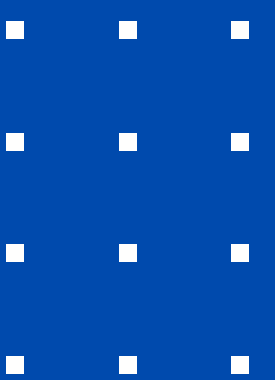
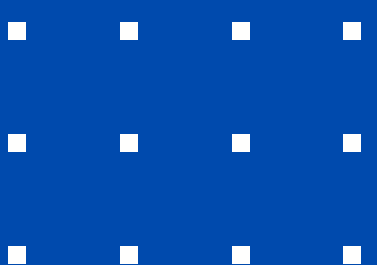


'RAINBOW'S END'

EASY ENGLISH:
COMPREHENSIVE
STUDY GUIDE



EVERYTHING YOU
NEED, NOTHING
MORE.





CONTENTS

1

PLOT SUMMARY

Page 4-5

2

SETTING

Page 6

3

CHARACTER

Page 7-14

Nan Dear

Page 7-8

Gladys Banks

Page 8-9

Dolly Banks

Page 9-10

Errol Fisher

Page 10-11

The Bank Maanger

Page 11-12

The Inspector

Page 12

Jungi

Page 12-13

Papa Dear

Page 13-14

4

THEMES

Page 15-17

Public Spaces

Page 15-16

Social Mobility and Economic Challenges

Page 16-17

5

SYMBOLS

Page 18-21

The River and Flood

Page 18

The Humpy

Page 18-19

The White Gloves and the Dress

Page 19-20

The Bulldozers

Page 20-21



CONTENTS

5

SYMBOLS *continued*

Page 18-21

The Spirit Tree (Biyala)

Page 21



PLOT SUMMARY

"Rainbow's End" is set in the 1950s and follows the Dear Family's story—a lineage of Victorian Koori women which includes the grandmother Nan, mother Gladys, and daughter Dolly—depicting the dynamics of home, aspirations, and experiences faced by Indigenous communities in Australia.

The narrative underscores the women's solidarity and resilience, with Dolly at the center, as she navigates her way through coming-of-age experiences. Living in marginal conditions near a rural town, their residence, 'The Flats,' embodies the segregation from the white community while hinting at the systemic neglect and hardship the family endures.

Encounter with Errol, a white encyclopedia salesman, shapes Dolly's coming-of-age journey. Misdirected to 'The Flats,' Errol's affection for Dolly burgeons, reflected in his ongoing visits under the pretense of encyclopedia deliveries. The relationship blossoms with unspoken emotions and cautious flirtations.

A local ball introduces a turning point, revealing both the racial tensions and the aspirations for a better life amongst the First Nations people. While Dolly shows courage and creativity in attending the ball—fashioning a dress from curtains—she experiences humiliation from white attendees, which echoes the broader societal attitudes towards her community.

The narrative complicates further when family bonds are tested against Dolly's attraction to Errol and the stark reality of her community's struggles. An assault on Dolly by one of her cousins at the ball thoroughly challenges Dolly's faith in her community and herself. Hereafter, a climactic natural disaster—the flooding of 'The Flats'—conveys the pressing need for change and safer living conditions for Indigenous families.

As the family seeks refuge, Nan's skepticism of Errol's intentions and the tensions of interracial relations are nuanced through her protective nature, rooted in historical prejudice. Yet, it's the community—the very victim of recurrent floods—that takes charge in rallying for justice and improved housing.

The play culminates with the uniting of both personal storyline and community activism. Dolly's personal growth is highlighted as she welcomes a new life by giving birth and eventually opens up to Errol's marriage proposal. This decision syncs with her mother, Gladys, who delivers a potent speech about Indigenous empowerment, touching upon individuals' rights to live with dignity—a central theme of the narrative. The return of Papa D



ear marks a full circle, signifying the interminable strength of family and community ties.

"Rainbow's End" creates a tapestry of struggle and love, as the Dear family, exposed to societal injustices, remain steadfast in their hopes for a brighter future. Moreover, it mirrors the broader Indigenous activism for equal rights and mirrors the growth of an individual—the resilient Dolly—amidst the backdrop of a society navigating through post-colonial tensions and aspirations for reconciliation.



SETTING

The setting in "Rainbow's End" by Jane Harrison reflects the socioeconomic and racial divides of the era, while also serving as a catalyst for character development and thematic.

The Dear family's modest dwelling at 'The Flats' near Shepparton is vital to understanding the characters' external and internal landscapes. Located by the riverbank and described as a **"humpy,"** this setting is both **"clean and homely"** and also representative of the family's resilience and pride amidst poverty and social marginalisation.

At a ball in the town hall, a place where the community's racial prejudices and disparities come to the forefront. Dolly's attendance wearing a dress made from old house curtains, later revealed to be discarded to "the town bloody tip," contrasts with the town's material **affluence**. Nancy's mockery of Dolly's attire ("Love your dress Dolly... When it was our sunroom curtains") highlights the socioeconomic rift between the Aboriginal and white communities.

