

All Things Wise and Wonderful Study Guide

All Things Wise and Wonderful by James Herriot

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Plot Summary

All Things Wise and Wonderful by James Herriot is the third volume of the memoirs of a small country veterinarian in the Dales of Yorkshire, England. Herriot has enlisted in the Royal Air Force, RAF, and the book begins with his basic training experiences. Herriot initially believes that he has kept himself in very good physical shape with his running about the countryside tending to the animals of the farmers in the area. However, his recent marriage to wife, Helen, enjoying her home cooking, and peaceful times together has rendered him less than perfectly fit and his suffering is intense. Every event in the RAF reminds Herriot of something back home in Darrowby.

Each chapter is a short story of his life either in the RAF military, or a memory of his life as a country vet. Most chapters begin with a scene of his current experiences in the RAF, then moving quickly to the more eloquent and whimsical stories of the people and the animals of the Dales of Darrowby. Herriot shows remarkable passion and compassion for the animals in his care and for the people who own them. His storytelling abilities bring the rich dialect of the Yorkshire farmer into one's living room as he relates the scores of stories. His characters, both human and animal, live on in memory long after the stories have been read.

With this third volume numerous favorite characters reappear, specifically his friend, employer, mentor, Siegfried Farnon with his desire to stay abreast of the advances of science in veterinarian medicine. Tristan Farnon, Siegfried's younger brother, returns with new and crazy experiences that deal with his desire to do as little work as possible and live as much as possible. The story of Tristan's stint as the locum tenens housekeeper/cook has him preparing all the meals for Siegfried and James while their housekeeper, Mrs. Hall visits her ailing sister. Every meal is sausage and mash. Initially Siegfried enjoys Tristan's culinary efforts, but after endless, tortuous meals of sausage and mash Siegfried claims to understand how the poisoned calves he is currently tending feel.

Herriot's ability to bring to life the lives and natures of the people and animals of Darrowby is unparalleled. His description of his training in the RAF reflect a world that is entering World War II, and some of his stories reflect more serious matters such as dogs being poisoned with strychnine, and owners wanting to give up on life when their animals become incapacitated or die. Regardless, the reader is left with never ending belief that there is basic good in all people and in the animals in their charge.

All things bright and beautiful

All creatures great and small

All things wise and wonderful

The Lord God made them all



-Cecil Francis Alexander



Chapters 1 - 3

Chapters 1 - 3 Summary

All Things Wise and Wonderful is the third book of Herriot's series about his life as a country veterinary surgeon in the Yorkshire Dales of England. In this book James has joined the military and endures basic training in the RAF during World War II. All he can think of is his overwhelming desire to go home to his wife, Helen, their unborn child and his quiet life in Darrowby, England. His own homesickness brings to mind thoughts of Blossom, a very old cow belonging to Mr. Dakin, one of Herriot's farmer clients. Blossom has lived long past her usefulness as a cow, and is destined for the fatstock market. Blossom has different ideas, for she eludes Dodson, the man who picks up the animals, and comes running back into her stall in the barn, begging with her big soft brown eyes to stay. Mr. Dakin allows her to stay.

Chapter two shows how early one morning, Herriot heads to Lord Hulton's farm to do tuberculin testing on his lordship's cows. Lord Hulton is a gentleman farmer who does much of his own work on the farm. His efforts do not always save James any time, but James understands that Lord Hulton is only trying to save him time. Later that week James receives a call from his lordship about a sow with a prolapsed uterus. Initially, James is terrified. He has tended only three pigs with a prolapsed uterus, and in each case he lost the animal. This time, after hours of effort, James is successful. Lord Hulton recognizes Herriot's fatigue and makes James a breakfast of bread, honey and scalding hot coffee. Herriot savors the experience of saving a pedigreed pig and having breakfast prepared and served by a marquis.

In chapter three, James has always been afraid of dentists. Once in the RAF, he is told that he must have an extraction and five fillings. There is no arguing in the military. He learns that the dentist assigned to carry out his extraction is nicknamed "The Butcher". Even James's nurse confides to him that the dentist has no idea how to extract teeth. The extraction is pure torture. James recalls taking out the wolf teeth in young horses, and as he leaves the dentist, his parting shot is to tell the Butcher that he, too, has knocked out teeth in the very same way. Only James is a vet, not a dentist.

Chapters 1 - 3 Analysis

In All Things Wise and Wonderful, James Herriot talks of his experiences as a new call-up in the Royal Air Force. Each experience he has in his military training transports him back to his low-key life as a country vet in Darrowby. Most of the book is written as a series of short stories, returning to memories of his country living as they are brought to mind with his experiences in the military; things that Herriot used to take for granted. His desire to serve his country during this time of war overpowers the desire to stay home, but James did not expect something as trivial as the smell of Helen's soap to bring on such heavy feelings of homesickness. In chapter one he relates the story of Blossom,



an old worn out cow whose desire to just stay home reflects his own desire to return to Helen, Herriot's wife, and their unborn child. The fog of London transports James back to Darrowby where he sees to the animals of a peer and is served breakfast in the barn at the hands of a marquis. Being in the military takes away all of his autonomy. Herriot has a dental inspection before reporting to the RAF and they still insist on extracting a tooth. As with all good vets, Herriot compares his experience to that of the animals he serves. *All Things Wise and Wonderful* is the third in the series of the James Herriot books, and he chooses to relate his RAF experiences to his memories as a simple country vet. Most chapters have only a sentence or two of military reflections, then the vast bulk of the story returns to his favorite subject, the people and animals of Darrowby.



Chapters 4 - 6

Chapters 4 - 6 Summary

Chapter four illustrates that, while in the RAF, Herriot marveled at the numerous gaseous emanations from the men in his unit, bringing to mind poor Cedric, the bulldog who suffers from extreme flatus. Cedric's owner, Mrs. Rumney, is delicate and feminine. She seeks veterinary advice about Cedric, but nothing they try works. Finally, James realizes that Cedric needs a new home and approaches Mrs. Rumney's handyman, Con Fenton. Con loves Cedric. Con has also lost his sense of smell. Putting Cedric and Con together is a match made in heaven.

In chapter five, on maneuvers in London, Herriot sees a London policeman chastising a young street urchin, reminding him of Wesley Binks. Wesley's pranks make him renown throughout Darrowby. Flowers from the garden or fireworks through the letterbox at Skeldale House can be the work of none other than Wesley. One day, Wesley adopts a dog, Duke, who needs treatment for distemper. While Herriot treats Duke, Wesley finds honest employment to pay the vet. Herriot does everything he can to save Duke, but ultimately the dog dies. Wesley cries like the little boy that he is. Then, he runs off and turns his back on all his industrious endeavors and returns to his nefarious ways.

In chapter six, James recalls one memory of life at Skeldale House that reminds James of the very humorous period of time when Tristan, Siegfried's younger brother, must fill in for the housekeeper. The young man admits that he can cook sausage and mash, but he neglects to tell Siegfried that sausage and mash is ALL he can cook. In the meantime, James and Siegfried are puzzled with the continuing deaths of young calves at Mr. Billings's farm. Mr. Billings has a very clean barn and always takes very good care of his animals, making these deaths that much more puzzling. Siegfried finally discovers that bits of the antlers have fallen into their feed, antlers that have been burned off with antimony. The farmer has been inadvertently poisoning his calves. Through all this, James and Siegfried have endured meal after meal of sausages and mash. "Not bloody sausages and mash again!" he bellowed" (p. 58, chap. 6). Finally Siegfried can stand it no longer and he heads to the Drover's Pub for lunch, claiming to know exactly how the poisoned calves felt.

Chapters 4 - 6 Analysis

From the gaseous emanations of the men in his unit to a street urchin's antics and memories of good food, James uses every opportunity to minimize the difficulties of being in the military by returning to his memories of life in Darrowby. What comes out of all the stories is the intense regard James seems to have for the people of his village. He shares with them a deep caring for the animals who serve them either as farm animals or as companions. Even Wesley Binks, who learns to love a sick dog named Duke, shows the better side of human nature despite his environment. James has a



deep love of the blunt, no nonsense people and their animals. Even though he is serving his country, something he believes in just as strongly, James is compelled to remember his past, his experiences, his lessons from the countryside where his life was once defined. Each story gives a deeper insight into Herriot's thoughts and understandings, and help to define what is important to the country vet. James realizes that a dog who emits smelly gas could be a social embarrassment to his mistress and looks for a better match for the dog. He finds one in a man who loves the dog and who has lost his sense of smell. When Wesley Binks has a sick dog, Herriot treats the boy and dog with the same respect he would give to the most important man in the district. This is who James Herriot is. He is a man of integrity, of compassion, of humor, and of faithfulness. Even the episode of Tristan's appalling cooking skills shows that it is Tristan's older brother, Siegfried, who cannot tolerate the monotony of the meals. James only relates the story, he does not seem to share Siegfried's dislike of sausage and mash. Memories of life in Darrowby obviously sustain James throughout his training.



