

All Creatures Great and Small Study Guide

All Creatures Great and Small by James Herriot

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Plot Summary

All Creatures Great and Small is the memoir of a country veterinarian that includes many different kinds of stories, from ridiculous anecdotes to tear-jerking memories. The book begins as Herriot starts off on his own after veterinary school. He is desperate to find a job and is offered the position as an assistant to Dr. Siegfried Farnon in Darrowby. Little does Herriot know what his acceptance of this position will mean for the rest of his life. Happy to have a job, he launches headlong into his new career.

Herriot's first veterinary visit is a reminder that the life of a country vet is not the same as that of a city vet in a clean office. He will have to endure freezing temperatures, sleep deprivation, a lack of electricity, and stubborn clients as he treats his patients. His job will not be easy, but his love of the work will see him through even the most difficult situations.

As Herriot passes his first year in Darrowby, he learns about more than just the animals in the region. He gets to know the people well and learns about their peculiarities and customs, as a vet usually ends up treating the owners of his patients as often as he does their animals. Herriot becomes a shoulder to cry on, a sounding board, and in some cases, a punching bag for frustrations.

Herriot's first winter in the region passes, and he is amazed by how cold the Dales can be. Spring comes in May, and all is renewed with the joy of lambing and the fresh countryside.

From stories about pampered lapdogs to rugged farm animals, Herriot reveals the inner workings of a vet's life and the struggles veterinarians face every day. He learns more in his two years in the Dales than he did in veterinary school, and he puts this knowledge to use time and time again.

Throughout these stories, Herriot always keeps his cool, even when his patience is sorely tested, both by Dr. Farnon and the people of Yorkshire. Herriot's stories of his life as a country veterinarian have touched millions of people throughout the world.

Chapter 1

Chapter 1 Summary

All Creatures Great and Small opens in the middle of a wintry night, as James Herriot is called to deliver a calf at the Dinsdales' farm. The night is freezing, and Herriot finds himself on the cobblestone floor of a dilapidated barn, struggling with a cow.

The delivery is not going well, and the hours roll by. Herriot's situation is made more complicated by a relative of the farmers. Uncle, as this man is called, has a veterinarian of his own, and he constantly reminds Herriot that his vet is much more qualified and capable, better built, and much more educated than he is.

As the night drags on, Herriot begins to lose hope that the calf can be saved. Just as he is about to give up, the calf's tongue reacts to his probing. This surprises Herriot, and he redoubles his efforts and delivers a live calf. Exhausted, Herriot attempts to wash up, but the single pail of dirty water is no match for the caked-on grime from the barn and the cow. Although Uncle is somewhat surprised the calf is alive, he still gets in a few more jabs before Herriot leaves.

Chapter 1 Analysis

This chapter illustrates how complicated it can be for a new veterinarian to begin his practice. Livestock owners are generally loyal to their veterinarians, and the intrusion of a novice is never welcomed. Through it all, Herriot keeps his cool, refusing to give in to his anger until Uncle throws in one too many jabs. Herriot seems almost used to this treatment and is well-prepared to deal with it.



Chapter 2

Chapter 2 Summary

It is 1937, and Herriot arrives in the town of Darrowby to apply for the position of an assistant with a local veterinarian. Fresh out of veterinary school, he is eager for these new challenges and hopeful that he will actually land a job. The majority of his classmates have not been so lucky, and Herriot is nervous about his upcoming interview with Dr. Siegfried Farnon. All through his long bus ride, Herriot has imagined Dr. Farnon to be a genial German who will treat him kindly.

Herriot is struck by the beauty and simplicity of the Yorkshire countryside, which seems mostly untouched by man. Having lived in the city, this is quite a change of scenery for the young veterinarian.

Herriot arrives at Skedale House, Dr. Farnon's clinic and residence, only to find that Dr. Farnon is not there and that the housekeeper has no idea where he is. She does not know about the interview, and Herriot begins to worry. His arrival is punctuated by the barking of Dr. Farnon's five dogs. The housekeeper instantly quiets the dogs.

Herriot waits for Dr. Farnon in the parlor, and just as he sits down there is a knock at the door. The dogs fly into action again as Herriot goes to the door. The caller is a farmer who speaks so strangely that Herriot can barely understand him. Herriot manages to figure out what the man needs and returns to the parlor. The same scenario replays several times, although Herriot now quiets the dogs on his own with a look.

The last caller is a young woman, who is also there to see Dr. Farnon. She regards Herriot with great distaste and refuses to speak with him. Finally, she gets tired of waiting and leaves, to Herriot's great relief. He goes into the garden and sits under a tree, eventually falling asleep. He is awakened, much to his chagrin, by Dr. Farnon, who doesn't look anything like Herriot imagined. No genial German is gazing down at him, but rather a typical Englishman complete with a tweed coat.

Chapter 2 Analysis

This chapter is a good look at the economic situation in Great Britain during the late 1930s. With war looming in Germany, many skilled workers cannot find jobs. They instead end up on the dole or taking menial labor positions. Herriot's opportunity is a golden one, although many veterinary assistants of the time would not agree. The majority of these assistants ended up being more of a housekeeper, landscaper, and all around handyman, usually for very little pay. The image of Dr. Farnon in Herriot's mind is stereotypical of a jolly fat German. The real Dr. Farnon couldn't be farther from this stereotype, and his appearance is somewhat shocking to Herriot.



Chapter 3

Chapter 3 Summary

Herriot's job interview begins with Dr. Farnon showing him around the laboratory at the clinic. Dr. Farnon has kept all of the antiquated equipment left behind by the former veterinarian of Darrowby, as well as adding new equipment and medications. Dr. Farnon seems to be in awe of these remedies and takes his job very seriously. Herriot tells him about the callers who stopped by earlier in the afternoon, and Dr. Farnon translates the local dialect for Herriot. One of the farmer's cows has mastitis, and they decide that Herriot will accompany Dr. Farnon on the rest of his calls for the day, including the visit to this cow.

Herriot and Dr. Farnon begin their calls at a farm where a draft horse is suffering from a sore foot. Herriot believes that the horse has pus trapped in his hoof, and Dr. Farnon has him perform the operation to relieve the pressure the pus has built up in the hoof. Herriot begins the procedure as Dr. Farnon looks on. The horse leans all of its considerable weight on Herriot's shoulder as the young veterinarian attempts to dig through the solid horn of the hoof to release the pus.

As the weight of the horse becomes unbearable, Herriot has no luck relieving the pressure. He does not want to have to rest with Dr. Farnon looking on, and he hopes that he can complete this first procedure without incident. Finally, Herriot gets the right spot, and the pus comes out of the hoof. Dr. Farnon uses a concoction of iodine crystals and turpentine, which he had showed Herriot at the lab earlier, to sterilize the horse's hoof. The concoction, when mixed, produces a large purple cloud, astonishing the farmer.

Herriot and Dr. Farnon leave and continue with their calls, finally ending up at Sharpe's place to treat the cow with mastitis. Herriot gets down to work and is immediately thrown against the wall by a swift kick from the cow. Embarrassed, he gasps for air but recovers and clears the blockage.

Chapter 3 Analysis

The first part of this chapter details a great many devices that were used in the late 1800s and early 1900s for veterinary work. Although they are outdated, it is obvious that Dr. Farnon is still attached to them. In this era, vets mixed their own medicines, which required a great deal of work. The remedies were usually strange and mirrored some of the same principles that were used for human remedies at this time.

One thing that has not changed is that the diseases affecting farm animals today are identical to what vets in the 1930s faced. However, they did not have our medical advances to cure these animals and had to rely on their own concoctions and strange remedies.

Chapter 4

Chapter 4 Summary

As Dr. Farnon and Herriot leave the Sharpe farm, Dr. Farnon decides to head home a different way. They stop at a pub, where Dr. Farnon surprises Herriot by offering him not only the job, but also four pounds a week with room and board. Most of Herriot's classmates, if they were lucky enough to find a position like this, are working for keep.

The night continues as Dr. Farnon and Herriot join the locals for a drink. One of them insists on speaking with Herriot and shares his recipe for a remedy for lameness in horses under the condition that Herriot never tell another soul. After much build-up, the man reveals that marshmallow ointment will cure a lame horse within seconds. Herriot, a bit tipsy at the point, solemnly expresses his thanks. Dr. Farnon and Herriot leave the pub and head back to the veterinary clinic, which is now Herriot's new home.

Chapter 4 Analysis

Although four pounds a week would only equal to about \$2 with the current exchange rate, in 1930's England this was a handsome salary. The fact that most veterinary assistants only worked for room and board makes this even more impressive.

The remedy shared by the man at the bar illustrates the tendency of many livestock owners to put their faith in strange remedies that normally do not work. Even today, some horse owners still use turpentine on open wounds, most likely doing more harm than good.



Chapter 5

Chapter 5 Summary

The next day dawns, and Herriot waits anxiously for his first call, alone. Herriot usually spends most of the day accompanying Dr. Farnon on routine calls, but Dr. Farnon has left to visit his mother. Herriot's big chance arrives in the middle of the night. Mr. Soames, the farm manager for Lord Hulton, calls with a sick horse. Herriot immediately leaves and arrives at the Hulton estate. Hulton is known for his stable of horses, and Soames is in charge of keeping them well. The sick horse is a champion hunter and has been in terrible pain since early that morning.

Herriot finds the horse pacing, sweating, and groaning. He is obviously in great pain. Soames thinks that it is only a simple colic or stomachache, but Herriot believes it something far worse. Herriot examines the horse and finds that its small intestine has become twisted, which is referred to as a torsion. Soames orders Herriot to fix the horse immediately, but the only thing to do is to put the animal down. Herriot tries to convince Soames of this, but Soames won't hear of it. Soames much prefers Dr. Farnon, and he insists that a simple shot will cure the horse.

Herriot is tempted to give the horse a shot of morphine to dull the pain and leave. His conscience wins, however, and he humanely puts the horse down. Soames is furious and vows to tell Dr. Farnon what a mess Herriot has made.

Herriot returns home, and Dr. Farnon arrives soon after. Soames immediately calls and begins to complain about Herriot, but Dr. Farnon tells Soames that he agrees with Herriot's diagnosis.

Chapter 5 Analysis

A recurrent theme throughout this book is that the owners of sick animals wait far too long to call for assistance. Even today, this is still a widespread problem. A torsion of a horse's intestine is very serious and causes great pain. Although there is now surgery that can save a horse's life, the technique was not known in Herriot's time. Herriot's decision was a painful one, but it shows that although he was tempted to mollify Soames, he overcame this temptation and put the horse out of its misery.

Chapter 6

Chapter 6 Summary

The next day dawns, and Herriot has had only two and a half hours of sleep. Herriot expects to see Dr. Farnon, but he has already gone to perform an autopsy of Hulton's horse. Herriot anxiously waits for him to return and confirm his diagnosis. Dr. Farnon arrives and tells Herriot that he was absolutely right. He mentions that his brother, Tristan, will be arriving from veterinary school later that day and asks Herriot to pick him up. Herriot is surprised by the name of Dr. Farnon's brother, and Dr. Farnon reveals that his father was a fan of Wagner, which explains why Dr. Farnon's first name is Siegfried.

After Dr. Farnon leaves, Tristan calls the clinic and Herriot goes to pick him up. Herriot is surprised that Tristan is very different from Siegfried both in looks and in manner. Tristan is very laid back and laconic. When they arrive at the clinic, it becomes apparent that the two brothers do not get along very well. Dr. Farnon expects more from his brother, who does not seem to care about being a veterinarian at all. Tristan reveals that he failed his recent examinations, which enrages Dr. Farnon.

The evening ends with Dr. Farnon storming out of the room and Tristan going up to bed. Tristan assures Herriot that Dr. Farnon will forget about the incident in the morning and tells him not to worry about it.

Chapter 6 Analysis

The troubled relationship between Dr. Farnon and his brother, Tristan, is slowly revealed in this chapter. They have a strange love-hate relationship and seem to spend a great deal of time at odds with one another. Tristan doesn't seem to care and spends his time getting by, which seems to be his preferred method in everything. Herriot finds himself in the middle of the arguing brothers, and uncomfortable situation. He likes Tristan very much, but Herriot has to be concerned about pleasing his boss as well. This situation will be covered more in depth as Tristan's visit continues in the following chapters.



Chapter 7

Chapter 7 Summary

In the weeks following Tristan's arrival, Skedale House settles into a comfortable routine. Every day, the phone rings at 7 a.m. as the local farmers discover problems with their stock. Although it is Tristan's job to answer these morning calls, he seldom does.

This results in Siegfried chewing Tristan out every morning, and then the discord between the brothers begins all over again. Herriot settles into this routine well. Another routine also begins as the area farmers get to know Herriot. They are all used to Dr. Farnon and begrudgingly accept Herriot. As they get to know Herriot, they warm up to him and treat him with their famous Dales' hospitality.

This chapter covers Herriot's appreciation of the area as he walks through the yard of Skedale House on his way to a call. Everything seems alive, and he is enjoying his new job.

Herriot stops to talk with the Boardman, a quasi-gardener and handyman at the house. The Boardman is a holdover from the previous veterinarian who occupied the house.

The call Herriot is attending is at the Copfield farm, known for its wild cattle. After a long battle with a herd of wild cows, which the Copfield boys soothe with injections, Herriot stops on his way home to enjoy the sunshine and bask in the overall good feeling he has had since coming to Yorkshire.

Chapter 7 Analysis

This chapter takes a brief look at the differences between a country vet and a city vet. Each one has basically the same tasks to fulfill, but Herriot truly appreciates the beauty of the area. While his job is difficult, Herriot cannot find any room to complain. He feels blessed that he has found this job, even though there are some obstacles with his clients and the new routine at Skedale House.

Any time someone starts a new position, especially if there is a popular coworker who has filled this position for some time, it is difficult to make your own way. Siegfried is described as a comet, which has captivated everyone in Darrowby. However, Herriot seems to have found peace and is gradually beginning to win over the residents of the Dale.



Chapter 8

Chapter 8 Summary

As Herriot learns more about Dr. Farnon, two things immediately come to the forefront. Dr. Farnon constantly contradicts himself, and a gaggle of women are always pursuing him. The women surrounding Dr. Farnon include the young woman Herriot met on his first day at Skedale House. She is much different when Dr. Farnon is around, but she still treats Herriot with disdain. Herriot desperately hopes that Dr. Farnon will not marry this girl.

Herriot is called to the Heatons' farm. Dr. Farnon joins him and then promptly goes in the wrong direction, insisting that Herriot said "Seaton." Herriot cannot get Dr. Farnon to change his mind, and they end up at the wrong farm, where Dr. Farnon orders everyone around, looking for a dead sheep that is not there. Dr. Farnon chides Herriot for sending him to the wrong farm.

There are several examples of Dr. Farnon's quirkiness in this chapter. He tells Herriot not to rush out on calls that are trivial and yells at him when he doesn't visit a farm for that very reason. The car that Dr. Farnon gives Herriot, an ancient Austin, is the cause of some of these problems. It is in horrible shape, but Dr. Farnon thinks the car is perfect. Dr. Farnon constantly berates Herriot to take better care of it, and then Dr. Farnon drives it into the ground himself.

Chapter 8 Analysis

Dr. Farnon is a man of contradictions, and it must have been difficult for Herriot to work for him. Herriot's good nature, however, allows him to take this in stride without losing his temper. This disposition makes Herriot a fantastic veterinarian and will see him through several future problems.



Chapter 9

Chapter 9 Summary

The times at Skedale House are not always serious. Tristan has added quite a bit of hilarity as he continually plays practical jokes on Herriot. His favorite joke is to impersonate a Dale farmer with an impossible case in the middle of the night, and Herriot always falls for it. After Herriot unsuccessfully tries the same joke on Tristan, they are both called out to fix a cow's eversion, a prolapse of the uterus that can happen after a strenuous birth. The entire uterus ends up outside the cow and needs to be cleaned and replaced as quickly as possible.

This particular prolapse is serious, and it takes Herriot and Tristan a long time to replace the uterus. The work is hard, and after they are done, they are both exhausted. Herriot warns Tristan that prolapses can reoccur and then sees his chance to get even for the practical jokes. Herriot calls Tristan later that evening, impersonating the farmer they visited earlier. He tells Tristan that the uterus has prolapsed again and he needs him to come back right away. This time, he has finally successful in tricking Tristan and laughs when Tristan whispers, "Are you sure it's all out?"

