Caddie Woodlawn Study Guide

Caddie Woodlawn by Carol Ryrie Brink

BOOKRAGS

Contents

Plot Summary

It is 1864, and the settlers near Dunnville, Wisconsin, on the Menomonie River, are nervous and isolated. Only two years earlier in Minnesota the Indians had killed a thousand settlers, and their own vulnerability makes the settlers in Wisconsin nervous. Caddie, her dog Nero, and her brothers Tom and Warren do not share that nervousness. Although they cannot swim, they cross the river — the other two clinging to Tom's shoulders as he tiptoes along the riverbed. They watch the Indians working on a birchbark canoe, then head home, stopping to forage for hazelnuts.

The circuit rider, an itinerant preacher who also brings outside news to the frontier, pays a visit leaving a broken clock for Caddie's father, John, to repair. John is the master mechanic of the mill at Eau Galle, a town a short distance from Dunnville. John has a large house and farm; he fixes all sorts of mechanical devices, including clocks.

Uncle Edmund, Caddie's mother's younger brother, visits as well. The children like his practical jokes, but Caddie is not too happy when one of the jokes results in her raft coming apart in the middle of the lake. Uncle Edmund rescues her and the raft, and gives Caddie a silver dollar for her trouble. When Edmund returns home, he takes Caddie's dog, Nero, with him, to train as a bird dog.

Winter school term begins with a confrontation between Caddie and the biggest boy in school, Obediah Jones. It ends with the teacher reconfirming her authority over the classroom and Obediah. Before the term is well under way, Caddie slips through thin ice while skating. She ends up sick in bed, then confined to her house through Christmas. During her confinement she learns — first on her own, then with her father's help — how to repair clocks.

Caddie returns to school in time for Valentine's Day and learns her brother has a secret crush on the seamstress's daughter, Katie. Caddie keeps her brother's secret.

Then bad news comes: Nero has run away from Uncle Edmund. Caddie feels terrible about— and responsible for — Nero's unhappiness in St. Louis, but more bad news is on the way.

There's a rumor the local Indians are going to attack the settlers. Caddie knows they won't, and her father believes the same, so he tries to calm the neighbors who gather at his farm for protection. But Caddie overhears some settlers planning on attacking the Indians, and goes to warn her Indian friends of the danger. She rides her horse across the frozen river, arrives at the Indian camp blue with cold, and warns them. She returns, accompanied by the Indians' leader, John, who confirms to Mr. Woodlawn they have no intention of doing harm. The settlers are reassured, but still unsettled; Indian John decides to take his people away for a few months. On the way, he leaves his dog and his father's scalp belt with Caddie for safekeeping until his return.

The Hankinsons — three children of a white settler and an Indian mother — get a visit in school from their mother. Mr. Hankinson is ashamed of his wife, so she is going away with her people. She leaves, with her three boys sniffling in the classroom. The next day Caddie takes the Hankinson boys to the Dunnville store after school and buys them candy and gifts, spending her silver dollar. For a moment, at least, their loneliness is eased.

Winter school term is over, leaving the children free to roam and play — and do chores. They get good news: the war is over! But soon after, their celebration is tempered by sadness: the President has been killed.

Soon it is time for the summer session of school. Indian John's dog makes a habit of following Caddie to school and waiting outside the door, even though the other children and the teacher all think he's ugly. One day, the dog raises a ruckus, but with good reason: there's a fire! The children, led by Obediah Jones, fight the flames and save the school.

Caddie's cousin Annabelle arrives to visit from Boston. Caddie's mother loves hearing of Boston relatives, society, and "culture," but Caddie, Tom, and Warren soon tire of hearing how wonderful Boston is compared to "quaint" Dunnville. Caddie and her brothers play a series of practical jokes on their refined cousin, for which Caddie's mother punishes Caddie, because she is not acting like a lady, blaming her, and leaving her brothers unpunished. Caddie feels unfairly treated, and plans to run away from home, but her father talks with her about how hard it is to be a woman — not only having to do so much work, but also to teach gentleness, courtesy, love, and kindness. Caddie begins to see a woman's work is far more than looking pretty in the kitchen, and realizes growing into a young woman might be something worth striving for.

Mr. Woodlawn receives a letter. He had long hidden from his family the fact that he had been born into a wealthy English family. Now, however, he has learned he can take his family to England and assume the title of "Lord Woodlawn," along with the extensive properties inherited with the title. He puts the choice up to his family. Cousin Annabelle is certain they will all choose to be English Lords, but the family votes to stay.

Caddie has begun to learn some of the household arts — her brothers Tom and Warren following suit — and Annabelle returns to Boston.

Indian John returns, reclaiming his scalp belt and his dog. Soon after, Nero returns! He made his way through the wilderness back to Caddie. Caddie sees the circuit rider appear on a fall day and she thinks back to all the changes of the past year, how she is the same person, only different.

Chapter 1

Summary

The “inseparable trio” — 11-year-old Caddie Woodlawn, her older brother Tom, and her younger brother Warren — is headed to investigate the wisps of smoke visible above the woods on the opposite bank of the Menomonie River in western Wisconsin. They’re sure it’s a sign the local Indian tribe is building birchbark canoes and, although none of them can swim, they are making the trek. They muse over the possibility of an Indian massacre, but they’re sure that Indian John — the leader of the tribe — is a friend to them and the other settlers. Reaching the bank, they remove their clothes, bundle them on their heads, and step into the water. Tom’s feet can reach the bottom, so Caddie holds onto his shoulder, and Warren holds hers, and off they go — even though they know their younger sister Hetty is off to tattle to their mother.

The family dog, Nero, accompanies them, and it’s he who first draws the attention of the Indians, as Indian John’s dog comes out to greet them. Indian John himself comes over to meet them, and the Indians briefly stop their work to gaze at the three children, whose red hair and pale skin always fascinate them. Soon they return to work, which the children watch with their own fascination, until Warren realizes he’s hungry. Caddie agrees, so they dash for home, knowing that being late for a meal is an “unpardonable sin in the Woodlawn family.”

On the way home, though, they see some hazel brush with nuts ready for harvesting. Tom and Warren fill their pockets and head for home, but Caddie still has room in her gathered skirts, so she waits behind. Finally, she rushes off towards home, dashes in the door and sees her family already at the supper table — but it’s a fancy company dinner with the circuit rider! Her hands fall to her sides, releasing hazelnuts to bounce off to every corner of the room.

Analysis

Chapter 1 introduces the reader to the Woodlawn family, particularly in relation to the third child, Caddie. Caddie’s character is introduced as the despair of her mother and the pride of her father — particularly for her tendency to join her brothers Tom and Warren in getting “in and out of more scrapes and adventures than any one of them could have imagined alone.”