The geographical separation of 'The Flats' from the rest of the community by a railway accentuates this difference, mapping the Dear family's story onto a broader narrative of systemic inequality and exclusion.

The river – adjacent to the family's dwelling – serves both as a place of reflection and the reveal of a community's vulnerabilities. The swelling of the river highlights the natural hazards that the poorly sheltered Indigenous settlement must withstand.



CHARACTER

Nan Dear

Born by the Murray River as her birth certificate states, Nan Dear is steeped in her Aboriginal heritage and connections to her traditional lands. Her identity is closely tied to the Murray River and the land from which she was **displaced**, specifically from Cummeragunja, marking a bitter and forcible removal from her home. This **dislocation** is a source of deep-seated resentment and shapes her worldview. Despite the trials she has faced, Nan Dear is characterised by a deep sense of duty and **pragmatism**. She is concerned with everyday survival and the practical needs of her family—working to put food on the table and keeping her family safe.

As the matriarch, Nan Dear's relationships with her daughter, Gladys, and granddaughter, Dolly, are a mix of affection and stern guidance. She is quick to offer wisdom to Dolly, such as reminding her of the importance of knowing family connections to avoid unwitting relationships with close relatives. Nan Dear's knowledge of family history is implied to be extensive, though she may feign ignorance when it suits her, suggesting a complicated relationship with the past.

Her cultural beliefs surface subtly through her reluctance to embrace the visiting monarchy, mocking the idea of needing white gloves for a royal visit and declaring, "**She's not my queen**". This resistance to the monarch's visit and the detachment she expresses towards Gladys' interest in royalty reveals an underlying rejection of **colonial** authority and a preference for the Aboriginal ways of life.

Nan Dear's resilience is not just a personal trait but serves as symbolic of her community's endurance. Statements like "**Born [by the Murray River] and by crikey I'm gunna go back and die there**" demonstrate her strong will to return to her roots despite the adversity faced. This return, for her, is associated with embracing the simplicity and beauty of her origins, like having a feed of swan eggs before she passes, signifying a connection to her birthplace.

Her experience of displacement is steeped in historical injustices, as evidenced by her bitter recollection of being forced to leave Cummeragunja. This comment on forced relocation exposes the reality of Aboriginal displacement and the loss of home and culture.

To be **displaced** means to be removed from one's usual or proper place, often involuntarily. In the context of "Rainbow's End," this refers to the removal of Aboriginal people from their traditional lands due to colonial policies and practices.

Dislocation in this context refers to the disruption and displacement caused by being forcibly moved from one's home or traditional land. It highlights the impact of such movements on the cultural, social, and personal lives of the characters.

Pragmatism is a practical approach to problems and affairs. Nan Dear's pragmatism in "Rainbow's End" reflects her focus on day-to-day survival and practical necessities, despite the broader struggles her family faces.

Pertaining to **colonialism**, this term relates to the control or governing influence of a nation over a dependent country, territory, or people



These observations offer a critical perspective on the consequences of colonial policies for Aboriginal people.

Nan Dear is a fiercely independent individual whose character lends **gravity** and authenticity to the narrative of "Rainbow's End." Her dialogue is delivered with an undercurrent of knowing defiance, revealing a woman shaped by adversity yet undiminished in spirit. She represents a generation of Aboriginal people who, despite **systematic disenfranchisement**, maintained their dignity and cultural identity. Through her words and actions, Nan Dear confronts the audience with the realities of her community's history, while also displaying an **indomitable** resolve to withstand and challenge these realities.

Gladys Banks

Gladys Banks represents the aspirations and challenges of an Aboriginal woman in 1950s Australia. This multi-dimensional character is caught between her cultural heritage and the desire for progress and recognition within the broader, often unfriendly, society.

As the daughter of Nan Dear and mother to Dolly, Gladys mediates between the old ways and new possibilities that her daughter may have. A scene in the play that captures her ambitions and protective instincts as a mother is her confrontation with the bank manager where she presents her daughter Dolly for a teller's position. Proudly asserting "**She's just completed her Leaving Certificate—the first in the family—with real good grades... 'N' top of her class in algebra,**" Gladys is met not with recognition but indifference, with the bank manager pouring himself tea but pointedly ignoring her. The scene captures the societal barriers that Gladys and her daughter face, as well as Gladys's determination to push against them.

Gladys's agency is further highlighted in her firm stance on her daughter's **autonomy** and social life. Despite Nan Dear's apprehensions, Gladys declares decisively, "**I'll make the decisions regarding Dolores thank you. She's going to the ball. And Errol Fisher is walking her home.**" This reveals her resolve and the assertion of her role as a parent, as well as the modernising viewpoint she holds compared to Nan Dear, who is more rooted in traditionalist concerns. Moreover, Gladys's readiness to confront and challenge Nan Dear's objections demonstrates her strong will as she endeavors to protect her children's rights to forge their own paths.