Chapters 7 - 9

Chapters 7 - 9 Summary

In chapter seven, James reflects on just how little attention people truly pay to a vet, especially when in great need. On his way home from one call where he cut and bandaged his finger, James is flagged down by a family whose dog has a ball stuck in its throat. Being too far down to reach with his fingers, Harriot presses behind the animal's jaw and the ball pops out. After resuscitation, Benny, the collie, reunites with the ecstatic children. A written thank you from the family opens with the salutation, "Dear Vet with the bandaged finger" (p. 68, chap. 7).

Chapter eight shows James recalling his very first winter in Darrowby, specifically at old Mr. Stokill's farm. The wind bites through his heavy overcoat and woolen gloves, but Mr. Stokill, an old-timer in Yorkshire, wears nothing but a khaki cover over a waistcoat, and hardly seems to notice the cold. James realizes he has much to learn. Attempting to help Mr. Stokill, James only makes matters worse in virtually every way from trying to corral a young bullock to moving a fiercely protective mother pig and settling her piglets. Mr. Stokill's quiet, capable manner shows James he has much to learn.

In chapter nine, one Christmas James stops by Mrs. Ainsworth's farm. Mrs. Ainsworth is every vet's dream. She owns three Bassett Hounds and willingly calls the vet at the slightest concern for her animals. This Christmas James finds Mrs. Ainsworth with a small black stray cat that has just brought her kitten into Mrs. Ainsworth's house. Debbie, the cat, has been a silent visitor for some months, but this time she is dying of cancer and has brought her kitten to a place where she believes it will be cared for. Debbie dies that Christmas Day. The following Christmas, James is invited in for a cup of Christmas cheer to see how Debbie's kitten, Buster, is doing. Buster keeps busy teasing the three lazy Bassetts and spending hours fetching a ball in the yard. Mrs. Ainsworth believes she has never received a better Christmas gift.

Chapters 7 - 9 Analysis

James realizes many things while he is in the RAF. There is an anonymity in the military, a sense of being only a single cog in a big wheel. This sense of being humbled makes James laugh when he remembers the time he is flagged down to help a collie choking on a ball. Even James knows that sometimes things happen that have nothing to do with the skill of the person performing the task, for he is just as surprised as Benny's family when the ball pops out of the collie's mouth. He does have the expertise to resuscitate the dog, but James really does wonder if he can really take credit. To further compound his understanding of his true insignificance, he receives a letter from the family of the dog who only remember two things, that he is the vet who saved their dog, and that he had a finger bandaged. They never even asked him his name. His insignificance and lack of experience shows up especially when James recalls his first



winter in Darrowby when he works to help old Mr. Stokill on his farm one cold winter night. James, believing that his youth and vigor should count for something, sets out to show Mr. Stokill how helpful he really is. Time and again, James fails. Mr. Stokill steps in and shows James what many years of experience can do for a man despite his age and frailty. James realizes that he merely makes himself look foolish by trying to show how capable he is.

Another understanding of his life occurs to James when he is out on a cold Christmas morning answering emergency calls. At first James feels resentful that he is called away from his home on Christmas, but after seeing to Mrs. Ainsworth's concern for the dying cat, Debbie, and the subsequent kitten who grows up to be a ball retriever and teaser of dogs, James recognizes how truly blessed he is with the life he leads. "Driving through the marketplace I thought again that Darrowby on Christmas Day was like Dickens come to life; the empty square with the snow thick on the cobbles and hanging from the eaves of the fretted lines of roofs; the shops closed and the coloured lights of the Christmas trees winking at the windows of the clustering houses, warmly inviting against the cold white bulk of the fells behind" (p. 81, chap. 9).



Chapters 10 - 12

Chapters 10 - 12 Summary

In chapter ten, Helen is only about two weeks away from delivering their baby, and James chafes at the distance between them. He realizes that he is experiencing her pregnancy right along with her with his unexplained queasiness every morning, his fatigue, and the pains in his abdomen simulating contractions. In Yorkshire the people believe that such symptoms mean that the man is carrying the pregnancy. For James it means he simply cannot wait any longer to see his wife. James goes AWOL, taking the three hour bus trip to Darrowby to spend a single happy hour with Helen, then returning on the three hour bus trip back to Scarborough. The hour is bliss and reassures James that his wife is healthy and happy. Breaking the rules for James is very out of character, but war changes a lot of things.

In chapter eleven, being classified as an AC2 in the RAF puts Herriot at the very bottom of the rankings in military life. This is not an uncommon feeling for James. Once he answers a veterinary call from Mr. Beamish, the race horse trainer who makes it very clear that he would prefer the services of Siegfried, a known horseman. Each time James examines and then diagnoses three horses, Beamish ignores his treatment suggestions. Just as James is leaving in a fugue of defeat, one more horse takes suddenly ill. She appears to be choking to death and initially James cannot determine the cause, until he notices the welts. The horse suffers from a severe allergic reaction. A shot of adrenalin causes the horse to improve rapidly. Mr. Beamish realizes that a vet does not have to be a horse person in order to cure a horse.

In chapter twelve, Herriot is on guard one night outside the Grand Hotel where he is currently stationed. The humor of the situation, an RAF trainee guarding the hotel in a small English village, brings to mind his ongoing battle with Mr. Bailes's dog, Shep. To access Mr. Bailes's farm, Herriot must walk about twenty yards between two five-foot walls. Shep spends most of his time in the garden; invisible through the stone wall. To the unsuspecting visitor, Shep is a menace. On one particular visit, Herriot's thoughts are heavily preoccupied on the sick cow, Rosie. Shep times his attack perfectly, leaping and barking only inches from Herriot's ear. James jumps in fright and can only glare as the dog disappears around the house. Each time Herriot visits Rose she is worse; as a result, Shep's covert attacks serve as salt in his professional wounds. One day, Herriot returns to find Rosie completely cured, on the advice of the postman, not on James's scientific veterinary knowledge. Suitably chastened as a vet, Herriot refuses to continue enduring Shep's covert assaults. This time when Shep bellows in his face, Herriot drags on the chain and bellows back into the the dog's face. For James it is a hollow victory; taking the dog's one form of amusement from him. Herriot takes a very perverse delight when he sees the great Alsatian leap and bark at the ear of a wandering tinker. The shout of surprise and the clanking of all the pots and pans the man is carrying amuses Herriot greatly. Shep is back.



Chapters 10 - 12 Analysis

Being in the military really affects James Herriot's life and denies him the freedom to act freely, especially as his wife, Helen, is due to deliver their first child in a matter of weeks. James is so connected to this process that he experiences pregnancy pains right along with his wife. Finally James can stand it no longer, and he actually goes "absent without leave" AWOL, to spend six hours traveling by bus just so that he can see for himself that Helen is doing well. Breaking the rules, for James, is really unusual, but he realizes that sometimes other things are more important. The military also reinforces just how insignificant people are, a fact James recalls when he is called to treat Mr. Beamish's race horses. Siegfried is considered to be the horse expert, but when a call comes in, a vet must answer immediately by going out to the farm. In this case, Siegfried is not available and James just face the exacting man himself. Each treatment suggestion and diagnosis is discarded by Beamish until one of his best horses begins to show signs of respiratory distress. It takes James a little bit, but he suddenly realizes that the horse is choking due to a severe allergic reaction. A quick injection, and the condition reverses immediately. Mr. Beamish regards James with higher esteem than previously.

Not all calls are successful, however, as James recalls of his visits to Rosie the cow at Mr. Bailes's farm. Nothing James tries works on the animal, but a suggestion from the postman seems to do the trick. Herriot's spirits are very low, and when Mr. Bailes's Alsatian, Shep, barks once too often in his face, James yells back at the dog. Immediately he is sorry for his behavior and worries that he might have permanently stopped the dog from his favorite recreational behavior. Shep might not bark at James any longer, but he still lies in wait for anyone else who might happen along. This relieves James greatly.



Chapters 13 - 15

Chapters 13 - 15 Summary

In chapter thirteen, Helen is due to deliver their first baby and James simply cannot wait any longer. Again, James goes AWOL to see Helen, and arrives just in time to see his new-born son. Apparently James has not seen as many newborn human babies as he's seen animal babies, for he is shocked and slightly repelled at the sight of his son. Nurse Brown and Helen both laugh at his reaction to his son. Back at the RAF, James contrives to spend time with Helen when she has recovered, so he fakes a telegram to get leave two weeks after their son is born. James feels some guilt at beginning a life of crime by circumventing the military system.

Chapter fourteen shows how being a country vet can sometimes include experiences and working hours that are downright unpleasant. After a particularly difficult calving one cold, wet night, Herriot feels especially sorry for himself. He stops by the Fox and Hounds for a beer where he is surrounded by the warmth and peace of the old-fashioned pub as well as the camaraderie of the hardworking men of his community. One man, Albert Close, an old, arthritis shepherd drinks his nightly pint, and under his chars is Mick, his equally old and arthritic dog. Mick's eyes are pus-filled and obviously painful. As a vet, James knows he can cure the dog with a simple operation, but the old man cannot afford it. The other men at the pub take up a collection to take care of Mick's eyes, and James tackles the communal project with all the men in the room during the surgery. Mick's recovery is uneventful, in fact he still believes that Mick's eyes just improved on their own. A vet's life is that of an unsung hero.