The uncertainties and dangers of pioneer life will be present throughout the book, and they are introduced in the form of questions surrounding the intentions of the Indians and the hazards of crossing a river without knowing how to swim.

The importance of relying on family is also introduced graphically, as Caddie and Warren literally depend on the support of their older brother. Caddie’s confidence in herself and her brother is justified by the success of her day, but the consequences of

her actions are also made clear: she doesn’t always act with the decorum befitting a specific occasion. This time it is not that important, but that trait will not serve her well in the future.

Vocabulary

inseparable, intrusion, massacre, pitch, calico, buckskin, thongs, venison, perspiration, sedate, fiery

Chapter 2

Summary

Mr. Tanner, the circuit rider, makes his way around the frontier lands, bringing news and the word of God to the settlers. He hardly ever relaxes, but one of the places at which he does is the Woodlawn's supper table. He also is from Boston, and the Saturday feast of beans and brown bread is a taste of home. He wonders when Caddie will become a young lady, but John Woodlawn explains when their daughter Mary died soon after arriving from Boston, he begged his wife to allow the next daughter, Caddie, to run free in the rough-and-tumble frontier woods. He hoped this would lead Caddie to health, and it seems to be working. Mr. Tanner produces a broken clock made in Boston — an old friend from home — and Mr. Woodlawn accepts the task of fixing it, as he has fixed so many others. Mr. Woodlawn also describes how he has helped the Indians by upgrading their rifles from a flintlock to a springlock mechanism.

At the supper table, the talk ranges from the danger of the Indians — Mrs. Woodlawn is certain folks from the South are encouraging the Indians to be violent, and Mr. Woodlawn insisting the Indians will remember his generosity towards them and remain peaceful — to talk of the war. Mr. Woodlawn has paid a man to take his place in the war, but says, "If it weren't for my wife and children, Englishman and peace lover though I am, I should be out there fighting for abolition." Mr. Tanner expresses surprise, saying the English aristocrats have no problem with slavery, but Mr. Woodlawn replies God created all men free and equal, and it's time everyone realized that fundamental truth.

Analysis

Chapter 2 again introduces the issue of Indian unrest and the possibility of violence. Now it is Mr. Tanner who expresses his concern, and Mr. Woodlawn who is certain there is nothing to fear from the Indians. Mr. Woodlawn's abolitionist sentiment is revealed as a facet of his belief that all are created equal and must make of themselves what they can. He is proud to say he shares nothing with the aristocratic point of view — a theme restated throughout the book. The author emphasizes this, introducing a hidden disagreement of some sort between her mother and father, but, at this point, we have no idea what that disagreement might be.

Vocabulary

aristocrat, devoutly, genial, unfathomable, cogs, pendulums, recount, benediction, samplers

Chapter 3-4

Summary

At church the next day, Caddie finds herself gazing at the Hankinson boys, the three children of Sam Hankinson and his Indian wife. His wife waits outside, and Caddie thinks to herself although she is proud of her own mother, she would not be ashamed to have an Indian wife, as Sam Hankinson appears to be of his wife. The service over, the circuit rider leaves, and the children turn their attention to the next bit of excitement sure to follow: Uncle Edmund's annual visit.

Uncle Edmund makes a habit of visiting each year at the time of the arrival of the passenger pigeons, when even a nearsighted, poor sportsman like himself can catch his fill. The children especially look forward to his arrival, because he's sure to put a toad in the sugar bowl or some such trick and liven up the household. The passenger pigeons arrive, and all that is needed to bag as many as you can carry is a stick or a net, as the flock makes its way south, feeding all the way. Mr. Woodlawn tells his sons and hired men to limit their catch to what they can eat. Caddie doesn't join in, as this seems more like slaughter than hunting. Edmund has not arrived with the pigeons, however, and the family is worried until they get a letter announcing his upcoming arrival on the "Little Steamer" that makes its way up the river to Dunnville. Everyone wants to ride into town to greet Uncle Edmund, but only Clara and Tom, the two oldest children, are permitted to join. Caddie and Warren figure that's only because there was no more room in the wagon, so after their parents leave, they dash to the barn and climb onto Betsy, the safer, yet slower of their horses. Edmund's excitement at seeing all of them there overshadows any annoyance their parents might feel. Edmund pulls a small book from his pocket as a gift to Caddie, but when she opens it, a cloth-covered spring leaps out. They all laugh, but Tom tells Edmund, "you'd ought to know you can't fool Caddie on snakes or clock springs. Try that on Hetty."

Uncle Edmund is anxious to get in some hunting, even though he's missed the pigeons. He has to pick a spotter, and settled on Caddie because, "'She's as good as a pointer for showing me the game, and she never tells me how to shoot it nor reproaches me when I miss my aim.'" Edmund, Caddie, and Nero head across the lake to hunt. Caddie can handle either the canoe or the raft. Now she jumps into the canoe and tosses a challenge back to Uncle Edmund: "Beat you to the end of the lake!" On the water, Caddie literally paddles circles around Uncle Edmund and Nero on the raft, and issues another challenge, saying she'll beat him back, too, even if she takes the raft and he gets the canoe. He wagers a silver dollar she can't, and she accepts. Finally, they make it to the other side and head off through the woods to start the hunt. Uncle Edmund has to run back to grab his game bag, which takes him a while, but finally he rejoins Caddie. Edmund bags three squirrels and a brace of partridges. Caddie reminds him of their wager, Edmund laughs and jumps into the canoe and starts paddling. Caddie, with Nero along, is rapidly closing on the canoe when it starts to fall apart, logs and pins separating. Nero jumps off and heads for shore. Caddie can't swim, so when the last

logs separate and she dumps into the water she desperately claws for a log. Once she has her hands around it, though, she feels more angry than scared. Edmund apologizes for his joke — he had no idea the raft would come apart so quickly. He picks Caddie up in the canoe and ferries her across, offering her the silver dollar so she need not tell her mother about the event. Caddie bristles, "'Are you trying to bribe a Woodlawn, Uncle Edmund?'"

Edmund circles back and picks up all the pieces, leaving Caddie to dry her clothes on the sunny bank. When he returns, he looks so exhausted that Caddie's annoyance evaporates, and together they put the raft together from the pieces Edmund has salvaged. Edmund offers her the dollar, neither as payment nor as bribe, but because it's burning a hole in his pocket. They return home, Caddie's thoughts now on the possibilities opened up by the silver dollar in her pocket.

Analysis

Chapters 3 and 4 center around the character of Uncle Edmund, whose traits contrast with his pioneer relatives. His sister, Harriet Woodlawn, loves her brother despite his tendency to childish pranks, while the children look forward to his arrival with unbridled anticipation. Edmund is like a child himself.

