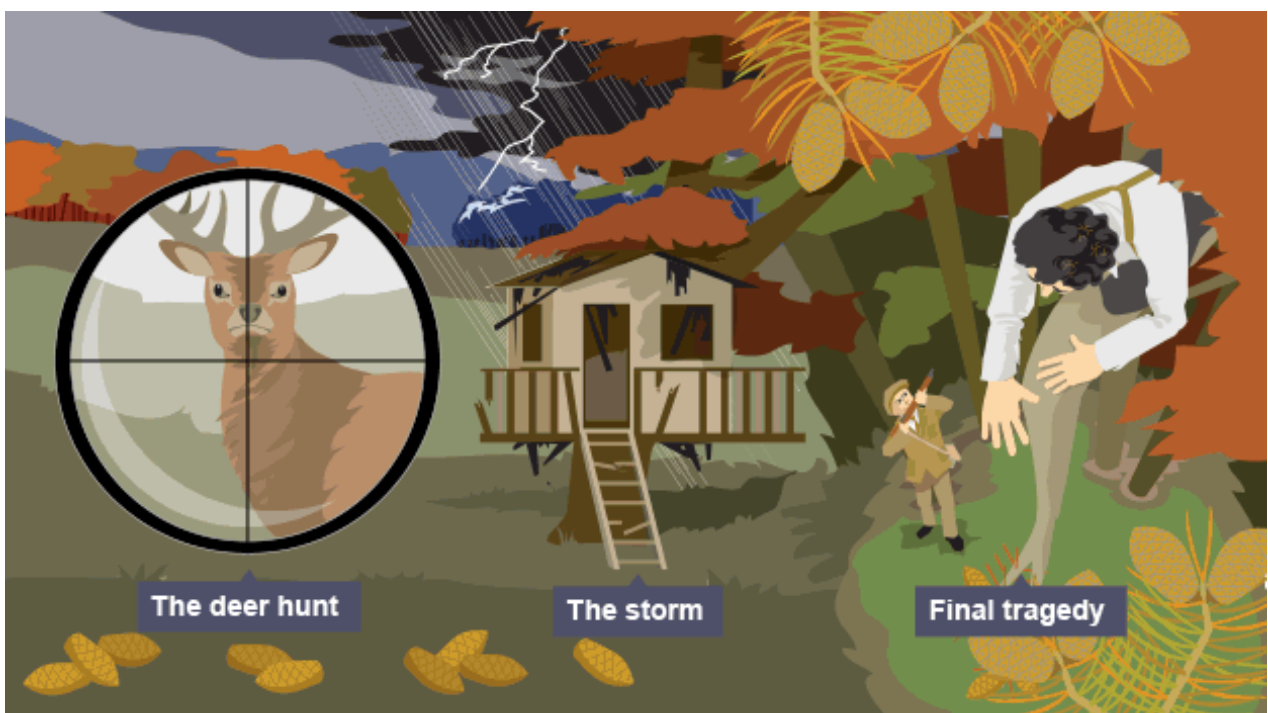
The Cone-Gatherers by Robin Jenkins

Robin Jenkins was born in Cambuslang in 1912 and attended Hamilton Academy and Glasgow University. He taught English in Glasgow and Dunoon. In 1956 he went to Afghanistan to teach then went to Spain and to what is now Malaysia before returning to Dunoon.

During World War II, Jenkins was a conscientious objector and worked in forestry. He himself wrote that he did ‘once gather cones, in an autumnal wood, in wartime’ and that, in his writing, he explores ‘the virtues and vices’ of people as well as good and evil itself.

Born and brought up in a mining village, he wrote, of the General Strike of 1926, that he saw: ‘miners armed with clubs ready to attack any bus driver who tried to drive through ... I have never forgotten the anger on those miners’ faces. They were men I had often seen sitting in the sun or playing cards ... I had been given a glimpse of the fury and resentment below the surface, not only in them but in all of us. I am sure that experience helped me to create the character of Duror.’

We should not, therefore, think of hatred as an alien concept or of Duror as a monster that we cannot understand. It is ‘fury and resentment’ that have partly made him what he is. The constriction of his life – his wife’s ailment and his mother-in-law’s dislike of him etc. – has turned him to hatred.



Novel Structure

The novel is structured in a fairly simple manner. There are three main events:

1. the deer hunt
2. the storm scene / beach hut
3. Roderick's entrapment in the tree.

1. The deer hunt is used by Duror to drive the brothers out of the wood by means of Calum's known hatred of cruelty. He calculates that Calum will do something which will offend Lady Runcie-Campbell for whose brother the deer hunt has been organised. Calum turns the deer hunt into a fiasco and Lady Runcie Campbell is furious. However, when Roderick intercedes on behalf of the brothers, and her brother remains neutral, and Tulloch is on their side, she changes her mind and lets them stay. Thus, Duror fails in his plot. A sub-plot used by Duror is his hint to Mrs Morton, the doctor, and Lady Runcie Campbell that Calum is a sexual pervert. This again does not succeed since by this time Duror's own behaviour has become eccentric.

2. The storm scene is important because it brings the brothers into direct confrontation with Lady Runcie-Campbell. This time, because of the heavy rain, thunder and lightning, they break into the beach hut on Neil's initiative, though the hut is forbidden territory to them. Lady Runcie-Campbell is again furious when she finds them there and orders them out. Roderick is silent when she asks him whether she has been unfair. Sheila, the daughter, is triumphant in the tradition of the class conscious aristocrat.

3. As a direct result of this incident Roderick leaves the house and climbs a tree from which he cannot get down. None of Lady Runcie-Campbell's servants is able to help so she sends peremptorily for the brothers. Neil refuses to come unless she herself pleads with them in person. The messenger, Graham, on his way back with the news of Neil's inflexible refusal, meets Duror whom he informs of Neil's attitude. Without a word, Duror sets off in the direction of the brothers. Lady Runcie-Campbell, hearing of the meeting with Duror as well as of Neil's ultimatum, decides to go and see the brothers herself. As she approaches she hears a gunshot. Duror has shot Calum and then killed himself. This brings the book to an end.

The structure is strengthened by the fact that the action is generally confined to the wood, except for the visit by the brothers to Lendrick. This little tragedy is set against the wider violence of the Second World War whose echoes we hear in the wood. Thus, we get the impression that because of the tragedy in the wood and of the war, man is violent. However, one of the functions of Calum is to show us by the goodness of his nature that there is an alternative.

Chapter summaries and timeline (Brief)

Chapter 1 - Neil and Calum introduced (rabbit scene). Duror introduced (obsessive watching of the men). **WEDNESDAY**

Chapter 2 - Duror's character developed (home life - nagging Mrs Lochie and invalid wife Peggy). Hatches a plan to rid of forest of brothers with deer drive. **WEDNESDAY**

Chapter 3 - Roderick introduced at cricket. Duror lies to Mrs Morton (housekeeper at big house) about hunchback Calum performing an obscene action in the forest. Mrs Morton gives Duror the chance to save himself from madness through an affair. Duror chooses not to. **THURSDAY**

Chapter 4 - Lady Runcie-Campbell introduced. Duror suggests using the cone gatherers as extra beaters at the deer drive for Captain Forgan. Deer hunt established. Duror's evil plan unfolds. **THURSDAY**

Chapter 5 - Duror delivers message of deer hunt duties to brothers in tree. Duror afraid of heights. Creation of tension and suspense. Neil is defiant – "We're free men". Duror's first thoughts of suicide. **FRIDAY**

Chapter 6 - Deer hunt. Erchie Graham introduced. Duror's madness develops - hallucinations. Neil and Calum participate despite earlier defiance. Calum spots deer, shouts warning, deer is shot. Calum grabs it around neck in despair. Duror throws him off and holding deer lovingly, cuts its throat. Lady Runcie-Campbell blames Calum but cannot decide if the brothers should stay on or not - leaves decision up to Duror. Duror's intentions more evil now - does not want them to go but wants to destroy them completely. **FRIDAY**

Chapter 7 - Saturday visit to Lendrick. Neil is bitter and rebellious after the hunt - going to get drunk. Everyone shows them respect.

