Cold Mountain Study Guide

Cold Mountain by Charles Frazier

BOOKRAGS

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Plot Summary

Cold Mountain is the story of a wounded Confederate deserter's return to his home and the city girl who learns to live there on a farm with the help of a tough, capable, and independent mountain girl.

A gravely wounded Confederate soldier, a veteran of the savage Battle of Fredericksburg, writes from the hospital to the woman he left behind that he is coming home to her. Inman deserts, knowing that Home Guards are on the prowl for deserters, and he begins a long trek westward to Cold Mountain, where he grew up. Inman's youth has filled him with respect for Indian lore, and warfare has filled him with nightmares of shattered bodies and incompetent leadership. Having enlisted to protect his homeland from invaders, Inman is disillusioned by humanity's brutality and has no loyalties. Inman worries that 4 years of horror have transformed him into a monster his would-be spouse on idyllic Cold Mountain, Ada Monroe, cannot love.

Ada struggles to survive in the shadow of Cold Mountain at Black's Cove after her father, Monroe, a Charleston preacher, moves there for his health but suddenly dies. Ada has enjoyed a protected, comfortable life but been denied training in anything practical. Snobbishly prickly, she is an object of mirth among the locals but is befriended by Ruby, a troubled young woman who has learned survival through trial and error, having been all but abandoned by her worthless father, Stobrod. Stobrod has enlisted and is presumed dead or deserted, so Ruby is available to help and tutor Ada. They become fast friends and Ada gradually becomes a more rounded person, who is able to survive.

As Inman walks home, he encounters a number of colorful characters. A failed preacher, Solomon Veasey, becomes his companion for a way, until they are seized by the Home Guard and dragged back eastward. The guardsmen tire of dealing with their charges and summarily execute them, but Inman survives, wounded in the head, and resumes his journey home. Gypsies; an aged woman, living as a hermit, tending goats, drawing pictures, and selling patent medicines; and several helpless women put upon by fate and the evils of mankind cross Inman's path. Exhausted, disillusioned, and worried about meeting Ada, Inman reaches Cold Mountain alive, fasting in the event Ada rejects him, because that will gain him entry to the land of peace the Cherokees claim lies hidden inside the mountain.

Stobrod and an innocent dull-witted, musical companion show up at Ada's farm, re-igniting Ruby's bitterness about her lost childhood. Ada convinces her to leave them provisions at a secret location on Cold Mountain (but not harbor the fugitives) and there the Home Guard, led by Teague, discovers them. After making them entertain them, the guardsmen shoot them down in cold blood. The women learn about this from an eyewitness and set out through deep snow on a grim burial detail. Stobrod has survived, badly wounded, and they nurse him back to health. Inman learns about all of this from that same eyewitness and heads to the spot. He and Ada are united, talk through their concerns about what the past has done to them and look forward to a

happy future after the war. The men and women divide for the trip home, and Teague confronts Inman and Stobrod. Stobrod escapes and Inman kills all but one of the guardsmen and is trying to talk him into laying down his rifle and walking away when hapless Birch fires a lucky shot and fells Inman. Ada follows the sounds of gunfire and cradles Inman as he dies. Ada is pregnant with his child, and we see, 9 years later, Ada, her daughter, Ruby, her husband (the Georgia boy who is the eyewitness), their three rambunctious sons, and a fully reformed Stobrod, making a successful, happy life together in the shadow of Cold Mountain.

"The Shadow of a Crow"

"The Shadow of a Crow" Summary

Inman awakens and recollects his childhood on Cold Mountain. He cannot stand the current world or what might be coming. It is late summer, hot and humid, and Inman remembers when he left school. A neighbor, Balis, wakes up and begins scratching notes, translating Greek into English. Since being wounded outside Petersburg and surviving against all odds, Inman has been here in a regular hospital, left to tend his own wound. While his neck heals slowly, he lies looking at the window that seems to frame a painting: road, wall, tree, cart, and blind man selling peanuts, and plays counting games.

When the blind man arrives, Inman walks over and asks how he lost his eyes. The old man was born that way. Inman asks whether he would like to see for 10 minutes. He declines, lest it turn him hateful. He offers Inman peanuts and listens to his story. Inman has seen much on battlefields, but Fredericksburg stands out. The generals watch from above. Inman prefers the dull Longstreet, who seeks cover for his troops, to the brash Lee. Inman's barefoot regiment hunkers down behind a stone wall, trading fire with the well-provisioned Federals, who are sent in waves of frontal attacks. Inman hates them for their "clodpated determination to die." Inman dislikes Lee's attitude that war is an instrument for clarifying God's obscure will and that battle ranks only behind prayer and Bible reading in sacredness. On the night the Federals quit, an aurora flames overhead, a rare event seen as an omen by many. A fiddle plays as dying Federals moan in the field. Confederates steal corpses' boots, while Inman thinks of going home. He sees a man systematically dispatching wounded prisoners with a hammer. The blind man recommends Inman shut this from his mind, and Inman wishes he could forget this and a recurring nightmare of random body parts reconstituting into bumbling, tormented bodies. In the ward, Inman reads Bartram's *Travels* to get himself sleepy. A favorite passage deals with Flower Gatherer, a wanderer seeking streams of fertility and pleasure. Inman happily recalls the topography of Cold Mountain and the names of places that seem like incantations, which ward off fears.

Days later, Inman walks to town, feeling strong but careful not to look well enough to be returned to duty. He buys some used clothing and supplies. Tired, he thinks about the blind man having no one to hate for his cruel fate. He reads about the Home Guard patrolling for deserters and some Cherokees fighting the Federals and taking scalps. Inman wonders whether his friend Swimmer is involved. They meet the summer both turn 16. Inman goes into the highlands to graze heifers, expecting a summer of solitude; but falls in with a dozen men from Catalooch, lazing around, fishing, drinking, and feasting. A band of Cherokees sets up camp nearby and challenges them to a violent form of racquetball, which they begin playing daily, betting heavily, drinking, and swapping tales. Swimmer talks about how animals come to be what they are, about spells that bring misfortune to others and how to safeguard oneself. Swimmer's vision of

the human spirit as frail and mortal conflicts with Inman's Christian upbringing. Inman hopes Swimmer is not among those fighting this war.

Inman looks up from his reverie to see coffee grounds settling into patterns and jostles the cup to break the spell; looking over the capitol, he sees vultures circling in patterns that resemble the grounds. Oracles are everywhere. One need not wonder about the future if one sees it inevitably growing worse. Inman perceives that his spirit has been torn apart while his body goes on living, as Swimmer holds: burned out, empty, lonesome, estranged, dead already, a hut of bones. Inman recalls debating Swimmer's thesis of a forest above the sky inhabited by a celestial race of spirits being reborn, with animals serving as messengers to this world. Cold Mountain soars in Inman's mind as the only "better place" left. He begins and destroys several letters, before writing simply he is coming home and wonders how the girl who sat on his lap 4 years ago will react when she learns all he has seen and done. He posts his letter and returns to the hospital.

Balis has died peacefully. Inman looks over the confusing mess of Balis' writings. "We mark some days as fair, some as foul, because we do not see that the character of every day is identical" is to Inman a depressing philosophy, but "The comeliest order on earth is but a heap of random sweepings," is something he can accept. After sleeping a few hours, Inman adds Balis' papers to his readied haversack and slips out into the night, under a full moon.

"The Shadow of a Crow" Analysis

The title of this opening chapter comes from the male protagonist, Inman, recalling a dream of dismembered body parts coming together off the battlefield to form pitiable zombies. Every morning after seeing this dream, Inman awakes in a mood as dark as "the blackest crow that ever flew." We learn how the protagonist came to be wounded, how disillusioned he is by the state of humankind, and how determined he is to return to the only place that matters to him: Cold Mountain. Technology as evil and nature as the root of good is a major theme of this novel.

"The Ground Beneath Her Hands"

"The Ground Beneath Her Hands" Summary

Ada writes on her porch about mutual duty to be frank and candid, and then she throws the page away. She surveys her failed kitchen garden and cornfields. Since her father's funeral, Ada has done almost nothing around the farm because she has not a clue what to do. She eats little, because cookery is beyond her. The chickens have gone wild, so finding eggs requires searching. Crawling into the hollow of a large boxwood by the steps, Ada feels safe as a child playing under sheets; even visiting church ladies can be avoided here. Ada has grown up in Charleston and been educated in art, language, music, and literature, but nothing that can help her eke a living out of 300 acres. Father Monroe had sheltered her and hired workers during the 6 years they have spent in the mountains. Now they are gone. Father had been a farmer as an idea rather than a livelihood. A red hen enters the boxwood, followed by a ferocious rooster that attacks Ada and drives her out, superficially bloodied. Ada washes and arranges her hair, picks out the cleanest of her unwashed clothing, and contemplates how to spend the day. She has little will to live. Sorting and storing her father's clothing and papers had been depressing, and the days now run together. Ada spends time reading her father's novels in a stuffed chair set by a hall window. Reading about characters who lead full lives is also depressing. Ada takes comfort looking out the window at Cold Mountain, studying how moisture changes the landscape continually. Somehow she enjoys these vistas over Charleston. Ada scours the pantry for breakfast fixings and makes bread fit only for the chickens. Dinner is a salad. Ada walks down the empty lane to Black Cove and turns upstream to the church, spare and elegant. She puts new flowers on Monroe's grave.

Monroe had died in May, reading a book in the yard while Ada went to the creek to paint. She returns to find him inert and runs to the Swangers' homestead. Ada spends the night there, thinking about mortality. The men of his congregation bury Monroe when the local Baptist clergy refuse to officiate for someone who preaches a non-wrathful God. They talk awkwardly of his great learning, sage advice, and kindness. Sally Swanger takes Ada home after the burial. Everyone expects Ada to return to Charleston, but she insists on returning to Black Cove. Three months later, Ada is less frightened of the house but foresees herself growing old there alone. Leaving the grave, Ada takes the shortcut home, which passes Swangers', where she hopes to be invited to dinner. First she stops at the mill, where Mr. Peek also provides postal services. Pocketing a letter, she heads on to No Creek Cove. Esco is happy to have his barn work interrupted and sits with Sally on the porch. They ate hours ago. They talk about their two sons, fighting in a war they do not understand, and about Teague and his Home Guard, marauding farms ostensibly looking for deserters. Esco has heard about the Owenses' fate. The wife had been tortured in front of her children to make Bill tell where he has hidden some loot. Eventually they get tired and leave, and Mrs. Owens takes the children to her brother's home. Esco needs his boys to come home and help with the farming. Ada listens to stories about signs in nature of a hard winter

approaching, and repeats her intention not to return to Charleston. She mentions she has received a letter from father's solicitor, but has not read it.

Esco proposes to tell Ada's future by having her look down a well backwards in a mirror. Ada feels desperate vertigo, looking into the blackness beneath a bright sky, and believes she saw the black silhouette of a figure walking through a corridor of trees. Dizzy, oblivious to Sally's inquiries, Ada hears a song and is sure the vision is important. Sally gives Ada a crock of preserves to go with her leftover biscuits (not knowing Ada cannot cook), and Ada heads over the ridge. The tune of the Wayfaring Stranger is still in her head and fills her with dread as she reaches the tree line. From this distance, her farm looks crisp and cared for, but she knows it will soon be the bramble-covered palace of Sleeping Beauty unless she can find a worker.

Ada and her father had come here six years ago hoping the mountain air would help his tuberculosis. Doctors had suggested the resorts the well-to-do frequent, but Monroe hoped preaching in a mountain church might be more therapeutic. They took a train to Spartanburg and muleteers to Cold Mountain, where Monroe bought a fine carriage and dappled gelding. Ada has seen the barren Alps and Carolina coastlands, but never the lush vegetation of the mountains. Monroe quotes his favorite poet, Wordsworth; Ada would follow her father anywhere. A driving rain falls and they must trust the horse to find his way; Monroe guesses at each fork in the road. Miraculously, after midnight, they arrive at the Cold Mountain Assembly chapel and sleep on the pews. Charleston friends have warned the mountain people will be odd, and they do find them touchy, distant, somehow embattled. They keep their houses shut tight, and only the men folk will talk with outlanders. Ada and Monroe keep visitations short and talk together about ignorance and means of overcoming it. Ada envies their lack of concern and living by their own light. Monroe's greatest missionary defeat comes at Esco's hands. Having heard the Swangers treat the Bible as a means of oracular instruction and been convinced they would be valuable members of the congregation if they could be brought up to date, Monroe and Ada go visiting. Esco appears to be a Druid at heart as he listens to Esco's explanation of the high points of true religion. At the end of a summary of the life and crucifixion of Christ, Esco gawks and concludes, "Well, about all we can do is hope it ain't so." Esco has delivered large quantities of the ignorance Monroe came expecting. They learn he and Sally are "dipped Baptists." People beg to hear the story and provide the punch line Monroe omits. The Swangers apologize and become friends and parishioners. Monroe keeps the Charleston house for a year, until he decides the mountains are his calling. He buys the cove from the Black family and designs and supervises the building of a fine house on the property. The old log cabin becomes servants' quarters. Income from investments means Monroe need not operate a profitable farm, and he lets parts of it go wild.

After Monroe's funeral, Ada writes his friend and solicitor about her financial position, and only now learns she has approximately nothing; if the South loses the war she will have absolutely nothing. Ada looks to Cold Mountain for the courage to hope. She pauses at the old stone wall, lies down in the grass, and reads about blackbirds. She sleeps a long time, dreaming about a railroad depot and a glowing display case in which her father's bones re-clothe themselves in flesh and he attempts to whisper to her. She

refuses to get aboard the train, which will take her back 20 years to her girlhood in Charleston. She awakens late at night and is not afraid, despite the dream. She eats the preserves and thinks lovingly of her father, whom she wishes would no longer visit her. At dawn, she returns home. Ada considers her few options: become a tutor to the children of father's friends or marry someone too old for the draft. She has no relatives on whom to lean and has lost her friends by inexcusably turning down two proposals of marriage. She is considered bristly and eccentric in Charleston. Nothing pulls her back. She envies the firm, extensive clan ties of the mountain folk and thinks she can make a satisfactory life her. She looks out the window wondering how.

Ada sees a figure walking up the path and steps out to the porch. A short, skinny girl sits down and starts rocking. "Old Lady Swanger said you're in need of help," Ruby opens. Ada agrees but says it she needs heavy man work. Ruby says she can plough all day if Ada has a horse, and she knows no man worth hiring remains in these parts. Ruby cheers Ada with her willing heart. Ruby has no schooling but is very bright. Like Ada, she has been motherless since birth. Ruby says she has never hired herself out before, knows Ada has no money, but is willing to work as long as "everybody empties their own night jar." Ada laughs at the non-joke, and then decides this is fair. As they talk over remaining details, the rooster appears. Ada announces she despises him and wonders how to drive him off. Ruby grabs and beheads him, and by dinnertime, his flesh is falling off the bone and biscuits are floating on a rich yellow broth.

"The Ground Beneath Her Hands" Analysis

This chapter introduces the female protagonist, Ada, her close neighbors, the Swangers, and her new helper and companion, Ruby. We learn how Ada came to Cold Mountain from Charleston and a very proper upbringing. Her preacher father provided her no survival skills, and the war has left her destitute of everything but land. She sits and reads by a window, much like Inman in the previous chapter, and begins and discards a letter to someone like Inman. Also, like Inman, Ada sees dreams of the reconstituted dead and, though she is not superstitious, she believes a premonition that someone will walk out of the forest to meet her. We learn a bit more about the marauding Home Guard, which will play a major role later in the novel, and we see Ada fed by the rooster that spilled her blood. It is proof Ruby will be Ada's deliverance.

"The Color of Despair"

"The Color of Despair" Summary

Inman is miserable after a rainy night on the road. He hates the flatlands filled with mean towns, red dirt, and cicadas that make his neck throb. He is too weak to make much progress every day, bone-tired, and lost in an area devoid of signposts. Downpours are terrible, and the farms are guarded by packs of vicious dogs, which he clubs. Last night was the worst, marked by meteors aimed at him, and other visions that fray his nerves. He hides from the Guard in a tree and daubs a mud bull's-eye on his jacket to mark himself a fugitive. Inman reaches a crossroads settlement that appears safe for provisioning. Two men on the porch pay no attention as he enters, but they are gone when he leaves. Inman notices a rare Whitworth .45 caliber rifle, which has a reputation for accuracy up to a mile. As Inman walks out of town, he is challenged by the pair, who is joined by the blacksmith, armed with a scythe. They corner him, but Inman disarms the blacksmith and slashes at their ankles to force them back. The blacksmith draws a pistol, which Inman grabs away, but it is too waterlogged to fire. Safe in the woods, Inman hears voices but cannot tell if they are real or imaginary. Nightfall is approaching.

As he walks, Inman remembers a potent spell Swimmer has taught him, "To Destroy Life," and takes up its refrain. Its intent is to lead a foe to Nightland, alone, covered in dog shit, and blue with despair. It reminds Inman of the best sermon he ever heard, by Monroe, based not on some Bible text but on a quote from Emerson, which talks of inevitable decrease. Inman hears it the day he first sees Ada. People have been talking about Ada for weeks since she arrived at Cold Mountain, making fun of her Charleston garb and hairstyles. Folks suspect she is "mazed in the head" or "wit-soured," so one Sunday Inman dresses up to find out. He arrives late, during a hymn, and from the back pew studies Ada's neck. Monroe comments on the hymn, and then moves on to his habitual theme, which the congregation finds shocking and distressful. Monroe is obsessed with why man is born to die. He has explored the Bible, philosophers, and nature without discovering the meaning of this riddle. People wish he would just entertain them with Bible stories like their late minister. Once he talks about his *mission* to them, they are offended because he has donated money to evangelize distant savages. He tries to clarify that "mission" just means work, and *his* work is to figure out this mystery. After the service, in the muddy churchyard, Inman joins a trio of young men who are trying to work up the nerve to approach Ada. Inman gets Sally Swanger to introduce him, and he realizes he has prepared nothing to say. Ada asks a riddle, which he answers. She walks over to her father, and they drive away.

Inman emerges from the pinewoods on the banks of a swollen river. He follows it, hoping for an unguarded bridge or trestle. It is a foul region infested with poison ivy. Inman contrasts this cesspool with the white water of Pigeon River and wonders why anyone would fight and die for this territory. He thinks of big timber, thin air, a cabin high on the mountain, and quiet. If Ada will go with him, he may see his despair vanish.

