Useful websites to have a look at

BBC Learning Clips
http://www.bbc.co.uk/search/learning/?q=the+cone+gatherers

ASLS Publication
http://www.arts.gla.ac.uk/scotlit/asls/SN10.html

BBC Bitesize
http://www.bbc.co.uk/programmes/p00ry4x1

BBC Education Scotland
http://www.bbc.co.uk/scotland/education/eng/cones/

BBC National 5 English
http://www.bbc.co.uk/education/guides/z6xcwmn/revision

Education Scotland
http://www.educationscotland.gov.uk/resources/ng/t/nqresourcetcm4229620.asp

ggessbeeslack
http://ggessbeeslack.wikispaces.com/The+Cone+Gatherers

Glow Resources
https://wikis.glowscotland.org.uk/0003824/Mr_Mackenzie_English_Class/S5%2F%2F6_Higher_English_2013-14/The_Cone_Gatherers_-_class_resources_and_homework

A Literary Odyssey Blog
http://aliteraryodyssey.blogspot.co.uk/2012/08/the-cone-gatherers-by-robin-jenkins.html

YouTube clips
http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Pssen1yO2mc
In a nutshell...

**KEY THEMES:** Conflict, Good vs. Evil, Class Division

**KEY CHARACTERS:** Calum

Neil

Duror

Roderick

Lady Runcie-Campbell

**SETTING:**

Time - World War II (1939-1945)

Place - Remote Highlands of Scotland; Estate and the wood

**SYMBOLISM:** Christian allegory - The Fall of Man

Nature - The cycle of life is inevitable, beautiful but cruel:

- Cones - represent the resurrection
- Tree imagery - illustrate Duror’s mental state

**KEY INCIDENTS:**

The Deer Hunt

The Beach Hut

The Ending

**METHOD OF NARRATION:** Third person, omniscient narrator allows the reader an insight into the key characters, particularly Duror and his insanity; Lady Runcie-Campbell’s inner conflict of rank vs. Christian ethos; Calum’s innocence and purity.
### Chapter Summary

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Chapter 1</th>
<th>Neil and Calum introduced (rabbit scene). Duror introduced (obsessive watching of the men).</th>
<th>WEDNESDAY</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Chapter 2</td>
<td>Duror’s character developed (home life - nagging Mrs Lochie and invalid wife Peggy). Hatches a plan to rid of forest of brothers with deer drive.</td>
<td>WEDNESDAY</td>
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<tr>
<td>Chapter 3</td>
<td>Roderick introduced at cricket. Duror lies to Mrs Morton (housekeeper at big house) about hunchback Calum performing an obscene action in the forest. Mrs Morton gives Duror the chance to save himself from madness through an affair. Duror chooses not to.</td>
<td>THURSDAY</td>
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<tr>
<td>Chapter 4</td>
<td>Lady Runcie-Campbell introduced. Duror suggests using the cone gatherers as extra beaters at the deer drive for Captain Forgan. Deer hunt established. Duror’s evil plan unfolds.</td>
<td>THURSDAY</td>
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<tr>
<td>Chapter 5</td>
<td>Duror delivers message of deer hunt duties to brothers in tree. Duror afraid of heights. Creation of tension and suspense. Neil is defiant – “We’re free men”. Duror’s first thoughts of suicide.</td>
<td>FRIDAY</td>
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<tr>
<td>Chapter 6</td>
<td>Deer hunt. Erchie Graham introduced. Duror’s madness develops - hallucinations. Neil and Calum participate despite earlier defiance. Calum spots deer, shouts warning, deer is shot. Calum grabs it around neck in despair. Duror throws him off and holding deer lovingly, cuts its throat. Lady Runcie-Campbell blames Calum but cannot decide if the brothers should stay on or not - leaves decision up to Duror. Duror’s intentions more evil now - does not want them to go but wants to destroy them completely.</td>
<td>FRIDAY</td>
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<td>Chapter 7</td>
<td>Saturday visit to Lendrick. Neil is bitter and rebellious after the hunt - going to get drunk. Everyone shows them respect.</td>
<td>SATURDAY</td>
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<td>Chapter 8</td>
<td>Roderick and Lady Runcie-Campbell argue over not offering the brothers a lift home in their car. Duror goes to Doctor - Duror healthy physically suggests problem may be sexual frustration and needs psychiatrist. Doctor offers three solutions to Duror’s condition: affair with another woman, religious acceptance or endurance. He has decided against an affair earlier, he does not believe in God and his ability to endure is about to snap.</td>
<td>SATURDAY</td>
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<td>Chapter 9</td>
<td>Duror again thinks of suicide. Duror visits pub and sees brothers being treated well. English soldier tells joke about a monkey and sees Calum and apologizes. Duror is foiled - Good defeats Evil.</td>
<td>SATURDAY</td>
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<tr>
<td>Chapter 10</td>
<td>Lady Runcie-Campbell’s dilemma (Christian values and upper class values). Roderick’s “pilgrimage” to cone gatherers with cake - sees Duror and cannot go to their hut - “Struggle between good and evil never rests”.</td>
<td>SUNDAY</td>
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<tr>
<td>Chapter 11</td>
<td>Storm breaks and brothers shelter in Lady Runcie-Campbell’s beach hut. Ejected into middle of storm when Lady Runcie-</td>
<td>SUNDAY</td>
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<td>Campbells arrive. Roderick objects to his mother’s treatment of them.</td>
<td>Key Scene 2</td>
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<td><strong>Chapter 12</strong> - Neil is angry - asks Tulloch to take them back to Ardmore.</td>
<td>MONDAY</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Chapter 13</strong> - Lady Runcie-Campbell lectures Roderick on his upper class duty - he goes off to see the brothers and apologies for his mother.</td>
<td>MONDAY</td>
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<td><strong>Chapter 14</strong> - Tulloch meets Roderick - tells him not to bother the men. Duror brings the doll to Lady Runcie-Campbell. Realises he is ill - Tulloch worried.</td>
<td>MONDAY</td>
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<td><strong>Chapter 15</strong> - Roderick gets stuck up the tree gathering cones. Lady Runcie-Campbell feels it is the duty of the brothers to save him.</td>
<td>MONDAY</td>
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<td><strong>Chapter 16</strong> - Erchie goes for the brothers against his will. Neil refuses - “we are not her servants.” Erchie meets Duror - tells him about brothers. Duror stalks off enraged – snaps. Erchie returns and explains. Lady Runcie Campbell runs to find Calum murdered and Duror shoots himself. She kneels and weeps.</td>
<td>MONDAY</td>
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Dictionary of terms