Chapter 9 Analysis

This chapter shows the lighter side of veterinary work and illustrates Herriot's sense of humor. A prolapse takes a great deal of effort to fix, and this case was the perfect opportunity to get even with Tristan. Herriot considers this quite a victory, especially because he has never before successfully pulled a practical joke on Tristan. Herriot seems to enjoy the company of the younger Farnon, who is much different from his older brother.



Chapter 10

Chapter 10 Summary

As Herriot settles in at Darrowby, the people become more familiar with him and some even request him before Dr. Farnon. The Bellerby family calls Dr. Farnon and asks for Herriot to take care of one of their cows. As Herriot is tending the animal, Ruth Bellerby walks into the barn and begins talking with Herriot. She is a pretty woman and very intelligent. She asks Herriot to give them a ride to a concert in town, and Herriot obligingly agrees.

The concert starts at 2 p.m., and it is a quarter to twelve. Herriot figures he has plenty of time as he is invited into the Bellerby house. The Bellerbys are notoriously unhurried people, and Herriot agonizes as they slowly eat dinner before getting ready for the concert. Herriot declines their invitation to join them because Mrs. Hall at Skedale House is cooking him dinner. He will need to get the Bellerbys to town in time to catch his own meal and then go back to the concert, and time is ticking away.

Ruth is trying to get her brother to go to the concert, and finally, just when they are ready to go, he agrees. This means that everyone has to wait for him to get ready. Herriot begins to worry, and he starts to get frazzled at this new delay. Herriot rushes everyone to the car and hurtles down the road to the concert. Herriot barely has enough time to eat after he drops them off and arrives back at the concert late. He gets several dirty looks as he takes his seat.

Chapter 10 Analysis

This chapter illustrates one weakness in Herriot's otherwise placid disposition. He cannot stand to be late, and the pace of the Bellerby family is maddening. Herriot does a good job building the tension in this chapter as he describes how the family methodically eats dinner and prepares to leave for the concert. They are calm people, and Herriot does his best to hide his frustration.

Also illustrated in this chapter is the theme of country life and how it differs from life in the city. Herriot was born and raised in a busy city, and although he appreciates the beauty of the countryside, he hasn't quite adapted to the leisurely pace of the area.



Chapter 11

Chapter 11 Summary

This is the first of several heart-rending chapters of this book. Herriot is called to check on a sick dog. He arrives at the house of an elderly man, who is obviously very poor. The man's wife died the previous year and the dog is all he has left. Herriot examines the dog, which is in great pain, and makes a diagnosis of inoperable cancer. The old man is shocked and asks how much time the dog has left. Unfortunately, the best thing for the dog is to be put to sleep immediately. Herriot readies the syringe while the old man says goodbye to his last remaining friend.

After the dog is put to sleep, Herriot goes to leave. The old man insists on paying him, but Herriot will not accept any money. Just as Herriot is about to get into his car, the old man runs up behind him with the remainder of a cigar, the only gift that he can find to give Herriot for his kindness.

Chapter 11 Analysis

Dealing with animals can be very emotional. The old man in this story has nothing in the world but his beloved dog. His house is falling down around him, and he is alone. The starkness of the scene contrasts with the old man's love for his canine friend. This story also is a contrast to other animal owners described in the book who don't care about their animals. The old man's gift of the cigar is heartbreaking, as you know that this is the one precious possession he owns.



Chapter 12

Chapter 12 Summary

The peace that has reigned in Skedale House is about to be shattered. Dr. Farnon, who is not good with money, assigns Tristan to take care of the accounting on the upcoming receipt day. All the bills for the locals and farm owners have gone out, and the next day they are expected to drop off their payments. Tristan agrees to take this job, confident that he can do it without any problems. Tristan is supposed to collect the money, write down the transaction in the receipt book, transfer the information to the ledger, and mark the bill as paid.

Receipt day arrives, and Tristan handles himself beautifully. All goes well until the afternoon, when a harried Tristan runs up to Herriot. Tristan has lost the receipt book and has spent two hours searching for it. Herriot tells Tristan that it shouldn't be that big of a problem if he transferred the names to the ledger, but Tristan has put off this last task. Tristan goes in to tell Dr. Farnon, dreading the response.

The ledger is not updated, so the same bills go out to the customers the following month. Lines form as angry customers brandish their receipts and demand to know why they are being charged twice. This cycle repeats the next month.

Chapter 12 Analysis

Once again, Tristan ruins a relatively simple task. The repercussions of this event are far-reaching and result in a good deal of chaos for the entire practice. This chapter illustrates how important it is to finish a given task and not put things off until later. The disaster caused by Tristan's laziness could have cost Dr. Farnon many of his customers, and it does cause a great deal of unrest.



Chapter 13

Chapter 13 Summary

Mrs. Pumphrey is a well-to-do widow who is the proud owner of a Pekinese named Tricki Woo. Tricki Woo has chronic health problems that are the result of Mrs. Pumphrey's overfeeding and over-pampering her pet, but Mrs. Pumphrey has no plans to change her care of Tricki. Mrs. Pumphrey has dubbed Herriot as Tricki's uncle, and she frequently sends him gifts, pictures, and cards in Tricki's name. This is the cause of great teasing from Dr. Farnon and Tristan, which will continue throughout the book.

To Mrs. Pumphrey, Tricki is more than just a dog. She sees her pet as a small, furry human. She regales Herriot with stories of Tricki's exploits and brilliance. Although Herriot knows that these stories must be made up, he indulges Mrs. Pumphrey and honestly likes her.

Chapter 13 Analysis

Tricki Woo will appear throughout much of the book. Most of the animals mentioned only appear in one chapter, but the saga of Tricki is ongoing. Tricki is a pampered dog without a care in the world, as are many dogs of the wealthy. However, this pampering can lead to problems, as illustrated in this chapter. Tricki's frequent vet visits are caused by Mrs. Pumphrey spoiling him, overfeeding him, and not giving him enough exercise.

Like many pet owners, Mrs. Pumphrey is guilty of anthromorphorism, or giving human qualities to an animal.



Chapter 14

Chapter 14 Summary

After Tristan's billing debacle, Dr. Farnon decides to hire a full-time accountant. Dr. Farnon's method of saving money involves stuffing the money in a jar over the fireplace, so an accountant is certainly needed. Miss Harbottle is a no-nonsense woman with a powerful aura about her. Her handshake alone is enough to make men quiver in their boots. She surveys the disaster that is the office and rolls up her sleeves to undo the mess. Her demeanor is businesslike, and Herriot is worried that she might be too tough. Dr. Farnon, however, is sure that he can handle her.

Chapter 14 Analysis

The arrival of a new character at Skedale House is sure to put some order into the three veterinarians' lives. At this point in the story, we have become used to Dr. Farnon's method of handling finances and Tristan's disastrous attempts at accounting. Miss Harbottle is sure to make a difference, although it may be painful at first. Dr. Farnon's confidence that he can handle Miss Harbottle will be tested as she settles in at Skedale House.



Chapter 15

Chapter 15 Summary

After having a fresh farm breakfast at a client's house, Dr. Farnon decides they should raise their own stock. Although Herriot and Tristan aren't so sure, the next day ten pullets and ten piglets arrive at Skedale House. Dr. Farnon puts Tristan in charge of their care and hopes that he will soon have a productive bunch of hens and pigs to take to market. However, these hopes are quickly dashed. The hens will not produce, and Tristan is not adept at handling them.

Herriot arrives at Skedale House after a call to find the hens in a tree. Tristan has let them get out, and now he can't find them all. Dr. Farnon arrives home, furious because the chickens are all over the neighborhood, creating havoc. After they catch the hens, Dr. Farnon sells them to another farmer. In two weeks, the hens begin laying ten eggs a day, which infuriates Dr. Farnon. His plan to be self-sufficient has failed, but it remains to be seen what will happen with the ten piglets.

Chapter 15 Analysis

Once again Dr. Farnon places Tristan in charge of a project only to have him fail miserably. Tristan just can't seem to get interested in the hens and has a lackadaisical approach to their care. Dr. Farnon and Tristan are locked in a cycle where Tristan is assigned a new project, fails, and then gets berated by his older brother. A few weeks later, Dr. Farnon tries something else, only to have Tristan fail again.



Chapter 16

Chapter 16 Summary

Tristan find the piglets much more interesting and begins taking very good care of them. They fascinate him, especially at mealtime. Each time the food is put out; the piglets rush the feeder and begin eating happily. Within a few seconds, however, each piglet wants what the other piglet has, and they begin tussling at the feeder.

The piglets quickly grow into pigs and become more dangerous. What was cute is suddenly injurious as they rush a terrified Tristan who is carrying their food pail. This scene is replayed several times until one day they all break past Tristan. Herriot arrives to find an exhausted Tristan and nine pigs. The pigs broke out of their sty and terrorized the town on a market day. Between wrecking displays, racing through the streets, and generally causing havoc, the whole town is in an uproar.

The missing pig is yet to be found when Tristan realizes that Dr. Farnon's prize hunting mare is also missing. Tristan forgot to lock the gate when he chased after the pigs. Dr. Farnon finds out about his mare after someone complains that she is eating his flowers. Dr. Farnon arrives at Skedale House in a complete rage, only to be met by an exhausted Tristan. Tristan refuses to go after the mare, and Herriot braces for World War III. Something in Tristan's voice changes Dr. Farnon's mind about berating him, however, and Dr. Farnon goes off to collect his mare. The livestock experiment comes to an end with the sale of the pigs.

Chapter 16 Analysis

The piglets in this chapter are very interesting. The way they eat, always wanting what the next pig has, can be compared to people who are never satisfied. As they grow, the pigs become more dangerous and finally overwhelm Tristan. For once, Tristan stands up for himself and escapes Dr. Farnon's wrath. This is an unusual move for Tristan, who normally puts up with his older brother's rages. It is obvious that even Tristan has had enough after the livestock episode.



Chapter 17

Chapter 17 Summary

Miss Harbottle is at her wit's end. Once again Dr. Farnon has emptied her new petty cash box. She begins to complain to Herriot when she hears Dr. Farnon's footsteps in the hall. She catches him trying to sneak past her and demands an explanation. Dr. Farnon explains that he got into the habit of taking what he needed from the pot on the fireplace and that his system worked quite well. Miss Harbottle reminds him that this is no way to run a business and that he cannot continue to empty the cash box whenever he feels like it. She also begins berating Dr. Farnon about his failure to log his visits in the ledger and his horrible handwriting when he does. He mumbles that he will take care of it while trying to make his escape.

Chapter 17 Analysis

Dr. Farnon's plans to control Miss Harbottle are not working. She has taken over the office and is desperately trying to keep everything organized. It becomes apparent that Dr. Farnon is much like Tristan in that he is not responsible when it comes to handling finances or keeping track of his business. He is finally put in Tristan's position when Miss Harbottle calls him out on the carpet.



Chapter 18

Chapter 18 Summary

Herriot looks back over the past six months at Skedale House and all of the experience he has picked up. He reminisces about an incident in veterinary school that has stuck with him. He was fresh out of a passing his equine portion of his exams when he came upon a seemingly suffering carthorse. The horse did not look well, and it seemed burdened as it waited for his master to return. Confident in all of his newfound knowledge, Herriot approached the animal on the street and began examining him.

After walking around the horse, Herriot patted the creature on the shoulder in a gesture of understanding. Suddenly, the horse grabbed him by his coat and hung him in the air, refusing to put him down. A crowd gathered as the horse continued to hold Herriot in his teeth. The owner finally arrived and told the horse to put Herriot down. The horse complied, and the owner berated Herriot for touching his horse. Standing there with his ruined coat, Herriot learned a valuable lesson about horses and about life.

Chapter 18 Analysis

This is a humorous account of Herriot's days as a student. Confident in his new abilities and feeling like a master, he ends up making a fool of himself. Herriot has no problem sharing these amusing stories that are not necessarily flattering toward him. There are definite lessons to be learned from Herriot's experiences, and this one deals with feeling sure of yourself when you really have no experience.



Chapter 19

Chapter 19 Summary

Herriot receives an invitation from Tricky Woo to attend a party at Mrs. Pumphrey's. This invitation causes a great deal of hysteria at Skedale House, as most dogs do not send their vets invitations. Herriot agrees to go and is greeted by Mrs. Pumphrey. She takes him to visit Tricky, who has been locked up for the festivities. Herriot sees the amount of food that Mrs. Pumphrey has put out for the dog. Two heaping bowls of chicken and cake have been left for the tiny Pekinese. Herriot demands that Mrs. Pumphrey remove the cake and most of the chicken, and she eagerly complies.

During the party, Herriot has too much champagne and thoroughly enjoys himself. After wishing Tricky a good night, he heads home to bed. A call pierces his slumber, and he drags himself out of bed to help a gilt (female pig) give birth to her first litter. As Herriot struggles to pull the first piglet out, he falls asleep on the ground due to the amount of champagne he drank earlier. The farmer leans over Herriot and wakes him, much to Herriot's embarrassment. Finally, the first piglet arrives, and the rest follow shortly.

Chapter 19 Analysis

Tricky Woo sends Herriot an invitation. Mrs. Pumphrey is responsible, but she insists that Tricky is just very talented. The party is a rare one for Herriot, who is not used to drinking that much champagne and talking to that many people. This catches up with him, with hilarious results, later in the evening. The cold delivery of the piglets contrasts sharply with Herriot's earlier revelry at Mrs. Pumphrey's party.



Chapter 20

Chapter 20 Summary

Miss Harbottle finally ends up on the receiving end of Dr. Farnon's contradictions. Instead of slinking past her as he usually does, Dr. Farnon confronts her and starts berating her on the way she is handling the affairs of the practice. Dr. Farnon insists that the cash box be kept full, even though he emptied it the night before. He also demands that the bills be sent out regularly at the first of the month, even though he does not fill in his visits in the ledger so that Miss Harbottle can tell which bills need to be sent. Miss Harbottle tries to interject these facts, but Dr. Farnon just continues, ignoring her, just like he does everyone else.

Chapter 20 Analysis

In Chapter 14, Dr. Farnon vowed that he could handle Miss Harbottle. Although it didn't seem to be working at first, he quickly resorts to his usual tactic of confusing requests that contradict one another. This seems to be his method of handling people, as was illustrated earlier with a similar attempt with Herriot. Instead of following his own advice, Dr. Farnon sets expectations for everyone else and promptly disregards these rules for himself.



Chapter 21

Chapter 21 Summary

Herriot finishes removing a large tumor from a Labrador retriever. The dog, which is still anesthetized, is placed in front of the stove while Herriot goes about his morning rounds.

When everyone returns for lunch, the dog is still out cold. Then the dog begins howling every few minutes, with no sign of waking. Dr. Farnon and Herriot leave for their afternoon rounds, leaving Tristan to care for the dog.

When Dr. Farnon and Herriot return, the dog is still howling. Tristan is frazzled and can't seem to take the horrible noise any more. Dr. Farnon and Herriot have a meeting to attend that night, so once again Tristan is left with the dog. They return at midnight after sharing a few drinks with their colleagues. As they go up to the house, they can hear the dog howling. Herriot finds Tristan surrounded by empty beer bottles and the howling dog.

When Dr. Farnon comes in, the dog finally starts to wake up and begins falling all over the floor as it tries to walk. Worried that the dog will hurt itself, Dr. Farnon has Tristan take the dog into his room for the rest of the night. Now that the dog is awake, it has stopped howling, but it replaces the infernal noise with constant pacing. The noise of its toenails on the floor continues through the night, and Tristan doesn't sleep at all.

In the morning, Herriot relieves Tristan and takes the dog, which is now fine. Tristan, however, isn't fine, and he bets Herriot that his brother will be pleased with how the night turned out. It doesn't take long for Tristan to be proven right. Dr. Farnon apologizes, but he obviously is quite pleased.

Chapter 21 Analysis

This chapter is more about the relationship between the two brothers than the dog. Dr. Farnon seems to relish giving Tristan the worst jobs he can find. Tristan always takes them, and he always ends up regretting it. Dr. Farnon seems to enjoy torturing his younger brother, and we are left to wonder what Tristan's next task will be.



Chapter 22

Chapter 22 Summary

Dr. Farnon asks Herriot to take a dog to Dr. Angus Grier, a nearby veterinarian. Dr. Grier has seen this dog in the past, and Dr. Farnon doesn't think it is right to take his patient away from him. Herriot travels to Brawton and meets Dr. Grier. The man is a Scot, like Herriot, but they couldn't be any more different. Dr. Grier is a blowhard and goes through assistants like water. This is attributed to his nasty disposition and constant badgering.