Inman believes one can wish something into reality, but he has never experienced this. He comes upon a sign, "Ferry. $5. Yell Loud," and sees a rope disappear underwater and emerge on the opposite shore. He yells, and a figure sets out in a canoe. The pilot rows hard upstream, angles out, and lets the current carry her to shore. She is an apple-cheeked girl, evidently of Indian blood, and muscular. She says $5 is her father's rate for hauling his flatboat across; it will not work in a heavy current, so while he hunts, she is offering rides for top dollar, to raise enough money to get away. They settle on $20 and set out. They see curious bubbles the girl thinks might be from a catfish, and Inman thinks of the trout at home. The moon is a crescent, just bright enough to make the canoe shine. Inman recognizes the Whitworth when it fires, tearing a hole at the waterline. Pistol shots are too distant to matter. The girl dips the canoe to darken its sides and Inman plugs the hole, but another is torn and the river floods in. The girl flips the canoe and they hold on, floating downstream. More shots ring out Inman thinks how easy it is to hate things like this trough of a river and how virtuous it is to love the world as it is. They pass the landing but shots continue to ring out, and Inman calculates the distance, as with thunder and lightning. When they are safely out of sight, they kick for the opposite shore. Inman compensates the girl for loss of her canoe, and she gives him directions. Inman awakens sore, bruised, and itching from poison ivy. His neck wound has cracked open, but he takes up his packs and sets off westward.

"The Color of Despair" Analysis

This chapter links the protagonists. Inman is one of a group of young men who admire her from afar and the only one who manages an introduction. Ada is aloof, but clearly remains in Inman's mind, for he wants to take her high up Cold Mountain to build a life together. We can guess that the letter he mailed from the hospital is to her. We also learn a bit more about the philosophies of Swimmer and Monroe and the way the mountain folk take to Ada. Inman struggles not only against the horror of warfare but also against any imperfection in nature. Cold Mountain is his nirvana, and nothing will keep him from it.

"Verbs, All of Them Tiring"

"Verbs, All of Them Tiring" Summary

Ruby moves to the Black Cove to teach Ada how to run a farm. They eat together, but Ruby prefers to live in the old cabin. Ruby prioritizes tasks, which Ada takes down in her journal. Ruby wants to grind meal to save on miller's fees, get some guineas for their eggs but also to serve as watchdogs and clear bugs. Pigs provide far more than two hams. The apple orchards are thick with fruit, and if they can press them into cider, it will bring more in trade than the apples. The tobacco crop is good, and can plugs will barter well. Ada does not understand a non-monetary system, and Ruby distrusts money, even before inflation robbed it of value. Ruby allows Ada to decide which unnecessary luxury to sell: her piano or her cabriolet. The dapple's fate of becoming a plow horse is the same, either way. Ada decides to sell the piano to Tip Benson, whose wife has coveted it for years. Ada had never played well and has bad memories of being propositioned by a piano teacher at age 15; she figures with pencil and paper she can still keep up with art. Keeping the cabriolet means she can escape if things get too bad. Ruby bargains hard with Benson and gets enough to see them through the winter, including some sheep and hogs she brands and releases to forage on Cold Mountain until winter.

As Jones and a friend haul the piano away, Ada remembers a Christmas party Monroe gives, where he serves champagne, and Ada and Sally drink too much. The guests form like-minded groups: the women gossip in one corner, the men argue politics in another, and the young men brag and nip at corn liquor. One woman tells about her daughter's poor marriage and how she does little more than wipe babies' tails; it takes Ada's breath away. Sally tells Ada Inman has arrived and advises her to marry him and have "pretty brown-eyed babies." Ada retreats to the kitchen to compose herself, but there he sits, warming himself by the fire. Ada blushes again, relating Sally's comment and has to step out for fresh air. Suddenly faint and giddy, Ada finds herself sitting on Inman's lap. She recovers in half a minute and goes to the piano. Inman and Ada talk briefly and awkwardly, never mentioning the kitchen incident, and he leaves early. As the party breaks up, the young men fire their pistols at the heavens, Ada sees through the parlor windows.

When the piano passes out of sight, Ada goes to the basement, hoping for leftover champagne, but finds a true treasure: a 100-pound sack of coffee. She and Ruby parch, grind, and brew the first coffee they have tasted in years, and Ruby figures they can sell it in half-pound lots and buy many staples. Ruby imposes routines on Ada's life, like getting up at dawn in time to eat the breakfast Ruby prepares. Only once does Ada issue Ruby an order, and the look she receives makes it clear that Ruby could be gone in a moment, forever. Ruby talks throughout the morning, planning tasks for winter, much as bears forage before hibernation. Ruby's monologues consist of *verbs* denoting tiring work. Ada hopes life will be easier once winter arrives, but Ruby outlines the mending to be done then. Ada had never thought about life as being so tiresome, and Ruby makes sure Ada takes part in every task that makes life concrete. Her first victory

comes when Ada churns butter; her second when Ada stops putting a book in her apron when she goes out to hoe. Ada knows, however, Ruby will not let her fail as any hired hand would.

In the evening, Ada reads to Ruby until dark, and then Ruby tells her life's story in pieces. Ruby has grown up poor and is tired of it. She never knew her mother, and her father, Stobrod Thewes, is a notorious ne'er-do-well and scofflaw. They live in a leaky cabin. Ruby has fed herself since she learned to walk, and once at age 4, spent a cold, scary night in the woods, caught by the thorn of a blackthorn tree. She remembers stories of wild animals preferring the flesh of children and of cannibal spirits in Cherokee lore. A voice in the woods calms her, and she feels protected. A fisherman finds her in the morning sets her free. She says nothing to Stobrod, and he does not ask where she has been. As she gets older, Ruby farms while Stobrod wanders, fiddles at dances, or hunts varmints. Stobrod loves to drink and steals corn to distill a raw, potent liquor. He works only one job, helping a neighbor stack and burn tree limbs. When the job takes too long for Stobrod's taste, he walks off, leaving the man alone; the man then gets trapped in the shifting logs and escapes being burned to death only by hacking off his leg. He holds a grudge and shoots at Stobrod from his porch occasionally. Stobrod cannot remember anything about his late wife to fill in details for Ruby and surprises her when he enlists in the army. He rides off on their only horse and is unaccounted for since Sharpsburg. Ruby does not know whether he has died or deserted. Without a horse, she cannot farm. She hunts turkey and deer. By 10, she knows the mountains for 25 miles around, and early in womanhood whips men single-handed in circumstances she will not divulge. She figures she is 25, but her father makes no record of her birth. Survival is more important than birthday parties, at any rate.

"Verbs, All of Them Tiring" Analysis

The title of this chapter comes from Ruby's constant litany of tasks to be performed if the women are to survive the winter. We learn more detail about Ada and Inman's early meetings, still very unpromising, and much about Ruby's horrid childhood that makes it clear why she is so accomplished a survivor. We will see Stobrod's fiddle later in the novel. Note the window motif again inserted rather in passing.

"Life Any Other Thing, a Gift"

"Life Any Other Thing, a Gift" Summary

Late night beside the Deep River, a good ambush spot for the Home Guard, Inman sees a light held by a crouching man in a broad-brimmed hat and black suit. Beside him stands a horse with something tied across its back. The man repeats, "Lord, Oh, Lord. When he rises and slings the burden over his shoulder; a limp arm and black hair tumble out, and Inman intervenes. The man declares Inman a message from God and hugs his legs. Inman smashes him on the cheekbone, sending him sprawling. The yellow-haired man declares he is a preacher and confesses he has gotten this girl pregnant, and now has drugged her, intending to kill her and hush up his mistake. Inman orders him to put her back on the horse and take him to town. Inman recalls sitting after the Battle of Fredericksburg with a boy from Tennessee, surveying a nightmarish landscape, and telling him the brightest star in Orion is Rigel. The boy replies that this is a man-made name, not the one God holds as a lesson we should settle for ignorance. At the time, Inman thinks the boy a fool, but now wonders if he might be right about some varieties of knowledge. The preacher asks what Inman plans to do with him. The girl lives with her deaf old grandmother, so it has been easy to arrange trysts all summer. They meet innocently enough at a church supper. Inman remarks that that is a far cry from dropping his britches in a hayrick or pitching her into the gorge. The preacher says his church is strict, so if he is found out he will have to run away. He cannot marry her as Inman suggests, because he is already betrothed. Inman agrees when the preacher declares he is ill-suited for preaching.

They come upon a settlement: a church, several businesses, and some houses. Inman decides to put the girl back in bed. Reaching the one-room cottage, Inman ties the gagged preacher to a tree before going in to reconnoiter. The grandmother is snoring soundly. Inman takes some food lying beside her, and carries the girl to her own bed. She awakens and stares at Inman, but he closes her eyes gently and tells her the preacher is no good, does not speak for God--no one does--and she should put him behind her. Her name is Laura, and she goes back to sleep. Inman debates cutting the preacher up, but settles for skewering a confession above him. The preacher begs not to have his life ruined, but Inman cannot bear to think he will one night lug the girl back to the gorge and be done with her. The preacher begs just to be shot, but Inman declines and departs. He walks hard until morning, and then heads for the woods, where he eats and falls asleep. When he awakens, Inman examines his .40-caliber LeMat's pistol, which he picks up on the battlefield and protects through his medical ordeals. Its nine cylinders turn around a shotgun barrel, a sort of last chance at close quarters. It gives him serenity. Inman thinks about how he might have done things differently in town, at the river crossing, and with the preacher. He does not want to be smeared with the mess of other people. Part of him wants to be an owl or a ghost; part of him wants to be a gunslinger. Before the war, Inman had not been one for strife, but once the fighting starts, it comes to him easily. It is a gift, like whittling or picking tunes

or preaching. Quick hands, a steady head, and size for close-in warfare are what matter.

Inman walks on, fatigued. Passing a hog drover and a slave carrying beanpoles, he wishes he could be a hog and just wallow. Inman prepares to cook corn mush when he smells real food downstream. Following the scent like a bear, he finds a camp of gypsy horse traders. A man plays a cigar-box fiddle and children play. There is plenty of work for the grownups, grooming the horses and disguising their defects for sale at a time the war is consuming many horses. Inman finds gypsies honest in their predatory relationship toward mankind and bald admission of seeking an opening. Inman spends the day here, dipping into the stewpot whenever hungry. He sees a dark-haired woman mount a mare and ride it across the river, and she reminds him of Ada. She is the target for a knife-thrower's act, Inman learns that night. After dinner, all sit around the fire as equals and tell stories whose connecting theme is freedom and opportunity. Late night, Inman goes into the woods to sleep. He picks a random passage in Bartram about an unnamed plant, studies each word, fixes the extended setting in his mind, fills in missing details, and constructs the shrub vividly in his mind. He thinks about the dark-haired woman, about how soft Laura is as he carries her to bed, and about Ada at Christmas, sitting briefly on his lap. It seems like another world. He remembers the smell of lavender, touching her hands, and kissing her wrist. Ada responds, "That was unexpected," and walks away. Inman lets go of his memories and sleeps, dreaming of a forest filled with hallucinatory blossoms. Ada approaches in a white dress with her head and shoulders draped in black. Three times, she fogs through him as he draws near; but the fourth time she stands firm and substantial. He says he has been coming for her on a long, hard road and will never let her go. She seems to agree, but says nothing. Inman wakes for real with the vision of Ada in his mind. The gypsies have departed, and Inman is sorry not to have said goodbye, but he walks on with a brightened spirit.

"Life Any Other Thing, a Gift" Analysis

The title comes from Inman's musings about how being a warrior is a gift like whittling or playing an instrument or speaking. Our view of how Inman and Ada first meet is enriched, and, in the person of the fallen preacher, we receive a foil for Inman's musings on religion, for they are destined to be together for much of the novel.

"Ashes of Roses"

"Ashes of Roses" Summary

Ada and Ruby weed the winter garden. They have plowed, sweetened, and harrowed the ground and planted a handful of seeds, hoping a warm fall will make up for a late start. Ruby is careful about doing chores in strict accordance with signs of nature, a practice Monroe would consider superstitious, but Ada envies as an attunement with nature and rationalizes as a metaphor for stewardship. As they hoe, a lost party of broken women and children ramble by, fleeing Federal persecution in Tennessee and aiming for Camden, SC. Ada and Ruby prepare a chicken dinner that is quickly consumed. The pilgrims tell of Federals taking revenge on Confederate soldiers' families for battlefield deaths and proclaim Ada and Ruby lucky to live in a hidden cove. In the morning, Ada and Ruby provision them for the next leg of their trip and send them off.

Ada and Ruby eat in the orchard. Ruby asks Ada which way is north, part of her program to help Ada understand the varied creation of which she is part. Ada does not know but feels answers are coming. Ruby has this knowledge from listening to grandmothers, watching them work, and asking questions. Many things she has puzzled out herself. Most important is being attentive to "what likes what" (which Ada translates as "observe and understand the workings of affinity in nature"). Ruby points to a patch of sumac and dogwood, already turning red while other trees are green. This, she explains, is because they are in fruit and need to let migrant birds know this, because as birds eat the fruit, they broadcast the seeds in their droppings, a system common to much of creation. Ada walks in the field, letting her eyes go unfocused, and grows aware of the myriad tiny creatures, whose accumulated energy gives quiver to life. Ada recalls the women saying she is lucky, and she cannot see how this life could be improved.

In the evening, Ada reads from Homer and Ruby laughs at Odysseus resembling Stobrod. At dusk, the sky reminds Ada of her last party in Charleston, three days of feasting, drinking, and dancing at her cousin's house on the Wando River. The young men have war fever. The final night, Ada wears a mauve dress, and a dashing but witless man, Blount, rows her out on the river. He has graduated and is preparing to enter the family business, but he will enlist in the event of war. Ada and the women are tired of this male refrain. Blount then admits he is terrified and has recurring dreams of horrible battlefield deaths. Ada cannot utter the time-honored female words of encouragement. Ada later walks past a mirror and envies the assured posture of a woman wearing ashes of rose. She realizes lighting and tint have distorted mauve into this hue, and she has just endorsed herself. Next morning, Blount begs Ada to keep what happened secret. She never sees Blount again, but learns from Cousin Lucy that he is killed at Gettysburg.

Ruby marvels people waste time on such useless activities, and Ada objects she has missed her point. Ada recalls sitting with Monroe as he talked of this magnificent topography being just a token of another world for which they yearn. Ada had agreed, but now believes this is all the life there is. Ruby yells the cow needs putting away, and as Ada walks to the pasture, she realizes a great force of loneliness inhabits the place, strongest at twilight; Monroe had argued this is the vacuum people feel when God pulls back another degree. Ada finds Waldo lying in tall grass and wants to lie down in the warm patch she leaves. An owl hoots a lovely line of poetry, and Waldo bawls impatiently. Ada feels she is learning.

"Ashes of Roses" Analysis

This chapter takes its title from Ada's recollection of a party in Charleston, where she admires herself in a mirror that has distorted her mauve dress into ashes of roses. Her recollections add to our understanding of the prewar mentality and to her cold-hearted inability to go along with social norms. We see her learning the ways of the countryside and her philosophical parting from her father's rigid views on the universe.

"Exile and Brute Wandering"

"Exile and Brute Wandering" Summary

Tired of skulking and starving, Inman leaves money for a dinner bag he steals; its contents are disappointing, but he consumes them. Hearing footsteps behind him, Inman ducks into the woods to watch pass a badly cut preacher, Solomon Veasey. He relates how Deacon Johnston and the congregation stripped and beat him and chopped off his hair (a la Samson and Delilah); his fiancy spat in his face, and he was ordered to get out of town before they hung him from the steeple. The girl, Laura Foster, will be "churched" (ostracized) for a while, gossiped about, and eventually married to some old bachelor, and be better off for their relations. Inman still wonders if he should have killed Veasey. Seeing Inman headed west, Veasey falls in with him and talks about his many missteps. He is proud only of having shined in the pulpit, saving many souls. He will start over in Texas, a land of freedom, perhaps as a great cattleman, starting his herd with the Colt revolver he appropriates from the Johnstons on his way out of town.

At an abandoned house surrounded by beehives, Inman and Veasey feast on honey and then follow a stream that to Inman smells of the mountains. When the ground flattens out, the stream turns into a muddy ditch, where they see a catfish that has taken a wrong turn somewhere. Having to have it, Veasey builds a snare downstream and drives the catfish in. They wrestle several rounds before Inman puts a bullet in its head. They feast throughout the evening. Veasey cannot get Inman to talk about himself and judges him as bad off as the Biblical Legion, whom he says is driven wild by ill fortune; Jesus straightens him out and sends him home a new self. Veasey claims he is physically unfit for army service, and he wonders whether he missed much. Inman tells him about Petersburg, where Federal tunnelers exploded a company of South Carolina boys near him and were so amazed at their achievement that they failed to capitalize on it and were blown to pieces by Confederate mortar fire and close combat. The ground is slick with and stinks of "internalments." Inman and Veasey press on, leaving behind more fish than they have eaten.

Veasey has a headache from being clubbed by Inman when he pulls his Colt on a shopkeeper. An old slave tells them about a shelter ahead where outliers are welcome. They come to a once-prosperous tavern, now dank and leaky. Tildy, a huge, fine-looking Black prostitute, serves drinks, sits open-legged and grinning, and the preacher fixates on her breasts. They agree to do business, but a drunk tries to tug Tildy away. Veasey is too slow drawing his Colt and finds a revolver in his nose. Tildy disarms Veasey, saving his life (because it is murder to kill an unarmed man). Seeing Inman's hand on his LeMat's, the man moves away. As Veasey and Tildy depart, Inman sits with his back to the wall and orders another drink. Dinner will be ready in 2 hours. The tavern holds a few assorted wanderers, talking nostalgia. He finds the $5 dinner disappointing, and climbs to the hayloft (another $5), where a white-headed peddler, Odell, is settling in. They drink through a thunderstorm, sharing tales of exile and wandering. Odell is born rich, raised to inherit his father's plantation, and accepts an arranged marriage that

cannot keep his interest. He falls in love with Lucinda, a household slave who is one-eighth black. Odell's father rents her out for fieldwork to get her away from his son, but Odell meets her in the countryside. When Lucinda gets pregnant, father ships her to Mississippi, and Odell searches for her, gradually using up his money. He fears he will end up worse than a peddler. Odell tells Inman of horrors he has seen in Mississippi, including a black woman caged for buzzards to torment "It's a feverish world" is all Inman can say. Veasey is bleeding when he catches up with Inman in the morning. He had haggled too firmly with Tildy, but she had been worth it, a stunning memory for old age and despondency.

