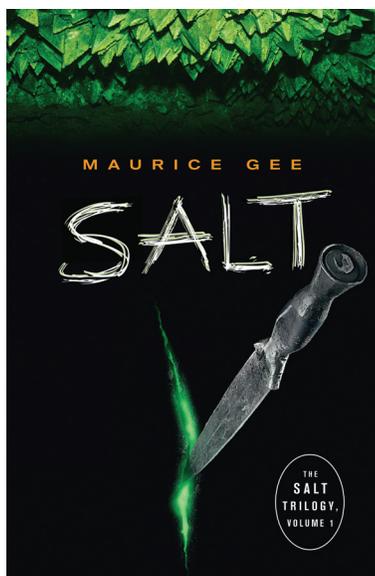


## THE SALT TRILOGY

**Salt**

Maurice Gee

Ages 12+

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AR Quiz # 133863

**In a Nutshell**

Belong is a ruined country ruled over by Company, a malevolent dictatorship that seeks power and wealth by whatever means it takes—including rounding up men already weakened by hunger and disease and sending them off to the salt mines, where they'll be worked to their deaths in the name of generating profit.

Hari, a young boy with the ability to communicate with animals, lives in Blood Burrow, in the remains of what was once a great city. Blood is one of several such burrows inhabited by the poverty-stricken lower class. Life in the Burrows is a constant violent fight for survival. Hari has learned to wield a knife and to be cruel and frightening in order to make it from one day to the next. During a Company raid on the Burrows to find more workers, Hari witnesses his father, Tarl, being branded and dragged off to work in Deep Salt—the mine from which no man ever returns. Hari vows to rescue him.

As Hari's journey gets underway, he meets Pearl, a Company daughter who's fleeing an arranged marriage with a powerful aristocrat. Pearl's maid, Tealeaf, is helping her escape to her own lands where the other Dwellers live. She has taught Pearl how to communicate without speaking, and how to control the minds of others with the strength of her own. Although Hari is initially distrustful, Tealeaf brings him around and he joins their party. As the trio travel together away from Company lands and toward the safety of Tealeaf's homeland, Hari learns how to develop his mind to be as powerful as Pearl's.

Tealeaf, Hari and Pearl stay with the Dwellers—an ancient, wise race—for a while, so that Hari can rest and build his strength for the rescue mission that lies ahead. With the help of a Dweller who knows the way, Hari is able to bring his father out from Deep Salt alive. Tarl returns to the Burrows to rally the underclass in a rebellion against Company, which has been weakened by the collapse of its central branch.

Pearl and Hari, realizing that Company is mining Deep Salt for radioactive material and has brought some to the outside to use in warfare against the Burrows,



# THE SALT TRILOGY

decide to take it upon themselves to return the material to Deep Salt and seal the mine off forever. The quest is a true test of their courage, of their ability to resist evil, and of their love for one another.

As Company and the Burrows descend into pointless warfare—repeating well-established patterns that have built up over the millennia—Pearl and Hari strike out to make a new life in a different land.

## About the Author

**Maurice Gee** is one of New Zealand's finest writers with more than forty books for adults and young adults to his credit. He has won several literary awards, including the Wattie Award, the New Zealand Fiction Award and the New Zealand Children's Book of the Year Award. *Salt*, the first volume in the Salt Trilogy, was the winner of the *New Zealand Post* Book Award for Young Adult Fiction.

## Before You Read

1. What do you know about nuclear warfare? Learn about Hiroshima and Nagasaki.
2. Why do people go to war? As you see it, is war ever justifiable? Why are human societies so unable to give up being at war with each other?
3. Do you think good prevails over evil?

## Consider the following question as you read *Salt*:

How much personal danger would you be willing to accept in order to avert a potential disaster for humankind?

## Connecting to the Text

### *Text-to-text connections*

- Maurice Gee's book *Salt* includes some elements of fantasy, such as the characters' ability to understand each other's thoughts. What other books have you read that have similar fantasy elements?
- Pearl is a very strong female character. What other strong females have you come across in your readings? Can you think of any strong girls and women in movies you've seen? What kinds of qualities make them strong?
- What other stories does *Salt* remind you of?

