

# TEACHERS' NOTES

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## Gool Maurice Gee

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### For the teacher

*Gool* by Maurice Gee is the sequel to *Salt*. At the end of *Salt*, Hari and Pearl, having rid the world of the radioactive 'salt', have settled down to a life of calm and peace far away from the turmoil of their childhood. The city is ruled by Clerk and the outlying burrows are controlled by Keech; both cruel and evil men at war with each other. Hari and Pearl now have four children, Xantee, Lo, Blossom and Hubert, and their family live in harmony with a number of other families. However, the evil of the men fighting for control of the world is still a threat to the future and this evil is about to enter into the lives of Hari and Pearl again, enveloping their children in a quest as difficult as the one that brought their own lives together all those years ago.

### Background to the world of *Gool*

Long centuries before Company came, life was good. The city was called Belong and its people were known as the Belongers. Ships went out from Freeport far into the west and north to harvest the seas. The lands stretched south and west, grain fields and farms, as far as men had ever travelled – to the jungles and the deserts that lay beyond. Men came from distant countries with their caravans and ships to trade, bringing goods and taking goods. The Belongers were happy.

And then one day a black ship came with white sails and a red open hand marked on its flag. Its name was Open Hand and it came from a place called Company. That day slavery began, although all was calm and friendly at first. Company took small steps at first and the Belongers were greedy because Company's trading ships brought so many good things. But somehow, those who had been young when the first ship arrived found that, as old men and women, they were no longer citizens of Belong but had become servants of Company. The city grew and Company set up warehouse and granaries and factories. Then Company needed barracks for its soldiers to protect its property – the Belongers allowed it. Soon the Belongers' ships were not allowed to sail, only the Company's. Company took over the farms, and managers and clerks from the Company ran everything including the Government. Its families settled the land and its rich built mansions on the cliffs.

Finally, there was a revolt and Company was thrown out. But the battles that followed were just as bitter, and by the time *Gool* opens, the city is ruled by the 'Clerk' and the surrounding 'burrows' are ruled by Kreech, both madmen.

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## Characters

- Hari and Pearl; their children, Xantee, Lo, Blossom and Hubert
- Tealeaf (Pearl's maid from her childhood)
- Tilly (who helped Hari and Pearl escape the city) and her son, Duro
- Sal and Mond and Karl (all children of families living alongside Hari and Pearl)
- Keech (ruler of the burrows) and his enemy, the Clerk (ruler of the city)
- Tarl (Hari's father whose life was saved during Hari and Pearl's quest for the salt).

## Close reading

### Chapter 1

1. Often authors choose to set the scene thoroughly as early as possible in a novel. What language technique does Maurice Gee use to achieve this in the first paragraph of *Gool*? Explain why he uses this technique and give examples from the text to support your answer.
2. List the characters introduced in this chapter and write two descriptive sentences about each.
3. How do you know that Hari and the children are not actually speaking out loud to each other?
4. Contrast the past and present environments of Hari's life.

### Chapters 1 and 2

1. In your own words, describe the 'beast' that captured Sal and Mond and fought Hari.
2. What were the 'rules of communication' that Xantee learned as she grew up? How are these rules different from your own?
3. Why do you think that Xantee could 'take their minds away and move them about' so much more easily than her parents, Hari and Pearl, could?
4. Describe the development of the 'five senses' in the children.

### EXTENDED THINKING

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- Hari and Pearl seem to accept their children have abilities beyond their own? What do you do better than your parents? Do you think this is a normal pattern between generations? Explain your answer.
  - Each generation has its particular challenges. What were the challenges your grandparents would have faced? Your parents? Yours?
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## Chapter 3

1. Chapter 3 contains a long discussion about the nature of the 'thing' that has attacked Sal, Mond and Hari. Bullet-point as many facts as you can find about this 'thing'.
2. In what way is Xantee questioning the nature of her relationship with Duro?
3. Who are the 'Peeps'?
4. Why must Xantee and Duro find Tarl, Hari's father? Explain as fully as you can.

## EXTENDED THINKING

- In this novel, humans 'mutated' in response to the environment. How do you think the world will change during the 21<sup>st</sup> century and how will humans have to change in order to survive?