Chapter fifteen shows how in the RAF, Herriot is not in charge of his own destiny. An order comes to nail the windows open during a Yorkshire winter in their sleeping dormitory, and the rate of bronchitis became one hundred percent. Another order adds shadow boxing to their daily training runs, in the belief that it will add belligerence to the new soldiers. Most of it is nothing but idiotic and uninformed orders coming from above, resulting in the men feeling puny and unempowered. They all feel like helpless pawns in a big game.

Chapters 13 - 15 Analysis

Whether in civilian life or in the military, Herriot realizes that his life really is not his own. He is at the mercy of either his superior officers or the hands of fate. From time to time he learns he can actually make some kind of a difference, as he does when he goes AWOL to see Helen just in time to see his new-born son, or when he is able to fix Mick's eyes so that he can see without infection and pain. This realization helps James to understand that life goes on, how he accepts it will make the difference. Just because he is an unsung hero as a country vet will never diminish his dedication to his clients

and their animals. Mick's owner never really appreciates what James does for his dog, but James knows, and is satisfied with it.



Chapters 16 - 19

Chapters 16 - 19 Summary

Chapter sixteen shows how not all of Herriot's memories of his vet practice are pleasant. One period encompasses the tragic outbreak of dog poisonings with strychnine. Of all things a vet faces, purposeful poisoning is the worst. Herriot believes his job to be one of bettering the lives of animals in his community. The victims are a beautiful dalmatian, the dog of a friend, a spaniel, and Fergus. Of all of them, Fergus affects James the most because Fergus is a seeing-eye dog for Johnny Clifford. Herriot gives Fergus a very chancy dose of a barbiturate in a desperate attempt to save the dog. Of all the dogs poisoned, only Fergus survives. Herriot cannot say whether it was the massive dose of the treatment or if Fergus got a smaller dose of poison, but he is glad that if only one dog survived that it was the seeing-eye dog.

In chapter seventeen, Mrs. Beck has long used her situation as a poor widow woman to avoid paying bills. Rumor has it that she is very wealthy, just cheap. She wants her cat, Georgina, to be spayed, and uses tears to persuade Herriot to do it for half the usual cost. Once James agrees, she further bargains for him to drive to her house, pick up the cat for surgery, and then return the feline to her home afterward. Georgina is not a willing patient, and James needs Tristan's help in containing the animal back to surgery. When he returns the patient to Mrs. Beck, she worries that Georgina will have a scar, and refuses to pay James until he returns to take out the stitches.

In chapter eighteen, Herriot reflects on how the war has changed lives, altered memories of holidays and happy times. He has graduated from AC2 to Leading Aircraftsman, an LAC. The promotion raises Herriot's wage from three shillings a day to seven and threepence a day. As he marches away from the Grand, Herriot promises himself that he will return when the war is over to see the Grand as it was meant to be.

Chapter nineteen shows how being in the military exposes James to a degree of verbal coarseness that he's never experienced as a vet. In Yorkshire, the farmers will never mention any sexual functions, especially to women. Such reticence frustrates the vets as no information renders them useless when they get to the farm, when a little information could have prompted them to bring the necessary equipment or medicines. One farmer, Mr. Gilby, a strict Methodist neither drinks, smokes, or swears. On one visit to his farm, James witnesses Mr. Gilby being struck in the crotch by a cow. The farmer cannot speak for the pain, and when he finally can, all he says is, "Right in the privates, Mr. Herriot" (p. 160, chap. 19). Such reticence is unknown in the military.

Chapters 16 - 19 Analysis

Being in the military causes James to recall some of the less pleasant experiences he has had as a vet. He recalls the time when the village dogs were being poisoned by



strychnine, and how of all the animals poisoned, he was only to save one. In fact, his modesty prevents him from taking full credit for the cure, for he is not sure if he cured the dog, or if the dog only got a smaller dose of the poison. His memory of Mrs. Beck reminds James of the village skinflint. Rumor has it that the woman is very rich, and yet she constantly haggles over the price of everything. James agrees to do a spay job for half the usual fee, additionally he must put up with the bad tempered cat on two car rides because Mrs. Beck manages to trick him into it. By the end of the chapter, she has still not paid him anything for all his efforts. Facing adversity is part of life, and James realizes that the future is, indeed, uncertain.



Chapters 20 - 22

Chapters 20 - 22 Summary

In chapter twenty, long before Helen and the RAF, Herriot is sent to Hensfield to cover for Siegfried's college buddy, Stewie Brannon. While still in Yorkshire County, Hensfield is very different from Darrowby for it is a mill town, complete with the dark and dreary atmosphere found in Dicken's best novels. Stewie's practice is mostly comprised of taking care of the pets of the poor, rarely charging more than a shilling for his expertise. The lack of medicines and supplies saddens James, leaving him hoping that he never has to deal with a difficult case. Just as James thinks this, a Golden Retriever, Kim, is brought in, having been run over by a car. The hind leg is attached only by a thread of skin.

In chapter twenty-one, James knows that Stewie's surgery does not have the necessary supplies to handle such a case, especially the lack of sulphanilamide, to prevent infection. The dog's owners, Peter and Marjorie Gilliard beg James to save Kim's leg. Determined, James reattaches the limb, stitching tendons, joining capsule, fascia, and skin. After the reattachment, James plasters the leg in a cast, mimicking a technique used in the Spanish Civil War, encasing terrible wounds in plaster to allow them to stew in their own juice. All they can do is hope at this point. After a week, Kim returns, and the limb is actually pink and warm, though smelly. James rebandages and replasters for one more week.

In Chapter twenty-two, while in Hensfield, James must act as vet to inspect the dogs at the Greyhound track. This track is not a high quality track. It is very low-class and James finds numerous problems with the dogs that puts him in very bad standing with the owner, Mr. Coker, who cannot wait for Stewie Brannon to return. As a man of integrity, James will not compromise his standards, and feels great relief when the evening is over. On his last day at Hensfield, Kim returns for his third visit, and this time the dog is healthy and happy. His success with Kim is Herriot's most lasting memory of his time at Hensfield.

Chapters 20 - 22 Analysis

Covering for one another is a common practice among the country vets in Yorkshire, allowing one another to take time off. Herriot covers for Stewie Brannon in Hensfield. This gives Herriot a glimpse into the way other veterinary practices are run, and Stewie's is very low-budget and inadequately supplied. However, Stewie serves the most needy of the town, and James recognizes that their motivations are very similar. While covering for Brannon, James encounters one of his most challenging cases, that of a dog whose hind leg is virtually torn from its body. Without adequate supplies and medicines, James proves to himself that his skill is more than adequate for he actually

reattaches the limb with great success. While the environments seem different, the motivations of most vets is the same, to serve people and their animals.



Chapters 23 - 25

Chapters 23 - 25 Summary

In chapter twenty-three, James experiences a lot of shouting in the RAF, but no one anywhere could beat the voice of Len Hampson who shouts in normal conversation, loud enough to be heard two farms away. James sees to Len's pig who has peritonitis, and the pig does not make it. From Len's farm, James visits Elijah Wentworth whose voice is a polar opposite to Len's. Elijah speaks barely above a whisper. James is able to save Elijah's bull. Later, James meets up with both men at Drover's Pub, and Len shouts out that his pig died, and everyone in the pub hears of James's failure. Elijah comes up to Herriot, and whispers that his bull has improved so well it seems like a miracle. Sadly for James, no one in the bar hears of his success, they only hear of his failure.

In chapter twenty-four, Granville Bennett is a skilled veterinary surgeon, specializing in small animals. James is terrified of Granville; not because of his medical and surgical skill, but because Granville has the capability of drinking copious amounts of alcohol, and is very skilled at causing James to drink far more than he can tolerate. Despite every effort James makes to avoid socializing with Granville, he cannot always avoid it. Believing that getting together with Helen and Granville's wife, Zoe, will serve as a protective influence, James agrees to a get-together. Once again, in Granville's company, James becomes so completely sloshed that he forgets that he should not eat hotdogs, and pays for his indiscretion for a very long night. The most interesting point is that Granville does not have a single vicious bone in his body, he merely treats James as a good host should.

Chapter twenty-five shows how being away from Darrowby gives James the opportunity to reflect on his partnership with Siegfried Farnon and why it is so successful. James believes it is an attraction of opposites, for he believes in traditional ways while Siegfried embraces everything that is new. For him, change is the future. James learns that while Siegfried usually claims to love new things, he often does not report when a new contraption fails to work appropriately. "Ah'll tell ye, Mr. Farnon used one this mornin'. Some of the stuff went in me eye, some went in 'is ear 'ole and the rest went down 'is trousers. Ah don't think t'bloody cow got any!" (p. 207, chap. 25). Siegfried demonstrates his mercurial nature when he chastises James for giving medicine away to an old-age pensioner, yet James overhears Siegfried not only giving the man free medicine, but he gives him money, and a ride home in his car.

