

Christy Study Guide

Christy by Catherine Marshall

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Plot Summary

The book, *Christy*, by Catherine Marshall is a fictionalized history of some of her mother's missionary experiences in the Great Smoky Mountains. Christy Huddleston is nineteen at the opening of the story, and she has made a decision to help the people of Cutter Gap as a schoolteacher. Prior to this great adventure, Christy's life is made up of tea parties, social calls, fashionable pointed shoes, and uncertainty about what her future holds for her. After listening to Dr. Ferrand speak, Christy finds the desire within herself to volunteer for an entire year, joining a community of people deep in the Smoky Mountains. The year is 1912. Christy's decision to leave her family and join a group of missionaries is a monumental life choice.

Once Christy begins her journey in January 1912, her life will never be the same. She finds herself alone in El Pano, without the greeting committee she expects. Using her powers of persuasion, she convinces the mailman, Mr. Pentland, to allow her to accompany him through seven miles of snowy, mountainous backcountry. Christy has never walked seven miles in her entire life, much less through such difficult conditions. This journey is a metaphor for what lies ahead for Christy Rudd Huddleston; one that she faces with courage and fortitude.

For Christy, life in Cutter Gap is no different than if she had gone halfway around the world. She did not understand, at first, how people can live the way the mountain people live. The lack of sanitation appalls her. Surgery done on the kitchen table shocks her. Clan disputes confuse her. However, as Christy embraces her task of being a schoolteacher to the children of the people she finds strange, she discovers a new way to see them. Through the children, she begins to be enchanted by the people, by the mountains, and by their way of life.

By living the life of the mountain people, Christy works hard to become one of them. She makes a deep and lasting friendship with Fairlight Spencer, one of the first mountain women she met. Christy teaches Fairlight to read. Fairlight teaches Christy of the mysteries of the mountains. She shows Christy where the best berries can be found and teaches her how to can them. Climbing the highest peaks of the mountains, Christy can hear the music of the wind. When typhoid hits the mountain community, Christy works as hard as any of the other missionaries to protect the people she has grown to love.

Christy learns how their pride and superstitions mold the people of the mountains. She sees how they handle their abject poverty with grace and acceptance. She also discovers that the people of Cutter Gap really understand life and what it means. By comparing the new Christy to her old self, she realizes that her former life was devoid of purpose. Spending a year among the people of Cutter Gap in the Smoky Mountains of Appalachia, Christy grows into a woman with a deep love and understanding of her fellow man.



Prologue

Prologue Summary

The book *Christy* by Catherine Marshall is a fictionalized true account of the author's mother's time as a volunteer to be a missionary teacher in the Great Smoky Mountains in her youth. Most of the characters actually existed, and most of the events occurred, but some have been changed for greater drama. The story is of a young and innocent girl who feels called to offer a year of her life living among and teaching the people of Cutter Gap. The people of Cutter Gap are of Scottish-Irish descent; they view strangers with suspicion and their ideas with greater skepticism. Christy's great love of the children and the people convinces more than words can the depth of her feeling for the people. Christy begins her journey, with big dreams of helping people. She sees her journey through with the deeper understanding of God's love for all living beings, even the ones who reject him, and that to truly help people she must first love them.

The author accompanies her mother to the isolated mountain community where her mother had volunteered to work as a teacher. At nineteen, the author's mother was very young, innocent, naive, and sheltered. After living her life, the author's mother returns to the Appalachian mountain community as an exercise in memory and recall. Virtually everything brings back poignant memories, from the Mud Hole that still is a road hazard to the old Lyon and Healy grand piano that she managed to acquire through a donation, now old, without the ivory on the keys, and covered with autumn squash and pumpkins. Entering the now deserted mission house, they find pay slips with names that vividly bring back young faces. Too much was learned to forget it now. The author's mother asks Catherine to write a story about the year spent teaching, 1912, and how lives were changed forever.

Prologue Analysis

The story, *Christy*, is based on the author's mother and her experience as a volunteer in Cutter Gap. The story is based in truth, but the author chooses to fictionalize it, changing names and some of the events. The basic premise of the story, however, is true. By volunteering, people made a difference in this isolated Smoky Mountain community, and Catherine Marshall's mother believes that the story must be told. "And suddenly, I understood how the story should be written—through mother's eyes, as I had seen it all along. Only—from the beginning, my imagination had taken hold of the true incidents and had begun shaping them so that now, after so many years, I myself scarcely knew where truth stopped and fiction began. Therefore, though so much of the story really happened, I would set it down in the form of fiction." (prologue, p. 19)



Chapters 1 - 2

Chapters 1 - 2 Summary

Christy Huddleston is a young and impressionable girl of nineteen who believes she has been called to missionary work. She comes from a fairly well-off family in Asheville, North Carolina. After hearing Dr. Ferrand talk of his calling to help the poor folk in the Great Smoky Mountains of Appalachia, Christy feels a similar calling. She has always heard of poor people in China and Africa, but has never heard of the plight of people in her own back yard. After Dr. Ferrand's talk, Christy immediately volunteers to be a teacher. Dr. Ferrand accepts her. Then Christy must convince her family to allow her to do this missionary work. No amount of persuasion on their part can dissuade her. So, Christy finds herself alone on a train headed for El Pano in January 1912.

Once the train reaches El Pano, Christy expects a reception committee to meet her. She has rehearsed the scene in her mind time and again. To her dismay, there is no one to meet her at the El Pano Station. Drawing on her inner strength, Christy asks the ticket agent where she might spend the night. Christy is directed to Mrs. Tatum's boarding house. Christy stumbles through the deep snow to the house and is relieved when a very chatty but welcoming Mrs. Tatum opens the door. She shows Christy to a room and bids her to come down for supper right away. During supper, Christy is again discouraged from her intention. Mrs. Tatum warns Christy that the mountain folk do not like foreigners and that Christy is completely unprepared for the harsh living conditions. Still, Christy is determined to go to Cutter Gap.

Chapters 1 - 2 Analysis

A missionary, Dr. Ferrand, has lit a fire in Christy Huddleston's heart, prompting her to volunteer to help the people of Cutter Gap who are less fortunate than she. Christy's youthful desire is optimistic and possibly unrealistic. Her family tries very hard to get Christy to change her mind, but to no avail. Then the conductor tells her unsavory stories of men being shot in the back country. Finally, Mrs. Tatum at the rooming house spends all of Christy's supertime warning her that Christy really does not know what she is getting into. Christy's youth plays a large part in her determination to keep her word. She is also excited about the idea of being independent for the first time in her life. Christy shows very strong determination to keep her word. It remains to be seen whether the kind words of warning are true, and if so, how Christy will handle her new experiences.



Chapters 3 - 4

Chapters 3 - 4 Summary

Asking about transportation to Cutter Gap, Christy discovers that the only person in El Pano who travels routinely to the Cove is the mailman, Mr. Pentland. In keeping with her impetuous nature, Christy corners Mr. Pentland at the general store and convinces him to take her with him on his mail rounds. She promises that she will not hold him up. True to her word, Christy has the gumption to work hard to keep up with Mr. Pentland. At first he starts off on a fast pace, but once he sees how hard Christy is trying, he slows down a bit to allow her to keep up with him. As Mr. Pentland delivers his first letter, Christy is astounded to realize that he only has seven letters to deliver, and his determination to do his job well makes an impression on her. The journey through the mountains is one of the most difficult things Christy has ever done in her life, but she persists without complaint, even crossing a raging stream on a bridge that is constructed of only two logs with crossbars nailed every now and then to connect the two logs. Before too long, Mr. Pentland realizes that Christy is truly tired and he tells her that they will rest at the Spencer's house to warm up and possibly have something to eat. Christy is relieved to hear this news. The two room cabin is not what she is prepared to see. The main room is both living room and bedroom, because all the beds are in the main room with a fireplace the only source of heat. Christy meets Fairlight Spencer for the first time and is struck by her natural beauty and grace and the unique minor-key musicality to her voice. The group of blond children help her to recall that she is to be a teacher, and she wonders if they might become some of her students. Mr. Pentland offers the Spencer's the lunch Mrs. Tatum had provided for him and Christy, and Mrs. Spencer puts the ham sandwiches on the table next to the pot of cabbage and bowl of sauerkraut. After Jeb Spencer says grace, they eat, with Mrs. Spencer and the oldest daughter waiting and serving on the family and the guests. One unique experience during the meal is the arrival of Belinda, the family's pet pig. Christy's background has not prepared her for a pig living in the home. Christy marvels at how it feels as though she has been transported back into the eighteenth century where there is no electricity or running water in the home. Just at that moment, a man bursts into the cabin with the news that Bob Allen has been badly injured by a tree falling on his head.

Making Christy feel even worse is the news that Bob Allen had been heading into El Pano to meet the new schoolteacher when he met with the accident. Bob is unconscious and unresponsive when he is carried into the dark cabin on a makeshift stretcher and laid on one of the beds. Dr. MacNeill examines the patient, taking great time and care. Once he completes his examination, he calls Bob's family forward and gives them the choice. Bob has blood on the brain that is putting pressure on the brain. If they do nothing, Bob will die. There is a very risky operation that the doctor claims to have seen only once where he can drill a small hole through the skull and relieve the pressure on the brain. Bob's wife Mary chooses immediately to have the operation done. She knows that her six children are going to be badly off if Bob dies. If there is a chance at all that he will live, she wishes to use it. Bob's older brother and the leader of



the Allen clan, Ault, is a lot more skeptical. He believes that drilling holes in the brain is a chancy business, but he does leave the decision up to Mary. The kitchen table is cleared and Bob is placed on the table. Dr. MacNeill painstakingly sterilizes everything he will need for the operation and prepares to do it in the midst of a cabin of dozens of dirty people surrounding him, watching. A fire is started in the yard to prepare as much boiling water as he needs from the spring nearby. Christy manages to get through the crowd of people and waits outside in the yard. She is joined by Fairlight Spencer, and they both watch the sun disappear in the shadow of the mountain across the way. After the operation, Mr. Pentland and Christy continue their journey to the Mission House, where Christy is exhausted and wants only to sleep.

Chapters 3 - 4 Analysis

Christy's journey into the world of Cutter Gap begins virtually from the moment she takes her first step out of El Pano. She and Mr. Pentland are hiking seven miles through the snow because there is so much snow that no horse is capable of getting through. For a city girl who has never experienced such a walk, Christy gamely trudges on mile after mile. She sees much of the beautiful scenery through eyes that begin to be dimmed from exhaustion. This journey is the metaphor of her upcoming life, and Christy embraces it entirely. Never once does she complain, though Mr. Pentland is able to tell when she tires. He is a gentleman, carrying her valise as well as the mailbag, though it is not heavy as it only carries seven letters. Christy is impressed with Mr. Pentland's determination to get those seven letters to their intended recipients. To Christy, it almost seems as though she has taken a step back in time, back to the eighteenth century. This is a feeling that is reinforced once she and Mr. Pentland reach the Spencer's cabin. At first, she is reluctant to share their food from Mrs. Tatum with the Spencer family, but when she sees that all they have to eat is cooked cabbage and sauerkraut, she freely offers her ham sandwiches to the children she will be teaching. She is charmed by the natural grace that is Fairlight Spencer, a mountain woman with five children. She is also alarmed at the woman's apparent superstition of the mountain shadow that falls across the cabin during Bob Allen's surgery. "But the eyes in her lovely face were glazed, turned toward that peak across the valley, seeing not the mountain that had shut out the sun, but some specter I could not glimpse. I stood there ill at ease, not knowing what to say." (chap. 4, p. 59). It is as if Fairlight sees some sort of ghost or specter that Christy cannot see. Fairlight's reaction to the mountain is foreshadowing for events that will occur much later in the story.



Chapters 5 - 6

Chapters 5 - 6 Summary

The next morning Christy wakes, sore, tired, and still a little hazy as to where she is. At first she thinks that everything is still a dream, but the reality of the tiny bedroom where she slept tells her that something of what she remembers actually happened. She looks out the window and immediately feels embraced by the view of the Great Smoky Mountains, and is filled with awe and energy from beholding them. Christy meets Ida Grantland, who functions as a cook and housekeeper for her brother, the pastor. Ida is a nervous woman whose hands and fingers are never at rest. She is tall, thin, with a little hair pulled back into a tiny bun. She is proud to be doing a service for her brother. It is hard to determine right at this point in the story what her feelings are for Christy. David Grantland joins Christy by having a cup of coffee as a break from getting the schoolhouse ready. After a huge breakfast, Christy is directed to Miss Alice Henderson's cottage, just beyond the spruce trees. She can see the smoke from her fire from the mission house. Once at Miss Henderson's house, Christy is moved to the point of tears to see the beauty the woman has created inside her cabin. Miss Henderson's belief in a loving God shows through everything she does. At first, the interview is a difficult one for Christy, for she is not able to express her need to make a difference in her life and in those lives she touches. She compares herself unfavorably against David and Miss Alice, believing their calling and mission in life to be so much greater than hers. By the end of the interview, however, Miss Alice states that she believes Christy will do just fine.

Christy's first day of school as a brand new teacher in a one-room schoolhouse with sixty-seven children is memorable. John Holcombe has come early to get the stove started so that the room is warm for her and the children, and David Grantland is there for moral support. The two men offer to stay for her first day, but Christy has learned her lesson from Miss Alice well enough. In order for the mountain folk to respect her, she has to earn that respect; even from the boys in the back of the classroom who are bigger and older than she. Christy is appalled at the lack of clothing for the children. Some of them come to school even with bare feet. This makes her feel very self-conscious about the vanity of her own pointy-tipped shoes that do nothing in the snow. The first child to greet her is Little Burl Allen, son of the man who endured the operation on the Spencer's kitchen table. His greeting, "and swap howdys" (chap. 6, p. 75) charms Christy. Christy learns many things that day, about taking roll, getting directions and addresses to the homes of the children, and even about raccoons in school and the dangers of rocks cloaked in fabric and hot marbles.

