

# Possession learning guide

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# Possession: a learning guide

You've finished reading *Possession: a comedy of wrong belongings*. What did you think of it? This learning guide will help you understand it better and to understand your own thoughts about the story.



***Possession:*** The act of having or taking control; occupancy; domination by something, such as an evil spirit, a passion, or an idea. Merriam-Webster dictionary

*Possession* can have more than one meaning. Which meaning is intended in the book—or is it both? Explain your reasoning:

***Literary theme:*** A universal idea, lesson, or message explored through literature.

LitCharts ([www.litcharts.com](http://www.litcharts.com))

We know from the title that *Possession*, generally, is about ownership. What do you think, specifically, is the universal idea or message of the book? Write it in a sentence, i.e., a statement of what the book is about. Then, in the boxes, below give three arguments for why you think this is the theme. Use specific incidents from the story to provide examples. (*There is no right answer to this question! But you should be able to support your reasoning with examples from the book.*)

1

2

3

**Character:** One of the persons of a drama or novel.  
Merriam-Webster dictionary

The main characters have very different relationships to things they own and to their values and beliefs around ownership or possessions, generally. What do you think is the main issue for each one?

Censa

Vittor

Despina

Nana  
Katja

Lizzy

Marie-  
Claire

Gigi

Owen

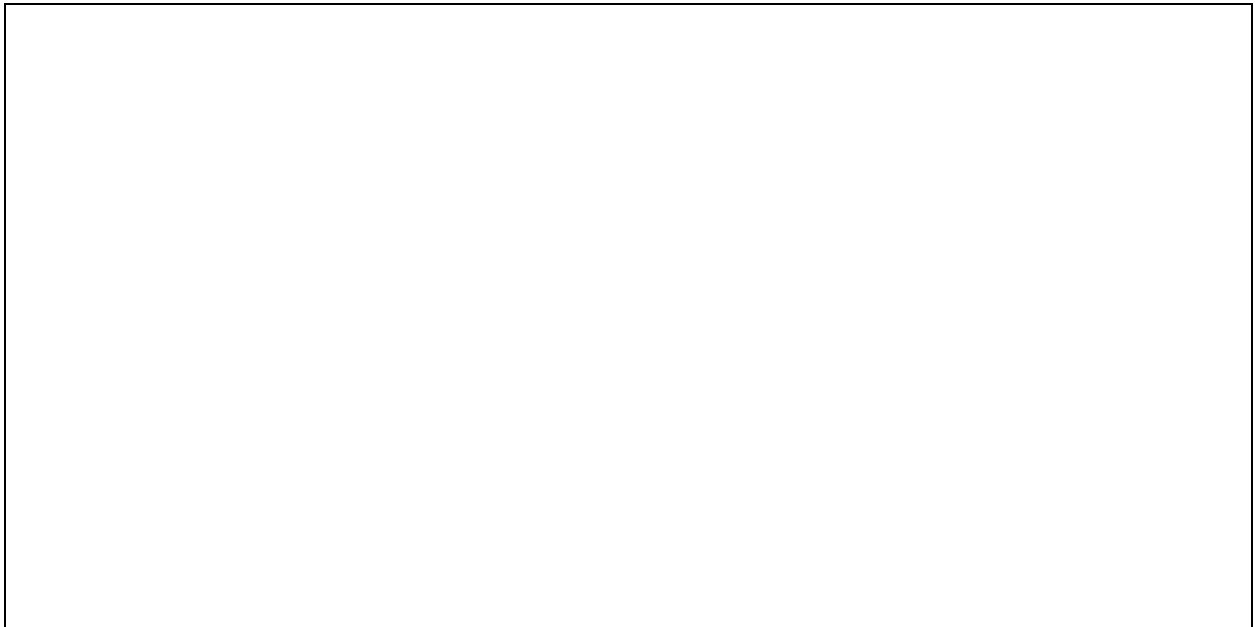
Gaspard



***Fantasy:*** Imaginative fiction featuring especially strange settings and grotesque characters.  
Merriam-Webster dictionary

The box, its contents—and the way it appeared—could be considered slightly fantastical, since it is never explained. But the idea of the box actually came from what is said to be a real incident (never solved) of a mysterious box falling from the sky onto a woman's head. You can read about it [here](#) (*Notecase from the Sky*).

Of course, *all* fiction is imaginative, but even the most fantastic can tell us about ourselves and uncover human nature. What is revealed about people in this story that you haven't thought about before? What did you learn from it that might be relevant to your own life?



*Character arc:* The change or growth of the protagonist through the story.  
Narrative First.