Dr. Grier operates on the dog and then tells Herriot that he can't take the dog until it comes out of the anesthetic. While they wait, Dr. Grier asks Herriot to accompany him on a call to a nearby farm. The call is for the cleansing of a cow, an incredibly dirty job. Herriot tries to get out of helping by claiming that he isn't dressed for this kind of procedure and then realizes his mistake.

Dr. Grier pulls a strange black suit out of the trunk of his car. It is a complete body suit, made out of rubber and filled with zippers. There is even a matching skullcap. Dr. Grier convinces Herriot to don the strange outfit and follow him to the barn. He begins cleansing the cow while the farmers gape at Herriot with awe. For the time being, Herriot is standing against the wall, uncomfortable in the stiff suit. Finally, Dr. Grier asks Herriot to bring him something, and everyone assumes that the man in the strange suit will have an important task.

They wait breathlessly as Herriot gets a pessary and brings it to Greer. The procedure is finished, and everyone is disappointed that Herriot didn't do anything else. He struggles out of the suit and returns with Dr. Grier to the clinic to pick up the dog. Before Herriot leaves, he spots Dr. Grier, who looks as though he is having some sort of a fit. Instead, Dr. Grier is having a hearty laugh at Herriot's expense.

Chapter 22 Analysis

Dr. Grier is an interesting character and can be compared to the tried and true elder who looks down on his younger counterparts. Dr. Grier is set in his ways and doesn't appreciate the new breed of veterinarians. His elaborate trick on Herriot is amusing and shows the lengths that this man will go to humiliate someone.



Chapter 23

Chapter 23 Summary

Herriot is called out to the case of milk fever in a cow. Milk fever occurs when a cow suddenly suffers a dramatic depletion of calcium in its blood stream. The cow goes down and cannot rise. It usually effects cows that are good milkers and shortly after they calve. This means that the situation is even more severe, as two lives are at stake.

This particular cow belongs to Dan Cooper, a nice farmer with a wife who is thought to be quite mean. Cooper thinks that the cow that is lying in a stream is done for, but Herriot pulls out a new remedy that consists of injecting a large amount calcium intravenously and subcutaneously. Herriot gives the cow her first dose, but nothing happens. He moves to the subcutaneous injection and waits for a few minutes. Suddenly, the cow begins to respond. As they wait in the freezing rain, the cow regains her feet and struggles out of the water. Slowly, Cooper and his son carry the calf to the barn, and Herriot follows them.

Cooper and his son go upstairs to change clothes, and Mrs. Cooper orders Herriot over to the fire, where she provides a steaming bowl of water for his feet. Herriot tries to refrain, but changes his mind after a look from Mrs. Cooper. As he begins to warm up, she serves everyone breakfast, and Herriot is treated to his first homemade sausage. Although talking is not acceptable at tables in this area, a look of shock registers on Herriot's face and Mrs. Cooper gives him more. Before Herriot leaves, Mrs. Cooper gives him a parcel full of food.

Upon returning to Skedale House, Herriot finds Dr. Farnon and Miss Harbottle at it again. She has been winning the battles of late by writing down all of Dr. Farnon's mistakes in the ledger and rolling them out when he is in the middle of a crisis. This time her plan backfires. A particularly troublesome client calls for Dr. Farnon, and he begins to visibly get extremely angry. After Dr. Farnon hangs up the phone, Miss Harbottle waves a slip of paper under his nose. He grabs the paper and begins to shred it while glaring at Miss Harbottle. The battle has shifted back to Dr. Farnon's favor.

Chapter 23 Analysis

In this chapter, we see the effect that a new remedy has on Mr. Cooper. The miraculous recovery of his cow shocks him. We also see that while his wife is not thought of very highly in town, she really isn't a bad person at all. The customs of the Dale people are frequently mentioned in this book. In particular, the custom of not speaking during mealtimes is almost foreign to many people. You are usually expected to provide at least light conversation during a meal, which Herriot quickly learns is not done in the Dales.

The battle between Dr. Farnon and Miss Harbottle continues as she learns ways to gain an advantage over her employer. Just when it looks as if she is winning, however, she oversteps and makes the mistake of pushing too hard.



Chapter 24

Chapter 24 Summary

Tristan and Dr. Farnon are at it again after Tristan returns at 4 a.m., drunk from a Bellringer's Outing. Dr. Farnon has his usual explosion, which doesn't seem to affect Tristan much. Later that evening, Tristan finds a note from his brother telling him to go home because a guest will be spending the night and they need his room. Although Tristan has plans to go to the village dance that night, Dr. Farnon is not sympathetic. Tristan refuses to go, and Dr. Farnon finds the most unpleasant task he can for Tristan in punishment.

A local farmer has an extremely mean sow with an infected growth on her ear, which must be lanced. Herriot has tried to help in the past, but he ran from the sow when she tried to attack him. It was looking to be an impossible job. Dr. Farnon tells Tristan that he must lance this growth before he can go to the dance. Tristan leaves and comes back in a few minutes saying that he can't find the house. Dr. Farnon knows better and sends him again. Tristan returns with the excuse that the family isn't home. He gets sent right back out to take care of the sow. Tristan returns again, saying that it is too dark to lance the ear and he can't hold a flashlight and operate at the same time. This is too much for Dr. Farnon, who orders Tristan to complete the task immediately.

Some time later Tristan returns, reeking of pig manure. Later, at the pub, a cleaned-up Tristan explains what happened. When he went into the sow's pen, she came at him. She got him on the ground, and all of his frustration finally came pouring out. Tristan jumped up and chased the sow around the pen, screaming at the top of his lungs. The sow turned out to be a coward. In the midst of running away from Tristan, she ran into the wall, lancing the infection on her own.

Chapter 24 Analysis

Once again, Dr. Farnon assigns a nearly impossible task to Tristan, who manages to complete it, although not without a great deal of effort. The difficulty of the tasks seems to be elevating, as Dr. Farnon does his best to imbue Tristan with some sense of responsibility. Tristan's good nature wins out, and he manages to finish the job much more easily than he thought he would. He returns, triumphant, if not pungent, much to his brother's surprise.



Chapter 25

Chapter 25 Summary

Spring has finally arrived in the Dales and with it a whole new round of tasks for veterinarians. Spring is lambing time, which means that for two months they are inundated with sheep. Normally, they don't deal with sheep during the year, but they get their fill during these two months.

Herriot prefers lambing because he is stronger than the ewes and the lambs are cute. After lambing comes vaccinations for the new lambs, and Herriot is amazed after one round of vaccinations. All of the lambs are separated from the mothers and corralled into a large pen. After the lambs are vaccinated, they are released to find their mothers. Herriot expects the ewes to spend hours looking for their lambs in such a large herd, but they find them in less than a minute.

After lambing comes foaling, which is much more difficult. However, this is nothing compared to castrating colts. The farmers usually decide to have last year's colts castrated after foaling is completed. In the past, castration was done by tying up colts, throwing them to the ground, and quickly operating. Although this was easy on the vets, it was not easy on the horses.

In Herriot's time, a new method called a standing castration is popular. The horse is subdued with a twitch, a metal device that twists the nose. The twitch releases endorphins, which naturally calm the horse. Then the horse is injected with local anesthetic at the surgery site and castrated. Although it seems much easier, this method results in a great many injuries for vets.

Dr. Farnon sends Herriot on a call to remove a tumor from a horse. Although Herriot likes horses, he is not a horseman. This means that he does not have a "way" with the animals, and he is not good at calming them down. Herriot hopes that the horse is a nice, weak foal and that the operation will be simple. Unfortunately the colt is a large six-year-old stallion with enormous feet and a terrible disposition. No one is there to assist Herriot, so he leaves, hoping that Dr. Farnon will take this one.

In the following weeks, Herriot has nothing but nightmares about the surgery until the day finally arrives where he is forced to go back. Two handlers lead the horse, which is straining at his lead ropes, out of the barn. Wild-eyed, the horse thrashes around until they get him to stand somewhat still. Herriot tries to gingerly inject anesthetic at the site of the tumor. The horse lashes out and kicks Herriot in the leg.

Herriot is thrown into the wall, and although his leg is not broken, he has a terrible bruise and a limp that lasts for weeks. This experience teaches him that fear is much worse than reality. He isn't killed by the horse and lives through the experience.



Chapter 25 Analysis

In this chapter, Herriot discusses the wonder of new birth and the joy that comes with delivering newborn animals. This contrasts sharply with his slight fear of horses and the dread that comes with operating on them.

Herriot's experience with the horse teaches him a valuable lesson, although it is painful. Instead of worrying about future cases, he knows he has lived through the worst and that it is much better to go into a surgery without fear, knowing that fear paints a picture much worse than reality.



Chapter 26

Chapter 26 Summary

Herriot is called out to Phin Calvert's farm to look at six steers that are acting strangely. Phin is ready for the new veterinarian to do something astounding because he is fresh out of school and full of new techniques. As Herriot watches the steers stumble around, he figures out that they are suffering from lead poisoning. Phin had just added a new panel to the barn that contains paint made with lead. The steers have been eating the paint and making themselves sick.

Herriot recommends giving the steers Epsom salts because there is no cure at this time for lead poisoning. Phin is shocked at this remedy because there is nothing new about it. He invites Herriot in for a drink and remarks to his wife that he was hoping for a more scientific cure. After fourteen days the steers are back to normal.

A little while later, Phin drops in at Skedale House and asks Herriot to come out to his farm. Before he leaves, Phin flirts with Miss Harbottle, who is aghast and dismayed with this behavior. When Herriot arrives at the farm, he finds a bull that cannot breathe. After taking the bull's temperature, which is more than 110 degrees, Herriot decides the bull must have heat stroke. The bull continues to try to breathe, and he looks as though he is losing. Herriot asks Phin's sons to grab a hose and spray the bull with cold water. After a few minutes, the bull takes his first successful breath.

Once again, Phin is expecting something marvelous from Herriot and all he gets is a cold-water remedy. He jokes about it with his friends, who are discussing new veterinary remedies, and he says that Herriot doesn't bother with these. He just uses water and Epsom salts.

Chapter 26 Analysis

This chapter shows that even though you might expect a new remedy to work better, sometimes the tried-and-true method prevails. Although Herriot does know about new medications, he isn't afraid to try the old methods first, often with great success.

The reader is also left to wonder about the relationship between Phin Calvert and Miss Harbottle. Phin's behavior hints that they may have dated in the past, but this is never explained in the book.



Chapter 27

Chapter 27 Summary

Dr. Farnon is at it again. This time, he's striving for cleanliness and efficiency at the practice. He wants extra effort from Tristan and Herriot to put on a good show for their customers and be as professional as possible. His new plan will soon be put to the test. One of Dr. Farnon's old friends has a cow with a wire stuck in her second stomach. This is a perfect opportunity for Dr. Farnon to try his new method, and he asks Tristan and Herriot to accompany him. Dr. Farnon pulls out a special white lab coat for the occasion, and they head out.

Tristan is put in charge of the instruments, and Dr. Farnon hangs his brand new tweed coat on the wall behind them. Dr. Farnon begins the operation on the cow, and suddenly her stomach starts expanding through the incision. Dr. Farnon pushes the stomach back in only to have it come out even larger the second time. This is replayed a few more times until it looks as though the stomach will stay in place. Just as Dr. Farnon is about to remove the wire, the stomach bulges out again. He cannot get it back in and decides to release the gas that is pent up inside. He lances the stomach with his knife. Foul liquid begins shooting out all over Dr. Farnon and the barn. His nice coat is drenched, and the flood continues. He cannot let go or he will risk contaminating the cow's internal organs. Finally, the flood ceases, and Dr. Farnon can finish the operation.

The efforts to clean up Dr. Farnon are fruitless, and he leaves his friend's house quite dejected. Tristan and Herriot have to ride with him, and they stick their heads completely out of the car to get away from the horrible smell. Nothing gets Dr. Farnon down, and he declares the operation a success.

Chapter 27 Analysis

For the first time, one of Dr. Farnon's plans comes back on him instead of his brother. He is at the mercy of a fetid stream of liquid, which ruins not only his coat but also his plans for cleanliness and professionalism. The fact that it was a friend's cow must not have made this situation any easier for Dr. Farnon, but in the end, it doesn't seem to bother him at all. The brothers are in fact very much alike in that they just keep going, no matter what happens.



Chapter 28

Chapter 28 Summary

Jeff Mallock, the local knacker, is introduced in this chapter. A knacker is similar to today's rendering plant workers, but in Herriot's time, these plants were usually run by one person instead of a corporation. A knacker's job is to remove dead animals, cut them apart, and use the different parts for various needs, such as bone meal, soap, and glue. Mallock is also the town coroner for animal cases, and in some ways the locals trust his opinions more than the veterinarians'.

Mallock's ideas are strange, such as worms in a cow's tail or milk tumors, but the people still believe him. He enters this story as the last ditch hope for Cranford, a local farmer who needs to have his cow diagnosed as being killed by lightning for insurance purposes. Herriot refuses to give a diagnosis of lightning death because the cow obviously died of heart failure. Cranford wants to be compensated for the loss of the cow, but the insurance company doesn't pay for heart failure.

The local farmers have all tried their hands at attempting to use death-by-lightning as the cause of death. One went so far as to singe a dead cow's coat with a candle before Dr. Farnon examined it. The only problem was he let the wax drip on the cow's coat.

Herriot takes the cow to Mallock, who performs an autopsy. He finds a tumor in the cow's heart, which was responsible for the heart attack. This is not what Cranford wants to hear. He is known for his stubbornness and ill temper, and he takes this opportunity to vent at Herriot. Cranford then leaves, vowing to complain about Herriot to Dr. Farnon.

Chapter 28 Analysis

Cranford is an interesting person. Although the cow obviously has not died from a lightning strike, Cranford refuses to listen to reason. Cranford is not a poor farmer, but he still wants to bilk the system for all that he can. Herriot obviously does not like Cranford, and it is hard to blame him. Cranford claims to be an upright, religious person, but he is still trying to break the law.



Chapter 29

Chapter 29 Summary

It doesn't take long for Cranford to complain to Dr. Farnon. Cranford arrives at Skedale House and is beset by Dr. Farnon's five dogs that refuse to quiet down. The conversation is punctuated by their barking until Cranford leaves in disgust.

Cranford continues to ask Dr. Farnon's practice to look after his animals, however, provided that Herriot isn't the vet on the job. A few days later, Cranford asks Dr. Farnon to send over some ointment for his cows. As Dr. Farnon prepares the ointment, Tristan comes in. Dr. Farnon asks Tristan to take the ointment to Cranford and deliver a fecal sample to a nearby laboratory for testing. He asks Tristan if he thinks he can handle this, given his recent bumbles.

Tristan replies in the affirmative and is sent on his way. Three days later, a letter arrives from Cranford. He is threatening legal action, and it becomes clear that Tristan mixed up the packages. He opened the fecal sample at his kitchen table and saw that the directions required him to knead it in thoroughly into his cows. This is one time that Dr. Farnon doesn't mind that Tristan messed up. Everyone gets a huge laugh at Cranford's expense.

Chapter 29 Analysis

It is rare in life that people get what they deserve, but this is an excellent example of just that. Cranford must have had quite a shock when he opened the fecal sample in his house. We are left to wonder if Tristan truly mixed up the packages or if it was a deliberate effort to get back at Cranford. The truth is not revealed, but this story provides needed levity.



Chapter 30

Chapter 30 Summary

Tricki Woo is back, and this time he is very ill. Mrs. Pumphrey has overfed him to the point where he is nearly dead. Unable to eat or move, Tricki lies on the floor listlessly. Herriot is called out and decides that Tricki needs to spend two weeks away from home to recover. This nearly kills Mrs. Pumphrey, and all of the servants rush out with Tricki's toys, coats, beds, and everything else they can think of. When Herriot gets Tricki back to Skedale House, he puts him on the rug and the five dogs survey him. For the first two days, Herriot withholds food from Tricki, who is starting to come around.

By the third day, Tricki is ready to play with the other dogs and starts to recover nicely. He begins eating once a day and loses all of his excess weight just trying to keep up with the other dogs. Mrs. Pumphrey sends over eggs, sherry, and cognac to speed the recovery process, and Tristan and Dr. Farnon wonder if they should send Tricki home at all. The two weeks go by, however, and Herriot tells Mrs. Pumphrey she can come get Tricki. The dog runs to her and jumps in her arms, completely recovered. Mrs. Pumphrey thinks the recovery is due to a miracle of surgery and not just proper feeding and exercise.