Chapters 23 - 25 Analysis

James learns a lot about life with his occupation as a vet. He learns that most of his successes will never be known, while bad news of his failures will travel the quickest. He also knows that he is not capable of drinking as much as other people, especially

Granville Bennett. Knowing Granville as he does, James avoids him as much as possible, even though he really is a wonderfully generous man. For James, avoidance seems to be the only effective way to not overindulge in drink. James is convinced that Zoe Bennett, Granville's wife, believes him to be a drunkard, for he has never been in her presence without being unduly influenced by alcohol. Getting along with Siegfried, too, is a bit like a mine-field. The most humorous aspect to the disagreements between the two men is that Siegfried will do exactly as he has just told James not to do. Fortunately, rather than taking offense, James learns to take things in stride and with a good dose of humor.



Chapters 26 - 28

Chapters 26 - 28 Summary

In chapter twenty-six, James shows how during his training, he and three other men are assigned to help the farmers bring in their crops. James struggles greatly with learning to erect the sheaves without them falling down. Then he lacks the appropriate skill and strength to throw the dried sheaves up on top of the growing pile on top of the cart. The farmer tells him that it is just a question of knowing how to do it; it's the farmer's attempt to make James feel better. Later, the farmer experiences a difficult calving, and James steps in to assist, delivering the calf with little effort. He, in turn is able to turn to the farmer and repeat the man's words back at him, that it's not a matter of strength, but a matter of knowing how.

In chapter twenty-seven, James and his comrades are finally off to Flying School. Through the endless journey James sleeps and dreams of Helen. Waking is a bit of a shock, for the men are told never to forget their I.D. discs. That will be the only way they can be identified if they are shot down. Playtime is over. There is a war on.

In chapter twenty-eight, James is now in flying school, being instructed by Flight Officer Woodham who feels that facing the Luftwaffe was infinitely easier than teaching new recruits how to fly. F.O. Woodham is really tough on James, but no tougher than James has to be on himself when he is working as a vet. He recalls one awful night when an animal who had eaten too much downed fruit was in distress. With a cold coming on, James would have preferred to stay home in his nice warm bed, but instead he ventures out to face the bitter cold, and further infection from the two farmers who assisted him, coughing and sneezing all over him.

Chapters 26 - 28 Analysis

Strengths to each man are as different as their past experiences and their training. While James struggles to help a farmer bring in the harvest, he is able to quickly and easily deliver a calf during a difficult calving. He knows that the war has changed everything in his life, but most of the time he prefers his dreams and his memories rather than worrying about why he needs to wear his I.D. discs. Even his flight officer continuously yelling at him does not deter James. He knows that if he can see to a sick animal in the middle of a bitter cold night with bronchitis coming on, he can certainly learn to fly for his country while they are at war.



Chapters 29 - 31

Chapters 29 - 31 Summary

Chapter twenty-nine shows Mr. Barge, the old-fashioned pharmaceutical representative for Siegfried's veterinary practice, who is not accustomed to being wrong. When Mr. Barge visits, he tells them of a new sedative that specifically works to calm farrowing pigs and dogs who get carsick. This news excites the two vets and they order some of the drug, Soothitt. Unfortunately, the medicine does not work as a sedative. James tries it on a very high-strung Cocker Spaniel without effect. He also tries it on a vicious farrowing sow, to no avail. In fact, the sow only quiets after she is given two gallons of beer. James and Siegfried are simply unable to tell Mr. Barge that his Soothitt is quite ineffective.

In chapter thirty, a Mr. Mount calls Skeldale House. Tristan answers the call in an assumed accent, pretending to be someone else. As soon as he hears Mr. Mount's voice, Tristan immediately turns from being a jokester to a vet of the utmost gravity. Mr. Mount affects people that way. Tristan dates Deborah Mount, the man's daughter. One of Mr. Mount's horses suffers from the worst case of canker Siegfried has ever seen and they must put him up at Skeldale House for about six weeks of treatment. During this time, Tristan plays pranks as juvenile as they are funny. Twice, however, Tristan is caught playing his pranks by the humorless Mr. Mount, who decides that Tristan is too juvenile to date his daughter. The farmer is pleased, however, with the job James and Siegfried have done on his horse.

In chapter thirty-one, comradeship is necessary between men and between animals. It is a universal fact. Jingo, a white Bull Terrier, comes to see James to get a barbed wire cut stitched. His constant companion, Skipper, a Corgi, insists on being on the exam table while James works. The two dogs are inseparable. A few days later, Jingo is back with a temperature and jaundice. James diagnoses leptospirosis, contracted from rats, a bull terrier's favorite prey. The dog is mortally ill. After a week, Jingo dies, leaving his Corgi companion depressed and with all appearances of being ill. At first Skipper's owners fear Skipper will die, too, but when they get a new puppy, another white Bull Terrier, Skipper returns to his former state of health.

Chapters 29 - 31 Analysis

In these three chapters, Herriot talks a great deal about relationships; whether they are human relationships or animal relationships. He firmly believes that relationships are absolutely necessary for man and animal to live a full life. His observations include just how much man and animal are dissimilar from one another, and yet still need one another. Herriot focuses on the camaraderie with the men in his RAF unit and compares this to his deepening friendship with the Farnon brothers at Skeldale House. Relating Tristan's practical jokes surrounding Mr. Mount and the unsavory magazines

demonstrates Herriot's great sense of humor. The story of Jingo and Skipper proves Herriot's great compassion for his animals, and how he can actually feel good about an incorrect diagnosis when Skipper finally recovers from his malaise after Jingo's death.



Chapters 32 - 34

Chapters 32 - 34 Summary

In chapter thirty-two, Herriot's flight instructor, F.O. Woodham talks and instructs constantly as James learns the rudiments of flying an airplane. This reminds James of the Birtwhistle family, a family of talkers. When James comes to see to one of their animals, they all hold their own conversation with the vet simultaneously, and none of them seeming to mind that no one really listens. The Birtwhistles have a lame cow, and James must cut off one of the cleats from the cow's hind leg in order to cure the animal. James ignores the conversation while he works, then suddenly Len, the strapping son of the farmer, falls forward and knocks James out with his head. The boy cannot tolerate the sight of blood. Once Len comes to, he continues talking as if nothing had happened.

In chapter thirty-three, James shares how on one day in Darrowby, long before James meets Helen, he and Siegfried meet a little dog begging at the market. Small and engaging, he sticks out as a very happy dog. One evening a call comes in about the little canine market beggar. A car hit him, popped out an eye, broke a leg, and gave him multiple lacerations. James and Siegfried give up an evening at a ball to see to the little pup. Once he has been put back together he has only a week for someone to claim him as a stray before he is put down. The policeman who called Skeldale house the night of the accident decides to adopt the dog for his two little girls. This is a good day for a vet.

In chapter thirty-four, during the time Herriot practices as a veterinary surgeon in England, tuberculosis runs rampant, and herds of cows must be tested regularly and all reports sent to the Ministry of Agriculture. Poor James routinely lets the Ministry of Agriculture down by filing the myriad reports incorrectly. A dedicated vet, James really tries to get the proper forms filed correctly, but he continually makes errors, despite calling the secretary and having her review his materials. James is an outstanding vet, but a clerical man, he is not. One clerical error nearly results in the inadvertent slaughter of a very expensive cow, but fate intervenes and James is able to stop the execution in time.

Chapters 32 - 34 Analysis

The life of a country vet cannot be compared to anything else for its great variety of experiences. The ceaseless and simultaneous talking of the Birtwhistles during a field operation of a cow can only be described as impossibly funny; for the conversation does not stop, even when Len loses consciousness and knocks James out when he falls to the field.

Being a vet requires the utmost dedication to his craft as demonstrated when James and Siegfried have to give up an evening out to perform hours of surgery on a stray dog that could be put to sleep in a week anyway unless someone adopts him. There are few



vets in the world today who would give so freely of their time, skill, and materials when the dog is just a stray. One thing that James realizes is that he is an excellent veterinary surgeon. His flying skills disprove his fears of suffering from vertigo while up in the air. James learns that his office and clerical skills, however, suffer. It is not for lack of trying, but the endless copies of the endless variety of forms for the Ministry of Agriculture plague James for much of his profession career.



Chapters 35 - 38

Chapters 35 - 38 Summary

In chapter thirty-five, after only nine hours of instruction in the RAF, F.O. Woodham sends James up for his first solo flight. After all the tormenting tutelage from Woodham, Herriot fears that he will either crash the plane or that he will get lost. Initially terrified, James quickly discovers how prepared he really is to fly the biplane. His excitement does cause him to temporarily lose his bearings, but he uses all his recently developed navigation skills and finds his way back to the airfield. He lands the plane perfectly and even F.O. Woodham has nothing but congratulations for him.