SATURDAY

Chapter 8 - Roderick and Lady Runcie-Campbell argue over not offering the brothers a lift home in their car. Duror goes to Doctor – Duror healthy physically suggests problem may be sexual frustration and needs psychiatrist. Doctor offers three solutions to Duror’s condition: affair with another woman, religious acceptance or endurance. He has decided against an affair earlier, he does not believe in God and his ability to endure is about to snap.

SATURDAY

Chapter 9 - Duror again thinks of suicide. Duror visits pub and sees brothers being treated well. English soldier tells joke about a monkey and sees Calum and apologises. Duror is foiled - Good defeats Evil.

SATURDAY

Chapter 10 - Lady Runcie-Campbell’s dilemma (Christian values and upper class values). Roderick’s “pilgrimage” to cone gatherers with cake - sees Duror and cannot go to their hut - “Struggle between good and evil never rests”. **SUNDAY**

Chapter 11 - Storm breaks and brothers shelter in Lady Runcie Campbell’s beach hut. Ejected into middle of storm when Lady Runcie Campbell, Sheila and Roderick arrive Roderick objects to his mother’s treatment of them. **SUNDAY**

Chapter 12 - Neil is angry - asks Tulloch to take them back to Ardmore. **MONDAY**

Chapter 13 - Lady Runcie-Campbell lectures Roderick on his upper class duty - he goes off to see the brothers and apologies for his mother.

MONDAY

Chapter 14 - Tulloch meets Roderick - tells him not to bother the men. Duror brings the doll to Lady Runcie-Campbell. Realises he is ill –Tulloch worried. **MONDAY**

Chapter 15 - Roderick gets stuck up the tree gathering cones. Lady Runcie-Campbell feels it is the duty of the brothers to save him. **MONDAY**

Chapter 16 - Erchie goes for the brothers against his will. Neil refuses - “we are not her servants.” Erchie meets Duror - tells him about brothers. Duror stalks off enraged – snaps. Erchie returns and explains. Lady Runcie Campbell runs to find Calum murdered and Duror shoots himself. She kneels and weeps. **MONDAY**

Chapters 1-4

The brothers, Neil and Calum, are high in the trees gathering cones. The wood is to be cut down for the war and will be re-seeded with the cones. Calum is clearly completely at home in the trees whilst Neil is less assured. Calum helps his brother down. On the ground, Calum’s deformity makes him clumsy.

Calum is compassionate to animals, sensitive to their pain and has caused the brothers to fall foul of the keeper, Duror, because Calum has released rabbits from the keeper’s traps. Duror hates both brothers but especially Calum. He wants them out of the wood.

When the brothers come across a snared rabbit with its front paw broken, Calum is upset at the animal’s plight but cannot kill it – not even to put it out of its misery. Duror kills the rabbit with a single blow.

Duror, in ‘an icy sweat of hatred’ (p11) watches them and aims his gun at ‘the feeble-minded hunchback grovelling over the rabbit.’ (This is typical of the way he refers to Calum.) The wood which has been his refuge has become polluted for him by this ‘freak’. If he pulled the trigger, ‘the last obscene squeal of the killed dwarf would have been for him, he thought, release too, from the noose of disgust and despair drawn, these past days, so much

tighter.’ (p11) He says that they are defiling the area around their hut with refuse; he calls them sub-human; and he spies on them obsessively.

The dominant emotion of these early pages is Duror’s savage hatred of the brothers.

Duror meets the local doctor, Dr Matheson, who seems preoccupied by food or the lack of it due to wartime restrictions and rationing. However, the doctor is shrewd and suspects that Duror is hiding seething emotions behind an apparently calm surface.

Duror’s home-life is desperately unhappy. His wife, Peggy, is grossly fat and bed-ridden and, in her own way, deformed:

The sweetness of her youth still haunting amidst the great wobbling masses of pallid fat that composed her face added to her grotesqueness a pathos that often had visitors bursting into unexpected tears. (p25)
Her wheedling voice reminded him of the hunchback’s. (p25)

His hostile mother-in-law, Mrs Lochie, accuses him of speaking to his dogs more often than to her daughter.

Mrs Lochie tells him that Lady Runcie-Campbell, the mistress of the estate, wants a deer-hunt organised for her brother, Captain Forgan, who is home on leave. Duror sees this as an opportunity to get rid of the brothers. He concocts a plot to have them drafted in as beaters knowing that Calum is likely to disgrace himself in front of Lady Runcie-Campbell. After all, if he cannot bear to see a rabbit in a trap, how will he cope with the violence of a deer-hunt? His hope is that Lady Runcie-Campbell will dismiss them.

In chapter 3 we are introduced to Roderick, Lady Runcie-Campbell’s son, his sister, Sheila, and their uncle, Captain Forgan. Roderick appears to Duror to be rather clumsy.

Duror refers to the deer as ‘vermin’ that ‘must be kept down’ whilst Lady Runcie-Campbell considers them beautiful. However, she has no qualms about the deer-hunt itself.

In the exchange that takes place between Duror and Mrs Morton, the buxom cook-housekeeper, we gather that Duror is sexually repressed. Mrs Morton shows no hostility towards the brothers but Duror lies to her about them and suggests that Calum is a sexual pervert and is dangerous to young girls like Sheila. He says that he has seen Calum exposing himself in the woods. ‘A lie, he saw, could cause as much distortion as the truth.’ (p47)

Duror suggests to Lady Runcie-Campbell that the brothers should be used as beaters. Lady Runcie-Campbell asks Mr Tulloch, the head forester, for permission to use them and he agrees. However, he then phones again to tell her that Calum has scruples about being a beater. Lady Runcie-Campbell consults with Duror and insists that the brothers join the hunt. Later she proposes, as a compromise, that only Neil be used, but Duror will have none of it.

‘Are we being unfair to this poor wretch?’ she asked. ‘After all, he is deformed, and a simpleton... But he does seem to be abnormal. Heaven knows what may go on in his mind.’ (p61)

Chapters 5 – 9

Up in the trees the two brothers see Duror approaching. He begins to climb the ladder but is afraid and dizzy and has to give up. Duror is ashamed of his failure: ‘He had never dreamed that he would not be able to do once only what the hunchback did several times a day. It seemed to him that he must therefore be far more ill and decayed than he had thought.’ (p71)

He tells them that Lady Runcie-Campbell wants them as beaters in the deer-drive that afternoon. Neil is angry on Calum’s behalf: ‘Who does she think she is, that she orders us about like dogs? But if we were dogs, she’d treat us better than she does. Aren’t the kennels at the big house bigger than our hut? ... It was beneath her to give us the beach hut to live in although it’s to be pulled down after the war. Does she think she can treat us like dirt one day, and the next order us about?’ (p72)

Neil says they are ‘free men’ and feels that Tulloch has betrayed them. However, Calum says that he will do his best and shut his eyes if any deer are shot.

The minor characters that we meet here – Harry, the gardener apprentice, Betty, the gum-chewing land-girl, Erchie Graham, an old handyman, and Charlie, a labourer – lighten the mood of an otherwise sombre narrative with some humour.

Duror rises up near them shouting his wife’s name. He has been having a nightmare in which he saw Peggy being attacked by thrushes.

Graham tells the brothers to lie down when they hear the guns as one of the men taking part in the hunt is ‘as blind as a mole’. Duror’s appearance surprises them. His speech seems slurred and he has not shaved ...

‘he was like a man talking in his sleep ... his bleary anxious unshavenness was so unlike his customary smooth inscrutability. They thought he must be ill; but none cared to ask.’ (p81)

When the drive begins, Calum flees with the deer and flings himself on a wounded one as if to ‘comfort it’ while it drags him along and its blood stains him. Duror rushes on the deer and ‘savagely’ cuts its throat. ‘He seemed to be laughing in some sort of berserk joy.’ (p85)

From Tulloch’s perspective: ‘Duror had the appearance of a drunk man, unshaven, slack-mouthed, mumbling, rather glaikit.’ (p86) However, when Tulloch checks he can smell no whisky on him.

Duror seemed possessed by a fury to rise up and attack the hunchback (p87)
Lady Runcie-Campbell glanced towards the little cone-gatherer with aversion. (p87)

Duror collapses and begins to speak his wife’s name. Lady Runcie-Campbell tells him he is sick and should see a doctor.