Gladys's complexity extends into her views on housing and respect. When discussing the Queen's visit and the humiliation

Gravity here signifies seriousness or importance. Nan Dear's character lends a sense of gravity to the narrative, as she is shaped by the significant challenges and adversities faced by Aboriginal people.

Systematic disenfranchisement refers to the deliberate exclusion of a group of people from the political process or from societal privileges, particularly voting.

Indomitable describes a person who is impossible to subdue or defeat. Nan Dear's indomitable spirit showcases her resilience and strength in the face of adversity and systemic challenges.

Autonomy is the capacity to make an informed, uncoerced decision; it is the ability of a person or group to govern themselves or control their own affairs.



of having their poor living conditions concealed behind hessian curtains, Gladys expresses upset not just over the cosmetic cover-ups but the deeper issue of decent housing and respect for her community. This highlights her awareness of the broader socio-political context and her aspiration for improved conditions for her people. Yet, she also values the autonomy they possess in their current living situation, preferring the freedom they enjoy at the **shanty** on the river to the restrictions experienced in more controlled environments like Cummeragunja, an Aboriginal settlement she and Nan Dear remember with claustrophobia.

Gladys Banks embodies the transition between tradition and progress, acting as both a nurturer and a pioneer. Her interactions with others showcase her resolve to advance her family's status despite the systemic challenges imposed by a world that often disregards their aspirations and **dignity**.

Dolly Banks

Dolly Banks is a crucial character in Jane Harrison's play "Rainbow's End," capturing the experiences of a young Aboriginal woman during the 1950s, a time rife with changes and challenges for her community. The daughter of Gladys Banks and the granddaughter of Nan Dear, Dolly is a character who embodies the bridge between the prior generation's traditional views and the new generation's aspirations.

Throughout the play, Dolly asserts her desires and individuality in a society that would typically dismiss them. In one scene, she interacts with Errol, a character symbolising the broader society's views, displaying her self-assured yet personable character. When Errol calls her "**Miss Banks,**" she promptly corrects him, saying, "**Dolly. We're not too fussed about fancy titles,**" indicating both her lack of **pretense**. Errol complements her name, but once he learns her full name is Dolores, Dolly momentarily moves away, reflecting a subtle consciousness of boundaries and self-respect as she navigates her interactions with a non-Aboriginal man.

Dolly's aspirations and accomplishments are a point of pride for her mother, Gladys, who notes that Dolly is the first in the family to complete her Leaving Certificate, a testament to her intelligence and drive. The circumstances in which this achievement is presented, however, bring to light the stark realities of racial prejudices they confront. Gladys holds a photo of Dolly, which prompts the bank manager to acknowledge Dolly's physical appearance but does not immediately understand the reason for Gladys's visit. The scene showcases

A **shanty** is a crudely built hut or cabin. In the play, the shanties symbolize the impoverished living conditions of the Aboriginal community and their marginalization in society.

Dignity refers to the state or quality of being worthy of honor or respect. In "Rainbow's End," the characters, especially Gladys, strive for dignity and respect within a society that often denies them these basic human rights.

Pretense is a false display of feelings, attitudes, or intentions. The play often deals with the pretense of societal norms and the struggle of the characters to maintain their authenticity in a world that expects them to conform.



Dolly through her mother's eyes—as capable and promising—and reveals the obstacles that she would face in achieving her potential in a society that does not readily afford opportunities to Aboriginal people.

Dolly's character arc within the play reveals the nuanced complexities of identity, as she must balance the expectations of her cultural heritage with her own personal ambitions in a society that often sees her and her community as lesser. Her actions and decisions throughout the play demonstrate the younger generation's determination to both honour their heritage and pursue a future they define for themselves. Through Dolly, Harrison presents themes of cultural identity, generational change, and the possibilities that lie ahead for Aboriginal women in a changing world.

Errol Fisher

Errol Fisher emerges in Jane Harrison's "Rainbow's End" as a significant, though less central, character, who embodies the **intersection** of the Aboriginal community's life and the broader Australian society during the 1950s. Portrayed initially as somewhat awkward and uncertain, he is introduced to the audience as he nearly falls off his bike upon encountering Dolly, signaling an immediate spark of attraction that complicates his interactions with the family.

This initial interaction with Dolly sets the stage for Errol's character development. The exchange with Gladys further illustrates his social position and perspective. When he tentatively approaches Gladys as she is chopping wood, mistaking her for a man, he immediately demonstrates cultural ignorance and nervousness. Apologising and stating his name, "**Sorry er ma'am. My name is Errol Fisher,**" he provides a contrast to the women's more assertive presence. This contrast is emblematic of the interplay between white Australians and Aboriginal people at the time—a dynamic of presumed authority and misunderstanding from the former, contrasted with an under-recognised competence and resilience from the latter.

Errol's intentions are primarily associated with business—selling encyclopedias as revealed in his conversation with Gladys—yet this transactional engagement serves as a backdrop to more complex **intercultural** exchanges. Gladys and Errol mention the encyclopedias simultaneously, indicating their previous interactions and the economic realities pressing on Gladys, who states, "**We... I... won't be needing them any more. All the shillings go into the meter box now,**" highlighting not only financial struggles but also the prioritisation of practical necessities over educational luxuries.