Back in Darrowby, in chapter thirty-six, Mr. Blackburn's farm has advanced to the point of automated milking machines for with progress comes greater constraints on time. It is no longer cost effective to milk this many cows manually. Unfortunately, one of Mr. Blackburn's cows has a hard time calving, having developed milk fever. Without James to see to her single-handedly, both the cow and the bull calf would have died. In the midst of the frenetic early morning milking bustle, James nurses number eighty-seven, for she has no name, and helps her to deliver a fine, large bull calf. Even change and progress cannot alter the need for someone to assist at a tough calving.

In chapter thirty-seven, Paul Cotterell comes from the South of England but is easily accepted by the locals of Darrowby because of his easy-going nature and willingness to buy anyone a drink. James drops by the pub one evening and Paul asks him to take a look at his dog, Theo. At first James suspects that it is worms, but as time passes Theo continues to decline physically. A more grave diagnosis presents itself, for Theo has Hodgkin's disease. Paul and James agree not to allow the dog to suffer any longer. Paul's reaction seems to be distant and James wonders how Paul can not care about his dog. Two days later James hears of Paul's suicide brought on by the loss of his dog. Paul has suffered from depression for years and no one knew. No one, not even James, could tell how Paul felt until after he takes his own life.

In chapter thirty-eight, Andrew Vine and his dog, Digger, come to see James only a week after Paul Cotterell's death. Another dog owner, suffering from depression, and is really attached to his dog, Andrew collapses at news that Digger is going blind. Unwilling to allow another client to despair over the loss of his pet, James shows Andrew how the young dog can live a full life even after going blind. James encourages Andrew to be Digger's caretaker; that he has the important job of looking after Digger. Before too long, Andrew realizes that while his companion is blind, Digger's enthusiasm for life remains undiminished. Both man and dog live happy lives.



Chapters 35 - 38 Analysis

While expectations in life are not often met, the feeling of living a fulfilling life becomes a choice rather than an expectation. James fears that he will suffer vertigo while flying, keeping him from becoming a skilled pilot, but his fears are unfounded. His first solo flight goes very well, so well his previously critical flight instructor can only offer his congratulations on a job well done. James realizes this in his veterinary surgery practice as well. When James first meets Paul Cotterell and his dog, Theo, he believes that Paul's manner reflects an easy-going man without any worries. Even when Theo is diagnosed with a fatal illness, Paul's demeanor gives James the expectation that Paul's attachment to his dog is merely superficial. Only after hearing of Paul's suicide does James realize that he mistakenly judged Paul Cotterell's lack of emotion regarding Theo. Thus prepared, when Andrew Vine, another man who suffers from depression, comes to James for advice about his dog, James is better prepared to help both man and dog. While he cannot stop Digger's progressive blindness, James can help Andrew to see that he has a job to do with Digger, providing him with an owner who loves him and will take care of him. Andrew's original choice might have been to put Digger down, but with the counsel James provides, he lives each day at a time and learns to enjoy his dog's company.



Chapters 39 - 41

Chapters 39 - 41 Summary

In chapter thirty-nine, James reflects on how, as an instructor, some lessons in veterinary practice do not always yield the desired result. As a veterinary student, accompanying James on his rounds, David expects to see some real veterinary work. Despite his desire to impress upon David the importance of studying his physics, chemistry, and biology, James is chagrined when three cases in a row turn out to be false pregnancies and not more serious physiologic processes. "The schoolboy nodded thoughtfully, 'Yes, it seems to me that yours is a funny life altogether.'" (p. 350, chap. 39). David's opinion of James's life as a country vet leaves James feeling let down somehow.

In chapter forty, a required medical operation prevents Herriot from accompanying his training comrades grounds overseas, and ultimately grounds Herriot from flying for the RAF. While he recuperates from his operation, he considers the dedication of spirit he observes in all the nurses. Such dedication reminds him of Judy, a dog who appoints herself to be a nurse for any newborn animal or for any ailing animal on the farm. "This was something more than mere curiosity; everything in the dog's attitude suggested intense interest and concern" (p. 356, chap. 40). Judy never leaves her patient until the animal either dies or recovers.

Chapter forty-one tells of how one night at Skeldale House, Siegfried lays down the law for Tristan. Because of his upcoming exams, Tristan must remain at Skeldale House for the evening, watching over a dog coming out of anaesthesia and studying for his exam rather than taking his usual trip to visit the barmaid at Drovers. As usual, once Siegfried leaves, Tristan follows the letter of the law, but not the intent. Rather than going to Drovers, Tristan invites the lovely Lydia to Skeldale House. Mistaking James's step for that of his older brother, Tristan panics and throws Lydia out the French window to avoid being caught with a girl in the living room. James and Tristan discover that their canine patient is also gone. Hours of searching finally reveal that the little dog trotted home. James retrieves the dog for its owner who picks him up at the appointed time. Unfortunately for Tristan, Lydia does not forgive being thrown out of the house quite as easily.

Chapters 39 - 41 Analysis

James reveals a long professional life full of fun and surprises. On one occasion he brings a student with him on his rounds, fully expecting to be able to show the student the wide variety of cases one can expect as a country vet. Unfortunately on that day, three cases in a row reveal a psychosomatic condition called "false pregnancy", and totally fails to impress the veterinary student. However, if the student did decide to take on country practice, he might come across a dog with the dedication of a nurse, like



Judy. Judy's self-appointed assignment is to see to every single young or sick animal on her farm, much as a human nurse might.

More fun and surprises in James's life find their source in Tristan. More interested in love and enjoyment in life, Tristan has a very hard time applying himself to his studies. Each time Tristan tries to combine the two activities, he suffers for it. The time he throws Lydia out the window rather than being caught by Siegfried, both he and James pay for it because the dog Tristan has been charged with watching disappears into the night. Only hours of searching recover the dog in time for its owner to retrieve him. Strangely, Tristan never seems to learn from his mistakes, and James takes a very perverse delight in Tristan's antics.



Chapters 42 - 44

Chapters 42 - 44 Summary

In chapter forty-two, once James realizes that his operation has permanently grounded him, he begins to wonder about his worth in the military. Even his Wing Commander does not know what to do with him. "I see you are a veterinary surgeon. Mmm—this poses a problem. Normally when an aircrew man is grounded he remusters on the ground staff, but yours is a reserved occupation. You really can't serve in any capacity but aircrew" (p. 372, chap. 42). Feeling useless and put out to pasture, James recalls old Mr. Potts; an old farmer whose farming days are long gone. Mr. Potts placidly accepts the changes in his life, but lives vicariously through James's experiences. When Mr. Potts dies, James continues to serve the old farmer by exercising Nip, the farmer's dog with his own beagle, Sam.

In chapter forty-three, once James receives news that he is grounded, he knows his time in the military will be limited. Before his release date, James's next assignment consists of passing out boots and uniforms. His supervisor believes in absolute conservation of effort, and in spite of knowing that he can devise a better method, James is trapped in an inefficient and ineffective position. "I agreed with him, of course, but continued to hurl the packets doggedly while somewhere in the back of my mind a little voice kept enquiring how James Herriot, Member of the Royal College of Veterinary Surgeons and trainee pilot, had ever got to this" (p. 382, chap. 43). There is no changing of the military.

Chapter forty-four shows how in his experience as a country vet, James meets all sorts of people. Most are farmers or villagers, but once in awhile he comes across a wanderer like Roddy Travers and the dog Roddy carts around in a baby buggy. Roddy's skill as a handyman makes him a valuable guest at all the farms around Darrowby. Roddy and Jake travel about, doing an odd job here and there; enough to pay their way. James performs emergency surgery on Jake for a pebble lodged against the dog's larynx that mimics epileptic fits. James greatly admires Roddy's simplistic approach to life, for once the dog's problem is handled, Roddy looks once again to his next destination.

Chapters 42 - 44 Analysis

By now James knows that his time in the military is nearing an end. Because of his necessary operation, he is no longer one hundred percent fit, and so has been grounded. Because of his status as a veterinary surgeon, the military can find nothing else for him to do, and so they pass him from station to station giving him meaningless and mind-numbing jobs until all the necessary paperwork is completed in order for him to be released. During this time, James thinks of some of the people he knew as a veterinary surgeon in Darrowby and calls to mind the lessons he has learned from them.

From Mr. Potts he learns to be patient and accepting. From Roddy Travers, James learns to live in the present and enjoy what the day brings. Knowing it is only a matter of time, James can wait until his military discharge.



Chapters 45 - 48

Chapters 45 - 48 Summary

Chapter forty-five shows how as a country vet, James needs to be on the lookout for contagious diseases such as foot and mouth disease. On Mr. Duggleby's farm James nearly misses the dreaded diagnosis because of their engrossing conversation about cricket. "It is one of the nicest things about country practice, but you have to keep your mind on the job at the same time or you could be in trouble" (p. 394, chap. 45).

Fortunately, James notices the foot and mouth and manages to prevent the spread of the disease that could devastate all the farmers of Yorkshire. Toward the end of the quarantine period, James calls on Mrs. Bailey whose cow has a vesicle on a milking teat. Initially James fears it is another case of foot and mouth, but it turns out to be nothing more than cowpox caused by a smallpox vaccine given to the youngest Bailey child.