"Exile and Brute Wandering" Analysis

The chapter takes its title from the description of the tales exchanged between Inman and Odell as they pass an evening in the hayloft over a tavern. We see Inman and the preacher reunited as unlikely companions, and through Odell, we learn a bit about antebellum plantation life. "Octoroon" is an obsolete word meaning 1/8th black parentage. Conditions in the Carolinas appear far less brutal than in Mississippi, but the peculiar institution is rigid and absolute.

"Source and Root"

"Source and Root" Summary

It brightens as Ada and Ruby walk to town, Ruby remarking all the way about birds. She tells of eating pigeons when she was left to fend for herself and defends crows as a witty, adaptable, and masterful species, despite their reputation. Ruby hopes to pull Ada out of a dark mood brought on by a week of hard work gathering hay. The outing will let Ruby buy ammunition for hunting turkey and deer and let Ada look for books and drawing materials. Ada buys *Adam Bede*. After lunch, they stop at Mrs. McKennet's, a wealthy widow friend of Monroe's friend when it became clear she could be no more to him. She has the servants make ice cream, which Ruby has never tasted. McKennet speaks of war as glorious, tragic, heroic, and noble, and believes an obviously fictitious narrative about a young officer dying on the battlefield at the same instant his fiancy expires at home. Ada effects Charleston airs and declares the conflict benighted on both sides equally. Ruby breaks the awkward silence and tells about morphine-crazed northerners who have invented a holiday of greed, Thanksgiving.

Heading out of town, Ada and Ruby join the crowd listening to a prisoner talk from a second-story barred window. He claims to have served bravely and been wounded at Williamsburg, but he "unvolunteered" to go home to his wife. A war hero, he may be hanged. He is the lone survivor of a woods full of outliers who were attacked by the Home Guard on Balsam Mountain. When they ride up, the prisoner's father meets them with a shotgun, which the leader takes as proof he is harboring fugitives. Two great dark men, Byron and Ayron, and a white-haired boy, Birch, ride in a cluster, while the leader, Teague, dressed like a preacher, rides at a distance. All are well armed. Ayron suddenly disarms the old man and beats him senseless, and then Byron skewers him with a saber. Byron and Ayron circle the house like wolves while Teague and Birch reconnoiter the barn and corncrib, where the outliers are hiding. Two are shot dead fleeing, and the captive surrenders. As they tie him up, he goes berserk, kicking and biting, until he is finally garroted and bound to a chair. Teague considers hanging him, but is convinced by Birch they need to bring in an occasional live fugitive. They drag him to town. From his window, the captive hollers God will not let this long stand.

Ada and Ruby leave grim and silent, but eventually talk about the story and whether the world should be viewed as a place of gloom or cheer. Just past a fork in the Pigeon River, Ruby stops and assumes a fighter's stance. She points out a great blue heron concentrating on its prey. Ada thinks of Narcissus, but Ruby says the heron's beak is designed for inflicting stab wounds, so all it thinks about is stab and eat. The heron evaluates Ada, who asks it why it is here, solitary as a monk? It closes to 10 feet, slowly unfolds its great winds, and flies away. Ada sketches it from memory in her new notebook and dates the drawing. Ruby provides the time by looking at the sun. As they walk on, Ruby recalls Stobrod often saying she has no human father and that a heron raped her mother. Ada is speechless. They watch a cloud of martins maneuver in unison.

Ruby's story reminds Ada of one Monroe told shortly before his death. Ada's parents marry late, Monroe at 45 and Claire (nye Dechutes) at 36, so she assumes she is an accident. One afternoon, Monroe sets her straight. Monroe, 25, is riding his horse when he first encounters Claire, 16, and instantly falls in love. She admonishes him for watering his horse without asking permission. He learns the father is a French importer/exporter and gains an introduction. Dechutes appears to accept Monroe's intention of marrying Claire once she turns 18. Monroe thinks this just and courts her throughout the spring, summer, and fall. He buys a diamond ring, but arrives to find her passionately kissing another man. Humiliated and betrayed, he gallops until the horse tires. He thinks of fleeing to Texas but instead heads home. En route, he comes upon a burning church, enters, throws the ring on the altar, and intends to die in the flames. A man orders him out and together they try in vain to put out the fire. At dawn, they console one another in having tried and Monroe rides home. A week later, he sails to England and later learns Claire has married. Monroe studies for the ministry. Nineteen years later, Monroe learns a widowed Claire has come home and again seeks her hand. They spend 2 happy years together. Claire dies giving birth to Ada, and only slowly does Monroe recover. He dedicates his life to his daughter's happiness. Ada is shocked to learn she is the product of passion. Birds are passing overhead as Ada finishes her story. Ruby points out Venus and heads to her cabin.

"Source and Root" Analysis

The title of this chapter refers directly to the story of Ruby's conception by a heron, but we also learn of the source and root of Ada's being. Monroe appears in quite a new light. We also learn about the Home Guard, heretofore mentioned only in passing, and horror. The sole survivor details how they operate to bring in one of three fugitives. Given the choice of dead or alive, they most often opt for the former, although authorities expect them to deliver a few live criminals.

"To Live Like a Gamecock"

"To Live Like a Gamecock" Summary

Inman and Veasey find a crosscut saw, which Veasey figures he can sell profitably. Veasey reminds Inman of God's use of fire and flood to show God has no great respect for personal property. It just distracts from the grand view. Inman finds this odd in someone who shows remnants of so many beatings. Veasey admits he has deserved them but intends to take no more. Inman tells him a Colt is too big to draw fast. They are hailed by a man named Junior, standing over the swollen carcass of a great black bull lying in a creek. Junior lives downstream and has come looking for why his water tastes rank. He has the eyes of a raptor and the mouth of a fish. Beside him he has a sawed-off shotgun. The three cannot budge the bull, but Veasey figures with his new saw they can cut poles to leverage it onshore. They waste hours before Inman uses the saw to dismember the bull. They joke about the preacher getting nauseous at the sight, and Inman recalls the slaughter at Sharpsburg. Junior invites them to dinner and to spend the night in his hayloft, and they give him the saw free - over Veasey's protest.

Junior turns jocular and shares a hidden bottle of liquor. He tells them of a youth spent profitably on the cockfighting circuit. Veasey jabbers admiration for Junior's sexual conquests, but Junior is unhappily married to a slut who has borne a black baby and moved her two slut sisters in, one of whom has unnamed twins. Veasey's glee diminishes. They approach a large, decrepit building tipping on crumbled foundations. They enter and sit down at the ramping table. The bedstead also slants. A fire smolders, and a Dutch oven gives off a rank smell. Little bumpers nailed to the table keep plates and cups from sliding. Veasey suggests using levers to right the house, but Junior is used to it. The liquor goes to their heads fast. A slight girl of 8-10 enters, light-skinned and beautiful. Her mama, she says, is out back. The girl says her name is Lula, but Junior insists it is Chastity to commemorate what a whore her mother, Lila, is. Dressed in a worn print dress, curvy, towheaded Lila eyes Inman. Junior lights a pipe and lets Inman admire his tobacco pouch, made from a bull's scrotum - one ought not to try to improve on God's inventions. Junior urinates into the bushes, sings a song about Noah and the rainbow, and goes off to tend a mare.

Inman follows Lila to a great fire and her sisters and a pair of dark-haired boys approach. Lila gives Inman an odd-tasting but potent drink and one of the sisters rubs lustily against him while another holds her groin while raking up corn husks from the fire. The boys pace silently, but respond to food. Six loaves are laid out as Lila announces they knew Inman would arrive. Inman wonders at the source of a distant yellow light, and Lila tells him a legend about Junior killing a man and his dog there. He also kills his mother when he takes her for a swan. The light turns blue and disappears. Inman hides his haversack - including pistol and money - in the woodpile and enters the house, where Veasey is asleep. Lila pulls out a great, reeking joint of meat and tells Inman to carve it while she rubs her crotch on his shoulder. The sisters are jealous. Inman wonders what is in his drink as he goes numb. Lila runs his hand under her dress,

orders the sisters out; clears the table, and sits in front of Inman, legs astraddle, dress up, and breasts spilling out. Inman is fascinated, but cannot move. Junior comes in to find Inman's face in Lila's cleavage, and Inman thinks what a horrible place this is to die. Junior declares they must marry or die, and Lila is delighted. Inman cannot speak. Junior reveals the Home Guard riding up, pulling a parade of blank-eyed prisoners. Junior gets $5 a head for runaways. Inman and Veasey are tied to the tether. One guardsman plays a fiddle and the others dance wildly with the rutting sisters. Junior calls for the wedding to commence over Inman's objection that Lila is already married. Junior intones a dark song about the inevitability of death and unpleasant consequences of life, and then dictates to Veasey the words he is to say. After the ceremony, Lila hugs Inman and says "Bye, bye." The two men are tied back on the string and the eastward march begins.

Veasey is tied in front of Inman and walks with downcast eyes. There are 15 other prisoners, old and young, all prison-bound. Some resist, some declare their innocence, some mutter murderous threats, and some sob for mercy. They will die, Inman contemplates, like most people, without a trace. Inman is bitter to be tied like this, unarmed, and regressing. The guards childishly torment them, give them no food and only such water as they can scoop from streams. When the old men can go no further, they are given corn gruel. Inman grows steadily angrier as miles of hard travel are rolled back, and he loses all concept of calendar time. One night, the leader announces this "pack of shit" is wasting their time, and they are gunned down. A bullet that has passed through Veasey grazes Inman's head. The Guards dig a shallow grave, throw in the bodies, and toss a covering of dirt over them so light Inman is more at risk of starvation than of suffocation. He lies still until a feral hog roots him out. His face is covered in blood. Pulling at his rope to free himself, he unearths Veasey. Inman has witnessed so many deaths that these have little impact. They have been near-dead a long time. Inman fears he may never be a civilian again. With a sharp stone he cuts his bonds and, lacking a shovel, rolls Veasey over face down.

Inman resumes his westward trek, feeling stunned and wretched. Yarrow leaves tied to his head draw out the pain, but his neck aches in sympathy. He sits by the roadside and waits for a sign. A yellow slave approaches driving steers, and gives the "dirt man" a melon to eat. Inman stares at the drops of juice for some sign but there is none. The yellow man smuggles him onto his master's farm, feeds him, boils his clothes, and gives him a hat. He warns about increased patrols following a prison break in Salisbury, and suggests Inman cut north to Wilkes where Quakers and Moravians will shelter him, and then down the Blue Ridge toward the cold, rough mountains. The man gives him provisions and draws a map from memory. Inman is amazed this slave can read, and the yellow man agrees his master is crazy, ignoring the law. Within a few nights, Inman is back at the dark, slanted house, where he collects his belongings, clubs Junior, and walks on, always hearing horsemen in time to duck into the bushes. Morning fog makes a cook fire safe. He watches three crows harry a rat snake and wishes he could become a crow, able to fly away from his enemies or laugh at them. Night falls like a vast crow.

"To Live Like a Gamecock" Analysis

The chapter takes its title from Veasey's reaction to Junior's tale of his youth, before marriage to a slut turned him to thoughts of murder/suicide. We see Inman and Veasey joined to a chain of prisoners taken in by the Home Guard and observe the daily abuse they inflict until finally they cannot be bothered with the prisoners any more and summarily execute them. We bid farewell to Veasey but watch a reborn Inman survive and resume his homeward trek. He knows how hard the war has made him and, like Ruby in the previous chapter, envies the crow.

"In Place of the Truth"

"In Place of the Truth" Summary

Ruby calms Ralph when he rebels against pulling a heavy sled of rails. Ada has noticed Ruby rarely works straight through a project; instead, she shifts among the most pressing priorities. Before bartering apples for cabbages and turnips, she cleans up a rusty old trap to stop corn from disappearing. Ada convinces her to pad the teeth to spare a human thief. Ruby leaves Ada one assignment: make a scarecrow. Ada has nicknamed the bold ringleader Notchwing, and has mixed feelings about keeping an account of the doings of particular birds. She cannot imagine seeing the effigy of her father every day in the garden, so she puts back Monroe's clothing and uses her mauve party dress. Ada knows Ruby will think of better uses for the material, but has other gowns to donate for those causes. Ada builds a frame, stuffs a pillowcase head and the bodice of the dress, and assembles it. A European hat tops it off. She figures someone looking down from the ridge would have a hard time figuring which is the scarecrow and which the woman. After dinner, Ada sketches the scarecrow and Notchwing in her journal.

Ruby returns with sacks of cabbage and hands Ada a worn envelope, which Ada pockets to read later. Ruby tells Ada all the uses of cabbage, and they prepare a long grave to bury most of them, marked for easy discovery in the January snow. Ada thinks retrieving them will be grim. Watching the sunset, Ada strokes Ruby's hair until it is sleek and begins braiding. They are having a contest, an idea Ada got watching Ruby groom Ralph to assist her own thinking and put the horse to sleep. Whoever does the best job on the other's hair is exempt from evening chores. Ada's is already done. Notchwing and his gang are frightened away by the new scarecrow, which Ruby says is a favorable comment. Ruby thinks the hat a nice touch. Ada tells her it is from France, and Ruby talks about the foolishness of travel. Ada does not bother to argue. She is not satisfied with the finished braid and feels Ada's plait, hard as a chestnut limb. Ruby, however, who has never seen the back of her head before, looks in a mirror, and declares the work perfect and Ada the victor. Ada reads from *Midsummer Night's Dream* until dark, and then Ruby sets off. It is premature to check the trap, she says.

Ada reads Inman's undated letter a fifth time. He seems to have resolved their relationship, but she does not know how she feels after such a long absence. It is unclear whether he expects the war to end soon or whether he is just striking out for home. Remembering the captive's story, she fears he will meet men like Teague. Wondering at the words, "I currently bear it no resemblance in either form or spirit," Ada finds the filigreed case holding a photograph of Inman in ordinary attire and a pointed goatee. Ada last sees him weeks before the picture is made, when he comes to the house to say goodbye. Monroe is busy reading. As Ada and Inman walk along the creek, he seems alternately cheerful and solemn. He appears about to kiss her, but brushes a brooch off her collar and into the water. He seems sad the tender moment is

irretrievably lost. Both wonder how the other will feel if he is killed in battle; when he voices this, she does not know if it is a test or tease.

Inman re-tells the story a 135-year-old Cherokee woman told during his childhood. The village of Kanuga at the fork of the Pigeon River warmly receives an outlander who claims to be their neighbor and relative. His people live beyond the Shining Rocks inside Datsunalasgunyi (Cold Mountain). Conquest and exile face the Kanugans, but there is room behind the Shining Rocks, if they prepare by fasting 7 days without leaving the town house or raising the war cry. The people debate this invitation and decide to accept. One man, however, slips out every night to eat deer meat. They arrive at the Shining Rocks at sunset on the seventh day and see inside the mountain an open country of bottomlands and fields and people dancing in the square. Thunder peals, and the sky turns black. All tremble, but only the man who has eaten loses his senses from fear. When the storm departs, so does the cave. They return to Kanuga in mourning. Only a few fighters survive the prophesied events. Ada does not know what to say about this folkloric tale and instantly regrets using the word. Inman informs her the old woman wept telling the story because instead of living in a better world, she is a fugitive.

With no more to say, Inman brushes his lips against Ada's hand and walks away. After an awkward exchange of glances and gestures, his last words are, "I'll see you when I see you." That night, Ada is not so cavalier. Monroe works on his sermon, leaving Ada lone in the parlor to read, play piano, and listen to sounds outside. She is troubled about not shedding tears or saying the things women always do about waiting for their men forever. She wonders how she will feel if she is told Inman has died. She is sorry she dismissed his story, realizing now it is not about an old woman but about his fears and desires. She is sorry she had used habitual glibness at the wrong time. Some day it will harden within her. Unable to sleep, Ada tosses and turns, reads, and finally masturbates as she has since age 13. Cousin Lucy says everyone does it when desperate, but Ada still feels stained the next morning. Tonight, Ada pictures Inman's arms and hands for lack of greater knowledge of male anatomy. \

Ada awakens clearheaded and bright, determined to right her errors. She drives into town, shops for an hour, and then knocks on Inman's door. Through the crack, Ada sees a monk's cell rather than a beau's. Silence reigns on the landing when Inman emerges, broken when Ada wishes things had ended yesterday in a more satisfactory way. Inman claims he had stopped at Black Cover as a courtesy en route from Esco and Sally, and thinks all went fine. Ada is not used to having apologies rejected, but resists storming away. She wishes they could go back, but Inman says bluntly that is one thing humans may not do. Ada pulls on Inman's cuff to unlock his crossed arms and squeezes his wrist, wondering what the rest of him feels like. They cannot look each other in the eye. Inman takes Ada in his arms and plants the elusive kiss. Ada guesses her corset stays make her feel like a turtle. They descend the stairs and at the foot, she quotes him, "I'll see you when I see you." Both hope that is soon--mere months--but the war has ground on.

"In Place of the Truth" Analysis

This chapter sets a trap that soon yields a surprising catch, adds to the motif of crows as superior creatures, introduces a Cherokee myth that will become Inman's anchor in the final leg of his trek home, and shows Ada realizing she must do something about the sophisticated glibness she learned to effect in Charleston, but which threatens to harden within her and turn her bitter. Inman's letter, which we see him write with conflicted heart in the first chapter, makes Ada think about what he might now be. All she has is a picture taken before he set off for war and memories of their very unsatisfying two-part parting. Ada had been unable to find the right words for poor, dead Blount either.

"The Doing of It"

"The Doing of It" Summary

For a week, Inman follows the yellow man's map to the sketchy edges. There is much open ground here and at night, he hides from riders with quick triggers. Seeing houses with great white columns, Inman is sickened to think he has fought so the owners can live in luxury. He yearns for the thinly populated mountains. As he climbs, autumn advances swiftly, and he spends a rainy night in the hollow of a chestnut tree, feeling like a gnome or troll or outcast, ready to fall on passers-by. He dreams of Fredericksburg and awakens shivering and sour. His legs are numb, and he feels like a traveling shade. As he waits for feeling to return, he contemplates how this could be the last day of his life. Dry heaves and a throbbing neck conspire against progress, but he moves along, befuddled and lost, one foot before the other.