Chapters 5 - 6 Analysis

Christy's meeting with Miss Alice is one of life-changing proportions. Through the gentle and yet stately woman, Christy learns of Miss Alice's intense love for the mountain



people, their heritage, their beliefs, and their drawbacks. With such a strong woman as an example, Christy has found an ideal role model. She will learn much from Miss Alice about the Scotch-Irish heritage of the mountain people, and hear it in their music played on a dulcimer. Christy is embarking on a journey of self-exploration, and she has found a tremendous compass in Miss Alice, one who will be brutally honest when it is necessary and tender and compassionate as well. While Christy works with the people she has come to teach, she, too, will learn. The first day of school is a primer lesson for Christy. "Looking back I can see now that the young walk unabashedly into many a situation which the more experienced would avoid at all costs" (chap. 6, p. 74). Christy learns of the clan mentality with Lundy Taylor and the Allen being in the same room together. She learns that not all the families are excited about a school being established in Cutter Gap, though more families are happy than not. By introducing them to patriotic songs that they do not know, Christy learns of their intense love of music in the songs that they do know. "They sang more unself-consciously than they talked, and with more emotion, charm and skill than I had ever heard in impromptu singing" (chap. 6, p. 80). Knowing that it is better to make friends than enemies, Christy works hard to earn at least the respect of the children in her class, and for the most part, she succeeds. She also sees the devastating poverty of the community. There are no books and no school supplies and the parents are in no position to purchase anything that is needed.



Chapters 7 - 8

Chapters 7 - 8 Summary

Teaching one month in the Cove and Christy discovers a few idiosyncrasies about the children. For one, they refuse to sit next to a child of the opposite sex, believing that such behavior belongs in a "courting school". They also would rather learn Latin than English grammar. Their poor nutrition contributes to their inattention during class and many of the children have bad eyes. Christy is tremendously discouraged with her efforts and wonders if she really should be teaching. One evening, in an effort to evade Ruby Mae, Christy goes for a walk and ends up by the O'Teale cabin. Once Swannie O'Teale sees her, Christy knows that she cannot turn and ignore the woman. Inside, Christy sees a filthy cabin with one corner penned off. It is for the oldest O'Teale son, who is a teenager who wears only a long sweater. He cannot speak, and is considered to be a half-wit. He is also prone to epileptic seizures. Swannie does not see that her son is a kind of tragedy, and this puzzles Christy. The situation continues to bother her even during dinner. Christy suddenly bolts from the table and runs outside where she loses her dinner. Miss Alice is there, comforting her with both words and her actions of gently holding her as she is sick. When Christy answers where she was that day, Miss Alice responds that the O'Teale place is one of the worst.

Christy has a momentary breakdown, believing that she is not cut out for the job. Miss Alice helps Christy to evaluate the situation as it really is, not what the emotions are painting it. She teaches Christy that in order to do God's work, she must emerge from her ivory tower. Then Miss Alice talks about why God allows awful things to happen in life; it allows humans full freedom of choice. Humans must choose to follow God or to choose to refuse to follow Him. She counsels Christy that each person is unique and has a job to do. If Christy chooses not to do her job, it may never get done, because no one else is there to do it. Christy decides to stay. She wishes to learn more from Miss Alice. She also wishes to put her prime consideration above herself. Such a selfless choice is a mature choice.

Having made the choice to stay, Christy makes a list of basic necessities for the mission, for that lack even simple cleaning supplies. With no form of transportation available, a horse is needed desperately for the mission, but will cost one hundred dollars. Because of Miss Alice's tutelage, Christy prays for money for a horse. Three days later a check for one hundred six dollars is sent to Christy from a woman who had learned of Christy's work at the mission through her mother. David believes it is merely a coincidence, but Christy and Miss Alice both believe it to be the result of Christy's prayer. Filled with pride at her success, Christy writes to advertisers in the "Ladies' Home Journal" asking not for money, but for donations of their products.



Chapters 7 - 8 Analysis

Christy meets Mrs. O'Teale on a walk one evening and agrees to visit with her in her cabin. This is never Christy's intention, but there is no truly graceful or polite way out of it. As with most mountain folks, the O'Teales live in the squalor of poverty. Inside the tiny cabin, a corner of the room is gated off for the O'Teale's oldest son, who is seriously mentally disabled and epileptic. Christy's youth and innocence do not prepare her for this. She manages to get through the visit without embarrassing herself or Mrs. O'Teale, but the filth, calm acceptance on Swannie's part, the poverty, and need deeply affect her. Miss Alice understands why Christy is so affected by the meeting with Mrs. O'Teale and counsels Christy extensively about the freedom of choice and how even ugly and evil things have a part in God's plan. Bolstered by this experience, Christy embraces her job with more vigor than before. She gets a donation from a woman who hears of the mission through Christy's mother. Then Christy sends letters to advertisers in a women's magazine, asking for product donations rather than money. She even asks for a piano and telephone wires and equipment from Bell Telephone Company. It is obvious that Christy will stay and see what kind of difference she can make in the lives of the mountain people of Cutter Gap.



Chapters 9 - 10

Chapters 9 - 10 Summary

Christy uses Miss Alice's teachings to accept the tiring ramblings of Ruby Mae. Once Christy thanks God for the ramblings, Christy hears what can only be described as the inner workings of the mountain folk mind. Most mountain folk are reticent. Ruby Mae is a wealth of information. The highlanders are in awe of Miss Alice with her Quaker ways and speech. She has gotten the message across to the mountain people that God loves them and is ready to guide them if they are willing. She does find a wall against the idea that God wants them to be happy, for the mountain people believe that happiness is equated with the pleasures of the world—that if they enjoy themselves, they sin. To Miss Alice, learning to enjoy God's creations is a form of worship, and some of the mountain women are looking for opportunities to experience light, beauty, and joy. Christy has an opportunity to share this lesson when she is asked by Kyle Coburn, Bessie's father, to help dress the McHone's baby girl for burial. Christy finds a baby dress in the mission's used clothing box and takes along ribbons, soap, needle, and thread. Believing the baby to be "liver growed", Opal McHone had forced the child to touch fingers and toes together. Right after that activity, the baby died. Christy is astounded at the ignorance of the woman, yet knows Opal wanted that baby girl. Christy's anger turns to Doctor MacNeill for not teaching the mountain mothers better. Once they are finished washing and dressing the baby, Opal is delighted with the beautiful ribbons and believes her baby girl to be the best dressed child to be buried ever. Christy and Ruby Mae start back for the mission and Uncle Bogg insists on walking back with them. Noises in the night make Uncle Bogg nervous, unusual behavior for a mountain man. The drunken men who had come into the McHone's cabin had worried Uncle Bogg enough to bring the girls all the way back to the Mission House. He had seen some strangers in the woods who had followed them all the way home.

The next day, David and Christy set out on horseback to another branch church. Christy rides Theo, the mission's mule. Forging a creek, Theo flounders and Christy falls into the water. Doctor MacNeill's cabin is the closest shelter. Dr. MacNeill enters a locked room in his cabin to find some dry clothes for Christy that fit her perfectly. David must go on to the church, leaving Christy with Dr. MacNeill. At first Christy is uncomfortable, but takes the opportunity to ask Dr. MacNeill about the dying babies, specifically the McHone baby. He explains a bit more about the stubborn Scotch-Irish people who are his people too. He explains that granny's word on matters of medicine is more easily accepted than his. He tells Christy of his history, of being born in the very cabin he lives in today. It is obvious he loves the people and will help them as far as they are willing to allow it. He understands their superstitious nature and their mindset. Doctor MacNeill also tells Christy about the Taylor-Allen feud and other grudge bearing issues and presses his point that getting to the bottom of the feuds and hate is even more important than sanitation and health matters. This is the doctor's challenge for Christy and her fellow workers at the mission.



Chapters 9 - 10 Analysis

Christy comes close to quitting. After her reaction at the O'Teale cabin, she believes that she is really not cut out for the work. Miss Alice sees something in Christy she, herself, recognizes. She sees the impetuosity of youth, the vitality, and the tenderness. She also sees drive and passion, and perseverance in Christy. Miss Alice does not lecture Christy; rather, she helps the young woman to understand how God has a role in everything she sees and experiences, both the good and the bad. Where Christy sees God failing to intervene, Miss Alice sees someone who has been called to do a task and either ignores or delays responding to the call. This talk helps Christy make the choice to stay and work in the cove. The other encounter that changes Christy's perspective is with Dr. MacNeill. Helping to lay out the McHone baby affects Christy badly. She carries anger against the mountain doctor for somehow failing to educate the people. Through him, Christy begins to understand, even honor, the ways of the mountain folk. Dr. MacNeill is a mountain man, born and bred. His love for the people is what keeps him in the cove. He understands that the way of the people is wrong in many ways, but that there is no fast and easy way to change it. He can only work with the people he loves gently and with respect. Even though Dr. MacNeill seems to have differing ideas for the purpose of the mission, he and Miss Alice both have learned how to change the mountain people. They must be mountain people. Only then can they truly understand the motivation of the people, and from that vantage point, they can truly help them.



Chapters 11 - 12

Chapters 11 - 12 Summary

Christy's letter-writing campaign is far more effective than she had ever expected. When the Lyon and Healy Company send the mission a piano, they send a concert grand. Christy must somehow tell David that he needs to go to El Pano to deliver the piano from where it was shipped to the cove. It takes David and three mountain men two full days to get the piano to the mission, where it gets a place of honor. Miss Alice chides Christy for not consulting the members of the mission team before taking it upon herself to send the letters. Miss Alice shares Dr. Ferrand's belief that begging is the wrong way to get help for the mission. Christy understands the point, but it does not stop the boxes and boxes of soup, furniture polish, and other similar items from coming.

Christy's initial reaction to the smells of the unbathed children is easily understood. She was accustomed to being clean. To make it easier to tolerate the smell, she uses a handkerchief well saturated in cologne. Soon the problem ceases because Christy learns to love the children and she no longer notices their smell. In addition, her example of personal cleanliness influences some of the older girls to imitate her and come to the mission to bathe, wash their hair, and press their clothes. Christy effects the children in other ways as well. One child, sister to the mentally retarded O'Teale boy, has a strong speech impediment for which she is teased by other children mercilessly. By sewing big beautiful buttons onto the little girl's coat, Christy manages to break through a barrier that is more than just language. "She came bouncing up to my desk, pointing to the buttons, stood there, gleeful and excited. 'Look at my buttons! Look at my buttons!' I could scarcely believe what I was hearing. In spite of the chortling, the giggles up and down the scale, the child was speaking plainly for the first time. It was like watching something open up inside her. I felt triumphant for her and left school so excited that I wanted to tell everyone about it" (chap. 12, p. 153). Through Mountie, Christy discovers the link between physical demonstrations of love and affection to learning. By taking some of her slowest readers onto her lap, she discovers that they learn much faster. Even the boys hang onto David's arm, looking to make a connection through the sense of touch.

Chapters 11 - 12 Analysis

The personalities of the highlanders, surprisingly, do not mimic that of the Western pioneers. Where cooperative efforts and community efforts build towns as well as relationships, distance and terrain have taught the people of the mountains independence to a fault. The highlanders are suspicious of joining groups or organizations, which helps to explain how hard it is for the mission to effect quick changes. Little Burl, having learned new lessons from Teacher, promises a new direction for the future of the people of the Cove. "I had reached down to get fresh papers out of my desk drawer when I felt arms around my neck hugging me fiercely. It



was Little Burl. He put his bare feet on top of my larger ones, locked his two hands behind my neck, stretched his head up to look me full in the eyes. 'Teacher, Teacher, hain't it true, Teacher, that if God loves ever'body, then we'uns got to love ever'body too?'" (chap. 12, p. 160). Christy is involved in an effort that is very difficult. She and the mission are working to effect a change in the lives of the mountain people for the better. The mountain people, however, are so fiercely individual that Christy often wonders if they even consider themselves to be part of the United States.



Chapters 13 - 14

Chapters 13 - 14 Summary

Getting to know the isolated and suspicious mountain folk is one of Christy's goals. By deciding to visit with every family of the children in her school, Christy sets out to form relationships. Her first official call proves difficult. Ruby Mae Morrison is estranged from her mother and stepfather, so Christy decides to try to mend the rift. Mr. and Mrs. Morrison are stubbornly suspicious and make no effort to converse when Christy comes. Her visit is awkward, short, and disappointing. The next visit, however, is very different. The Spencer cabin is where Christy witnessed Bob Allen's injury and met many mountain people the day she walked from El Pano with Mr. Pentland. The Spencers had prepared for Teacher's visit by cleaning the two room cabin, gathering beautiful leaves from the forest and putting them in bowls, and picking the first of the spring flowers, the violets and trillium. An impromptu concert with the debonair Jeb Spencer singing and playing the dulcimer proves the heritage and legacy of the mountain culture. Fairlight shows Christy an unusual quilt she designed herself by drawing the new moon and a star in three different positions and then recreating them in a quilt. This marks the beginning of Christy's friendship with Fairlight, a friendship where the two women share with each other that which they can teach.

Fairlight's deepest wish is to learn to read and write. How wonderful that she and Christy have begun to forge a friendship. Understanding that Fairlight is a creative person, Christy works to teach reading to this bright adult woman. Fairlight quickly grasps the rudimentary concepts of the lessons. Another effort in which Christy becomes involved is the Sewing Circle that meets on the two Saturdays Miss Alice is in Cutter Gap. For the Sewing Circle meetings, while all the ladies sew, Miss Alice has Christy read from stories in the Bible. The stories are about a loving and generous God, one who is willing to forgive and bring His strays back into the fold. Miss Alice encourages the women to learn about one another, and learn about God's love in a safe environment. By creating the Sewing Circle, she gives the women a sense of community.

When the ladies of the Sewing Circle leave, Christy asks Miss Alice about the history of Dr. MacNeill. His ancestor, Neil MacNeill, born in 1720, visits relatives in the New World in New York and Philadelphia in 1745. During his absence from Scotland, the bloody massacre of Culloden Moor occurs in April 1746. When MacNeill returns, he has not heard of the English victory. The English government thinks that the clan loyalties cause the trouble and they pass the Disarming Act, which prohibits the wearing of all tartans. Their way of life destroyed, their men hiding in caves, the Scots people have lost their way of life. Because MacNeill was out of the country during the uprising, his fortune is intact. With this money he buys a boat, the Curlew, and ships as many of his countrymen to America as possible. The Curlew makes four round trips and brings eighteen hundred Scottish folk to the New World. They make their way to the Smoky Mountains, which make them think of their homeland. With them they bring their ballads



and superstitions and all other personality traits that make them the people Christy knows today.