The incident with the passenger pigeons appears separate from the flow of the story, allowing the author to reflect on how the advance of "civilization" eliminated ways of life that had existed before: the annual migration of skies full of passenger pigeons and the semi-nomadic Indian life.

The author is still introducing Caddie's traits, including her ability to know how far to push against her parents' rules. The fact she is able to bend the rules and not get punished has probably been a key factor in Caddie's development. Edmund shows his immaturity by attempting to bribe Caddie so his poor judgment is not revealed. The fact that Caddie is repulsed by the suggestion reflects a trait she shares with her brothers: they accept responsibility for their actions, and expect others to do the same. The theme of personal responsibility returns throughout the book. Caddie accepts Edmund's silver dollar, but only as a gift.

Vocabulary

passenger pigeon, sportsman, slaughter, harassed, glutton, perilous, steamer, smirk, beeline, halter, churning, ruefully, nearsighted, anticipation, sublimely, whippersnapper, beached, admirable, reverberated, poled, indignation, infamy, comeuppance, lulled

Chapter 5-6

Summary

Edmund's visit comes to a close, and he makes a startling proposition: he would like to take Nero to St. Louis to be trained as a bird dog, and return him next year. Although Harriet is resistant — along with Caddie and the rest of the children — she eventually agrees to Edmund's proposition. Edmund leaves, and the children are regretful, but not for long, as autumn chores are distracting, to say the least. Cranberry picking through the dangerous bogs takes so much of their time Warren complains, "I'm getting dents in my thumb and finger, picking so many cranberries." Harriet's turkeys are also ready for market, and she has more and better birds than ever before. But the war has sapped everyone's resources, and no one can afford to pay her even what it cost to raise them. Rather than sell them at a loss, she brings them all back. What are they going to do with all those turkeys? Why, mother says, we will eat them ourselves! The children dance in the yard, excited about the prospect of having turkey for more than just the single Christmas meal.

The first day of the two-month-long winter term of school approaches, and the children get their new clothes sewn. The winter clothes are done just in time, as the first day of winter term also brings the first snow. The first moments of school bring conflict. Obediah Jones, the biggest boy in school, has grown to regard the classroom as his territory, so he sits down at his desk and puts his muddy feet on Maggie Bunn's desk, right next to Caddie. Maggie objects, but Obediah says he's not scared of anybody in the school. At this provocation, Caddie swings her ruler down on Obediah's shins. Obediah leaps to his feet and grabs Caddie by the hair, and she responds by kicking his shins.

Miss Parker, the teacher, enters after ringing the school bell and finds a general brawl. She brings order, but Obediah challenges her, saying "I kin do what I please and nobody dast stop me." For a moment he thinks he's gotten away with it, then he finds himself grabbed by the scruff of the neck and hauled to the front of the class, where Miss Parker tans his backside with a ruler. She sends him outside. He comes back in five minutes, chastened, and well-behaved.

Analysis

In Chapter 5, the decision-making process in the Woodlawn household is introduced. Mr. Woodlawn is not an autocrat. This will be important in later decisions, and the reader is prepared by this early introduction. The decision about the dog does leave an open question: why does Harriet give in to her brother's requests? The issue is introduced at some length, but it never reappears, so the author's intention is not clear.

The war is a distant presence in this book, more a philosophical foil than an imminent danger, but the economic privations have now hit the northern frontier. The “hardship” it introduces to the Woodlawns is a paradoxical plenty: too much of a special thing. This may be an intentional irony.

Caddie’s defense of Maggie does not introduce a new side of her character, but it does reinforce a few elements that will have continued importance. Specifically, Caddie is motivated to action by seeing the plight of a friend, and Caddie does not even think of her personal safety when she sees something that must be done.

Vocabulary

homespun, darning, sulphur, adoration, hornpipe, quagmire, hummock, barbarous, sedately, challis, muffler, vigor, slates, Waterloo

Chapter 7

Summary

School settles into a routine. Caddie's biggest thrill is from the Saturday spelling bees, in which she usually remains one of the last standing. Outside of school, the children enjoy the treat of joining their father at the mill at Eau Galle. Tom is an expert skater, but Warren and Caddie make up in daring what they lack in skill. But Caddie pushes just a little too far and crashes through the thin ice. Tom speeds over to where she's fallen, has Warren lay flat on the ice and grasp Caddie's arms. Tom pulls, and out pops Caddie. There's little fanfare regarding the incident, but it has one lasting effect: Caddie catches a cold that keeps her in bed for a week and confined to the house for weeks after that.

Her illness keeps her from doing any Christmas shopping. She had intended to spend her shiny silver dollar on gifts for her family, but she is unable to leave the house. So Christmas passes with the usual visit from Santa Claus, who fills the stockings with toys and surrounds them with fruit and nuts very similar to those the children have harvested themselves. It is rounded off, of course, by a turkey dinner, but the children have grown tired of turkey.

When confined at home, sick, Caddie's boredom leads her to the attic, where she finds two unusual items among the family's possession: "a pair of little red breeches and a pair of small, wooden-soled clogs." The mystery holds her only so long, and she soon finds herself looking at the shelf of clocks awaiting father's repair. There is the circuit rider's clock, as yet unrepaired. Caddie thinks of the times she has seen her father repair clocks, and she decides she will help out.

She opens the back of the clock and finds the spring so tightly wound it can't unwind. She eventually sends parts flying around the attic. She jumps, startled by laughter, and finds her father chuckling at her predicament. Her father helps her gather the pieces and they repair the clock together. Her father declares her a partner in the clock-repair business.

Analysis

The rescue on the ice presents the children's trait of self-reliance once again. This is not a new characteristic, but it is presented in a more extreme situation.

Another side of that same trait is shown by the father's response to Caddie's interference with his clock repairing. He does not get angry at her action, but sees it as initiative, and encourages her to take responsibility for what she has started. This is more reinforcement of characteristics the author has already introduced.

Vocabulary

inclination, gimcracks, breeches, clogs, accumulate, dog-eared, parlor, ancestors, silhouette, tiresome, mahogany, flannel, scrolls, muskrats

Chapter 8

Summary

One evening soon after Caddie's clock repair, the family gathers together one evening, as usual, this time telling stories of earlier adventures as they crack butternuts. All that storytelling reminds Caddie of the breeches and clogs she had found: what was their story? Father and mother decide to tell the story.