Inman comes upon a blissful, wrinkled, but pink-cheeked old woman setting a bird trap. She tells him the trail peters out in about a mile, but southwest there are old trade trails from Indian days. Inman is about to move on when she remarks about his recent bullet holes and pallor and offers him dinner free. She leads him to the lip of a cliff where vertigo overcomes him. Waves of mountains fade towards the horizon, tapering off like the pain of his neck wound as it heals. She points out Table Rock and Hawk's Bill as landmarks and leads him to her camp, a monument to a nomad who has taken root. In a dark, soggy cove sits a garish caravan. She scares off the ravens, and two dozen goats gather to inspect Inman. A he-goat that looks like Satan butts Inman and he is so weak he falls to his knees. Inman finds the woman building a fire and setting out an enamel basin. She summons a spotted goat, scratches it peacefully - and then slashes its throat. She continues fondling it as it dies. When it has, Inman inspects the caravan. Portraits cover the sides. One shows an anguished Job; another a man on hands and knees looking at a white orb. The caption reads, "Are you among the lost?" A smear of paint with eyes says, "Our personal lives are brief indeed." Inman watches the woman prepare the goat for roasting and for stewing.

Inside, the caravan is cramped. The table is piled high with paperwork, books, and annotated pen-and-ink nature sketches. Herbs and pelts dry among the stacks, and the wings of a nighthawk oversee it all. Inman watches the old woman fry flatbread and thankfully accepts a chunk of roast goat wrapped in one. She makes cheese from goat milk, hands him whey, and bets he had not expected to see cheese making when he awoke today. Inman has long ago quit speculating on what a day may bring, but he will concede cheese had not figured in his thoughts. The woman asks whether Inman is fresh from killing men at Petersburg, and he replies it is more like people have been trying to kill him. He shows his neck weal and claims he is furloughed, his paperwork lost. She doubts it. Inman asks about her caravan. It is all she has and she likes the idea of being able to move on, although she has not left this cove in 26 years. As a girl she wanted to marry a boy with yellow hair who walked her home from a dance, but her father married her to a cruel three-time widower. Figuring she was destined to be

number four of five headstones, she rode off on his best horse, traded it for a cart and eight goats, and has been on her own ever since, living off the goats and the land. In town, she barters for things she cannot grow or hunt, and makes medicines for sale, along with tracts on sin and salvation, proper diet, and phrenology.

Inman tells the goatwoman his neck wound came during the summer below Petersburg. She supposes he has thought about how a thumb's width difference would have blown his head off. The other wounds come from "the other bunch." She asks if he thinks it is worth "fighting for the big man's nigger?" Slavery, she declares, is a curse on the land, a fire burning them down, and God will liberate the slaves. Inman says he knows few slaveholders, does not know why he has fought, and insists he has been furloughed, not run off. The old woman laughs, denies all affiliations, but reminds him of the danger he faces. Seeing kindness in her eyes, Inman talks openly about shame for his zeal in 1861 and facing the innumerable ignorant, downtrodden workers the Federals throw at them; as you kill them you grow heartsick, but they keep marching south. The powerful draw of new faces, places, lives, and laws the war had promised has turned to the weariness of killing. Seeing berries and birds this morning has cheered Inman and made him want to return to the wheel of seasons if he can still fit into its harmony.

The goatwoman asks whether Inman's wounds still hurt, examines them, and brews laudanum. She daubs some dark substance on Inman's neck, which she acknowledges causes pain, but God has made our minds less able to hold the memory of pain than of bliss. At her age recollecting long-lost pleasures is pain enough. She puts the medicine in his pocket and gives him a handful of hard-to-swallow herb lozenges to take once a day. After a hearty supper and a dose of laudanum, Inman finds himself talking about Ada, how he loves and wants to marry her, realizing this implies some faith in a theoretical future. He does not know whether Ada will accept a man as galled as he has become. Ada can be thistleish but is quite beautiful. The woman laughs at such foolishness, like eating a bird for its singing. The laudanum makes Inman picture himself as a hermit on Cold Mountain, living pure and alone like this woman, but then he realizes he will hate the loneliness. She talks about her drawing and writing. When the time comes to die, she hopes to stretch out and let the ravens take her away, which is better than going to the worms.

Inman spends a rainy night under the caravan and in the morning hears how the woman had sold goats in the capital city once and had to steal back their collars. The medicines make Inman groggy. He awakens and leafs through the goatwoman's journal, where she describes every detail of goat life. Inman contemplates her hermitic life, thinking about God's finer productions, but also remembering that yellow-haired beau and knowing so many years have passed. Inman wonders how she would react to seeing herself in a mirror. He wants to move on but not before thanking his hostess. She returns mid-morning with a brace of rabbits, declines payment, and warns Inman to watch himself. She gives him an intricate drawing of a berry cluster

"The Doing of It" Analysis

This chapter shows Inman confronting the hermitic life and allows him to unburden himself about why he enlisted to fight the war and why he has walked away. The goatwoman fortifies him physically and emotionally, and sets him back on the road with medicines to remove his pain and warns him of the danger facing deserters. The carrion flower, whose berries she has sketched and given him as a going-away gift, smells like rotting flesh when in bloom. The woman does not seem the type for either omens or talismans. She hopes ravens will rend her dead body apart some take and carry her abroad, rather than having worms do their duty.

"Freewill Savages"

"Freewill Savages" Summary

Up at dawn to start breakfast, Ruby sees a man in dark clothes standing by the corncrib, and approaches with the shotgun. Stobrod has been caught in the trap all night. Ruby releases him, looks him over, declares he looks older than 45, figures he won his new suit at cards, and disbelieves he is a war hero owed a furlough. She makes him stay on the porch as she cooks and under the pear tree rather than joining them inside. Stobrod tells of living among heavily armed outliers in a deep cave, hunting, eating, drinking, and making music. Ruby threatens to shoot him if he steals corn again, and Stobrod saunters off toward Cold Mountain.

On a warm, dry day, the tobacco is drying well and will soon be ready to trade. Ada sits on the edge of the hayloft, kicking her legs like a child. Ada eventually joins her and they admire Cold Mountain in the distance. Ruby talks about Ada learning to run the land, which means at a minimum learning to differentiate poplars from oaks by sound. Since this may be the last warm day, they eat supper outdoors, and Stobrod joins them, uninvited. He talks with Ada about the war when Ruby snubs him, and produces a fiddle he has fashioned over the months. To give it a distinctive sound, he has put inside the rattles of a big snake. He admires the fiddle as a thing of wonder, a sign of the new man he has become through the war. Ruby is skeptical.

In winter camp near Richmond in 1862, a man appears asking for a fiddler to ease the dying of his 15-year-old daughter, a victim of massive burns. Stobrod runs through his repertoire of six songs, which the girl declares pitiful and demands he make up a tune - something he has never tackled before. He plays something in the Phrygian mode so doleful the mother walks away in tears, but the girl enjoys it. The father pays Stobrod $1 when the girl dies, and Stobrod begins playing every day. He frequents taverns, learning black songs and perfecting his technique. Music shows him the order in creation and disproves happenstance. His repertoire grows to 900 tunes, including 100 of his own invention. Ruby is skeptical and demands he play just one. Stobrod gives his fiddle an exotic tuning and plays "Green-Eyed Girl," startlingly clear, sharp, and pure. Yearning is its main theme. The women are amazed at his long bowing, sweet and strident. After a silence, Ruby says this is odd for a man who got his nickname from being beaten half to death with a stob for stealing a ham. Ada sees miraculous proof a wasted life can be redeemed.

"Freewill Savages" Analysis

This chapter brings back Stobrod, the negligent parent and presumed casualty of war, first as a corn thief and then as a born-again musician. Ruby remains skeptical about a thief named for a beating he once took--"stob" is a southern colloquialism for tree branch--but Ada sees him as a sign lives can be changed, something she has been

hoping can take place within her. Earlier in the chapter, Ruby shows how far she has to go in understanding nature around her, which is part of her quest. The prospect of Inman's returning and wanting her is an even greater challenge.

"Bride Bed Full of Blood"

"Bride Bed Full of Blood" Summary

The goatwoman's medicine heals Inman's physical wounds, but his thoughts remain painful. He runs out of food and finds no game. Ravenous, he eats wild cress. Seeing his reflection in a pool, he breaks up the alien image. He wishes he could become a bird and soar to a distant perch. A wet crow stares at him and Inman strikes off down a little-used track. Next day, Inman realizes he is being followed, and confronts a little hog-eyed man in overalls and a black suit coat, who flees into the forest. Inman fears he will alert the Guard, so he threatens to shoot. The man gives the hand signals of a secret society that Inman learns in the hospital. He gives the countersign and the man continues the code but Inman declares he has no allegiance. Pots declares he, too, is unaffiliated since his son died at Sharpsburg. Pots recommends a good gal down the road who will feed him, no questions asked, and Inman walks there through the slanting rain, looking like a dark monk seeking not to be fouled by contact with the world.

Inman calls out from the gate and assures the petty girl, Sara, Pots has sent him. Shedding his ice-covered coat and haversack on the porch, Inman enters a dark, clean, pictureless cabin. A bestiary/zodiac-themed quilt and a raw-skinned newborn offer the only color. Inman is self-conscious of his filth as Sara serves him a heaping plate. He gulps so loudly he alarms himself, and she watches in fascinated disgust. He learns she is an 18-year-old war widow whose husband John died in Virginia, never having seen his baby. Inman thinks every man who volunteers for this war might as well just blow his own brains out, for all the meaning the sacrifices have. Sara has no help with plowing or tending a garden, owns a few chickens and a well-fed hog she dreads butchering. Raiders steal her cow and kill her hound just to scare her. Inman wishes he had not come here, for he could easily spend his life helping Sara. He offers to butcher the hog and Sara agrees, in exchange for cleaning and mending his clothes.

As Inman eats a second helping, the baby cries and Sara nurses him. Inman wishes he could resist looking at her full, white breast and glistening nipple but cannot. Sara hands Inman a pile of John's clothes, a basin, soap, and a rag, and sends him to the porch to change. He strips in the cold, scrubs, rinses, and dresses, feeling like he is putting on the husk of another life. The vision of Sara's back gives him a memory he may find useful in lonely old age. They sit silently by the hearth. Sara is lovely but unreadable. Inman collects his packs and settles in the corncrib, which is better than the bare ground. Footsteps call him to arms, but it is only Sara, asking him to come inside. A hickory fire blazes high. Sara lies in bed, and asks whether he can lie beside her and do nothing else. Inman wonders whether she sees him as John's ghost, half-desired, half-feared. The quilt reminds him of dream animals. He agrees and climbs under the quilt, taking in her scent. She sobs, and Inman offers to leave, but she tells an unremarkable tale about how they had fallen in love, built this cabin, and made a go of it. Since he died 4 years ago, she has been short of food, consoled only by the baby conceived during John's last furlough. Nothing else holds Sara to the earth. Sara touches Inman's

neck scar, and then rolls over, and goes to sleep. No woman has touched him tenderly in years, and he fears he will never experience it again. He cannot sleep but does not even consider pulling Sara to him. The quilt beasts trouble the little sleep he gets.

Sara shakes Inman and warns him to get out. Either the Home Guard or raiders are riding up. Inman flees and finds a hidden position where he can observe the yard. Sara drives the hog into the woods. Three men dismount at the gate, two armed with Springfield rifles and one with a Navy revolver he aims at Sara. He orders her to sit next to the hog. She hears the men ransack the cabin and screams when they emerge carrying the baby. Inman is out of range, has no plan, and figures an attack can only result in death for Sara, the baby, and himself. They demand hidden money, which Sara denies having and tie her to a post while laying the unswaddled baby on the frozen ground. They grow angry as they discover Sara truly has nothing. Inman shifts to where he can shoot at least one of the Federals, but he still sees the outcome as bleak. They rope Sara's hog, unhitch Sara, hand her her baby, and collect three chickens. Sara says if they rob her like this, they might as well kill her on the spot, but they head off down the road. Inman takes Sara in to warm the baby, orders her to build a fire and boil a cauldron of water, and jogs after the Federals, not knowing what he will do when he overtakes them.

After a few miles, the Federals stop at a cove, kill and roast two chickens, and talk of going home to Philadelphia and New York. Inman wishes they were there now, because he does not relish killing them. Inman circles the cove, climbs a hemlock, makes turkey calls, and waits for the man in charge to investigate. When he looks up, Inman shoots him dead, but his companions figure he has killed a turkey. The riflemen call out for Eben and eventually search for him. They are city boys, fearful of the woods. Inman shoots them at close range, drags their bodies to the cave, and props them up with their rifles against the wall. He fetches Eben, whose exposed insides the remaining hen is eating. Inman recalls a sacred song about the soul rejoicing when it lives again and hums a few bars. Next to what he has seen in war, this is nothing, and he is sure he has killed better men than Eben, but he also knows he will never tell this story. Inman sketches animals from Sara's quilt on the cave wall, matching the ancient Cherokee drawings. How frail the human body is against modern technology, he thinks, and returns to the clearing. Because the Federals' horses are branded, he reluctantly shoots them and returns to the cabin.

Sara has boiled water and washed Inman's clothes. They eat the cooked chickens and set to work butchering the hog. For supper they have cracklings and stew. Sara suggests Inman shave, and this reveals a gaunt, scabby face he is sure will horrify Sara. Inman hopes this is not his true self and can be altered for the better; Sara smiles and says he looks "part human." She rocks her croupy baby, whom Inman does not expect to survive the winter, and sings with a shrill, nasal, lonely, despairing, and resentful voice that touches Inman's heart. The ballad, "Fair Margaret and Sweet William" recalls a horrible murder. Her next song, "Wayfaring Stranger," comes out a squeal of lonesomeness and pain, and an owl's hoot provides a fitting conclusion. Inman thinks of the spectral world. After spending another night with Sara, Inman sets off again.

"Bride Bed Full of Blood" Analysis

The chapter title is taken from a lyric in the old English ballad of "Fair Margaret and Sweet William," which new character Sara sings in the evening after being terrorized and robbed by three Federals and avenged by Inman. Like Stobrod in the previous chapter, Sara is a singer of sorrow but has not the musical talent to at least make it artful. An owl--the ancient symbol of death--accompanies her closing notes. Inman leaves her after being mildly tempted to abandon his course home, pessimistic about her and her baby's fate. Life is bleak and will get bleaker.

"A Satisfied Mind"

"A Satisfied Mind" Summary

Apple season brings much pleasant work for Ada and Ruby. Ruby sets off with two jugs of profitable hard cider to trade for beef, leaving Ada to split logs and burn brush, which is a good initiation into timberwork, which will be essential to winter survival. Patience, pacing, and rhythm are needed more than pure power. Work as long as you can and still be able to get up in the morning and resume--no more, no less. Ada slits logs first, dry and hard after 2 years on the ground. Ada does as Ruby had showed her and enjoys the sound and rhythm. She takes pride in having 40 pieces ready to haul to the house, but then she calculates that this will last just 3-5 days. Their winter needs are beyond calculation.

Drying out from the work, Ada writes cousin Lucy about how she has grown dark, leathery, and muscular since father died. Her mind is clear and her sense alert. Nothing is metaphoric any more. She is content. Unhappy with the tone, Ada sets the letter aside and turns to the brush pile. Last month, she and Ruby had cut a lot and left it to dry. Ada gathers and ignites it and settles to read but cannot get interested in *Adam Bede*. Instead, she searches for a tiny crablike creature inside a thistle, and watches it soar skyward on the wind like the souls of the departed are said to do. Evening falls, and the sky looks like marbled endpapers in a book. Canada geese flock overhead, and a breeze blows. Waldo demands to be milked, and Ada obliges, amazed at the sound and the darkness of her fingers against the pink teat. Ada wants Ruby to find her on duty at the fire. For weeks, Ada has been observing sunsets on the ridge and plans one day to notch the positions of the two annual solstices. This will help her feel time as a loop rather than a line and will answer the question, "Where am I?"

Hearing voices, Ada assumes a defensive posture. Stobrod and a banjo-carrying companion approach cautiously. The companion fetches wood on Stobrod's command, and Ada keeps her distance. Stobrod says he has been well for a man on the run, and Ada remembers the captive's story about the killer, Teague. Stobrod introduces his companion as Pangle, a corpulent, gentle man-child set free to wander Cold Mountain when everyone sees he will never earn a living. When outliers commandeer Pangle's cave, he settles among them and attaches to Stobrod. The outliers have taken to looting the houses of anyone with whom they have had the slightest difference, and have decorated the cave with elegant furnishings from the Walker estate. Among the spoils is an ugly, but mellow, banjo Stobrod gives Pangle and shows him how to tune. The boy shows natural talent, masters Stobrod's entire repertoire, and they become a duo.

As the lone brisket Ruby has gotten in trade cooks, they sip cider, and the musicians tune up. Ada says Monroe had opposed fiddles on aesthetic grounds, beyond the usual theological contempt for the "devil's box." They play a loopy, syncopated tune, "Drunk Neggar" and additional pieces suited for dancing. Ruby removes Ada's silver bracelet, wears it a while, and then returns it. Stobrod offers a musical autobiography of his war

years. The final song, "Stone Was My Bedstead," touches Ada more than any opera she has attended because it offers hope, and she wishes there were a way to record it for posterity. Stobrod's face shows delight and the conviction he can always play better. They offer as an encore a gospel song that speaks of stormy lives ending in death without the resurrection expected in the genre. As they eat, Ruby asks what Stobrod wants from them.

A talkative Bearskin Man has taken charge of the outliers and is driving them to loot rich slave owners. Stobrod has not deserted one army to die in another, private one, so he begs sanctuary until the fighting is over and begs for consideration when Ruby says no. She rejects his claim to have done the best he could for her. Ruby will not risk Ada's property harboring him from a man of Teague's reputation. Ada is nervous as an arbitrator, but sees Stobrod's return as a resurrection and second chance. Thus, it is Ruby's duty to look after him, to which Stobrod says, "Amen." Ruby says they have different ideas of fatherhood and reminds Stobrod of his moonshining days when she had foraged for wild food and wished she could be a wolf child. She recalls Ada's tales of Romulus and Remus as fierce guardians. Ruby admits Stobrod never struck her, but neither had he shown her affection.

Ada watches a lunar eclipse, which, when full, allows the Milky Way to shine. Ada experiences vertigo watching the heavenly light and thinks about Stobrod's heartfelt love song about coming back; speaking one's mind and heart unguardedly is worth more than 4,000 lines of Milton, she thinks and wishes she could learn how. Ada tries to write a letter to Inman but comes up with empty phrases, so she pens, "Come back to me is my request," signs and addresses it, and sleeps.

"A Satisfied Mind" Analysis

The chapter title describes the happily musical Stobrod, working in duo with the simpleton Pangle. The depth of Ruby's resentment emerges and is set against Ada's view she owes him a child's duty. Ada's attachment to Monroe doubtless colors her views. The idea of marking the horizon for the northern and southern solstice positions shows Ada becoming attuned to nature, which will play a part in the final chapter. She has decided she wants Inman to return and has abandoned the literary ambiguities she is used to sending him. She believes him still to be at the hospital.