Chapter 30 Analysis

Mrs. Pumphrey obviously loves Tricki, but the two don't make a good combination. She cannot resist Tricki, and the dog is greedy. Mrs. Pumphrey has made the dog ill by constantly feeding him. This chapter shows that sometimes what appears to be a miraculous cure is just the right amount of the necessities of life, food, water, and plenty of exercise. It will remain to be seen if Tricki suffers a relapse.



Chapter 31

Chapter 31 Summary

Herriot is awakened in the middle of the night for the second time. This time, the call is for a mare in foal that is having a difficult delivery. Herriot leaves, not bothering to change out of his pajamas. As he drives over, he gripes to himself that he doesn't know why he chose this job, but as he gets closer, he decides that it really isn't all that bad.

Herriot arrives and begins to work on the mare. The owner is quite shocked to see Herriot in his pajamas, which are loudly colored and striped. After some effort, Herriot moves the foal around in the mare's uterus, and he is born without any additional effort. The foal is alive, much to the surprise of the owner and Herriot. The farmer is pleased because he loves this mare a lot. He leaves some butter in Herriot's car and continues to tease him about his attire. Herriot decides to stop at a local cafe, but he forgets he is wearing only a coat over his pajamas.

Herriot orders a cup of coffee and a sandwich before remembering that he left his wallet in his pants at home. The waitress doesn't believe him, but she lets him have the coffee anyway. The locals in the cafe joke about Herriot and wonder if he's an escapee from a prison or just an eccentric.

Chapter 31 Analysis

This chapter is a fun diversion at this point in the book. It's not every day that a veterinarian arrives on the job wearing only his pajamas. Herriot's grumbling before going on the call is easy to understand, as most people would be a little cranky at getting hauled out of bed twice in one night. Once again, Herriot's natural optimism wins, and he realizes that he is lucky to work in a beautiful area and that the owner of the mare has a lighted barn, making the job much easier.



Chapter 32

Chapter 32 Summary

Herriot is called out to another case of milk fever at Mr. Handshaw's. The injection of calcium does not work as planned, however. The cow recovers, but she will not get up. They try a number of ways to get her on her feet, with some not-so-helpful suggestions from Handshaw's neighbors. Finally Herriot says he will be back the next day, leaving Handshaw to bemoan the fact that his father is no longer there to help him.

The next day, many neighbors are on hand to help raise the cow. Again, they offer a number of suggestions but no actual help in lifting the cow. Even though they get her hindquarters in the air, the cow still refuses to stand. Someone remembers that having a strange dog bark at a cow will get her up, and everyone rushes off to get their dogs. In a short time, the barn is filled with strange barking dogs, which do no good. Over the din, Herriot thinks he hears the cow's pelvis creaking. After getting everyone to quiet down, Herriot examines the cow and decides that her pelvis is broken. He utters the fateful words, "She'll never get up again," and leaves.

The next day, Herriot gets a call from Handshaw, who is triumphant. The cow is up and walking around. Herriot can't believe it and asks how it happened. Handshaw says that he remembered an old remedy from his father that consisted of putting the skin of a freshly killed sheep on the cow's hindquarters. Flabbergasted, Herriot discusses the case with Dr. Farnon. He reveals to Herriot that some cows have a weakening of their ligaments after calving, which can make the pelvis appear broken. He tries to tell Herriot that it happens to everyone and not to be upset.

Herriot is ashamed, and Handshaw wastes no time in telling anyone who will listen about the cow that would never get up again.

Chapter 32 Analysis

Herriot is never too ashamed to tell a humorous story about his experiences. This one in particular must have been particularly painful, as the story circulated for years. Again, Herriot keeps his good sense of humor and reflects that he actually did the cow a favor. Instead of being sent to the knacker after her usefulness ran out, she retired as the famous cow that would never get up again. A mistaken diagnosis can be fatal, but in this case it did not turn out too badly, at least for the cow.



Chapter 33

Chapter 33 Summary

Dr. Farnon delivers a message from Mrs. Pumphrey to Herriot when he arrives back at Skedale House. Mrs. Pumphrey needs him to examine her pig. Herriot thinks he means peke, and asks Dr. Farnon to repeat the message. No, Dr. Farnon meant pig. Mystified, Herriot drives over to Mrs. Pumphrey's and learns that it is indeed a pig. Mrs. Pumphrey has visited relatives in the country and brought home a pig to keep Tricki Woo company. She is currently keeping the pig, Nugent, in the kitchen, which is obviously not sitting well with her cook. Pigs are particularly odiferous, and Nugent is no exception. After pronouncing Nugent sound, Herriot convinces Mrs. Pumphrey that pigs belong outside.

A palatial sty is built for Nugent, and he enjoys a life of luxury, punctuated by frequent treats, lots of attention, and playtime with Tricki. This joy is interrupted when Herriot gets an urgent call from Mrs. Pumphrey. As Nugent has grown larger, he has developed a strange habit of urinating in fits and starts, which concerns Mrs. Pumphrey greatly. Herriot assures her that this is normal.

Herriot now has a second nephew, as Mrs. Pumphrey insists on referring to him as Nugent's uncle. This isn't so bad, as Herriot frequently receives gifts from Tricki and Nugent, although this does result in some teasing from Dr. Farnon.

Chapter 33 Analysis

Once again, Mrs. Pumphrey can be counted on to provide an absurdly funny story in this collection. Her obvious love of her animals may seem misplaced, but it is merely the result of her loneliness. Although her staff may not like Nugent, she is certainly in love with him, and the pig is providing some much-needed exercise for Tricki.



Chapter 34

Chapter 34 Summary

Dr. Angus Grier has become ill with the flu, and Herriot must help him with his practice. Remembering the rubber suit incident, Herriot is hardly overjoyed, but he complies. Herriot has to live with the Griers during his stay and is treated to porridge for breakfast, lunch, and dinner, punctuated by the frequent complaining of Dr. Grier. Herriot gets a call to take care of a cow with a prolapse, and Dr. Grier instructs him to just put the uterus back and not place any retention sutures in place. Although this is against Herriot's good judgment, he complies.

Several days later, Herriot is called back. The uterus has come back out because there were no retention sutures, and it is now damaged and filthy. Dr. Grier accompanies Herriot and repairs the damage, although he does not take responsibility for the accident. The farmer is very upset and remonstrates Herriot, who remains silent about the advice of Dr. Grier.

Chapter 34 Analysis

This chapter is a great illustration of why it is important to do what is right, even against the advice of others. Herriot reluctantly follows Dr. Grier's bad advice, which nearly results in the death of the cow.

Dr. Grier's refusal to admit responsibility is interesting, as is Herriot's silence when the farmer tells him that he should have placed the stitches in the first place. It is obvious, however, that this is a mistake Herriot will not make again.



Chapter 35

Chapter 35 Summary

Dr. Grier's visit has reduced him back to his bedridden state, and Herriot has to stay longer. A call comes in from a Mrs. Mallard, who thinks her dog has a bone in its throat. Dr. Grier tries to get up, but he can't. He tells Herriot that it won't be a bone in the throat, but pharyngitis. Surprised that Dr. Grier can make long-distance diagnoses, Herriot follows his advice.

Herriot arrives at Mrs. Mallard's and is greeted by a woman in a green ball gown, heavy make-up, and overpowering perfume. She is obviously not expecting him, and Herriot tells her that Dr. Grier is sick. Mrs. Mallard takes him to the dog, which is just fine. Herriot examines him just in case, and he tells Mrs. Marshall that it must be a case of pharyngitis.

Thinking the incident very strange, Herriot returns to the office. The next day, he is examining a Bassett hound when the owner mentions that he lives next to Mrs. Mallard and that her dog must be awfully sick. He has seen Dr. Grier's car there quite a lot, always at night. Finally, the man's connotations dawn on Herriot, and he reacts with shock. Although it is hard for him to imagine that Dr. Grier is having an affair with the woman, he is more embarrassed that he stood there talking about pharyngitis when the woman knew better.

After two more days, a new assistant arrives, and Herriot returns to Skedale House. As he approaches, he can hear the two brothers arguing, as usual. Happy to be home, Herriot is beset by all five dogs and surprises Dr. Farnon, who is very happy to have Herriot back home.

Chapter 35 Analysis

The revelation of Dr. Grier's affair is shocking, but the way that Herriot reacts is interesting. Although he is surprised that Grier would have an affair, he is more concerned about how he acted at the house that night because the woman knew he was talking nonsense. It is easy to tell that being a good veterinarian is much more important to Herriot than unearthing someone else's love affairs.



Chapter 36

Chapter 36 Summary

Herriot visits a young, poor farmer named Terry Watson, who has a cow with mastitis. This disease usually means that the cow will not be a good milk producer, and it drops the value of the cow dramatically. This is the last thing that Watson needs. Herriot confirms the diagnosis and tells Watson that the cow most likely will have to get by on three udders, as the mastitis is very bad. Watson asks what he can do, and Herriot tells him that he will give the cow an injection and if the farmer can strip the udder every half hour, she may have some hope. This glimmer of hope is a lifeline to Watson.

The next morning, Herriot is the area and drops in to see how the cow is doing. Watson is stripping the udder and leaning his head against the cow. Watson appears to be asleep when Herriot walks in. The cow is perfectly normal, and Herriot can't believe it when pure milk comes out of her affected udder. Watson's wife comes in and tells Herriot that Watson spent the entire night stripping the udder, not even stopping to eat. Watson is obviously exhausted but won't stop until Herriot gives the cow a clean bill of health. Even though he has been up all night, Watson goes on to work.

Chapter 36 Analysis

Terry Watson is an example of a dedicated farmer whose animals mean everything to him. He was willing to spend an entire night taking care of an animal, even though he needs his rest for work. This event could have been devastating because Watson is poor, but his dedication is rewarded with a healthy cow.



Chapter 37

Chapter 37 Summary

Back at Skedale House, Herriot is operating on a dog to remove a rubber ball from its stomach. As he stitches the wound, Dr. Farnon walks in to observe. Dr. Farnon's presence makes Herriot very nervous as he tries to finish. Finally, Dr. Farnon yells at Herriot for using too much suture material and lectures him on the importance of thrift. Dr. Farnon finishes suturing the dog with minute strands of catgut and the least amount of cotton and dusting powder that he can.

A few weeks later, Herriot assists Dr. Farnon with an operation on a colt. The colt impaled himself on a fence post and has a great deal of damage to his chest. Once Dr. Farnon has cleaned the wound, he instructs Herriot to take over. Remembering his earlier lecture, Herriot begins to stitch the muscles back into place using the least amount of catgut that he can. Finally, it is too much for Dr. Farnon, who explodes and takes over. He rips off a long piece of catgut and goes to work. The line is so long that he has to stand up just to pull the sutures through.

When Dr. Farnon is finished suturing, he uses a two-pound box of dusting powder on the wound and ends up covering everyone, including himself, in the fine dust. He takes the opportunity after the operation to chide Herriot for his thrifty nature. Attributing it to Herriot's Scottish ancestry, Dr. Farnon encourages him not to be so thrifty in his next operation. This is almost too much for Herriot, but he quenches his temper and mumbles his agreement to Dr. Farnon.

Chapter 37 Analysis

Dr. Farnon's continuing contradictions must have been difficult to take. He continually asks Herriot to do one thing and chastises him when he does. If Herriot didn't have a good sense of humor, it could have resulted in him quickly losing his job. The two seem to work well together, however, largely due to Herriot's forgiving nature.



Chapter 38

Chapter 38 Summary

Mr. Worley loves his pigs. He is a retired newsagent and by all rights, should not be a successful raiser of pigs, at least according to the Darrowby locals. However, he happens to be one of the most successful pig raisers in the town despite his lack of proper facilities and livestock knowledge.

Herriot is called out to tend to Queenie, one of Worley's sows. She has a sore foot, and although this isn't something serious, Worley wants her taken care of. Worley takes an immediate liking to Herriot and says that he can tell Herriot loves pigs. After fixing the sow's foot, Herriot heads out. Herriot becomes a frequent visitor at Worley's inn in the afternoons for a quick pint. Darrowby has several liquor regulations, but the local constable doesn't appear to enforce them.

Some time later, Herriot is called out in the middle of the night to look after Marigold, another one of Worley's sows. She has just given birth to a litter of piglets, but she is not producing milk. Herriot finds the piglets in bad shape. Herriot quickly gives Marigold a shot, and although Worley doesn't think this will work, her milk soon begins to flow. Herriot shoots Worley in the glasses with a stream of milk, proving that she is healed. The piglets settle in for their meal, and Herriot follows Worley to the inn.

Herriot is surprised to find that the bar is full at 1 a.m., which is against local regulations. He joins the crowd of rowdy men for a drink, not realizing they are making him buy the round. He finishes his beer, pays the tab, and then heads out for one last look at the now happy piglets.

The next day, Herriot learns that Worley's inn was raided ten minutes after he left. The local constable was on vacation, and his replacement cracked down on Worley. Although he ends up being fined fifteen pounds, Herriot knows that Worley is more interested in his pigs than his business.

Chapter 38 Analysis

In this chapter we see again the contrast of an owner who truly loves his animals rather than seeing them as income. Worley cares deeply for his pigs and goes to great lengths to make sure they are healthy and happy. Worley is also a man who wasn't born into livestock raising and is looked down upon by local producers. This doesn't stop Worley from out-doing them at producing healthy pigs for market, bringing them much irritation.



Chapter 39

Chapter 39 Summary

Tristan drives Herriot out to a call because Herriot's left arm is in a sling as a result of an infection. They are in the dilapidated Austin because Tristan wrecked his car earlier that week. Dr. Farnon is ill and has decided that Tristan, however irresponsible, is the one for the job.

After the call, Tristan and Herriot relax in the sunshine. All of the sudden, the Austin starts rolling backwards. Tristan forgot to put the car in park. Their efforts to catch the vehicle are for naught, and it continues to pick up speed. They see a small wooden shed and realize that the Austin is going to smack into it. Tristan realizes that this time, it will just be too much for his brother. All of the surgical instruments go flying out of the Austin as it careens down the hill and hits the building.

As the dust clears, Herriot and Tristan realize that the entire building has been leveled and the car is on its side. Rushing to the scene, they find out that the car, other than a broken taillight, is not any more dented than it already was. The shack, however, is a total loss. They go back up the hill, and the farmer lends them a horse to pull the car back onto four wheels. The farmer reveals that the shed doesn't belong to him and is rented out by the local golf club that has put a nine-hole course on the rented land.

The farmer promises not to say anything, and Herriot and Tristan return to Skedale House. Dr. Farnon is very upset by the taillight, but he has no idea that the two were responsible for demolishing the club's house.

The next day, Dr. Farnon is even sicker and a call comes in that requires a five-mile drive. The Austin is still in the shop, and Dr. Farnon has no choice but to let Tristan drive his brand new Land Rover. After extracting a promise that Tristan will not wreck the vehicle and threatening him with violence if anything happens, Dr. Farnon allows him to borrow it. Herriot and Tristan head out to the call, enjoying the Land Rover. Tristan is delighted that he got an opportunity to drive it.

As Tristan and Herriot are driving, they see a car trying to pass a lorry in the oncoming lane. The car obviously will not make it, and they brace for a collision. The left side of the Land Rover is sheared off. Tristan gets out and collapses on the ground, certain that this time Dr. Farnon will kill him.

The other car is upside down in the ditch, and Herriot and Tristan run over to see if the driver is all right. Inside the car are dozens of eggs and chickens and a man covered in egg yolk. He apologizes profusely and offers to pay for the damage.

Herriot and Tristan proceed to the call, trying to figure out what to tell Dr. Farnon. They arrive back at Skedale House, and Tristan breaks the news. Dr. Farnon is furious, but



he is too sick to do anything. He fires Tristan again, but Tristan knows that Dr. Farnon doesn't really mean it.

Chapter 39 Analysis

Not many people can manage to wreck three vehicles in one week, but leave it to Tristan to give it a try. No matter what he tries, it always seems to come out wrong. However, his nature is much like Herriot's, and he seems to get through all of these incidents without getting too ruffled.