John Woodlawn was born in England, the son of the second son of an English Lord. John's father, Thomas, married the seamstress — a shoemaker's daughter instead of the child of a noble family. That did not fit with the Lord's plans, so he disowned his son, Thomas, John's dad. Thomas went from living in a large estate with peacocks prancing about, to roaming from town to town, painting murals for inns and taverns in exchange for room and board. The change proved too abrupt, and Thomas died when his son John was about ten years old. The young John, a child who looked about half his age, begged his mother for wooden clogs and danced for coins, wearing a little green jacket and a pair of red breeches. Father demonstrates as an adult he can still dance. While the children watch delightedly, mother retrieves an old painting from her linen chest. It is a painting of a three-year-old John, done by his father.

Although the picture shows a little boy with red-tufted hair in a sailor suit, Caddie sees wistfulness in the child's eyes. As the children go off to bed, Caddie can't help but think of the little boy, sadly looking through barred iron gates into a land he cannot enter.

Analysis

John Woodlawn has dropped hints about a somewhat unsympathetic attitude towards the aristocracy, but it is only in this chapter he reveals the source of his impatience with the aristocratic perspective. The theme of personal responsibility — especially as manifested in hard work and its reward — is re-emphasized. Caddie finds it hard to believe John's grandfather, Lord Woodlawn, would not admire a shoemaker, "if he was a good shoemaker." Caddie explicitly states what we have already seen in her character: a respect for those who perform their chosen tasks well.

For the first time, the virtue of rewarding effort and character is implicitly tied to America, while the vice of pride is explicitly linked with England.

Vocabulary

skeptical, hassock, tufts, industry, coppers, haycock, disinherited

Chapter 9-10

Summary

Caddie returns to school in time for Valentine's Day. Tom encourages her to spend her silver dollar on valentines, but Caddie is not so frivolous. Instead, she brings six pennies she has saved and buys a few "penny comics" for friends and family. She learns Tom is working away in the back room of the store, sprouting potatoes in exchange for the nicest valentine in the store. Caddie can't dream who it's for, but she realizes Tom wants it to be a secret and she tells no one. Next day at school, the valentines are exchanged, but as the day wears on, the fancy valentine has still not appeared. After afternoon recess, though, the valentine appears anonymously on Katie Hyman's desk. That gets Caddie to thinking — she does everything with Tom, yet here he is giving a fancy valentine to Katie, who's just a little lady. "Maybe," thinks Caddie, "there's something in this lady business after all."

Valentine's Day soon fades away, but what hasn't faded away for the children is the monotony of turkey for lunches, and again for suppers. Caddie approaches the Hankinson children and offers to trade turkey sandwiches for their parched corn, leaving both sides happy with the result. February also brings George Washington's birthday, which is also Caddie's birthday. Teacher lets Caddie carry the flag, and her heart is filled with pride in her country — more than her classmates do — because "they were mean to father in England."

The morning of Caddie's birthday, her mother bemoans the fact that her now 12-year-old daughter knows none of the feminine arts, even though Caddie protests, "I can plow." But father tells mother to bide her time and the child will "see her way soon." When the children return home from school those thoughts are forgotten, though, for a letter has come from Uncle Edmund. Nero has been miserable in St. Louis and has run away. Caddie feels guilty that she, Nero's favorite, has let the dog suffer such a miserable fate. She runs upstairs to bed and cries herself to sleep. She doesn't awaken until Hetty and Minnie come to bed. She goes downstairs to find mother has kept her dinner warm and ready to go on the table. As she finishes eating, a rider gallops up to the door and knocks. Father steps outside and when he returns he tells them a stranger has come to the tavern to warn the people of Dunnville the Indians are gathering for an uprising. Mr. Woodlawn doesn't give the rumor credence, but he still offers his house — the only one one large enough for the settlers to gather in — as a gathering place where they can join for their mutual protection.

Analysis

Up until Chapter 9, Caddie has been completely content with her choices. Specifically, when given the choice between adventures in the woods or applying herself to the household arts, there is no question the adventures are the right choice for her. But

when Katie is introduced as an object of her brother's admiration, Caddie considers there may be value in the other option.

Although Caddie's trade with the Hankinson boys satisfies her own self-interest, the reader cannot help but suspect generosity in her character is part of her motive. Surely, there were other children she could have traded with, yet she chose the Hankinsons, who are poor, shy, and perhaps ostracized.

The pioneer traits Caddie admires and embodies have already been associated with her country, and Caddie continues the association by making a deeply personal connection between the principles of her country and her own life.

The end of Chapter 10 reaffirms the Woodlawns are leaders of the community, as they are called upon to offer protection — and perhaps guidance — to their neighbors. Neither father nor mother hesitate to offer all they have in support of their neighbors, which echoes the traits Caddie has demonstrated in support of her friends.

Vocabulary

fancies, miserly, transfixed, sprouting, coasting, trial, parched, abstracted, reproachful, inconsolable, pallet

Chapter 11-12

Summary

Two years earlier, more than a thousand white settlers had been killed in neighboring Minnesota, and it didn't take much to send the settlers of western Wisconsin into a panic. The morning after word of a possible uprising came to Dunnville, people began approaching the Woodlawn farm. Mrs. Woodlawn is in her element, preparing food and shelter for her neighbors. She recruits Caddie to help in the kitchen, and when finally released, Caddie runs out the door with a hearty Indian war whoop. This initiates pandemonium: women screaming, and men reaching grimly for their guns. That reaction is enough to keep Caddie from making a repeat performance.

Mr. Woodlawn and Robert Ireton try to spread calm, and 24 hours pass without incident. The next day, when Mr. Woodlawn heads into town, taking Tom and Warren along, Caddie overhears some of the men planning to attack the Indians first.

Caddie cannot let her friend Indian John be attacked, but with father away, there's nothing she can do to stop the men. She goes to the barn and puts the bridle over Betsy's head. She has to sneak away and warn Indian John. But someone sees her in the barn. It's Katie. Caddie tells Katie of her plan and swears Katie to a "cross your heart" promise not to tell anyone.

Caddie takes Betsy through the woods to the Indians. The cold bites at her, the frozen river creaks under the horse's hooves, and she is blue with cold when she reaches the Indians' camp. The camp is bustling with activity, but they are making preparations for dinner, not preparations for war. Indian John comes to her, sees to her comfort, and then tries to understand her message. She finally gets him to understand the settlers are scared of him, and they may come to attack. He returns with her close to her father's house. She urges John to return home and avoid the danger, but just as he is about to leave a man grabs onto his bridle! Luckily, it is Mr. Woodlawn.

She explains what she's done. John confirms they have no desire to fight. Mr. Woodlawn says he has confronted the cowards who were going to try a pre-emptive attack against the Indians, and that all is under control. Caddie returns to the house, relieving Katie's tension so much that Katie faints. The children want to hear about her adventure, but in the warmth and relief of returning home, she drifts off to sleep.