In this context, the term **intersection** refers to the point at which different things come together and have an effect on each other.

To be intercultural is to pertain to or take place between two or more cultures. The interactions between Dolly and Errol in the play are examples of **intercultural** exchange.



His interactions with Dolly in the play are coloured with romantic interest, albeit fraught with the implications of such a relationship in a racially divided society. He compliments her name and attempts to bridge their cultural gap, however awkwardly. Since Errol also represents other characters in the play, his role is fundamental in bringing out the perspectives and reactions of Nan Dear, Gladys, and Dolly and propelling their narratives forward. Errol's presence and character serve as a mirror that reflects and **refracts** the complexities of identity and interpersonal relationships within the **stratified**, mid-20th century Australia Australian society.

The Bank Manager

Harrison uses the The Bank Manager to showcase the systemic barriers faced by the Aboriginal community in terms of employment and societal inclusion. His interaction with Gladys Banks in her attempt to secure a job for her daughter, Dolly, is telling of the racially prejudiced attitudes of the time. Gladys, with determination, engages the Bank Manager and puts forward Dolly's qualifications for a teller's position: **"But she's just completed her Leaving Certificate—the first in the family."** Despite the qualifications presented, the Bank Manager dismisses the notion, indicating a lack of openness to hiring an Aboriginal person.

The Bank Manager focuses on Dolly's appearance rather than her capabilities when he says, **"Yes. Very pretty face,"** after examining a photograph of her. This superficial assessment underscores the racial **objectification** and **segregation** of Aboriginal people. His concern regarding how Dolly would **"fit in"** at the bank delineates the invisible boundaries placed by a society reluctant to accept Aboriginal individuals into professional roles. **"In a job such as this reliability is important,"** he states, questioning how Dolly would commute to work, despite evidence of her punctuality and capability presented by Gladys.

The role of the Bank Manager, while not overly complex, provides a window into both the institutionalised racism of the period and the socioeconomic status of Aboriginal families. His patronising attitude when offering a tin money bank to Gladys, likening it to **"jam tins,"** reflects a **condescension** towards her and her family's means of saving money, which is deeply ingrained in the Bank Manager's and wider society's view of Aboriginal people.

The character subtly represents the gatekeeping that denies Aboriginal people equal opportunities, serving as a juxtaposition to Gladys's and Dolly's aspirations for advancement. Through this interaction, Harrison critiques the wider Australian society's

To alter or distort. The character of Errol Fisher **refracts** the complexities of identity and relationships in a stratified society.

To be **stratified** is to be arranged in layers or classes; to be hierarchical. "Rainbow's End" depicts a stratified society where social and racial divisions are prominent.

To **objectify** is to treat a person as an object without regard to their personality or dignity. The Bank Manager's focus on Dolly's appearance rather than her capabilities is an example of objectification.

Segregation is this action or state of setting someone or something apart from others. The physical and social segregation of Aboriginal people is a central theme in "Rainbow's End."

Condescension is an attitude of patronising superiority; it's a way of behaving towards others that implies that you consider yourself better or more intelligent.



views on race and the **illusory** concept of a fair, **meritocratic** system, thereby reinforcing the themes of racism and discrimination that are central to the play's message.

The Inspector

In the play "Rainbow's End," the inspector is a minor but telling character that presents a snapshot of the authority and surveillance that Aboriginal people endured in 1950s Australia. He appears in a scene where Nan and Gladys are inside the humpy, anxiously straightening everything, which sets a tone of tension and unease. The inspector serves as a symbol of the government oversight and control that loomed over the lives of the characters.

Paying a visit to evaluate their living conditions, the inspector enters with a superficially pleasant demeanor that thinly veils the oppressive power dynamics at play. He greets the efforts of Nan and Gladys with an offhand compliment, "**I say crocheted pillow shams. Such beautiful work!**" which Gladys attributes to her mother's handiwork. His interaction is polite yet distant, making notes while seemingly ignoring the weight of his presence and authority in the humpy.

As the scene unfolds, it becomes clear that his visit is not a casual or friendly one, but an inspection that could have severe implications for the family. The anxiety Nan and Gladys display is indicative of their vulnerability to the whims of the inspector and, by extension, the colonial power structure. When the inspector inquires after a Mr. Banks, his question underscores the traditional views of family structure and the expectation of a male head of household, hinting at **patriarchal** values as well.

The inspector's questions and his mode of taking notes encapsulate the intrusion of government into personal spaces and lives. This scrutiny implies potential consequences if living conditions or behaviors do not meet certain standards, though these criteria are not made explicit. This scene heightens the awareness of the audience to the systematic and normalised regulations that govern the lives of Aboriginal characters in the play, bringing the broader context of racial disparity and control into focus through the actions and attitudes of the inspector.