Chapters 13 - 14 Analysis

Christy discovers that the mountain people are much like people everywhere. Initially they can be reticent and quiet as Fairlight was the very first time Christy met her, but after getting to know one another through the children, the next meeting between the two women results in a wonderful offer and acceptance of friendship on both sides, a true gift for each woman. Discovering the difference between people who want to get to know you and those who do not is also a valuable lesson. Ruby Mae's parents are set in their ways and the only way they know how to deal with their daughter is to lock her in the smokehouse. Despite Christy's encouragement to join the new mission church services, Mr. and Mrs. Morrison are unwilling to change their ways. The Spencers are more open to the opportunities of education, as evidenced by Fairlight's desire to learn to read and write. She can see how such learning effects her children, and she wants the same thing. Because Christy has loved the Spencer children, Fairlight is very open to her visit and friendship.

Miss Alice shows the way to a loving God by example. She provides the safe and beautiful environment of her home so that the women can learn what it is to have a sense of community. It also provides a safe place for them to learn about a caring and loving God, something that is unusual in their religious teachings, for they have always been part of the hellfire and brimstone teachings of their religion. Miss Alice teaches them about love and beauty, of acceptance and tolerance. With this kind of instruction, Miss Alice hopes to show them a way to end their legacy of hatred. After the women leave, Miss Alice explains about Doctor MacNeill's ancestor, who was responsible for bringing over eighteen hundred Scottish people from their homeland to the New World, most of whom settled in the area where she and Christy are now working the mission. The people brought their beliefs and their traditions with them, and because of their isolation, their lives have changed very little in the one hundred and fifty years they have been in the New World.



Chapters 15 - 16

Chapters 15 - 16 Summary

Planting interrupts school for the children, so Christy makes good use of the time having her reading and writing lessons with Fairlight and with her newest adult student, Opal McHone. This brings a glaring problem to light. In order to include more adult classes, there will have to be another teacher and more supplies. Dr. Ferrand's efforts are divided among his seventeen missions scattered throughout four states. Copying some of the efforts of Queen Esther from the Bible's book of Esther, Christy decides to meet with the richest man she knows in Knoxville, Mr. Hazen L. Smith. Following Esther's example, Christy wears her best dress, gets her hair done, and buys a new hat for the occasion. Christy refuses to look like a drab, mousy missionary. Lastly, Christy keeps the reminder from Miss Alice in mind about Dr. Ferrand's fundraising philosophy to not beg for money. Christy bravely meets with Mr. Hazen Smith and literally sweeps him off his feet with her looks, her presentation, her request for help, her assurance that she expects no help from him if he truly is not moved in his heart to do so. Not only does Mr. Smith promise to help but he requests that Christy tell her story to a bigger audience and promises to make the arrangements.

Music is in the hearts of the highlanders and most of the time, when calling on the families, David carries his ukulele with him. He claims it breaks down barriers faster than anything else. Music has even instigated open houses at the mission a couple of nights a week for the young people, another place where community building is taking place. One visiting situation that is not aided by the music of David's ukulele is with ninety-three year-old Aunt Polly Teague. Knowing that her time on earth is short, Aunt Polly looks to David for assurances of a life hereafter. David flounders. He is not sure, himself, of the afterlife, and Aunt Polly's questions trouble him. It turns out that Aunt Polly ministers to David rather than the other way around.

Chapters 15 - 16 Analysis

The mission is making headway in changing the isolated and suspicious nature of the people of the Cove. With the success, however, comes greater need. Christy is excited at the prospect that adult women want to learn to read and write, but knows that without additional supplies, little will get done. Taking lessons from Esther's story in the Bible, Christy approaches a wealthy businessman in Knoxville with the story about the work they do at the mission. Rather than simply asking for money, Christy shares the story and vision of the mission. Mr. Smith promises to help with donations and books and possible college scholarships for the most deserving of the students. Not only are the students learning new things and aspiring to new heights, so is David. Only his lessons are difficult, for he faces his own lack of faith in the hereafter and learns from Aunt Polly Teague what it really means to give one's life over to God.



Chapters 17 - 18

Chapters 17 - 18 Summary

Christy and Fairlight learn from each other; Christy believes Fairlight has taught her more about life than she had ever known before. Fairlight teaches Christy how to live for today. If the first day of spring warrants it, Fairlight will leave her housework to explore the bounteous beauty outside. The natural shyness of the mountain people is due to the lack of sophistication that city folks have of hiding their feelings. When a mountain person offers friendship, they are opening themselves up to hurt and pain because they have no built in defenses. Mountain friendships are deep, intense, and extend into the family. This helps to explain the bitter hatred involved in their feuding. To violate a friendship as deep and intense as what they have is considered to be the ultimate betrayal.

The understanding that highlanders are lazy and shiftless is untrue. They merely know how to relax and enjoy themselves. But there is some truth to the shiftlessness in some cases. David is paying twenty-five cents an hour, some coming from his own pay, to the men who help him set telephone poles and string telephone wire. Most of the men work hard. Ozias Holt, however, refuses to work and expects to be paid. David fires Ozias, and Fairlight fears retribution against the preacher. Christy experiences some unpleasantness when she arrives at the school one morning to see all the beautiful new books and maps sent by Mr. Smith cut, torn, and trampled. This breaks Christy's heart and she is angry at the children, though she knows that only a few are actually responsible for the damage. The worst event of the day occurs when Lundy Taylor pokes Mountie in the back with a stick and refuses to take his seat. Christy marches back to the enormous boy and pulls him by the hair back into his seat. Lundy jumps up, ready for a fight, and John Spencer tries to put himself between Lundy and Teacher. Fortunately, David appears for the math lesson and stops any further incident.

Chapters 17 - 18 Analysis

There are lessons to be learned all around. Christy and David have some of the most important, even most difficult lessons to learn. While learning about mountain friendship, its depth and intensity, is a fairly easy lesson for Christy to learn, understanding how her new ideas can be intimidating to the people she is helping is not. As Miss Alice tells her, learning to befriend the mountain people is a journey, and as such, it is every changing. David, too, must learn that orders, even logic are not always the best way to persuade the highlanders. In fact, his acrimonious encounters with both Ozias Holt over the telephone line work and with Lundy Taylor over school behavior, have prepared the way for possible retaliation in the future.



Chapters 19 - 20

Chapters 19 - 20 Summary

Christy's problem with Lundy Taylor takes a temporary backseat when the phone line is completed. David learns that a test call will come in at four in the afternoon on Wednesday, and somehow word gets out to the people of the Cove. By three Wednesday afternoon, the Mission House is filled with mountain folk who are not sure that such a device can really work. When the call does come in, everyone is so noisily excited that David can hardly hear. He finally puts the receiver to Little Burl's ear, who is dumbfounded at the voice at the other end. This is a time of high excitement for the Cove. This does not ameliorate Christy's concern over Lundy Taylor's continued absence from school. Finally, she decides to visit Bird's-Eye Taylor, Lundy's father, at home. The visit is intimidating, but Christy feels that she must make an effort. A week after the visit, Lundy does return to school, but only a couple of days go by before a fight breaks out on the playground and Christy discovers that Lundy Taylor kicked Little Burl so hard in the stomach that the little boy loses consciousness. Christy cannot understand why Lundy would be so vicious to the little Allen boy, as he was only playing hide and seek under the schoolhouse.

The pigs who live under the schoolhouse actually give away the secret. Hidden under the church/schoolhouse is a holding room filled with bottles of moonshine. David's worst fears are realized; there is moonshine being produced and delivered to the strange men seen about the Cove from time to time, known as blockaders. Some of Christy's students act as delivery boys—Lundy Taylor, Smith O'Teale, and Wraight Holt. Because of the stricter laws in North Carolina, Tennessee whiskey is in higher demand than ever before. David works with the US Marshals to find the still, but it has been moved before the officers arrive. Miss Alice is quietly disturbed by this information and she urges David to extend a forgiving hand of friendship to Ozias Holt.

Chapters 19 - 20 Analysis

The mission is now on the receiving end of difficulties with feuding. Christy has a personal battle with Lundy Taylor. Being warned that Bird's-Eye now has it out for her does not alarm Christy. She believes all she has to do is talk to Bird's-Eye and all will return to normal. At first this seems to be the case until Lundy kicks Little Burl in the stomach for discovering the hiding place under the schoolhouse. It appears that instead of returning to normal, events have taken a turn for the worse. Bird's-Eye's home is built against a cave that could hide hundreds of gallons of whiskey; Lundy, Smith, and Wraight Holt carry it to the schoolhouse and hide it there for the blockaders. Miss Alice's warning for David to patch things up with Wraight's father is likely due to her concern that a feud will escalate between the moonshiners and the missionaries. David is reluctant, mainly because of his temper, but as a Christian he knows he should be the first to mend the relationship.



Chapters 21 - 22

Chapters 21 - 22 Summary

Before David acts on the advice of Miss Alice, Ozias surprises David and Christy with an invitation to take part in a Working; a joint affair to accomplish a large task. This is a very rare occurrence in the mountains, so David is suspicious of the motivation behind the invitation. He suspects that the men are not ready to accept him as a man yet. His words speak the truth. The ominous atmosphere at the Working oppresses Christy inside the cabin with the women. At the noon meal, David's defeated demeanor speaks volumes. When Ozias asks Uncle Bogg to tell the story of the preacher named Dry Guy, the atmosphere worsens. The story is about a preacher the people want dead. The unsubtle story enrages Christy, yet she has no defense. David must prove his worthiness as a leader by accomplishing the same tasks the mountain men do. In fact, Bird's-Eye shoots at David four times, purposefully missing, then orders David to keep his religion inside the church house and to stop meddling in the affairs of the mountain people. David's answer is to invite them to church tomorrow, and then he quietly returns to his section, which he finishes.

The next morning the church is packed, when it usually stands only half full. David preaches from his heart about the need to practice Christianity on a daily basis. He teaches that church is not a building but a community made up of people and the fellowship they share. He reminds the congregation that Christianity is not just a Sunday garment. It must be worn throughout the week. David speaks his mind and tells his congregation that white lightning is being brewed and trafficked by night, using schoolboys as runners. It is evil.

Just as David's sermon reaches its zenith, Dr. MacNeill taps Christy on the shoulder to come and help him. Little Burl has a torn abdominal muscle that has abscessed and must be operated on immediately. Though reluctant, Christy agrees, and with this personal surrender comes the peace of knowing God has heard her prayer and will comfort and support her. Bolstered by her faith, Christy assists Dr. MacNeill during the surgery with chickens and roosters coming in and out of the cabin. Once the operation ends, Dr. MacNeill privately tells Christy that he is the one who warned the blockaders about the US Marshal coming.

Chapters 21 - 22 Analysis

The differences between the missionaries and the residents of the Cove are very stark, and the issue of running whiskey becomes an enormous concern. The people of the Cove stick together. With the preacher getting US Marshals involved in looking for the still, David has made himself a target. He simply does not understand the people. Nor does Christy understand how they can stand mute when a little boy is injured to the point of death, especially when Dr. MacNeill divulges that he is the one responsible for

warning the blockaders. Christy is angry and hurt. Here the doctor has just completed a difficult operation on Little Burl and yet he seems to be siding with the moonshiners and blockaders. Miss Alice has warned both David and Christy to look beyond their anger to find a better understanding of the people to whom they are ministering.



Chapters 23 - 24

Chapters 23 - 24 Summary

Christy and David wait for three days before Dr. MacNeill is able to find time to meet with them and explain his position. Dr. MacNeill knows that the three men running the still are Bird's-Eye Taylor, Tom McHone, and Nathan O'Teale. He also tells David that his sermon Sunday did more harm than good. MacNeill tries very hard to get David to understand that he is basically on the side of justice, but in this case he had to make a choice between two evils. He knew that Bob Allen had been to see David the day before the raid. Had the still been found, Bob would have been the number one target for the blockade runners. Dr. MacNeill figures that with Bob's head surgery and Little Burl's recent abdominal surgery, the Allens do not need any more trouble. Bob Allen's older brother, Ault, considers himself to be the head of the clan, and had anything happened to Bob, Ault will light off the Allen-Taylor feud like dynamite. Dr. MacNeill then gives David and Christy a history lesson that explains that since the time of Washington and Jefferson, no one has figured out how to help the highlanders make a decent living except by selling moonshine. Today, the situation has changed little. Tom McHone has a financial crisis in that his wife, Opal, has pernicious anemia and requires expensive food and medicine. The only occupation that pays well enough for that is blockade running. He asks David if one can fault a man for wanting to provide for his wife.

The next day, Ruby Mae and Christy discover that Prince's beautiful flowing tail and mane have been shorn. Before they can tell David, Ruby Mae discovers the church pulpit on fire in the middle of the mission yard. A quickly formed bucket brigade quenches the fire, but does nothing for the uneasiness everyone is feeling. Before much time passes, the US Marshal passes by and has Bird's-Eye Taylor and Nathan O'Teale in handcuffs and Tom McHone unconscious on the back of a horse. Tom has been shot and Dr. MacNeill must operate to remove the bullet from near his spine. Soon word spreads that Tom tattled to the federal Marshal and got himself shot for his efforts. David and Dr. MacNeill are very much at odds with each other over the entire event. Then word comes that Bird's-Eye and Nathan have escaped from jail.

Chapters 23 - 24 Analysis

For Christy and David, trying to understand the highlander mentality about preferring to do blockade running than to accept charity is nearly impossible. A highlander himself, Dr. MacNeill tries to explain that the fiercely independent spirit of the mountain people does not allow them to turn to strangers for help. Dr. MacNeill tries to do what he can and he did talk Tom McHone into changing his mind. Unfortunately, this choice has now put Tom in terrible danger and Dr. MacNeill feels responsible for the man's fate. David's angry tirade from the pulpit has turned even the most faithful members of his congregation against him. By accusing the people of allowing evil in their midst, David has only accomplished the erection of new barriers between the mission and the

mountain people. The pulpit set on fire and the disfigurement of the mission's horse is tangible evidence that the people are restive and unhappy.



Chapters 25 - 26

Chapters 25 - 26 Summary

With Tom McHone shot and Bird's-Eye Taylor and Nathan O'Teale loose from jail, Christy is concerned. They had initially been told that Tom was shot during the raid on the still, with the implication that it had been the marshal doing the shooting. Christy observes Dr. MacNeill closely, and believes she knows what troubles him. She requests time alone with him to talk and they go to the empty schoolhouse. There Christy accuses Dr. MacNeill of knowing that Tom was shot by Bird's-Eye because Tom had decided to change sides because of Dr. MacNeill's visit to the McHones. Dr. MacNeill does not admit this; rather, he tells Christy that he has loved the McHones and the mountain people longer than she has been alive. He then challenges her and her purpose and the mission's purpose. Christy's words tumble over one another as she shares her ideas for adult classes, cooking with herbs to improve their nutrition, childcare, even cabinet building for the men, and possibly opening trade schools. Dr. MacNeill loves her enthusiasm, but rejects her push for teaching her version of Christianity to him and the highlanders. Christy leaves, confused and not sure of what she believes herself.