Conscientious Objectors those who refuse to fight in a war, often on religious grounds

National Service service for one’s country, usually in the armed forces in wartime, but sometimes in such occupations as forestry

Home Guard a volunteer force for home defence, used first in the Second World War

Landgirl women who completed National Service by working on the land

Rations the amount of food and clothes available to one person were restricted during the war and they were awarded on a coupon system

Wireless set a radio. There would be no TV at this time. Wireless sets were usually large and run on batteries

“The Rowan Tree” a Scottish song

Thrawn stubborn

Bothy hut

Wean child

Gean tree the wild cherry

Beaters people employed to rouse game for others to shoot at

Wizard magical, wonderful

Quid pro quo something in return for something given

Tocher dowry

Glakit foolish

Huff a fit of anger or sulk

Oxter armpit

Shooting brake an estate car

Grue shudder
Byke  nest
Tholing  enduring
Saps  a mixture of bread and tea (or milk)
Mak siccar  make sure
A staunch Kirk hand  a regular church-goer
Beelzebub  a devil
Scunners  sickens
Godmongers  dealers in religion
ATS  Auxiliary Territorial Service, now superseded by the Women’s Royal Auxiliary Corps
Forby  as well as that
Drooking  drenching

People and places

Cone Gatherers  people hired to pick cones that could be used to grow more trees. A lot of trees were felled during WW2 so it was essential to replant.

Christian  the hero of The Pilgrim’s Progress, famous book by John Bunyan (1628–88)

Cupid  the God of Love

Hercules  very strong Greek hero, was tricked by Atlas, who held the world on his back, to take over the burden

Lord Byron  a famous 19th century Romantic poet, well-known for his good looks

Pilate  the Roman Governor who ordered Christ crucified

Sir Galahad  one of the Knights of the Round Table famous for his courtesy

African desert  the North African Desert was used in the war and later General Montgomery inflicted a decisive defeat on Rommel, the German general, at El Alamein

Mull  an island off the west coast of Scotland
**Sargasso**  a floating mass of seaweed in the Western Atlantic

**Stalingrad in Russia**  the unsuccessful and prolonged siege of the city by the Germans was a turning point in the war
# Vocabulary Vault

<table>
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<tr>
<th>Word</th>
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Key theme: Conflict (good vs. evil)

Setting:
The idyllic nature of the wood might remind us of the Garden of Eden into which evil is introduced to destroy the innocent. Duror wishes to expel Neil and Calum from the ‘garden’.