In nearly all stories (there are a few exceptions), the main character undergoes personal growth as a result of the experience they go through. This is one of the things that makes a story compelling. Static characters don't attract us very much. What is Ćensa's character arc? What is she like at the beginning and how has she changed by the end of the story? What do you think of this change?

What do you think of Ćensa's relationship with her mother? What do you think of the new understanding she has come to by the end of the book?



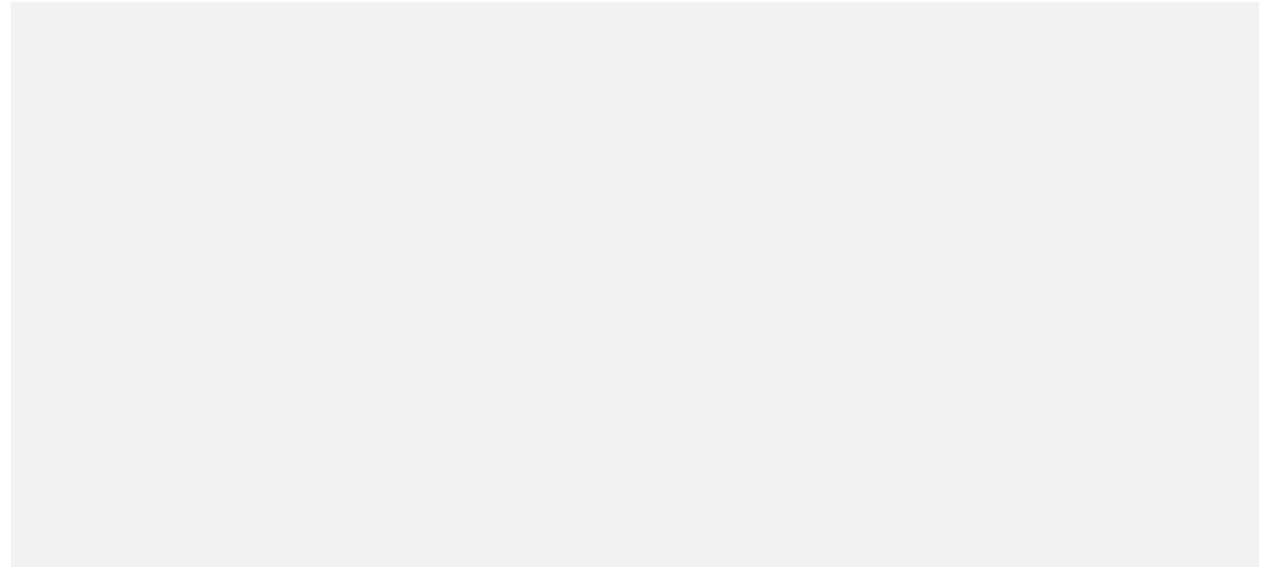
What do you think of Censa's use of the mysterious drug in her art process? Assuming you knew it was safe to use and non-addictive, would you do the same? Why or why not?

What do you think of Angel's decisions and Censa's reactions to them? What do you think you'd do if you were in Angel's position? In Censa's position? Why?

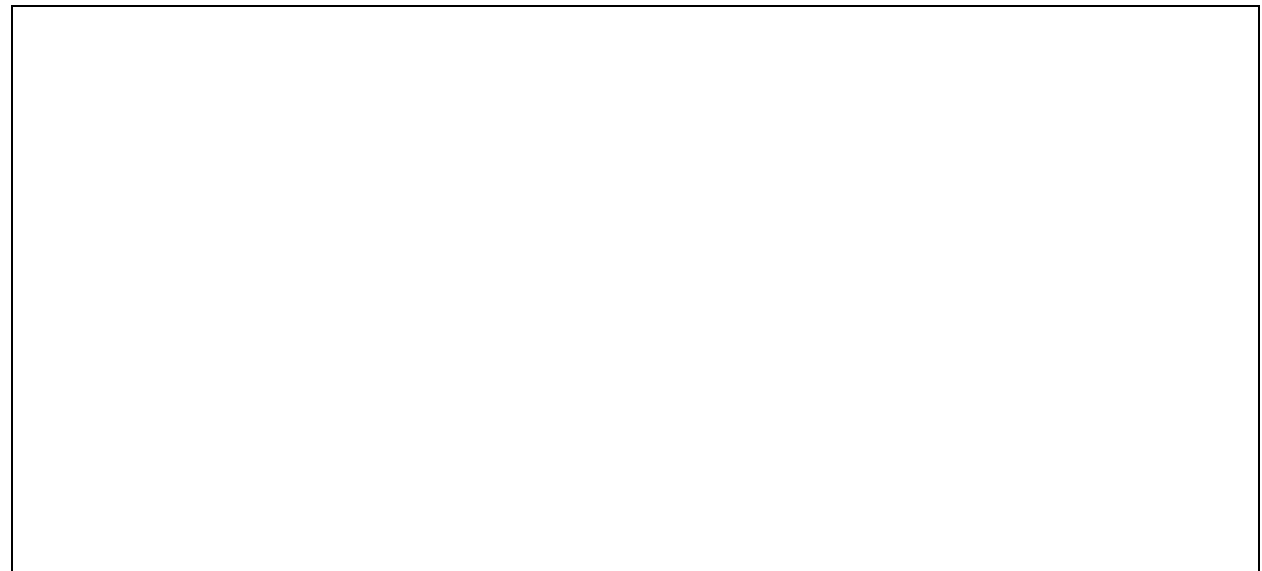
**Ethics:** A set of moral principles . . . dealing with what is good and bad and with moral duty.