That night Ruby Mae wakes Christy with word that men are trying to break into the Mission House. The women are alone, for Tom McHone has crept out during the night and David is in Knoxville. The women are not sure who the men are. The three women move furniture in front of the doors to keep the men out. Looking for weapons, the women find two fireplace pokers, a shovel, and some cast iron skilletts. The men have come for fun with the women and for Tom McHone. Christy and Miss Ida argue about whether they should reveal Tom's absence. Christy fears for Tom's life, Miss Ida fears for their lives. Luck is with the women, for it begins to pour rain outside and this dampens the spirits of the drunken men. When David returns he is no wiser as to who shot Tom McHone. He is angry because the entire Lyleton jail emptied and many dangerous men are loose. He decrees that the women will learn to shoot a gun and lessons begin the next day. Then Christy looks to David for spiritual guidance of her own faith, but is disappointed in his lackluster answers.

Chapters 25 - 26 Analysis

Just as Christy is developing a love of the mountain people, she is faced with difficult questions regarding her beliefs and values. She initially challenges Dr. MacNeill, but he turns the conversation around and redirects the same questions to her. When Christy answers, her words parrot Miss Alice's beliefs. This shows Christy that she really is not sure of her position and motivation. She wants to help the mountain people and she does believe in Miss Alice's view of God. She just has not entirely embraced it enough to make it her own. She goes to David for guidance and finds once again that David is as puzzled and troubled about his faith as she is. Christy's Christian journey has just

encountered someone who does not believe in God, and this truly troubles Christy, for she believes Dr. MacNeill to be a good man.



Chapters 27 - 28

Chapters 27 - 28 Summary

Christy is still confused and seeks the advice of Miss Alice to help her figure out her philosophy of life. Miss Alice gives Christy a paper with a message and tells her it is the answer. Before she reads, Christy goes to the most peaceful spot in the woods she can find. The paper reads: "If any man will do his (the Father's) will, he shall know of the doctrine, whether it be of God, or whether I speak of myself" (chap. 27, p. 312). At first this merely confuses Christy further, but then she feels strongly called; that Opal McHone is the key to her questions. In fact, as Christy hurries to Opal's, she feels more strongly than ever a sense of urgency. At Tom's house is Bird's-Eye and three other men outside, wanting Tom McHone. Bird's-Eye gives Christy permission to enter the cabin, but cautions her with his shotgun. Inside, Opal is terror-stricken and asks Christy how she knew Opal wanted and needed her. Christy's answer is that God told her to come. To Opal, this is proof that God cares about her and her family. Then Opal wants to know what to do next. Christy asks aloud for His help. Opal shares Bird's-Eye's unhappy history with Christy; that helps to explain how the man became so mean. She'd once even dated Bird's-Eye and knows he has the capacity for good. With this memory, Opal goes out to the men and offers them some home-cooked food. Bird's-Eye comes into the cabin to eat while his men stay outside on guard while they eat.

Chapters 27 - 28 Analysis

Christy is stunned by the situation. Here she is in the middle of a mountain man feud because God tells her that Opal needs her. Once Opal hears this, her heart is changed and she finds the strength of mind and character to approach the men. She does not try to change their minds about getting her husband. She tries to appeal to the goodness she had once experienced with Bird's-Eye when he set the broken leg of a fawn that Opal kept as a pet for a time. Bird's-Eye does not back down from wanting Tom, but he does remove himself and the men from the McHone property. For Bird's-Eye to do this is virtually a miracle, for feuding is not something to be taken lightly.



Chapters 29 - 30

Chapters 29 - 30 Summary

Christy spends the night at the McHones, and the night is interrupted with Tom and his father, Uncle Bogg, coming into the cabin. Tom is a hunted man, a fugitive, and he feels like a trapped animal. Uncle Bogg, the county squire, is unable to fix the mess his son is in. They all decide that Tom's best chance of survival is to get to the Mission House before dawn. Tom gazes at the faces of his children, pats Opal's hand, telling her it is soon to be over one way or another. The next morning Christy walks the three McHone children to school, but as they approach the mission house it is obvious something has happened. Tom McHone is dead, shot in the back no more than three hundred yards from the Mission House. Isaak insists on seeing his father, and David takes him inside. Christy's heart is anguished; the likelihood of Isaak continuing the feud based on the death of his father is high. Christy accompanies David to Opal's to discuss the funeral when they come across Isaak and Rob Allen, his best friend, digging Tom's grave on the instructions of Uncle Bog, saying, "They killed my Paw" (chap. 29, p. 328) with each shovelful. Opal knows it is the hate spilling over. She wants a proper funeral with Miss Alice preaching. Miss Alice chooses the story of Lazarus to help the mountain people to see that Jesus cares. He cares as much for them as He did for Lazarus, that He is their friend. Jesus also exhorts them all to love one another; this is why they must let go of their hate and feuding.

Miss Alice coaxes David out of his discouragement caused by Tom's death. She believes their job is to win the people over, not fight with them. David wants to bring God's word AND help to clean up the messes some are making of their lives with moonshining and feuding. They both agree that they must win over evil, and Miss Alice coaches David that watered down teachings and messages are not the way to do it. This creates great doubt in David and he confides to Christy that he is unsure of his calling to be a minister. He does ask Christy to marry him, but asks her to hold her answer for now. David's proposal flatters Christy, yet puzzles her as well. His uncertainty about his ministry might lead to uncertainty about marriage.

Chapters 29 - 30 Analysis

Tom McHone's death brings to light the very evil the missionaries fight. Most of the time evil lies hidden underneath the surface, where fighting it is most difficult. With Tom McHone's murder, the evil now walks among them. The evil perpetuates itself in Uncle Bogg forcing Isaak to dig his father's grave, reminding him with every shovelful that someone killed his father. No one knows for sure who killed Tom, but most believe Bird's-Eye has the best motive; therefore, hate is directed toward Bird's-Eye. Christy's faith is truly challenged. She answers God's call to go to Opal and yet Tom still dies. This confuses her. Her questions regarding God's intentions abound. David, too, founders on his journey with God and his calling. This is a typical reaction for young

Christians on their faith journey. Only Miss Alice seems to be well grounded in her beliefs.



Chapters 31 - 32

Chapters 31 - 32 Summary

Fairlight gives Christy the understanding of friendship that forges a bond between them that is closer than Christy even has with her family. This friendship is integral in Christy's understanding of who she is. During these wonderful jaunts into the woods where the mint and berries grow, or by a stream with its weeping willow shade, Christy and Fairlight savor one another's presence. Fairlight writes poetry for Christy, writing "I love you for what you are making of me. I love you for what I am when I am with you" (chap. 31, p. 345). These times of peaceful reflection often find Christy thinking about David's proposal, and whether he really means what he says. She knows he is falling in love with her. Up in the heights of the mountains where Christy longs to be, she realizes that Dr. MacNeill's "starter force" really is God, and one who loves every living thing whether human or animal; she also knows now that the lessons she learns in the heights of the mountains must be lived in the valley below.

This inspires Christy to begin on her dream. Jeb Spencer keeps bees and sells sourgum honey. With the leftover honey, Christy and Fairlight experiment with it, using honey instead of sugar, which costs ready money. They steam bellwort shoots like asparagus, stuff possum with chestnuts, make cider from crabapples. Their projects expand beyond cooking; floursack curtains at the window are a start. On one of their outings the two encounter Bird's-Eye, who asks them to take a note to Opal, which Christy takes to her immediately. Opal needs Christy to read; Bird's-Eye claims to not be responsible for Tom's death.

The next day school ends with its closing exercises. In light of the most recent events, a positive experience might pull the people of the Cove together. One after another, Christy's beloved students recite, sing, and spell to perfection until Christy calls on Lundy Taylor, who sleeps at the back of the room, the smell of whiskey all over him. Christy moves on to Creed Allen who brings a pet raccoon on his shoulder as Christy promised he could on the first day of school. Creed gives a presentation on coons and demonstrates its intelligence that is interrupted by the hound dogs that burst into the classroom, much to the amusement of all the parents present. Miss Alice presents Christy with a gift, a hand-carved deer, the work of John Spencer. With school over, Christy plans to go home for a holiday, delaying a response to David's proposal.

Chapters 31 - 32 Analysis

Christy's maturity and spiritual growth are greatly fertilized by her experience with the mountain people. She experiences exuberance and joy, she weeps in sorrow and rages in anger at things that are completely out of her control. These experiences challenge her faith and test her understanding. Initially, Christy's ability to perform her job is hindered by her lack of knowledge and understanding. Spending time with the children



of the mountains, Christy grows to love them. Weeping beside Opal McHone at Tom's funeral, Christy cannot help but admire the wisdom in the woman, the same woman who believes her baby girl died because she was "liver growed". By following Miss Alice's advice and looking on her mission work as a journey, Christy learns acceptance. Though Fairlight, Christy learns to reach the heights where she feels she can touch the face of God. Her understanding of Him must be lived with the people of the Cove.



Chapters 33 - 34

Chapters 33 - 34 Summary

Before Christy leaves for her break with her family in Asheville, she visits Miss Alice, who expects her. Miss Alice sees that Christy still puts her upon a pedestal, and Miss Alice cannot allow Christy to go home with any illusions. Miss Alice tells Christy a story of how frail her humanness really is. A young Miss Alice is introduced to an itinerant preacher, a visiting Quaker from England. His manner is so like her father's that Miss Alice is immediately comfortable with him. Year after year he visits until one year Miss Alice is sixteen. The preacher fills her ears with lies about the Spirit of God and she must remove her clothes to experience it. Young, innocent, and impossibly naive, Miss Alice complies. The man of God rapes her and leaves her with child. The head of their Quaker meeting meets with Miss Alice's family and agrees it is right to keep and raise the child. The standing of Miss Alice's family is not diminished and Miss Alice has support that defied belief. The child is loved and raised and then became the wife of Dr. MacNeill and looked enough like Christy to be her twin.

At home, Christy quickly realizes she has grown and changed, yet her home, her friends, her family have not. Her understanding of Miss Alice's story deepens and matures, showing Christy a woman not on a pedestal, but a woman who has endured pain and tragedy and emerged stronger and with greater compassion for her fellow man. Christy finally understands that one accepts another simply because God receives each individual as they are. This includes Bird's-Eye and Lundy Taylor; Opan McHone figures this out lone before Christy does. There are no gradations for how good or how bad a person is or how hard one tries. At the end of Christy's stay at home, her parents attempt to persuade her to stop teaching and return to college, but Christy reminds them that a Huddleston finishes what they start. On her way back to Cutter Gap, Christy heads to Knoxville for her visit with Hazen Smith and Mrs. Toliver of the University Club in Knoxville. At her talk, Christy meets Mrs. Browning, who introduces Christy to the idea of Danish Folk Schools, designed to help older people learn to read, write, have a trade. Then Christy meets the businessmen of Mr. Hazen's choosing and they all promise hundreds of pounds of flour, sugar, milk, and more.

Chapters 33 - 34 Analysis

With Miss Alice's story of betrayal, dishonor, and ultimately acceptance, Christy learns of a new kind of a God, one who is waiting for everyone, even those who deny His existence. This new understanding prods Christy to return to the people God has called her to serve, even Bird's-Eye and Lundy Taylor. Her job is not to pick and choose who to serve, her job is to serve them all. On her way back to Cutter Gap, Christy stops over at Knoxville where she learns of a novel adult education system being used with great success in Denmark, and she meets some business acquaintances of Hazen Smith's who promise to send large quantities of food and cleaning supplies. It is as if Christy is

returning to the fray, girded for the battle ahead of her. She is still unsure of David's proposal and asks him for more time to be sure about marriage.



Chapters 35 - 36

Chapters 35 - 36 Summary

The first event upon Christy's return to Cutter Gap is the marriage of Ruby Mae and Will Beck. Christy's efforts to reunite Ruby Mae with her parents worked, and as such, Ruby had much more freedom while Christy was gone. The old mountain way of marrying young gives her the desire to get married. At first, David wishes not to preside, hoping to get the couple to wait, but he relents, believing that God's blessing can only be a good thing as their minds are set on it. Once David's ceremony is over, the real mountain celebration begins with food, dancing, and the belling of the bride, where the new couple consummates their marriage overhead while the festivities continue below. Dr. MacNeill dances several times with Christy and seems to be attracted to her. This scares Christy, and when David offers to walk her back to the Mission House, she accepts.

Fall in the Cove arrives in a kaleidoscope of color; colors more intense in hue than Christy has ever seen before. David and Christy spend more and more time together, and Christy believes that she is falling in love. David's kisses are more and more frequent and it is easy to see that he considers them to be engaged. Christy is troubled because David never tells her that he loves her. For Christy, the possibility of getting her ideas for the adults of the Cove to expand. She receives the book on Folk Schools and reads it over and over. Here, at last, is a treatise on how to tackle the very educational problems she sees in the cove, especially with regard to adults. Miss Alice seems interested, as does Dr. MacNeill. David, however, resists her ideas as impossible because he sees the mountain folk as lazy.

Chapters 35 - 36 Analysis

Coming back to Cutter Gap after her vacation, Christy's energy is restored and she studies Among the Danes for ideas that support her position. Having taught Fairlight to read, Christy's belief that all mountain folk can learn expands and grows. She speaks of her ideas with the fire of youthful enthusiasm and believes that the Danish Folk School model can revolutionize the efforts of the Mission. Christy desires David's agreement, yet his reluctance to give it hurts her. David believes her ideas to be just another grandiose idea doomed to failure. Perhaps David's response reflects the jealousy he feels at her belief and faith in herself and God.



Chapters 37 - 38

Chapters 37 - 38 Summary

One thing about the highlanders that Christy confronts but puzzles her is their intense superstition. Their Scottish and Irish background provides much grist for stories of witches and devils and how such creatures interact with humans, and little Zady Spencer confides her fear of the dark in case she sees a ghost. Christy teaches Zady a song refrain that says that God will watch over and take care of you. The line between faith and superstition is fine, and for the highlanders, their God is one to fear rather than a source of comfort. Fairlight has a fear of the shadow of the mountain and Christy believes it is merely due to where the cabin is located. Across from the cabin stands a very high pinnacle that will capture the sun's rays and plunge the cabin into premature darkness. Christy recalls the many times spent with Fairlight whose mood resembles that of a carefree child, then, when the shadow of the mountain comes over, Fairlight changes. "There is no answer. I looked at Fairlight and realized that she had not heard my last sentence. It was late in the afternoon now with the sun dipping. She was staring at the Pinnacle opposite with a look on her face that I had seen so often, a look that frightened me... 'See that other mounting? Sometimes I think it's witched. Most every day it puts me in mind of the shadder o'death'" (chap. 37, pp. 415 - 416). Christy's first inclination is a glib response denying her death, but the mountain folk do experience death on a regular basis. Christy can only offer her presence and her comfort.