Analysis

Fear is a constant presence in Chapters 11 and 12. But the fear only serves to raise the stakes for Caddie's actions. Caddie has already demonstrated her fearlessness and her support for her friends. Those character traits come to the fore once again in her ride to warn the Indians. The circumstances would perhaps warrant a change in Caddie's

character — if she were to allow the fear to raise concerns over her personal well-being — but when she is tested, she remains true to herself.

Upon her return from her mission, Caddie is the center of attention, but she pays no attention. In the same situation, her brother Tom, for example, would have reveled in the attention, exaggerating the story to heighten the appreciation of his listeners. Caddie has such little interest in the attention of others that she falls asleep. This confirms Caddie's motive is truly what we have come to expect: concern for her friends.

Vocabulary

smelling salts, chieftain, impassive, tethered, perplexity, distended, treacherous, irksome, epidemic

Chapter 13-15

Summary

Although the massacre scare is over, the Indians are left unsettled and uneasy enough they decide to move away for a while. Indian John visits Caddie and leaves her with his dog, which has an injured foot and cannot travel far. He also leaves his scalp belt, passed down from his father. He will return in the moon of the yellow leaves for his possessions.

Tom immediately thinks of a plan: charge admission to let the kids from school see the scalp belt. But first they need a better name than “Indian John’s father.” So they come up with “Chief Bloody Tomahawk” as the name of the owner of the belt.

At school the next day, Mrs. Hankinson lets her boys know she is leaving with her tribe. That evening, Mrs. Woodlawn explains Mr. Hankinson married his wife when there were hardly any white settlers in the area, and now he is ashamed of her. Caddie is sorry for the Hankinson children, but there’s nothing she can do about it. Or is there?

The next day, Caddie brings her silver dollar to school, and as school lets out, she convinces the Hankinsons to follow her to the Dunnville store. Caddie buys them candy, tops, combs, and handkerchiefs — enough to achieve her objective: drive the lonesome look out of their eyes.

Children line up in the yard, ready for the big show to take place in the barn. Tom shines as the master of ceremonies, building the excitement as the most wondrous wonder of Dunnville. Robert Ireton, as much a showman as Tom sings with the children, to make it the best show ever. Caddie, Tom, and Warren look over the knick knacks they collected as entrance fees for the show, but Tom cannot enjoy the moment. Katie Hyman wasn’t there. She hasn’t even been to school since the massacre scare. The children get permission to take the show to Katie. Caddie is skeptical that Katie will want to see the scalp belt, but off they go.

They cheer up Katie, and she even musters the nerve to look at the scalp belt. Her valentine is pinned to the wall near her bed, and she tells Tom she guessed who sent it. That’s enough to put Tom in good cheer for the entire long walk home.

Analysis

Caddie demonstrates empathy and lack of concern for herself once again in her actions with respect to the Hankinson boys. These character traits are made more concrete when the depth of Caddie’s sacrifice is made clear by the amount of goods she can purchase with her dollar.

The seeds for change within Caddie are nourished a bit more by the visit to Katie. Katie is frail and weak — and has not been an object of admiration. But when Katie musters the strength of character to look at, and even touch, the scalp belt, Caddie begins to see that being “feminine” is not necessarily a sign of weakness.

Vocabulary

gruesome, resolute, vivid, crotches, mutton, preliminary, earnestly, deigned, dismembered, portage, homestead

Chapter 16-18

Summary

The winter school term comes to an end, with a recital to close the term. Caddie practices a long poem, with “gestures and a fine Boston accent”; while Warren had only a short piece: “If at first you don’t succeed, try, try, again.” But Warren is very nervous, suffering from almost paralyzing stage fright.

Recital day is cloudy and stormy, so their mother decides to stay home with Minnie and Baby Joe, rather than risk getting them soaked in the storm that’s coming. She suggests the children may want to stay home, but they don’t want to miss the recital. Caddie’s performance goes off without a hitch, but Warren mistakenly says the verse his brother has put in his head, “If at first you don’t fricassee, fry, fry a hen.” Mrs. Parker asks him to stay after school and say it right. Tom apologizes to Mrs. Parker, accepting responsibility for putting the wrong words in Warren’s head. She accepts his apology and sends the children home. The storm breaks when they are halfway home. They take brief shelter under a spreading oak, but Tom convinces them to hurry for home, so they start off. Moments later, the tree is struck by lightning, sending the children flying. They get up and race for home.

Now the children are free to fill their days with adventures...and chores. Father sets a task in front of Tom, Caddie, and Warren: hitch up Betsy and plow the far field. This is the first time they are permitted to plow without Robert’s help. They have fun, at first, but the work becomes boring. So they decide to take turns, two of them regaling each other with stories while the third does a couple of round-trips with the plow. Caddie and Warren are excited by the prospect of hearing Tom’s story, while Tom relishes the opportunity to make up a new tale. He tells each of them, in turn, a story cobbled from folk-tales and fairy-tales, mixed in with a little local flavor, such as the “pee-wee” call of the phoebe birds flying overhead, and all are well-pleased.

Spring is coming, and with it the return of the Little Steamer, carrying goods, mail, and news from the outside world. This time the news is something special: the war is over! The community and the family celebrate. The next day Caddie strolls up on the hillside north of the house, where her sister Mary is buried. She sits and looks down on the farm. Hetty joins her, and Caddie realizes Hetty is truly alone: too young to accompany Caddie and the boys on their adventures, and too old to be happy hanging around the house with Minnie and Baby Joe. As they sit on the hill, they see the circuit rider appear and rush down to meet him. He looks glum, so Mr. Woodlawn says he must not have heard the war is over. But Mr. Tanner says he has even later news: Lincoln has been shot and killed.

Analysis

The lightning striking the tree serves the story in three ways. It reiterates the importance of family, specifically, accepting the protection of the older sibling. It serves as a metaphor for the unpredictable dangers of the pioneer life; and the children's response to it —excited, but not melodramatic, mirrors their attitude to the dangers of their lives.

The end of the war and the rejoicing, followed soon after by the President's assassination, parallels other events within the story. For example, Caddie's successful mission to warn the Indians is followed by the sadness of their exodus. Sweetness and sadness are intertwined for these events, setting the stage for the bittersweet nature of events to come.

Vocabulary

urged, fricassee, lash, ominously, foreboding, bunting, cloudburst, hogshead, coachman, novelty, furrow, aura, secondhand, tagging, tattling, unaccustomed, pine slashings, trilliums

Chapter 19

Summary

Spring turns to summer. The children are kept busy picking berries — one day going as far as Chimney Rock, on the watch for rattlesnakes. They find a four-foot-long skeleton of a rattler, and they hardly notice the sound of a live rattler making its warning known. They rush home, after which they are put to work doing the churning that will keep them in butter for a year. The family also gets news that cousin Annabelle will be visiting from Boston.

