IMPORTANT QUOTATIONS

The quotes below have been taken from a range of scenes from the play and therefore have a brief description to put them into context.

- “Back from the dead, if only you knew it.” (Pg. 14) Taxidermist says to the little Indigenous boy he rescued

- “Think about what it might mean, if swathes of Mahomedan Turks or creaking armies of sausage-breathed Huns over-ran our country, imposing their foreign ways, interfering with our women. Imagine the horrors of what it would be like if we were to lose, and you wake up one morning and find us all under occupation.” (Pg. 16) The retired schoolmaster’s rant to Harry and his friends about why they should join the fight, he fails to see the irony in what he is saying to the young men.

- “The world – the bigger, grown-up world – is a complicated, difficult place. You should enjoy every moment of your childhood. Plenty of time for the truth later.” (Pg. 20) The taxidermist is talking to Nigel (as his son) wanting to protect him from the horrors of the world and not yet tell him about how his parents were killed.

- “If you can fire a gun and stand in the sun, they might pretend to forget you’re...” (Pg. 21) Ern is explaining to Bob and Norm that being in the army might mean they are treated more fairly and equally. This demonstrates the sentiment of many Indigenous soldiers and is one of the mains reasons many signed up.

- “We can’t have darkies in the same battalions as white chaps.” (Pg. 24). The secretary at the recruiting hall demonstrates the attitudes of many about Indigenous men trying to enlist in the army.

- “If they’re willing to get up off their backsides and show a bit of pluck then they’re white enough for me.” (Pg. 24). The clerk at a recruiting hall says this to his sergeant when the boys are trying to enlist and people aren’t too sure whether they should be allowed or not.

- “Are you, would you say, Substantially European? Your father was white, wasn’t he? Let’s say ‘yes’. Join that line...” (Pg. 25). The recruiting sergeant, even though the decision has been made to allow the boys to enlist, is still looking for ways to justify his decision.

- “...they’ll think we’re police!” (Pg. 27) Bob believes that people back home will think they are policemen since they are wearing a uniform.

- “You noticed something? Once we started wearing this clobber, suddenly we’re, dunno how to explain it –“ (Pg. 27) Ern has noticed that they are being treated differently now that they are wearing the
Australian Army uniform. In fact not only are they being treated differently by the White men, they are also being seen differently by their families.

- “Imagine what the old folks would say!...I mean, arriving in boats uninvited on someone’s beach. They’d laugh their heads off.” (Pg. 29). Laurie points out the irony as he lands at the Dardanelles.

- “Upside down when a coon thinks it’s all right to sit and look me in the eye and touch the same metal plate and finger the same spoon and drink the same bloody water as a white man. I don’t know who you are boy but you’ve got gumption. And you know what they say about boys with gumption don’t you? They get shown their place.” (Pg. 30). An aggressive private who still has the same racist views as he had before the war, his thoughts haven’t changes but those of the soldiers around him have as he is beaten up for his views.

- “The white man needs us coloured boys now / Here in the shit every face is brown / You see the world’s been turned upside down.” (Pg. 31). A song about how the situation has changed since the war started.

- “Seriously, they put you here ‘cause you have tracking skills, you know, you can look at a blade of grass and say how many have gone past and all that sort of malarkey.” (Pg. 32) A white soldier tells Laurie why he gets sent on so many reconnaissance missions. It demonstrates the stereotypes that exist about Indigenous people.

- “Maybe he thought I had better camouflage in the dark.” (Pg. 32) Laurie’s sense of humour is revealed when he suggests why he gets sent on so many reconnaissance missions.

- “In the light of recent reinforcements we may have to reconsider his name.” (Pg. 33). The older soldier sees the irony is calling a man Darky, when he isn’t Aboriginal.

- “If we both get home, you’ll be walking into the front bar, mate. Don’t worry about that.” (Pg. 35) Perce Hourigan tells Em that he will be treated the same as any other man when he returns home from the war.

- “Them Australian niggers, live on the creek bank, never wash.” (Pg. 36) A West Indian ammunition hauler calls Mick an Australian nigger and says that he doesn’t wash, so Mick punches all four of them out. He took offence at being accused of not washing. Demonstrates the stereotypes that exist and the attitudes towards Indigenous soldiers.

- “…you reckon you can waltz around with all the white boys do you? That they’ll make life easy for you, suddenly you’re their dearest little black mate. Suddenly you’ll be a man, and a white one at that? That doors will open for you?” (Pg. 38) Bertie’s mum isn’t too sure what Bertie is hoping to achieve by enlisting in the army. The things she’s listed are the things that Indigenous soldiers were hoping for.

- “Think the coppers like to talk about it. Must be a magic fairy land somewhere with oak trees and shepherds pie. Don’t see much Australia round here.” (Pg. 39) Bertie’s mum shows that the concept of Australia as a nation is not supported by everyone and there is still a division in attitudes.
• "All these blokes, you’re going off to lick their boots. Same blokes, same boots that have kicked us for years. And you can’t wait." (Pg. 40) Bertie’s grandad can’t understand why Bertie would want to enlist. This was a common attitude for a lot of the older generation and many Indigenous soldiers believed things would change once they had served.

• "You’re as good as any white man, Harry." (Pg. 41) a white soldier tells Harry that he’ll have a drink with him when they return home. This statement highlights how Indigenous soldiers were viewed differently because they had served alongside white soldiers in the war. However, this was not the case for every Indigenous soldier.