Early in October, Zady summons Christy for her mother with a gravity and urgency previously unknown. She waits until she sees Teacher saddling Buttons, then runs ahead for home. At the Spencer house, Christy finds a waiting committee of the Spencer children outside the cabin. The silence of the cabin gives Christy a spurt of alarm. Fairlight is in bed with a pneumonia-like illness and is so feverish that she is delirious. Christy sends Clara to summon the doctor, Zady to the spring for water, and Lulu for rags to sponge off the fevered woman. Christy sees the brown fuzz on her friend's teeth and tongue, unusual because usually high fever leaves the tongue white. Fairlight sees death coming for her; Christy rejects the talk. Then the confused ramblings the woman speaks as if they are on one of their lighthearted outings, her voice changing so much that her three youngest children believe her to be telling them a story. After the delirious rantings she falls into a sleep, but wakes screaming in fright of the shadow coming for her, and Christy sees it is the time of day when the shadow of the mountain plunges the cabin into darkness. She pleads and tries to reassure Fairlight she will be okay, that Dr. MacNeill is coming, but to no avail. Just as Fairlight's face is covered with the shadow she dies. In this way, typhoid comes to Cutter Gap.

Chapters 37 - 38 Analysis

The superstitious beliefs and macabre interest in all things to do with death and dying are all part of the highlander's heritage. They believe in a God who is cruel and



vengeful. It is difficult to incorporate much of Miss Alice's belief in a benevolent God during times of crisis. Fairlight, specifically, demonstrates the most childlike wonder and rapture at the glories of God's creation. Yet, Christy knows there is a darkness in her friend that has a superstitious basis. Each day the Spencer cabin experiences premature darkness that raises intense dread in Fairlight. These times of silence and a deeply troubled spirit defy Christy's understanding and her novice attempts to bring comfort to the dying woman are in vain. Fairlight's death coming the moment the shadow of the mountain crosses her face could be coincidence. Perhaps it is not.



Chapters 39 - 40

Chapters 39 - 40 Summary

The death of her dear friend sorely tests Christy's faith. She stumbles as she tries to reassure Fairlight's youngest children and fares no better with Jeb. Christy punishes herself for not working harder to allay Fairlight's fear of the shadow of the mountain. Christy reaches the point where she holds God responsible for Fairlight's death and her own anger and resentment. In desperation, Christy turns to David for spiritual counsel. Once again he disappoints her, but Christy realizes that David's faith is in jeopardy now as well. Christy's anger and disappointment in a God who would not save as good a woman as Fairlight continues to grow and fester. This gives way to the understanding that it is wrong NOT to speak out her rebellion toward God; that by doing so gives Him a chance to defend Himself. Miss Alice supports this theory with her words, "Christy, those who've never rebelled against God or at some point in their lives shaken their fists in the face of heaven, have never encountered God at all" (chap. 39, p. 432). Miss Alice urges Christy to read the book of Job and the psalms of King David, who had both asked the very same grief-stricken questions. Soon Christy feels the love of God embrace her and she realizes it is her time alone with her Creator. Christy has found her center.

The typhoid that kills Fairlight has arrived at Cutter Gap, though it usually occurs when the springs thaw in early summer, but autumn epidemics result from the fall rains. The most difficult aspect to typhoid is the lack of understanding how it spreads. The highlanders do not know it is from human and animal waste washing from high ground to low ground. The mountain folks all prize their water and refuse to accept the idea that typhoid bacilli can be present by the billions in their clear sparkling water. They all agree to start school on time, for the children will be safer in school than at home, as the school is cleaner. One of Christy's dreams has come true with the Mission House acting as a boarding house for some of the most needy or distant school children. Lundy Taylor's stay as a boarder results from his father's continued disappearance. Lundy succumbs to typhoid, creating a crisis at the Mission House. Dr. MacNeill sends Christy to his cabin with a list of medicines and supplies he needs. Inside the locked room Christy discovers not a shrine to his wife, but a laboratory where the doctor can research the mountain diseases without alarming the highlanders with their fears and superstitions.

Chapters 39 - 40 Analysis

For a nineteen-year-old girl, Christy sees so much more of life than her sheltered life ever offered her before. She suffers the death of her closest mountain friend. The grief and confusion of Fairlight's family further confound her. In anger against God, Christy rails at the unjustness, the unfairness of it all before she reaches a new understanding of God. Somehow her soul is set at rest and she can once again accept the love of God. Moving ahead with her plans for boarders at the Mission House and for her school



children, Christy once again confronts typhoid. This time it is Lundy Taylor. The doctor needs medicines and supplies and sends Christy to his cabin for them as he cannot take the time. The locked room in the cabin reveals an aspect to the already surprising mountain doctor. Christy wonders if he sent her so that she can see for herself just how much the doctor cares for his people.



Chapters 41 - 42

Chapters 41 - 42 Summary

Dr. MacNeill is called away to cases more severe than Lundy's and must spend the night away from Cutter Gap. Just as soon as the doctor leaves, word arrives that Ruby Mae is very ill and someone from the Mission House must go. Initially Miss Alice refuses Christy's help, but because Ruby Mae is her friend, Christy insists on accompanying the versatile Quaker woman, who frequently steps in when Dr. MacNeill is unavailable. Miss Alice is not sure if Ruby Mae has typhoid, but does know she has pneumonia. Christy and Will set to work peeling and slicing onions to heat for poultices. For hours they peel, slice, and heat the onions, prepare a poultice, turn Ruby Mae from front to back, their work a desperate attempt to save the girl's life. Toward dawn Ruby Mae finally coughs up huge amounts of blood, pus, and phlegm. By the time Dr. MacNeill arrives, Ruby is better.

Dr. MacNeill instructs Christy to clean her clothes with a lye solution, to wash her hands and hair and to get as much sleep as possible. His inclination is to send her back to Asheville in order to protect her from the epidemic, but Christy refuses. She belongs here and she begins to wonder if she belongs to Dr. MacNeill rather than to David. Miss Alice tells Christy about Dr. MacNeill's relationship with her daughter that answers many of Christy's questions about the man, making him even more intriguing in Christy's eyes than before. He gives instructions like a drill sergeant on how to keep themselves free of disease. He especially coaches Christy, as she has not nursed typhoid patients before. Lundy's case worsens, despite the twenty four hour nursing he receives. Christy is directly exposed to Lundy's fecal excretions during one night shift, having to clean the unconscious boy after he soils himself. Lundy is desperately ill and calls out for his father. Toward morning, Bird's-Eye appears at the back door of the Mission House.

Chapters 41 - 42 Analysis

Christy's intentions to teach are undermined when the typhoid afflictions become epidemic. Christy experiences a testing of her love for the mountain people when Lundy Taylor falls ill and when Ruby Mae needs immediate medical attention. By insisting on accompanying Miss Alice to Ruby Mae, Christy demonstrates her devotion to the girl who followed her endlessly her first few months at Cutter Gap; the girl who represents all the mountain people to Christy. She solidifies her relationship with the people she has chosen to serve. Her night watch over Lundy is prompted by the severe fatigue Miss Alice and Miss Ida feel under the pressure of the twenty-four hour nursing care. The sense of teamwork and togetherness escalates; their mission, really, is to love the people of the mountain as God loves them.



Chapters 43 - 46

Chapters 43 - 46 Summary

Lundy is healing, but Dr. MacNeill's concern increases because the boy has lost a lot of weight and will be hungry. The tricky part of convalescence from a lengthy typhoid bout comes when the patient feels better and wants food . . . solid food. Dr. MacNeill warns Lundy that eating solid food too soon could potentially perforate his bowels, and he could die. Now, in addition to nursing the other typhoid patients, the women must keep an eye on Lundy to make certain that he does not eat any solid food. In the meantime, Christy hears that Bessie Coburn has recovered from typhoid but that her mother is ill and has no time or energy to help. Christy feels so tired from the endless nursing, but she cannot allow her student to be the only one to care for her ailing mother. Finding Bessie so weak and gaunt that she hardly recognizes her, Christy gets Mr. Coburn to fetch water, sits Bessie by her mother to comfort her and rest Bessie, and then gets to work cleaning the cabin. By the time she leaves, her exhaustion is extreme, but the cabin looks much better. Back at the Mission House, all is in uproar. Lundy Taylor has worsened, and Miss Alice suspects that he has eaten solid food. It turns out that Lundy snatched and eaten two hard-boiled eggs in his hunger. Researching in her medical books, she discovers that the proper care is to operate for a perforated bowel as soon as possible. Unfortunately, Dr. MacNeill is hours away on other cases. All they can do is sit by his side and comfort him. By the time Dr. MacNeill arrives, the boy is in shock, it is too late to operate, and Lundy dies after all the care that he has received.

The biggest news then is that Bird's-Eye confesses Lundy's sin of murder. He did not want to tell everyone while Lundy suffered with typhoid, but now that he is gone, Bird's-Eye does not feel that he is betraying Lundy. At first David disbelieves Bird's-Eye's story, but Miss Alice knows it to be true. Christy's admiration for the woman grows without bounds, for Miss Alice has nursed Lundy ceaselessly until his death and all the while she knew him guilty of Tom McHone's murder. Opal McHone's perception and offerings of food and friendship had made a difference to Bird's-Eye. Miss Alice can see that David still chafes under the strain of his ministry and his uncertainty about what he is to do and speaks to him of the prophet Jonah. Christy is present for the talk, but at the very end, she finally succumbs to her fatigue, only she has typhoid now. Her nightmarish dreams are intermixed with David's joyous discovery of his true calling, and he will not leave the ministry. They are also blended with Dr. MacNeill's protestations of his love for both Christy and God, the words Christy hears as she finally regains consciousness.

Chapters 43 - 46 Analysis

The dénouement of the book occurs with the death of Lundy, the final despair of David, and ultimately Christy's collapse from typhoid. With the onset of the terrible tragedy that the typhoid epidemic brings to Cutter Gap, much of the problems that have been



addressed seem no longer to matter. Hardly a family in the area has been left without a mark. The epidemic makes no distinction between good or bad, intelligent or not. As an equalizing force, the typhoid epidemic is equal to none other. Believing that moonshine is an effective medicine, all stills are working to maximum capacity. Formerly seen as lazy, the highlanders have risen to the challenge demanded of the crisis. Everyone is too busy to be too worried about much of anything. During Christy's typhoid delirium she believes that she sees Fairlight, whole, alive, and beautiful; Fairlight, running through the very forests that she loves, and with the two children she had lost earlier in her marriage to Jeb. This, for Christy, is the affirmation that Fairlight is in heaven and that heaven is right where Fairlight was happiest. David, too, tells Christy that he has found his true calling, and it is to stay with the mountain people. The greatest conversion comes with Dr. MacNeill's admission that he has turned away from God, and with the potential loss of the girl he has come to love, he is turning back to God. The story ends with Christy putting her hand into the one of Dr. MacNeill.



Characters

Christy Huddleston

Christy Rudd Huddleston is a nineteen-year-old volunteer, giving a year of her life to be a teacher deep in the Smoky Mountains in Cutter Gap. Christy has high ideas of "helping" the mountain people by becoming the teacher for their school. Little does she know that she is embarking on a journey that will permanently change her life. Up until the time she leaves for Cutter Gap, Christy has known a life of plenty and luxury with the biggest problem being which shoes or hat to buy for a social event. Her very first night at El Pano, she has to grow up, find her own way to the boarding house, and then persuade the postman to take her on a seven mile walk though the snow and ice that are too deep for a horse to travel. Initially, Christy's spunk and determination are what get her through. As she comes to know the mountain people, she sees a great need and feels compelled to help. Her determination is set, and she believes that all it takes is an application of her ideas. What she finds is that she is in a community of people whose history is so completely different from hers that she must spend time getting to know the people, what they think about things and why. She finds that she must learn to respect their knowledge, just as she expects them to respect hers. A mutual unveiling of each helps the process. Ruby Mae and Fairlight give Christy the best insight into the mountain people because they take an instant liking to Christy and are more open with her. Christy's relationship with Miss Alice is that of a student with a mentor. Miss Alice has incredible faith and knowledge of human nature that Christy needs in order to be effective. Time and again, Christy turns to Miss Alice for advice and guidance. Christy becomes romantically attached to David Grantland, the mission's pastor, but she is disappointed that he never openly declares his love for her, and is truly unsure of his faith. She also becomes attracted to the mountain doctor, Dr. Neil MacNeill, whose faith is nonexistent, but his love and understanding of the mountain people unparalleled. Responding to his challenges, Christy reaches deep inside of herself to find parts of her that she did not know existed. She finds that the world is not so easily defined as she once thought. By the end of the story, she has grown, matured, and learned to love as deeply as a woman can love.

Alice Henderson

Alice Henderson is a Quaker Missionary from Ardmore, Pennsylvania. She has established three missionary schools; Big Lick Spring, Cataleechie, and Cutter Gap. Miss Alice is a stately woman with a coronet of graying braids and a very calm and poised manner. As a Quaker, she eschews violence, but learned early that in order to gain the respect of the mountain men, she has to be a better shot than they. She also understands the lack of belief in a God of love is having on the community, and through her example and the particular readings she chooses for the Sewing Circle, Miss Alice exposes the women of the Cove to the beneficence of God. Miss Alice has been among the mountain people for many years; her daughter was Dr. MacNeill's wife until she



died. Because of her close association with the highlanders, Miss Alice has a deep and intense compassion and understanding of the mountain folk. She understands that they believe in a harsh and judgmental God who does not easily forgive. She also knows that they appreciate beauty in nature and in song, but do not easily know how to bring it inside so that they can always have it around them. When Miss Alice built her cabin, she insisted on having large glass windows so that when the mountain folk visit her, they can see the beauty of the mountains as a mural inside. She also takes some of the mountain traditions and creates objects of beauty with them. Fairlight has followed her example and brings pretty colored leaves inside and displays them in bowls. She also picks flowers and puts them in vases on the table. Little by little, Miss Alice persuades the mountain people to a better understanding of God and of life. She also works with Christy and David, who are both newcomers to the Cove, to understand the mentality of the people, and teaches them how to love the highlanders for who they are.