Jungi

Jungi, a police officer, is a character that represents law enforcement and state power. The actor who plays Errol Fisher also portrays Jungi, indicating that the play presents this character as another facet of the same societal system that

The term **illusory** refers to something that is based on illusion; not real or based on false ideas or beliefs. It is used to describe perceptions, appearances, or impressions that are deceptive or misleading.

The word **meritocratic** is used to describe a system, principle, or environment where advancement, success, or privileges are based on individual ability, talent, or merit, rather than on factors like class, wealth, or nepotism.

Patriarchal refers to a system, society, or organization where men hold the primary power and predominate in roles of political leadership, moral authority, social privilege, and control of property.



Errol represents—this time, the forceful side of authority.

In the scene involving Jungi, Gladys becomes alert to a noise outside, and a moment of tension ensues as a flash of lightning reveals Dolly standing statue-like in the dark. Here, Jungi's role as an enforcer is made evident when he prevents entry into the humpy, stating, **"You can't go in there. We're evacuating."**

He stands as a figure of disruption and control, directly impacting the lives of the family. His straightforward action and interaction with Dolly reflect the blunt reality of police intervention in the lives of Aboriginal families, namely the exercise of authority that often came with little explanation or regard for the personal agency of those affected. This moment emphasises the **oppressive** atmospheres that the characters navigate regularly, with Dolly looking down in shame yet still willing to defy his command and push past. This defiance is a testament to her spirit, mirrored by the **obstinacy** of Nan and Gladys, who remain insistent upon their own ways in the face of systemic and personal challenges.

Jungi's presence in "Rainbow's End," while brief, is significant in that it provides an **authoritative** force that the main characters must react against, revealing their resilience and determination to maintain **autonomy**. His portrayal in the play allows audiences to feel the palpable weight of government involvement in the everyday lives of the Aboriginal community and gives insight into the broader **socio-political** landscape of the time.

Papa Dear

Papa Dear, as depicted in Jane Harrison's "Rainbow's End," is a **paternal** figure whose presence is felt throughout the narrative despite being physically absent for much of the play. His character is crafted through the recollections and expectations of the other characters, particularly Nan Dear and Gladys. Papa Dear's role is largely communicated through anecdotes and his influence on the family's structure and values.

Mentioned by Nan Dear as **"busy doing good work. God's work and hard work,"** Papa Dear is portrayed as a figure devoted to the betterment of the Aboriginal community. His dedication to activism and community work is further highlighted when Gladys recalls that he is **"in Western Australia. Touring the communities there,"** and has been featured **"in the newspaper and all,"** suggesting his actions and efforts are recognised and appreciated beyond their immediate surroundings.

Oppressive describes a situation or a condition that is unjustly harsh, authoritarian, or burdensome. It often connotes a stifling or overbearing atmosphere or regime.

Obstinacy is the quality of stubbornly refusing to change one's opinion or chosen course of action, despite attempts to persuade one to do so.

Authoritative describes something or someone commanding and self-confident, often backed by the appropriate knowledge or experience, which demands obedience or respect.

Autonomy refers to the right or condition of self-government, or in a broader sense, the capacity of an individual to make an informed, uncoerced decision.

Socio-political combines social and political factors. It typically refers to phenomena or issues that involve both social and political aspects, such as laws affecting social conditions, or social movements influencing political policies.

Paternal relates to a father, resembling a father, or seeming fatherly. It often connotes qualities associated with fathers, such as guidance, protection, or authority.



Papa Dear's dream visitations reinforce his endearing place within the family, despite his absence. In an imagined scene, he is seen wearing **"an old-fashioned hat and coat,"** hinting at a sense of **nostalgia** and timelessness associated with him. His brief entrance to kiss Gladys on the top of the head showcases a symbolic and loving connection with his family, despite his lack of direct intervention in their current struggles.

The character of Papa Dear is particularly important to Dolly during a vulnerable moment when she reflects on her family tree, considering naming her unborn child Reg or Regina, **"after Papa Dear."** This indicates an enduring legacy and respect for him within the family, especially for his commitment to their people.

While Papa Dear does not have a speaking role or much direct action, his presence resonates with the family and the audience, capturing the spirit of a generation of Aboriginal individuals who strived to improve conditions for their communities. Through the memories shared and the respect expressed by the characters, Papa Dear stands as a symbol of resilience, hope, and the ongoing struggle for activism and recognition within the Aboriginal community of the time.



T H E M E S

Public Spaces

Within "Rainbow's End," the infrastructure of the town and the public spaces the characters interact with are instrumental in the narrative, as they reveal the societal structures and racial segregation of the era.

The bank manager's office, for instance, is a setting where economic transactions occur, but also where social boundaries and racial discrimination are evident. As Gladys Banks boldly introduces her daughter Dolly to the Bank Manager, hoping for employment opportunities, the scene encapsulates the societal barriers that Aboriginal people face. The dialogue, "**I don't think so...**" **tersely** dismisses Gladys's proposition, laying bare the bank's role not only as a financial institution but also as a gatekeeper of social mobility and acceptance.