The summer session of school starts, and Tom gets to put his rattler skeleton on the wall of the school. Indian John's ragged-looking dog accompanies Caddie to school.

One day the dog raises a ruckus, and the teacher asks Caddie to quiet her dog. But when Caddie goes out to check, she sees the dog is howling over an approaching fire. Obediah sets to work beating the fire back and other boys follow his example. He directs the fire fighting and digs a firebreak around the school. Caddie had run to town to get help, and when she returns with some men from Dunnville, the schoolhouse was already out of danger. Mrs. Parker recognizes Obediah as a hero, and so is the "ugly ol' Indian dog."

Analysis

The novel has introduced the concept of valuing people by their actions, and here the theme reaches its peak. Obediah and Indian John's dog are both seen as less-than-admirable, in one way or another; yet they redeem themselves through their actions and no question remains about their true value.

Vocabulary

foolhardy, hapless, aghast, finished, vicissitudes

Chapter 20-21

Summary

Cousin Annabelle arrives with her seven trunks, and her Boston vocabulary, which she uses to comment on the “quaint and rustic” surroundings in which she finds herself. Mrs. Woodlawn is bright and excited to hear news of family and friends from back in Boston, but it doesn’t take Tom and Caddie long to get tired of Annabelle’s “city airs.” Annabelle expresses a desire to do all they do on the farm, and Tom and Caddie see an opportunity to introduce her in a way she’ll never forget.

Annabelle shows up for farm chores in her new dress with eighty-eight buttons, more than any of her friends in Boston. They put her on Pete, who has a habit of riding under an outbuilding and scraping his rider off against the low eaves, which he does to Annabelle. She picks herself up, but has had enough riding for the day — now she’s ready to “salt the sheep.” Tom encourages her to hold the salt in her hand, and the forty sheep crowd her, push her, and eat the buttons off her dress before she can escape. Annabelle bears up, although she walks a little stiffly; and her enthusiasm for speaking of Boston is a bit reduced. Caddie regrets she’s promised Tom to help with a third practical joke — one that Tom thinks is too good to pass up.

They take Annabelle to turn somersaults in the haymow, and Caddie slips an egg down the back of her blouse. Hetty rushes in to the house and gives mother a report on the horse ride, the sheep salting, and the egg in the dress. Mrs. Woodlawn is irate, and whips Caddie across her legs three times, then sends her to bed with no supper. Tom says he should share the punishment, but mother is angriest at her daughter for not acting like a lady.

Caddie goes to her room, burning at the injustice of her sole punishment. She wraps some possessions in a towel and prepares to run away after Minnie and Hetty come to bed and fall asleep. She was punished for not being a lady, but if she runs away and tracks down her friends, the Indians, she’ll never need to grow into a lady. Her father comes in after the other two girls are asleep, and he talks to her about becoming “a woman with a wise and understanding heart.”

Caddie sleeps and awakens with the realization that growing into a woman is not a matter of buttons and bows, but a responsibility. Hetty apologizes for tattling, and also lets Caddie know that Tom and Warren received thrashings from father, who felt it unfair that only Caddie should be punished, as Tom himself agreed.

Analysis

Annabelle appears to be everything Caddie does not want to be: fashionable, refined, elegant. But Annabelle does not run off crying or complain about her rude treatment at the children’s hands — except for the squishy egg she cannot tolerate. This feeds

Caddie's self-doubt, creating conflict between her beliefs concerning "ladies," and the reality she sees. The fact she sees admirable traits in someone she's not expecting to admire adds to Caddie's willingness to consider change in herself.

Then Caddie is punished — punished for not being a lady. That is the last straw, and she prepares to run away from home rather than be forced to become something she doesn't want to be. But her thoughts and her father's words combine to give her a new sense of what it means to grow to be a young woman, and she realizes it might not be the distasteful chore she has feared.

Vocabulary

thrashed, stays, unheeded, tiresome, remorse, muslin, bodices, apparitions, nosegay, fatigued, jet

Chapter 22-24

Summary

Caddie leaves her room to find Clara and Annabelle hard at work sewing a quilt, and she decides to give it a try. After a short while, she finds herself just as capable with a needle as the other two. Tom and Warren find her at quilting and — perhaps due to their habit of doing everything together — join in. Over the next week Caddie and the boys spend time inside the house learning “housewifery,” although they would never call it that.

Then a letter arrives for their father. A letter with English stamps. Mr. and Mrs. Woodlawn retire to the parlor to talk, and then the children know it is something important, because that is a special room, used only on rare occasions. The children are called in to the pantry where they learn the letter is indeed special: the latest Lord Woodlawn has died and their father is now in line to succeed to the title and ownership of the estates. There’s a condition: he would have to give up his American citizenship and connections – and re-locate to England.

Mrs. Woodlawn and Clara, and especially Annabelle, are sure he should accept the honor, but Mr. Woodlawn says such a decision should be seriously weighed. The children wander into the yard, almost stunned by the news — except for Hetty, who is dashing off to tell the neighbors. Tom, Caddie, and Warren race after her, admonishing her not to spread the word they’re English, or they would be if father accepts. Hetty had thought they’d always be Americans, so this new perspective quashes her desire to spread the news. That evening Caddie walks the yard, smelling, seeing, listening to her home and she concludes she wants her future to be here, in the country she loves.

At breakfast the next day, Mr. Woodlawn announces the decision will be made by all of them. At 4 that afternoon, they are to meet in the parlor and vote by secret ballot whether to “Stay” or “Go.” Father presents the advantages of each option, and leaves them all to think about it through the day. Caddie, Tom, and Warren are all going to vote to stay, but they expect mother, Clara, Hetty, and Minnie will vote to go. Hetty surprises Caddie by saying she’s going to vote the same way Caddie is, which she know will be to stay because Caddie likes this place better than anywhere. But which way will father vote?

The votes are written and collected and father unfolds them.

The first four: “Stay.” Caddie knows the first four must be Hetty’s, Tom’s, Warren’s, and her own. The next: “Go.” Father unfolds the next three and reads them in succession: “Stay — Stay — Stay.” Clara says the “Go” vote is hers and she wants to change it; she doesn’t want to go to England either.

To Mr. Woodlawn's suggestion that his wife must have voted that way just for him, she responds that "Home is where you are, Johnny!"

Autumn colors arrive, and with the change of season, the Indians return. Indian John comes for his belt and his dog. He gives Caddie a pair of moccasins and leaves. For a moment, the dog is undecided about who to stay with and Caddie knows if she shows a sign the dog will stay with her. She keeps her peace, and the dog runs after Indian John.