David Grandland

David Grantland is the Minister of the Inland Mission. He has been assigned to Cutter Gap, and is not necessarily there by choice. He really works hard to make a difference in the lives of the mountain people, but he suffers from dejection and rejection. He often wonders if he should be in Cutter Gap. He is full of ideas and plans, but without understanding the mentality of the mountain people, he has a tendency to ride roughly over their sensibilities and speaks of things the highlanders believe should be left alone. He and Dr. MacNeill differ in their approach to the moonshine problem in the mountains. He agrees that it is a sorry situation that the mountain people should have no real source of ready money, but believes that moonshining, being against the law, should be abolished. On the positive side, David is sincere in his desire to help the mountain people. He frequently comes to Christy's aid when she is overwhelmed by a situation at the schoolhouse. His love of music helps him to make friends among the mountain people, but overall, they are suspicious of his intentions. They fear the changes that David represents. His preaching, for the most part, is considered to be the best around, because of his use of high language and vocabulary. Even though the people do not really understand what he says, they think that they have the best preacher in their parts because he has such a style.

Fairlight Spencer

Fairlight Spencer is the wife and mother and great friend of Christy's. Fairlight is a naturally beautiful woman in a plain way who first meets Christy in her home in January when Bob Allen is brought in for surgery on her kitchen table. Christy describes her voice as having a low minor key tonality to it. Christy and Fairlight forge a friendship that is unusual for mountain women. Christy teaches Fairlight to read and write. Fairlight teaches Christy about the beauty and bounty of the mountains. Her fear of the shadow of the mountain, however, haunts her life, so much so that when she is stricken with typhoid, she dies the same moment the shadow comes over her cabin. The shadow represents the death she fears, and her fears come true.



Dr. Neil MacNeill

Dr. Neil MacNeill is the physician of the Cove. He is a very large man with long red curly hair and a craggy looking face. He grew up a mountain man, born in the very cabin that belonged to his grandparents. His love of the mountain people keeps him in Cutter Gap, when he could become very wealthy should he move his practice to a city. When he was sixteen, a group of physicians from New York came to the mountains on a hunting trip. One of Dr. MacNeill's uncles was their guide and Dr. MacNeill went along as to help carry their gear. When Dr. MacNeill told them of his desire to be a doctor, they helped to make college and medical school possible for him. Long ago, Dr. MacNeill lost his relationship with God and became an atheist. This is what attracted Miss Alice's daughter to him. The tragedy of his wife's death and the death of his infant son seemed to permanently put Dr. MacNeill in a state of denial of God. His attraction to Christy seems initially to be due to her resemblance to his late wife, but he does love her vehemence and enthusiasm. He functions as a mentor as well, but not so gentle a one as Miss Alice. Christy responds to Dr. MacNeill's challenges and learns to love the mountain people, and look for ways to help them that are in keeping with their beliefs and background. He helps Christy to see the people as beautiful in and of their own right.

Ida Grantland

Ida Grantland is David Grantland's spinster sister who is suspicious of Christy, indeed, of any woman who gets close to David. Ida is an uptight woman who sees the bad in everything. She is not an optimistic woman at all.

Jeb Spencer

Jeb Spencer is husband to Fairlight. He is a ballad-singing mountain man, deep blue eyes, and a red-blond beard. He wears shabby clothing, but has a cultured way about him. He plays a four-stringed dulcimer and sings songs that bring forth their Scotch-Irish heritage and make the listeners think of times gone by.

John Spencer

John Spencer is a fifteen-year-old boy who is really interested in math. He has finished a geometry book all on his own. He spends three months carving a deer to be presented to Christy as a gift from all the parents and students of her school.



Zady Spencer

Zady Spencer is the daughter of Jeb and Fairlight who summons Christy when Fairlight is ill with typhoid, then succumbs to the disease herself; however, with good nursing at the Mission House, she survives the epidemic.

Clara Spencer

Clara Spencer is the daughter of Jeb and Fairlight whose greatest goal in life is to have two or three pairs of shoes, and to live in a house with enough pans to cook in and a rug on the floor.

Lulu Spencer

Lulu Spencer - Jeb and Fairlight's youngest daughter.

Little Guy

Little Guy - Jeb and Fairlight's youngest son.

Bob Allen

Bob Allen is the keeper of the mill by Blackberry Creek, who was hit by a tree on his way to El Pano to pick up the new schoolteacher. Bob was operated on the Spencer's kitchen table by Dr. MacNeill to relieve the pressure on his brain.

Mary Allen

Mary Allen is the wife of Bob Allen. She is very superstitious, though she does join the Women's Sewing Circle.

Rob Allen

Rob Allen is a would-be writer. He has no wish to keep the mill run by his father. Best friend to Isaak McHone, and helps him dig his father's grave.

Creed Allen

Creed Allen is the boy who brings a raccoon to school on the first and last days.



Little Burl Allen

Little Burl Allen is the youngest Allen son. He understands the expanse of God's love and that they must love others because God loves them. He is injured by Lundy Taylor over discovering the hiding place for the moonshine under the schoolhouse and has to have an operation to drain the resulting abscess.

Ault Allen

Ault Allen is Bob's oldest brother and head of the Allen clan. He has a tendency to be violent with he has been drinking.

John Holcombe

John Holcombe is a mountain man who is instrumental in getting the school in Cutter Gap started.

Elizabeth Holcombe

Elizabeth Holcombe - John's wife.

Lizette Holcombe

Lizette Holcombe is very good with math and gets a book of the Complete Works of Shakespeare for making top grades in school for the year.

John Holcombe

John Holcombe the boy who stands between Christy and Lundy Taylor when Taylor becomes aggressive toward Teacher.

Sam Houston Holcombe

Sam Houston Holcombe is the nine-year-old boy who is to help Teacher keep the stove loaded with wood.

Uncle Bogg McHone

Uncle Bogg McHone is the county squire, "humorist of Cutter Gap", and tells tall tales. Is protective of the mountain women. Father to Tom McHone.



Tom McHone

Tom McHone is the grown son of Uncle Bogg who becomes a blockade runner in order to make money to help his wife. He is persuaded to stop, and dies for his efforts.

Opal Pearl McHone

Opal Pearl McHone is Tom's wife who has a baby girl who dies in infancy from being "liver growed", whose childbirth pallor continues to linger. It turns out that she needs expensive medication for her pernicious anemia, which explains why Tom turns to moonshining.

Isaak McHone

Isaak McHone is the young man who must become the man of the family when his father is murdered.

Nathan O'Teale

Nathan O'Teale is a rough highlander who joins Bird's-Eye Taylor in moonshining.

Swannie O'Teale

Swannie O'Teale - Nathan's wife.

Wilmer O'Teale

Wilmer O'Teale- teen-aged boy, half-witted and epileptic.

Smith O'Teale

Smith O'Teale is the boy whose greatest goal is to go to the level lands and get a job where he can finally have enough to eat. He gets involved as a blockader with the moonshine industry.

Orter Ball O'Teale

Orter Ball O'Teale is an eleven-year-old boy who has horribly crossed eyes.



Mountie O'Teale

Mountie O'Teale is a young girl with a horrible stutter. Christy unlocks the desire to talk and learn with gifts of buttons on her coat and a red scarf.

Ozias Holt

Ozias Holt agrees to work setting up the telephone poles and wire, but then refuses to work. He and David argue. Then he is the host of the "working" where David is humiliated, threatened, and injured.

Rebecca Holt

Rebecca Holt - wife to Ozias.

Wraight Holt

Wraight Holt is a seventeen-year-old boy, the one who concerns Christy in the school. He writes her a note that indicates he would like to court Christy . . . but the tone of the note is more insulting than it is. Wraight also functions as one of the schoolboys who works with the blockaders.

Zacharias Holt

Zacharias Holt - prankster in school.

Vella Holt

Vella Holt is the five-year-old girl who is hit in the head with a rag wrapped rock thrown by Lundy Taylor.

Bird's-Eye Taylor

Bird's-Eye Taylor - feuder and blockader.

Lundy Taylor

Lundy Taylor is the seventeen-year-old son of Bird's Eye and a problem in school. He is openly hostile, and is the likely source of some horrible pranks that could and did result in injury. He falls to the typhoid epidemic. He is also responsible for shooting Tom McHone in the back.



Kyle Coburn

Kyle Coburn - mountain man, married to Lety Coburn.

Lety Coburn

Lety Coburn - Kyle's wife who gets sick with typhoid.

Bessie Coburn

Bessie Coburn is the thirteen-year-old girl who has managed to get halfway through the Latin text, survives typhoid, then has to nurse her sick mother.

Duggin Morrison

Duggin Morrison - glum mountaineer, Ruby Mae's stepfather.

Ruby Mae Morrison

Ruby Mae Morrison is a red-haired girl who lives at the mission house and follows Christy around like a little puppy.

Aunt Polly Teague

Aunt Polly Teague is a ninety-two-year-old woman in the Cove who chooses when she dies. She is considered to be the oldest woman in the Cove. Member of the Sewing Circle.

Lenore Teague

Lenore Teague - Aunt Polly's daughter-in-law and member of the Sewing Circle.

Granny Barclay

Granny Barclay - midwife of Cutter Gap, and has the trachoma eye problem that troubles much of the Cove.

Liz Ann Robertson

Liz Ann Robertson was married at fourteen and pregnant, due to deliver before she is fifteen.



Mr. Hazen Smith

Mr. Hazen Smith is a wealthy Knoxville businessman who Christy approaches to help with the mission via donations, books, and eventual scholarships and jobs for some of her students.

Mrs. Toliver and Mrs. Browning

Mrs. Toliver and Mrs. Browning - ladies at the University Club, Knoxville.

Gentry Long

Gentry Long - United States Marshal who leads the search for the moonshiners.

Javis MacDonald

Javis MacDonald is the train conductor who knows Mr. Huddleston. He looks after Christy during her train ride from Asheville to El Pano. He gives her a few frightening stories about the mountain people, but realizes that scaring her is all he will accomplish.

Mrs. Tatum

Mrs. Tatum runs a boarding house in El Pano, and is who mothers Christy the first night, when she is not met at the train. Mrs. Tatum tries very hard to dissuade Christy from going to Cutter Gap, knowing intuitively that Christy has led a very sheltered life.

Ben Pentland

Ben Pentland is the mailman for Cutter Gap, one who takes his job very seriously. He agrees to take Christy the seven snow-covered miles on foot from El Pano to Cutter Gap. At first he is cantankerous and reluctant, but once they set off, he is a very good and gentlemanly companion.

Dr. Ferrand

Dr. Ferrand - missionary whose life goal it is to help the people in the Appalachians.

Will Beck

Will Beck - boy who marries Ruby Mae Morrison.



Objects/Places

Asheville Train Station

Where Christy boards the train for Cutter Gap.

Cutter Gap

The mountain cove where Christy teaches for a year.

El Pano

Town about seven miles away from Cutter Gap, closest train station.

American Inland Mission

Dr. Ferrand and Miss Alice established a mission to help the mountain folk of Appalachia, especially providing religion and education.

Log Bridge

One of Christy's first obstacles on her journey from El Pano to Cutter Gap.

Spencer Cabin

A two-room log cabin where the beds are all in the living room. This is where Christy meets Fairlight, who becomes her friend, and where Bob Allen has surgery for blood on the brain on the Spencer's kitchen table.

Mission House

The house where Christy stays while she lives in Cutter Gap. It is fairly sparsely furnished, and seems to reflect the personality of Ida Grantfield.

Miss Alice Henderson's Cabin

A small cottage built by hand by Miss Henderson, to be at one with the beauty of her surroundings, and to open the inside to the glories of God on the outside. She creates a peaceful haven inside, full of native materials and old crafts to create a sense of peace and beauty.



Dulcimer

Mountain instrument from two to eight strings that is strummed with a goose-quill.

Rock Ball

A ball made of a rock that is wrapped in fabric. It is thrown by Lundy Taylor and hits little Vella on the head.

Hot Marbles

Another evil trick played by Lundy Taylor, this time on Christy. Fortunately, Little Burl stops Teacher in time so that she does not burn her fingers picking up marbles that are just out of the fire.

Ivory Tower

From where Christy and Miss Alice come. It is a figurative place of isolated protection they both enjoyed in their youth.

Feud

The hate tradition that is practiced among the clan families of the Appalachians.

Baby Dress and Ribbons

The objects Christy takes to Opal McHone in order to lay out her newborn infant daughter who dies. The ribbons are a luxury Mrs. McHone has never had before.

Dr. MacNeill's Locked Room

Rumored to have the remains of his dead wife, but really his laboratory for the study of trachoma, the mountain eye disease afflicting the people of Cutter Gap.

Buttons and Red Scarf

Gifts from Teacher to Mountie to prove that Mountie is special.



Sewing Circle

An activity run by Miss Alice, helping the mountain women learn a sense of love of God and of community.

Trachoma

Eye disease prevalent in the Cove that is manifested by granulation on the eyelids, bloodshot eyes, and diminished eyesight. Dr. MacNeill is studying the disease in hopes that he can find some sort of treatment for the common affliction.

The Curlew

The ship Neil MacNeill buys to ship eighteen hundred of his countrymen to the New World after their uprising in Scotland brings a life of starvation and terror.

Telephone

The first telephone in the Cove is set up in the Mission House. Most people do not believe a voice can be heard through wire and lines. Most people do not believe a voice can be heard through wire and lines.

Among the Danes

Book written by Grundtvig about the Danish Folk Schools revolutionizing adult education.

Black Betty

The bottle of whiskey, a prize for the winner of the horse race held at every wedding.

Typhoid

The dreaded disease spread through fecal contamination of drinking water that plagues Cutter Gap the fall of 1912.



Social Sensitivity

The prominent role that social conflict, particularly as it involves the impoverished and illiterate mountain people of East Tennessee, plays in *Christy* reflects Catherine Marshall's interest in social issues. The mountaineers depicted in this novel suffer from the material and educational deprivation which have been longstanding problems in Appalachia. When nineteen-year-old Christy Huddleston leaves home to teach and minister to the people of the Smoky Mountains, she finds primitive conditions she had not thought possible in the twentieth century. She is told that outsiders are not welcome and that she may face violence in response to her attempts to upgrade the mountaineers' social and educational position. As she learns more about the people of Cutter's Gap, Christy commits herself to the betterment of their welfare. She is joined by others, such as Miss Alice, the young Minister David Grantland and Dr. Neil MacNeil. Among their goals is the eradication of the traffic in bootleg whiskey, which involves even the children. Dr. MacNeil is dedicated to improving sanitary conditions among the people and doing away with superstitions that prevent them from taking advantage of the benefits of modern medicine. David Grantland, who is appalled by the tradition of illegal whiskey and violent feuding among the mountain folk, risks his life by speaking out against these practices.