"A Vow to Bear"

"A Vow to Bear" Summary

Inman loses track of miles and hours as he walks remote areas. He offers to bury a grief-stricken mother's child on a knoll where four gravestones already stand. He places her in a coffin he has lovingly built and lined. The woman declines to say anything, knowing it will come out bitter. Inman fills the hole and accepts an invitation to eat. He chokes up, seeing the meal the woman prepares and says it requires special thanks for which he cannot find words. The woman suggests some and Inman begins eating. She shows him a daguerreotype of three adults and six children; she is now the sole survivor. She sends him on his way, and that night sleep comes hard to Inman. The next few nights, he finds shelter in the haunts of birds. A passage from Bartram about endless mountains and valleys sticks in Inman's mind as he nears the familiar border country northwest of Cold Mountain. A road sign shows he is far from any town. Stopping at a stream to fill his canteen, Inman hears a strange tock and click sound and investigates: the bare-bone skeletons of three hanged men are rattling in the breeze.

Days later, walking a ridgeline, Inman adds a fresh rock to the ancient Cherokee cairn to commemorate his upward yearning. At a rocky scarp where travelers used to admire the view, he eats parched corn and stretches out, wishing for a bigger moon. He awakens at dawn to the sound of steps and readies his LeMat's. A black sow bear protecting a cub is 20 feet away, sniffing the breeze and not liking Inman's scent of him.

After a series of dreams at Petersburg in which he becomes a bear and watches himself shot and skinned by hunters, Inman vows never again to eat savory bear meat. The beasts are now sacred to him. Inman wills the sow to understand he wants only to move out of her way, but she false charges, as he knows she might. Tragically, she cannot halt her momentum in time and plunges over the cliff to a gory death. Inman is enraged that even his best intentions come to naught. The cub bawls in anguish. Inman knows it will starve or be killed by a predator, wishes he could adopt it, but knows this is impossible. Sadly, he kills it and, rather than waste the meat, parboils it. Nevertheless, joy fills Inman's heart at the prospect of being home, free from hate and fear. He recognizes the natural features around him and puts familiar names to them all. He feels balance returning. The bear meat, when roasted, tastes like sin--an eighth deadly sin, he decides.

"A Vow to Bear" Analysis

This chapter finds Inman entering the fringes of his familiar homeland. We learn of his vow to give up eating delicious bear meat after another dream series on the battlefront. Having seen himself slain and pelted out as a bear, he feels special kinship. He is helpless, however, to prevent a mother bear from perishing as she follows her protective

instincts, and he is too much a woodsman to let the doomed cub's flesh go to waste. Anguish will not let go of Inman.

"Naught and Grief"

"Naught and Grief" Summary

Stobrod walks with Pangle close on his heels while another man trails behind. Eating a doe whose cause of death is uncertain has given them diarrhea. They reach an icy rock ledge and ascend to flat ground, a "Y" in the trail, and an old fire ring beneath an immense poplar. Stobrod dimly remembers the spot. Neither knows their companion's name; he is a Georgia boy of 17, smooth-cheeked, a deserter along with his cousin, who has died of a lung disease. Found wandering, he is taken in and accompanies Stobrod and Pangle as they set out to found a new community at Shining Rocks. Stobrod has never been to his state but reminds the boy constantly of its bad reputation. They have told the Georgia boy how Ada has convinced Ruby to provision them secretly at a place she recalls from her girlhood ramblings, when and if she feels like it. They are not to show their faces at Ada's again. Raking the ground, they find a modest stash of food. Stobrod knows they must head higher, to more remote regions of Cold Mountain, but he has little feel for the area, having been drunk during most of his earlier travels. He will decide where to go after they eat something bland to settle their stomachs and warm themselves on liquor. The Georgia boy looks pained and excuses himself to run into the bushes.

Three guardsmen ride into view, pointing rifles at Stobrod, and Teague warns him to sit still. He does not bother to ask whether they have papers, but says it may be to their advantage to reveal what they know about some thieving outliers holed up somewhere in a cave. Stobrod talks vaguely of somewhere on the far side of the mountain, but Pangle's face belies the story, and he provides detailed directions. The men dismount and invite themselves to share the fire. Pangle enjoys the companionship before falling asleep. Stobrod shares Teague's mediocre liquor and says they have been performing and gambling. Teague wants to hear something, and Stobrod finds a lively tune and Pangle joins in. They retune to the "dead man's tuning" for a variant on an old song. None of the guardsmen has heard such playing and Birch declares Stobrod and Pangle holy men. Nevertheless, Teague orders them to stand against the poplar. Pangle drapes his arm over Stobrod's shoulder and grins, as though posing for a picture. A guardsman objects that he cannot shoot a man smiling at him, but Pangle cannot wipe it off. Teague orders him to cover his face with his hat. Shots ring out.

"Naught and Grief" Analysis

Stobrod and Pangle (apparently) die playing the music they love and have attained amazing heights in delivering. Even non-musicians can grasp that these must be extraordinary musicians. The chapter ends abruptly, with balls passing through human meat and slamming into a tree trunk. Rather than switch to Inman's progress as the pattern of the book suggests should happen, the author follows up with the Georgia boy's bearing witness to the shooting.

"Black Bark in Winter"

"Black Bark in Winter" Summary

The guardsmen ride away, without covering the bodies or saying a word. One laughs. The shocked Georgia boy tells Ada how diarrhea saved his life. He vows never again to set foot on Cold Mountain. Ruby offers to feed him like other strays and resists the minor comfort Ada is able to give. She shows no signs of mourning as she says they must decide between burying them there and bringing them home. Remembering bad blood between Stobrod and the blacks, Ruby decides on the former. Ada heats leftovers for the boy, and Ruby maps out for him how to get home for Christmas. It is a bad time to travel with days so short; they will have to spend at least one night in the woods. They load up Ralph and dress in Monroe's clothing. In happier circumstances, Ada would have drawn on charcoal mustaches and sideburns and mimicked how men talk and gesture with cigars, but this is a day of dread requiring silence. They give Georgia boy permission to sleep in the hayloft until dark and set off as he waves goodbye.

They trudge until evening through a gloom of snow and fog. Ralph is nervous. Monroe would have found analogies for God's doings. He owned a book of types: roses, babies' births, and crows. Ada sees a black stream as a weapon of the spirit or a warning, but she considers the book useless. They stay near the creek as they enter a hardwood forest and come upon an abandoned Indian trail. Ruby knows a good place to spend the night, and they press on to it. It is a ?-shaped natural structure near a spring, unchanged since it sheltered her as a foraging child. They build a fire, prepare tea, and eat biscuits and tart apple rings. Ruby remarks the Georgia boy is no worse than most men, but he could benefit from having someone's foot in his back every waking moment. She shows Ada fragments of arrow points and takes comfort that ancient people did as they are doing tonight. The temperature drops as they burrow into the leaves, and Ada interprets patterns of flame on the cave walls as various wild animals. She recalls Stobrod's song about becoming a different creature in every season, and worries about lost, betrayed, or unexpressed love making a human want to turn into a beast. Ruby says musicians regularly modify existing songs, adding and removing elements, neither improving nor degrading them. Ada falls into a dreamless sleep and awakens at first light to see deepening snow. Neither is anxious to press on. Ruby recalls Stobrod mistaking Mrs. Swanger's tea for cress and eating it with fatback.

They find Pangle's corpse, still smiling and looking confused. They find part of a fiddle but no Stobrod and figure the Guard has hauled him away. The ground is not deeply frozen, so burying Pangle is light work. Although they met only once and never talked, Ada weeps for him, and remembers burying the winter cabbages and thinking it metaphoric. There is no similarity at all with this. They pack the earth, and Ada fashions a cross. She says nothing aloud but hopes a tall locust tree will grow over him. Ada sees something under a rock ledge. It is Stobrod, lying still, cradling his fiddle. He has lost a lot of blood but is breathing. He had been hit three times, the worst in the upper chest; he is too weak to groan as Ruby cuts deep and pulls the ball out. They wrap him

in blankets and Ruby forces him to drink medicinal tea. They find better shelter in a Cherokee village, abandoned since the Trail of Tears. Ada struggles to orient herself and wonders if any villagers still live and how they have adapted to other words, dreams, and prayers to other gods, They carry Stobrod inside the best cabin and force Ralph into another lest he freeze to death. Ada is tired, cold, and scared in this loneliest place on earth. She dreads the work ahead and sees in the flames none of the happy visions of the night before. Even Ada can tell from the sounds more snow is coming.

"Black Bark in Winter" Analysis

We hear the Georgia boy's account of the execution and follow Ada and Ruby's grim burial detail. The chapter draws its title from Ada's hope a locust tree will someday grow over poor Pangle's grave where she has planted a makeshift cross. It occurs in the context of an obscure reference to the Greek goddess Persephone, but the author moves rapidly onward. Ruby is softening toward the father she thinks she has lost, and Ada struggles to get past her father's theological views about how everything in creation represents a sign of something in God's plan rather than something in and of itself. She and Inman are both struggling with traditional Christianity by this point. Note the passing mention of Ruby's views on the Georgia boy, whom they wrongly expect is homeward bound. It will be quoted in the last chapter.

"Footsteps in the Snow"

"Footsteps in the Snow" Summary

Inman arrives where the three ways converge and is puzzled to find a single grave amidst signs of feasting and killing. He finds more blood, warm coals, and sodden herbs on a rock ledge. He fears Ada may recede from him forever, leaving him a lone pilgrim because there will be no moon tonight, and it smells like snow. Inman's struggle to understand the evidence is made harder by his vow to fast. If Ada will not have him, Inman wants to be ready for the portals at Shining Rocks; he doubts anyone in the world is emptier than he, and he is ready for the happy valley the woman with the snake tattoos had described.

Inman does not start the day expecting to lie on cold ground again, but he is certain he will declare himself to Ada and have her answer. He will arrive weary-looking but heroic, bathed and freshly clothed, and Ada, too, will wear fine clothes and run to embrace him in the roadway. Inman has scrubbed himself raw, washed his clothes, and hung them to dry. In the morning, he avoids the roads until shortly before Black Cove. No one answers his knocking and calls, but he finds a man's boot tracks in the snow and tries harder. The Georgia boy asks what the racket is about, admits Inman, and tells an inflated tale of battle and a tear-jerking "Fiddler's Farewell." He runs to tell the women, who insist he rest until he is recovered. Inman sets out to find them.

Inman cannot control his thoughts or breathing. He imagines holding a grandchild, but a dark voice in his head says he is too far ruined by fear and hate for faith and hope to work. He is ready for a hole in the ground. He remembers Veasey's death after all his talk about sinners being saved. There is no map or guidebook to bring one back from bitterness and anger. Inman knows this is true, but he also knows he has tracks to follow after he sleeps. As the snow deepens, Inman sees the tracks grow first as faint as an old scar, then as watermarks in paper, and finally vanish. Still he runs forward, feeling his way. He figures if he lies down now, snow will cover him, and eventually all that will be left is his naked skull.

Stobrod's cough awakens the women, and Ruby sends Ada out for water. Ada reports seeing a flock of turkeys and is told how to fire a shotgun. Ada stalks the flock and is amazed to drop two birds with her first shot. Inman hears the report and walks warily towards it. He sees a hunter and calls out he is lost. Making out Ada's fine face, he calls her name. Inman realizes his senses are undependable and people often see trickster spirits in the woods. Ada, too, is confused, hearing her name and failing to recognize this drawn, scruffy beggar. They stand at distance duelers' range, scarcely the clasping of hearts Inman has imagined. Inman puts away his pistol as love rings in his soul. He says what the dream in the gypsy camp had told him: "I've been coming to you on a hard road and I'm not letting you go." Ada trains the shotgun on him and says simply, "I do not know you." Inman accepts this as justice for years of bad behavior and turns to walk to Shining Rock, or perhaps Veasey's Texas, but finds no trail. He turns back with a

gesture saying he has nowhere to go. Then Ada recognizes him, ravaged, ragged, weary, and starving for food and kindness, and tears fill her eyes. She picks up the turkeys and talks to Inman as Ruby does to a nervous horse. She describes the features around them and how she had lacked the courage to differ with Monroe about some painting in Europe. It penetrates Inman's cloudy mind that Monroe is dead, Ada is in control, and things may turn out fine

"Footsteps in the Snow" Analysis

This chapter follows Inman on his final quest for Ada. It begins with Inman at the murder scene puzzling over the single grave and not at all confused by men's footprints leading away, but he knows women wear them. We learn he has talked with Georgia Boy, who has not set off for home but, instead, has given himself permission to recuperate and embellish his story. Ada's wish for a way to record music permanently, the bear cub, and the story of the Cherokees' fasting to enter the hidden valley come together. Ada and Inman meet not as he has been rehearsing mentally, but like duelers, and Inman is quick to accept defeat. His burden of guilt is overwhelming, and he disbelieves in cheap salvation-by-grace schemes. Everything Ruby has been teaching Ada suddenly makes sense, and Ada is in touch with her environment and able to help the helpless Inman.

"The Far Side of Trouble"

"The Far Side of Trouble" Summary

Ruby barely acknowledges Inman as he and Ada sit together in the suddenly cramped cabin. Stobrod is disoriented and clammy, and Inman has much to say but first must sleep. While the men sleep, the women collect firewood, clean, and prepare the birds for roasting. Ruby tells Ada she might *want* Inman but does not *need* him; she has big plans for Black Cove. Ada gives her an emerald ring and Ruby roughly gives it back. Ada wants not to end up a bitter old woman. Inman wakes disoriented and fetches Stobrod water. At the creek, he smells roasting turkey. Inman has given up predicting who among the wounded will live or die. Inman builds up the fire and leaves Stobrod to sleep. Ruby opens the door of her cabin curtly. Ada is so beautiful it hurts, and Inman does not know how to behave. Beside the fire, Ada touches his back and stomach, remarking that he is thin. Ada serves him chunks of turkey to nibble on while the rest of the meal is finished.

Ruby takes her father turkey broth and announces she will be gone a while. Ada recalls Charleston's rules on chaperonage and decides they are out of place here. Inman prattles about the food but wants to spill his true thoughts and feelings. He shows Ada his grimy Bartram scroll, picks a passage at random, and he blushes to find it highly sexual. Inman, instead, puts the scroll away and does the dishes. He is sure Ada has been intimate with no one, so the burden is on him. He asks whether she has written him and says they did not get through. Ada is glad to have an opportunity to say what she now feels rather than what she had written, and she adds detail and passion. She does not mention the last note. Inman refrains from saying they would have eased his bad day; he does not want to talk about the hospital yet. They talk about the ruins of the past, imagining a family of Cherokees in this cabin having no premonition their world is about to end. Inman tells her how he has hoped Ada will marry him, and confesses he is ruined beyond repair and fearful they will grow bitter and wretched together. Ada notes physical wounds heal more quickly than spiritual ones, and doubt can defeat it. Ada hopes he is among those who can be healed. He kisses the hollow of Ada's neck. They embrace, and words spill out of him about staring at her in church. Grieving about the wasted years accomplishes nothing. One must move forward, carrying one's scars. Inman feels redeemed by kissing Ada's neck. She, however, cannot recall the event and create a shared memory, but she asks him to kiss her again. Ruby's return ends the moment, and Inman retires to Stobrod's cabin. All three have difficulty sleeping. Ada thinks how they have become different people from what they were, but perhaps better. Ruby knows Ada is awake, thinking love thoughts, and she wonders aloud about what to do with Pap if he survives. Ada promises they can take him in, now that no one is hunting for him. Ruby says as a child she often wanted to grab his fiddle and dash it on the rocks.

The next day is colder. Ada wants him to know how she came to be what she is--how Monroe tried to keep her a child, but now he has died and how Ruby has taught her

much. Ruby is not a servant and does not take orders. Inman must understand and accept that Ada and Ruby are inseparable friends. They gather scarce goldenseal for Ruby and find an arrow in a poplar. They should visit this site annually with their children, who will find this artifact--and Indians--odd.

Ruby sits with an alert Stobrod, who is afraid of this dark, big man. As both men sleep, Ada asks Ruby about next spring, and Ruby sketches an ambitious plan and then dozes off. When Ruby awakens, she checks on Stobrod and announces the crisis will come tonight, so she will stay with him. Ada undresses awkwardly, and Inman pulls her close. Snow is piling up outside their haven, safer for them than for the earlier inhabitants whom soldiers had dragged into exile and death. Tonight, the cabin holds no pain or even vague memory of collected pain. Later, they lie woven together and fill each other in on their pasts. How, Inman wonders, can one talk about the reality of war, any more than know an old bear from its signs in the woods? Inman shares a few camp stories but nothing about great generals he has seen. He recalls the goatwoman teaching him God eases memories by laying the worst on and then taking some back; Ada disagrees and advises Inman to work at forgetting. They turn to the future: marriage and a happy life at Black Cove. Though they are reaching the age where possibilities narrow, they are on the cusp of life.

"The Far Side of Trouble" Analysis

In this chapter, we watch Inman and Ada share histories and dreams and struggle to help themselves overcome their fears and demons. Ada refuses to abandon Ruby, and Inman accepts her as part of their new life. Ruby has reconciled with her father, and she accepts that she must give the lovers space. The chapter ends with an uplifting message that life can start anew. The Cherokees' fate and the bear motif, however, suggest everything cannot work out this rosily.

"Spirits of Crows, Dancing"

"Spirits of Crows, Dancing" Summary

Inman and Ada determine three options for him: 1) return to active duty; 2) remain a hunted outlier; or 3) surrender to the Federals. Inman will cross into Tennessee, bow his head, and salute the Union flag. They vow to focus on the new postwar world during the separation. Both the weather and Stobrod's health improve steadily. The two wanted men must not endanger the women. Inman feels part of the richness of his world depart as Ada rides away. Stobrod recognizes and curses the bullet-scarred poplar and recalls Pangle's love of music and unworthiness to die this way. Horsemen approach. Inman sees no protection or hope of reasoning, so he sends Stobrod charging off on Ralph, kills three guardsmen including Teague, and pursues the white-haired boy, hoping not to have to kill him. The boy makes a break, and Inman jockeys to cut him off. The horse charges and bucks the boy into the snow. Inman begs him to drop his rifle, but he shoots and thanks God for his luck. Hearing the shots, Ada runs towards them, passing Ralph and Stobrod. She holds him in her lap as he talks about the seasons blending. From a distance, it is an intimate tableau suggesting decades of happiness ahead.

"Spirits of Crows, Dancing" Analysis

Teague and the Home Guard surround the two runaways, Inman gets Stobrod away safely, and he succeeds in killing all but the blathering young Birch. Inman cannot convince the young fool to give up and walk away, and he is shot for his troubles. The author paints an elegiac scene of what might have been as Inman's final thoughts race through his mind.

