

City of the Beasts Study Guide

City of the Beasts by Isabel Allende

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Plot Summary

Alex is fifteen the year his mother becomes gravely ill. When Alex's father, John, finds possible treatment for his mom in Texas, Alex and his two sisters are told they'll be sent to stay with their grandmothers. Alex's sisters will stay with their mom's mother, Clara, but Alex is to go to Kate, his dad's mother. Alex is furious with the decision, saying that Clara will cook and take care of the children, but Kate is unorthodox. Alex pleads to be allowed to stay with Clara, but John says three children will be too much for their grandmother. Despite Alex's pleas, he's sent to New York where he's to meet up with his grandmother prior to a trip to the Amazon.

Kate doesn't meet Alex at the airport and leaves him to find his way to her apartment on his own. His backpack, flute and other possessions are stolen on the way, and Alex is furious with Kate. But when he arrives, Kate says that he learned from the experience. Kate is a writer with the International Geographic magazine. Within days, Kate and Alex are part of a crew traveling into the Amazon region. The trip up the Amazon is boring. Alex hates the food available and spends a great deal of his time hungry. Things become better for him when he meets up with the guide, Cesar Santos, and the guide's daughter, Nadia. Alex and Nadia soon become friends and spend a great deal of time together.

Alex and Nadia are taken by the People of the Mist, a native tribe with the ability to fade into the scenery so efficiently that they are never seen unless they choose to be. The two young people are present when the tribe's leader dies, take on the roles of leaders with specific responsibilities, and each goes on a quest. They discover the mystical city where the beasts live, and Alex travels in search of healing waters that a shaman promises will heal Alex's mother. Nadia goes on a quest of her own.

The purpose of the trip into the Amazon is to search for a Beast that has reportedly killed several people. Also invited along on the trip is a doctor, Omayra Torres who says she plans to vaccinate the natives against measles. In truth, a wealthy entrepreneur, Mauro Carias, is hoping to eliminate an entire native tribe in the area, known as People of the Mist, in order to develop the region for mining operations. Dr. Torres is working with Carias and plans to give the natives a deadly form of the measles virus, which will almost guarantee that the entire tribe will die. When Alex and Nadia discover the plan and put a stop to the vaccinations, there's a fight and the entire crew is put in danger. They do manage to escape, and Alex pleads with Kate to write her article about the People of the Mist and their plight. Nadia, having found three large diamonds on a quest of her own, presents the gems to Alex to financially support the endeavor to save the natives.



Chapters 1 through 3

Chapters 1 through 3 Summary

Alexander Cold is fifteen years old, the oldest son of John and Lisa. He has two younger sisters, Andrea and Nicole. Alex wakes very early one day and goes down to breakfast, though he knows there won't be much in the way of breakfast. There hasn't been since his mother became ill. Most days, Lisa barely has the strength to get out of bed. On this particular morning, Nicole and Andrea begin to argue, and Andrea screams out that their mother is going to die. Nicole screams back and John intervenes. Alex rushes out of the room, trips over the dog and yells at the animal, though he's very fond of the dog. Alex goes to school, but realizes he forgot his flute. He rushes home at lunchtime and hears a strange noise. Alex discovers his father is shaving his mother's head. Alex becomes very angry and attacks his father. When he realizes what he's doing, he rushes to his room and begins to destroy all of his possessions. He then cries himself to sleep. When Alex wakes, his father says he will take Lisa to Texas for medical treatment. Alex is to go with his grandmother, Kate, and that Kate will be taking him on an "adventure" to the Amazon. Andrea and Nicole will be staying with their grandmother, Carla. Alex is upset. He says at fifteen, he is old enough to have a say. He wants to stay with Carla. John says Alex has no choice. John tells Alex to pack. Alex leaves home knowing that it is possible that his mother will die but hoping too that she'll be fine.

In chapter two, Alexander arrives at the New York Airport. He expects his grandmother to meet him, but hours pass and she doesn't arrive. Alex is very angry and doesn't know what he should do. He finally gathers his possessions and goes to the bus stop. He encounters a young girl there, who introduces herself as Morgana. The girl suggests they travel together and promises she will help him find his way to his grandmother's apartment. Alex gratefully accepts her company. It's very cold outside, and when the bus arrives, Morgana says she lost her wallet. Alex pays her fare and boards the bus together. When they get off the bus, Morgana suggests they stop to eat. Alex reluctantly agrees. Before ordering, he goes to the restroom. Alex has money in his boots and doesn't want Morgana to see it. He goes into a stall, and when he returns, he realizes that the girl and his backpack are both gone. Alex is upset that he was so easily taken in. He is lucky that he had his passport in his jacket pocket, but his money, his flute, and his return plane ticket are all gone.

In chapter three, Alex has to figure out how to get to Kate's apartment on his own. It's snowing by the time he finds Kate's apartment building. When she opens the door, Alex says, "Hello, grandmother", which makes Kate angry. She says he took too long arriving at her apartment and reminds him to never call her grandmother. When Alexander says he'd expected her to meet him at the airport, she counters, saying she expected that Alex was capable of finding his way from the airport to her apartment. Alex tells his grandmother about being robbed. He's embarrassed that everything he had was stolen by a girl who wasn't much older than Alex. Alex is most upset that his flute was taken. Kate says that she will give Alex the flute that belong to his grandfather.



Kate says she is traveling to the Amazon for a magazine called International Geographic. They will be looking for evidence of a large creature that is being called "the Beast". Alex learns that the beast has killed several people, but Kate doesn't know for sure how many. Take says a famous anthropologist named Professor Ludovic Leblanc will accompany them on the trip. The professor has apparently spent years looking for proof of a yeti. By this time Alex is very tired. Kate tells him to go to bed because their work starts the following day.

Chapters 1 through 3 Analysis

Alex is very upset at the thought of going to the Amazon. He is equally upset at the thought of spending time with Kate. Kate is a writer. She has traveled around the world writing articles. Alex is comfortable in his life and doesn't want anything to change. He plans to be a famous musician, is a good student, and just wants his life to be like it was before his mother's illness.

Alex's temper tantrum after seeing his father shaving his mother's head is understandable. This is an example of Alex's childish attitude prior to his trip with his grandmother. Later, he will tell Kate that he plans to earn enough money to replace everything he broke in his room. This is evidence of Alex's emerging maturity. He could easily have taken the attitude that everything he broke was his own and that there was no need for him to replace it. He does, however, realize that he has to take responsibility for those actions.

Alex is slightly intimidated by Kate, but he is also very interested in her. Upon his arrival at her apartment in New York, he sees her for the first time in her own home. She has items from all over the world, including the human skulls from Tibet and python skin from Malaysia. Alex recalls times he was with his grandmother over the years. She'd caught him smoking once, and had taken him for a ride, providing him with cigars that he smoked until he was sick. Alex and both his sisters are always excited to have Kate visit them, and it's interesting that Alex has never visited her. Another interesting point is that Kate isn't young. She's sixty-four but is still running around the world in search of stories. As they travel into the Amazon, she'll keep up with the entire crew without ever lagging behind. Kate is an interesting character because she has trouble showing her emotions. For example, she seems indifferent that Alex had difficulty arriving at her apartment. She tells him to go to bed, and when he says good night, she responds, "bah". But Kate waits until Alex is asleep and makes certain that he has covers before going to bed herself. It will later be revealed that Kate is actually very concerned about Alex throughout the book. It's not in her nature to be overly affectionate or to show her loving concern, even when she's feeling it.