### *Text-to-self connections*

- Lo tells Hari that he must do what he must do. "Follow your voice when it calls," he says. Although Hari does actually have an inner voice, Lo's words have a deeper meaning still. How can you apply Lo's wisdom in your own life?
- At the beginning of chapter 3, Tealeaf tells Pearl she is not running away, she is running toward. If you adopted this outlook, how would it change your perspective on things in your life?



- If you had some kind of special power, what would you want it to be?
- Think about how Kyle-Ott hates Pearl, especially after he is burned in the fire. How do we reach a place where hate takes over?

### *Text-to-world connections*

- When Tealeaf and Pearl arrive for a brief stay at a commoner's house in Ceebeedee, Tealeaf tells the curious woman not to wonder about their situation. She says women run from many things. As you see it, is this true? Throughout time, why have women had to run? Do women still run from things?
- In chapter 4, Tealeaf teaches Pearl and Hari about the bounty plant. The three travelers are careful not to cut more water sacs than the plant can support, or it will die. What does this tell you about the relationship the Dwellers have with the land that surrounds them? What can we learn from this?
- What do you know about mining in the wider world? Are mining practices always fair? Are mining companies known for their environmental responsibility?
- Ottmar is greedy for the radioactive material known as deep salt. He wants to use it to take power over the city and surrounding lands. Can you think of other rulers or regimes that have plundered resources in a similar way?

### **The Language of Literature**

#### *Showing vs. telling*

Maurice Gee uses descriptive language to show his characters' emotions. For example, in chapter 2 he describes how Hari feels when he tells Lo that Tarl has been taken to Deep Salt: *Again Hari felt his innards churn at the name. His throat tightened so he could scarcely speak.*

- Working with a partner, find several more selections from *Salt* where the author shows the characters' emotions. How is this more effective than simply telling the reader how the characters are feeling?

#### *Metaphor*

Authors use metaphors to strengthen an idea or image. Metaphors compare things that aren't really alike, but that share some similar characteristics. Here's an example from *Salt*, when Hari suffers from terrible dreams: *He tried to turn and run, but the dream was on his back, and bursting from the ground at his feet and swooping from above...*

- How does the metaphor of an attacking bird give the reader a sense of the dream's strength? Find several other examples of metaphors in the book. Write them down, and include a brief explanation of why you think that particular metaphor is more effective than plain description.

# THE SALT TRILOGY



# THE SALT TRILOGY

## *Theme*

The theme is the “big idea” or message in a book. Often, books can have more than one theme.

- Several themes run through *Salt*. One of them is that war is pointless. Another is that nuclear warfare (and human use of radioactive materials in general) is dangerous and destructive to the environment. Working with a partner, see if you can figure out some of the other themes in the book.

## **A Closer Look**

### *Chapter by chapter*

#### Chapter 1

1. Draw a picture of how you imagine the Whips to look.
2. Create a character web for what you know about Hari so far. Add to this web as you read *Salt*.
3. People who have been brainwashed—or are fearful—repeat the Company mantra: *Company cares*. Do you think this is true? Does Company really care?
4. Describe some of the stories Burrows people believe about the salt mines. What do they say about Deep Salt?
5. Explain how Hari’s skill in speaking with animals helps him in this chapter.

#### Chapter 2

1. Describe Lo. Why does he mean so much to Hari?
2. Summarize how Company took power over the city of Belong.
3. Who was Cowl, and why do Company employees spit on his statue?
4. As you see it, is it more fair to run a state with a group, or with a single person at the head? How does your country govern itself? What would change if there were to be only one person in charge?
5. Explain what is meant by the phrase *power corrupts*.

#### Chapter 3

1. Describe Pearl’s home life and family. Is it a life you would choose for yourself?
2. Why did Pearl choose Tealeaf to be her maid?
3. How does Tealeaf influence Pearl’s life as she is growing up? What are Tealeaf’s powers?
4. What does Pearl struggle with when she is faced with having to stay at Tilly’s place?
5. Why does Pearl feel ashamed when she explains to Tilly how she usually spends her loose change?