Tulloch speaks to the brothers and says that although Calum is being blamed for the fiasco of the hunt, he will 'speak to the lady about this business' and tell her it is not fair to blame Calum.

Lady Runcie-Campbell is furious with the brothers and says they must go. Both her son, Roderick, and Tulloch defend them and Captain Forgan tells his sister that their behaviour has not offended him.

Duror felt tired, weak, hungry and sick... Yes, he wanted the cone-gatherers out of the wood ... But the hunchback in some dreadful way had become associated with him, in fact had become necessary to him. If the crooked little imbecile was sent back now to the forest at Ardmore, he would live happily there whilst here in the wood Duror's own torment continued. His going therefore must be a destruction, an agony, a crucifixion. (p95)

On Saturday the brothers go to the town of Lendrick by bus as usual. They are made welcome in the local shops and the café. However, the conscientious objectors who work in the forest are not so welcome in the town. Neil, to his own disgust, treats them in the same way as the townspeople do.

Neil had taken part in this ostracism, not from choice, but because by conforming he won comradeship for himself. (p108)

Lady Runcie-Campbell has made an appointment for Duror to see the doctor and runs him into Lendrick where she and her two children are going to the pictures. Roderick suggests offering Neil and Calum a lift back but his mother accuses him of being 'absurd' and Sheila agrees: 'rescuing her mother from the predicament of having to rebuke Roderick for naivety, and at the same time trying to preserve his charitable attitude towards his inferiors.' (p113)

'We've carried dogs in the car ... Human beings are more important than dogs.' (p113)

Duror brings the doctor a gift of venison with Lady Runcie-Campbell's compliments. Whilst there is nothing physically wrong with Duror, the doctor suspects that all is not well emotionally and mentally. We learn that Duror had only been married for three years and was only twenty eight when his wife became ill. As Duror is not a religious man, the doctor says he must simply 'endure' his burden. He suggests they drink to 'endurance'.

When Duror leaves the surgery he goes to the hotel bar. A number of local workers and the brothers are there. Four English soldiers come in and one tells a joke about a fighter pilot and an ape. When the soldier sees Calum he apologises profusely. After the brothers have left, one of the people in the pub says that he heard their mother committed suicide after Calum's birth and that she came from one of the islands, perhaps Mull. An old fisherman says: 'They are a pair of harmless decent men ... I think we should find something else to talk about.'

Chapters 10 – 12

Lady Runcie-Campbell visits Peggy who fawns on her because she is an aristocrat. We learn more about Lady Runcie-Campbell herself, her husband Colin who is unthinkingly anti-egalitarian, and her father who had been a judge, who believed in practical charity and who had taught his grandson, Roderick, to be friendly to his social inferiors.

On her return home Lady Runcie-Campbell tells Roderick he should go out in the sunshine. He says he might go to the beach to look at the seals and asks Mrs Morton for a cake to take with him. She warns him not to go near the cone-gatherers but he has lied about his intentions. He plans to visit the brothers. He considers the cake a 'symbol of reconciliation' (p144) and intends to offer them the bag he carries it in to gather their cones in.

Roderick thinks of his journey through the wood as a sort of pilgrimage through a realm of 'magic and terror'. (p143) When he approaches the hut he sees Duror spying there: 'the lurker ...the most evil presence of all' (p144) turns out to be Duror ... 'a barrier he could not pass' ...

Why did he hate the cone-gatherers and wish to drive them away?
Was it because they represented goodness, and himself evil?
... Roderick knew that the struggle between good and evil never rested in the world, and in every human being, it went on. The war was an enormous example. Good did not always win ...
in the bitter end ... good would remain in the field, victorious. (p145)

He wonders whether Duror has gone mad and thinks of him as evil. When Duror eventually leaves, Roderick abandons the cake to be eaten by insects. In Roderick's imagination he sees Duror killing the brothers then 'come stalking out to gloat over the corpses.' (p146)

P146 – 147 – Death, the war and the forest.

Roderick feels that Duror has somehow defiled the wood.

There is a storm while the brothers are in the trees. A light in the sky reminds Calum of heaven where he thinks his mother is. Neil, who is not religious, tells him: 'I don't think there's any heaven at all. It's just a name to please children.' (p151)

Neil is worried that if he is soaked his rheumatism may be 'so aggravated it might cripple him for ever' and if he was 'unable to walk, far less to climb, who would look after Calum with his derided body and his mind as foolish as a child's?' (p150) Neil decides they should go to the beach hut which is forbidden to them.

Inside, they light a fire and rummage among the old toys which once belonged to Lady Runcie-Campbell's children. Lady Runcie-Campbell and the children come into the hut to shelter from the rain. She is angry and tells them to leave. Sheila is mocking and pitiless but Roderick is silent as if disapproving of his mother's actions.

‘Surely you don’t think, Roderick, we should have asked them to share the hut with us?’ (p159)

Reconsidering the matter, now that her natural anger was past, she still saw the cone-gatherers’ intrusion as dishonest and insolent. (p160)

Tulloch learns from both Neil and Lady Runcie-Campbell what has happened and goes to see the brothers. From a distance, he catches sight of Neil on his knees conscientiously gathering beech seeds and suddenly realises how old he looks. Neil tells Tulloch that Lady Runcie-Campbell was more concerned about her dog than the two brothers. Tulloch decides he will take them from the wood and back to their previous employment, replacing them with two conscientious objectors. Neil volunteers to stay till the end of the week and is willing to stay longer if Lady Runcie-Campbell apologises to Calum and himself: ‘I mean no disrespect to you, Mr Tulloch ... but it would not be an apology at all if she said it to you.’ (p167)

The incident in the beach hut highlights again the vast distance between the classes – between privilege and deprivation. It also shows to the brothers that Tulloch is their best and most helpful friend.

Chapters 13 – 16

Lady Runcie-Campbell and Roderick argue about her attitude to the cone-gatherers. He accuses his mother of unfairness in sending them out of the hut: ‘There was room for us all, mother.’ (p172)

She tells him: ‘... in any way you like to look at them, they are our inferiors ... It is our duty to find an attitude to them ... which recognises that inferiority, but not offensively. The maintenance of society on a civilised basis depends upon us... You have no right any longer to such ignorance, Roderick. You are not an infant now, to whom the world is a fairy-tale. You are growing up in a world at war. How often has your father impresses on you the supreme importance of asserting your inherited position in that world?’ (p173)

She decides she is going to send the brothers away and phones Duror to get his co-operation in making the brothers leave. Mrs Lochie answers. She tells Lady Runcie-Campbell that Duror has brought home a naked doll.

Tulloch visits the brothers and informs them they can leave the wood shortly. He meets Roderick and tells him this. Roderick seems downcast by the news. Tulloch goes to see Lady Runcie-Campbell. He tells her he will assign conscientious objectors to take the brothers’ places. Lady Runcie-Campbell is unhappy as she sees conscientious objectors as cowards.

When Duror appears he produces a doll which he says he found in the brothers’ hut. Calum had taken the doll from the beach hut to repair its broken leg. Lady Runcie-Campbell tells Duror not to ‘make a filthy mystery out of it’ (p191) but is obviously affected by Duror’s insinuations as: ‘She held it as if it was visibly soiling her hand.’ However, Tulloch asks for it for his daughter, explains that Calum will have taken it to mend it and: ‘In his hand it was innocent again.’ (p192)

Duror continues to make 'the most loathsome accusations' against Calum. Lady Runcie-Campbell suggests he goes home but he says he has work to do.

Lady Runcie-Campbell and Tulloch discuss his behaviour and his hatred of Calum and put forward various theories.

Chapter 14 ends with Tulloch deciding not to tell the brothers that he might take them home the next day – just in case he cannot make it. He pauses twice as if in doubt about that decision. (p195)

In Chapter 15 Mrs Morton tells Lady Runcie-Campbell that Harry is claiming that Roderick is trapped high in a tree. Neither Harry nor Graham is able to climb high enough to rescue him. Lady Runcie-Campbell goes to the tree then sends Graham to fetch the two brothers.