Chapters 4 through 6

Chapters 4 through 6 Summary

In chapter four, Alex and Kate fly to Manaus, a city described as the "most populous of the Amazon region", where they are to meet up with others of Kate's team. Those people are Timothy Bruce, Joel Gonzalez and Ludovic Leblanc. Timothy and Joel are photographers for the magazine and Professor Leblanc is a famous anthropologist. They are to meet up with their guide at Santa Maria de la Lluvia. In addition to the magazine team, they are traveling with a couple of missionaries and a young doctor named Omayra Torres. As they begin the trip, Leblanc shows off his stash of weapons, saying that they must be prepared for hostile natives. Leblanc says that "brutality" is normal among the native tribes, and that only the fit and strong survive. In contrast, civilized people have "compassion" that makes them protect the weak. Leblanc says that is why the "human race is deteriorating". Dr. Torres objects, saying that the natives are not as uncaring and ferocious as Leblanc indicates. He counters, saying that the natives are proof of man's base instincts and that women, in the native tribes, are nothing more than possessions.

As the team travels, Alex takes note of the region. The Rio Negro is very wide and many families live in boats on the water, seldom or never moving about on dry ground, while some families live in houses built to be above the waterline along the shores. Alex reads about the region and when he tells Kate some of the theories about the Beast, she tells him that he should always take advantage of an opportunity to be quiet. Alex is hungry all the time. He doesn't like anything that's available on the trip and no one is willing to try to find something that would please his picky appetite. He feels sorry for himself on this point. He notes that his mother no longer tries to make him eat things he doesn't like and the things that he does like make up a "very short list".

At one point, Alex is swimming with the others in an attempt to cool off. Suddenly he realizes there's something in the water with him. Kate yells at him to remain still and he manages to do so, though he's desperate to try to get away. When he realizes it's a dolphin, he's excited and loves the experience. They arrive in Santa Maria de la Lluvia, where they meet up with their guide, Cesar Santos. He introduces them to his daughter, Nadia. Nadia has a pet monkey and wears a feather in her ear. Alex knows his sisters would be jealous of both her appearance and the monkey. Alex has learned about the region, both from listening and reading, and knows that some people search for diamonds and other precious stones in the area and others capture wild birds to sell illegally. Drugs and weapons are also traded, though it's illegal.

Alex has time to talk to Nadia and she says that her mother, unable to stand the stress of the jungle life, had left them and is now living in a sanatorium in Canada. Alex, curious about a situation that would cause a mother to leave her child, asks why Nadia remained, and she says that she wants to live in the jungle where her father is. Nadia introduces Alex to Padre Valdomero, who tells the story of an invasion of ants. He says



that the village people set fire to the houses in an attempt to kill some of the insects and simply escaped, returning after the ants were gone. The Padre also tells about seeing the Beast. He says that the creature was "a giant more than nine feet tall". He goes on to describe it as slow-moving and says that there was a horrible odor. Alex is most surprised when the Padre says that the creature said something, though in a language the Padre didn't understand.

In chapter five, Leblanc hires a local man, a native named Karakawe, as his servant. Karakawe's main job is to fan Leblanc. Leblanc says that they are to leave very early the following day because the expedition can last no more than three weeks. Dr. Torres says that she is going along in an effort to vaccinate the natives against measles. Just then, some additional people arrive. They include Captain Ariosto, a soldier who is to provide security for the group, along with several additional soldiers. Another new arrival is Mauro Carias, who is a wealthy man who has a great deal of powerful connections because of that wealth. Carias is funding the expedition in search of the beast. Leblanc objects to Dr. Torres coming along, saying that the budget for the expedition is limited. But Dr. Torres says the government is paying her way in an effort to provide medical care for the natives.

The conversation turns to the spiritual needs of the natives and Cesar says that the tribes believe that "everything has a soul", even trees and rivers. By that night, Alex is so hungry he can hardly stand it but doesn't want to eat the tapir and beans provided. Nadia and Alex walk away from the camp a short distance that night and Nadia tells Alex about the jungle. In the middle of the conversation, she tells Alex to be quiet, and they are soon joined by a very old man who is obviously friends with Nadia and her monkey, Boroba. The man gives Nadia an amulet, which is supposed to keep her safe and provide her a method for summoning him. Nadia and the shaman talk for some time, but Alex doesn't understand the language. After he leaves, Nadia whispers that the man's name is Walimai, though she warns Alex that he is never to say the man's name aloud. He's a shaman for his people and is very old.

Nadia says the amulet is to keep her safe from "Rahakanariwa", which she explains is a huge "spirit cannibal-bird". Nadia says that Walimai has warned that being part of the expedition in search of the Beast is a dangerous undertaking and that people shouldn't go looking for the Beast. He says, however, that Nadia and Alex are pure of heart and that they have been singled out to search for the Beast.

In chapter six, Alex is restless that night, thinking about the shaman's predictions that the trip is dangerous and that some will die. He overhears a conversation and goes to get Nadia, hoping she can understand the language. She hears Carias talking to Ariosto, saying that Ariosto knows what he is being paid to do. Ariosto says that the members of the magazine team may become a problem. The soldier then says that he doesn't understand why the native tribes are protected. Carias says that by the time the tribe is eliminated and the inevitable wave of settlers arrives, both men will be rich from the diamonds and emeralds they'll recover. Carias ends the conversation by saying that there won't be a native left alive when his plan is complete. He also says that there's an accomplice in the group of travelers, but refuses to identify that person. When the men



are gone, Nadia and Alex try to make sense of what they heard. They know that the team and the natives are in danger and discuss the possibility of telling Kate, but Alex says that Kate won't listen to him. They decide that they'll simply have to wait and be on guard for anything out of the ordinary.

The next morning, Alex refuses to eat leftover tapir, imagining that it is nothing more than a huge rat, and is initially afraid to go for a swim, citing his fear of mantas in the river. Cesar convinces him to swim, saying that the mantas are shy and will leave rather than face a human unless they are startled. He tells Alex to drag his feet on the river bottom in order to scare them away. Alex takes Cesar's advice and is happy after the swim.

Chapters 4 through 6 Analysis

Alex notes that Professor Leblanc spent "a brief time" with the natives of the Amazon and from that experience wrote a lengthy book about that time. The book was a "sensation" in academic circles. In truth, Leblanc's book is largely of his imagination. He is frightened of everything, and at one point, he runs around shooting into the air long after the danger has passed. It seems that he believes what he wrote to be true and touts the dangers of the natives over and over during the trip into the jungle. Leblanc believes that everyone else should bow to him because of his knowledge about the native tribes. What's interesting is that he focuses exclusively on how dangerous and primitive the tribes are without any thought at all to their unique culture and all that's beautiful about the natives. Kate has little respect for Leblanc. When the team sets out, she laughingly points out to Alex that Leblanc is dressed like a big game hunter rather than choosing practical clothing for the trip.