"Epilogue: October of 1874"

"Epilogue: October of 1874" Summary

Ruby marries the Georgia boy and they raise three sons at Black Cove. They hold a last picnic before cold weather sets in, ending Ada's favorite season poignantly and metaphorically. Ruby's 9-year-old daughter helps her carry out food. Stobrod brings milk from the barn. At twilight, he plays until the children are exhausted, and then he puts aside the devil's box to sing a new hymn, "Angel Band." Ada is missing a fingertip since an accident marking the winter solstice. They lock themselves in the house to sleep in preparation for another busy day.

"Epilogue: October of 1874" Analysis

Inman has, indeed, died, but Ada is pregnant (like Sara) and bears a daughter. The Georgia boy does not return home, and Ruby marries him and keeps him and their sons in line. Stobrod, too, is part of the family as life goes on in a perpetual cycle. Everyone seems at peace.

Characters

Inman

The novel's male protagonist, Inman is a native of Cold Mountain, NC, who has suffered a grave neck wound in the Battle of Fredericksburg. We first meet him in a military hospital, where he miraculously survives. Suffering from post-traumatic stress disorder, fearing a return to active duty, disillusioned with the war, and longing for the preacher's daughter, Ada Monroe, Inman slips away from the hospital one night. Inman knows deserters are being actively hunted, so he avoids highways and treks through forests and lowlands. Still, he runs into trouble re-provisioning and often goes hungry. After preventing a murder by a preacher-rapist and leaving the perpetrator for parishioners to punish, Inman encounters gypsies who feed him, is re-united with the preacher, Solomon Veasey, and puts up with him as a traveling companion for a while. Inman and Veasey help a woodsman remove the carcass of a bull from a stream. The man, Junior, takes them to his off-kilter cabin, where his wife, Lila, and her sisters lust after him. Junior catches Inman drunk, drugged, and compromised, and forces Veasey to marry Inman and Lila--before betraying Inman and Veasey to the Home Guard for $5 a head. Tied together with over a dozen captured outliers, Inman grows furious to lose ground in his westward trek. Eventually, after a week of tormenting the prisoners, the guardsmen grow tired and summarily execute them. Inman is grazed in the head by balls slowed by having passed through Veasey, and he resumes his westward movement, alone.

A yellow-toned slave hides him while he recuperates and draws him a map; a hermetic goat herder/artist/healer gives him medicine and a sense of God's providence. A war widow, Sara, nearly tempts him to put down roots and inspires him to hunt down and kill the three Federal raiders who torment and rob her, but he pushes on, determined to reach Cold Mountain and either marry Ada or become a hermit there. Sorrow over the death of a mother bear and having to kill and eat the cub makes Inman vow to fast until he finds Ada. He cleans up for his arrival at Black Cove, learns Ada and her friend Ruby have gone to Cold Mountain to bury the murdered Stobrod, and sets off. He finds Ada hunting turkeys in the snowy forest, despairs when she does not initially recognize him, and remains fearful of whether she can love him when she comes around. Inman and Ada spend hours alone, entwined under blankets, dealing with their pasts and planning a future together. Ruby's father, Stobrod, has survived the execution, gravely wounded, and when he is well enough to travel, he and Inman travel home separate from the women. The Home Guard finds them, and a desperate Inman kills all but one guardsman, Birch, who takes him down with a lucky shot. Ada rushes toward the sound of the shots and holds Inman as he dies.

Ada Monroe

One of the novel's female protagonists (with Ruby), Ada is the daughter of a protective, ailing, and widowed Charleston preacher. Ada accompanies Monroe to Cold Mountain,

where he takes on a parish, and she attracts attention by her city ways. Monroe buys an old farm at Black's Cove, which he leaves to Ada--and precious little else--when he dies. We first meet Ada, when she is struggling to figure out how to survive with superb literary and artistic skills but no practical learning. Ada's first meeting with Inman, as one of a quartet of young parishioners wishing to meet her, is awkward, and the second, swooning from champagne and the kitchen stove's high heat into his lap at Monroe's last Christmas party. On both occasions, Ada is curt. After her father's funeral, Ada finds no reason for returning to Charleston, where she has no relatives and has alienated society by turning down two marriage proposals. A neighbor sends Ruby her way to help her survive, and Ada hires her as an equal. Ruby becomes a demanding taskmaster, helping Ada learn survival skills. Ada sells her piano, on which she had not excelled, for a large number of provisions. During the evenings, she reads to Ada, and once it is too dark, listens to her life tales. Ada is determined to understand her environment like Ruby and gradually gains confidence she is.

A brief note from Inman in the hospital makes her think about him and their awkward parting as he headed off to war; he promises to come for her, but when and how: as a veteran someday or as a deserter immediately? Ruby's estranged father, Stobrod Thewes, is a deserter and shows up at Ada's farm with a friend. The women agree to provision them secretly in the woods, but they do not take the risk of harboring them. When word comes that the Home Guard has executed them on Cold Mountain, the women head there to bury them. They find Stobrod wounded but alive. Ada, who succeeds to her own surprise as a turkey hunter, encounters a stranger in the snowy woods and is slow to recognize him as Inman. While Ruby tends to her father's wounds, Ada lies entwined with Inman beneath blankets, sharing their pasts and exploring their joint future. Ada and Ruby head home separately from the two hunted runaways, and Ada runs toward the sounds of gunfire. She finds Inman dying and cradles him in her lap. She is pregnant and bears a beautiful daughter. Ruby marries, has three sons, and they all live contentedly in tune with nature at Black Cove, in the shadow of Cold Mountain.

Ruby Thewes

The second of the novel's female protagonists (with Ada), Ruby learns from the Swangers that Ada needs help with her farm after her father's death, and volunteers to help on condition they live as equals. Ruby's being motherless as an infant, like Ada, creates a bond that overcomes Ruby's lack of education. Ruby's father is a ne'er-do-well named Stobrod Thewes, who throughout her childhood and adolescence, has left her for extended periods to forage for food, learn to hunt, and farm by trial-and-error. Once, at the age of 4, Ruby is caught in a blackberry bush while scavenging and is not missed by her father overnight, a time of terror for her as she remembers stories about wild beasts preferring to eat children and about wandering Cherokee spirits. A mysterious voice comforts her, however, and she is freed in the morning. Stobrod has volunteered for the army and disappeared with their only horse, so Ruby is free to move into Ada's old cabin.

Ruby is a hard taskmaster to Ada, teaching her how to survive. Ruby has no use for currency, but she is a master of barter and turns good apple and tobacco crops and a lucky find of coffee beans into provisions for her and Ada's first winter together. When Stobrod shows up as a fugitive from the Home Guard, Ruby is cold and resentful, but Ada convinces her she must help him and his companion survive. Ruby designates one of the places she frequented as an abandoned child as a secret drop for provisions. She will not endanger Ada by letting Stobrod hide on the farm. A Georgia boy brings news that Stobrod and his friend have been captured and killed by guardsmen, and she resolutely sets out to find and bury the bodies. She and Ada discover Stobrod gravely wounded but alive, and Ruby softens as she nurses him back to health. The fugitive men separate from Ruby and Ada for the trip home, and the women hear gunshots soon afterwards. Inman, Ada's intended, is killed. Ruby eventually marries the Georgia boy and bears three sons. They live on Ada's farm with her and the daughter she conceived with Inman in their few days together.

Solomon Veasey

Veasey is the preacher whom Inman prevents from killing his pregnant paramour and who becomes for a while his traveling companion. Veasey is proud of his soul-saving pulpit skills but confesses he is not otherwise fit to be a clergyman. His passion for the female anatomy is overwhelming; no matter how many beatings he takes for enjoying it. Veasey survives the beating his congregation members give him when they discover him gagged and tied to a tree outside the girl's cabin. The wife of the ringleader, Deacon Johnston, takes pity on Veasey and gives him clothes; Veasey steals their Colt revolver. He thinks out loud to Inman about becoming a *pistolero* of note in Texas. Veasey and Inman help Junior remove a dead bull from a stream when Junior hails them for help. Veasey has become enamored of the physics of leverage and wants to apply them to the bull and Junior's tilting house.

Neither Veasey nor Inman has been eating well, so the alcohol Junior shares with them goes quickly to their heads. Veasey falls asleep by the fireplace while Junior's wife, Lila, tries to seduce Inman. The Home Guard takes them both into custody after Veasey is made to officiate at the marriage of Inman and Lila. After several days of a tormenting eastward march, during which Veasey walks head down in defeat, the Home Guard summarily executes its prisoners. Inman, who survives because the bullet that causes his head wound is slowed by passing through Veasey, can only roll his companion over on his belly when he walks away. Several times afterwards, Veasey's visions of freedom in Texas will return to Inman's mind when his goal of marrying Ada seems dim, and his skepticism over the Christian doctrine of salvation and life after death will be intensified by his memory of the tragically fallible preacher.

Stobrod Thewes

Ruby's widowed ne'er-do-well, scofflaw father, Stobrod makes Ruby forage for food, plow their tiny field, and keep house while he wanders off for days at a time to dances,

where he plays an amateurish fiddle. Stobrod loves to drink, but is too lazy to grow corn; instead, he steals corn by night and distills a raw, potent liquor. He works only one job, helping a neighbor stack and burn tree limbs from newly cleared farmland. The job takes too long for Stobrod's taste and he walks off, leaving the man to finish the job, which nearly costs the man his life when he is trapped by shifting, burning logs. Stobrod enlists in the army as soon as the war starts, and he rides off on their only horse, leaving Ruby unable to plant fields. He is unaccounted for since Sharpsburg, and Ruby does not know whether he has died in action or has deserted. Stobrod, a nickname gained when he is nearly beaten to death with a stob (a southern term for tree branch) for theft, returns transfigured by music.

In 1862, he learns to compose tunes on his fiddle while playing for a dying girl, and he applies himself to mastering the instrument until his repertoire reaches 900 tunes, 100 of them his own invention. Ada sees him as a sign that wasted lives can be reclaimed. Accompanied by the dim-witted but musically talented Pangel, Stobrod asks Ruby and Ada to give him sanctuary when the law pursues the thieves among whom they have been living. Ruby still resents her lost childhood, but a compromise is reached. Ruby will leave supplies for them when she wants to at a designated, hidden spot, but they are not to endanger Ada's property by showing up on it again. Teague and the Home Guard capture Stobrod and Pangel on Cold Mountain, ask them to play some tunes, and summarily execute and abandon them. A Georgia companion is hiding in the bushes and so survives, and he rushes to tell Ruby and Ada. They find Stobrod shot three times but alive and nurse him back to health. Stobrod survives the encounter with guardsmen that proves fatal to Inman, and after the war lives with his daughter, Georgian son-in-law, their three sons, Ada, and her daughter.

Balis

A former student of Greek at Chapel Hill, Balis is shot in the foot at Cold Harbor, and steadily loses his lower leg by amputation as the stub refuses to heal. He occupies the bed next to Inman and spends his waking hours translating some Greek text. He dies peacefully while Inman is in town, and Inman confiscates his much worked-over manuscript when he flees the hospital. One of Inman's goals for a happy life with Ada is to study Greek and continue Balis' research.

William Bartram

An 18th-century writer about travels in the Carolinas, Bartram is Inman's constant companion and inspiration in the form of a coverless copy of his book, which Inman carries rolled in a scroll. He picks passages to read at random, as some people look for oracles in the Bible.

Birch

A blue-eyed, blond-haired member of Teague's Home Guard, Birch spouts biblical allusions that annoy the others. His prized fingernail, long as the finger itself, is torn while apprehending a fugitive. He declares Stobrod and Pangel saints after listening to their wondrous duet on fiddle and banjo, and then he takes part in their summary execution. When the Guard overtakes Inman and Stobrod, who survives his first shooting, Inman kills all of them except Birch, whom he tries to convince to give up his gun and his vendetta. Birch fires a lucky shot while Inman talks, wounding him fatally.

The Blind Man

The Blind Man is an old man who sets up his newspaper and peanut stand across the road from Inman's hospital every day and listens to Inman's horrible stories about Fredericksburg. Inman wonders what it must be like to have no one to blame for one's misfortunes for the old man had been born with no eyes in his sockets. He advises Inman to drive out the evil visions that torment him.

Blount

The dull, wealthy young man who courts Ada at her cousin's party and confesses to her his fear at disgracing himself in the coming war, Blount dies at Gettysburg, retreating backwards so as not to be shot in the back by the Northerners.

Eben

The pistol-toting leader of a three-man Federal posse, Eben is a cruel man from New York City. His unnamed companions are Philadelphia city boys, fearful of the woods. They raid Sara's homestead while Inman is visiting and terrorize her by laying her baby on the frozen ground as they ransack for hidden treasures. In the end, Eben leads his men away, stealing Sara's means of surviving the winter, her hog and three chickens. Inman pursues the guardsmen, lures Eben to the foot of a tree in which he hides, and dispatches him with a single shot. Inman then stalks the companions and shoots them at close range. Inman has little regret over dispatching the cruel Eben.

The Ferry Crossing Girl

An unnamed part-Indian girl, young and powerfully built, the ferry crossing girl takes Inman across the storm-swollen river in her canoe for a premium price. She is intent on earning enough to move away. The unnamed character gives him directions for his continued trek after her boat is destroyed by gunfire by marauders.

Laura Foster

The girl Inman finds drugged by the preacher, Veasey, and about to be thrown into the gorge to hide their affair and her pregnancy, Laura is rescued and returned to her home. When parishioners find Veasey tied to a tree outside her door with a full confession over his head, they beat and shear him and will probably "church" (ostracize) her for a while, gossip about her. Eventually, some old bachelor will marry her and bring up her bastard child.

Georgia Boy

A 17-year-old native of Georgia whose name no one knows or cares to learn, Georgia Boy and a cousin desert the army figuring it would be tragic to die so near the end of the conflict, but the cousin dies of some lung disease. Georgia Boy is found wandering lost on Cold Mountain and joins up with Stobrod and Pangle. He avoids capture by Teague when diarrhea forces him into the bushes. He hears the Home Guard shoot his two companions and hurries to tell Ada and Ruby. Ruby tells him how to find his way home without setting foot again on the mountain, and is surprised to find him still at Ada's home when they return. The boy tells Inman his story, now greatly embellished, when he arrives at Ada's door, sending him on the last leg of his journey. Georgia Boy marries Ruby, and they have three sons.

The Goatwoman

An unnamed elderly woman whom Inman encounters in the mountains, the goatwoman takes him to her garish caravan, feeds him, and gives him home remedies for the road. Her hermitic life of 26 years in this isolated mountain cope begins when her father marries her to a cruel three-time widower from whom she flees. She remembers fondly the yellow-haired boy who kissed her after a dance. She hopes ravens will rend her dead body apart someday and carry her abroad, rather than having worms do their duty.

Junior

A viper-eyed man who asks Inman and Veasey's help getting a dead bull out of the stream, Junior reveals to them he enjoyed financial and sexual success as a cockfighter before marrying Lila, who turns out to be a whore. Junior lives with her, their daughter Lula/Chastity, Lila's rutting twin sisters, and one of their dim-witted twin boys. To Inman and Veasey's surprise, he also collects $5 a head from the Home Guard for any runaways he turns in. Junior is preoccupied with salting a ham when Inman returns after escaping death and clubs him to death with his revolver.

Lila

Junior's lusty wife, mother of Lula/Chastity, Lila intoxicates and seduces Inman, and, surrounded by the Home Guard, marries him before God in a ceremony dictated by Junior and performed by the preacher Veasey before the Home Guard drag them away.

Monroe

Ada's father, a liberal-minded preacher, much influenced by Emerson, who moves to Cold Mountain from Charleston to find relief from an advanced case of tuberculosis. He has heard the mountain people are cruel and barbaric and arrives looking to confirm their ignorance. His worst moment as a missionary is preaching at length to Esco Swanger, a Baptist who pretends he has heard nothing about Jesus Christ and leaves Monroe unaware he has been tricked. Monroe gives Ada a proper education but shields her from the kind of practical knowledge she needs to survive his sudden death. Before his death, Monroe feels obliged to tell about how he first courted Ada's late mother, Claire, in their youth, only to have her father marry her off to an associate. Monroe sails to England and studies for the ministry.

Widowed, Claire returns home and at 36 marries the 45-year-old bachelor minister. Claire dies in childbirth after 3 happy years of marriage. Ada had assumed she was an accident rather than the result of passion. Monroe seems unconcerned by signs of Inman's interest in his daughter as he goes off to war in 1861. Monroe is obsessed with the meaning of death and preaches every Wednesday and Sunday on the subject without finding a satisfactory answer. Parishioners prefer entertaining stories about Bible incidents.

Claire Dechutes Monroe

Ada's late mother, Claire at age 16 becomes the object of 25-year-old Monroe's affections, but her father marries her off to an associate, and she accompanies him to France in a miserable, childless marriage. Widowed, Claire returns home and at 36 marries the 45-year-old bachelor minister. Claire dies in childbirth after 3 happy years of marriage.

Odell

The white-haired peddler with whom Inman shares stories and a flask during a stormy night spent in a roadside tavern's hayloft. Odell has been on the road for years, searching for his rich father's slave, Lucinda, whom Odell loves and has impregnated. The father sells her to someone in Mississippi to end the foolishness and locks Odell in a room until he calms down, but Odell steals all the family riches he can find and sets out in search of Lucinda.

Pangle

A childlike, corpulent man turned out by his relatives to wander Cold Mountain, Pangle attaches himself devotedly to Stobrod and, surprisingly, shows a natural talent on a stolen banjo. Soon, he knows Stobrod's entire repertoire, and they play as a duo. Wandering Cold Mountain with Stobrod and a Georgia boy, Pangle dies with a smile on his face at the hands of Teague's Home Guard after accompanying his friend in several tunes. Ada and Ruby find his body and bury him on the mountain where he has fallen.

Sara

A young mother, widow of John, a casualty of war who never sees his baby, Sara takes Inman in on a frosty night, feeds him, does his laundry, and sleeps beside him, telling her tale of woe. Three Federals terrorize her by lashing her to a post and laying her baby on the frozen ground as they search for treasures. Finding none, they release her but steal her hog and chickens. Inman pursues and kills them, and returns the animals. He helps Sara butcher the hog and prepare winter foodstuffs.