Another critical setting is the Rodney Shire Council meeting, where the town's decision-makers discuss issues pertinent to the Aboriginal community. The meeting's overheard conversation is relayed through a voice-over on the radio, which Nan Dear dismisses as "**rubbish.**" The voice-over reveals a lack of care for the displaced Aboriginal residents; "**We bulldozed the shanties but they're creeping back**" reflects an attitude of **erasure** and containment rather than one of support and inclusion.

Public spaces are not just physical locations; they're reflection points where the personal experiences of discrimination, hopes, and frustrations of the Aboriginal characters clash with the prevailing societal views. The town hall acts as a symbol of local governance and power, where decisions affecting the lives of the characters are made. Through these settings, Harrison paints a broader picture of the societal forces and cultural landscapes that shape the lives of the Aboriginal protagonists, emphasising the disparity between the reality of **marginalised** communities and the rhetoric of public officials. Each of these spaces—the office, the council chamber, and the humpy—come together to construct a complex image of 1950s Australian society, highlighting the distances and differences that must be navigated by the characters.

The Rumbalara housing development is one such space that signifies the government's attempt to address Aboriginal housing issues. As a voice-over describes, "**From riverbank humpy to white house is quite a step. It will shortly become reality for the Aboriginal residents of the tin and canvas**

Tersely means speaking or expressing oneself in a concise and direct manner, often in a way that may seem rude or abrupt. In the play, this term could describe the Bank Manager's dismissive response to Gladys's proposal for Dolly's employment.

Erasure in this context refers to the removal or obliteration of something, particularly in a cultural or historical sense. The play touches on the theme of cultural erasure of Aboriginal people and traditions due to colonial influence.

Treated as insignificant or peripheral. The play highlights the **marginalised** status of Aboriginal people in Australian society.



shanties," it is a transformative space that is meant to signify progress. However, this movement from traditional **humpies** marks a profound shift in lifestyle and self-perception for the characters, offering both the promise of modern living and the potential erosion of cherished connections to culture and land.

These government-initiated changes resonate with the characters in different and complex ways. For Nan and Gladys, holding their humble possessions as the sound of bulldozers echo in the background, the loss of their humpy represents more than just a physical displacement; it's a symbolic upheaval of their connection to their past and their hopes for the future.

These social spaces also extend to the dance hall, a locale of negotiation between private desires and public performance. It is here that the crossing of cultural boundaries is made most explicit, whether through the acts of courtship or socialisation, offering a glimpse into the **burgeoning** desires and expectations of characters like Dolly as they interact with non-Aboriginal characters like Errol.

The play invites the audience to consider the impact of these spaces on Aboriginal lives, as they represent not just physical structures but broader efforts at societal integration and cultural assimilation. Through this, Harrison questions the true meaning of community and the cost of 'advancement' during a pivotal era in Australian history.

Rough shelters or huts. The **humpy** in the play is symbolic of the living conditions and resilience of the Aboriginal characters.

Begin to grow or increase rapidly; flourish. Dolly's **burgeoning** desires and expectations reflect her coming-of-age journey.

Social Mobility and Economic Challenges

The theme of social mobility and economic challenges in "Rainbow's End" underscores the obstacles to progress faced by the Aboriginal characters, mapped against their aspirations for better opportunities. Their socioeconomic status is bound up with the racial discrimination they face, as depicted in their living conditions and in the imperfect avenues available for upward mobility.

Gladys, representing the struggle for social mobility, voices the collective ambition and frustration of her community, declaring the need for self-determination and education as prerequisites for economic advancement. She articulates a list of demands that reflect both personal and communal quests for progress: **"We demand the right to make our own decisions and not be at the whim of government at the mercy of Protection Boards at the vagary of landlords and property owners"**. This quote encapsulates the desire for autonomy and the removal of systemic economic constraints.



Moreover, Gladys' subsequent call for educational opportunities speaks to the core of the theme, highlighting the belief in education as a path to socioeconomic improvement: **"We want jobs in town for our sons and daughters. We want them to go to universities"**. This not only points to the pursuit of employment but also expresses a drive for higher education and upward social movement, defying the narrative imposed by the dominant culture that questions their capacity to learn and succeed: **"They say we can't learn but we can. We can do anything once we set our minds to it eh?"**. This assertion of capability and determination directly confronts the racist stereotypes that serve as barriers to social mobility and economic self-sufficiency.

These statements demonstrate a clear understanding of the socioeconomic prison constructed through both direct racial discrimination and systemic economic oppression that the Aboriginal characters face. Their fight for equality aligns with their demand to be regarded and treated as equals, not only by governmental and social institutions but also within the context of everyday interactions: **"We the undersigned demand to be the equal of anyone. And we will fight for that right. And keep fighting. Until we are treated right. By our neighbours and employers. By the Shire by the Crown..."**. This ongoing struggle for economic **parity** and social justice emphasises that these challenges are not individual but collective, faced by the entire community.

Jane Harrison reveals the deep-seated economic challenges and social barriers that Aboriginal people must navigate, yet also showcases their undying resilience and the tangible hope for a more equitable future.