# THE SALT TRILOGY

## Chapter 4

1. Describe the difference in the commands made by Pearl and Tealeaf when they are dealing with Hari for the first time. Why does Pearl exhaust herself?
2. What is the significance of Hari's dream?
3. Draw a character map of Pearl. Compare her to Hari. How are they similar? How are they different? Do you think they will one day become friends?
4. Why does Hari hate?
5. Why does Tealeaf insist on taking Hari with them on their journey?

## Chapter 5

1. For what reasons does Pearl not like Hari? Find examples that illustrate her feelings.
2. How does the spirit of competition between Pearl and Hari tell us more about their characters? Why do they feel so competitive with each other?
3. How does being forced to cooperate in hiding from the search party help to bring Hari and Pearl closer together? Does this happen in the real world, too, where people who fight together grow closer?
4. Why does Pearl think King Ottmar would be worse than Company as a ruler?
5. With a partner, read the scene where Hari stampedes the horses. Find and record the words and phrases that help create suspense and excitement.

## Chapter 6

1. Why is the jungle such a dangerous and menacing place?
2. How might the journey have been different for Hari and Pearl if they hadn't had Tealeaf with them?
3. Why does Tealeaf seem to change in the jungle?
4. How does Hari come to the realization that Lo didn't really know that much beyond the borders of the city?
5. How do the travelers stay safe in the jungle?

## Chapter 7

1. Why does Stone Creek disappoint Pearl? How do her initial impressions turn out to be wrong?
2. How does the author use language to show Stone Creek to be a peaceful, loving community?
3. Explain how Deep Salt destroys people.
4. Describe how Hari grows and changes as he observes the ways of the Dwellers.
5. Why does the Dweller knife tremble?
6. Why does Tealeaf still have hope for the city, despite all the warfare and struggle?



# THE SALT TRILOGY

## Chapter 8

1. Why does Danatok risk so much to enter Deep Salt and rescue men he doesn't even know?
2. Think about the burden Pearl carries. She senses that she is essentially the hope for a new way of being. How must this be for her?
3. Compare the effects of Deep Salt to radiation sickness.
4. Why is Hari so disconcerted when he realizes Pearl cares about him?

## Chapter 9

1. Why does Pearl grieve for a family she never loved?
2. For what reasons does the dog choose Tarl over Hari?
3. What is the significance of the voices that Pearl and Hari hear inside?

## Chapter 10

1. Why is Tarl so suspicious of the Dwellers?
2. When Tarl speaks of killing Ottmar and his men, Pearl tells Tarl that the old ways are gone, and that there are new things to fight. What does she mean?
3. In this chapter, we learn that Burrows women are accorded low status. For example, girls aren't to speak until they are invited. As you see it, how was life similar for Pearl when she lived with Company? Is this a fair way to be?
4. When Tarl recalls his first experience entering Deep Salt, he says he knew at once that he was a dead man. What made him know this?
5. Why does Pearl volunteer to steal the deep salt and return it to the hill? Is she brave or foolish?

## Chapter 11

1. Hari learns that fighting isn't always the best way. How does Tarl differ from his son in this regard?
2. Why does Hari have to lie to his father about bringing him the box?
3. As you see it, why does Hari so willingly accept Pearl as his equal, given his prior experience relating to women?
4. How does Tarl prove to the people of Blood Burrow that he actually is who he says he is?

## Chapter 12

1. Why does Pearl want to sit on the bench that looks out to sea?
2. Describe Ottmar. If you could give him one piece of advice, what would it be?
3. Pearl and Hari have a great advantage with their ability to sense how people feel. How would their quest to seize the salt differ if they lacked this ability?



# THE SALT TRILOGY

4. For what reasons does Hari have a harder time turning away from the voice of evil? How does he try to escape the voice?

## Chapter 13

1. Why does the salt weigh on Hari so much? Why does this sensation intensify as he tries to release it into the lake?
2. When Pearl says there won't be any living people left in Deep Salt, do you think she knows this for sure? What motivates her to say this?
3. For what reasons do Hari and Pearl want to seal off Deep Salt?

## Chapter 14

1. How does the weather evoke a mood for this chapter?
2. Why is it so important to Tarl that he makes his father happy? What has Tarl lost?
3. How does Hari know Tarl doesn't stand a chance against Keech?
4. Summarize what has happened in the City.
5. Describe how Hari and Pearl's relationship changes over the course of the book.