Dr. Farnon's continuous firing and rehiring of Tristan is replayed again. He has fired Tristan so often it seems to have become a ritual without any real implications. The lack of follow-through on Dr. Farnon's part may explain why Tristan never really has to pay for his actions and continues his normal course of living.



Chapter 40

Chapter 40 Summary

A call comes in from a farm in the Dales to check on a calf with a bad leg. Herriot arrives at the farm, but at first he doesn't find anyone. He finally checks inside the house, and he meets a pretty girl named Helen Alderson who is making bread. She offers to take Herriot to the calf, and they start the long trek up the hill to the barn.

Herriot examines the calf and applies a cast to fix the broken leg, promising to return in thirty days to remove it. Before he leaves, he talks with Helen and they enjoy the beautiful countryside around them. He ends up telling Helen his life story, and he realizes that he has not talked with a girl his own age in a very long time. He is attracted to Helen, but he is too shy to say it.

Herriot returns home and asks Dr. Farnon and Tristan if they know of Helen. They respond that she is sought after by the local boys, but she seems to be picky about choosing a boyfriend.

Chapter 40 Analysis

There seems to be very little time in Herriot's life for socializing, but he has finally met a girl who he likes. Helen seems to like him, but she may be just as shy as Herriot. No one else has seems to have any luck getting to know her, and Herriot feels as though he won't have a chance either. This visit is a foreshadowing of events that will take place later in the book between Helen and Herriot and hints at a possible relationship.



Chapter 41

Chapter 41 Summary

Herriot begins his work as the Local Veterinary Inspector for the Ministry of Agriculture and Fisheries. This long title means that he is responsible for testing local cattle for tuberculosis and other diseases. Testing day rolls around, and Herriot schedules a full day of testing.

Herriot's day begins to go downhill at the first farm. Although he had asked all of the farmers to have their cows inside, Mr. Kay has left the last six out in the pasture. They begin a fruitless roundup, which consists of much running around and ending up right back where they were. The cows do not cooperate. After several attempts, Herriot is at the end of his rope, but Mr. Kay calls a neighbor over to help. Although the neighbor, Sam Broadbent, is described as being "slow," he has one peculiar talent. He can imitate a fly.

Dubious, Herriot does not believe that this will do any good, but Sam begins to make a noise that sounds remarkably like an angry fly. The cattle hear this and run to the barn, allowing Herriot to finish the examinations at this farm.

Chapter 41 Analysis

The good-natured people of the Dales seem to have many good qualities. Even though Sam Broadbent isn't a genius, he is still respected for his one talent, imitating a fly, which makes him feel as though he truly belongs to the community.

Herriot is amazed at Sam's gift and thankful for his help in getting the unruly cows into the barn. However, he is far behind schedule, which will catch up to him as we move to the next chapter.



Chapter 42

Chapter 42 Summary

Now an hour behind, Herriot arrives at the next farm on his itinerary. The farmers are the Huggills, and they are some of the nicest people in the Dales. The Dales people are always hospitable, but this family of four brothers has taken it to the next level. They are always ready to agree with someone and do their best to make their guest feel at home.

The Huggills have a large herd, but they have all of the animals ready for Herriot. He begins the testing but quickly realizes that the brothers will not be much help in identifying the cattle. Walter Huggill pulls out his cattle book, but the numbers do not match with the correct cattle. Herriot is forced to scrape the wax off each cow's ear to reveal the identifying tattoo. This puts him even further behind schedule as he races to finish this call.

Herriot finally realizes that he scheduled too many inspections in one day and is sure that he will have an angry group of farmers at each stop. He is absolutely correct.

The next farmer has all of his cows inside, but he is very angry that Herriot has kept him waiting so long. The cows have made an awful mess of the barn, and the farmer doesn't think he will ever get it clean. In the summer months, the Dales farmers do not keep their cows indoors, which means that he will have extra work hauling all of this manure away.

Herriot finishes with this farmer and heads to the next four stops. These farmers have all turned their cows out because they were tired of waiting. Herriot is now hopelessly behind schedule.

The next farmer isn't at home, but he left the cows in for Herriot to examine. All is going well until he reaches a Shorthorn-Ayrshire cross that kicks him very hard. Skipping this cow, Herriot moves down the line and returns, hoping to come at the nasty cow from the side to improve his chances. This is a mistake. He soon finds himself getting pummeled from all directions and hooked in the back by the cow's horns. Spying a hole above him, Herriot pulls himself up to escape the cow, and he ends up in the hayloft. The farmer returns and asks him if he's taking a nap. Herriot describes what just happened, much to the glee of the farmer.

Herriot continues to his last stop, hours behind. He goes through the motions until he reaches the last cow in the line. Something doesn't feel right about this cow's udder, and he realizes that he's testing a bull. The farmer gets a good laugh at the exhausted Herriot's expense.



Chapter 42 Analysis

Herriot's good nature seems to crumble under pressure as he is forced to make up time. Everything seems to go against him with his testing, but his dedication to his work keeps him going.

In Herriot's time, tuberculosis in cattle was a death sentence for human beings. It resulted in meningitis and spinal and lung infections in children who drank infected milk. This seems to be what makes his job worthwhile, as he knows his efforts will prevent a possible deadly illness.



Chapter 43

Chapter 43 Summary

Miss Stubbs is an elderly woman who doesn't have much left. Her house is falling down around her, and she is bedridden. Her poverty is evidenced by the condition of her house and a small card that hangs in her room, reading "God is Near." Instead of being framed, it is just a simple card on the wall.

Miss Stubbs does have a dedicated housekeeper, Mrs. Broadwith, and three dogs and two cats. These animals mean everything to her, and although she is poor, she manages to take care of them. Unfortunately, all but one of her animals is ill. Prince, one of the dogs, has a bad heart. Ben, another dog has kidney failure, and the cats are both ill. Herriot is a frequent guest as he tries to keep these animals alive for the elderly woman.

Herriot is called out a short time later to take care of Ben, who he finds dead on the floor next to Miss Stubbs' bed. He tells Miss Stubbs that he is very sorry, and she responds that she will be next. Her illness is never identified, and she never discusses much about her past. Herriot feels terrible about Ben's death and Miss Stubbs' current condition. She is worried that she won't get to see her animals when they die, because she has heard that animals don't have souls. Herriot assures her that he is certain that animals have souls and that she will be reunited with them. This seems to give Miss Stubbs some peace.

A month later, Herriot hears that Miss Stubbs has died sometime previously, but not many people cared much about her to talk about her death. Herriot panics, worrying about her animals. He goes in search of them and finally finds Mrs. Broadwith, who has kept the animals. They all rush in from the backyard to greet him. Relieved, Herriot learns that Mrs. Broadwith will be caring for all of the animals for the rest of their days.

Chapter 43 Analysis

The story of Miss Stubbs is similar to the story of the old man and his dog from Chapter 11. She has nothing in the world, but she still does her best to take care of her animals. Herriot's profession of his belief that animals go to heaven brings Miss Stubbs the peace that she needs to let go. A veterinarian usually ends up taking care of animals' owners as much as the animals themselves. Herriot's dedication and love of his work is apparent in his concern for the animals after Miss Stubbs' death.



Chapter 44

Chapter 44 Summary

Herriot is doing his best to make progress with Helen Alderson. He finds out that she likes music and starts attending the Darrowby Music Society concerts to get to know her. His shyness, however, seems to be keeping him back.

After one performance, the vicar asks Helen and Herriot to clean up after tea. As they wash the dishes together, Herriot finally gets up the courage to ask Helen out. After a moment, she blushes and agrees. As they finish the dishes and return to the concert, doubt creeps into Herriot's mind. Did he force her to say yes? Did she really mean it?

Chapter 44 Analysis

Although Herriot is confident in his work as a veterinarian, his shyness when it comes to women is apparent. He obviously thinks a great deal of Helen and is having a terrible time overcoming this problem. Now that he has finally asked her out on a date, it remains to be seen if he will go through with it.



Chapter 45

Chapter 45 Summary

Dr. Farnon greets Herriot at breakfast with a news article stating that large animal producers generally don't love their animals like small producers do. This segues into a call that Dr. Farnon asks Herriot to take to float two horses' teeth. The farmer is John Skipton, one of the most successful farmers in the region.

Herriot arrives, and Skipton greets him. The old man grabs a pitchfork and hefts a small bale on his shoulder, telling Herriot to follow him. Herriot grabs his floating tools, which are quite heavy, and struggles after the older man. They finally reach a nice spot, where Herriot sees two horses resting in the creek. As they approach, Herriot realizes that the horses are very old. The mare is a chestnut, and the gelding is a bay, but they are so old they look like roans, or horses with white flecks through their coats.

Skipton asks Herriot to guess how old the horses are, and Herriot opens their mouths to check their teeth. They are both so old that there is no longer any way to read the grooves on their teeth to determine their ages. Skipton reveals that the mare is thirty and the gelding is about twenty-eight. Skipton says, "They were two slaves when I was a slave," and he leaves it at that.

Skipton is worried about the two horses because they seem to be dropping a lot of hay when they eat. As horses age, they need to have their teeth floated, or rasped, so that they can eat properly. Horses' teeth continue to grow through their lives and can become long and jagged, which inhibits proper eating. This condition can be responsible for various other health problems.

Herriot examines the mare and finds some jagged edges on her teeth, which he quickly repairs. The gelding, however, has two extremely big teeth that are each three inches long. Floating these teeth will take a great deal of effort, and Herriot grabs the shears, a long contraption that is operated by turning a screw with a crossbar. Although the horse doesn't feel any pain, the tooth makes a large crack when it comes off, which usually scares the horse.

Herriot starts to work, dreading the moment when the tooth cracks. However, the old horse just looks mildly surprised with the first crack and doesn't seem to care about the second. Herriot finishes up, and they head back to the house.

Before he leaves, Herriot talks with one of the hired men who tells him that Skipton visits the horses every day. Skipton always brings the horses something when he goes and takes good care of them, even though it has been twelve years since either horse has worked.



Chapter 45 Analysis

This is one case that trumps the stereotype of large livestock producers not caring for their animals. When you have hundreds of animals, it is hard to develop a personal attachment to each one, but some farmers do have their favorites.

In most situations, when an animal has outlived its usefulness it is sold for meat. It is a rare farmer who will continue to feed an animal that has outlived its use on the farm. Skipton goes beyond this by ensuring that his horses are not only well fed but well cared for as well.



Chapter 46

Chapter 46 Summary

After an assistant passes out at the sight of blood, Herriot affirms his conclusion that it is always the biggest men who collapse during surgery. Time and time again, whenever an animal is opened up, the big guy faints dead away.

Herriot has plenty of opportunities to test this theory on the locals. One incident in particular involved removing a nail from a cow's stomach. The farm was a local meeting site, and several people gathered around to watch the surgery. Herriot asked if anyone wanted to be his assistant, and a tall, strong young man offered. The young man strutted around, joking with the crowd. As Herriot made the first incision, the man passed out, falling over onto his back. The little farmer who was holding the cow's head came around and helped Herriot finish the job.

The last story covers a man who wants to learn how to castrate his own pigs. Herriot offers to show him, and the man decides to pay him first. Herriot's hands are already disinfected, so he promises to give the man his change when he is done. Herriot begins the incision, talking the man through the operation, only to discover he passed out on a nearby barrel.

Herriot finishes quickly and slaps down the change in front of the man. This wakes the man up, and he hollers after Herriot that he's short a shilling.

Chapter 46 Analysis

Every area has local idiosyncrasies, and Herriot seems to have catalogued most of them for the Dales region. This chapter is a humorous look at his theory of large men hating the sight of blood. Several instances are mentioned, and the stories are very amusing. This particular theory is most likely true in many cases, no matter where you are.



Chapter 47

Chapter 47 Summary

Mr. Sidlow is a farmer who only calls a veterinarian at the last possible moment, often prolonging his animal's suffering. He has gone through all of the vets in the area and now has no choice but to use the vets at Skedale House. Dr. Farnon usually gets Sidlow's calls, but after a year, Herriot ends up with him.

This call is for a bullock with an obstruction in his throat. When Herriot arrives, he realizes that Sidlow has tried to force the obstruction down, which has ruptured the animal's windpipe. Herriot tells Sidlow that the animal will have to be put down, but Sidlow disagrees. Herriot fills out a form certifying that the meat from the animal is fit for butchering and calls the abattoir to pick up the bullock.

Sometime later, Herriot is called over to the local racetrack to stitch up an injured horse. The horse's usual doctor is a renowned horse veterinarian, and Herriot nervously stitches the animal as carefully as he can. The stable boy offers him a tip on an upcoming race and suggests that he put five pounds on the race. By the time Herriot returns to Darrowby, he decides to go ahead with it and withdraws five pounds from the bank. He has plenty of time to get back to the track, and he dresses for the occasion in a nice suit. On his way out, the phone rings. It's Sidlow.

Herriot rushes over to Sidlow's, hoping to get to the track in time, and he finds a cow with Johne's disease, a certain death sentence. Herriot tries to take her temperature anyway, but the thermometer disappears inside the cow. Herriot removes his jacket and retrieves the thermometer.

Herriot races to the track and arrives just after the race. The horse the stable boy tipped him on has won at ten-to-one odds.

Chapter 47 Analysis

Again, Herriot's dedication to his job and the animals he takes care of is apparent. He is certain that the Sidlow family will let the bullock, or steer, suffer and he makes sure the animal is put down. His actions result in the entire Sidlow family disliking him immensely, but Herriot continues his efforts to save their animals despite the Sidlows' lack of care. In our time, a farmer like Sidlow would most likely be reported to the ASPCA, but there are still many livestock producers who are like him.



Chapter 48

Chapter 48 Summary

The fateful day has arrived. Herriot is finally going to take Helen Alderson out on a date. He is extremely nervous and realizes that he has nothing to wear. He pulls out a suit that he bought when he was seventeen, which doesn't fit anymore. Mrs. Hall does her best to modify the suit, but it is desperately out of style, and the overall picture is very amusing.

Tristan convinces Herriot to take Helen to the nicest restaurant in town, which is in a hotel. Herriot arrives to pick up Helen and sits anxiously with her father as she finishes getting ready. The two leave but quickly return after Herriot ends up on a washed out road. Their feet are soaked, and he ends up having to borrow a pair of shoes from Helen's father. The shoes are from the early 1900s and have small bows on them, but that's all her father will give him.

The rest of the date goes downhill as Helen and Herriot suffer a flat tire and the conversation becomes strained. At the hotel, Herriot learns that he should have had a reservation at the hotel to eat at the restaurant. The planned dance is also not taking place that night. They suffer through their meal, and Herriot drives Helen home in silence.

When Herriot drops Helen off, her face is anxious, but he is too mortified to notice. All he can think of is that she had a miserable time and really didn't want to go out with him anyway.

Chapter 48 Analysis

When Herriot is with Helen, he is always unsure of himself and quite nervous, unlike his usual carriage. His self-esteem takes a dive because he is in love with her and doesn't feel worthy of her attention.

The disastrous date seems to spell the end of Helen and Herriot's relationship, and it certainly will if Herriot allows it to. Helen's anxiousness shows that she cares about him too, but Herriot is too busy being mortified to notice.



Chapter 49

Chapter 49 Summary

The Austin has finally lost its brakes, a condition that Herriot endures for some time. He repeatedly asks Dr. Farnon to have the brakes fixed, but Dr. Farnon never seems to get around to it. The Dales country is extremely hilly, and Herriot has several near misses with the car and usually ends up stopping the car by crashing into an inanimate object.

Dr. Farnon finally drives the car and narrowly misses colliding with the farmer he and Herriot are on their way to see. As they whip around the farmer's yard trying to stop, Dr. Farnon calmly handles the situation until they find a ditch where they can safely stop. Dr. Farnon remonstrates Herriot for keeping quiet about the brakes, and as usual, Herriot says nothing.

Chapter 49 Analysis

Dr. Farnon's habit of putting things off finally takes a deadly turn. As it usually happens, he does not decide to do anything about a problem until it affects him directly. Herriot's silence at these idiosyncrasies shows the depth of his patience. When you consider the length of time that Herriot has spent as Dr. Farnon's assistant, it is amazing.



Chapter 50

Chapter 50 Summary

Harold Denham is a millionaire, but that doesn't stop him from playing football pools. Herriot won a pool once, so Denham always manages to find something wrong with one of his animals on Wednesday, the day that the pools are tabulated.