Neil refuses to help: 'We are not her servants.' (p208) 'I expect nothing of her. Let her expect nothing of us.' (p209) 'If she wants our help, let her come and ask for it.' (p210)

On his way back, Graham meets Duror and tells him of his failed mission. Duror stalks off in the direction of the brothers without saying anything.

'To hell with you,' muttered Graham, and he gave the dead tree a kick. 'You always did think yourself a lord among men. Maybe what happened to your wife was a punishment for your pride ...' (p213)

Back at the tree, Graham tells Lady Runcie-Campbell what Neil said, and about Duror. She decides she will go and see the brothers. As she approaches she hears 'the report of a gun, followed by a scream, and then by the quickened wails of the gulls.' (p219)

She sees Duror walking away then comes upon Calum's body hanging in a tree having been shot by Duror. As she watches Neil trying to reach his brother she hears another shot.

She knew that somewhere, on her beloved promontory, Duror, with His face shattered and bloody, lay dead. (p219)

She hears Sheila shouting that Harry has helped Roderick down from the tree.

The book ends with Lady Runcie-Campbell going down on her knees near the blood and the cones which have fallen from the bag that Calum had been filling.

She could not pray, but she could weep; and as she wept pity,
And purified hope, and joy, welled up in her heart. (p220)

Structure

There are three main events: the deer hunt; the storm scene; and Roderick's entrapment in the tree.

The deer hunt is seen by Duror as an opportunity to get the brothers driven out of the wood. Calum does indeed turn the hunt into a fiasco but Duror's plot fails. (The sub-plot where Duror hints that Calum is a sexual pervert also fails as Duror's own behaviour has become eccentric and Tulloch attests to Calum's innocence.)

The beach hut is forbidden territory. Lady Runcie-Campbell is furious and Neil is indignant at their poor treatment.

As a direct result, Roderick climbs the tree but cannot get down.

Lady Runcie-Campbell is involved in all three incidents but Duror initiates the evil in the book by means of the deer hunt.

he action is generally confined to the wood, except for the visit to Lendrick. This makes it a tragedy in the classical Greek sense with a fixed locality, a short period of time, and a sense of inevitability.

The tragedy is set against the wider violence of World War II whose echoes we hear in the wood. Despite the violence in the wood **and** in the world, Calum shows us, by the goodness of his nature, that there is an alternative. Thus the ending is strangely hopeful.

The cones are symbols of regeneration. They are being gathered to re-seed the forest. When Roderick climbs the tree he carries a bag to collect cones, and at the end of the novel cones fall from Calum's bag.

Calum is compared to a monkey or ape (a reference to Darwinism, perhaps) but also to Christ – crucified in the tree.

Setting – Time – During WWII

- On the very first page we read of a destroyer and aeroplanes.
- The wood from the forest is being used for war purposes.
- Dr Matthews complains about rationing.
- In Duror's house the radio is on and Stalingrad is mentioned. The Russian city suffered a protracted and cruel siege by the Germans but did not surrender. Its heroic resistance marked a turning point in the war.
- Captain Forgan, Lady Runcie-Campbell's brother, is home on leave and will be in the African desert after his leave.
- There are conscientious objectors from Ardmore.
- There are English soldiers in the hotel bar.
- Tulloch's brother was killed at Dunkirk.
- Mrs Morton's son, Alec, is in the Merchant Navy.
- Duror is in the Home Guard.

- Duror refers to the fact that ‘the Germans were putting idiots and cripples to death in gas chambers’ (p15) referring to the Nazi idea of the Aryan as the perfect human being. In Lendrick the villagers and conscientious objectors accept Calum without hostility but the Nazis are exterminating the disabled.
- Lady Runcie-Campbell’s husband is away from the estate. He would have dealt with the brothers swiftly and without any ethical indecision.
- The war being fought against an unjust Nazi regime fuels Neil’s ideas of equality and independence from authority. He is much more rebellious than Calum and feels deeply the disparity between himself and Lady Runcie-Campbell. He feels that when the war is over a new social regime will be instituted which will be much fairer.

Characters

John Duror

In the opening chapters we learn about the main character Duror:

- he is a vindictive man
- he hates deformity
- he has a darker side to his character
- his mind is in turmoil
- he is emotionally damaged

Duror is a forester. His wife, Peggy, is bedridden and vastly obese. His mother-in-law does not think he pays enough attention to her daughter.

Duror has tried to get into the army, probably to escape his wretched home life. He hates the cone-gatherers. He especially hates Calum who removes animals from the traps he has set.

Since childhood Duror had been repelled by anything living that had an imperfection or deformity or lack: a cat with three legs had roused pity in others, but in him an ungovernable disgust. (p13)

His monstrously fat wife disgusts him too.

Tulloch examines the source of Duror’s hatred of Calum:

... why had Duror taken a spite against Calum? ... It could be the whole man’s disgust at the deformed man, unreasonable and instinctive: he had seen, for instance, crows mobbing one that had a broken wing. Or it could be that Duror resented their intrusion into the wood: again in nature animals had their own hunting grounds and chased off trespassers. Or it could be that the dislike was simply inexplicable... (p194)

Duror sets a trap for Calum in the form of the deer hunt and tells lies about him. Calum reminds him continually of his wife’s deformity. Though physically deformed, Calum’s face

is beautiful and his goodness shines through. Perhaps this more than anything is what Duror cannot bear – that Calum is not bitter about his deformity.

Duror is not a monster beyond our understanding. Our last glimpse of him is through Lady Runcie-Campbell's eyes:

He was walking away among the pine trees with so infinite a desolation in his every step that it was the memory of him ... which was to torment her sleep for months. (p219)

At this point Duror becomes a figure of evil. As the author describes Calum as Christ-like in death, we remember Judas who betrayed Christ then also went away by himself and committed suicide.

You may find the following phrases useful when describing Duror:

- As Calum represents good, Duror represents evil in the novel.
- When we meet him it is important that he is described as “hidden”
- An ever-present but invisible danger – like the war.
- Disgusted and obsessed by Calum.
- He is completely alone in his feelings towards the brothers:
 - “Duror was alone in his obsession. No one else found their presence obnoxious.”

- Duror's hatred for the weak is part of who he is.
 - “Since childhood Duror had been repelled by anything living that had an imperfection or deformity or lack.”

Potential reasons for his mental turmoil:

- hates Calum –good at carving, climbing trees
- good relationship with Neil
- deformed
- childhood hatred of deformity – reminded of this by Calum
- can't get into the army – psychologically emasculating
- job as a gamekeeper – death and decay
- contrast cone-gatherers –new life
- obese wife Peggy – contrast earlier marriage
- contrast Lady Runcie Campbell – beautiful, worshipped her
- he is sexually frustrated
- his mother-in-law
- no child – something which he regrets
- he has sleepless nights
- he has an unachievable dream

Duror's personality

- Duror's personality is very complex and deranged. It can range from acting like a civil, formal, respectable middle class man, who loves, cares, and connects with his dogs. To neglecting his wife, and shooting and killing an innocent person just because he has a deformity.
- Duror has a side to him that has an overwhelming capacity for evil. It is described in the book as 'A tree growing inside of him.' It was planted in him years ago, and has managed to grow, and take over more of Duror's body, soon this tree (his capacity for evil) will consume him, as it will be that large he will not be able to stop or control it.
- This side of him has a desire to cause trouble and harm, illegal or not, the urge is too powerful for him to make a consideration. "To feel his fist crashing against someone's face , hateful only for its human shape, would be a relief and compensation, whatever happened afterwards."
- "He could have named, item by item, leaf and fruit and branch, the overspreading tree of revulsion spreading in him; but he could not tell the force which made it grow, any more than he could have explained the life in himself, or in the dying rabbit, or in any of the trees about him" P. 9
- Duror has a huge capacity for evil. It keeps growing throughout the novel and leads to frequent inhumane acts that get more drastic throughout the book.