In chapter forty-six, the end of Herriot's time in the military is spent waiting; endless, eternal waiting for his eventual discharge. Only Ned Finch can understand what it means to wait as much as James did. As a farm hand, Ned must submit to the demands and commands of his employer, Mr. Daggett. Mr. Daggett believes that Ned's ineffectual efforts around the farm are due to the time the farm hand spends at the pub. James once observes Ned in the pub and understands that only at the pub is Ned not constantly commanded and ordered about. It comes as no surprise to James when Ned meets a naturally jovial woman and the two decide to marry. Ned has spent all his life waiting for a partner who will love and accept him for who he is.

Chapter forty-seven shows Oscar the cat, who joins the Herriot family for a time when he is brought in badly injured. Initially James believes the best thing to do is to put him down, but Tristan, having a very soft spot for cats, persuades James to stitch the poor animal back together. For weeks afterward, Helen feeds the cat warm milk, broth, and gravy until Oscar recovers. Then, a most peculiar behavior occurs. Oscar turns out to be a social cat and spends his evenings at one village meeting or another. It is this behavior that brings Oscar's real family to the Herriots—their cat became lost during a move, but he was always one to join the evening meetings in the village. The parting hurts Helen, but she knows the cat should return home. Later James and Helen visit the cat's family where he has just returned from visiting a yoga class.

In chapter forty-eight, James finally returns home from the RAF. The journey, long and cold, takes him home. For James it feels that he has come full circle, only this time when he arrives at Darrowby, Helen and his infant son wait for him.



Chapters 45 - 48 Analysis

The last few chapters of *All Things Wise and Wonderful* allow James to share with his readers a few more stories about interesting characters and events of Darrowby. His job as a vet allows him the luxury to have lengthy conversations with the farmers, but he does recall a time when the distraction could have had horrible repercussions when he nearly misses a diagnosis of foot and mouth disease. It always pays to be attentive to his work. His last character is a cat they name Oscar who comes to them so badly injured that at first James believes they need to put him down. With great skill, love, and patience, the cat survives, only to be claimed by his original family. Loving animals as he does, James knows that there is no other choice but to return the animal. At the end of the book, James arrives back home in Darrowby, feeling much the same as he did when he originally arrived in the small Yorkshire town. For him, it is a true homecoming.



Characters

James Herriot

James is the main character and narrator of the stories in *All Things Wise and Wonderful*. He is a country vet who recently enlists in the Royal Air Force, the RAF. James and Helen are newly married and expecting their first child. The difficulties of military training, adjusting to non-civilian life, and being separated from his young wife cause James to reflect almost continuously about his life in Darrowby, and how blessed he is to have such a fantastic job in one of the most beautiful areas of the world, the Yorkshire Dales in northern England. James demonstrates great understanding and compassion for his clients and their animals. His dedication to his vocation is proven each time he leaves his warm bed to go out into the cold and dark to tend to the creatures that are either a livelihood to a farmer or a companion to a man, woman, or child. Never making a distinction as to which is more important, James treats all he encounters with love, compassion, dignity, and skill. He is a transplant to Darrowby, having originally come from Scotland, and he relates some of his mistakes with humor and wit. Herriot does not put himself up as an arrogant man, or a know-it-all. Rather, James revels in what he does not know, and willingly learns anything he can to become a better vet and a better man.

Siegfried Farnon

Siegfried is the Senior Partner and owner of the veterinary practice in Darrowby. His skill and experience serve to provide an excellent mentoring for James. He demonstrates all the kindness and compassion toward a new young vet that James could possibly have desired. Siegfried's manner and capabilities serve as an excellent example to James. On the other hand, Siegfried has some annoying eccentricities that frustrate James and Tristan to no end. Siegfried loves newness when it comes to veterinary practice and willingly embraces any new medicine or procedure even if it has not yet been proven. He also has a conveniently forgetful nature when it comes to giving advice to James about how to treat animals, always acting as if he is the most skilled and experienced. Siegfried also acts as mentor and father to his younger brother, Tristan, who is working to become a certified vet. The most spectacular display of fraternal frustration is over the episode of sausages and mash. Siegfried obviously loves his brother, but will not deny just how frustrating it is to be patient and understanding in the face of all of Tristan's foibles. Overall, Siegfried is a fantastic employer, and a very amusing character.

Tristan Farnon

Tristan is Siegfried's younger brother and a current veterinary student. Tristan has the intelligence to become a very good vet, yet he always gives a far greater appearance of



industry than is actual fact. Tristan would far rather spend time at Drover's Pub or be in the company of a young woman than to answer calls for the veterinary practice or study for his exams. Tristan Farnon is a very experienced practical joker, making him one of Herriot's most favorite characters. His culinary skills extend only to the preparation of sausage and mash, a period of life in Skeldale House that nearly sends his older brother Siegfried around the bend.

Helen Harriot

Helen is the new wife to James, a small country vet. She is the daughter of a local farmer, and as such is more accepted in Darrowby than James is at first. She is very calm, contented, loving, and nurturing. She takes any abuse James throws at her when he is called out of bed in the middle of the night with peace and equanimity. When James complains that he will catch his death of cold, Helen calmly reminds him to bundle up and that he can have some soup when he gets back. Helen acts as a balancing influence on James who seems both petulant and childish at times. Being with Helen makes James a better person all around.

Mr. Dakin

Farmer with a cow named Blossom, both quiet and patient.

Blossom

Mr. Dakin's old cow who insisted on coming home.

Jack Dodson

Man who picks up animals for the fatstock market.

William George Henry Augustus

The 11th Marquis of Hulton, a gentleman farmer.

Charlie

Lord Hulton's farm foreman.

Hector McDarroch

Sadistic military dentist, known as the Butcher.



Cedric

Boxer with a problem of constant and excessive flatus.

Mrs. Rumney

Fastidious and delicate owner of Cedric, unable to keep the dog.

Con Fenton

Retired farm worker who lost his sense of smell and loves Cedric enough to give him a new home.

Wesley Binks

Troubled ten-year-old boy always up to mischief.

Duke

Wesley's dog who is sick with distemper.

Mrs. Binks

Wesley's mother, slovenly, cares nothing for Wesley or Duke.

Mrs. Hall

Housekeeper at Skeldale House.

Mr. Ken Billings

Best farmer with calves dying mysteriously.

Benny

Collie with a ball stuck in his throat.

Mr. Stokill

Frail old farmer who outperforms young James Herriot.



Mrs. Ainsworth

Well-off client with three Basset Hounds.

Debbie

Stray cat of Mrs. Ainsworth's, dies of lymphosarcoma after bringing a kitten home.

Buster

Debbie's kitten, a Christmas present from Debbie.

Ralp Beamish

Racehorse trainer, prefers Siegfried to look after his horses. He is rough, stubborn and his estimation of Herriot finally improves when James diagnoses urticaria in his valuable horse.

Shep

Alsatian (German Shepherd) who lies in wait and barks at Herriot to frighten him.

Rose

Mr. Bailes's cow with a digestive ailment.

Jim Oakley

The postman credited with curing Rose rather than Herriot's methods.

Nurse Brown

Helen's postpartum nurse.

Ted Dobson

Young cowman, arranges a collection to operate on Mick.



Albert Close

Retired shepherd who owns Mick.

Mick

Albert's dog who needs eye surgery.

Jasper

Dalmatian who dies of strychnine poisoning.

Mr. Bartle

Jasper's owner.

Johnny Clifford

Blind man who owns a guide-dog named Fergus.

Fergus

Clifford's guide dog, Alsatian who is also poisoned, but he is the only one who survives.

Jack Brimham

Builder, friend of Herriot's, dog also poisoned.

Old Boardman

Lame WWII veteran.

Patch

Boardman's dog who is also poisoned.

Mrs. Beck

Widow woman who cons Herriot out of the proper price for a spay job on her cat. She is rich but pretends to be poor.



Georgina

Mrs. Beck's cat.

Mr. Hopps

Old fashioned man who is unable to talk to a woman about his cow coming into season.

Mr. Gilby

Strict Methodist who is kicked in the crotch and unable to swear aloud.

Stewie Brannan

Vet who needs Herriot to cover for him while on vacation.

Kim

Dog hit by a car.

Peter and Marjorie Gillard

Young couple who own Kim.

Mrs. Holroyd

Brannan's housekeeper.

Mr. Coker

Manager of the Greyhound Racing Track.

Len Hampson

Shouter, unable to hold a conversation in a normal tone of voice.

Elijah Wentworth

Speaks barely above a whisper.



Granville Bennet

Brilliant surgical vet who has an infinite tolerance for rich food and alcohol.

Zoe Bennet

Granville's wife.

Sam

Herriot's Beagle who has a papilloma.

John Tillet

Has a cow with milk fever.

Mr. Bailey

Old age pensioner with terrible arthritis, gets free medicines for his dog.

Mr. Edwards

Farmer James works for in the RAF sheaving corn until situations reverse when a cow is having a difficult calving.

Flying Officer Woodham

Herriot's flight instructor.