Alex's swim with the dolphin is important because it points to Kate's concern for him. Alex believes that Kate doesn't care what he does and that she's spending a great deal of time ignoring him. She's actually keeping a very close eye on him and knows immediately when the dolphin arrives in the water with him. It's Kate who yells out to Alex to be still, knowing that the dolphin will swim with him if he doesn't panic and begin splashing about in an attempt to get away from the creature. Kate captures the scene on film, a thoughtful gesture that Alex appreciates. Joel and Timothy, the two professional photographers, also take pictures.

Rahakanariwa, as explained by Nadia, is a "spirit cannibal-bird". In truth, it's an ideal. Though Nadia seems to believe it is a real phenomenon, she later makes it clear that it's actually anything that brings death to the native tribes. Nadia will later realize that the Rahakanariwa foreseen by Walimai is the measles virus that is going to be used to kill off an entire tribe of natives. After their encounter with Walimai, Nadia tells Alex all about the shaman's conversation - including that she and Alex are singled out to find the Beast. Alex listens but then asks Nadia if she really believes in all those things. Nadia is obviously upset that Alex doesn't, but she doesn't argue with him.



The conversation Nadia and Alex overhear between Carias and Ariosto is complex because they don't know all the details. They have only hints that there's something deeper at work but don't really know what's being planned. They will eventually discover that Carias and Ariosto are planning to wipe out an entire tribe of the natives in order to clear the way for settlement. But before the settlers arrive, they plan to rush in, mine the area for diamonds and emeralds, and become rich for the effort. Their plan to wipe out the tribe is not revealed until much later, but Alex and Nadia will learn that Dr. Torres is in on the plot and that she's going to administer tainted vaccine in order to kill the natives.

Alex's idea that a tapir is probably nothing more than an oversized rat is typical of his attitudes. He will later discover that a tapir is more like a pig and weighs in at somewhere around two hundred pounds. They are prized for their meat, and when Alex gets past his initial reaction, he'll discover that tapir meat is delicious.



Chapters 7 through 9

Chapters 7 through 9 Summary

In chapter seven, Mauro Carias invites all the members of the expedition to his personal camp prior to the departure into the jungle. Kate is obviously unsettled by the fact that Carias has many guards and tells Alex that she wonders what could possibly prompt the need for so many. Carias is very rich, having gotten his money from the natural resources of the Amazon. He provides a meal for the members of the expedition and, for the first time in days, Alex finds plenty of food that he likes to eat. Carias talks to Nadia, asking why she isn't in school. Nadia says she can read and write, and her father says she has a flair for languages. Carias says that he'd like to take Nadia to the city and offers to become her godfather. Cesar declines the offer.

Carias takes the group to another place in the camp where he has a magnificent black jaguar in a cage. The animal is pacing and Cesar says the cat should be freed. At Carias's command, one of the men brings a monkey and tosses it into the cage with the jaguar. The cat kills the monkey and Cesar shoots the cat. When Carias becomes enraged, Cesar says he set the jaguar free.

As the expedition prepares to depart, Nadia arrives with Boroba. A sweater is the only thing she's carrying. Leblanc throws a fit, saying that he's already accepted that Alex and Dr. Torres can come along, but refuses to allow Nadia. He won't get into the boat and the team realizes that his presence insures the financial backing, so they have to wait. Finally Kate says that she's hired Nadia as her personal assistant and Leblanc has no option but to give in.

In chapter eight, Alex learns to deal with leeches. Alex also learns about the effect of expeditions on the Indians. The natives have no personal possessions. Everything is shared and there is no greed. However, as soon as the natives become acquainted with tools - especially machetes and knives - they want it for themselves. Alex and Nadia know that Karakawe has become enamored with metal and is never without his pistol, though it is obviously very old. One night, Alex and Nadia catch Karakawe rummaging through Dr. Torres' bag. He says that he was looking for a spider he'd seen. At one point, Alex and Nadia tell Kate what they'd overheard. She believes them but can't figure out what to do to prevent them without knowing more about their plan. She advises the two children to remain diligent.

Alex often plays his flute and the members of the expedition enjoy the music. Boroba rushes to Alex each time he plays, staring until he finishes. As they travel up the river by boat, Kate talks to Alex about fear. She says that there's nothing that will totally overcome fear. Just as she says this, one of the soldiers falls to the bottom of the boat, dead of a spear that had been shot directly into his heart. Leblanc is furious that Cesar didn't protect the expedition. Dr. Torres says the spear was dipped in poison. They have



to bury the body along the river and Cesar marks the place so that an effort can be made later to recover the body for the man's family.

From that point, the travelers are on edge, a situation made worse because the vegetation gets thicker. Leblanc insists that they go back, but no one else is willing and he's overruled. Cesar gives Nadia and Alex shooting lessons so they'll be able to defend themselves. When Kate tells Alex that he won't be likely to hit anything in a crisis situation, Alex says that Kate doesn't trust him to defend her. She says that he's correct in that assumption but assures him that she'd rather be killed in the jungle than to die of old age in the city.

When they stop for a rest, Alex and the others go for a swim. Suddenly Alex realizes that the photographer named Joel is in trouble, and he rushes to the man's aid where Nadia discovers Joel is being squeezed by an anaconda. Cesar chops off the snake's head, but several minutes pass before the huge snake's coils stop constricting, allowing them to free Joel. When he's out of the water, Dr. Torres decides that he has broken ribs and is in shock. She's in favor of returning him to Santa Maria de la Lluvia, but Lablanc now wants to go on. Cesar says they'll have to wait until the following day to make any move. They cut up the snake and roast it over a large fire built to help keep Joel warm.

That night, Alex tells Nadia that he can "see" his mother in his mind. She tells him that, with practice, he'll be able to do that all the time.

In chapter nine, the members of the party have trouble sleeping that night. There's a strange odor in the air that makes everyone queasy and uncomfortable. Kate is the only person not overly adversely affected. The members of the group take turns taking watch. During one of the watches, a man disappears. A search of the area turns up nothing, but the man's body is found the next morning. As they are all walking around the jungle the following day, Leblanc falls into a muddy area that's eventually identified as excrement. While Leblanc is furious, everyone else is thinking that the animal that left it must be huge. The decision is made to move Joel back down the river, but several say they'll remain in search of the Beast. Alex refuses to leave Kate, a decision that pleases her. The party soon splits up. There's soon a plan to build a trap but they can't dig a hole big enough to make the plan work.

That night, Cesar hangs a rope between trees and drapes gifts such as beads along the line. The hope is that the natives will accept the gifts and show themselves, making an opportunity to vaccinate the tribe. Nadia tells Alex that she believes Karakawe tampered with the radio, making it unusable in the case of emergency. That evening, Nadia and Alex are together outside the ring of firelight when they are suddenly surrounded by natives. They fade from view as silently as they appeared, and Nadia says they must be the tribe known as People of the Mist. Later, when Alex is standing guard with his grandmother, he is less afraid than he'd been prior to seeing the natives. He knows that if the intention was to kill them, they'd have all been dead already.