The visits are usually trivial, and Herriot begins to suspect that Denham is really more interested in finding out about Herriot's picks than taking care of his animals. The Denham family is well-respected, but Harold seems to be somewhat eccentric.

One visit results in Herriot being wounded by Denham's Great Dane. She has just given birth to a litter of pups and is suffering from a fever. The dog is friendly until Denham leaves the room to get a towel and hot water. Once he leaves, the dog is convinced that Herriot is after her pups, and she pushes him into the corner, growling threateningly. The dog bites Herriot on the thigh, and he grabs a chair to fend her off. Denham finally returns after wandering about with the water and towel. Luckily, Herriot gets away with just a badly bitten leg.

Dr. Farnon jokes about Herriot's new walk when he returns, but he quiets down when he sees the damage that the dog did to Herriot's leg.

Chapter 50 Analysis

The life of a vet is filled with interesting stories. The majority of Herriot's wounds have come from either being kicked or scratched by an animal. This all-out attack from a dog shakes him badly, especially given the location of the wound. It is not enough to make him want to quit his job, however. Once again, Herriot shows his dedication to his profession.

Chapter 51

Chapter 51 Summary

It is the second winter that Herriot has spent in the Yorkshire region, and already the snowfall is significant. Herriot receives a call to a farmer's house that is very remote, and he gets ready for the long walk because the snowplows do not normally plow in this area.

Herriot drives as far as he can and begins the long walk up the large hill toward the farmhouse. The snow is quite deep, but he keeps up a steady progress until a blizzard strikes. Herriot loses his bearings and can't see the farmhouse from his vantage point. He wanders hopelessly through the snow, falling into enormous drifts before finally stumbling onto the farmhouse. The farmer greets him and follows Herriot to the barn.

Once Herriot and the farmer are inside, the farmer, who seems oblivious to the blizzard, remarks: "Ay. It's a plain sort of day."

Chapter 51 Analysis

Often, locals grow accustomed to their weather patterns, which can baffle outsiders. Herriot has only been in Yorkshire for two years and is not used to the inclement winters they experience. His panic as he desperately tries to reach the farmhouse illustrates just how rugged this area is. It is easy to get lost and freeze to death in a blizzard, especially if you are not familiar with the terrain. It is obvious, however, that Herriot loves Yorkshire despite its horrible winters. Spring seems to make it all worthwhile to him.



Chapter 52

Chapter 52 Summary

As Dr. Farnon gives Miss Harbottle his order of visits for the day, he half-listens to Herriot, who is describing a case he is working on. Herriot thinks the calf has diphtheria and says that he is using liniment on the calf's throat and has given the calf an injection of Prontosil to help with the fever. Dr. Farnon thinks that Herriot said pneumonia, and he begins to question Herriot on his treatment. Calmly, Dr. Farnon asks Herriot to start from the beginning, which drives Herriot over the edge. Herriot re-explains the case, but Dr. Farnon still doesn't seem to be listening and ends up telling Herriot that as he gets used to being a vet he won't be so easily confused as he obviously is this morning.

Herriot goes into the backroom and kicks a box in anger. Tristan comes in and immediately knows that his brother is to blame. Herriot can't figure out why it's bothering him so much because he has gotten used to Dr. Farnon. Tristan thinks it is because of Helen Alderson and the recent dating debacle. Herriot admits that Tristan is right. Tristan decides to set Herriot up and arranges for a foursome at a local dance for the upcoming weekend.

Chapter 52 Analysis

Helen seems to be Herriot's true weakness. He hasn't gotten over the date with her or the fact that they haven't spoken since. Although Tristan seems to think that dating in general will fix Herriot's problems, it is obvious that only the return of Helen will put Herriot right.



Chapter 53

Chapter 53 Summary

Dick Rudd is a poor farmer who has scraped together a living out of nothing. He and his wife have seven children and have gotten by for years with just a few animals and no car. Rudd has finally purchased the cow of his dreams, a roan Shorthorn with a pedigree. She is a fantastic milker and everything seems to be going his way.

Herriot is a frequent guest at the Rudds' and is idolized by the entire family. Herriot is not sure how Mrs. Rudd feeds all seven of them on their small income. The reason becomes clear as he shares dinner with them and is served a filling rice pudding before the main course. By the time everyone has finished their pudding, they aren't hungry for the main course.

Shortly after buying the new cow, she begins to go downhill. Herriot diagnoses the cow with a throat abscess, but there is not much he can do for her until it pops. Herriot recommends heat and ointment, but the cow gets worse despite Herriot's best efforts. Throughout the cow's decline the Rudds provide Herriot with free food and extras before he leaves, making Herriot feel terribly guilty.

Chapter 53 Analysis

The poverty of the Rudd family is stark, yet they are a happy lot. They are willing to share what little they have with Herriot and seem to genuinely like their vet. Herriot is obviously fond of the family and appreciates their kindness. Often, it is the truly poor who are the most generous with what they have.



Chapter 54

Chapter 54 Summary

At last the Rudds' new cow is almost dead, and Herriot decides to try a risky surgery. He pops the abscess with a knife, but it appears to be too late. Herriot is convinced that she will be dead the next day. The once fine cow is now a skeleton, and all of Rudd's dreams are going down with her. The cow miraculously survives, however, and the Rudds couldn't be happier.

Chapter 54 Analysis

Many of these cases feature Herriot looking back and wishing that he could have employed current veterinary techniques back then. Now, there is a much easier surgery to treat abscesses, but he did not know how to perform the procedure. Herriot cares deeply not only for his patients but also their owners, and he wishes that he could have done more to help them.



Chapter 55

Chapter 55 Summary

By far, the worst problem Dr. Farnon has to deal with is non-paying customers. There are many different types of people who don't pay their bills, but the majority of them seem to be very charming people. Dr. Farnon tries a number of ways to get them to pay, but he always admits defeat. His favorite non-payer is a man he calls The Major, who has never once paid him or anyone else in town. The man is still well-thought-of and goes three years at Darrowby, running up bills without anyone truly getting mad at him.

Chapter 55 Analysis

This chapter is an interesting look at the characters of Darrowby. There are many who seem to get by without worrying about their bills, but the Major and his family are probably the most unique.

The fact that non-payers always expect prompt service is true. It is interesting to note that Dr. Farnon and Herriot continue to care for these animals, even though they know they will never receive payment for their services.



Chapter 56

Chapter 56 Summary

One exception to the charming non-payer rule is the local butcher. He has not paid his bill in more than a year, but he still expects prompt service. Dr. Farnon has it out with him, and the butcher becomes greatly offended. Herriot becomes aware that everywhere he goes, the butcher seems to be there too, staring at him.

Finally, Herriot gets a call at 3 a.m. to assist one of the butcher's cows with a difficult delivery. The cow is having twins, and they are twisted around one another. After much effort, they are finally born and both survive, against the odds. The butcher offers Herriot some sausages, but Herriot decides not to let him off the hook. He asks the butcher how much he owes him, and after a great deal of struggle, the butcher tells him the price.

Chapter 56 Analysis

It is interesting that Herriot pushes the butcher to accept payment for the sausages. Herriot knows that he will most likely never receive payment for the night's work, but he still tries to prove his point. The butcher's reaction shows that although he struggled with the fact that he should have given Herriot the sausages for free, he couldn't resist taking payment for them.



Chapter 57

Chapter 57 Summary

Herriot joins Tristan and two nurses, Connie and Brenda, for a night on the town. Herriot finds Connie very attractive, but she still pales in comparison to Helen. Herriot does his best to put Helen out of his mind and enjoy himself. The four of them end up at a local pub, where they get very drunk. After awhile, they go to the dance. After a few dances, Connie and Herriot get very hungry and eat ham and egg pie, which will soon come back to haunt them. Connie gets sick first and asks Herriot to take her outside.

Connie and Herriot stumble around the building, trying to sober up. The building, however, is on a hill, and they end up rolling through the mud until they hit the bottom. When go back into the dance, they are both a muddy mess. Herriot hears a familiar voice and looks up to see Helen standing in front of him. She surveys the two muddy faces and tries to be polite. Herriot is mortified.

Chapter 57 Analysis

It seems that Herriot cannot get Helen off his mind. Even though he tries to have a good time with Connie, he ends up making a fool of himself in front of Helen, again. Helen's reception of Herriot is interesting, as she still seems to care for him and seems hurt that he is with someone else.



Chapter 58

Chapter 58 Summary

This chapter is a collection of stories from a variety of different farmers in the region.

The first covers an old dog, Tip, that always sleeps outside his master's door, even in the worst weather. Herriot first meets Tip in the middle of the snowstorm and is surprised by the snow-covered dog on the step. Even though Tip is fifteen years old, he hasn't lost a step, or his will to sleep out in the cold to protect his master's door.

The next story is a very brief anecdote about an old farmer with a particular cow who likes to dip her tail in feces and slap the farmer across the face with it as he milks her. This slapping, alternated with frequent kicks, makes it quite a job.

The third story is about a man named Luke Benson who has a peculiar habit of speaking with his teeth closed. He doesn't particularly like anyone in the area, but he has a special hatred for his neighbor. Benson laughs when things go wrong for the poor man, until the man's wife runs off. Herriot soon finds out the reason behind Benson's sorrow. He wishes someone would run off with his wife instead.

The last story is about the Bramleys, a family of four bachelors and a sister who is also unmarried. They are set in their ways and seem somewhat strange to Herriot with their habit of sitting stock still, all in a row, after dinner. The Bramleys love their cats and have several running about on their farm. Feline enteritis strikes the cats, and they all begin dying. The whole family is upset, which is odd because most farmers do not regard cats very highly. Miss Bramley is particularly upset and keeps bringing sick kittens to Herriot in hopes that he can cure them.

Herriot remembers that a local lab is working on a vaccine and tries it on the surviving kittens. He asks Miss Bramley to keep him posted on their status, but months go by and he forgets all about it. Some time later, a note is pushed under the door of Skedale House: "Dere Sir, Them kittens is now big cats. Yrs truly, R Bramley."

Chapter 58 Analysis

This collection of stories, although brief, is another look at the types of people who lived in the Yorkshire region during Herriot's time. There were the typical farmers with exceptional animals, such as Tip; the farmers who couldn't get along with anyone else; and the strange batch of farmers that sticks out, such as the Bramleys.

These stories are still applicable today, and you could find any number of farmers who would match these descriptions in small towns across America.



Chapter 59

Chapter 59 Summary

Herriot comes across a band of gypsies who have a piebald pony suffering from founder. Founder is a condition that strikes horses after they eat too much grain or as the result of a disease. When a horse has founder, the blood flow to its hooves is increased, and the temperature of the hoof rises dramatically. The small bones in the hoof rotate and can cripple a horse permanently.

Herriot asks Dr. Farnon for help, and they return to operate on the pony. Although Dr. Farnon has never tried the procedure before, he begins to bleed the pony in hopes of decreasing the flow of blood to the hooves. After this is completed, Dr. Farnon has everyone lead the pony to a nearby stream. He recommends that they keep the pony in the stream for several minutes at a time, many times a day.

A few days later, Herriot sees the family leaving, and the piebald pony is fine.

Chapter 59 Analysis

The treatment of founder has come a long way since Herriot's time, but the remedy of cooling the horses' feet by submerging them in cold water is still widely used. Dr. Farnon's love of horses is apparent as he does his best to save the pony's life. Founder can still be fatal, but considering the techniques available to Dr. Farnon and Herriot, they perform a remarkable task. Dr. Farnon has never performed a bleeding, but he is willing to do all that he can to save the pony's life.



Chapter 60

Chapter 60 Summary

Helen Alderson enters Skedale House with her dog Dan and asks to see Herriot. Tristan runs to get him, and Herriot can't believe that Helen is actually asking for him. Tristan has Herriot put on a clean white coat, and Herriot goes out to meet Helen. Her dog has dislocated his hip jumping over a wall, and Herriot needs to pop the joint back in. He goes to bring Tristan in to help with this difficult procedure, but Helen offers to help instead. They begin to work together to fix the dislocation, and after some effort, Dan is put right again.

Mrs. Hall enters with tea and invites Helen to sit down with Herriot. Herriot can't believe that Mrs. Hall has joined Tristan in matchmaking, but he doesn't say a word. This time, they have no problem keeping up a conversation.

Helen calls Herriot later that night with an update on Dan, and Herriot finally has the courage to ask her out again. To his surprise, Helen agrees.

Chapter 60 Analysis

When Herriot is dealing with an injured animal, he feels comfortable with himself. He finally has the confidence to overcome his embarrassment with Helen. Her admission that she loves to work with animals and her help with Dan's procedure make it clear that she is a good match for Herriot.



Chapter 61

Chapter 61 Summary

This chapter is a look at two very different families. The first family, the Taveners, are very wealthy. They have a dog suffering from rheumatism, which is very painful. The mother and daughter loudly remark that the father is entirely to blame for the dog's condition.

Tavener offers Herriot a drink, and Herriot notices that the man's hands shake. He can't decide whether the man has Parkinson's disease or if it is the shake of an alcoholic. Tavener spills the drinks, and his wife goes ballistic. She leaves with her daughter, but not until they both give Tavener a baleful look.

The next family, the Altons, are quite poor. Tim Alton has called Herriot to look at his prized pig. The animal has a terrible fever, but Herriot gives him an injection and says that the pig will be okay. Alton is a hard worker and looks much older than his forty years. On the way out Herriot passes Alton's daughter, who is getting on her bicycle. She has saved some extra money and is going into town to get her dad a beer because he has had such a bad day.

The differences between the two daughters are striking.

Chapter 61 Analysis

Herriot seems to think very highly of the poorer residents of the Dales, and with good reason. For the most part, they are hard working, dedicated people who love their families.

The Taveners stand out in stark contrast. The wife and daughter have no problem humiliating Mr. Tavener in front of Herriot and seem to regard him with great disdain. On the other hand, Alton's daughter thinks the world of him and goes out of her way to do something special for him.



Chapter 62

Chapter 62 Summary

The second date between Herriot and Helen Alderson has arrived. This time, Herriot picks the cinema, figuring nothing can go wrong. He soon finds out he was incorrect. The theater owner is almost late opening the theater, and the usher is the daughter of a farmer Herriot knows well. She thinks it's hilarious that Herriot is out on a date and brings them to the "courting seats," which do not have an arm between them. She continues to snicker from a distance.

As the movie is about to start, a man in front of Herriot turns around and begins berating him for misdiagnosing his animal. Herriot can't remember who the man is, but he is relieved when the picture starts. Soon after, a man comes in the back door of the theater and wanders up to Herriot's row, obviously very drunk. He collapses on Herriot and then passes out in the seat next to Herriot and Helen. The rest of the movie is punctuated by his loud snores.

All through these disasters, Herriot notices that Helen has a strange look on her face. Thinking the date is going up in flames again, Herriot waits for the second feature, which is supposed to be about Scotland, and their whole reason for being at the theater. Instead of the scheduled movie, a western comes on the screen. Herriot is dismayed, and Helen finally breaks into laughter. After some time, she finally composes herself and says, "Next time, why don't we just go for a walk."

Herriot can't believe his ears. She actually said "next time."

Chapter 62 Analysis

Herriot has finally made progress with Helen, even though their second date turns out to be as big of a disaster as their first. Helen shows that she truly likes Herriot, despite all of the problems that seem to surround their dates. Helen's sense of humor and good nature will suit her well for a relationship with Herriot.



Chapter 63

Chapter 63 Summary

Dr. Farnon has an opportunity to become the supervising veterinarian for the Northwest Racing Circuit. Dr. Farnon loves horses, so this is a fantastic opportunity for him. All he needs to do to get the job is to impress the two men in charge of the Circuit. His only problem is that he would have to leave his practice and the area, which he has grown to love.

The big day arrives, and Dr. Farnon brings Herriot along. The two men and their wives are very fond of Dr. Farnon, and he seems to be doing well with his interview. They all head to the Brawton racetrack, and everyone is getting along quite well. At the track, Dr. Farnon has the opportunity to assist the track veterinarian when a horse goes down, and he bumps into an old friend, Stewart Brannon. Herriot has heard many stories about Stewie Brannon and gets along with the man right away.

Dr. Farnon asks the track veterinarian to tell the two men he will be right back and goes off with Stewie, dragging Herriot along.

Chapter 63 Analysis

Dr. Farnon has a golden opportunity to do what he loves and make a much better wage. He charms everyone and does very well looking the part of a successful horse doctor. However, the impression he has made is soon to go up in smoke. The return of Stewie Brannon will have lasting implications for Dr. Farnon's career.