The state or condition of being equal, especially regarding status or pay. The theme of seeking **parity** in social and economic terms is significant in "Rainbow's End."



SYMBOLS

The River and Flood

The river and flood in "Rainbow's End" reflect the characters' ongoing combat with both the forces of nature and the pressures of societal discrimination.

The play begins with an evocative description of a flood, a natural disaster that the family must endure and recover from. The depiction of the flood is immediate and **visceral**: **"She wails like a banshee. Rain, thunder, darkness. Time passes... The waters rise"**. This passage not only sets the scene for the ensuing challenge but also metaphors the unpredictable disruption that natural forces can have on life, akin to the societal upheavals faced by Aboriginal people.

Post-flood, the characters' resilience is laid bare as Gladys stands outside the humpy, **"the water has drained away but the devastation has been wrought."** What remains is **"saturated and muddy,"** a testament to their shattered **domesticity** and a broader reflection of their shaken but unbroken spirit. As Nan Dear leads Dolly, **"shell-shocked"** and **bedraggled**, out of the humpy, she offers not just physical sustenance in the form of **"a cup of billy tea,"** but also emotional support, symbolising the continuity of care and survival instinct rooted deep within their family and culture.

The river is synonymous with life and sustenance, much as it is with peril and uncertainty. The flood thus becomes a motif for the hardships imposed upon the characters, where the perseverance in the aftermath mirrors the larger struggle against the inundating forces of racial prejudice and social exclusion. This symbolic event reinforces the theme that while the family is continually subjected to forces beyond their control—be it nature's whims or institutionalised racism—their resilience fortifies their bond, as they adapt, endure, and continue their journey against the odds.

The Humpy

The humpy is not merely a physical structure; it is a potent symbol of the Aboriginal family's resilience, connection to their land, and their socioeconomic status. Described as a **"rough dwelling; a bush hut made from found materials"**, the humpy stands as a testament to the ingenuity and resourcefulness of the family in improvising their home from what is available to them.

Visceral refers to deep inward feelings rather than to the intellect. The description of the flood in the play

Domesticity refers to home or family life. It often connotes the routine activities of managing a household and family relations.

Bedraggled describes something that is dirty and disheveled, especially as a result of being wet or not cared for. It can be used to depict a person, animal, or thing that has become untidy and worn out due to harsh conditions or neglect.



This detail is significant as it emphasises how the protagonists make do with limited resources, a direct result of economic **deprivation** and systemic exclusion.

The humpy is more than a symbol of economic challenge, though; it is also a space of cultural significance. It is here that Nan Dear, Gladys, and Dolly share intimate family moments, resist the intrusion of the Inspector sent by the government to report on their living conditions, and maintain their cultural practices.

When the family is eventually forced to leave their humpy for the prefabricated houses in the Rumbalara housing estate, they experience a loss that is as much cultural as it is material: **"From riverbank humpy to white house is quite a step."** This enforced relocation resonates with echoes of past dispossession and is representative of the broader colonial impact on Aboriginal lives and lands.

It is within and around this humble structure that some of the play's most significant confrontations with the harsh realities of their world occur, making it a central motif throughout the narrative. The humpy, with its **connotations** of makeshift necessity and adaptation, represents the intersection of the family's defiant perseverance and the adverse conditions imposed upon them by a society that frequently sees them as living on the **periphery**.

The White Gloves and the Dress

The white gloves and the dress in "Rainbow's End" serve as symbols of social aspirations and the pressures of conforming to an idealised standard within an environment dominated by colonial values. These items, connected to the pivotal event of the Queen's visit, carry significant weight in the characters' lives as markers of cultural **assimilation** and social mobility.

Gladys's pursuit of respectability and acceptance in the broader Australian society is embodied by her desire to present herself and Dolly in a certain way during the Queen's visit. On a deeper level, the white gloves represent a **veneer** of civility and refinement imposed by a society that judges individuals based on adherence to European standards of appearance and etiquette.

At times, these symbols act as a foil to the characters' Aboriginal identity and their quest for equality and acceptance. Gladys, after a long walk redirected due to the presence of hessian screens meant to hide their shanties, arrives home exhausted. The state of her attire, as she **"holding a very wilted bunch of**

Deprivation refers to the damaging lack of material benefits considered to be basic necessities in a society. It can also mean the lack of a quality or attribute, usually one that is necessary for a full, healthy life.

Connotations refer to the ideas or feelings that a word invokes in addition to its literal or primary meaning. For example, a word could have positive or negative connotations depending on the cultural or personal associations people have with it.

The **periphery** is the outer limits or edge of an area. The Aboriginal characters in "Rainbow's End" live on the periphery of society, both literally, in terms of their physical location, and figuratively, in terms of their social status.

Assimilation in this context refers to the process of taking in and fully understanding ideas or culture, often at the cost of losing one's cultural identity. The play explores the pressures of assimilation faced by Aboriginal Australians.