Chapters 7 through 9 Analysis

Later, Alex is talking to Nadia and tells her about an experience he had prior to the jaguar's death. He says that he connected with the cat and that when Cesar shot it, it was as if Alex felt the bullet. Nadia doesn't need a great deal of explanation. She says that the jaguar is Alex's totemic animal. She goes on to say that "Alexander" is the name his parents gave him at birth, but that Jaguar is his true name. Alex asks if Nadia has a totemic animal and she says that she doesn't yet know what it is. Nadia explains to Alex that there's a difference in young men and young women in that young women, with the power to create life within their own bodies, have less need for the power of the totemic animal, meaning it may not be revealed as early in life. The encounter with the jaguar has made Alex realize that there's more to life than what he can see and explain. He is suddenly interested in Nadia's view of things and accepts what she says as fact.

Most of the members of the team have a servant who performs many tasks. In Kate's case, Alex holds that role. Alex has confessed to Kate that he destroyed everything in his room at home prior to leaving for the trip, and says that he wants to replace it all with his own money. Kate records the hours Alex works for her each day and agrees to pay him. This is another example of Kate's interest in Alex. She really has no obligation to pay him. She's already paying his way on the trip. She also doesn't think possessions are all that important and so wouldn't really see the need to personally replace something of her own that she's broken. But she understands this need in Alex and is helping him accomplish it.

The personality of Leblanc becomes more clearly defined as they travel into the jungle. Leblanc has an annoying habit of referring to himself in the third person. At one point he tells the other members of the group that they must return to civilization because he's afraid. He says that his death would be a great loss to the world. But then when Joel is injured by the anaconda, Leblanc is unwilling to allow the party to return to seek medical attention. By this time, it's evident that Leblanc wants to go on and he says that Joel is just shook up, but will be alright.



Chapters 10 through 13

Chapters 10 through 13 Summary

In chapter ten, they discover the following day that two of the soldiers, who have been very afraid, have taken the boat and run away. Cesar says there's really no way for them to make their way to Santa Maria de la Lluvia on their own and knows that the group that went back earlier will be sending help. He says that help will return long before they could possibly make it back on foot.

Alex plays the flute one day and Nadia whispers to him that she believes the People of the Mist are again in the area. Nadia says she believes the people have come to hear Alex's music. The two youngsters step again outside the main camp. They are listening and watching for some sign of the people when Alex is suddenly grabbed from behind, picked up with his mouth covered, and hauled away. He fights to get away but is hit on the head by something and ceases the struggle. When Alex and Nadia have a moment to talk, Nadia says they only hit him because he fought. When Alex says he is injured, Nadia tells him that he must act as if he isn't hurt.

Nadia and Alex are able to communicate with the natives. Nadia tells Alex to listen with his heart and he realizes that he can understand a great deal. Eventually, the group comes to a halt and Alex is given something to eat that looks like a cracker. He is so hungry that he doesn't pay attention to how dirty it is, but just eats it. That night he lies on the ground and goes directly to sleep. When the Beast appears, only Nadia and Borbora are still awake. Nadia is horrified by the sight and is too afraid to even call out or run. The next day, Nadia tells Alex and the People of the Mist what she'd seen, but the natives seem unperturbed.

One of the natives is called Tahama, which Alex and Nadia learn is not his name but a title earned for being an excellent hunter. He is always near the chief and seems to be revered by his fellow tribesmen. By now the group is deep in the jungle and the natives have stopped watching Nadia and Alex, who know they'd be lost if they lost sight of the natives. They follow a river for awhile and then encounter a huge waterfall.

In chapter eleven, the natives indicate that they are going to climb the rock beside the waterfall. Nadia, who is afraid of heights, is terrified. Alex points out Nadia's amulet given by the shaman. He then creates a rope in order to help her feel more secure and convinces her that they have no choice but to climb as the natives are doing. They manage the climb but when they reach the top they discover that the chief, an older man who is called Mocarita, is missing and apparently fell. When the Indians make it clear that they plan to use Alex's rope to climb back down to rescue him, Alex objects. He's been mountain climbing with his father and knows how rescues should work. Based on that experience, he makes the climb back down in search of the chief. Alex finds the chief's body, wraps his own arms and legs around the man, and waits to be hauled back up.



At the top of the waterfall, Alex finds himself in the Eye of the World. The chief is obviously unable to go on under his own strength, and Alex directs the natives to build a makeshift stretcher using poles and tree bark. They arrive at the village, called Tapirawa-teri. Alex sees one of the warriors who is sitting alone and learns that the man has killed another human. The man is now performing a purification ritual. Alex sees a spear such as that used to kill the soldier on the boat.

In chapter twelve, Alex learns that the People of the Mist are very careful to remain hidden. They note the air traffic overhead and build fires that won't attract attention. The morning after their arrival, the chief dies. The village is in an uproar and members of the tribe are looking for someone to blame. At one point, they turn on Alex, and he isn't certain he will survive. Alex is tied to a tree and forgotten there. Nadia takes a knife and begins to cut through his bindings. Without knowing what they'll do, they begin to calmly walk away. Just then, the shaman arrives and calls a halt to the hostilities.

The people begin trying to decide who will be their next leader and the shaman urges that they keep open minds as to what is best for the future of the tribe. Meanwhile, Alex and Nadia begin trying to convince the natives that they should consent to being vaccinated. Nadia explains it in terms of the Rahakanariwa being a disease that can attack the tribe. Alex and Nadia take part in a ritual during which Alex become a jaguar and Nadia learns that her totemic animal is the eagle. Both participate in another ritual that includes drinking a broth containing the ground up bones of the chief, and Alex pushes aside any hesitation he has about drinking it. The people then choose Iyomi, the wife of the dead chief, as the new chief. This is done despite the fact that there has never been a female leader. She calls on Tahama as her chief of war and names Alex and Nadia to key roles as well. Later, Alex participates in a ritual that all young men of the tribe endure in order to move from childhood to manhood. When Alex completes the ritual, he can feel the difference.

In chapter thirteen, Nadia and Alex have had visions. Nadia's vision indicates that she is to travel to a high peak in order to recover three large crystal eggs that are somehow to offer salvation to the People of the Mist. Alex has a vision in which he is in the hospital room with his mother. In that vision, she is not well but is comforted by Alex's presence. After the vision ends, she shares the vision with John and he doesn't believe it was anything more than a vision. Working on information from the shaman, Alex believes that if he travels to the depths of the earth, he'll discover a fountain with water that will help Lisa recover. Nadia is afraid of the heights she'll have to attain and Alex believes the key to protecting the People of the Mist is to ensure that Kate writes an article about them, bringing attention to the situation. Despite the doubts, both prepare to go.

Alex and Nadia head into the jungle, lead by the shaman. They enter an enchanted cave and encounter a large dragon-like animal that frightens Boroba and enchants Nadia. They leave the cave and enter the city of the gods, which Alex believes might be the city of El Dorado. He soon realizes that it isn't really a city but is a series of rock and earth formations and that the gold is really fool's gold.



Chapters 10 through 13 Analysis

Alex knows that he and Nadia will never find their way back to the river and the camp of their group. He has held onto a hope that they'll be found by a rescue party from the air. His hope is that the rescue effort will find the native village and deduce that Alex and Nadia are there. But when he arrives at the village, he discovers that the village isn't built in the typical layout with a large clearing. Instead, the huts are built in a circle but completely under the cover of trees.