The episode in which the brothers are expelled from the hut by Lady Runcie-Campbell as reminiscent of the ‘No room at the inn’ scene in the Bible.

Character:

Calum

Is introduced as an innocent character, in touch with nature. He empathises with all creatures and hates to see suffering. Although he is infirm in body he has a beautiful mind that matches his face.

Duror

On the other hand is the personification of evil. Although he is strong in body, his mind is rotten, black and twisted. Although his job as gamekeeper dictates him to live closely with nature, he seems to despise life, especially if it is not perfect in his opinion. He becomes obsessed to the point of perversion with Calum and convinces himself that he has to kill Calum to be free of his torment. His fantasies in the first chapter foreshadow what will happen in the last. Durors unreasonable hatred for Calum should resonate with the reader as a link with the atrocities performed by the Nazis in WW2.

Neil and Calum

The relationship of Neil to Calum might remind us of the phrase in the Bible, ‘Am I my brother’s keeper?’ Finally, when we visualise Calum’s body hanging in the tree we may think of the Crucifixion: “He hung... in twisted fashion, and kept swinging. His arms were loose and dangled in macabre gestures of supplication.”

Lady Runcie-Campbell

In the mind and soul of Lady-Runcie Campbell there is a struggle between her ideas of rank and her Christianity. She tries to act in accordance with her Christian ideas by, for instance, visiting Duror’s wife even though she finds her revolting. But at the same time her Christian ideals are undermined by the burden of her aristocratic beliefs. She acts by her instinctive ideas of rank when she forces Calum into the deer hunt and cannot understand how he can have the impudence to refuse. She sees no conflict between her belief in Christianity and
the slaughter of deer. She puts the brothers out of the hut and she commands them at the end of the book to come and rescue her son from the tree.

When she is demanding, after the deer hunt, that they be dismissed from the wood, she is reminded by Tulloch of Christianity when he says that he has questioned the brothers and says he can ‘find no fault in them’. These are the words used by Pilate, the Roman governor who had Christ crucified, with the simple substitution of ‘Him’ for ‘them. However, she does not seem to hear what Tulloch is saying to her.

Ending:
According to Christian belief the crucifixion is not a death without hope, but was intended to happen, and mankind would be saved by means of it. Like Christ, Calum is innocent and his death is, therefore, a sacrifice which in some way is to help men. The other elements of hope are the cones which drip down with the blood and are symbols of renewal and regeneration.
“For Calum the tree-top as interest enough; in it he was as indigenous as squirrel or bird… his sunburnt face was alert and beautiful with trust”. P.1.

“This wood had always been his stronghold and sanctuary; there were many places secret to him where he had been able to fortify his sanity and his hope. But now the wood was invaded and defiled; its cleansing and reviving virtues were gone” P.10.

“Since childhood Duror had been repelled by anything living that had an imperfection or deformity or lack; a cat with three legs had roused pity in others, in him an ungovernable disgust.” P.10.

“He had read that the Germans were putting idiots and cripples to death in gas chambers. Outwardly, as everybody expected, he condemned such barbarity; inwardly…he had profoundly approved.” P.13.

“So he would perish, he knew; and somewhere in the vision, as a presence, exciting him so that his heart beat fast, but never visible, was a hand outstretched to help him out of that mire, if he wished to be helped.” P.42.

“It seemed to him that he must therefore be far more ill and decayed than he had thought. He was like a tree still straight, still showing green leaves; but underground death was creeping along the roots.” P.58

“Calum no longer was one of the beaters; he too was a deer hunted by remorseless men.” P.69.

“Screaming in sympathy, heedless of the danger of being shot, Calum flung himself upon the dear, clasped it round the neck, and tried to comfort it.” P.70

“He understood for the first time why he hated the hunchback so profoundly and yet was so fascinated by him. For many years his life had been stunted, misshapen, obscene and hideous; and this misbegotten creature was its personification.” P.73.

“If the crooked little imbecile was sent back now to the forest at Ardmore, he would live happily there whilst here in the wood Duror’s own torment continued. His going therefore, must be a destruction, an agony, a crucifixion.” P.78.