Mr. Snowden

Has a six month calf going bad.

Mr. Barge

Pharmaceutical Representative for Siegfried Farnon.

Mr. Mount

Massive man who is deeply religious, a hard, but fair man.



Deborah

Mr. Mount's daughter who catches Tristan's eye.

Jingo

White bull terrier who dies from hepatitis, and a pup by the same name who is his replacement.

Skipper

Corgi who is Jingo's inseparable companion.

Jack Sanders

Owner of Jingo and Skipper.

Birtwhistles

Family that always speaks all at once.

Len Birtwhistle

Big son who faints at the sight of blood and can talk of nothing but sports.

P.C. Phelps

Adopts the stray that James and Siegfried save.

Miss Harbottle

Secretary at Skeldale House.

Kitty Pattison

Head of office staff at the Ministry of Agriculture.

Charles Harcourt

Divisional Inspector who chews James out for filing official documents inappropriately.



Mr. Blackburn

Big dairy farmer.

Theo

Pet of Paul Cotterell, always at the put with his master.

Paul Cotterell

Dies after he puts down Theo.

Andrew Vine

Depressed man, could have given up on life but for his dog.

Digger

Vine's dog who goes blind.

Lucy

Poodle with a rubber doll named Emmeline, suffers from false pregnancy.

Tessa

Dalmatian with false pregnancy.

Teddy McQueen

Anesthetist for Herriot's operation, Herriot's former classmate.

Judy

Sheepdog who acts as a nurse.

Eric Abbot

Owner of Judy.



Miss Westerman

Retired schoolteacher, owner of Hamish.

Hamish

Scottie belonging to Miss Westerman, who Tristan loses when dog-sitting him.

Lydia

Tristan's lady friend he dumps outside unceremoniously when he thinks Siegfried comes home.

Mr. Potts

Reminisces about the old days with James.

Nip

Mr. Potts' dog. James walks him after Mr. Potts dies.

Corporal Weekes

Fat and lazy RAF shop keeper.

Jake

Crossbred greyhound who rides about in a pram.

Roddy Travers

Jake's owner, a handyman and a bit of a gypsy.

Mr. Duggleby

Entire herd of pigs slaughtered due to hoof and mouth disease.

Mrs. Bailey

Has a cow with blisters that turn out to be cowpox.



Ned Finch

Mr. Dagget's long-suffering farm-hand.

Elsie

Miss Tremayne's cook and housekeeper who marries Ned.

Marjorie Simpson

Postman's daughter.

Oscar

Cat who is badly injured, patched up and adopted by the Herriots only to discover that he belongs to another family.



Objects/Places

Darrowby

Village in the Yorkshire Dales where Herriot practices veterinary medicine.

Skeldale House

The name of the home owned by Siegfried Farnon where Siegfried, James, Helen, and Tristan live.

Propolmidine Cream

An antibiotic cream that Herriot often prescribes, a name that Lord Hulton can never remember.

Fatstock Market

Where animals are taken when they are no longer productive, where they can be boiled down into useful components.

Foot Operated Dentist Drill

A dental object that has terrified James from his childhood.

RAF

Royal Air Force.

AC2

Herriot's military rank in the RAF.

Charcoal Biscuits

Remedy suggested by Siegfried to help Cedric the Boxer's unbelievable gas problem.



Fireworks

Lit and put through the surgery letter box as a prank by Wesley Binks.

Surgery

The office and waiting room where the vets see patients brought in by their owners.

Antimony

A deadly poison that will burn horn buds off a cow, but the risk of affected bits of horn falling into food will kill the animal.

Woodbine

Brand of cigarettes that Tristan smokes.

Black's Veterinary Dictionary

The book that Herriot carries with him in the RAF to keep up his knowledge of veterinary medicine.

Small Rubber Ball

Dangerous toy for Benny the collie.

Pence

One twelfth of a shilling English money.

Shilling

Twelve pence English money.

Pound

Twenty shillings English money.



Half Crown

Two shillings and six pence, a.k.a. two and six.

Guniea

One pound English money.

Farthing

One quarter of a pence, English money.

Bob

Slang for shilling English money.

Quid

Slang for one pound of English money.

Alsatian

Name used instead of German Shepherd, likely due to the world environment during World War II.

Grand

The hotel in Scarborough where Herriot is stationed.

Strychnine

Poison used to kill vermin, inappropriately used to poison dogs in Darrowby.

Stewie's Table

Vet exam table with unreliable legs that collapses when least expected.

Henfield

Dark and dingy mill town in Yorkshire.



Shropshire

Town in the south of England.

Luftwaffe

German Air Force.

Biplane

Fixed wing aircraft with double wings.

Soothitt

An ineffective drug that fails to work on a farrowing pig and a hyper Cocker Spaniel.

Ministry of Agriculture

The British agency that oversees all tuberculin testing of the cow herds of England, requiring very exacting standards.

Ziehl-Nielson

A stain that is used to detect tuberculin bacillus on a slide.



Themes

A country veterinary surgeon is a dedicated man.

Being a vet in the late 1930s and early 1940s is not a job for the weak of heart. Many of the calls that James, Siegfried, and Tristan answer come in the middle of the night, sometimes twice in one night, without regard to the outside temperature or day of year it is. The life of a country vet is at the mercy of the call of duty, much as the life of a military man is. In *All Things Wise and Wonderful*, Herriot relates many of the things he is required to do when in training with the RAF, and he often compares such requirements to his experiences as a vet. One night James must answer a call, it is winter, bitter cold, he has a cold, and the only people who can help him are two old farmers who are sicker than he is. There is nothing to do but to deal with the animal emergency that has taken him out of his bed. James may wish that he could stay in his nice warm bed, but his dedication to his work forces him to deal with inclement weather, unhappy or ugly clients, and animals who will not heal no matter what he does for them. Despite all this, James recognizes that he has a job to do, and with the difficulties of his job come incredible benefits that only he can experience. Consider the two subsequent Christmases at the Ainsworth farm where James first meets Debbie, the stray cat who comes in only to warm herself at the fire. Debbie has a fatal illness, and brings her single kitten to Mrs. Ainsworth to care for. Debbie dies, but her son Buster lives at the Ainsworth house terrorizing the Basset Hounds and playing fetch with a ball. Such experiences would never be his if James did not recognize his duty to his clients and their animals.

The connection between animal and human is invisible but pow

Man and animal have been companions for a very long time, and some of them form relationships that can actually take the place of another human for them. Johnny Clifford is blind and uses a seeing eye dog in order to get around more easily. Fergus must see Mr. Herriot once a year to be evaluated for another year as a service dog for Johnny. Such a bond between man and dog is formed because of a physical need, but without the ability to create such a bond, such an animal would be useless to a human being. When the strychnine poisoning occurs in Darrowby, James is infuriated and very frustrated because he is unable to save all the dogs; however, he does manage to save Fergus. Other animals are companions without a physical need such as blindness. Paul Cotterell loves his dog, and the two are constant companions. When Theo appears to be ill, Paul seeks medical advice from James. Initially James believes that Theo's condition is minor and treats it as such. Paul accepts any diagnosis James gives with equanimity, even when the diagnosis changes and Theo must be euthanized. James mistakenly believes that Paul's attachment to his dog is very minor, but when the man commits suicide, James realizes that such a connection is no minor thing. When Andrew Vine, another man suffering from depression, comes to James for help with his



dog, Digger, James recognizes that he has a larger role to play in this event. Coming on the heels of Paul's suicide, James is forced to take a closer look at the man and dog before recommending a course of action. Even his wife, Helen, suffers when she is deprived of the companionship of an animal. Oscar comes to the Herriots when he is very badly injured, and Helen spends countless hours nursing the cat back to health. When the cat's family shows up, Helen knows it is the right thing to give the animal back, but she grieves the loss of such a close companion.

Everyone needs friends and companionship, human and animal

While in the military, James considers the relationship he shares with his fellow-soldiers and recognizes that they all need one another. This forces him to consider his friendship with Siegfried and Tristan Farnon, and again the realization hits him that without such close friends his life would not be as fulfilling as it currently is. Once he turns his thoughts to friendships among humans, James cannot discount the very close relationships he has witnessed between animals. Jingo and Skipper are inseparable companions, and when Jingo suffers a fatal disease, Skipper takes to his bed and appears quite willing to simply die as well. Only when the owners replace the former Jingo with a puppy does Skipper show an interest in resuming his life. Not all relationships between animals have the same characteristics. Judy, a farm dog, considers herself to be the nurse and caretaker of all the animals of the farm if they are young or sick. She will not leave the side of the afflicted animal until the animal either recovers or dies. Then, Judy will look for her next patient or cause. When James leaves the farm, Judy is busy chasing the newly hatched chicks, futilely trying to keep them safe inside the barn. It is a thankless and unending job, but Judy needs to be needed, just as her fellow animals and humans show a similar need.