Alex and Nadia are wearing their clothes when they arrive in the village of the People of the Mist, but none of the people of the village are wearing any clothing. The women and children are very afraid and Nadia suddenly realizes it's because they are wearing clothing. She tells Alex to remove his clothes, and he hesitates, but sees her undress with no self-consciousness and follows suit. The women and children are no longer afraid but they are very interested in the fact that Alex is not equally tan all over his body. Alex admits to himself that he would never have accepted this as necessary a few weeks earlier but that now seeing Nadia's body is natural to him.

Alex learns a great deal about the People of the Mist in a very short period of time. He knows that the people of the tribe depend on each other and that their greatest fear is that of being put out from the tribe. That's an extreme punishment. The youngsters are not like children of many civilized countries in that they don't expect a reward for doing well. They simply know they must.

While they are waiting in the temporary camp for help to return, Alex and the others spend a great deal of time lying around. Alex notes that there's really nothing to do once something has been killed for their next meal. They can't store anything for another day because it will ruin. With this time on his hands, Alex comes to a better understanding about the habits of the natives and the reasons behind them. In addition, the people have very little in the way of possessions and everything has a purpose. Alex says that having art is unheard of and that nature provides all the ornamentation the tribe has or needs. There are boa constrictors in the compound. The snakes are tame and are kept to rid the camp of pests such as mice and to keep poisonous snakes away.



Chapters 14 through 20

Chapters 14 through 20 Summary

In chapter fourteen, Alex and Nadia see the Beast. It's a huge "man-ape" with knife-like claws and thick hair all over its body. It moves incredibly slowly and Nadia compares it to a gigantic sloth. The shaman begins to communicate with them and Nadia concentrates on understanding. Alex realizes that he can also understand. They learn that there are more of the creatures, that they are considered gods, and that there's to be a council meeting of their fellow gods. The shaman says that they have "always been here".

The next day Nadia and Alex count eleven of the Beasts, all adults, and the shaman says that births among them is very rare and that he'd never seen a youngster born nor an adult die, though he knew of a grotto where the bones of the Beasts littered the ground. The shaman says the Beasts are friends of the People of the Mist, and that they keep the history of the People of the Mist in their minds. The Beasts could produce the tribe's history for the past twenty thousand years.

Alex and Nadia learn that the Beasts seldom leave their home but have recently come out to protect the People of the Mist from the foreigners who arrive regularly. However, the sightings of the Beast have brought more people in search of the Beast. One of the Beasts says that Nadia and Alex will battle the Rahakanariwa and asks what reward they will seek if they win. Nadia asks for the crystal eggs and Alex asks for the water of healing. The gods then ask for an offering and Alex begins to play on his flute while Nadia dances. In chapter fifteen, the Beasts grant Alex and Nadia their requests, but tell them they must travel to retrieve what they seek. The shaman warns that they must finish their tasks before dark, meaning they have to split up. They also cannot return empty-handed or they will die. Both agree that they will go anyway.

Nadia begins the climb, though it's strenuous and she's often afraid. She finds the eggs but can't remove them from the nest. She realizes that she has to leave something for the items she's taking. She realizes the only thing she has that she values is the talisman from the shaman. She removes the talisman and drops it into the nest. The exchange is appropriate and she is able to remove the eggs.

In chapter sixteen, Alex descends into a narrow passageway that seems it will never end but finally does. His trip is equally harrowing, but he survives. He battles interesting things that distract him from the mission and has to keep pulling himself back to the task at hand. He finds the water with the magical power, but it isn't flowing enough for him to collect it in the gourd he's brought along. He realizes that he must leave an offering and that the only thing he has of value is his grandfather's flute. He places it on the ground and the water begins to flow freely. When the gourd is filled, he returns to the surface. Nadia and Alex talk about their trips and each consoles the other. Nadia says that the



music is within Alex and that he can get another flute. Alex tells Nadia that the power of the talisman is already in her.

In chapter eighteen, Nadia, Alex and the shaman arrive back at the village of the People of the Mist to discover two helicopters. The village is deserted except for the team. Cesar rushes to Nadia and hugs her. Kate rushes to Alex and slaps him, telling him that she'll kill him if he ever again worries her to that extent.

The attitude in the camp turns to one of fear. Dr. Torres presses Alex and Nadia with the need to find and vaccinate the People of the Mist, but both know they can't find the natives until they choose to show themselves. Kate knows that Alex left his grandfather's flute somewhere and believes that he's telling her only part of the story of his time away from her, but doesn't verbally press him. The scent specific to the Beasts permeates the air and everyone grows more fearful. One day Kate tells Alex that his parents named him Alexander, which means "defender". She says that they hadn't chosen the name but had given in when Alex insisted. Leblanc is angry, knowing that he's going to return with the story of the Beast.

Then Iyomi puts in an appearance in the camp. Timothy begins shooting video of the first contact and Nadia explains that Iyomi is the chief and that they must negotiate with her. Nadia tries to tell Iyomi that the vaccines being provided will be good for her people, but Iyomi says the tribe wants only for them to leave. The native accept food and gifts, though Nadia and Alex know this is not a good thing for the tribe.

Mauro Curais is among those who now present in the jungle, and Nadia sees Dr. Torres leave her tent in the middle of the night to meet with Curias. Nadia overhears a conversation that indicates the doctor is in love with Curias. The Indians eventually agree to the vaccinations and line up to receive the shots. Nadia and Alex are talking about all they have learned and their visions. Alex says a point of the vision in which people wearing masks were killing the natives symbolizes lies. Nadia asks if he has any idea why Curias is so insistent that the natives be vaccinated. At the same moment, they remember that Curias had told Ariosto that the entire tribe would be wiped out, put their visions into the equation and realize that the vaccine is tainted. They rush to intervene and manage to stop the process before it begins.

In chapter nineteen, Karakawe announces that he's an official with the Department for the Protection of Indigenous Peoples. He says that Curias has been under surveillance for some time and that the situation would be easily resolved by testing the vials to see if they contained vaccine or doses of the measles, which would be deadly to the tribes. Suddenly there are gunshots and Alex says it's not clear what happens first. Several Indians fall dead as Ariosto fires, shattering the vials of vaccine. Tahama attacks, hitting Curias a brutal blow. When the fighting is over, a baby is discovered and Kate is charged with taking care of the infant. Torres is huddled with Curias, murmuring to him as she holds him. Ariosto almost decides to kill the entire party but knows that American officials tend to investigate when Americans died, even in the jungle. He decides that he'll have to come up with a better cover story and holds them captive as he plans.



The decision is made to have Curias and the other wounded soldiers flown back to civilization for treatment. Ariosto agrees to allow them to leave, knowing the soldiers won't tell anything without his approval and that Curias isn't going to be able to tell anything. Kate expects Leblanc to be hysterical, but he calmly takes command of the situation. Ariosto demands Timothy's film and Timothy objects, but Leblanc steps in. He talks to Ariosto, saying that without Ariosto's presence, the team might have been massacred. He pretends to be confused about what prompted the fight in the first place, which makes Ariosto stop and consider that the others might be equally confused. Ariosto eventually goes back and demands Timothy's film, which he hands over. Ariosto ties Alex to a post at the edge of the camp.