Merriam-Webster Dictionary

All around the world, societies debate who has the right to live in their territories and their moral obligations towards the displaced. The concept of the right to let certain people *in* and keep others *out* relates to one of ownership over land. Yet, throughout the vast majority of human history this notion was non-existent. *Can* people really *own* the land? What do you think? What are the implications of beliefs about land ownership? What would change if they were different? Explain your thinking, below.



What do you think of Vittor's attitude towards refugees? What are some of the complexities of this issue for a country like Malta? (You may have to do some research to find out more about the country!)



*Setting:* Where and when a story or scene takes place.

LitCharts ([www.litcharts.com](http://www.litcharts.com)).

In a good story, setting isn't random; it helps to tell the story in some way. Now that you've learned a bit about Malta—how does the setting in this country serve the story? Write your ideas, below.

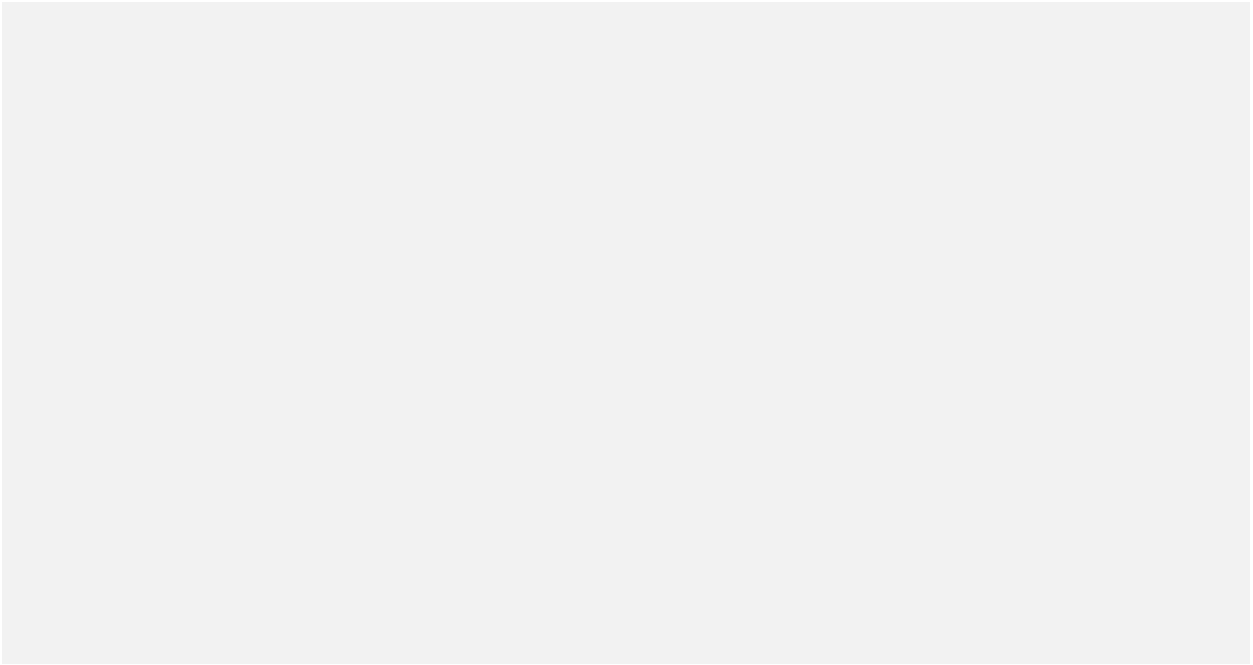


Photo credit: Loretta Rose

## *Final thoughts:*

Who were your favourite characters and why?

What were your favourite moments in the story and why?

What's a favourite quote from the book and why?

What were you left wondering about or pondering over after you finished the book?

*Anything you cannot relinquish when it has outlived its usefulness possesses you; and in this materialistic age a great many of us are possessed by our possessions.*

**Peace Pilgrim**