Chapter 64

Chapter 64 Summary

Dr. Farnon, Herriot, and Stewie enter the track's bar. It's not much of an establishment and doesn't even have many chairs. The food is decent, however, and Dr. Farnon instructs the waitress to keep filling their glasses with whiskey. Two hours later, Dr. Farnon is very drunk and realizes that he has kept the two men from the Circuit waiting. When they find the two men and their wives, they are angry at being kept waiting.

It is apparent that the Circuit representatives have changed their minds about Dr. Farnon, who is wobbling around. They ask to leave immediately, and Dr. Farnon takes them to his car. The only problem is, he can't find his keys. After a thorough inspection of his pockets, he comes up empty. Stewie arrives with his tiny Austin and offers to give everyone a ride home. The two men and their wives are shocked, and one of them finally manages to short the engine of Dr. Farnon's car.

Dr. Farnon insists on cleaning the windshield before they go in an attempt to regain his usefulness. Unfortunately, he begins using a dead chicken to polish the glass. After they get home, Dr. Farnon reflects that it was for the best. He didn't want to leave Darrowby anyway.

Chapter 64 Analysis

After making a complete fool of himself, Dr. Farnon realizes that he didn't want the illustrious position after all. Like Herriot, he has come to love the Yorkshire area and would miss the peace of the country. His exploits with the dead chicken are hilarious and provide yet another humorous anecdote from Herriot's life.



Chapter 65

Chapter 65 Summary

Herriot begins dating Helen regularly, and he becomes a fixture at her house. Herriot can't quite seem to break the ice with her father, even though he likes the man very much. Since Mrs. Alderson died, Mr. Alderson seems to have retreated within himself and doesn't appear to like Herriot at all.

Later on, when Herriot is at Skedale House, Dr. Farnon mentions that he really should get married. Herriot isn't ready to take this step, but Dr. Farnon convinces him that it's the only thing to do and offers to let Herriot and Helen live in a suite upstairs. Worried that Herriot is too tentative with everything he does, Dr. Farnon thinks Herriot will string Helen along for years before getting up the courage to ask her to marry him.

Although Herriot would prefer to wait until he is more established, Dr. Farnon tells him to strike while the iron is hot and propose before someone else does. Reminding Herriot that he will one day be a partner, he finally wins Herriot over. Shortly after their conversation, Herriot asks Helen to marry him. She is surprised, but she says yes and they set an early date. There is only one more obstacle to traverse. They will have to tell her father.

Chapter 65 Analysis

Dr. Farnon has gotten to know Herriot well in the past two years. He is right that Herriot is a slow mover and doesn't make quick decisions. Helen's acceptance of Herriot's proposal must have been a great relief to Herriot, and it shows the progress he has made by having the courage to ask her. When Herriot has followed Dr. Farnon's advice in the past, however, something horrible always happened. Will this be the case this time as well?



Chapter 66

Chapter 66 Summary

After a particularly odiferous cleansing of a cow, Herriot returns to Skedale House reeking to high heaven. He goes to take a bath and spies Mrs. Hall's bath salts. Thinking they might do the trick, he pours in most of the bottle. The fragrance of flowers fills the room, and Herriot relaxes in the tub. He finally manages to drag himself out and falls asleep immediately. His slumber is interrupted at 1 a.m. by a call from Mr. Alderson. They have a calving problem and need him to come right away.

Herriot is under a great deal of stress because he wants to impress Mr. Alderson. Helen and Herriot still haven't told Mr. Alderson of their plans to marry, and Herriot knows he has to do a good job with this case or his hopes will be dashed.

Herriot arrives and examines the cow. In the heat of the barn, a strange smell starts to emanate from his body. Mrs. Hall's bath salts are in full force. Mr. Alderson and his sons immediately notice the flowery scent and give Herriot more than a few strange looks.

The Alderson cow has a torsion of the uterus, and the only way to fix it is by gently rolling the cow. They begin, and after several attempts, the torsion is released and a healthy calf is born. Herriot uses this moment of triumph to drop the bomb. He tells Mr. Alderson that he would like to marry Helen. At first, Mr. Alderson doesn't react, but he finally tells Herriot to come inside the house.

Mr. Alderson serves Herriot a drink, and the two sit in front of the fireplace. They begin to stiffly converse, but after three whiskeys, Mr. Alderson opens up. He tells Herriot of his love of Mrs. Alderson and how special she was to him. Herriot is surprised that he doesn't use the typical Dales statement that "she was a good worker" to describe his wife. This was a man who truly loved his wife. After a few hours, Mr. Alderson finally realizes what time it is and tries to show Herriot to the door.

The whiskey hits Mr. Alderson harder than he thought, and Herriot ends up taking him up to his room. Before he goes to bed, Mr. Alderson gives Herriot a smile, and Herriot knows that everything will be all right.

Chapter 66 Analysis

Disaster always seems to follow Herriot when it comes to Helen. Arriving with the powerful scent of feminine bath salts must have been mortifying. Herriot overcomes this and has the courage to finally bring up his marriage to Helen's father.

Mr. Alderson, although a seemingly gruff and quiet man, turns out to be a man who deeply cared about his wife. While most farmers in the area only speak of the quality of



their wives' work, Mr. Alderson truly loved Mrs. Alderson and prized her for her beauty and her ways.

Mr. Alderson's acceptance of Herriot is very quiet, but it gives Herriot the last shot of confidence that he needs.



Chapter 67

Chapter 67 Summary

It's tuberculosis-testing time again, and it falls during the week of Herriot's impending honeymoon. Dr. Farnon is beside himself and yells at Herriot for rushing off to get married. After several futile attempts to remind Dr. Farnon that it was his idea that Herriot marry Helen so quickly, Herriot gives up. He offers to stay at a local inn that he and Helen enjoy and do the testing instead of going on his honeymoon.

Herriot manages to fit his wedding in between tests, and the ceremony is simple. As Herriot and Helen drive away, they pass Skedale House. Helen points out that there is a new shingle outside the door. Dr. Farnon has made Herriot a full partner in the practice. They continue to the inn and enjoy a quiet dinner. The next day is spent testing cows and enjoying their new life together.

Chapter 67 Analysis

Although Herriot has always been dedicated to his work, this incident truly shows the extent that he will go. Skipping his honeymoon to test cows shows what a great match Helen is for Herriot. The fact that she doesn't mind shows that she is a good choice for the young vet. Her love of animals matches his and will provide them with many years of loving cooperation.

Dr. Farnon's surprise is a big one, and one that Herriot did not expect. It should have taken a few more years for Herriot to merit this position, but Dr. Farnon realizes the gem that he has in Herriot and rewards him.



Characters

James Herriot

James is the main character of these stories. His real name is Alf Wight, and he is a good-natured veterinarian who has experienced a great many things. He is a kind man who is always ready to do his job, even in the middle of the night. His good nature comes in handy during many occasions throughout this collection of memories.

Herriot was born in Scotland and is a newcomer to the Yorkshire region of England. The customs of the people he runs across are strange to him at first, but he quickly adapts. Although he was raised in a city, Herriot quickly becomes accustomed to life in the country and stays in this region for the rest of his life.

Dr. Siegfried Farnon

Dr. Farnon is the owner of a veterinary practice in Darrowby. He is a tall man with sandy hair and a long, handsome face. The women in the area love him, and he is rarely without a collection of women hanging on his every word. His appearance is generally unkempt but that doesn't affect his success with women.

Dr. Farnon is also a man of contradictions. Throughout the book, he frequently issues orders and then gets mad when they are carried out. He is also extremely absent-minded.

Tristan Farnon

Tristan is Siegfried's younger brother. He is good-looking, but unfortunately, a very bad student. He is studying to be a vet, but he continually flunks his courses, much to his brother's dismay. Although he is a student, Tristan seems to spend little time in class.

Tristan also has a way with women and is a frequent guest at the local pubs. Tristan is usually involved in some misfortune and raises the ire of his brother nearly every day. He is laid back and doesn't seem to be bothered by his brother's constant badgering.

Mrs. Hall

Mrs. Hall is Dr. Farnon's housekeeper. She is about sixty years old, and she doesn't talk much. She is used to the oddities of a veterinary practice and puts up with the majority of the doctor's antics.



Diana Brompton

Diana is a redhead and an admirer of Dr. Farnon's. She treats most people with great disdain, but she is completely besotted with the vet.

Mr. Soames

Mr. Soames manages Lord Hulton's horses. It is rumored that he is stealing money from Hulton and using it to better his position. He is a nasty man and vicious with horses.

Lord Hulton

Lord Hulton is only mentioned briefly. He is a rich landowner who owns several horses.

The Copfields

The Copfields are a farming families in the Dales. The sons, Frank and George, are fair-haired, strong men who effortlessly wrestle cows. The family is known for its wild cows.

The Seatons

The Seaton family suffers through one of Dr. Farnon's absentminded moments when he attempts to do a post-mortem at the wrong farm.

The Bellerbys

The Bellerbys are a peaceful family who never hurry. This family appears in the story regarding the rush to get to a concert on time in Chapter 10.

Mr. Dean

Mr. Dean is a poor old man who lives alone in a rundown shack. His only companion is an old dog, which Herriot puts to sleep.

Mrs. Pumphrey

Mrs. Pumphrey is a wealthy widow and the owner of Tricky Woo, a Pekinese. She loves her dog dearly and pampers him excessively. She is a sweet woman who means no harm, but she does a great deal of damage to Tricky.



Miss Harbottle

Miss Harbottle is the accountant and secretary who Dr. Farnon hires to keep track of their business. She is a no-nonsense woman who frequently clashes with her boss.

Boardman

The Boardman's real name is never mentioned. He is a holdover from the previous veterinarian who stays at Skedale House after the practice is sold to Dr. Farnon. He does odd jobs around Skedale and looks after their vehicles.

Mr. Atkinson

Mr. Atkinson is the farmer who calls Herriot out after a long party at Mrs. Pumphrey's house. Herriot falls asleep while helping Mr. Atkinson's sow with her litter.

Angus Grier

Dr. Grier is the vet at Brawton, a nearby town. He is a cantankerous old man who goes through assistants like water. He plays a practical joke on Herriot once and later relies on Herriot when he becomes ill.

The Coopers

Dan Cooper and his wife and many children are a poor farming family in the Dales. Dan is a nice man, and his wife is regarded by many as a nasty woman. She turns out to be very nice, however, and treats Herriot well.

Charlie Dent

Charlie Dent owns a murderous sow that has a run-in with Herriot and Tristan.

Mr. Wilkinson

Mr. Wilkinson owns a horse that causes Herriot many nightmares and finally comes close to breaking Herriot's leg during an operation.



Phin Calvert

Phin Calvert is a farmer who is fond of Herriot, but he expects more pomp and circumstance than Herriot can provide with his remedies. Phin flirts with Miss Harbottle when he visits Skedale House, much to her dismay.

Colonel Merrick

Colonel Merrick is a friend of Dr. Farnon's. He owns a cow that ingests a wire and sprays the contents of her stomach all over Dr. Farnon.

Isaac Cranford

Isaac Cranford is a wealthy farmer who tries to cheat the system by claiming one of his cows died from a lightning strike instead of a heart attack. He is a cheerless man who is disliked by most of the residents of Darrowby.

Jeff Mallock

Jeff Mallock is the local knacker, or renderer. He is highly regarded by the farmers of the area, and his strange diagnoses are frequently accepted over the veterinarians'.

Mr. Dixon

Mr. Dixon owns a mare, and he calls Herriot in the middle of the night to help her foal. Mr. Dixon gets a great deal of enjoyment out of Herriot's attire because Herriot neglected to change out his pajamas before going on the call.

Mr. Handshaw

Mr. Handshaw owns the cow "who would never get up again," one of Herriot's most famous misdiagnosed animals.

Old Hodgkin

Old Hodgkin is Mrs. Pumphrey's gardener. He is frequently forced to play with Tricky Woo and Nugent the pig.



Mr. Adamson

Mr. Adamson is a farmer in Brawton. His cow is nearly killed when Herriot follows Dr. Grier's advice instead of his own instincts.

Mrs. Mallard

Mrs. Mallard is Angus Grier's mistress. Herriot is called out to her place when Dr. Grier is sick.

Terry Watson

Terry Watson is a poor farmer whose livelihood is threatened by a cow with mastitis. He stays up for the entire night doctoring her, with great results.

Mr. Worley

Mr. Worley owns a local inn and pub. He is a retired newsagent who now spends his free time with his beloved and productive pigs.

Helen Alderson

Helen Alderson is a pretty young woman who lives on a farm in the Dales. She is sought after by the young men in the area, including Herriot. She eventually marries Herriot.

Mr. Kay

Mr. Kay owns a herd of cows that makes Herriot terribly late for his scheduled tuberculosis examinations for the Ministry of Agriculture and Fisheries.

Sam Broadbent

Sam Broadbent is a neighbor of Mr. Kay's who is rather slow, but he has a useful trick of being able to imitate a fly.

The Hugills

The Hugills are a nice and agreeable family that thinks the world of Herriot. They are his second stop on his TB inspection list.



The Bells

The Bells are a farm family that has Herriot inspect their cows for TB. One of their cows nearly kills Herriot while he attempts to examine her.

Miss Stubbs

Miss Stubbs is a bedridden woman who is very poor. She owns three dogs and two cats. One of her dogs dies, and she is greatly comforted by Herriot's statement that animals go to heaven. She dies shortly thereafter.

Mrs. Broadwith

Mrs. Broadwith is Miss Stubbs' caretaker. She takes in Miss Stubbs' remaining animals after her death.

John Skipton

John Skipton is one of the most successful farmers in the region. He owns two ancient horses that he loves dearly.

The Sidlows

The Sidlows are a strange family that doesn't take good care of their animals. They have gone through all of the veterinarians in the area and are stuck with the vets of Skedale House. They all have a peculiar habit of looking at people through the sides of their eyes.

Mr. Alderson

Mr. Alderson is Helen's father. He is a nice man who loved his wife dearly. After her death, Mr. Alderson retreats into himself. He is not fond of Herriot at first, but he grows to like him.

Harold Denham

Harold Denham is an eccentric man who plays football pools even though he doesn't need money. He owns the Great Dane that attacks Herriot.



Mr. Clayton

Mr. Clayton is a farmer in a remote region of the Dales. His farm is the site of a blizzard that nearly kills Herriot.

The Rudds

The Rudds are a poor family that admires Herriot. They save up for a pedigreed cow, only to have her fall sick and nearly die. The cow is saved through Herriot's heroic efforts.

The Major

The Major is Darrowby's resident con artist. He has managed to live in the area with his entire family without paying a single bill in three years.

Dennis Pratt

Dennis Pratt is a non-paying client of the Skedale vets who gets free medications by charming the vets.

Horace Dumbleby

Horace Dumbleby is the butcher of Algrove. He hasn't paid his vet bill in more than a year, but he still expects prompt service when he has a problem. After Herriot successfully delivers twins for one of his cows, he tries to give Herriot some sausages but ends up taking money for them anyway.

Brenda

Brenda is one of Tristan's girlfriends. She is a nurse and a friend of Connie's.

Connie

Connie is a nurse who Tristan sets Herriot up with after his first date with Helen fails. Herriot and Connie get horribly drunk together and run into Helen.

The Trenholms

The Trenholms are the owners of Tip, a sheepdog who always sleeps at their door no matter what the weather.



The Bramleys

The Bramleys are an old-fashioned farming family in the Dales. They love their barn cats and go through a terrible time when feline enteritis nearly kills all of their cats.

The Myatts

The Myatts are a Gypsy family that Herriot meets. He and Dr. Farnon successfully treat their foundering pony.

The Traveners

The Traveners are wealthy family. The father is despised by his wife and his daughter.

The Altons

The Alton family appears in the same chapter as the Traveners as a contrast. They are very poor but love and respect each other greatly.

Gobber Newhouse

Gobber Newhouse is the town's resident drunk. He spoils the second date between Herriot and Helen.

Stewart Brannon

Stewart Brannon is an old schoolmate of Dr. Farnon's. He is also a vet, but he is not as successful as Dr. Farnon.

The Allens

The Allens are the last family mentioned in this book. Mrs. Allen pushes Herriot to marry and is shocked when he actually does. She doesn't believe it until he shows up the next day with Helen. Herriot and Helen spend their honeymoon testing the Allens' cows for TB.