John Duror

Context (Understanding)	Textual Reference (Quote / Evidence)	Comments on Evidence (Analysis)
<p>During their first day in the wood, Calum had released two rabbits and Neil had predicted trouble. Duror, the big gamekeeper, was waiting for them outside their hut.</p>	<p><i>“..His rage had been quiet but intimidating.,he would seize the first chance to hound them out of the wood; they were in it he said sore against his wish”</i> (p5/6)</p>	<p>First impressions of Duror are of a physically strong, powerful character who seems quite evil and intolerant.</p>
<p>Duror is in the wood watching Calum’s attempt to rescue a dying rabbit.</p>	<p><i>“Hidden among the spruces...in an icy sweat of hatred, with his gun aimed all the time at the feeble minded hunchback grovelling over the rabbit.”</i> ” (p9)</p>	<p>The fact that Duror is hidden suggests a man who is symbolically hiding his true feelings, his real identity, but his actions suggest an intimidating and violent character.</p>
<p>Duror was the only one to find the presence of the cone-gatherers obnoxious.</p>	<p><i>“Since childhood Duror had been repelled by anything living that had an imperfection or deformity or lack:...and now in manhood, after the</i></p>	<p>Duror’s hatred of deformity is unexplained, but Calum serves as a reminder of his wife’s paralysis. The language suggests that Duror has kept his emotions inside</p>

	<p><i>silent tribulation of the past twenty years , an accumulated horror, which the arrival of these cone-gatherers seemed at last about to loose.”</i> (p10/11)</p>	<p>for so long that now the cone-gatherers are about to become a catalyst to provoke some violent reaction to his internal conflict.</p>
<p>Outside the cone-gatherers hut, Duror finds it difficult to accept that Calum, a hunchback should be skilled in carving. Calum reminds him of the situation in Germany.</p>	<p><i>“He had read that the Germans were putting idiots and cripples to death in gas chambers. Outwardly, as everybody expected, he condemned such barbarity; inwardly, ... he had profoundly approved.”</i> (p12)</p>	<p>Duror’s approval of the German’ actions suggest his deep seated revulsion to physical and mental disability. Again he conceals his true feelings. He is still able to recognise that they are socially unacceptable yet is unable to empathise with disability in any form. The reference to what the Germans were doing parallels his attitude to Calum and highlights the strength of his vindictiveness and his potential for real evil.</p>
<p>Dr Matheson stops to give Duror a lift. During their conversation he asks how Peggy is keeping.</p>	<p><i>“.....God knew how many inhibitions, repressions, and complexes were twisting and coiling there like the snakes of damnationand there</i></p>	<p><u>Analysis of situation</u> The doctor is quite astute when he imagines the dark thoughts lurking in Duror’s mind.</p>

	<i>could not be victory.”</i> (p16/17)	<u>Analysis of language</u> The imagery hints at Duror’s mind being full of evil, twisted thoughts, his repressed emotions causing him deep inner conflict. The reference to “victory” suggests that for Duror, his personal battle will have tragic outcomes.
Duror’s mother-in-law, who looks after Peggy, his wife, blames Duror to some extent for her daughter’s present state.	<i>“He did not deny her insinuation, nor did he try to explain to her that love itself could become paralysed.”</i> (p20)	Mrs Lochie condemned Duror for Peggy’s situation and constantly criticised him as if she blamed him. Although Peggy is the one who is physically paralysed, ironically it is Duror who is emotionally paralysed.
Duror eventually comes to his bedroom and Mrs Lochie goads him.	<i>“he felt as terrified and desolate as an infant separated from his mother in a crowd.”</i> (p28)	Duror’s life at this stage is filled with loss and emptiness. He has “lost” his wife and happiness. However the simile suggests that though Duror appears strong, unmoved and able to cope with his situation, inside he is filled with fear and loneliness.

Duror's Lies

In the novel we learn about the development of Duror's evil:

- he lies and keeps his emotions inside
- he manipulates Mrs Morton
- he lied to Lady Runcie Campbell
- he lied to Dr Matheson
- he made accusations against the cone-gatherers to try to drive them out of the wood

Context (Understanding)	Textual Reference (Quote / Evidence)	Comments on Evidence (Analysis)
<p>Outside the cone-gatherers hut, Duror finds it difficult to accept that Calum, a hunchback should be skilled in carving. Seeing Calum reminds him of the situation in Germany.</p>	<p><i>“He had read that the Germans were putting idiots and cripples to death in gas chambers. Outwardly, as everybody expected, he condemned such barbarity; inwardly, ...he had profoundly approved.” (p12)</i></p>	<p>This shows that although outwardly Duror appears to conform, he is actually lying in his condemnation of the war. This reveals a controlled character who has the ability to hide his true feelings, covering his inherent evil.</p>
<p>Duror finds Mrs Morton, the housekeeper, alone in the kitchen. He tells her that he saw Calum exposing himself in the woods.</p>	<p><i>“He described it briefly, enjoying her fascinated embarrassment.” (p38)</i></p>	<p>Duror deliberately lies to Mrs Morton to manipulate her into spreading a rumour about Calum to sow the seed of doubt about the cone-gatherers. The fact that Duror “enjoyed” her</p>

		reaction hints at his perverted nature.
Duror had dissuaded lady Runcie Campbell from giving the cone-gatherers the beach hut. She then asked what their hut was like.	<i>“ He had had to lie.” (p41)</i>	This shows that Duror chooses to use his power for evil rather than good. He betrays L R C trust in him in manipulating her in this way.
After his behaviour at the deer drive Duror visited the doctor. He lied about what he suspected Calum of doing in the woods.	<i>“But not many of us commit abominations with ourselves in public,..” (p98)</i>	Dr Matheson is not so easily taken in by Duror. He has more insight into Duror’s life and character, perhaps by virtue of his profession. But it is clear that Duror is trying his best to vilify Calum revealing the true depth of his evil nature.
Duror appears at the house when Lady Runcie Campbell is having a discussion with Mr Tulloch. He produces Sheila’s doll from his pocket and informs them he found it in Calum’s hut, in his bed. Duror makes suggestions about Calum.	<i>“the most loathsome accusations against the little cone-gatherer.” (p156)</i>	Duror attempts to arouse feelings of disgust and revulsion against Calum in the hope of having him removed from the wood. His incoherent suggestions make Lady Runcie Campbell at last realise that Duror is mentally unstable.

<p>Mr Tulloch assures Lady Runcie Campbell that Calum's intention was to carve a new leg for the doll, nothing more sinister.</p>	<p><i>What he said about Calum were lies.” (p158)</i></p>	<p>Mr Tulloch's viewpoint represents common sense and a lack of prejudice. He cannot quite explain Duror's reasons for making such damaging accusations yet he is able to reason that his dislike of Calum could simply be inexplicable.</p>
---	---	--

Duror's Character Quotations

1. “Stood Duror the gamekeeper, in an icy sweat of hatred, with his gun aimed all the time at the feebleminded hunchback grovelling over a rabbit” (page 9) - *Shows sick mindedness; Foreshadows the finale – Calum's death; Introduces the theme of Good vs. Evil and conflict of personalities*
2. “Every minute had been purgatory of humiliation: it was as if he were in their service” (page 9) – *Shows discontent at the cone gatherers presence*
3. “Why do you call him *my* hunchback, doctor?” (page 98) – *Shows Duror's unhappiness of being associated with the hunchback*
4. “He's got a smile for every limping dog”
“He's got none for me” (page 99)
5. “She noticed the gamekeeper was again unkempt” (page 155)
6. “For many years his life had been stunted, misshapen, obscene, and hideous; and this misbegotten creature was its personification” (page 73)
7. “His going therefore must be a destruction, an agony, a crucifixion” (page 78)
8. “She knew that somewhere, on her beloved promontory, Duror, with his face shattered and bloody, lay dead” (page 181)
9. “From amongst the rhododendrons came a shout of anguish: “Peggy! Peggy!” (page 63)
10. “I'm sorry I'm late, my lady,’ he said, ‘Ever since the storm yesterday my wife's been badly upset... he held out his own, and could not still its shaking” (page 155)

Calum

In the opening chapter we learn about the character Calum:

- he is at one with nature
- he sees goodness in all things
- he realises life and death are linked
- he is afraid of Duror

