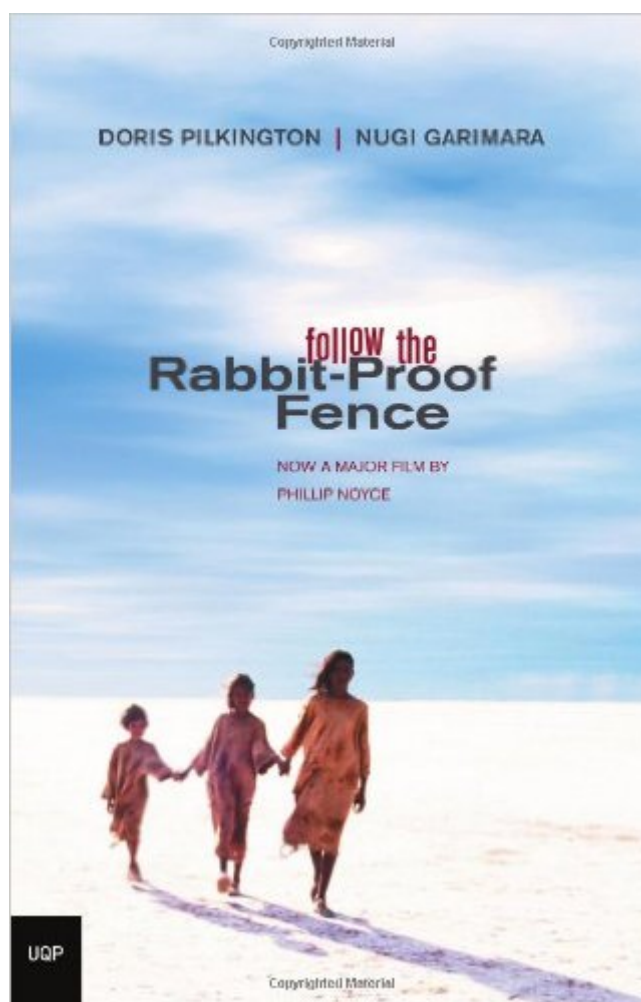


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# Follow The Rabbit-Proof Fence



## Synopsis

This extraordinary story of courage and faith is based on the actual experiences of three girls who fled from the repressive life of Moore River Native Settlement, following along the rabbit-proof fence back to their homelands. Assimilationist policy dictated that these girls be taken from their kin and their homes in order to be made white. Settlement life was unbearable with its chains and padlocks, barred windows, hard cold beds, and horrible food. Solitary confinement was doled out as regular punishment. The girls were not even allowed to speak their language. Of all the journeys made since white people set foot on Australian soil, the journey made by these girls born of Aboriginal mothers and white fathers speaks something to everyone.

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

It's an insult to Doris Pilkington and to the children's endeavour alike to race through this book. Still, circumstances dictated [the film was waiting] and the deed was done. Which merely led to a re-read. This real-life story of three young girls escaping from the looming slavery of a Christian mission to return home is another entry on the balance sheet of imperialism. With immense forces arrayed against them, the three evaded all pursuit, even expert Aborigine trackers, to cross half a continent to rejoin their families. The distance covered was likely the longest walk in Australian history. The roots of this story lie in the opening chapters which recount the actions of European visitors and settlers against the indigenous Australian population. Women were raped, murdered or abandoned. Men were killed, imprisoned, led into slavery as they watched their traditional lands overrun by cattle, sheep or grain. The ease with which firearms overcame spears added to the European's

attitude of "superiority". By the time of Molly Craig's capture, killing had been mostly abandoned in favour of "assimilation" - a mild word for indentured servitude. Molly, recognised the fallacy of being forced into an unwanted life. She took steps to avoid this fate - many steps, as it turned out. Enough to hide from pursuers, do some elusive backtracking and arrive at home. At least 1800 km of mostly barefoot walking. There were adventures enough along the way, and some ironies. Although alerted to their escape, the wives of white selectors fed, clothed and sheltered them briefly. Then doxed them in to the police after the trio had again gone bush. The girls lived on donated food, captured rabbits, birds' eggs or whatever else the bush provided. Each contributed as best they could.

I first saw the Miramax movie starring Kenneth Branagh, which was based upon this book. I was intrigued enough by the film to read this book. I was not disappointed. This book is certainly a testament to the human spirit. It also reveals the harsh, paternalistic and racist policies that the Australian government imposed upon its Aboriginal population. In 1931, the Australian government issued an edict that mandated that all Aboriginal and part Aboriginal children were to be forcibly removed from their homes and taken to special settlements where they were to be assimilated. There, while living in inhumane and degrading conditions, they would be taught to be culturally white, would be mandated to speak English only, and would be trained to be domestic help or laborers in white households. The author tells the reader the story of three young girls, Mollie, Gracie, and Daisy, who had Aboriginal mothers and White fathers. Ranging in age from nine to fifteen years old, the three girls were forcibly removed from their loving families and taken to a special settlement. The girls rebelled against this system, and, homesick, escaped from such a settlement. They left with literally just the clothes on their back. Their only guide home would be a rabbit-proof fence that stretched for over a thousand miles across Australia. The girls' Aboriginal heritage and survival skills would come in handy throughout their nearly nine week long trek across Australia, as they were forced to subsist on the land and the occasional kindness from strangers. They had to endure thirst, hunger, and danger, while avoiding being caught along the way by professional trackers, police on the lookout for them, and white settlers that were unsympathetic to their situation.

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