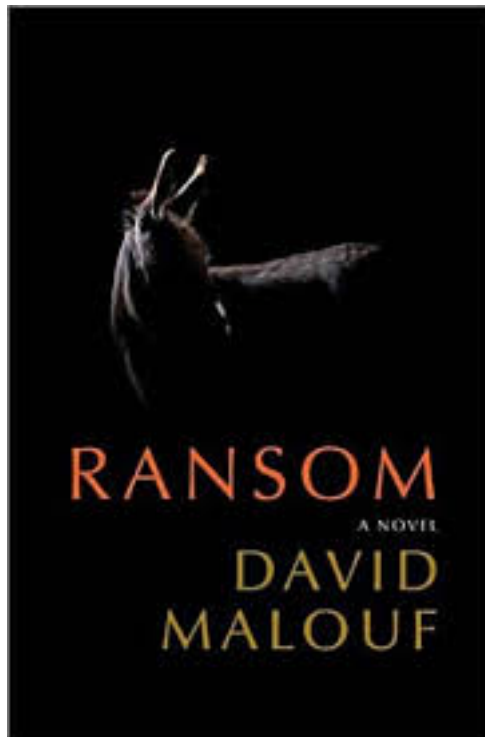


RANSOM COMPREHENSION TASKS:



Shifting Perspectives

‘The sea has many voices.’ (p.3)

Chapter divisions in Malouf’s novel correspond with different character perspectives and changes in time, location and scene:

- I. Dawn on the bare, desolate seashore and war-torn plains, from the perspective of Achilles.
- II. Priam’s bustling, urban day inside private and enclosed spaces of bedchambers and inner courts.
- III. Somax’s voice as storyteller dominates his realm: the fertile natural world between encampment and city.
- IV. The evening introspection of Achilles contrasts with loud military camp life and the new perspectives of Priam and Somax.
- V. A new day dawns as the three protagonists return to their normal roles, contemplating the impact the experience has had upon their lives.

Consider how these places and their inhabitants are being characterised. They exist in close geographical proximity, but they are worlds apart: what unites and separates them? Moreover, this is the passing of a single day in a ten-year war – think about the metaphors of time at play. Malouf presents the life-cycle of man, contrasting traditional male roles through age, class and status which are evoked by the changing perspectives of young warrior, elderly king and common man.

Embedded narratives

Many stories are told within the story to unveil the past or foreshadow the future, including:

- Achilles and Patroclus' first meeting (p.10–13)
- Priam's childhood (p.63–79)
- Somax's home life (p.118–121, 130–135)
- Priam's impending death (p.212–214).

This interweaving of narratives highlights the significance of causality in the fall of Troy:

- (i) what do each of these narratives tell us about the characters involved?
- (ii) how can one event create a chain of events?
- (iii) how does a single life or death affect an entire family, city or history?

QUICK QUIZ

PART I:

- Why is the story of Patroclus significant in the narrative?
- Do Achilles actions/decisions seem like those of a leader?

PART II:

- How have Priam's childhood experiences influenced his decisions as a King?
- Why/how do Priam's plans to ransom Hector's body challenge the authority of the gods?

PART III:

- Somax is the “everyman” character in the book. What does he teach Priam?
- Why is the appearance of Hermes disturbing to Priam and Somax?

PART IV:

- Why is Achilles uncomfortable in the presence of the women who are preparing Hector’s body?
- Does Priam triumph, or does Achilles relent in the ransom negotiations?

PART V:

- What has Priam achieved?
- Why is Somax essentially unchanged? What is Malouf’s message