Not long after, another traveler returns. It is Nero, thin, worn, and tired, but he has made it home. The circuit rider, too, comes for another visit. Caddie reflects on the year that has passed, and how she is "the same girl and yet not the same." If that's how life is, she thinks, "I like it."

Analysis

Caddie has always done what she thinks she should do, so there is no surprise that, once she has decided to pay attention to the womanly arts, she does it. Caddie's vote is also no surprise: all that she values she identifies with her country, and every vision she has of England is tinged with sadness. The only dramatic tension revolves around the votes of her other family members. They select the harsh pioneer life, and the correctness of their decision is emphasized by the metaphor of Nero's return, showing he, too, knows his home.

A touch of the bittersweet surrounds the ending — in the same way it has accompanied other events through the book. Caddie reflects on the changes, and the reader cannot help but be a little regretful over the carefree adventurous lifestyle she has left behind.

Vocabulary

goldenrod, asters, summoned, distraught, preference, prejudice, impartial, citizenship, weeping willow, absurd

Characters

Caroline Augusta “Caddie” Woodlawn

Caddie is an 11-year-old girl with a thirst for adventure and a dedication to friends and family. She can always be tempted by the prospect of traipsing through the woods or foraging for nuts or berries, and it’s not too hard to convince her to take part in practical jokes that sometimes don’t demonstrate the best judgment.

She puts her rough-and-ready frontier skills to use in service of her friends and family, without thought of personal danger or loss. She is not only a girl of action, however; she reflects on the right course of action, both short-term and long-term. But once she decides on that right course, she does not hesitate to act.

Thomas “Tom” Woodlawn

Tom is Caddie’s senior by two years. Tom is a natural showman, a boy who sees a story in everything around him. Tom is also always aware of the possibilities to play a practical joke. Tom’s playful side sits on top of a deep sense of loyalty to his family, particularly his two younger siblings, Caddie and Warren.

Warren Woodlawn

Warren is two years younger than Caddie. Tom, Warren, and Caddie are a nearly inseparable trio. Warren is more impatient than his two older siblings, and he has none of Tom’s desire to be the center of attention — exactly the opposite, as he suffers from stage fright. He is always willing and eager for an adventure, though, which he often shares with Tom and Caddie.

John “Father” Woodlawn

John Woodlawn is a prosperous frontiersman, master mechanic of the local mill, farmer, owner of the largest house in the area around Dunnville. He has deep personal pride, and a calm reflection that makes others in his community turn to him for support and guidance. The welfare of his family —both in terms of physical comforts and security and in terms of personal characteristics — is of paramount importance to him. He was born in England, to a noble family, but was denied the advantages of that connection because of his father’s choice of bride. Because of that, he has a strong belief a person’s worth is determined by their actions.

Harriet “Mother” Woodlawn

Harriet Woodlawn was born and raised in Boston, Massachusetts. She pines for the glittering society of her earlier years, relishing news of the goings-on in Boston. Her love for her husband and her dedication to her family have motivated her to become a capable frontierswoman. She believes girls should be girls, and is sometimes frustrated with Caddie’s insistence on maintaining a tomboy’s attitude and habits.

Henrietta “Hetty” Woodlawn

Hetty is a curious 7-year-old girl trying to find her place in the family. Too young to accompany Tom, Caddie, and Warren on most of their excursions, but too old to be content playing with her younger sister Minnie, Hetty finds her self-worth in being the bearer of news. To Caddie, this often manifests itself as a tendency to be a tattletale.

Clara Woodlawn

Clara is “the good daughter,” at least in her mother’s eyes. Clara is old enough to remember with fondness the years the family lived in Boston. She is content to learn the “feminine” skills of homemaking.

Minnie and Joe Woodlawn

Minnie and Joe are the youngest two children in the family.

“Circuit Rider” Tanner

Mr. Tanner is also originally from Boston, but is now an itinerant preacher roaming the frontier, where he wrestles “in spiritual battle with angels and spirits of evil.” He is also physically strong. His arrival is cause for excitement, as he brings news of the world beyond Dunnville.

Miss Parker, “Teacher”

Faced with the challenges of handling a classroom of twenty children, ranging in age from six to twenty-one, she is often stretched to her limit. But, although physically small, she is in firm control of her charges.

Uncle Edmund

Harriet Woodlawn's younger brother lives in St. Louis, but visits his sister and her family about once a year. Everyone remembers his practical jokes, although the children's attitude is admiring, while Harriet's is tinged with annoyance.

Indian John

Chief of the local tribe, Indian John has been a friend to the Woodlawns. His calm rationality mirrors John Woodlawn's.

Obediah Jones

The largest boy in the school, he is struggling with growing up, recognizing his own physical strength, and trying to find his place in the world.

The Hankinsons

Three small children of Sam Hankinson and his Indian wife. The boys are poor and timid.

Katie Hyman

Katie is the daughter of the local seamstress, and often helps her mother with the sewing. She is timid and a bit frail, but she has a strong personal character and can push herself beyond her natural tendencies.

Robert Ireton

Robert Ireton is the Woodlawn's hired hand. He is physically strong and capable, and is deeply committed to the success of the Woodlawn's farm. He enjoys a good story or a good song.

Objects/Places

The Woodlawn Farm

The Woodlawns are prosperous, with several hired hands helping them work the largest house in Dunnville. Caddie's familiarity with the farm and her willingness to work to keep it prosperous are integral parts of her character.

Dogs

Caddie and dogs seem to be attracted to each other. She likes them and accepts responsibility for them, and they attach themselves to her.

The Schoolhouse

The schoolhouse is where the Woodlawn children have their social interactions with other children of their neighborhood. It is where they have opportunity to demonstrate the strength of their beliefs by showing how they act towards others.

The Dunnville Forest

Caddie and her brothers are at home in their surroundings. The woods are not without danger, but they consider the dangers insignificant compared to the prospects for forage and adventure.

Themes

Order

Mr. Woodlawn fixes machines, including those most delicate instruments: clocks. Caddie picks up his skill with clocks. Mr. Woodlawn's sense of order extends beyond physical clocks, into a sense of the order of the world, a belief the world should make sense. Caddie shares that as well.

Personal Responsibility

Caddie often sidesteps her parent's restrictions — not exactly breaking the rules, but bending them pretty far. The three children cross the river, for example, suspecting their mother has not forbidden it only because she thinks them incapable of doing it. Then Caddie and Warren take Betsy to meet Uncle Edmund at the landing. The children are never punished for that kind of transgression, because they take responsibility for what happens to themselves. When Caddie falls in the frozen water, her brothers pull her out; when they have to plow the field, the field gets plowed. Personal responsibility is emphasized throughout the book.