Context (Understanding)	Textual Reference (Quote / Evidence)	Comments on Evidence (Analysis)
Neil and Calum were sitting in the dark at the top of a tree.	<i>“Calum fancied he was resting in the heart of an enormous flower.”</i> (p2)	Calum becomes one with nature. Resting in the "flower", he is like a cherub on a cloud; and yet he is deformed. The result is an emphasis on his inner goodness.
Calum watches an owl and imagines he is flying and swooping to catch his victim.	<i>“The owl could not be blamed; it lived according to its nature; but its victim must be pitied.....This was the terrifying mystery, why creatures he loved should kill one another.”</i> (p3)	Calum’s inability to understand fully the natural world, where life and death are inextricably linked, is evident. He is full of pity for all natural creatures symbolising good.
.Neil is voicing his discontent at the fact	<i>“You’re better and wiser than any of them.”</i> (p4)	Neil’s assessment of

<p>that they are living in a little hut while the big house on the estate lies almost empty; Calum likes their tiny hut and the space in the trees.</p>		<p>Calum's character emphasises Calum's ability to see good in all things. He feels neither jealousy nor resentment.</p>
<p>Calum reacts to the presence of Duror outside their hut.</p>	<p><i>Calum, demoralised as always by hatred, had cowered against the hut hiding his face.” (p5)</i></p>	<p>Calum's fear of Duror and his desire not to look at him reflects the power of an evil presence over good, personified by Calum.</p>
<p>Calum moaned in dismay at this dilemma of either displeasing his brother or forsaking a hurt creature.</p>	<p><i>“He remembered his solemn promise; he remembered too the cold hatred of the gamekeeper.”(p6)</i></p>	<p>Calum's natural instinct is to do good but the power of evil symbolised by Duror is ever present.</p>
<p>The narrator describes the paradoxical nature of Calum's appearance.</p>	<p><i>“..on the misshapen lump of his body sat a face so beautiful and guileless as to be a diabolical joke.” (p10)</i></p>	<p>The contrast between Calum's physical appearance and his inner goodness is evident. His inner goodness is not immediately evident because of his freakish appearance.</p>

		The writer's use of the words "diabolical joke" suggests that there are malevolent and contradictory forces at work in nature – reinforced in the rest of the novel.
Duror has been watching Calum's skill at carving a squirrel.	<i>"To Duror it had been the final defeat that such ability should be in a half-man, a freak, an imbecile. (p12)</i>	It is evident that Calum was capable of talents not associated with deformity. Despite his flaws Calum reflects positive inner peace. In addition Duror's inability to make sense of Calum's skill reflects his own inner confusion; his anger suggests his personal involvement. "the final defeat" suggests a sense of insult which is emotional rather than rational.

Calum is the innocent victim of Duror's hatred. Apart from his angelic face, he is physically ugly. We are told he 'looks like a monkey' (p78) and through Duror's eyes he is described: '... shuffling along, his hands close to the ground, his head without a neck ... his shoulders humped so grotesquely'. (p78)

Betty says, 'He 'fair gie's me the creeps' and Harry says that 'a jungle picture' he once saw of a 'pet ape' on 'a silver chain ... looked just like him'. (p79)

Graham, however, snarls at them saying, 'The man's working for his keep' and Charlie 'studied the cone-gatherers without bias.' (p79)

When the English soldier tells the story about the fighter pilot and the ape many people in the pub are embarrassed as they 'had already associated the little hunchback with the monkey in the silly story.' (p132)

The contrast between his angelic face and grotesque body particularly angers and agitates Duror.

He seems perfectly at home in the trees whereas Neil has to be helped down. It is on the ground that Calum stumbles.

He identifies himself with animals and suffers when they do. This is instinctive rather than due to any abstract ideas of right and wrong or any notion – as held by Neil – of the unfairness of the world.

He is friendly to the conscientious objectors and is not influenced, as Neil is, by the prejudices of the society around him. It is his absolute goodness that Duror cannot tolerate.

Calum is frightened by the storm. He sees a light in the sky which he thinks is from heaven (p149 – 151) and he believes he saw his mother – ‘Maybe I did see her, Neil,’ he said shyly. (p151)

He is like a child and believes the stories his brother told him: ‘It’s not your fault, Calum. I told you lies. I don’t think there’s any heaven at all. It’s just a name to please children.’ (p151)

Calum does not want to go to the beach hut because they are ‘not allowed’ (p151) and they had ‘promised’ not to. He tells Neil that, ‘The lady will be angry again.’ (p152) He is also anxious that the cones will get wet. Neil ‘knew that this saving of the cones was his brother’s act of atonement for entering the forbidden beach hut.’ (p153) He tells Calum: ‘... They laughed at you in the pub, Calum, and I was angry at you for giving them the chance to laugh. But don’t change. Keep being yourself. You’re better than all of us.’

In the hut, Calum delights in the children’s paintings and toys and wants to mend the broken doll.

When Duror shoots Calum he is found by Lady Runcie-Campbell hanging from the tree: ‘though he smiles, he was dead.’ (p219) Calum is innocent and defenceless and relies on his brother to steer him through the complex world they (and we) live in.

Calum Quotations

“Through he smiled, he was dead. From his bag dropped a cone, and then another. There might have been more, but other drops... distracted her; these were blood.” - *Conveys that he is peaceful in death.*

“Stood Duror the gamekeeper, in an icy sweat of hatred, with his gun aimed all the time at the feeble-minded hunchback.” - *Conveys his obsessive hatred of Calum*

“Calum was not reassured; he still whimpered and cowered like a dog in the presence of someone who had been cruel to it.” - *Calum unconsciously realises the extent of Durors hatred towards him*

“With moans and yelps at lamentation like an animal he was struggling along that branch to try and reach him.” - *Neil's class conflict leads to his brother's death.*

“He bent down to rescue it, he had not decided in terms of right and wrong, humanity and cruelty; he had merely yielded to instinct.” - *Highlights his unquestionable love for all things living*

“Their hut which to him, reminded a symbol of humiliation.” - *Size of hut represents class division.*

“‘Would it be all right if I took it away and put a leg on it?’ asked Calum eagerly. ‘I would bring it back.’” - *Calums childlike kindness.*

Can you add any more?

Neil

Neil is more worldly-wise than his brother and is aware of class differences. When Calum released the rabbits from the snares 'Neil had been angry and had prophesised trouble'. (p7)

'Yonder's a house with fifty rooms,' went on Neil, 'every one of them three times the size of our hut, and nearly all of them empty.' (p4)
'But we couldn't live in the big house, Neil.'
'Why couldn't we? We're human beings just like them. We need space to live and breathe in.'
'We get lots of space in the trees, Neil, and on the hills.'
'Like birds and animals, you mean?'
'We're just simple folk, Neil. I want us just to be simple folk.'
Neil yielded to the appeal in his brother's voice, and also to the uselessness of complaint. (p4)

Unlike Calum he is aware of the wider world beyond the wood and thinks the war is being fought for equality and improvement in the life of the ordinary individual. He has a strong sense of justice and fairness.

'there's no sense in being sorry for trees ... when there are more men than trees being struck down ... Trees can be replaced in time ... Can you replace dead men?' (p5)

He has to think of the future and worries about what will happen to Calum if he dies or if he has an accident.

To look after his brother, he had never got married, though once he had come very near it: that memory often revived to turn his heart melancholy. (p5)

'I'm responsible for him, Mr Tulloch.' (p163)

He believes that Lady Runcie-Campbell prefers her animals to them. Whilst this may not be true of Lady Runcie-Campbell, Sheila says, 'Monty's more important to me than they are.' (p114) Her brother, Roderick, thinks that that is 'wicked' of her. (Neil later acknowledges Roderick's 'genuine friendliness'. (p155))

Neil is not as open to the conscientious objectors as Calum is and knows that he is wrong not to speak in defence of men he has worked beside. (p109)

Neil does not believe in heaven or a merciful God.

In the beach hut Neil keeps his head down when Lady Runcie-Campbell remonstrates with him - 'A lifetime of frightened submissiveness held it down' (p157) – but he defies her when Roderick is trapped in the tree.

At the end of the novel Lady Runcie-Campbell describes how, 'With moans and yelps of lamentation like an animal his brother was struggling along that branch to try and reach him.' (p219) Neil's future looks very bleak.

Lady Elizabeth Runcie-Campbell

Lady Runcie-Campbell is an aristocrat with a conscience. However, she also believes that her position makes her superior to ordinary men and women. She is a Christian. Her father was a judge.