## Chapter 4

1. Why do you think Xantee and Duro did not try to stop Sal and Mond from leaving on their own?
2. List examples of different kinds of courage from this chapter.
3. Xantee's character developed during this chapter. Referring to the text, what does the reader learn about her?
4. The character of Duro also comes across clearly in this chapter. Find each of the following extracts and comment on what each shows about Duro and his relationship with Xantee:
  - a) *One step at a time, Duro said, from his job trimming sails . . . You squeak. I do not.*
  - b) *They scare me, Xantee.*
  - c) *I'd get out of this if I could, Duro said.*
  - d) *They're dead, Duro said.*
  - e) *He's Duro. He can speak with us but not you.*
  - f) *Xantee looked at Duro and saw him standing back from them, alert, not hearing what was said but ready for anything he must do.*
  - g) *So let's not ask any questions, Duro said. Let's just go.*

## Chapter 5 (language analysis)

1. Find ten examples of a simile, two examples of a metaphor and two examples of personification. Why did the author use so many examples of figurative language?
2. There are a number of highly descriptive passages in this chapter. Pick one such passage that appealed to you, write it out and explain why you chose it.

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## EXTENDED THINKING

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- In this chapter, there are clear examples of a 'balance' and respect between the people and the earth. In what ways are societies in today's world trying to foster similar balance and respect between people and their environment?
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### Chapter 6

1. Using your knowledge of today's cities, explain what could be the 'sort of cloud hanging over Belong'?
2. What are 'tubers' that Duro feeds Xantee?
3. Describe, with quotes, how the author has convinced us of the strength of the connection between Tarl and the dog world.

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## EXTENDED THINKING

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- Draw a sketch of Tarl from his description when Xantee and Duro first see him.
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### Chapter 7

1. Comment on the structure of the last line in Chapter 6 and the first line in Chapter 7. What effect does the author intend?
2. Why do you think Tarl prefers living with the dogs than the humans?

### Chapter 8

1. *They walked down a twisting gully to the edge of a steep incline. Thunder clouds like bread dough swelled in the south, while westwards veils of rain dropped across the sky. Then a burst of sunshine lit a patch of what that gleamed like pearl shell.*  
What language techniques were used to create this particularly descriptive passage?

### Chapter 9

1. What made Keech so dangerous both as a ruler and as an enemy of Xantee, Duro and Tarl?
2. What is the position of women in the Burrows and the cities? Use quotes to back up your answer.
3. What is Danatok's connection with Hari and Tarl?

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## EXTENDED THINKING

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- In what ways could the gool be considered a metaphor for some of the 'ills' in today's world?
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## **Chapter 10**

1. What would a modern psychologist have to say about the 'voice' that Danatok talks about at the beginning of Chapter 10?
2. What could be a religious explanation for the 'voice from the other side'?

## **Chapter 11**

1. List the subjects that the parchment rolls found by Xantee and Duro covered? Why did some survive better than others?
2. What were the two pieces of knowledge that the story of Barni revealed to them?
3. What did they have to do to save Hari?

## **Chapter 12**

1. What was Xantee's plan and why did it fail?
2. In what ways are Kreech and the Clerk both similar and different?

## **Chapter 13**

1. Why was the Ottmar mansion important to Kreech and the Clerk? And to the gool?
2. How were Kreech and the Clerk 'feeding' the gool?

## **Chapter 14**

1. How did Xantee kill the gool? Why was this method successful?

## **Chapter 15**

1. Explain why you think Lo chose to live with the jungle people and why he took Sal with him.

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## Discussion/debate

- In Chapter 11, the author writes: 'She wondered if the gool's hunger was really much worse than the hunger of humans that led them into so many disasters'. Debate the following moot: *That suffering caused by humans is worse than the suffering caused by natural disasters.*
- In groups, discuss the ending of the story. Was it satisfactory? Did you get a surprise? Does it make sense? What needs to happen now for order and prosperity to be restored to the country? Do Duro and Xantee have any responsibility to help restore this order? Report your findings to the rest of the class.

## Research

- Tealeaf told the story of the myth of the red and white stars. What are myths? What is the purpose of a myth? Identify and briefly describe a New Zealand myth. What is the purpose of this myth?
- Research the history, development and effects of the practice of 'meditation'. Why do people meditate? Find a description of how a person feels in deep meditation and compare it with the following extract from Chapter 6:  
*She had first heard the wind and sea and forests and mountains breathe her name silently inside her diminished self one morning as she walked alone on the beach. It said nothing more, just Xantee, yet those two syllables united her with the thing that spoke – took everything from her, gave everything back, increased in all its cells by its oneness with the voice.*

## EXTENSION ACTIVITY

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- Create a myth that could explain something in today's world to the children of the year 3000 AD.
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