The Value of Work

Mr. Woodlawn and Caddie both explicitly mention how doing good work should be a source of pride. Possessions won by "good sense and industry" are of more value than those accrued by birthright. Obediah Jones, although introduced as an unsavory sort, redeems himself through his actions — the work he does. Hard work is almost synonymous with character in Caddie Woodlawn.

Style

Point of View

Caddie Woodlawn is written in the third person. With few exceptions, the narrator describes only events at which Caddie is present and what she thinks of those events.

Setting

The events of Caddie Woodlawn take place in Dunnville, Wisconsin, along the banks of the Menomonie River in western Wisconsin, from fall of 1864 to the fall of 1865. The setting is integral to the formation of characters in the novel. The pioneer spirit is not something that springs up in a vacuum, but in conjunction with the demands of living in newly settled territory.

Language and Meaning

The novel has a few terms that are specific to the time and place that may be unfamiliar to many modern readers, but is generally written in very accessible language. The unfamiliar terms, such as “phoebe bird” and “hoarhound,” are included as a matter of course because they are terms Caddie would commonly use.

Structure

The novel is divided into twenty-four chapters, some representing an hour or two, while others describe several weeks, or even months, of events. The novel is built around one year — a significant coming-of-age year for Caddie Woodlawn. There is little narrative thread; the novel is a picaresque succession of events, one on top of the other. The one thread holding them together is the effect these events have on Caddie’s growth from a child to young adult.

Quotes

And in those pioneer days, Wisconsin offered plenty of opportunities for adventure to three wide-eyed, red-headed youngsters. (Chapter 1)

He was not only a man of God who could wrestle in spiritual battle with angels and spirits of evil, but it was said that there was not a man on his circuit who could show a strength of muscle equal to his. When, in his deep voice, he spoke of punishment for sinners, the little schoolhouse seemed to be filled with the crackling roar of the fires of hell. (Chapter 2)

God created all men free and equal,' he said, 'and men themselves must come to understand that truth at last! (Chapter 2)

Something of sadness filled her young heart, as if she knew that they were a doomed race. The pigeons, like the Indians, were fighting a losing battle with the white man. (Chapter 3)

It was always a personal grief to her when a foolish young turkey swallowed a bee and died of a stung throat, and she swelled with a pride almost as great as his own when a fine cock with spread tail strutted by. (Chapter 5)

Ah, if I had these fine, plump fowls in Boston! Wouldn't I make a fortune? But out in this barbarous country all folks want to eat is salt pork. Poor trash! Poor trash! (Chapter 5)

Obediah had met his Waterloo, and Teacher was at last the greatest person in her little world. (Chapter 6)

Caddie and Warren were ambitious to do as well as Tom, but they could only follow along in awkward imitation of his skill. What they lacked in skill, they tried to make up in daring. (Chapter 7)

Nobody made much fuss over it. Pioneer children were always having mishaps, but they were expected to know how to use their heads in emergencies. (Chapter 7)

It is difficult to tell you about England, because there all men are not free to pursue their own lives in their own ways. Some men live like princes, while other men must beg for the very crusts that keep them alive. (Chapter 8)

[W]hat I have in life I have earned with my own hands. I have done well, and I have an honest man's honest pride. I want no lands and honors which I have not won by my own good sense and industry. (Chapter 8)

Caddie's birthday was on February 22, the same as George Washington's...Teacher hung up a flag and there were songs and speeches. 'I know they're not for me, exactly,' Caddie confided to Tom, 'and yet I guess I enjoy them more than George Washington does. (Chapter 9)

I am willing to stake my farm, and a good deal that I hold dear besides, on the honor and friendliness of the Indians hereabouts. Still, we must keep clear heads and be ready for emergencies. Whatever happens, the white settlers must stand together. (Chapter 10)

The fear spread like a disease, nourished on rumors and race hatred. For many years now the whites had lived at peace with the Indians of western Wisconsin, but so great was this disease of fear that even a tavern rumor could spread it like an epidemic throughout the country. (Chapter 11)

Savages were savages, but what could one expect of civilized men who plotted massacre? (Chapter 12)

But, although it all came to nothing and folks could laugh at the ‘massacree scare’ at last, still it left with many people a deeper fear and hatred of the Indians than they had ever felt before. (Chapter 13)

[H]ere are some cookies Mother sent which you'll find much nicer than scalps. (Chapter 15)

It was almost as if Caddie had never seen that little face before. Suddenly she understood for the first time that Hetty was all by herself. Minnie was too young, and Tom, Caddie, and Warren had no room in their adventures for a tagging and tattling little sister. (Chapter 18)

It's a strange thing, but somehow we expect more of girls than of boys. It is the sisters and wives and mothers, you know, Caddie, who keep the world sweet and beautiful. (Chapter 21)

Caddie knew that her old, wild past was ended. But suddenly she knew, too, that she wanted the future, whatever it might hold, to be here in the country that she loved, and not among strangers in a strange land. (Chapter 22)

I'd rather build a new mill in America than live in a castle in England that somebody who'd died hundreds of years ago had had the fun of building. (Chapter 22)

I wonder if it's always like that? Folks keep growing from one person into another all their lives, and life is just a lot of everyday adventures. (Chapter 24)

Topics for Discussion

Topic 1

Thomas, John's father, falls in love with a seamstress and is disowned as a result. Tom, John's son, is courting a young seamstress as well. What is the difference between their situations? What is the author trying to communicate by putting them in similar situations?

Topic 2

When Tom and Warren pull Caddie from the frozen pond, there is no fanfare for their heroics. How does this play into Caddie's character? Caddie rides to warn Indian John he might be attacked. Is that a brave thing to do? Does she expect recognition for her efforts?

Topic 3

For much of the book, there is a great war going on. Wisconsin is far removed from the battlefront. How does the war affect the actions and attitudes of the characters?

Topic 4

When considering their decision on whether or not to accept the English title, Mr. Woodlawn tells the children to ask themselves: "What will be best for my future? Where shall I be most useful and happy?" To Mr. Woodlawn, are "most useful" and "happy" the same thing? How about to Caddie? What do you think the author believes?

Topic 5

Uncle Edmund weakens the structure of the raft and almost drowns Caddie. He takes Nero and loses him. In both cases, he thinks he can make up for it, by paying a silver dollar to Caddie, and bringing a puppy to replace Nero. Tom gets Warren into trouble by putting a nonsense rhyme in his head, and gets Caddie into trouble by involving her in one practical joke too many. Tom tries to accept responsibility for those actions. How does Edmund's attitude towards responsibility contrast with Tom's?