She is very beautiful.

We learn that she would have given the brothers the beach hut to stay in 'if Duror had not dissuaded her; and she had not forgotten to ask him afterwards what their hut was like. He had had to lie.' (p51)

She cannot understand Calum's excessive sensitivity towards the deer's plight. She does wonder whether she is being unfair but is once again swayed by Duror and is determined not to let them dictate to her.

She wants the brothers removed but lets them stay after Tulloch and Roderick intervene on the brothers' behalf.

She does not give the brothers a lift back from Lendrick.

As a Christian, Lady Runcie-Campbell feels that she ought to visit Duror's wife, Peggy, but she finds the visits 'degrading' (p134). And in spite of her supposed Christianity, she is very angry when she finds the brothers sheltering from the storm in the beach hut and turns them out. She needs to protect Roderick from pneumonia but believes the brothers, because of their job, should be quite used to the rain.

'Your father's right. After this war, the lower orders are going to be frightfully presumptuous' (p158)

she ...saw the cone-gatherers' intrusion as dishonest and insolent ... her son's concern on their behalf was in some disquieting way unhealthy. (p160)

She tells Roderick that his sister 'has a far more intelligent and mature attitude towards people below us in the social scale'. (p160) A proper distance must be maintained.

When Roderick is stuck in the tree she does not panic but acts calmly and decisively. However, she turns on Harry when she thinks he has implied that her son is a coward. Whilst she does not understand Neil's demand that she come personally, she does go.

The novel ends with her on her knees. We might interpret this as meaning that she has learned a lesson about rank and Christianity.

In her defence, Lady Runcie-Campbell is on her own - her husband is involved in the war and her father is dead - and has to make decisions alone. She will seek counsel from others and is not inflexible - she will change her mind. It is unfortunate that the person she turns to for advice more often than anyone else is Duror who hates the brothers.

Roderick

When we first see Roderick he is playing cricket with his uncle. He 'was useless at games as far as Duror could judge'. (p36). Two years older than his sister, Sheila, 'from birth he had been weak in body and complicated in mind ... He ... now was tutored at home. He had never liked Duror, and when little had not hesitated to say so.' (p37) When he was four he saw Duror 'with a dead roe deer, and for years afterwards had disliked him.' (p53)

Nevertheless, he wishes to take part in the deer hunt, he perseveres in games, and he admires the daring agility of the cone-gatherers. He has learned a sense of fairness and justice from his grandfather, the judge. He accuses his mother of being unfair when she wishes to send the brothers away after the deer hunt as Calum had not wanted to take part in the first place; he wants to give the brothers a lift home from Lendrick; and he is ominously silent when Lady Runcie-Campbell sends the brothers out of the beach hut.

His grandfather had loved him and encouraged his 'tenderness and sincerity' (p137) towards his social inferiors.

He imagines the wood to be a wood from the legends of King Arthur as he carries a cake as 'reparation' for what happened in the beach hut. However, he does not give the cake to the brothers as Duror is there watching them.

He climbs the tree to emulate the brothers but it could also be that the events on the ground are confusing and unfair and he is seeking refuge. Perhaps that is why he does not answer his mother when she shouts up to him.

He is the opposite of his sister who is an aristocratic and unfeeling snob.

Dr Matheson

Dr Matheson is rather selfish but is also shrewd. He knows that Duror's 'illness' is mental rather than physical. From the doctor we learn that Duror has had to endure his wife's infirmity for a long time and had only three years of happy married life.

Mrs Lochie

Duror's mother-in-law looks after Peggy and the house in Duror's absence. She worries about what will happen to her daughter if anything happens to her. She does not seem to like Duror very much and tells Lady Runcie-Campbell about the doll with 'not ... a stitch on' (p179) to get him into trouble.

Her expression is one of 'dour resoluteness' (p24) and her life seems dull. She is determined not to let her daughter's illness 'conquer her' but 'never would she forgive whoever was responsible for that misfortune'.

Even in sleep her features did not relax, as if God too was a suspect, not to be trusted. (p24)

Captain Forgan

Lady Runcie-Campbell's brother is a typical upper-class type. He is thirty-five and a lawyer in peace-time. We first encounter him playing cricket with Roderick. He says of Calum: 'I bear the poor fellow no ill will.' (p96)

Sheila

Sheila is the hard face of the upper-class. She is spoiled, mocking and without compassion. She means it when she says her dog, Monty, is more important to her than the brothers. She laughs at Calum when he tries to put the wrong hand into his jacket sleeve and she draws attention to the holes in his pullover – 'Did you see the holes in the little one's pullover?' (p157/8)

Peggy Duror

'The sweetness of her youth' was 'still haunting amidst the great wobbling masses of pallid fat that composed her face'. (p25) '...in the first two years of their marriage, she had loved to race with him hand-in-hand over moor and field' but now she is bed-bound. She is miserable, her life is tedious and Duror no longer loves her.

Mrs Morton

She is the housekeeper at the Big House. She is a sensible, cheerful buxom widow (p41). She visits Peggy regularly and thinks Duror is 'a more distinguished man than Sir Colin himself' (p43) and would marry him if he were freed by Peggy's death, to marry again.

Duror lies to her about Calum's supposed indecency (p47) but she tells him not to 'become embittered'. (p48)

Mr Tulloch

Tulloch is the forester at Ardmore where the brothers usually work. He understands Calum and the brothers are excluded from deer hunts at Ardmore. He tries to be fair to Lady Runcie-Campbell but decides to take the brothers back to Ardmore. His sympathy and compassion may arise from his grief at losing his brother at Dunkirk. He does not dislike the conscientious objectors and even tries to help them wash the graffiti from their huts. He recognises Duror's hatred and tries to find an explanation for it.

Minor Characters

Harry, Graham and Betty represent ordinary human beings. They serve to lighten the action by humour.

The Moral Question – Good v Evil

The big question of the novel is: Why does Duror hate Calum?

There are a number of reasons that might be put forward:

- Calum releases rabbits from Duror's traps.
- Duror's instinctive hatred of a 'freak' or someone/something different or unnatural.
- Calum's ugly body (and sweet face) reminds him of his wife.

More than that perhaps, Duror represents the forces of evil – the serpent/devil in the Garden of Eden - whilst Calum represents innocence.

The setting of World War Two adds another dimension. In Nazi Germany Calum would have been persecuted and destroyed. There is evil and danger in the wood – evil in the outside world is represented by the war.

Calum is trusting which leaves him open to abuse by Duror who lies about him and deliberately involves him in the deer hunt.

Religion

The idyllic nature of the wood reminds us of the Garden of Eden; the beach hut – no room at the inn; 'Am I my brother's keeper?' – a reference to Neil and Calum; the crucifixion – a death that brings hope; the cones and Calum's blood at the end are symbols of renewal and regeneration.

There are also direct references to God throughout the novel.

- Mrs Lochie, speaking to Duror, refutes Mary Black's claims that what happened to Peggy is a 'punishment inflicted by God' '... But I told her I'd question God to his very face; I'd ask him what right had even He to punish the innocent.' (p28/9)
- Duror is not religious – perhaps because of his wife's deformity?
- Neil does not believe in heaven or the afterlife.
- Calum thinks he sees heaven and his dead mother during the storm.
- Mrs Morton says of Calum; '...the small one's not as God meant a man to be; but that's God's business, not ours' (p46)
- Later, however, she says to Roderick: 'No harm will come to you, laddie ... if God looks after His own. If,' she added, turning away. (p141)
- Lady Runcie-Campbell struggles between her ideas of rank and her Christianity. She puts the brothers out of the hut and commands them to come and rescue her son. Only at the end does she break free from her sense of rank in order to save her son.
- When Tulloch says he can 'find no fault in them' (p94) after the deer hunt it echoes Pilot's words about Christ – 'I find no fault in Him.'
- Lady Runcie-Campbell's father was a Christian but was not over fond of the Church. Her husband, Colin, is a Christian only because as laird he has to set a good example.

Class

Class is one of the themes of the book. The upper-classes are represented by the absentee laird, Sir Colin, his wife, her father, her brother, Captain Forgan, and her children. Dr Matheson is middle-class and the rest are lower-class.