In chapter nineteen, Nadia slips out of camp, using what she'd learned from the People of the Mist. The shaman arrives at Alex's side and, using a Swiss army knife Alex gave him, saws through Alex's bindings. Ariosto soon discovers that Alex is missing and doesn't even know when the Beast arrives, spraying the scent that paralyzes everyone and killing Ariosto. Nadia and Alex return the following day to find the Indians and the team trying to communicate. Nadia helped with translations to learn that the Indians were simply going to move their village to another part of the region. It's decided that Cesar, who is a pilot, can manage to fly the helicopter and that they'll leave.

In chapter twenty, the group is in Santa Maria de la Lluvia and the magazine team is about to depart. Nadia rushes to Alex with the three crystal eggs she'd found. She says she'd shown them to her father, who identified them as large diamonds. Nadia says that Alex and Kate, with the proceeds from the sale of the diamonds, would be able to set up a foundation to oversee the protection of the People of the Mist. Cesar explains that he'd known Karakawe was a government official and that Karakawe had given Cesar one of the vials of vaccine with his theory of the tainted medicine. Cesar says the vaccine can now be tested to prove the theory. Timothy produces rolls of film, telling Kate that while Leblanc was distracting Ariosto, he'd had time to switch the photos of the fire fight between the soldiers and the natives for film of the earlier part of their journey. He has the entire series of events on film. Nadia and Alex part, promising to write though they know mail service is erratic. Alex says that meeting Nadia was the best part of the entire adventure.

Chapters 14 through 20 Analysis

At one point during the encounter with the Beasts, Nadia and Alex are given a potion by the shaman. The result is that they all share a vision. In this vision, the Rahakanariwa is caged but is fighting to free itself while a jaguar and an eagle stand between the People of the Mist and the dangers they face.

While Alex is in the land of the gods with the shaman, Nadia and the beasts, he finds that the city of El Dorado is not gold but a mineral called fool's gold. Then he finds jewels and knows that he and his family could be richer than his wildest dreams. He's sidetracked by that thought but comes to realize that the water that would heal his mother is the most valuable thing he could possibly take away from there. In addition,



he thinks about the fact that his mother is in Texas with the most capable, advanced medical team in the world working on her case. He wonders why he thinks that having a gourd filled with water from a mystical cave mixed with herbs provided by an ancient shaman is going to make a difference. But he also realizes that he believes it will make a difference and he doesn't question or doubt that belief as he would have just a few weeks earlier.

Alex describes the mutilation of the boa constrictors in the village. He says that the corpses of the snakes are rotting in the jungle heat. The soldiers killed them for sport, though there would have been no real sport about it. Alex doesn't dwell on the killing but it seems to point out a distinct difference between the People of the Mist and the "civilized" soldiers.

Nadia is talking to the People of the Mist when Curias urges that she push them to have the vaccination. Nadia, angry that Curias doesn't even try to understand the ways of the people, suggests that he go first in order to show the natives that it's alright. He is immediately upset and Nadia believes the reaction is more intense than is warranted. She will soon realize that Curias knows that the vaccine is tainted, though she doesn't put the entire plot together quite yet.

When Alex returns to the camp after his time with the People of the Mist and the Beasts, Kate realizes he's changed. She can't put a definition to the change but watches him carefully. She questions him a couple of times, asking once if he has told her all there is to tell about his time away from her, and his answer is cryptic. She doesn't press at that moment. Later, Alex tells her everything about the Beasts and pleads with her to write an article saying that they don't exist in an effort to discourage other explorers.



Characters

Alexander Cold

Alex is fifteen when his mother contracts a serious illness. Alex isn't certain that his mother is going to live. One day Alex comes home unexpectedly to find his father shaving his mother's head. Alex goes crazy, fighting with his father and then destroying everything in his room. When he is past the anger and grief, he talks with his father and learns that his mother is going to Texas for treatment. Alex's sisters are going to stay with their mother's mother, Clara, but Alex is going to spend a few weeks with his father's mother, Kate. Alex protests, saying that at fifteen he's old enough to be consulted about the decision. In truth, Alex is very immature and self-centered. He hates going to the Amazon with Kate, hates the food and hates the primitive conditions. But Alex is soon caught up in the adventure. He begins to mature when he's taken hostage by a native tribe and realizes that there's a lot to be learned from the People of the Mist. He encounters the Beast and discovers that they are not mindless killers but an ancient race of intelligent beings. By the time Alex is reunited with Kate, he's come to understand a lot about himself and his world. The Alex who returns to civilization with his grandmother is a changed person. He is no longer picky about food and realizes that tolerance of others is vital to his own happiness.

Nadia Santos

Nadia is the daughter of Cesar Santos, who is to serve as guide to the group headed into the Amazon. She is younger than Alex but is very much at home in the jungle, a fact that Alex comes to respect. Nadia is self-confident, which is probably the result of living with her father who expects that she take care of herself. Her only fear seems to be the fear of heights, but she gets past that when she discovers that her totemic animal is the eagle. Nadia understands a great deal about tolerance, and it's largely her influence that makes Alex learn tolerance during his time in the Amazon. Nadia has befriended a shaman and has come to rely on his power for protection. Nadia climbs a mountain in search of three eggs because she has had a vision about them and believes that they are somehow the key to saving the People of the Mist. She doesn't understand how or why, but her trust in that vision is ultimately an important quest. The vision is mystical with no basis in hard fact, and Nadia's willingness to believe is typical of her nature.

Kate Cold

Alex's grandmother refuses to allow Alex to call her "Grandmother". She is a writer for International Geographic. She has traveled to many parts of the world and is perfectly comfortable in the Amazon jungle. She demands that Alex become self-sufficient, which eventually increases his confidence. What's seen by Alex as indifference is really Kate's



way of trying to help Alex. She is demanding but obviously loves Alex and is very relieved when Alex is found safe after being taken hostage by the People of the Mist.

Cesar Santos

Nadia's father, his role on the trip into the Amazon is that of guide to the team from the International Geographic. Cesar is an honorable man and is one of only a few people who know about the egg-shaped diamonds Nadia recovered during her quest on behalf of the People of the Mist.

Professor Ludovic Leblanc

A member of the crew traveling into the Amazon, he is self-absorbed and refers to himself in third person. Surprisingly, it's his ability to calmly take charge of the situation after the murder of the Indians that saved the lives of the crew. As the story comes to a close, Leblanc pledges to publish the story of the People of the Mist in order to bring attention to their situation.

Karakawe

Posing as a native in search of employment, he travels with the International Geographic group into the Amazon, apparently as a personal aide to Professor Leblanc. In truth, he's an official for the Department for the Protection of Indigenous Peoples and spends the entire trip looking for proof of someone purposely harming the natives of the region.

Mauro Carias

The entrepreneur who is apparently supporting the International Geographic crew on their quest to search for the Beast. In truth, he's planning to have Dr. Torres inoculate all the natives with a deadly form of the measles virus so that they will die, leaving the way clear for Carias to mine the region for its wealth of natural resources. Carias is killed during a fight after Alex and Nadia figure out the plan.