“Why then did he hate the cone-gatherers and wish to drive them away? Was it because they represent goodness, and himself evil? Coached by his grandfather, Roderick knew that the struggle between good and evil never rested: in the world, and in every human being, it went on. The war was an enormous example. Good did not always win.” P.119.
“Why had Duror taken a spite against Calum? This was not the first time he had considered the gamekeeper’s disgust at the deformed man, unreasonable and instinctive... Of course Duror and Calum were human; and at that very moment, in different parts or the earth, men were blowing one another to pieces without personal bias or hatred, in pursuance of their respective ideals. Why then seek an explanation of one childish grudge?” P.160

“Then she went down on her knees, near the blood and the spilt cones. She could not pray, but she could weep; and as she wept pity, and purified hope, and joy, welled up in her heart.” P.181
The novel is structured in a fairly simple manner. There are three main events:

- the deer hunt
- the storm scene / beach hut
- Roderick’s entrapment in the tree.

1. The deer hunt is used by Duror to drive the brothers out of the wood by means of Calum’s known hatred of cruelty. He calculates that Calum will do something which will offend Lady Runcie-Campbell for whose brother the deer hunt has been organised. Calum turns the deer hunt into a fiasco and Lady Runcie Campbell is furious. However, when Roderick intercedes on behalf of the brothers, and her brother remains neutral, and Tulloch is on their side, she changes her mind and lets them stay. Thus, Duror fails in his plot. A sub-plot used by Duror is his hint to Mrs Morton, the doctor, and Lady Runcie Campbell that Calum is a sexual pervert. This again does not succeed since by this time Duror’s own behaviour has become eccentric.

2. The storm scene is important because it brings the brothers into direct confrontation with Lady Runcie-Campbell. This time, because of the heavy rain, thunder and lightning, they break into the beach hut on Neil’s initiative, though the hut is forbidden territory to them. Lady Runcie-Campbell is again furious when she finds them there and orders them out. Roderick is silent when she asks him whether she has been unfair. Sheila, the daughter, is triumphant in the tradition of the class-conscious aristocrat.

3. As a direct result of this incident Roderick leaves the house and climbs a tree from which he cannot get down. None of Lady Runcie-Campbell’s servants is able to help so she sends peremptorily for the brothers. Neil refuses to come unless she herself pleads with them in person. The messenger, Graham, on his way back with the news of Neil’s inflexible refusal, meets Duror whom he informs of Neil’s attitude. Without a word, Duror sets off in the direction of the brothers. Lady Runcie-Campbell, hearing of the meeting with Duror as well as of Neil’s ultimatum, decides to go and see the brothers herself. As she approaches she hears a gunshot. Duror has shot Calum and then killed himself. This brings the book to an end.

The structure is strengthened by the fact that the action is generally confined to the wood, except for the visit by the brothers to Lendrick.

This little tragedy is set against the wider violence of the Second World War whose echoes we hear in the wood. Thus, we get the impression that because of the tragedy in the wood and of the war, man is violent. However, one of the functions of Calum is to show us by the goodness of his nature that there is an alternative.
**Narrative:** This novel is written in the third person so that we can enter the minds of the characters through what they are thinking and what is happening to them. We see the events from different points of view throughout the novel. The author shows us events through the eyes of Neil, Duror and Lady Runcie-Campbell most of the time. However, sometimes he uses minor characters, e.g. Mrs Morton, the Doctor, and Baird.

**SETTING – THE PERIOD**

The period during which the action takes place is the Second World War (1939-45). Britain was fighting against Germany, led by the dictator Hitler.

- On the very first page we read of a destroyer and aeroplanes. The cones themselves are being used to re-seed the forest because much of the wood is being used for war purposes.
- In the first meeting between Duror and Dr Matheson the latter is complaining of the fact that he has to eat spam, a meat which was used because other meats were not available or were strictly rationed.
- When Duror arrives at his house and we encounter his wife Peggy and his mother-in-law, the wireless (radio) is on and Stalingrad is mentioned. Stalingrad was a city in Russia which had to suffer a cruel siege by the Germans. However, it did not surrender and it’s a heroic resistance marked a turning point in the war.
- Lady Runcie-Campbell’s brother, Captain Forgan, is home for a few days’ leave and it is he who asks for the deer hunt.
- In the cafe in Lendrick, Calum and Neil see the Ardmore workers enter. They are conscientious objectors, people who often on religious grounds would not take part in actual fighting but would do non-military jobs which would benefit the country, e.g. forestry or farming. These men were not popular and were often accused of cowardice. The villagers of Lendrick are not friendly towards them and Lady Runcie-Campbell, with her traditional aristocratic values, does not care for them. In the hotel bar in Lendrick we meet four English soldiers, one of whom tells a joke which he apologises for later, as he thinks it might have offended Calum. We learn that Tulloch’s brother has been killed in Dunkirk, a major disaster for Britain’s forces on the Continent when they were driven into the sea by the Germans and had to be rescued by the Navy and civilian boats drafted in for the occasion.
- Mrs Morton’s son Alec is in the Merchant Navy.
- Duror himself would like to be in the war but they will not take him. He is in the Home Guard instead, an organisation in which civilians were given some training in weaponry in order to defend the country if the Germans landed. There is reference by Duror to the fact that “the Germans were putting idiots and cripples to death in gas chambers.” This refers to the Nazi ideal of the Aryan as the perfect human.
Important Quotations – Setting