A **veneer** is a superficial or deceptively attractive appearance. In "Rainbow's End," the veneer of societal progress and equality hides the underlying racial prejudices and inequalities faced by the Aboriginal community.



flowers comes inside the humpy and plonks down in the only chair," speaks volumes of her futile attempts to mold herself into the image of societal expectations. The wilted flowers she holds, perhaps once intended as a gift for the Queen or as a symbol of participation in the day's **regal** events, signify the decay of her hopes under the weight of racial and economic realities.

Similarly, her discomfort with the borrowed shoes alludes to the futility and discomfort that comes from trying to fit into a societal mold that was never intended for them: **"Oh my feet! Remind me never to borrow Aunty's shoes again"**. The equating of discomfort with the shoes symbolises the larger narrative of Aboriginal peoples donning cultural facets that are not their own, causing a sense of displacement and unease.

In "Rainbow's End," then, the white gloves and the dress—and by extension, the wilted flowers and borrowed shoes—are not just articles of clothing or accessories. They are **laden** with the subtext of cultural aspirations entwined with the characters' struggles to assert their identity and worth within a societal framework that often excludes and marginalises them.

Regal pertains to a king or queen; majestic or royal. In literature, regal imagery or descriptions are often used to signify grandeur, authority, or elegance associated with monarchy.

Laden means heavily loaded or weighed down. It can refer to something or someone carrying a heavy load, either physically or metaphorically, as in being burdened with problems or responsibilities.

The Bulldozers

In "Rainbow's End," the bulldozers symbolise the forceful imposition of government policies on the lives of Aboriginal people and the erasure of their traditional ways of living.

The sound of bulldozers marks a moment of transformation and loss for the family as they watch their home, the humpy, disappear — a manifestation of intrusive governmental intervention that disregards the significance of the humpy as a cultural and historical **sanctuary** for the characters: **"From riverbank humpy to white house is quite a step. It will shortly become reality for the Aboriginal residents of the tin and canvas shanties"**. This illustrates the government initiative to 'solve' Aboriginal housing, though it's deeply conflicting for the characters who are being uprooted from their ancestral connection to the land.

A place of refuge or safety. The **humpy** is a safe haven for the family, embodying their resilience and cultural identity.

The authority of the bulldozers and the physical uprooting of the community are starkly depicted as Nan and Gladys **"hold their humble possessions as the sound of the bulldozers is heard"**. The deafening sound resonates with finality, signaling the end of an era for the family's traditional dwelling and compelling a move to the prefabricated houses that represent conformity and forced modernization. Despite the government's portrayal of this move as a **"vigorous attempt yet to solve Aboriginal housing,"** the use of the bulldozer as a symbol in the play points



to a history of such 'solutions' often being forms of cultural dispossession and control.

The bulldozer signifies the physical destruction of the humpy, but it also represents destruction of the family's autonomy and the **erasure** of cultural practices that have allowed the Aboriginal community to maintain a sense of identity despite ongoing colonisation. In "Rainbow's End," this symbol is a powerful reminder of the characters' resilience against the mechanically indifferent forces that disrupt their lives, as well as the resilience necessary to adapt to new environments and challenges, albeit begrudgingly and with loss.

The removal or obliteration of written or printed matter, especially by drawing a line through it or marking it with a delete sign. In the play, the bulldozers symbolize the **erasure** of the Aboriginal way of life.

The Spirit Tree (Biyala)

In Jane Harrison's "Rainbow's End," the biyala or spirit tree serves as a symbol of cultural identity and connection to ancestral traditions.

This symbolism is introduced through Nan Dear, as she clarifies the concept of the family tree for Dolly. When Dolly mentions constructing her family tree for a school project, Nan Dear responds with a cultural interpretation, acknowledging the biyala: "**Tree? You mean the biyala? Spirit tree branches hanging low over the river?**". This inquiry demonstrates not only Nan Dear's deep cultural awareness but also her desire to impart this knowledge onto her granddaughter.

Nan Dear's reference to the biyala contrasts with Dolly's Western-style family tree diagram – a linear, rational approach to ancestry. The biyala represents a more **organic**, interconnected understanding of familial and cultural associations. In this way, the spirit tree becomes a motif of the Aboriginal connection to nature and community as opposed to the more individualistic Western notion of lineage.

Organic refers to something derived from living matter. In a broader sense, it can describe processes or developments that occur naturally and spontaneously, often in a manner that feels harmonious and interconnected.

The image of the spirit tree, with its branches hanging over the river, also suggests protection and a sense of belonging. It represents the idea of ancestry as not just a list of names but as a living entity that offers shade and continuity for the present and future generations. By including the motif of the biyala, Harrison conveys the characters' strong attachment to their heritage, notwithstanding the **omnipresent** pressures of assimilation and the impact of colonialism on their lives.

Omnipresent means present everywhere at the same time. In a literary context, it can describe a concept, theme, or entity that appears throughout the entirety of a work.

Harrison uses the biyala as a vehicle to explore the complexity of Aboriginal cultural identity, the significance of place and belonging, and the characters' connection to a landscape that holds both their history and their spirits.