The reformers are appalled by the election of corrupt officials who condone murder if the murderer is a member of their clan.

Techniques

Marshall effectively uses a number of techniques to convincingly portray the daily life and heritage of the mountain community of Eastern Tennessee.

Throughout the novel, she authentically reproduces the speech patterns and the idiomatic expressions of the mountaineers. She also includes examples of their cultural heritage such as selections from their folk ballads and tall tales. Many of the customs of mountain society are described, those pertaining to daily life as well as the traditions of mountain weddings and funerals that are unique expressions of the heritage of the people. Several stories from the family histories of the characters such as Neil MacNeil are included to explain the reason behind the original emigration of the ancestors of the mountaineers and their motivation for choosing the mountains of Eastern Tennessee for settlement.

The culture heritage of Alice Henderson, Quaker missionary, is revealed to the reader in a similar manner.

Through the use of the Quaker speech idiom and theological expressions which are important to Friends, Marshall helps the reader understand the society from which "Miss Alice" comes and the central values of her Quaker religious inheritance. Alice Henderson's own life story, as she reveals it to Christy, is also an illustration of the ways of the Quaker community and the standards by which they live.

Marshall's description of the landscape of the mountain region is used to impress upon the reader the nature of the lives of the mountaineers themselves. As the mountains have a ruggedness and beauty, so do the people who live in them. The portraits Catherine Marshall draws of the characters similarly reflect the inner qualities they possess. For example, Alice Henderson is described as a patrician and poised woman. These qualities reflect the nobility of spirit and the spiritual tranquility that "Miss Alice" has achieved.

The novel, narrated from Christy's point of view, is in the first person.

This lends an air of intimacy to the telling of the story and helps the reader to identify with the conflicts and struggles the young teacher experiences.



Themes

Finding Purpose in Life

This is most plainly demonstrated throughout the entire story by Christy. Yet more than one character has to find that one thing in life that is bigger than they are. In order for something to be meaningful, it has to be bigger than the common petty concerns of humanity. Christy's entire purpose throughout the book is to find her purpose. The most illuminating part of her journey is that for as far forward as she believes she advances, she experiences setback after setback. Miss Alice teaches Christy that if she can see it as a journey, then it will not be so difficult. A journey often moves along in spurts and starts, with stops and diversions as the journey progresses. Miss Alice has searched for a purpose in her life, first with her time as a child in a Quaker family. That journey ended when she is raped by a visiting minister, someone they had trusted. Her daughter is accepted into their Quaker fold, and a new journey for Miss Alice begins until her daughter is old enough to ask about her father. Miss Alice withholds nothing, but somehow her daughter sees herself as damaged goods, and becomes wild and bohemian; another soul looking for a purpose in life. When her daughter marries Dr. MacNeill, Miss Alice reopens the communication and relationship with her daughter by coming to the mountains where Dr. MacNeill works. Knowing that her daughter still needs room, she decides to open a school in a nearby town, Big Lick Spring. Miss Alice finds her purpose even though she never manages to repair the relationship with Margaret before her death. Her purpose has become much bigger, and that is to bring the word of a loving God to the people of the mountains. Dr. MacNeill, too, has a purpose to find, and he has found it, but flounders when it comes to allowing God to help him. David Grantland, despite being a minister, is not convinced of his purpose in life. He thinks that he knows it, but his faith is constantly challenged and he does not have the answers he needs for his people. The entire story is one of discovery, finding one's true purpose in life.

Good Work Ethic

Christy has a good understanding of a good work ethic, having the backbone to see things through. She demonstrates this by her seven mile trek from El Pano to Cutter Gap at the beginning of her adventure. That difficult journey, however, is only the beginning for Christy. Once she reaches Cutter Gap, she discovers that her job as schoolteacher is going to be so much more difficult than she had ever imagined it could be. Her first day of school in the one room schoolhouse has seventy-two students in attendance on the very first day. The range of abilities of the children is not determined by how much schooling they have had, but how much effort they have put into their studies. At first, she is repelled by the smell of the unwashed children and is concerned that this will affect her ability to teach them, but once she learns to love them, the smell becomes less of a problem. There is nothing that is presented to Christy that she is unwilling to attempt and see through. On a personal level, Christy is presented with



other challenges, but anything that requires a good work ethic Christy is not afraid to try. Others who show a good work ethic are David Grantland in his efforts to build the school/church house, clear land, erect telephone poles all the miles to the nearest town. David's work ethic is nearly unsurpassed. The only time that David comes close to not accomplishing his duties is when his faith suffers a blow, but when it comes to actually getting things done, David is a source of endless strength. Miss Alice, too, shows a work ethic as an example to the women of the Cove. Her manner is different, and her determination to reach the people unparalleled. It seems to the reader that without Miss Alice, the entire mission operation in Cutter Gap might not make it. Miss Alice knows this. She knows that the people volunteering to help the people of Cutter Gap need to understand the people and themselves, so her work ethic becomes one of eternal patience and loving counsel. She watches David, Neil, and Christy carefully, and works to guide them whenever she can. She knows where each of them are in their faith journey, and so she is careful in how she works with each of them. Dr. MacNeill has a work ethic that is fed the more he is needed. When he is not needed as a doctor, then he works on his own research to help the mountain people, but knowing their nature, he keeps it quiet from them. He does want Christy to know that he loves the mountain people enough to do whatever it takes. Some of the mountain people are portrayed as lazy and shiftless, but as the reader looks deeper into the text, their natures are different, but no less important. Fairlight never allows her family's needs to go untended, but she has learned the importance of taking time to enjoy the beauties of nature. Her example shows that a good work ethic does not mean that there is no enjoyment of life, but a good balance of the two.

Mountain Relationships

Christy learns that mountain relationships are different than the relationships she has known previously. Initially, she is hampered in her efforts because of the natural shyness and reticence of the mountain people. Fortunately for her, Ruby Mae is the exception that proves the rule, and talks nonstop about the events of the Cove, the feelings of the people, their reasons for what they do. Christy has to interpret, reading between the lines, for Ruby Mae is a product of her environment and all her perceptions are colored by her experience. The mountain friendship is slow to be made, but once made it is either permanent or it ends in a feud. The highlanders have never learned the art of hiding their feelings or pretending to be happy when they are not. The mountain friendship is a tie between people that is a connect or a bond that is not easily severed. One's word in the mountains is as solid a bond as a signed contract. The relationship between mountain people is also not just between the two individuals involved, but it is a connection of every member who is related by blood, it is strong and firm, and stretches into the past and is anticipated for all future relationships. For the mountain folks, a friendship or relationship is either a permanent relationship or it is a war. Their friendships are for life and beyond. They would never think to hurt or to cheat a friend, and they would never think to allow a friend to go without food, clothing, or money as long as there is some to share. The mentality behind feuding comes from this depth of feeling. When a member of one family is hurt or considered to have been betrayed, the intensity of the feeling is much more intense than if the original relationship were more



superficial or trite. The ability to forgive and forget does not exist in this environment of such deep feeling. When a highlander offers friendship, it is for life, indeed, forever.

Significant Topics

The themes in *Christy* concern themselves not only with these social issues but with matters of personal religious growth and maturity in the lives of the characters. One of the themes of the novel is the need for people to come to terms with the presence and meaning of death in human life. The ability to accept death as a natural part of life and glimpse its meaning in God's plan is seen as a reflection of the level of an individual's spiritual maturity. Different characters in the novel attain various levels of awareness of what the inevitable event of death can mean in the life of a Christian. For instance, to Fairlight Spencer, a woman burdened by fears and superstition, death represents complete annihilation symbolized by a terrifying shadow. The young minister David Grantland acknowledges the Christian belief in immortality but is hard-pressed to defend his beliefs with vigor and enthusiasm. It is the oldest woman in the cove, Aunt Polly Teague, who questions the young minister on this subject, who ultimately experiences a vision of eternal life which is far more convincing than the minister's words. At the end of the novel, *Christy* herself has a mystical experience which confirms for her a belief that there is an afterlife.

The characters in the book find their religious beliefs shaken many times.

One factor that assails their faith is the resistance of many of the mountain people to the remedies modern civilization offers. Teacher *Christy*, Doctor MacNeil and the Reverend Grantland cannot understand why their attempts to eradicate suffering among the mountain folk are ignored or ridiculed. Another theme in the novel is the prevalence of self-doubt that plagues those who dedicate their lives and skills to helping others. *Christy* and the Reverend Grantland go through periods of self-examination in which they question their motives in dedicating their lives to the service of others.

In *Christy*, periods of confusion and self-doubt are not condemned as signs of moral weakness. A central insight provided in the novel is that spiritual truth of a strong and lasting nature can most surely be found in times of temptation and seeming despair. After *Christy*'s friend Fairlight Spencer dies at an early age, leaving her small children behind, the young schoolteacher reaches a crisis point in her faith.

Christy describes her feelings during this time with complete candor: "This was no ache but a wild, searing pain boring into my vitals, piercing every thought." When she admits her feelings of desolation to Miss Alice, a much admired mentor and friend, the older woman assures her that doubts and temptations to despair are far from uncommon experiences among men and women of faith. Miss Alice verifies her claim — that even the most godly people can find their faith assailed — by quoting from the words of biblical figures such as Job, and the writer of the Psalms.



Comforted by the fact that her experience is not unique, Christy continues her search for meaning convinced that, "If there was a God, He would have to be truth. And in that case, candor — however impertinent — would be more pleasing to Him than posturing."

Through many days of silent contemplation, Christy reaches a point of spiritual awareness and the certainty of God's presence and love in human life.

Although Christy admits that, "The world around me was still full of riddles for which my little mind had not been given answers," she does find her God. Christy's God is described as having a personal knowledge and love for each man and woman He has created: "God insists on seeing us one by one, each a special case, each inestimably beloved for himself." Through this experience, Christy finds the courage to face the challenges which will undoubtedly rise in the future with confidence. She asserts, "I knew now. God is. I had found my center, my point of reference. Everything else I need to know would follow." Faith, then, leads not to a desire to escape from reality but, on the contrary, motivates the believer to embrace the challenges of life with renewed energy and a revitalized sense of commitment. Throughout the novel, Divine Providence is seen working through the trials and moments of testing in human lives. The basic issue of theodicy, why God permits suffering to exist, is not addressed in this novel. However, one of its central themes is the conviction that God can bring goodness even out of situations that seem cruel and senseless.

Christy's near-fatal illness at the conclusion of the novel gives her a deeper awareness of the meaning of life and reveals the person she is destined to marry.

Throughout *Christy*, the characters find a growing sense of their own identity when they learn to respect the values and culture of those different from themselves. Christy gradually learns to neither stereotype the mountain people nor trivialize their heritage as romantic and quaint. As she learns to accept them as individuals possessing a colorful heritage with both strengths and weaknesses, she begins to discover her own identity and the gifts she possesses. Although the role of woman as wife and mother is respected, Christy offers several different role models. Christy herself is an unconventional woman. Although she is from Southern society in the early years of the twentieth century, Christy is far from a typical "southern belle."

She lives an independent life, far from family and friends, in an isolated community which is full of dangers and hardships for her. Christy deliberately chooses a life focused on work and independence. As she embarks on her adventure in the Tennessee wilderness, she experiences "elation about being turned loose to make my way in the world." Christy's role model and mentor is an unusual woman who combines spiritual insight with practicality.

Alice Henderson, a Quaker missionary, gracefully transcends the limitations placed on the role of women in her day and age. "Miss Alice" is an authority figure who is loved. As a Quaker woman, she is accustomed to preaching and assuming a leadership role in missionary work. This she continues to do even in the mountain community where females have not been traditionally welcomed as leaders of the church or community.

By revealing the personal tragedy in her own life which led her to the work of ministry she has undertaken, "Miss Alice" teaches Christy how God can bring positive results even out of tragedy.

Finally, the events of Christy testify to the fact that human beings are mutually dependent on each other. No one can remain in isolation from others without causing suffering to himself and weakening the society around him.

The mission work in Cutter's Gap depends on the coordinated efforts of many people working together. The crucial need for people to work together in order to contribute to the welfare of all becomes apparent when an epidemic of typhoid comes to the mountain community.



Style

Point of View

The point of view of Christy is first person, protagonist, a traditional storytelling method that gives the story a sense of immediacy. The reader feels what the protagonist feels because they experience everything that the protagonist experiences as the story unfolds. The most interesting use of first person in this story is that the author is really telling not her story but the story of her mother and her time as a missionary volunteer teacher in the Great Smoky Mountains. Because she has heard the stories from her mother so often throughout her life, the author has internalized the stories and brings them to life through the first person character of Christy. Christy's youth, innocence, naivety, and enthusiasm are easily felt as she works through each obstacle throughout the story. Her first challenge is to find her way to Cutter Gap. She expected a welcoming committee from the school, because her perspective is based on that of an upper middle class young woman from a genteel family. She has never experienced life in a one or two room cabin without the benefit of running water or indoor bathrooms. Her next real challenge comes when she arrives at the Spencer cabin and Bob Allen is brought in and must have an immediate operation to save his life. Christy's perspective allows the reader to experience her fear and her terror, her discomfort at being in the dark and close cabin with all the strange mountain people, with the pig who joins them for the meal, and for the wife of the unconscious man embedding an ax in the wooden floor to keep away evil spirits. Because the protagonist does not really understand what is happening, the reader is equally confused by some of the actions and activities. However, Christy's determination to see her promise through to the end keeps the reader going, to see the job through to the end. Along the way, Christy falls in love with the people of the mountains, and brings her reader with her. Her descriptions of Cutter Gap, the people, the children, their loves, their fears and their superstitions are all part of the story that unfolds as she lives and learns to accept as she has never done before. Christy's moments of despair and antagonism toward God are not shielded, but put forth in their full agony, so too, are the moments of great joy and happiness. Nothing is kept back, and as a first person story, the reader experiences what Christy experiences, and is forever changed by the story.