Esco and Sally Swanger

Ada's closest neighbors, the Swangers join Monroe's church from the "dipping Baptists," partly as payback for Esco's joke on the newly arrived minister. They have two sons fighting in a war they do not understand, and Esco needs them home to help him farm. Sally introduces Inman to Ada after church one Sunday, and at a Christmas party suggests under the influence of champagne that Ada marry Inman and have babies. When Monroe dies suddenly, the Swangers continue helping Ada, suggesting to Ruby that she volunteer her services and giving more in trade to Ada and Ruby than their produce is worth.

Swimmer

A Cherokee whom Inman meets during the summer they are both 16, tending cattle in the highlands. Swimmer talks in a flowing voice about how animals come to be what they are, about spells to bring misfortune to others and to safeguard oneself. Swimmer's vision of the human spirit as a frail, potentially mortal thing conflicts with Inman's Christian upbringing. At the end of the summer, Swimmer gives Inman a racquet made of bat, hawk, and heron, and says it will give him the characteristics of these creatures. Inman hopes Swimmer is not among the Cherokees said to be fighting the Federals, and he uses one of Swimmer's spells, "To Destroy Life," after the canoe incident; its intent is to lead a foe to Nightland, alone, covered in dog shit, and blue with despair.

The Tattooed Cherokee Woman

A 135-year-old Cherokee woman whom Inman remembers from his childhood, telling the story of Kanuga and the failure of its people to enter the promised land beyond the Shining Rocks inside Datsunalasgunyi (Cold Mountain). When Inman tells Ada the story, she sees folklore, while he recalls the old woman's tears over missing the opportunity to live in a better world and having to survive as a fugitive.

Teague

The cold-eyed leader of the Home Guard patrolling North Carolina, Teague dresses like an itinerant preacher. His reputation as a murderer spreads throughout the county, and we see several instances, including the taking of one outlier out of three on his father's farm and the execution of Stobrod and Pangle after making them entertain his Home Guard with sweet music. Teague overtakes Inman and Stobrod, recovered from his wounds, but a desperate Inman resists, killing Teague and three guardsmen before being gunned down by a lucky shot by the hapless Birch.

Tildy

The large Black prostitute who saves Veasey's life by disarming him in a standoff and slashes him with a razor on the face when he haggles too much over her price. Veasey finds her naked body amazing and stunning.

The Yellow Man

A slave whom finds Inman at the roadside, bleeding and starving after having survived Teague's massacre, the Yellow Man spirits Inman into the slave quarters, feeds him, tends to his wounds and laundry, and prepares for him a detailed map of Cold Mountain. He warns him to avoid the roads because the Home Guard is out in force.

Objects/Places

Bears

Inman on the battlefield has a series of dreams in which he is a bear. In the last, he is slain by hunters and pelted out. Thereafter, he identifies with the species and gives up eating their meat as he has since childhood. As he reaches the edges of Cold Mountain and anticipates freedom from fear and hatred there, Inman faces off with a mother bear protecting her cub. He asks her to understand he wants only to get out of their way, but she follows her instincts and makes a false charge to frighten him. She miscalculates the space available before a precipice and plunges to her death. Inman has no choice but to kill the defenseless cub, the third doomed baby he has encountered, and cannot let its meat go to waste. Eating it is to him an eighth deadly sin.

Cold Mountain

Inman's homeland in the southern Blue Ridge Mountains of North Carolina (shown in maps on the end pages), Cold Mountain becomes his goal after he flees the army hospital and senseless war. Inman hopes Ada Monroe will accept him after years of savage fighting and live with him in a remote cabin on Cold Mountain or that the Cherokee legend of Shining Rocks is true and, fasting, he can enter the paradise within the mountain. The Cherokee name for Cold Mountain is *Datsunalasgunyi*, which signifies neither cold nor mountain. Cold Mountain is also where Ruby wanders as a child and adolescent, grubbing for an existence, abandoned by her drunken father, Stobrod Thewes, who operates unsuccessful stills in the forest.

Black Cove

The farm in the shadow of Cold Mountain bought by Monroe from the Black family (hence the name) when they move on, leaving it in reasonable operating shape. Monroe designs and supervises the building of a fine house on the property and the Blacks' old log cabin becomes servants' quarters. Income from investments means Monroe need not operate a profitable farm and he lets parts of it go wild. When he dies, Ada sees no reason to return to Charleston, but despairs of running the farm because she has never learned anything remotely practical. Ruby volunteers to help, and they make a go of it at Black Cove.

Deep River

Deep River is the river at which Inman encounters the lecherous preacher, Solomon Veasey, and his intended murder victim.

Home Guard

An umbrella term for bands of vigilantes springing up during the Civil War, ostensibly to return Confederate soldiers to active duty and root out Northern sympathizers, the Home Guard, in fact, are marauders. *Cold Mountain* shows several in operation but focuses on the gang operating around Cold Mountain and led by Teague. They torture Mrs. Owens in front of her children to make husband Bill tell where he has hidden some loot. Inman in his westward trek encounters and easily evades them several times, but he eventually dies at the hands of its last survivor. There is another group of Northerners in Tennessee taking vengeance on Confederates' wives and children.

LeMat's Revolver

Inman's prized British-made firearm, the LeMat pistol has nine .40-caliber cylinders turning around a shotgun barrel, a sort of last-chance at close quarters. It is finely balanced and solid and grants a sense of serenity to the person carrying it. Inman picked his up on the battlefield just before being wounded and protected it through his medical ordeals.

Ralph

Monroe's fine gelding horse, intended to pull his elegant cabriolet, Ralph is reduced to field work of necessity, pulling sleds and other farm implements. He rebels against this change, but Ruby calms him by breathing in his nostrils, braiding his tail, and talking to him. Ralph is nervous trudging through snow on Cold Mountain, searching for the spot where Stobrod and Pangle lie murdered, and he gallops a wounded Stobrod to safety when the Home Guard ambush him and Inman.

Shining Rocks

A landmark on Cold Mountain (in Cherokee: *Datsunalasgunyi),* Shining Rocks are said to be the portal to a peaceful hidden land for those who fast 7 days. Inman recalls the story from his youth, about how one of the Kanugans breaks the fast and the whole village is relegated to a fate of exile. Inman fasts as he walks onto Cold Mountain so that should Ada refuse to marry him, he will be prepared to pass through the Shining Rocks.

Trail of Tears

The shameful event in U.S. history when Native Americans are driven from their ancestral lands onto reservations in the 1830s, the Trail of Tears is referred to several times in this novel. Inman remembers the legend of the village of Kanuga being marched into exile rather than taken into paradise beyond the Shining Rocks of Cold

Mountain when one man breaks the requisite fast. At the end of the novel, Ada, Inman, Ruby, and Stobrod find better shelter in a Cherokee village, abandoned since this time, and Ada wonders whether any villagers still live and how they have adapted to other words, dreams, and prayers to other gods.

Waldo

Monroe's cow, Waldo provides Ada various opportunities to appreciate her growing affinity for nature.

Social Sensitivity

Certainly, a major undercurrent of Cold Mountain is that of nostalgia, a yearning for a time when most men and women lived closer to the earth, paid closer heed to the cycles of the seasons, knew the names and properties of plants, noticed the habits of animals. This aspect of the novel has led at least one reviewer to accuse Frazier of escapism, of a failure to create a living art, an art that grows out of its author's own time and experience.

And some of Frazier's own comments have lent support to such criticisms.

One can partly answer the charge of escapist nostalgia by pointing to details in the novel which show clearly that not everything about the past was superior to the present. For instance, the goatwoman's forced marriage to an old man who worked his wives to death like abused farm animals is a situation far more likely to have occurred a hundred years ago than today. Ada's frustrated desire for something we now take for granted, the ability to record musical performance, also points to shortcomings in Ada's times compared with our own.

Still, it is true that Cold Mountain implies a protest against the mass culture of our era. Frazier offers the reader an alternative vision of life, an alternative "lifeway," to use a word the author has used elsewhere. It is important to note that he in fact has chosen to celebrate a way of life that was already becoming marginal in American society in the mid-nineteenth century. The inhabitants of sheltered Black Cove, the Swanger farm, and presumably the Inman place are neither members of the doomed Southern slave owning class nor members of the "metallic future" of the encroaching Northern industrial class. But they are living a pattern and texture of life that has not yet, even in our own time, passed entirely from the earth, living a way of life that has continued to persist for thousands of years. Frazier writes about it partly to show what most of us have lost and partly to show what is still possible. In other words the book implies that a life more in tune with the ageless cycles of plant and animal life (without which none of us could survive, no matter how indirect our present connection with such processes) is still possible. The irony of the traumatized soldier's cheer at the sight of massive clouds of now-extinct passenger pigeons ("at least that much remained unchanged") must not be misunderstood: Frazier is not so much lamenting the loss of the good old days as warning us that all of nature's details are not eternal. In this oblique way Charles Frazier can be said to evoke contemporary environmental and ecological concerns.

Frazier wrote his book in a late-twentieth-century America rife with competing sexual, ethnic, and racial agendas and grievances. Without being programmatically "politically correct," he has produced a book that should offend none but fatuous romanticizers of the antebellum South and of the so-called "Lost Cause." Cold Mountain is a tremendously egalitarian book. Like its main characters Inman and Ada, it approves of simple virtues and spiritual equality. It is, in fact, a remarkably decent book that also manages for the most part to avoid triteness.

Frazier's portrayal of Ada and Ruby suggests a sensitivity to contemporary women's issues while attempting to be true to what the author understands as the norms for the mid-nineteenth century. One would be hard pressed to find a more competent female character in literature than Ruby—and than Ada becomes under Ruby's tutelage. Ada is warm; Ruby is tough. And in the course of the narrative each woman in effect teaches her dominant virtue to the other.

Ruby has whipped a number of men in her short life, and Ada shows that she can kill a turkey on her very first try.

When Ruby says to Ada, "We don't need [Tnman]," she is saying that women can survive, indeed prosper, on their own.

When Ada replies, "But I think I want him," she is acknowledging emotional and physical needs that in no way compromise her spiritual independence.

Frazier's portrayal of his male characters is somewhat more traditional. Inman is in most ways the stereotypical rugged male hero. Although we understand him to be a perceptive and competent man, what we see him do best in the novel is kill the villains and protect the innocent.

His responses to visual, musical, literary, and pictorial art are generally perceptive and open-minded, if somewhat baffled.

But his plans for an unconventional marriage with Ada ("They would do as they pleased"), for a life of books and music and creating watercolors turn out to be, sadly, nothing but lovers' dreams.

Inman ends his life in a whirlwind of killing.

The novel finally shows more admiration for the endurance, sensitivity, and nurturing of women than for the killing power of men. But it would not be fair to say that Frazier is simplistic or sentimental (or anachronistic) about the relative virtues and characteristics of men and women. He is careful to populate his book with admirable and deplorable characters of both genders and with creative and sensitive men as well as tough and capable women. Inman's sensitivity to the natural world, Balis's translating of Greek, the "yellow slave's" creation of cartographical art, Stobrod's extraordinary gift for music—these are just a few elements that show that Cold Mountain's world includes at least some men who can do something more constructive than slaughter or exploit their fellow man.

The novel's portrayal of AfricanAmericans, like its portrayal of women, strives to be historically plausible and at the same time acceptable to contemporary sensibilities. Frazier is writing Odyssean adventures about the slave-owning South before the end of the war, and the narrative and the stories told by characters within the narrative more or less accurately reflect those socially unjust and cataclysmic times. There is a beautiful, helpless slave girl who is loved by one white plantation owner but victimized by another; a gigantic, confident, attractive, ruthless black prostitute; kind, loyal slaves who help

their vulnerable masters flee the invading Federals; black men numbered among the murderous Home Guard; a compassionate, thoughtful, educated slave who shelters Inman and nurses him back to health. Like most Southerners of the time, the main characters own no slaves, and none of the sympathetic characters are given words or actions that suggest support of the institution of slavery.

There is one failure in Frazier's otherwise successful navigation between the Scylla of novelistic necessity and the Charybdis of contemporary ethnic touchiness. The author's portrayal of Native Americans, specifically the Cherokee, is reverent to the point of sentimentality.

Toward the end of the narrative Frazier evokes the spiritual wisdom of the Cherokee with two of the novel's few unconvincing elements: Inman's relationship with bears and his belief in a paradise beyond Cold Mountain's Shining Rocks.

Inman's feeling of a mysterious connection with bears, his solicitous attitude toward an attacking mother bear, and his guilt at eating bear meat are simply out of character. And Inman's dietary guilt combined with the belief in the Shining Rocks leads to some totally unconvincing fasting by this pragmatic (and starving) man.

Perhaps Frazier is attempting to push his warrior protagonist through the mystical stages of purgation, illumination, and union; at any rate, the material is poorly integrated into the narrative. Fortunately, Frazier quickly drops the Shining Rocks fantasy, and the reader can simply ignore the bear material without loss to Cold Mountain's powerful and artistically appropriate ending.

Techniques

The alternation of chapters between Inman and Ada establishes these characters as co-protagonists. It also builds suspense, at first about the nature of their relationship and finally about the future of it. When the characters are reunited in the eighteenth chapter, "Footsteps in the Snow," the alternation ceases and Inman and Ada share three chapters, as they share three days in the deserted Cherokee village. The only chapter that belongs neither to Inman nor Ada is the sixteenth, "Naught and Grief," the chapter in which Pangle and Stobrod are shot by the Home Guard. This chapter's singularity underscores the crucial importance of its action and foreshadows the final gun battle.

However, the most striking technique in Cold Mountain is its unique diction. Cold Mountain's prose bristles with unfamiliar nouns (harls, passway,jemson, snath, cullions, internalments, barns, spurtle, rindle), unusual verbs (frabble, rare, frail, way, row), and strange adjectives (moiled, mackled, awander, malandered, misgrown, withy), many of which cannot be found in a standard dictionary.

The effect is not to baffle readers, but to transport them to a different time, a time when presumably people had detailed knowledge of the particular things, actions, and qualities referred to. Frazier creates the texture of a life that is palpably different from ours. His concrete language draws the reader into a particular world of weight and substance; his diction, for all its strangeness, convinces the reader that this is a vividly real place, rather than a vaguely imagined one. This technique supports Cold Mountain's theme of the overwhelming significance of the physical. A number of Frazier's words or their meanings appear to be invented by the author, but in fact this is true of very few of them. Even the well-educated reader often does not know them either because the things they refer to are no longer widely used or because they refer to parts or conditions of things that now only antiquarians or specialists need to know. Some words are regional or dialectical. Some are simply rare. Some words have obvious meanings, but are now obsolete. Some are perhaps anachronistic (judder?), born too late to have been used by the characters in the novel—and yet seem right for the paradoxical effect of exotic mundanity Frazier is seeking.

Frazier's use of the French dash for direct quotation serves at least two functions. Like his use of unfamiliar words it distances the text, suggesting patterns of living and thinking somewhat different from out own. It also allows Frazier at times to blur the distinction between direct and indirect quotation where conventional English punctuation would be required to clarify it unambiguously. This is useful to a writer who wants to create the texture of a strange, but vividly palpable world without attributing implausibly large or precise vocabularies to his characters, some of whom have little or no formal education.

Frazier's use of an omniscient point of view allows him to enter into numerous characters' minds and to interpret their thoughts and reactions without being hampered by the largely ineffective locutions the characters would themselves use. In a novel with so many characters, the omniscient point of view also helps to create a certain unity of

diction and tone. But there is some modulation. The language associated with Ada is more literary, at times more abstract, than that associated with Inman. But both speak and think in a language that is somewhat strange to late twentieth century readers, without being quaintly "historical."

Cold Mountain uses symbols skillfully, in a conventionally paradoxical though deft manner. Its crows and ravens are simultaneously reminders of death and hardy representatives of life. The neck is that which connects the spiritual to the physical, the head to the body. The neck is where Inman is wounded. It also where he longs to kiss Ada—and finally does. It is therefore a symbol for both the horrifying fragility of the body and the enchanting beauty of the body. It is a symbol of mortality and as such a symbol of both death and life.

Of course the novel's title presents Frazier's central and most profound symbol. Cold Mountain is the literal geography for which Inman longs. But it is also an emblem of the physical world that Ada learns to love and live in. And it is a symbol of the inevitable death that awaits Inman. It is what Samuel Taylor Coleridge called a "true symbol," one by which the creative imagination "reconciles opposites": creation and destruction, love and hate, beauty and ugliness, past and future. The mountain is no happy Emersonian or Wordsworthian dream any more than it is a mere gigantic lump of matter. It and the range of which it is a part are the staging areas for equally inexplicable acts of human cruelty and human kindness. It is, finally, a symbol of the whole of Frazier's world, of the mystery of existence. Cold Mountain is not simply the "physical" world. It is the "natural" world—that is, the spiritualised physical world.

Themes

Themes

Inman's and Ada's few days of joy snowbound together in the deserted Indian village bring to fruition their love for each other. But more fundamentally those days bring to fruition the mature, unsentimental love of the natural world that has been growing in each character.

Cold Mountain celebrates the simple lives of subsistence farmers and woodsmen, ways of life nearly as old as the human race. It celebrates but does not romanticize the labor the earth requires to yield sustenance to those whose regular habits and careful attention can learn to cooperate with the seasons. In doing so it must reject competing visions of life, those full of destructive ideals and a thirst for unwholesome extremes. Ada's memory of the Savannah boy Blount who weeps with fear before enlisting and Inman's memories of Marye's Heights— these are moments when the novel examines and finds wanting the Southern myths that have turned savagery, loss, and destruction into Romantic moments of "nobility" and "beauty." Mrs. McKennet's cliched "heroic" views are rejected by Ada, just as Longstreet's comment that at Fredericksburg the Federals were "falling as steady as rain dripping off an eave" is rejected by Inman. "It was nothing like that, no similarity," thinks Inman.

Inman's attitude toward war and toward the tendency of figurative language to mask the reality of pain and death is echoed in Ada's response to Pangle's grave: "Ada remembered her thoughts when they had buried the winter cabbages, how she had made it metaphoric.

But she found this burial to be an entirely different matter. Beyond the bare fact of two holes in the ground, there was no similarity at all between the two."

Frazier's is a reverent book, but it is not a religious one. It is a book that asserts the spiritual but not the supernatural. Ada, Inman, and Ruby are skeptical about an afterlife. But if they are skeptical about the next world, they do believe in a spiritualized natural world, a world whose apparently infinite connections and cycles imply a spiritual force animating the material.

The book is also about change, about the necessity for individual people to open themselves to the flux and complexity of life and the unavoidable dangers of doing so. Both Ada and Inman express fear that they will never be able to connect with things and people outside themselves. Inman has been "stunned" by the war. His neck wound is the outward symbol of his inner wound.