• "Can’t put history back in the bottle, mate." (Pg. 43). Ern says this while he and some mates are expressing their frustration at the lack of progress in the war.

• "Your folks do something, over in the West? I wouldn’t know where to begin. His you know, his soul will be stuck here. You know what I mean. With all these tress, they will grow here one day all these - what do you call them? Elms and oaks and all that. And all these hedges and the flowers and we don’t know the names of any of them. And when they burn the smoke is different and it will lead him a different way." (Pg. 44) Bertie explains the importance of the land to Indigenous people and is worried about Frank’s spirit not being able to return home.

• "This is the first one who looks like me. No, he can’t get buried in this dirt. Or it he is we need to make sure he knows how to follow me, to get back, follow me on the ship, follow me on the train, back to the river." (Pg. 44) Bertie continues to explain his concerns.

• "Even the officers looked at me with new eyes, the half-caste was rising in estimation." (Pg. 47) the ghost believes he was looked upon more favourably after he’d successfully taken three German machine gun nests.

• "But me, I’m moving. Moving in my own way across rivers, even if they aren’t my own. And I’ll be here til everyone’s forgotten everything that happened and the dirt can go back to being just dirt." (Pg. 48). The ghost reflects on being buried on foreign land.

• "No-one mentioned the colour of my skin from the day I enlisted. I sopped more for going to a private school!" (Pg. 55) Nigel talking to an Indian Prisoner of War. Shows how the colour of his skin has not caused him any issues since he’s been in the army.

• "But one day we shall not be British. This Private will always be Australian, he has nothing else to be." (Pg. 56) An Indian Prisoner of War demonstrates his understanding of how Nigel is nothing but Australian.

• "You can walk down the main drag with your medals and all the fillies will gaze up at yer. Not that you’ll know mind, but you’ll feel it. You’ll be somebody." (Pg. 58). Ern reassures Bob that when he returns home things will have changed and he’ll be somebody.
• “They won’t forget you mate. You’ve fought for the King for Country. For our country. For Australia.” (Pg. 58). Ern continues to try and reassure Bob, but he is also trying to reassure himself that things will be different when they get home.

• “Maybe the folks will be different. But the land stays the same. The names get changed around it, they change the names of the plants and the birds and the rivers and then they change what the words mean. But the sun still gets up in the morning.” (Pg. 59). Norm shares what the sad reality is more likely to be when the men return home; that things will have changed, but not the important things.

• “But in the services, you are forged into something…not white, you’re not erased of your past, but it’s…it’s…incorporated into who you are, and you realise – maybe in those hideous moments in hell on earth, maybe on parade, maybe with mates, I don’t know – you realise, ‘I belong’.” (Pg. 67) Returned Indigenous soldier talking of how the war changed him for the better.

• “So for me, yes, sir, the war was on one hand the worst thing on earth, wouldn’t wish it on the lowest dog. But on the other hand, it made me, and it made us, for better or worse.” (Pg. 67) Returned Indigenous soldier talking of how the war changed him for the better.

• “Curse war, but bless it for it brought me into the fold.” (Pg. 67) Returned Indigenous soldier believes his being involved in World War I made him who he is today and made him an Australian.

• “What’s that you’ve got in your hand there? Hair, eh? Bertie, why aren’t you sayin’ nothing?” (Pg. 70) Bertie’s mum is excited that her son has returned, but is does not understand what Bertie has experienced and how he has been changed by it.

• “We don’t see the skin, we see the service.” (Pg. 72) the RSL Secretary convinces the cellerman and pub owner to allow Archie to drink in the front bar on ANZAC Day.

• “For you the war’s over. What’s starting to dawn on me is that, for us, it’s never going to end.” (Pg. 75) Mick realises that he will forever be fighting for equality.

• “I don’t give a rat’s arse where you’ve been and what you’ve done. I don’t give a fuck what happened on the other side of the world. I don’t care for your airs and graces. As far as I’m concerned you’re still the boy who used to shut his lip and do as he was told. Ever since you came home you’ve been the worst kind of black, an uppity one.” (Pg. 76) The overseer speaking to Archie. This speech reflects that while the Indigenous soldiers expected life to be different when they returned home, this view was not shared by the wider population.

• “Why would things change? The only thing that’s changed round here is you.” (Pg. 77) The old hand on the cattle station talking to Archie. He doesn’t share Archie’s view that things have changed and he doesn’t want to challenge the status quo.

• “I remember a sergeant saying to me ’no-one cares what bloody colour you are you useless bastard, get on with it.’ And it was true. For three years no-one said a bloody word about my skin. And when I
spoke I was heard. And when they called me mate they meant it. And nothing has felt as good since the day I was demobbed.” (Pg. 79) Norm explains how in the army everyone was treated the same regardless of their background.

- “They painted my colour back on the day I got off that boat.” (Pg. 79) Shows how quickly the discrimination returned once Norm was no longer in the army.
- “I still don’t have the faintest bloody idea what we were fighting for. But I thought I won something over there. And then I lost it back here.” (Pg. 79) Reflects the feelings of many Indigenous soldiers who fought in the war hoping it would change things once they got home, only to find out it was no different.
- “You know, even when the fires had been through, the little green shoots came up everywhere. Little tiny tender shoots, up from the bones. But all that’s lost now.” (Pg. 85) Bertie’s grandad drawing a comparison between how the bush can no longer regenerate and neither can Bertie.
- “He must be doing all right for himself, mustn’t he?” (Pg. 89) the editor of a newspaper assumes that because Nigel is educated and articulate his life mustn’t be difficult.