Style

Point of View

The stories in *All Things Wise and Wonderful* are told in first person. The book is written as a memoir of Herriot's experiences as a country vet, during the time that he is in training with the RAF during World War II. The book covers the period of time when Herriot first joins the RAF to the day he finally returns home to Darrowby. Each chapter tells a story either of his experiences while in the military or a very brief episode of military life that brings to mind a memory of his experiences as a country veterinary surgeon in the Yorkshire Dales in Darrowby, England. When compared to Herriot's other stories and memories of his life in Darrowby, *All Things Wise and Wonderful* sometimes focuses on events that are not very happy. Herriot speaks of the depression of two of his clients, one of whom commits suicide after his dog must be euthanized. Another unhappy episode is when the dogs around Darrowby are being poisoned by strychnine. James reflects on his inadequacies as a vet, often reflecting and regretting that the cures that most vets use today were not yet invented. Much of Herriot's life is spent rendering palliative treatment of the animals and even the farmers who own the animals. From time to time he speaks of a new drug that simply did not work, and the only way to know that was to use it and have it not work, like with Soothitt. By relating the stories in first person, the reader feels as though it is a very easy matter to accompany Herriot on his endless calls on the farmers of the Yorkshire countryside. His life, overall, is a good and satisfying one, and most of the stories support this belief. A few of the stories, however, do reflect on the real difficulties of life and the need to persevere and continue on as best one can.

Setting

The setting of *All Things Wise and Wonderful* moves from the life James lives while in training with the RAF and the Yorkshire countryside of Darrowby, England. This is set during World War II, a time when most young men in England are either asked to enlist, or enlist out of a sense of patriotism. James believes that he should do what he can for his country, but the entire time he is gone his heart brings his mind back time and again to Yorkshire, the people, the animals, his friends, and his family. While in training, James trains for quite a while in London, causing him to become very homesick for the colder but cleaner air of the Yorkshire Dales. At one point, James is stationed very near Darrowby and this proximity gives him the courage to go AWOL to see Helen just before their son is born, and then right at the time that Helen delivers their baby. The rest of the setting really focuses on the different farms of Darrowby. Each farm is as different as the farmer and family that lives on it. Some farms are well cared for, scrupulously clean, and obviously a place where the animals will receive good care. One starkly contrasting setting is that of Wesley Binks's home that is slovenly, dirty, and depressing. The only corner in that home that is clean is the dog's bed. James recognizes just how much setting can influence the story. Some of his stories talk about the bitter cold of the



countryside, giving the reader a good understanding of just how dedicated a man the country vet must be in order to get out of his nice warm bed in the middle of the night, nursing a cold, or simply wishing to be able to stay at home on Christmas. By using weather as a component setting, Herriot brings his stories to life in a way few other authors can.

Language and Meaning

Herriot is a genius when it comes to language. As with all his books, in *All Things Wise and Wonderful*, James Herriot uses dialect writing with a skill few authors have ever mastered. Most of the characters in the stories live in Darrowby and the surrounding Yorkshire countryside, and the dialect writing when spoken aloud brings their language to life. Consider this excerpt from Chapter 32, Page 276:

"Now then, Mr. Herriot," the farmer's wife said, beaming as she handed me a steaming mug. "I was talkin' to your good lady in the market place yesterday, and she said . . ."

"And ye think them powders o' yours might do the trick?" Her husband looked at me seriously. "I 'ope so, because Nellie's a right good milker. Ah reckon last lactation she gave . . ."

"Kestrels is drawn agin Dibham I nt'Hulton cup." Len chimed in. "It'll be some game. Last time . . ."

Mrs. Birtwhistle continued without drawing breath. ". . .you were nicely settled in at top of Skeldale House. It must be right pleasant up there with the lovely view and . . ."

". . . give gallons when she fust calved and she kept it up for . . ."

". . .they nearly kicked us off t'pitch, but by gaw ah'll tell ye, we'll. . ."

". . .you can see right o'er Darrowby. But it wouldn't do for a fat body like me. I was sayin' to your missus that you 'ave to be young and slim to live up there. All them stairs and . . ."

By using the language in dialect writing, the reader is immediately transported to another place and time. This creates a world that becomes so very real, immediate, and authentic. Without the use of dialect writing, Herriot's books would still be wonderful, engaging, and interesting, but would lack the color of character that he has created with his writing style.

Structure

James uses an interesting story-telling technique in *All Things Wise and Wonderful*. Rather than creating just another memoir of his time in Darrowby as a veterinary surgeon, he weaves his experiences in the RAF during World War II with his memories

as a vet. Most chapters in this book begin with a very brief recounting of his time in the RAF that somehow reminds him of the life he left behind. "I think it was when I saw the London policeman wagging a finger at a scowling urchin that I thought of Wesley Binks and the time he put the firework through the surgery letterbox." In one single sentence, Herriot guides the reader to his current situation of being in military training in London, and then effortlessly moves to the life he obviously prefers back in Darrowby. This is almost a framework story, with the framework being his time in the military, and the resulting stories being related based on his current experiences. Even though this book is written of his time in the RAF, the vast majority of the book is back in Darrowby, brought there by his memories and his emotional attachment to his life, his friends and his family back in the Yorkshire Dales.



Quotes

"She was the classical picture of an ancient bovine; as fleshless as her owner, with jutting pelvic bones, splayed, overgrown feet and horns with a multitude of rings along their curving length. Beneath her, the udder, once high and tight, drooped forlornly almost to the floor. She resembled her owner, too, in her quiet, patient demeanour." Chap. 1, p. 4

"Aye, ye'll think I'm daft, but that's how it is. T'awd lass has come 'ome and she's stoppin' 'ome." Chap. 1, p. 8

"Aye,' the old man went on sadly. 'I 'have no sense of smell.'" Chap. 4, p. 40

"There's t'young vitnery coming out of his house. Not long married, too. That's his missus next to him." Chap. 5, p. 43

"But when you known without a shadow of doubt that, even without doing anything clever, you have pulled an animal back from the brink of death into the living, breathing world, it is a satisfaction which lingers, flowing like balm over the discomforts and frustrations of veterinary practice, making everything right." Chap. 7, p. 67

"Tryin' to get tae see ma wife, corp. She's havin' a baby soon." Chap. 10, p. 89

"Now I was an AC2, the lowest form of life in the RAF, and the 'Hey you!' was a reflection of my status. The Yorkshire farmers don't rush out and kiss you, but their careful friendliness and politeness is something which I have valued even more since my service days. Because that was when I stopped taking it for granted." Chap. 11, p. 94

"Aye, that's what he said. He'd seen 'em like that afore and a good gallop put 'em right. So we got Rose out here and did as he said and by gaw it did the trick. She looked better right away." Chap. 12, p. 107

"Well, he's a funny-looking little thing isn't he?" Chap. 13, p. 114

"The shops were shut and even through the wintry drizzle there was a suggestion of repose, of work done, of firesides and books and drifting tobacco smoke. I had all those things, plus Helen, back there in our bed-sitter." Chap. 14, p. 119

"The big difference between my present existence and my old life as a vet was that I used to make up my own mind as to how I would do things, whereas in the RAF all the decisions which affected me were made by other people." Chap. 15, p. 129

"Treating guide dogs for the blind has always seemed to me to be one of a veterinary surgeon's most rewarding tasks. To be in a position to help and care for these magnificent animals is a privilege, not just because they are highly trained and valuable but because they represent in the ultimate way something which has always lain near



the core and center of my life; the mutually depending, trusting, and loving association between man and animal." Chap. 16, p. 1136

"NAY, AH DON'T LIKE THAT MUCH! AH ALLUS LIKE TO 'AVE A GO. ISN'T THERE SUMMAT WE CAN DO? WHERE THERE'S LIFE THERE'S 'OPE, THAT KNAWS." Chap. 23, p. 188

"Not at all, laddie, nearly all tonic. Well cheers, so nice to see you both." Chap. 24, p. 198

"Our existence was ruled by sudden and unexpected alarms." Chap. 30, p. 248

"The shock of Paul Cotterell's death stayed with me for a long time, and in fact I know I have never quite got over it because even now when the company in the bar of the Drover has changed and I am one of the few old faces left from thirty-five years ago I can still see the jaunty figure on the corner stool and the bushy face peeping from beneath." Chap. 38, p. 329



Topics for Discussion

Explain why Herriot's writings are so popular.

Discuss Herriot's method of introducing his main topic back in Darrowby by first bringing to mind something that is currently happening to him in the RAF.

Do you believe that Herriot's actions to go AWOL to see Helen are the sign of an unlawful man? Explain.

Do you believe James should have noticed Paul Cotterell's depression before putting his dog to sleep? Discuss.

Compare and contrast Paul Cotterell and Andrew Vine.

Discuss the relationship between Siegfried and Tristan.

Discuss the relationship between James and Tristan.

Talk about the life of a small country vet during the time of All Things Wise and Wonderful. What were the good points? What were the bad points?

Describe a relationship between an animal and a person that you know personally. Do you feel as Herriot feels about it? Why or why not?

Describe a relationship between two animals. Compare or contrast it to one of the stories in All Things Wise and Wonderful.

Discuss your favorite story in this book. Explain why it is your favorite and how it speaks to you.