Objects/Places

Yorkshire

Yorkshire is an area of England that is pastoral and agricultural.

The Dales

The Dales are a region in Yorkshire where much of the book is set.

Darrowby

Darrowby is the town where Herriot practices as a veterinarian.

Skedale House

Skedale House is the home and practice of Dr. Farnon.

Heston Grange

Heston Grange is the name of the Aldersons' farm.

Mallock's

Mallock's is the knacker yard that is owned by Jeff Mallock.

The Inn at Darrowby

The Inn at Darrowby is the inn and pub owned by Mr. Worley.

Dennaby Close

Dennaby Close is John Skipton's massive farm.

Brawton

Brawton is a nearby town and the home of Dr. Angus Grier.



The Reniston

The Reniston is a fancy hotel where Herriot takes Helen on their first date.

Aldgrove

Aldgrove is a town near Darrowby.

Poulton

Poulton is a small village in Yorkshire.

Darrowby Plaza

Darrowby Plaza is the movie theater in Darrowby and the site of Herriot's second date with Helen.

The Wheat Sheaf

The Wheat Sheaf is an inn close to Darrowby where Herriot spends his honeymoon with Helen.



Social Sensitivity

As in his later books, Herriot writes in *All Creatures Great and Small* of his own experiences in the Yorkshire village of Darrowby while recounting anecdotes about his, Siegfried's, and Tristan's veterinary practice. As a city man come to the country, Herriot clearly believes that he has seen the good life, and he dedicates much of his book to vividly recounting experiences that justify his view. The Darrowby characters' distinctiveness and moral worth arise from their constant contact with the animals and lands, the demanding life of the Dales' often inhospitable land and weather, and the virtues and family life these difficulties inspire.

This life without the complications, indirectness, and abstract processes of urban living seems to leave people more "real" and more representative of universal, elemental, and human values.

Techniques

Many of Herriot's techniques may have evolved while his observations germinated in his mind during the thirty years between writing his diaries and writing his books. As happens in autobiography, the narrator is sixtyodd years old while he relates events that took place when he was about thirty. The reader sees the young man in light of the elder he has become. The young man is made more likable by being blended with the narrator's thirty additional years of awareness. This older narrator writes lovingly of seemingly superficial events that provide a glimpse of deeper themes while relating a simple story.

Each chapter is a separable anecdote, a short narrative complete in itself, usually featuring one new character and one incident of humor or pathos. A typical chapter shows a comic aspect of Herriot's coping with a problem involving animals and farmers. The chapter is an immediate, clear glimpse of particular elements of the whole lifestyle. Herriot mixes his informal narrative with local dialect and veterinary jargon, drawing authentic detail from the Dales and his science, touching the picturesque images with humor and nostalgic sentiment. The morality of events is rarely far away: How should people treat animals and each other?

How should people face triumph and tragedy? Herriot briefly describes animals, illnesses, and people, or steps back to admire the land while the anecdote's small plot carries the reader along. He often relates past to present, usually in terms of the progress of veterinary medicine, leaving the reader with a sense of the Dales' atmosphere in the late 1930s without the distracting comparison to modern appearances. By means of careful selection, he depicts situations in relation to clear general observations, without oversimplifying or overcomplicating the situation. The main weakness of this technique is that the reader starts and stops uncomfortably often between anecdotes, as the most important events are left too much in the background to hold his continuing attention. Eventually, these chapters accumulate into a sympathetic, nostalgic image of life in the subculture of the Dales, as Herriot uses literary devices as a vet would use his diagnostic and remedial tools: the simpler and surer, the better.



Themes

Themes

The Darrowby people Herriot encounters as a new vet illustrate many universal themes. Through their love for their animals and each other, they experience joy, pain, hope, satisfaction, and despair. As farmers, their success is not egocentric, but a chancy result of their cooperation with their land, their animals, the Dales environment, and the onslaught of disease and the knackerman, who carts away their dead beasts. This intensely difficult life accentuates idiosyncrasies, and evokes desperate, nonscientific folk cures for animal maladies, and nervous distrust of the vets. Herriot understands this and only rarely gets angry and is never bitter toward these brave, necessarily strong folk whose daily lives are much like climbing one of the 2,000 foot "fells," the bare, steep, looming hills into which the Dales are uncomfortably nestled. The animals' lives are instructive models for the people, for whom the ultimata of birth, death, and disease frame the daily morality of living.

These people, give or take an odd one, are good, Herriot says, adding, without preaching, that readers should learn from them. American suburbanites, apparently, see in these people the struggle for survival that they in their ease no longer worry about and yet still feel the need to recognize.

Dedication

The life of a vet is not easy, and Herriot's dedication to his work is tested throughout this book. Whether it involves pulling himself out of bed in the middle of the night for the second time or blindly struggling up a hill in a blizzard, Herriot never allows his work to slide. Even though Herriot may be tired, he gives his all to his patients, even when he is sick or just plain tired. For example, his first round of testing cows for tuberculosis turns out to be a fiasco, but he slogs through. The vision of sick children infected by bad milk keeps him going. Even when he is supposed to be on his honeymoon, Herriot takes the week to help Dr. Farnon with the scheduled testing for tuberculosis.

Mercy

Several times throughout these stories, mercy is important. Herriot always struggles to do what is right, especially when he thinks an owner will let an animal suffer unduly. One of his first cases, a horse with a torsion of the small intestine, is his first opportunity to exercise mercy. Although the caretaker of the horse, Mr. Soames, is adamant that the poor creature should not be put down, Herriot puts the animal out of its misery. When a bullock is suffering at the hands of the Sidlow family, Herriot doesn't wait for the family to call the butcher to come get the animal. He makes the call himself to ensure that the task is done right away instead of in a few days.



Herriot's mercy also extends to the owners of his patients. Herriot treats Mr. Dean, the poor old man who has nothing, respect and comforts him when his dog is put to sleep. Herriot won't accept payment for the procedure and does his best to make the man feel better. Miss Stubbs is another example of Herriot's mercy. The poor woman is suffering at the thought that she may not see her animals in heaven, and Herriot takes the time to sit with her and reassure her. After her death, Herriot makes sure that her animals are well cared for.

Humor

Herriot's sense of humor gets him through many terrible times. Each time a sad story is related, he follows up with a story that gets the reader laughing again. Herriot experiences many hilarious situations during his fifty years in veterinary practice, and he is not afraid to share them.

Tristan Farnon's sense of humor gets him through many troubled times with his brother. Although the brothers are usually at odds, Tristan never seems to let it get to him. This comes in handy when Tristan manages to wreck three cars in one week.

Even Herriot's clients display a keen sense of humor. They have no problem laughing at Herriot's expense when something goes wrong. For example, Mr. Bell, the owner of the cow that corners Herriot in her stall, doesn't attempt to hide his laughter when Herriot relates the story of his escape.

Style

Point of View

All Creatures Great and Small is told in the first person. It is a memoir of the times that Herriot experienced as a vet in Yorkshire for fifty years. He relays many different kinds of events. This book spans the first two years of Herriot's life in the Yorkshire region and as a young veterinarian. You are with him through all of his mistakes and triumphs. His style of narration is conversational, and you can imagine yourself sitting down with Herriot as he relates these tales.

In some cases, Herriot interjects comments on how he would have treated a case if he had known more or had access to certain treatments during this time. These interjections do not take away from the story but add an interesting commentary as you go through Herriot's life.

Setting

The book is set in the Yorkshire region of England, which is largely pastoral and agricultural. The people of this area are mostly farmers, and they work hard to earn their living. The specific region of Yorkshire where Herriot lives is called the Dales, and it is a place of extremes. The winters are cruel, but the warmer months are glorious and well worth the wait.

The stories take place in the mid 1930s in pre-World War II England. Industry is starting to take over much of Europe, and farms are becoming more rare. The Dales region has not been hit hard by this transformation, but Herriot reflects in his narration that much has changed in the area since. Much of the book takes place in the countryside, where Herriot prefers to spend much of time. The majority of his calls are to farms, but he does spend some time in Darrowby on small animal cases.

Language and Meaning

Herriot's language is English, but there is some variation from what Americans are used to. For example, tires are tyres. It is not difficult to understand what Herriot means with most of his descriptions.

The vernacular of the area is frequently portrayed, and Herriot himself wonders how a Scotsman was ever able to communicate with the people of Yorkshire. At first, Dr. Farnon has to translate what the people are saying to Herriot, but he quickly becomes accustomed to their language.



Some of the words used are now out of date, such as "nattering," which means chatting or keen. However, the vast majority of the book is timeless. The variations in language add to the overall immersion effect that the book has on the reader.

Structure

The book is a collection of stories. Most are anecdotal and portray an event that happened with a certain family. The majority of the stories are chronological, and you join Herriot through his first two years in the area.

There are a few cases where the stories are continued into the next chapter, such as the story of Strawberry the cow, but most of the stories are contained to one chapter. There are also a few instances where several smaller stories are combined into one chapter where there wasn't enough material in each story for its own chapter.

Some characters appear throughout the book, such as Dr. Farnon, Tristan, Mrs. Hall, Miss Harbottle, and Helen, but the majority of the characters appear only once.



Quotes

"He was relaxed and smiling, the farmer and his helpers were smiling, even the cow was smiling. There was no dirt or blood or sweat anywhere." Chapter 1, page 1.

"Oh aye, he's womitin. Womitin bad, sorr." Chapter 2, page 14.

"Animals are unpredictable things, and so our life is unpredictable. It's a long tale of little triumphs and disasters and you've got to really like it to stick it." Chapter 5, page 38.

"'Oh, Mr. Herriot,' Mrs. Pumphrey said, looking at her pet anxiously. 'I'm so glad you've come. Tricky has gone flop-bott again.'" Chapter 13, page 86.

"If you decide to become a veterinary surgeon you will never grow rich, but you will have a life of endless interest and variety." Chapter 19, page 120.

"'Well, well, well,' he bawled heartily at Miss Harbottle. 'It's Flossie! And what's my little darlin' doing this fine day?'" Chapter 26, page 161.

"It isn't only the four legged 'uns wot likes my meal. Wonderful stuff - full of nourishment." Chapter 28, page 174.

"God help us, what's this, the fol-de-rols?" Chapter 31, page 188.

"Not with that ugly old devil, you mean, eh? Takes a bit of reckoning up, doesn't it?" Chapter 35, page 216.

"Look! The bloody thing is going straight for that hut!" Chapter 39, page 239.

"That's right. A warble fly, tha knows. He's a bit slow is t'lad but by gaw he can imitate a fly." Chapter 41, page 255.

"My first sight of Mr. Sidlow reminded me that me that he and his family were members of a fanatically narrow religious sect...I had the feeling that Mr. Sidlow would have burnt me at the stake without a qualm." Chapter 47, page 296.

"'Not a bit of it,' I slurred. 'My stumbling sentences cannot hope to express my extremely high opinion of you.'" Chapter 57, page 361.

"'Look,' she said faintly. 'Next time, why don't we just go for a walk?'" Chapter 62, page 402.

"But the effort fell flat: the effect was entirely spoiled. He was polishing the glass with a dead hen." Chapter 64, page 414.

Adaptations

The English television serial, often rerun on the Public Broadcasting System, carries over the spirit of the four books with attractive lightness without sacrificing depth. The humor is more accessible, Siegfried is less vicious, and the relationship between the brothers is more comfortable.

All Creatures Great and Small is the title of a feature-length film based on Herriot's work, but it is not a straight adaptation of that book. Heriot, played by Christopher Timothy, has returned home to practice after having served in World War II. Although he has been away for years, the bucolic life is as bucolic as ever, and provides a setting for his poignant animal stories taken from his several books. This 1986 film, directed by Terence Dudley, also stars Robert Hardy and Peter Davison.

Key Questions

James Herriot was one of the best loved authors of his time. His fans were — and are — passionately devoted to his writings. To say that *All Creatures Great and Small* and its sequels inspire love in a multitude of American readers would be no exaggeration. One possible reason for this love could be the strong appeal of the pastoral — a kind of writing that emphasizes the merits of rural life — during times when people feel under great stress from a complex and intrusive culture; its fans tend to be urban dwellers who fantasize about an unreal, imagined simpler country life. This aspect of Herriot's appeal offers excellent opportunities for discussion: How realistic is his portrayal of rural life? Does he romanticize it? Are his passionate readers indulging in a fantasy of a way of life that never really existed, or does Herriot's appeal lay in an honest depiction of a way of life?

Other aspects of *All Creatures Great and Small* are also inviting for discussion. People tend to love the characters, yet most are only sketched, while a major figure, Siegfried, seems to change with each passing tale. What makes these characterizations as appealing as they evidently are? Is the appeal in their quaintness or in their humanity? This question alone could generate an evening's debate among readers, faithful and otherwise.

Another approach that *All Creatures Great and Small* offers for generating discussions is an external one. In review after review, one will discover the assertion that it and its sequels have inspired people to become veterinarians. One could invite speculation on this point. Is its supposed influence true? Is this a case in which one can confidently point to a work of literature and declare that it changed people's lives and in so doing, perhaps changed society as well? How important is Herriot's influence on veterinary medicine? Can one find veterinarians who became vets at least in part because of reading Herriot's books? Did Herriot expect to influence future veterinarians? If so, why would he discourage his daughter from becoming one? If you have a group of devoted Herriot readers, this line of discussion could go on without end.

1. Has Herriot discovered the good life?
2. Are the characters in *All Creatures Great and Small* representative of universal, elemental, and human values?

What are some of these? Do they add value to the reading of the book?

3. An interesting figure is the knacker, who carts away dead animals.

Do research with an eye toward explaining the knacker's origins and specialized role in society at the time of the events in *All Creatures Great and Small*.

4. What can we learn from the lives Herriot portrays? Are they good examples for our own lives?



5. How much of Americans' affection for Herriot's books stems from a romantic view of Englishmen?
6. What are the merits of organizing the book by anecdotes, rather than creating an unbroken narrative? Is *All Creatures Great and Small* a novel or a collection of short stories?
7. How does the book compare with the television series based on it? Does the television series capture the main characters, or are they different in significant ways? How many people, do you think, like the book because they like the television show?
8. How important is science in *All Creatures Great and Small*? How much good is it in treating animals? In what ways does it contrast with folk medicine? What is Herriot's attitude toward folk medicine?
9. How much does Herriot's attitude enhance or detract from the book?
10. Why do Herriot's writings about the Dales inspire passionate devotion in many American readers?



Topics for Discussion

How did the industrial movement affect the livestock industry?

How does the life Herriot experienced in the country differ from his experiences in the city?

How has veterinary medicine changed since Herriot's time?

Do you think large livestock producers do not love their animals?

Name the differences between the Taveners and the Altons.

How does the quality of life differ between the poor farmers in the region and the rich landowners?

Are there any cases that you would have handled differently from Herriot?

Explain the relationship between Siegfried and Tristan Farnon.

Literary Precedents

All Creatures Great and Small uses many devices from both fiction and nonfiction. The complexity of the older narrator recalling his youth is reflected in most autobiographies and in the Marlow stories of Joseph Conrad (Lord Jim [1900], Heart of Darkness [1902], The Secret Sharer [1912]). The encounter between the city man and the country people is a crux of nineteenth-century American Southwest humor, although the American city man's attitude and motive are much different from Herriot's. The English view that such differing cultures create differences in human nature was pioneered by Sir Walter Scott in the novel Waverly (1814). George Eliot portrays nineteenth-century rural England with more measured calmness and less variety of mood in Adam Bede (1859) and Silas Marner (1861).

The pastoral tradition of poetry, which pleased city dwellers of the Renaissance, provides quite a contrast with Herriot's Dales, which please modern suburbanites. Pastoral shepherds and maidens were a relief from the filth and corruption of cities then; their fantastic, idealized rural images brought an emotional clarity. Herriot's real Darrowby, with its diseases, pain, and dirt, may reorient suburbanites whose securer life has removed some of the discipline the hard life can bring.

Related Titles

The five titles of Harriot's series about the Dales are taken from a nineteenth-century hymn: *All Things Bright and Beautiful* (1974), *All Creatures Great and Small* (1973), *All Things Wise and Wonderful* (1977), *The Lord God Made Them All* (1981), and *Every Living Thing* (1992). In addition, Herriot has published *James Herriot's Yorkshire*, a book of description and photographs, *Moses the Kitten*, a children's book, and *James Herriot's Dog Stories*, fifty stories about his favorite animal.



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