Dr. Omayra Torres

Dr. Torres seems to be an honorable woman who wants to do what she can to keep the natives safe from disease. She travels with the International Geographic crew with the apparent goal of vaccinating natives against measles. In truth, she's in league with Carias and is planning to inject the natives with a deadly form of the virus that will guarantee that they all die within a few weeks.



Timothy Bruce

A photographer for International Geographic, he has traveled with Kate before. He's a professional photographer and is at home in the jungle. He is responsible for taking photographs of the expedition and hopes to return with photographs of the Beast. Timothy actually captures photos of the fight between Carias, Captain Ariostos and the natives. When Captain Ariostos tries to take his film, Professor Leblanc distracts Ariostos for a short time and Timothy switches the film so that he returns to civilization with photographic evidence of the soldiers' killing the natives.

Captain Ariostos

A military leader in charge of a group of soldiers traveling with the International Geographic team, he is really in league with Carias and planning to exterminate the natives of the region. Ariostos is to be paid by Carias for his efforts and expects to be ready to retire soon after the expedition.



Objects/Places

Texas

Where Lisa Cold is to go for specialized treatment for her illness.

New York

Where Kate lives.

International Geographic

The name of the magazine Kate works for.

The Rio Negro

The river on which Alex and the International Geographic team travel to meet up with their guide.

The Beast

A creature believed to have killed a number of people but actually an ancient being who lives in peace with the People of the Mist.

Boroba

Nadia's pet monkey.

Santa Maria de la Lluvia

The village where Alexander and the National Geographic crew meets up with Nadia and her father before traveling deeper into the jungle.

The People of the Mist

A native tribe who hold the ability to disappear into their surroundings.

The Eye of the World

The name given to the place inhabited by the People of the Mist.

Department for the Protection of Indigenous Peoples

An official organization charged with protecting native tribes, this is the organization Karakawe works for.



Themes

Coming of Age

Alex ages only a few weeks over the course of the story, but he matures a great deal, making the coming of age theme important in this story. Early in the story, Alex becomes very angry when his father tells him that he has to spend a few weeks with Kate. He says that he is fifteen and argues that his age means his father should have consulted him rather than making decisions for him. While some of Alex's actions can be put down to his worry about his mother, it seems that he is really childish and self-absorbed in many ways. One of his objections to staying with Kate is that Kate doesn't cook. It's more likely that Kate doesn't indulge Alex's picky appetite. When they arrive in the Amazon, Kate doesn't provide anything special for Alex to eat. When the crew eats monkey or snake, Alex is allowed to eat or go hungry. Early in the story he goes hungry most of the time. He is petulant, saying that no one cares if he's hungry. But there comes a time when Alex realizes that he should eat what's provided without complaint. He discovers that he likes most of the food, a discovery that grows as he eats a greater variety. Another aspect of this theme is seen as Alex learns to focus on the needs of others. He has worried about his mother but that concern is at least partly selfish - Alex doesn't like the lifestyle his family leads when his mother is too ill to care for them. As he learns about the People of the Mist and the Beasts, he realizes that their situation is desperate. He becomes willing to endure many hardships in order to do what he believes will help them survive.

Greed

Mauro Carias puts together an entire crew to travel into the Amazon jungle and his reasons - on the surface - are honorable. He's reportedly hoping to provide information about the beast, and the travels of the crew provides a means of making contact with natives in order to vaccinate them against measles. While Carias' motives are questionable from the beginning, it's not until near the end of the story that it becomes apparent that he's trying to kill off an entire tribe of native people in order to have free access to the region's wealth of natural resources. While Carias is the most evident example of this theme, the habits of the natives provide another, more subtle, example. The crew leaves gifts hanging from a rope near their camp in the hope that natives will take the gifts and give the crew the opportunity to make contact. But the People of the Mist don't touch the gifts. Alex later learns that the leader of the People of the Mist doesn't allow the people to have metal knives or other objects provided by the foreigners. The leader believes that if the people have possessions, they'll come to covet them. Greed is a concept that doesn't exist in their current lifestyle, but the leader of the tribe knows that possessions will create that greed.



Willingness to Adapt

Alex has grown up with a lack of respect for Kate because he doesn't like her lifestyle simply because it's different from his own. Kate has traveled the world and is a famous writer. Alex can't understand that this is Kate's passion and that it's an honorable life. He sees only that she doesn't baby him by providing food that he likes and giving him what will make him comfortable. It takes a great deal of time in the Amazon for Alex to come to realize Kate's lifestyle is different, but equally acceptable if only he is willing to adapt. Alex learns this when he spends time with the People of the Mist. He is immediately interested in their ability to virtually disappear into the background and sets out to discover that secret. In that effort, Alex teaches the people of that tribe the use of a rope to help with a difficult climb to reach their village. Though it would never have been used by the people, Alex helps them fashion a travois to carry their leader who is injured in a fall. During his time with these people, Alex finds himself willing to accept their traditions. When the bones of a fallen leader are ground into a powder and made into a drink, Alex accepts the honor of being allowed to participate. When a shaman tells the People of the Mist that they must be open to new ideas with regard to choosing a new leader, they accept his word and - though it hasn't ever been done before - choose a woman and allow Alex and Nadia to play a role.



Style

Point of View

The story is presented largely from the perspective of Alex. For the majority of the story, the reader learns only what Alex knows. For the most part, this information is told through Alex's thoughts and conversations with other characters though there are a few exceptions to this as well. For example, it's noted that Alex is constantly hungry during the trip into the jungle. He doesn't think he'll like any of the food being offered and refuses to try it. This information is presented merely as fact to the reader. There are a few specific scenes in the story that are presented from some other perspective. One of these is seen when Alex has a vision in which he is in the hospital room with his mother. In that vision, he visits with her, touches her, and is reassured that she's still alive. Immediately following that scene, the reader sees the story from a Alex's parents' perspective. Alex's mother, Lisa, says that she was comforted because Alex had been there. Alex's father, John, is concerned that Lisa is hallucinating. Lisa's expresses her thoughts in words, but it's only John's thoughts that are presented, giving the reader an omniscient perspective but only for this scene. For the remainder of the story, the reader doesn't know anything more than Alex about his mother's condition. The fact that the majority of the book is limited to Alex's perspective is appropriate because it allows the author to present the twist at the end of the story. If the reader was given an omniscient view of all the characters there would be no surprise at the end when Alex and Nadia discover that Dr. Torres and Carrias are trying to kill the entire tribe of natives.