Opening of the novel:
“It was a good tree by the sea-loch, with many cones and much sunshine; it was homely too, with rests among its topmost branches as comfortable as chairs”

“Misted in the morning, the loch had gone through many shades of blue and now was mauve...Seals that had been playing tag in and out of the seaweed under the surface had disappeared under the surface like children gone home for tea. A destroyer had steamed seawards, with a sailor singing cheerfully. More sudden and swift than hawks, and roaring louder than waterfalls, aeroplanes had shot down from the sky over the wood...In the silence that had followed gunshot had cracked far off the wood.”

Opening of Chapter Three:
“Next morning was so splendid that as he walked through the policies towards the mansion house despair itself was lulled. The sky itself was vast and bright; the withered leaves underfoot were iridescent with melting frost; the very air glittered...It was a morning that seemed to beguile the mind with recollections of a time of innocence before evil and unhappiness were born”

Opening of Chapter Five:
“They were safely in another good tree by the loch side. So brightly shone the sun amongst the orange branches and on the blue water, it dazzled their eyes and made every cone glitter, so that they seemed to be plucking nuts of sunshine.”

Chapter Eight:
“Whin bushes, profusely golden in the summer, stirred in the breeze...further off, with even stronger temptation of distance, were stars, so remote, and so obvious of his infinitely petty existence that for a few moments he experienced rest and hope.”

Opening of Chapter Eleven:
“In the tip of the tall larch they were in a good position to watch the approach of the storm. At the sea-end of the loch for the past half hour indigo clouds had been mustering, with rumbles of thunder still distant and half-hearted...At the very crest, Calum was frightened and exhilarated.”
Some might find the end of the novel puzzling. Calum has been killed and Duror has committed suicide. Yet Lady Runcie-Campbell, while kneeling down among the blood and the spilt cones, wept, ‘and as he wept in pity, and purified hope, and joy welled up in her heart.’

Where does this hope come from, or is this joy? It cannot surely come from the death of Calum. After all, his life has not been a fortunate one, though he has not shown bitterness.

The case is rather complicated and to understand it we must think of Calum not simply as a person but as a symbol. What, therefore, does Calum symbolise in the book? In the first place, he seems to symbolise goodness. Duror sees him as partly monstrous but also having a beautiful angelic face. His brother, Neil, thinks that he is the best of human beings. He seems entirely innocent and without malice.

He, therefore, appears a Christ-like figure. Christ, too, was innocent, without malice and without bitterness. Christ, too, did not repel violence with more violence. Christ in spite of this was crucified. And Calum’s position in the tree as described at the end looks like a crucifixion.

Christ’s crucifixion was not an end but a beginning. By means of it, men and women were forgiven for their sins. His crucifixion was a symbol of hope. He paid for the sins of Human beings with his own death.

It must be that Lady Runcie-Campbell saw Calum not as a simple human being but as a Christ-like symbol and this explains her ‘hope’ and ‘joy’.

Whether, however, Calum can take on himself the weight of a Christ is dubious. After all he is not, as Christ was, the Son of God. Unlike Christ, he was a human being with disabilities. Nor can Duror be simply seen as a Judas. After all, Judas was one of Christ’s disciples and Duror hated Calum for the beginning. It is also possible that is was not just Calum’s death that made Duror kill himself: his life, such as it was, was wretched and miserable.

It is for readers to make their own mind up about the ending. It may be that for some readers the ending will appear entirely satisfactory and a solution to the events that have been preceded it. Or is the author perhaps saying that Calum’s death has not been in vain since it has so profoundly affected Lady Runcie-Campbell?

One of the pleasures of reading good novels is that these questions can be argued. There is no set answer as in mathematics and each reader can bring to the book his or her knowledge and experience.