Setting

Christy begins in Cutter Gap, years after the events of the story, with the author's mother giving her daughter reasons why the story needs to be told. After the prologue, the story begins in Asheville one cold January morning in 1912, where nineteen-year-old Christy is being put on the train by her father, who turns her charge over to the conductor. Little does Mr. Huddleston know that once Christy reaches El Pano, no one will be there to look out for his little girl except Christy herself. Asheville is a modern town, and El Pano is on the edge between civilization and noncivilization, for beyond El Pano by seven miles is Cutter Gap. Cutter Gap is a mountain cove community whose



inhabitants are descendents of fiercely independent Scotch-Irish. Their independence has isolated them to the point that Christy is not even sure that they believe that they are governed by the United States government. "Most of the highlanders seemed to think the government was something separate from them 'out thar somewhars.' From their basic lack of respect for law and government officials had come the concept that if a citizen did not agree with a law, then he need not obey it. They thought of such lawlessness as 'freedom.' Yet something was wrong because out of that kind of freedom could come no stable society—only, it seemed to me, more lawlessness, violence, and eventually, anarchy" (chap. 25, p. 290). In fact, during these portions of the story of the moonshining and blockading, the very lawlessness of the people becomes very evident.

The dichotomy of the seeming backwards inhabitants of Cutter Gap and their language that has its basis on the Bible and on Shakespeare makes Christy feel as though she has traveled back in time by several hundred years. The people live in one and two room rustic cabins without electricity or running water. Bathrooms for the better off are outdoor privies . . . for the others, there are just holes in the ground. The mission is comprised of a Mission House, the church/schoolhouse, and Miss Alice's cabin that are gathered in a central location. Christy discovers just how distant this community is on the first day of school when she tries to get directions and addresses to the students' homes. For example, when she interviews Sam Houston Holcombe and asks for his address the answer stuns her: " 'Wal—' That puzzled look on the small face again. 'First ye cross Cutter Branch. Then ye cut acrost Lonesome Pine Ridge and down. Through the Gap's the best way. At the third fork in the trail, ye scoot under the fence and head for Pigeonroost Hollow. The ye spy our cabin and pull into our place, 'bout two mile or so from the Spencers.'" The mountain community, though distant from one another, is very tight and protective of one another. Christy and David, as the newest newcomers to the area have to work very hard to understand the nature of the people back in the mountains so far away from civilization. Miss Alice and Dr. MacNeill both have had many years with the mountain people, and are on hand to help the newcomers adapt to their new life in a strange and wondrous setting.

Language and Meaning

The language of Christy falls into at least two distinct categories, that of the educated portion of the characters, and that of the mountain people. Christy, for only having had a year and a half of college, uses language that is peppered with highbrow words such as supurrorating, balmoral, and sonorous. When David Grantland is preaching, he uses even more highbrow words such as polemic, exegesis, syntax, and anthropomorphism. This type of language then is contrasted with that of the highlanders, whose language is based on the heritage of their Scotch-Irish ancestry and the works of Shakespeare. The parents tell Christy that they want their children to learn Latin, over and above English grammar. Their language, even their songs come from the words of centuries ago, and in a land far, far away. It is quaint, descriptive, and often funny. Christy's first encounter with the language of the highlanders is with Mr. Pentland who takes her from El Pano to Cutter Gap. "His speech was peppered with expressions so quaint that it was like another language: 'the sunball' . . . 'afeard' . . . 'mought,' Twilight, he called 'the aidge of



dark,' and I smiled, remembering his 'blatherskite wimmin" for Mrs. Tatum and me" (chap. 4, p. 42). For the mountain folks, terms like "just a step or two" is more in keeping with a city block or two. Mountain folk have a tendency to minimize things rather than exaggerate them. Their language, though, is often more specific than that of Christy, Miss Alice, and David. "Don't need no more of this world's goods. Some folks gits plumb mesmerized when paper money is shook afore their eyes" (chap. 37, p. 415). Fairlight tries to explain to Christy that she has no further need of money if it takes away from the more important things of life, that of friends and family. Christy's language, specifically during the expositional portions of the novel, are filled with the high language of an educator, words that are not commonly used in speech, but often found in writing. The dichotomy of the two forms of language creates a rich tapestry of writing that makes the story come very much alive.

Structure

The structure of the story is chronological, with the exception of the prologue which takes place years after the events of the story, but which serves to introduce the story and the need for it to be told. Once the story begins, Christy narrates the events of her life, with a little bit of back story in flashbacks that help the reader to understand just how difficult it is for her to make the decision she makes to help the mountain people of Cutter Gap. From time to time, there are bits of back story told, mostly by Miss Alice, when she tries to help Christy understand either her motivation or the motivation of Dr. MacNeill. With the exception of the prologue, the entire story is told from the perspective of Christy. Even the stories that Miss Alice tells Christy about her life and experiences are then related to the reader, and distilled with Christy's current understanding of life in general. Many of the chapters begin with Christy's expository description of what she means to discuss, whether it is the nature of the mountain people, or the beauty of the area, or the difficulties the highlanders face with their choices to not learn the new ways. After she relates her feelings about the topic, Christy enters into a story-telling nature complete with dialogue in the highlander vernacular to illustrate the points she made in the beginning of the chapter.

The use of this type of structure makes all the lessons that Catherine Marshall wishes to teach very clear. For example, when Christy introduces the topic of the superstitious nature of the mountain people, she relates a few examples from her experience, specifically what the children say their grannies tell them about their fears. She tells of Zady's story of a "hant tale" that her father brings home from his time at the mill about Granny Barclay who sees a witch. Christy cannot understand why they still get so excited about tales of witches and ghosts and hauntings, even though she understands that their heritage predisposes them to such stories. Then Christy goes into the story of her time with Fairlight, and how the shadow of the mountain affects her every afternoon.

Catherine Marshall also uses a great deal of foreshadowing. The observant reader will realize that Fairlight demonstrated her fear of the mountain the very first day Christy meets her, when Bob Allen is brought to the Spencer cabin for his brain surgery. "She nodded, but seemed preoccupied. Her eyes were focused on the sun setting behind the



tall pinnacle opposite. I looked from her face to the peak. Rugged scenery certainly—majestic—but I did not understand her intense concentration on it. Then suddenly, the sun dipped and the shadow of the mountain fell across us, lying like a dark hand across the top of the ridge where we stood. I felt the woman beside me cringe, draw into herself, go rigid . . . the eyes in her lovely face were glazed, turned toward that peak across the valley, seeing not the mountain that had shut out the sun, but some specter I could not glimpse" (chap. 4, p. 59). Such a literary device serves to enmesh the reader into the story, giving the reader the feeling of *déjà vu*, having heard something like this before, and sometimes the reader does not even realize that the clever author prepared well in advance for just such a feeling when she structured the novel.



Quotes

"Neither rain—nor snow—nor heat—nor gloom of night—will stay these couriers from the swift completion of their appointed rounds." Chap. 4, p. 39

"Certainly there had never been such a setting for a major operation: the wind whistling around a mountain cabin; dirty pots and pans by the hearth; a baby crying in its mother's arms; the smell of chewing tobacco; all these people crowded into one room with the air getting fouler by the minute. It would be germ-laden. Surely the Doctor was going to ask these staring people to leave." Chap. 5, p. 56

"Then something else they inherited from those ancestors of theirs—those people with their proud self-reliance and intense love of liberty—and that's an iron will. But this will that could result in major achievements is now used mainly to keep feuds alive." Chap. 5, p. 72

"Somehow this Cove was my Cove. The children were my children. Little as I had to give, I had to give it here. It was as Miss Alice had said last night, we have to decide to give—even in hard spots where there's lots of evil." Chap. 8, p. 107

"'First off, folks was so scandalized they couldn't see straight,' Ruby Mae reminisced. 'Old men used t' snort, I can hear them yit, 'Ain't nary bitty sense in it.' Said 'Wimmin and keepin' house belong together like sap and bark. Nothin'a-tall outside the house and yard be fittin' for wimmin.'"" Chap. 9, p. 117

"Of course, the speech defect was by no means over—the emotional blocks went too deep—but astonishing progress was being made. And this little girl was teaching me such a lot about what an adventure schoolteaching is, and more, that what these children needed most was love instead of lives governed by fear and hate. The adults, hanging onto hatred in the name of virtue, were reaping a bitter harvest in their children." Chap. 12, p. 154

"David had brought with him to the mountains a ukulele which he would produce at the slightest provocation—to the delight of the children and young folks. They were familiar with fiddles, dulcimers and banjos, but the ukulele was as strange and fascinating an instrument as the piano. By the time I got to the Cove, David already had a reputation as a 'song-followin' man.' With his sense of rhythm, his rafter-raising baritone, and his nimble fingers, David had a ready-made way into the hearts of the people, for music was the universal language of the highlanders. They sang as readily as they talked. There was a song or a ballad for all occasions: to lighten housework, for hunting or hoeing corn or driving the cows home or churning or piecing a quilt or rocking the baby. And if the right ditty did not come readily to mind, then one was promptly improvised." Chap. 16, pp. 199-200

"Fairlight told me how on the first fine spring day, she considered it only right and proper to drop her housework: 'The house, it's already been a-settin' her for a hundred years.



It'll be right here tomorrow. It's today I must be livin"—and make her way to one particular spot she knew. There she would kneel and with her long slender fingers brush aside the dead, sodden leaves and gaze wonderingly on the first blossoms of the trailing arbutus. Knowing her as I did, I could picture her fairly crooning over the flowers." Chap. 17, p. 210

"Maybe. Maybe not. But I think Ozias intends this Working to be a challenge to me. Some of these men still aren't ready to accept me as a man." Chap. 21, p. 247

"Miss Alice had laughed at him. 'David, dear boy, haven't you watched the people's faces while they're singing? Their foottapping hymns are one of the few joys of their lives. Why tamper with that? They're praising God in their own way. Well—let them!" Chap. 22, p. 260

"You've never seen pride until you've met the fierce passion for personal independence in these folks. Believe me, it didn't just happen that the first Declaration of Independence came out of the Appalachians' Mecklenburg County more than a year before the 4th of July one we celebrate." Chap. 23, pp. 274-275

"I might never have discovered who I really was or have gotten answers to the relentless questions that had driven me to the Cove without those quiet hours spent with Fairlight in the mountains. I do not know why it is that an intimate contact with wild life and a personal observation of nature helps so much in this self-discovery. But that it is so, I have seen in other people's lives as well as my own. Not that my hometown Asheville was such a large city. Perhaps it is just that even a small city provides artificial distractions which separate us from the roots of our life; even a few bricks and a little macadam are a shield between us and the wisdom that nature has to give." Chap. 31, p. 346

"I tried to describe the fierce pride of the people; their self-reliance and love of liberty; the rebellion against taxation and all governmental restrictions or even 'benefits'; how out of centuries of tyranny they had learned the lesson well that for every benefit, a freedom must always be surrendered." Chap. 34, p. 383

"So please don't think that I'm heroic. I've had just as much trouble adjusting to all of this as any of you would have. In fact, at first I almost gave up and went back home. It was a struggle to see underneath the rags and smells, the human beings—some with fine minds, some with great spirits, lovable, proud, sensitive—and begin to care about them, really care." Chap. 34, pp. 383-384

"And that was why David had a valid point about the 'Black Betty.' Everyone in Cutter Gap knew that it was on occasions like this that the potent whiskey unlocked old grudges. Tempers usually flared, knives, and guns might be whipped out. Fights and eye-gougings, knifings, and shooting—celebrations all too often ended in tragedy." Chap. 35, p. 392

"She nodded absently, all her attention centered on Ruby Mae with no concern for herself or her hands at all. She's learned the secret all the way, hasn't she? How to love



other people. She really does care about these folks. Nothing held back. This is what I've been learning with Little Burl and Mountie and Opal and Fairlight. Fairlight most of all. Fairlight . . . Fairlight. . . Could I see in Ruby Mae something of what had meant so much to me in Fairlight? Yes, yes I could - a little. It's love like Miss Alice's that heals." Chap. 41, pp. 449-450

Adaptations

In 1994 Christy was adapted to a highly successful weekly television serial.



Topics for Discussion

Describe an event or period of time in your life that had a life changing effect on you.

Explain Mrs. McHone's calm acceptance of her baby girl's death. How does Christy help? What does this say about the mountain people?

Why does Uncle Bogg walk Christy and Ruby Mae all the way back to the Mission House? What does this say about the changing scene of the Cove?

Describe a situation where a gesture of love and kindness results in an unexpectedly positive outcome.

Describe in detail all the steps Christy takes to approach Hazen Smith to ask for help with the mission. Be sure to include her motivation.

How does David earn the respect of the men of Cutter Gap? Could David have won the respect of the men of the Cove any other way? Answer with support from the text.

Discuss Dr. MacNeill and his seemingly contradictory way of helping the mountain people, especially on the whiskey trafficking and feuding issues.

Explain the story of Lazarus and how Miss Alice uses it at Tom's funeral to try to reach the mountain people.

Describe the effect Fairlight's friendship has on Christy.

Discuss superstition and its hold on people like Fairlight. What is the best way to handle superstition in children? In adults?

How do you describe David's reaction to questions concerning death and life after death? Why does he behave as he does? What is the reaction of the people he counsels?

How does Ruby Mae's volubility help Christy to understand the mountain people?

At what point does Christy understand the real meaning behind her desire to volunteer? Explain.

Discuss Miss Alice and her role in the story. Why does she tell Christy all the negative history in her life and the life of her daughter?

Does Christy's heart belong to David or to Dr. MacNeill? Why?

Literary Precedents

Conflict and struggle in the frontier regions of North America is a theme in many novels. Christy shares the Western genre's tendency to focus on the conditions of lawlessness and rugged individualism that characterized American pioneer society. Ole Edvart R61vaag's *Giants in the Earth* (1927) and the novels of Willa Cather have analyzed the conditions of life in regions which are isolated and largely free of the trappings of civilized life.

Christy also contains several elements which are traditional in the genre of the romance novel. It is the story of a young girl, living an adventurous and rather unprotected life in a setting which is exotic compared to the place of her upbringing. As in many romance novels, the heroine finds the man to whom she is drawn hard to understand. Dramatic tension is introduced when she finds herself forced to decide between the man she thought she loved and another man who suddenly claims her affections.

Related Titles

As in *Christy*, Marshall combines a colorful portion of American culture and history with facets of her family background in *Julie* (1984). Some of Christy's themes are continued: the plight of the poor, efforts to help them, and the importance of spiritual growth in confronting hardships of the world.



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