## Chapter 15

1. What sickness is Hari fighting? How does he overcome it?
2. What do Hari and Pearl wish to do now? Why do they want to relinquish their power to go into people's minds?
3. Why do you think other people will come to the place where Pearl and Hari are now? Who are they?

### *Extension activities*

- Create a diorama of the lands Gee writes about in *Salt*. Look through the book for words that describe the territory. Don't forget to look for smaller details too, like in chapter 3, where Pearl trudges after Tealeaf over "scurfy ground" and across a yellow river.
- Design a bookmark or promotional poster for *Salt*. Your goal is to tempt people to buy the book. Consider what kinds of information (and illustration) you should include to meet this goal. Your bookmark should be double-sided; posters are single-sided.
- Divide your class into teams. Debate one or several of the following:
  - ◆ War is impossible to avoid.
  - ◆ Good should always triumph over evil.
  - ◆ Love conquers all.
  - ◆ Humans should not use radioactive materials.



# THE SALT TRILOGY

- Put together a cast for the film version of *Salt*. Imagine the film producer wants a casting director to make recommendations. Decide who would be the actors and actresses. Include photos and descriptions of the stars and explain why each is ideal for the part. Write a briefing to convince the producer of your selections.
- Rearrange a passage as a “found” poem. Find a particularly effective description or bit of action from *Salt* that seems like it could be poetry...written as prose. You may leave out words and sentences as you rewrite this passage to create a poem.
- Working in a small group, compare the way of life in *Salt* to present-day living in your community. You can present this in panel format with a PowerPoint presentation or a poster. Include methods of transportation, fashions, foods, customs, gender roles, types of government and two more aspects of your own choosing.
- Show how this novel could be used in science and history classes. What kinds of social and environmental lessons can we learn from *Salt*? How do they apply to our current way of living? To our past way of life? Write a short essay explaining your thinking.

### *Vocabulary activities*

- Choose all or some of the following vocabulary items from *Salt*. Consult a print or online dictionary to help you create full definitions for each. Record these in your notebook. Be sure to include multiple definitions where applicable.
- Select 5 to 10 words from the vocabulary list and use them in a paragraph. Remember to lead off with a topic sentence.
- Create a synonym-matching test using 10 of the vocabulary items from *Salt*. On one side of the paper, write the vocabulary word. On the other side, write a synonym for that word. Be sure to mix up the order! Exchange your matching test with a friend.
- Make a crossword puzzle using 10 of the words from the vocabulary list. You may wish to add other words from *Salt* to your puzzle too. Make your crossword by hand on graph paper, or with an online puzzle-generating tool. Here's one to get you started: <http://puzzlemaker.discoveryeducation.com>.

*ambush*  
*gully*  
*plinth*  
*sentry*  
*treaty*

*anticipation*  
*jerkin*  
*probe*  
*shroud*

*awning*  
*latrine*  
*radiation*  
*sluggish*

*breakwater*  
*mutinous*  
*recoil*  
*strut*

*emblem*  
*pannikin*  
*revulsion*  
*tiller*



### Related Reading

- Anderson, Laurie Halse. *Chains*  
Barnes, John. *Tales of the Madman Underground: An Historical Romance 1973*  
Beale, Fleur. *Juno of Taris*  
Bray, Libba. *Going Bovine*  
Crutcher, Chris. *Whale Talk*  
Dowd, Siobahn. *Solace of the Road*  
Draper, Sharon M. *Copper Sun*  
Gee, Maurice. *Gool*  
Golding, Julia. *Dragonfly*  
Haines, Lise. *Girl in the Arena*  
Larbaleister, Justine. *Liar*  
Le Guin, Ursula. *Gifts*  
Lloyd, Saci. *The Carbon Diaries 2017*  
Ness, Patrick. *The Knife of Never Letting Go*  
— *The Ask and the Answer*  
— *Monsters of Men*  
Snow, Carol. *Snap*  
Tolkien, J.R.R. *The Hobbit*

# THE SALT TRILOGY

