from Follow the Rabbit-Proof Fence

Doris Pilkington

NONFICTION NARRATIVE



This version of the selection alternates original text with summarized passages. Dotted lines appear next to

the summarized passages.

From 1910 to 1970, many of Australia's Aboriginal children were separated from their families and moved to settlements. In *Follow the Rabbit-Proof Fence*, three girls try to return back home. One morning in Australia, a group of girls gets ready for school. One of the girls, Molly, says she and her two sisters, Gracie and Daisy, will head over to the school after they empty the toilet bucket.

As soon as the other girls left the dormitory, Molly beckoned her two sisters to come closer to her, then she whispered urgently, "We're not going to school, so grab your bags. We're not staying here." Daisy and Gracie were stunned and stood staring at her.

"What did you say?" asked Gracie.

"I said, we're not staying here at the settlement, because we're going home to Jigalong."

Her sisters are scared and confused, but Molly tells them not to worry. She explains that they will follow the rabbit-proof fence.² She says that once they find it, they can follow it until they reach home.

The task of finding the rabbit-proof fence seemed like a simple solution for a teenager whose father was an inspector who traveled up and down the fences, and whose grandfather had worked with him. Thomas Craig told her often enough that the fence stretched from coast to coast, south to north across the country. It was just a matter of locating a stretch of it then following it to Jigalong.

Gracie and Daisy agree to run away, and they all pack clothes and other items. Molly and Gracie empty the toilet bucket and then meet Daisy by a tree. They run along a nearby river. Molly looks for a safe spot where they might be able to cross.

"We'll try here," said Molly as she bent down to pick up a long stick. She slid down the bank into the river and began measuring its depth ... while Daisy and Gracie watched patiently on the bank.

"Nah, too deep," Molly said in disgust.

The sisters continue along the riverbank. Molly tries to cross the river again, but is unsuccessful. At last, they find an area to cross.

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^{1.} Jigalong (JIHG uh lawng) *n.* region in Western Australia where the Mardu Aboriginal people live.

^{2.} rabbit-proof fence *n*. fence that ran from the north coast of Australia to the south coast to deter pests such as rabbits.

As three pairs of eager eyes examined it closely, they knew that they had **NOTES** found the perfect place to cross the flooded river. A tree leaned over the water creating a natural bridge for them to cross safely to the other side. Once the girls cross the river, they splash through the muddy banks for a few hours. The girls rest for a few minutes, but then Molly tells her sisters they have to keep going. They obey, get up, and hurry beside Molly. The only sounds that could be heard were the startled birds fluttering above as they left their nests in fright, and the slish, slosh of the girls' feet as they trampled over the bullrushes. From Follow the Rabbit-Proof Fence by Doris Pilkington. Copyright @ 1996. Used with permission of University of Queensland Press. by Sawas Learning Company LLC. All Rights Reserved