The deer hunt is an upper-class pursuit. Roderick would normally be at public school but is considered too delicate and is being tutored at home instead. As laird, Sir Colin has a family enclosure in the local church. He considers ordinary people to be ‘still brutes under the skin ... It’s taken centuries of breeding to produce our kind ... after the war they’ll be trying to drag us down to their level. It’s up to us to see they don’t manage it.’ (p198) He believes that even in heaven ‘there must be rank as on earth.’ (p136) His daughter, Sheila, seems very close to him in ideas. He sees war as a threat to the class structure whereas Neil sees it as hope for the common man. (‘Didn’t someone say on the wireless that in war-time everybody’s equal?’ (p154))

Whilst Lady Runcie-Campbell does go to the cone-gatherers at the end and the novel concludes with her on her knees, through the rest of the book her ideas of rank prevail. However, she is acting on behalf of her husband. She has to make the kind of decisions on her own that he would have made without hesitation and without any compassion or thought for the brothers **and** she does doubt some of her actions. Is the author questioning whether rank and Christianity can ever be reconciled?

Nature

With the setting being a wood, the author can write about nature and the links between man and nature in a way that gives depth to the novel.

Nature can be beautiful and also cruel. Animals prey on each other but man adds to the cruelty by killing for sport – the deer hunt – and by leaving animals to suffer – the rabbit in the trap.

Duror is cruel and his dogs are afraid of him: ‘they ... mistrusted him’ and he even fantasised about ‘thrashing them till their noses and eyes dripped faithful blood’. (p34)

Calum is at home in the wood but suffers with the suffering animals; Neil is worried that he may have an accident in the wood and be unable to look after Calum; the storm causes trouble for the brothers when they break into the beach hut; Duror has a nightmare of his wife being attacked by thrushes (p77); Roderick thinks of the wood as an enchanted but also frightening place.

People are compared to animals:

- Calum is compared to a monkey or ape.
- Duror refers to the doctor as ‘a greedy old pig’. (p22)
- Roderick is described as having ‘a startled deer’s eyes and hare’s teeth’. (p37)
- Lady Runcie-Campbell tells Tulloch the brothers ‘are being as discreet as squirrels’. (p57)
- Calum is like a ‘dog in the presence of someone who has been cruel to it’. (p67)
- Neil objects to the brothers being treated like ‘dogs’. (p72)
- Betty’s laughter is compared to a ‘hyena’s’. (p83)

- After the deer hunt, Neil tells Calum ‘they were to be like insects, not bees or ants which could sting and bite, but tiny flies which could do no harm since there was nothing in creation so feeble as not to be able to molest them.’ (p98/9)
- The doctor tells Duror he is ‘as sound as an ox’. (p121)

Man is both part of nature and set apart from it. Calum carves representations of animals and finds man’s cruelty tormenting. (Human beings are the cruellest of all animals.) He is defenceless against such cruelty and would not survive long without Neil to protect him.

The cones are a powerful symbol representing the resurrection of the wood after the war is over. Look at the way Calum insists on protecting the cones from the storm.

Outside the wood men are fighting and killing each other on a huge scale – even the trees are victims of the war.

The Ending

The death of Calum (resolution)

The final and climactic scene in the novel is a dramatic one. Duror, now almost completely insane and angered even more by Neil’s refusal to help Roderick, murders Calum in the tree, thus destroying the freak that had tormented him.

He is left with so infinite a desolation that he takes his own life. It is that vision of Duror, utterly broken and falling into the abyss, that is to haunt Lady Runcie-Campbell for months. The grief that Duror caused continues in Neil’s moans and yelps of lamentation, but at the same time there is hope in the figure of the upper class Lady on her knees as if begging forgiveness. Calum’s death gives the other characters a reason to regret, to remember and to change.

Where does the hope and joy mentioned in the final sentence come from? To understand the ending we need to think of Calum as a symbol of good – he is innocent, pure, without malice or bitterness. His death is a beginning and promise of renewal, not an end. However, Calum is not Christ; he is a deformed human being, not the Son of God.

Duror’s suicide is not just about his guilt over Calum’s death but a realisation that Calum’s death has not ended his own suffering – his life will continue to be wretched and miserable.

The novel has been likened to a **fable** – a story about animals with a moral at the end. The structure of the novel is fairly simple. It is set – for the most part – in a wood and has a small number of characters of importance. A wood is also a place where we might easily get lost, where the way is not clear. We have seen that the human characters are often compared to animals.

Some might find the end of the novel puzzling. Calum has been killed and Duror has committed suicide. Yet Lady Runcie-Campbell, while kneeling down among the blood and the spilt cones, wept, ‘and as he wept in pity, and purified hope, and joy welled up in her heart.’ Where does this hope come from, or is this joy? It cannot surely come from the death of Calum. After all, his life has not been a fortunate one, though he has not shown bitterness.

The case is rather complicated and to understand it we must think of Calum not simply as a person but as a symbol. What, therefore, does Calum symbolise in the book? In the first place, he seems to symbolise goodness. Duror sees him as partly monstrous but also having a beautiful angelic face. His brother, Neil, thinks that he is the best of human beings. He seems entirely innocent and without malice. He, therefore, appears a Christ-like figure. Christ, too, was innocent, without malice and without bitterness. Christ, too, did not repel violence with more violence. Christ in spite of this was crucified.

And Calum's position in the tree as described at the end looks like a crucifixion. Christ's crucifixion was not an end but a beginning. By means of it, men and women were forgiven for their sins. His crucifixion was a symbol of hope. He paid for the sins of Human beings with his own death. It must be that Lady Runcie-Campbell saw Calum not as a simple human being but as a Christ-like symbol and this explains her 'hope' and 'joy'.

Whether, however, Calum can take on himself the weight of a Christ is dubious. After all he is not, as Christ was, the Son of God. Unlike Christ, he was a human being with disabilities. Nor can Duror be simply seen as a Judas. After all, Judas was one of Christ's disciples and Duror hated Calum for the beginning. It is also possible that it was not just Calum's death that made Duror kill himself: his life, such as it was, was wretched and miserable.

It is for readers to make their own mind up about the ending. It may be that for some readers the ending will appear entirely satisfactory and a solution to the events that have been preceded it. Or is the author perhaps saying that Calum's death has not been in vain since it has so profoundly affected Lady Runcie-Campbell? One of the pleasures of reading good novels is that these questions can be argued. There is no set answer as in mathematics and each reader can bring to the book his or her knowledge and experience.

Literary Techniques in the novel

Symbolism

Symbolism is when an object, an image, a word, a person, a colour or a setting represents ideas beyond what it is.

Characters

The characters can be viewed as characters or they can be viewed as symbols. In viewing them as symbols, we can see that Lady Runcie-Campbell represents the upper classes and their interests. Calum represents the poor and the weak. Neil represents the self-sacrifice and care of the people, and Duror represents evil? Or the type of person who sides with the ruling class so he can have a higher standing than ordinary people. There are individual instances of symbolism with the characters, for instance, Lady Runcie-Campbell having Calum's blood on her hands after he is shot.

The storm

The storm symbolises the conflict in human relations and the tragedy that is about to unfold. By throwing the brothers out into the storm, Lady Runcie-Campbell is metaphorically throwing them out into the 'storm' of Duror's emotions - his anger and hatred.

The brothers' hut

The hut where the brothers have to live is not fit for human habitation. As itinerant workers, they cannot afford to own property and they have to make do with what the landowner offers. They are offered a hut fit for animals which shows the perception the landed class have of itinerant workers who work on their land.

The woods

The woods have a symbolic meaning for the characters. To Neil and Calum they are not just a place of employment, but a place of sanctity and replenishment. They provide refuge and instil hope, a sort of paradise on earth. To Duror, the woods are a place of evil, defiled by Calum especially, and they need to be cleansed. To Lady Runcie-Campbell their destruction (and selling) is a money-making opportunity and a cause for new hope.

Animals

The treatment of animals recurs throughout the novel. Calum shows the caring side of humanity, nature and life by his love of animals. The hunt of the deer shows the military, cruel side of life (note the military language used in the chapter).