Setting

The book has several distinct settings ranging from the city of New York to the deep jungles of the Amazon and the mythical city of El Dorado. Some of these general settings really exist, though the majority of the specific settings do not. For example, New York City is a real place, but Kate's apartment is a figment of the author's imagination. The same is true of the Amazon. Though the jungle, the rivers and even some of the settlements described are real places, the specifics are not. Camp sites and buildings are created by the author for the story. The settings are described in great detail. For example, the place known as "The Eye of the World" is at the top of an incredible waterfall and the natives have to reach it by scaling a cliff that would be impossible to those unfamiliar with the handholds. The author describes settings which makes them seem real. There is a tremendous contrast between New York and the jungle. Alex sees "harsh neon signs" along "dirty streets" filled with "mounds of black plastic bags on the street corners, some torn, with garbage spilling out". He notes the beggars and the horrid conditions of the neighborhood through which he passes on the way to Kate's apartment. The settings in the Amazon are dangerous and sometimes harsh, but in different ways. Alex notes the landscape, the people and the often mystical settings. The majority of the settings overall are believable and appropriate for the story. Alex believes the City of the Beasts is the mythical city of El Dorado, a place legend has

credited with being rich in gold. Alex believes the gold is really a mineral known as "fool's gold", so named for its color and resemblance to real gold.

Language and Meaning

The story is written in an informal style with an emphasis on providing information about Alex, the setting, and the culture of the people of the Amazon. The informal style makes the book it easy to read and easy to understand. The casual reader may become bored with some aspects of the story. For example there is extensive description about Alex's trip under the surface of the earth as he searches for the magic quarters he believes will cure his mother. The same is true of Nadia's trip as she climbs high up the mountain in search of the crystal eggs. The descriptions provided in each of these sections of the story are extensive. The writer goes into great detail about the scenery, conditions, and actions of the Alex and Nadia. These details add little to the storyline but make the story's characters more real. For the most part, the action of the story is fast paced. Alex goes from his home to his grandmother's home in New York to the Amazon very quickly. What he sees and learns along the way drives the actions of the story. Story is divided between dialogue and narrative. Both dialogue and narrative are appropriate to the story, setting, and characters. The dialogue, especially that of Kate, provides additional depth to the characters. For example, at one point, Kate tells Alex that he should "never miss an opportunity to be quiet". This is typical of Kate's character. The use of dialogue of this type helps drive the action and makes the story more believable.

Structure

The book is divided into twenty chapters. The chapters range greatly in length. For example, chapter three is only twelve pages and chapter six is only nine pages. By contrast, chapter seventeen is twenty-nine pages in length and chapter nineteen is twenty-five pages. Chapters are titled by number and title. For example, the first chapter is titled Chapter One, The Nightmare. Other chapter titled include The Eccentric Grandmother, The Abominable Jungleman, The Amazon River, The Shaman, The Plot, The Black Jaguar, The Expedition, People of the Mist, Kidnapped, The Invisible Village, Rites of Passage, The Sacred Mountain, The Beasts, The Crystal Eggs, The Water of Health, The Cannibal-Bird, Bloodstains, Protection and Separate Ways. Each title offers a clue of the events of that chapter. In The Shaman, Alex meets a shaman who has become protector to Nadia. In Rites of Passage, Alex is accepted into the tribe of the People of the Mist and goes through the rite of manhood. In The Water of Health, Alex reaches a fountain that he believes will provide the key to his mother's recovery. The story is presented generally in chronological order. The only real exception to this occurs after Alex and Nadia escape from the camp being held hostage by Captain Ariostos. They are gone when the rest of the camp is attacked by the Beasts and don't know what happens until later. The reader follows Alex and Nadia through their adventures over the following hours, but the events at the camp are revealed later.



Quotes

"Kate is quite capable of pushing me into a river full filled with piranhas,' Alex blurted out. 'With a grandmother like mine, I don't need enemies.'"

Chap. 1 p. 14

"He had to stay in bed for the next two days, as green as a lizard and convinced that he would die if nausea and the pain in his head. His father thought he had a virus, and his mother immediately suspected her mother-in-law but didn't dare accuse her of poisoning her only grandson."

Chap. 2, p. 30

"Foreigners were moving into the region and no one was stopping them as they push the Indians farther and farther toward impenetrable jungle, or killed them, with no fear of being punished."

Chap. 4, p. 64

"The cat and its counterpart repeated those words three times: Alexander, jaguar; Alexander, jaguar; Alexander, jaguar, and then the sand of the plain became phosphorescent, the sky turned black, and the six moons begin to whirl in their orbits and scatter like slow-moving comets."

Chap. 7, p. 105

"'No, but I would rather be murdered but Indians in the Amazon and die of old age in New York,' his grandmother replied."

Chap. 8, p. 130

"Even though they were right beside him, they were difficult to see; they blended perfectly into nature, which made them invisible, like stealthy ghosts."

Chap. 9, p. 162

"It was a paradise and magnificent waterfalls, a vast rain forest filled with the animals, birds, and butterflies, with a benign climate free of the clouds of mosquitoes that tormented them in the lowlands."

Chap. 11, p. 196

"This was how the wise woman distributed power and organized the People of the Mist for confronting the terrible times drawing nearer. And that was how Nadia and Alex Pham themselves saddled with our responsibility that neither felt capable of fulfilling."

Chap. 12, p. 230

"Alex was still trying to find rational explanations for what he had witnessed. In contrast, Nadia except did all of its wonder without question."

Chap. 13, p. 258



"The memory of the Beasts contained all the information the messengers of man had given them; they were leaving archives. The Indians did not know writing, but their history was never lost because the Beasts forgot nothing."

Chap. 14, p. 272

"Kate, in contrast, was able to contain the wave of affection and relief she felt; as soon as her grandson was within reach, she slapped him in the face."

Chap. 17, p. 327

"In the eyes of the world, that epidemic would be an inevitable misfortune; no one would suspect otherwise, and in that way Mauro Carias would be guaranteed that there would be no government investigation. It was a clean and efficient method of extermination that left no trail of blood, unlike the bullets and bombs used for years against native people in order to clean out the Amazon Territory and opened a wait for miners, traffickers, settlers, and adventurers."

Chap. 18, p. 358

"'Keep them, Jaguar. They are very valuable; they are the largest diamonds in the world,' Nadia whisper to him."

Chap. 20, p. 20, page 403



Topics for Discussion

Who is Alex Cold? What kind of person is he prior to his trip into the Amazon? How does he change over the course of the trip? Why does he change? Describe his strengths and weaknesses before, during and after the trip.

Describe the members of Alex's family. How is he related to Kate? Describe the relationship between Alex and Kate. What does each feel for the other? How do these feelings change over the course of the story?

Who is Nadia Santos? How does Alex meet her? What kind of person is Nadia? Why do they become friends? Compare Nadia to Alex. What are the strengths and weaknesses of each? How and what does each learn from the other?

What happens to Alex's family that prompts his trip into the Amazon with Kate? What is Alex's immediate response to that crisis? What is his long-term response? How does the trip affect Alex? Is the impact on Alex positive? Support your answers with examples from the story.

Why are Alex and Kate traveling into the Amazon? What is the role of Mauro Carias in the trip? What do Alex and Nadia discover about the real reason for the trip? How does Carias plan to accomplish his real plan? How do Alex and Nadia foil the plan?

Kate is going into the Amazon to search for the Beast. What does Alex discover is the truth about the Beast? How does he make this discovery? What does he do to try to protect the People of the Mist and the Beast? What does Nadia do? What do Kate and Leblanc pledge to do?

What is the most important theme in this story? Give at least two examples of the theme. Why do you believe it to be the most important?