At the beginning of the novel, he has a condition that has been called in the twentieth century "shell-shock," battle fatigue," and "post-traumatic stress syndrome." His journey home is a perilous quest for healing. The blind man tells him at the beginning of the

book, "You need to put that away from you." Inman knows this, but doubts that he can. He walks away from the hospital more spiritually dead than alive. As he kills and whips men in his path, he is fighting his way back to life. That Inman cannot kill the boy Birch at the end shows clearly that he has come to embrace life, not death. The other Home Guard are the enemies of all life, the agents of death, and to kill them is to strike a blow for the living. But the boy is relatively innocent.

For a flicker of a second, Inman's subconscious recognizes that he is faced with becoming a kind of Teague, albeit in selfdefense. His hesitation is thus not the manifestation of a death-wish, the act of a death-haunted man, but the act of a life-affirming one. Only a few days before, he had given the hunter in the snow the chance to kill him with a shotgun: "having in the past taken up arms thoughtless to the consequences, he decided now to put them away the same.

He let down his hammer and brushed back his jacket and stuck the pistol under his belt." That hunter turns out to be Ada, the woman who a day later proves to be "life before him, an offering within his reach."

At the beginning of the novel, Ada's situation parallels Inman's. Her ability to allow the natural world into her mind and heart, to connect with its cycles and seasons, has been damaged not by the war but by her upbringing. Only after her father's death does she begin to see the world directly, rather than through the lenses of books.

In the logic of Frazier's novel, neither brutish naturalism nor escapist supernaturalism can yield a satisfactory life. The spiritual is to be found in the physical.

Thus, Cold Mountain rejects the Modernist assertion that sexual love cannot heal and cannot redeem, a theme American literature scholar Frazier will have encountered in such novels as Hemingway's post World War I novel The Sun Also Rises (1926; see separate entry). Inman had been longing for six years to kiss Ada "there at the back of her neck, and now he had done it. There was redemption of some kind, he believed, in such complete fulfillment of a desire so long deferred."

Cold Mountain demonstrates that love pours the spiritual into the physical. It can satisfy Ada's "sharp yearning," a yearning she had first felt to be for the Transcendent. And it can heal Inman. At the beginning of Cold Mountain, he is plagued by a recurring dream of bloody body fragments drawing together into soulless monsters seeking life. When his soldier companions had seen the terrible wound in his neck, they had said, "We'll meet again in a better world." But at the end as he is dying Inman doesn't dream of angels or of abstract "types and symbols of Eternity." He dreams of the physical world burgeoning with the spirit of life: "the year . . . happening all at one time, the seasons blending together.

Apple trees hanging heavy with fruit but yet unaccountably blossoming, ice rimming the spring, okra plants blooming yellow and maroon, . . . pumpkins shining in the fields . . . Everything coming around at once."

The belief in the natural world, the world that embraces physical love, of course cannot save Inman from the death that has stalked him from the first page.

And it cannot remove from Ada's world the necessity for exhausting work in the fields. But it makes them both capable of reaching out to authentic life. That Ada conceives a child from their brief time together tells us that Inman has become more of a life-giver than a death-dealer.

And it tells us that Ada no longer lives in her father's benevolent but sterile theoretical realm.

Religion

Formal religion is depicted in *Cold Mountain* in the figures of two preachers, Monroe and Veasey, and comes off as ineffectual, if not repugnant. Monroe studies theology in England after a failed romance and is happy with the vocation, but he is obsessed with the meaning of death. His quest renders his sermons repetitious and unsatisfying to rural congregants who want only to be entertained by stories from the Bible. Emerson and philosophers of all age vie with the Bible for Monroe's attention. There are evident confessional clashes with intolerant and ostensibly benighted Baptists on Cold Mountain. Their clergy refuse to bury the heretical Monroe.

Veasey prides himself in pulpit work that saves many souls, while his own lustful passions destroy his own. He realizes he has no calling to ministry, but continues to construct his worldview on Christian grounds, readily recalling scriptural passages that fit various situations. The youngest of the Home Guard ruthlessly hunting down and murdering deserters and marauding civilian farms is often caught up in mystical rapture, spouting verses that only make his colleagues laugh. Inman, brought up a Christian but influenced by Cherokee lore, struggles with theodicy, the age-old struggle between good and evil, embittered by war, slavery, and the white man's treatment of the Indians. Ada gradually frees herself from her father's views that everything in the world is but a reflection of a prototype in the Kingdom of Heaven, and she comes to appreciate the natural world for its own delightful rhythms, sights, and sounds. As his own last resort in case Ada will not marry him, Inman performs the Indian fast that will open the mystical gates to a peaceful land hidden within Cold Mountain.

Dreams

Much of the action in *Cold Mountain* is moved forward by dreams. Inman, a victim of post-traumatic stress disorder, sees most of these. One involves dismembered body parts coming together off the battlefield to form pitiable zombies. Every morning after seeing this, Inman awakes in a mood as dark as "the blackest crow that ever flew." Another is a series in which he becomes a bear and sees himself shot and skinned by hunters. As a result, Inman vows never again to eat savory bear meat, and when he is forced to do so, he puts himself on a religious fast to be worthy of entering the peaceful hidden world within Cold Mountain. Ada also dreams after her father's death; she sees a

railroad depot and a glowing display case in which her father's bones re-clothe themselves in flesh, and he attempts to whisper to her. She refuses to get aboard the train, which will take her back 20 years to her girlhood in Charleston and awakens wishing her beloved father would no longer visit her. Ada does not consider herself superstitious, but believes someone will walk out of the forest to meet her, as Inman eventually does.

After visiting the gypsy camp, Inman dreams of a forest filled with hallucinatory blossoms from which Ada emerges in a white dress with her head and shoulders draped in black. Three times, she fogs through him as he draws near; but the fourth time she stands firm and substantial. He says he has been coming for her on a long, hard road and will never let her go. A minor character, Blount, is terrified by recurring dreams of horrible battlefield deaths before his time comes to enlist and die. Dreams are so much a part of *Cold Mountain* that at one point it is emphasized Ada enjoys a *dreamless* sleep.

Brutality

Set during the American Civil War, *Cold Mountain* inevitably deals with brutality, but only a portion of this is accounted for by the advanced technology that debuted in this conflict. Inman is introduced in a hospital, where he recovers from a neck wound despite the primitive medical technology; his bedmate dies as gangrene gradually consumes his leg. Battlefield conditions are not shown directly, but rather in Inman's recollections, after he has reflected on the horrors and suffered nightmares on their account. Federals have learned to tunnel beneath enemy lines and explode massive mines, but then they are so surprised and elated they fail to press the advantage and are blown to pieces by Confederate mortars; Inman recalls intense hand-to-hand combat amidst pools of blood and guts.

Warfare, he concludes as he walks away from it, is senseless, even in the cause of ending slavery, another form of brutality, a few scenes of which we witness in a fellow traveler's recollections. Several times the shameful "Trail of Tears" of the 1830s is recalled, the forced exile of Indians from their ancestral lands to distant reservations, where they must learn the ways of whites.

Several times we see the Home Guard in action, not returning deserters to the army as intended, but marauding farms, torturing, robbing, killing, and terrorizing without conscience. We see vigilante violence against the preacher, Veasey, in retaliation for his rape of a parishioner, and summary executions of prisoners when taking them in proves inconvenient. Only in the epilog, a decade after the main action and the end of the war, do we see Ada and Ruby living with their children and Ruby's husband and father in peace on the farm. There are no signs of the brutality of Reconstruction reaching Cold Mountain, but the reader will recall that it is extending the conflict in another form.

Style

Point of View

Cold Mountain is told in the third-person past tense by a skilled wordsmith who is acutely sympathetic to the goal of the protagonists, Inman and Ada, to be reunited on Cold Mountain. The narrator follows their day-to-day activities--the one trekking through forests and flatlands, avoiding contact with hostile Home Guards and meeting a variety of characters, sympathetic and not and the other learning to survive on a farm after being raised a perfect gentlewoman who is also privy to their inner thoughts. Both protagonists struggle with the meaning of the Civil War, rejecting it as a senseless waste of life and fortune and with how 4 years of separation have changed them, perhaps rendering them no longer attractive to the other. The narrator obviously roots for Inman, Ada, and Ruby and for Stobrod and Veasey to stop being the reprehensible characters they are and revels in the execution of justice, even when it is violent. The violence of battlefield and that against the Indians three decades earlier provides a background for the entire narrative.

Setting

Cold Mountain is set in the Blue Ridge Mountains of North Carolina during the Civil War (see the map on the end papers). Inman, a wounded Confederate soldier, defects from an army hospital and walks westward to his beloved native Cold Mountain, hoping to find and marry the daughter of a Charleston, SC, preacher, who has relocated there. They meet several times before the war and have corresponded intermittently. Ada Monroe is helpless when her father dies, but survives thanks to a competent young woman, Ruby, who has learned survival as a child and adolescent when her father abandons her to her own wiles. Flashbacks provide information about the white man's cruelty to the Indians (the Trail of Tears), the slaves' dismal fate under slavery in the Carolinas and Mississippi, and the unspeakable horror of warfare as technology comes of age.

Language and Meaning

Cold Mountain is rich with detail about rural mountain life in the era of the American Civil War. Frazier makes the landscape come alive as Inman treks through forests, lowlands, foothills, and mountains to return to the land of his birth and his heart's longing. Frazier also shows the world of farming through the eyes of Ada, a transplanted city girl wishing to learn about nature, and Ruby, at 25 a hardened mountaineer. Indian lore and Protestant mysticism both contribute to the picture of a world removed from the fighting but touched by its violence.

Frazier uses the quaint vocabulary and idioms of the day, not only in dialog, but also in the body of the narration. Many expressions will be unfamiliar to readers in the 21st

century (non-Southerners in particular), but it is never impossible to get the gist. Characters routinely speak of black slaves in terms that are offensive today, but with no intention of offending. Often they are decrying the peculiar institution and applauding the Federals' intention of ending it. *Cold Mountain* throughout speaks for the aspiration of human beings to be free.

Structure

Cold Mountain consists of 20 unnumbered chapters and an epilogue set a decade later. Their focus generally alternates between Inman, a wounded Confederate deserter from an army hospital to his native Cold Mountain, and a transplanted young city woman, Ada Monroe, whom he has met several times, and who is learning to survive on the land with the help of a tough mountain woman, Ruby. Inman's chapters depict encounters with characters good and bad and deal with his growing conviction that the Civil War is senseless. They also show a strong affinity for the vanished Cherokee culture of Cold Mountain and depict the savage battles Inman has survived. Much of his time is spent evading the Home Guard, ostensibly intent on returning defectors to action but in fact terrorizing the landscape. Ada's chapters show how she gradually becomes attuned with nature, aided by her new friend Ruby. Ruby's ne'er-do-well father, Stobrod, becomes a major figure in these chapters, providing a tense emotional atmosphere. The two threads come together when Ada and Ruby go out to bury the supposedly murdered Stobrod, and Inman arrives home only to find Ada away from the farm, and he goes in search of her. Inman and Ada are reunited, talk over the past, and plan an idyllic future, which is cut short by the Home Guard. The epilogue shows Ada and Ruby both raising children on Ada's farm.

Quotes

"All through the mess of the field hospital and the long grim train ride south in a boxcar filled with wounded, he had agreed with his friends and the doctors. He thought he would die. About all he could remember of the trip was the heat and the odors of blood and of shit, for many of the wounded had the flux. Those with the strength to do so had knocked holes in the sides of the wood boxcars with the butts of rifles and rode with their heads thrust out like crated poultry to catch the breeze." The Shadow of a Crow, p. 4

" - There's more to it than just the climbing, Swimmer had said. Through Inman could not recall whether Swimmer had told him what else might be involved in reaching that healing realm, Cold Mountain nevertheless soared in his mind as a place where all his scattered forces might gather. Inman did not consider himself to be a superstitious person, but he did believe that there is a world invisible to us. He no longer thought of that world as heaven, nor did he still think that we get to go there when we die. Those teachings had been burned away. But he could not abide by a universe composed only of what he could see, especially when it was so frequently foul. So he held to the idea of another world, a better place, and he figured he might as well consider Cold Mountain to be the location of it as anywhere." The Shadow of a Crow, p. 17

"Cookery had become a pressing issue for Ada. She was perpetually hungry, having eaten little through the summer but milk, fried eggs, salads, and plates of miniature tomatoes from the untended plants that had grown wild and bushy with suckers. Even butter had proved beyond her means, for the milk she had tried to churn never firmed up beyond the consistency of runny clabber. She wanted a bowl of chicken and dumplings and a peach pie but had not a clue how one might arrive at them." The Ground Beneath Her Hands, p. 21

"All during the cooking and the eating, Ruby would talk seamlessly, drawing up hard plans for the coming day that struck Ada as incongruent with its soft vagueness out the window. By the time summer drew toward its conclusion, Ruby seemed to feel the approach of winter as urgently as a bear in autumn, eating all night and half the day to pack on the fat necessary to feed it through hibernation. All Ruby's talk was of exertion. The work it would take to build a momentum of survival to carry them through the winter. To Ada, Ruby's monologues seemed composed mainly of verbs, all of them tiring. Plow, plant, hoe, cut, can, feed, kill." Verbs, All of Them Tiring, p. 80

" - You wouldn't, He holds it close, the boy said. It's a thing you'll never know. It's a lesson that sometimes we are meant to settle for ignorance. Right there's what mostly comes of knowledge, the boy said, tipping his chin out at the broken land, apparently not even finding it worthy of sweeping a hand across its contours in sign of dismissal. At the time, Inman had thought the boy a fool and had remained content to know our name for Orion's principal star and to let God keep His a dark secret. But he now wondered if the boy might have had a point about knowledge, or at least some varieties of it." Life Any Other Thing, a Gift, p. 91

"Monroe would have dismissed such beliefs as superstition, folklore. But Ada, increasingly covetous of ruby's learning in the ways living things inhabited this particular place, chose to view the signs as metaphoric. They were, as Ada saw them, an expression of stewardship, a means of taking care, a discipline. They provided a ritual of concern for the patterns and tendencies of the material world where it might be seen to intersect with some other world. Ultimately, she decided, the signs were a way of being alert, and under those terms she could honor them." Ashes of Roses, p. 104

"When three crows harried a hawk across the sky, Ruby expressed her great respect for the normally reviled crow, finding much worthy of emulation in their outlook on life. She noted with disapproval that many a bird would die rather than eat any but good it relishes. Crows will relish what presents itself. She admired their keenness of wit, lack of pridefulness, love of practical jokes, slyness in a fight. All of these she saw as making up the genius of crow, which was a kind of willed mastery over what she assumed was a natural inclination toward bile and melancholy, as evidenced by its drear plumage. " - We might all take instruction from crow, Ruby said pointedly, for Ada was clearly in something of a mood, the lifting of which lagged considerably behind the fairing sky." Source and Root, p. 137

"One of the Home Guard stepped behind him and clapped a colt's pistol to his temple and said, Figure that. One minute a bride, and the next, if I pull this trigger, she'll put a smile on her face and scoop her husband's harns off the ground into a napkin. "I do not understand you people, Inman said, and they retied him and Veasey to the string of men and marched them off down the road east." To Live Like a Gamecock, p. 176

" - You must fast, the stranger said; otherwise we see you but you do not see us. Our land is not altogether like yours. Here is constant fighting, sickness, foes wherever you turn. And soon a stronger enemy than you have yet faced will come and take your country away from you and leave you exiles. But there we have peace. And though we die as all men do and must struggle for our food, we need not think of danger. Our minds are not filled with fear. We do not endlessly contend with each other. I come to invite you to live with us. Your place is ready" In Place of the Truth, pp. 197-198

"A little spotted brown-and-white goat came to her and she stroked it and scratched below its neck until it unfolded its legs and lay down. The animal's long neck was stretched forward. The old woman scratched it close under its jaw and stroked its ears. Inman thought it a peaceful scene. He watched as she continued to scratch with her left hand and reach with her right into an apron pocket. With one motion she pulled out a short-bladed knife and cut deep into the artery below the jawline and shoved the white basin underneath to catch the leap of bright blood. The animal jerked once, then lay trembling as she continued to scratch the fur and fondle the ears. The basin filled slowly. The goat and the woman stared intently off toward the distance as if waiting for a signal." The Doing of It, p. 211

" - That's not the way I saw it. " - What's the other way? She said. I've traveled a fair bit in those low counties. Nigger-owning makes the rich man proud and ugly and it makes the poor man mean. It's a curse laid on the land. We've lit a fire and now it's burning us

down. God is going to liberate niggers, and fighting to prevent it is against God. Did you own any? " - No. Not hardly anybody I knew did. " - Then what stirred you up enough for fighting and dying? " - Four years ago I maybe could have told you. Now I don't know. I've had all of it I want though. " - That's lacking some as an answer." The Doing of It, p. 217

"As he looked about the room, Inman was suddenly aware of his filth. In this clean, closed space he found that his clothes threw a powerful reek from the gathered sweat of his long walking. His boots and pant legs were caked muddy to the shins, and he left tracks as he stepped. He considered taking the boots off but feared that his socks would stink like rotted meat. It had been some time since he had last gone unshod. The cabin was not an old one and still held a faint crisp smell of dressed timbers, chestnut and hickory, and Inman felt marked and at odds with their bouquet." Bride Bed Full of Blood, p. 239

"When he was done singing, they played one more round and then stopped. They consulted and twisted the pegs again to make the dead man's tuning, and they then set in playing a piece slightly reminiscent of Bonaparte's Retreat, which some name General Washington's tune. This was softer, more meditative, yet nevertheless grim as death. When the minor key drifted in it was like the shadows under trees, and the piece called up something of dark woods, lantern light. It was awful old music in one of the ancient modalities, music that sums up a culture and is the true expression of its inner life. "Birch said, Jesus wept. The fit's took them now." Naught and Grief, p. 290

Adaptations

Reports indicate that United Artists has purchased the rights to Cold Mountain for $1.2 million and that plans are in the works for Anthony Minghella to direct.

Minghella directed the highly acclaimed The English Patient (1996), an adaptation of Michael Ondaatje's novel of the same tide (see separate entry).

Key Questions

Cold Mountain has impressed reviewers as well as the reading public, Civil War buffs as well as readers antagonistic to Civil War literature, hawks as well as doves. Its overarching simplicity of situation embraces a remarkable complexity of incident and detail that can provide rich material for group discussions. Readers are moved, charmed, and disturbed by Cold Mountain, and are usually eager to talk about its characters, meaning, and effect.

1. Which do you find more interesting, the story of Inman's journey home or the story of Ada's struggle for survival? Why?

Is Cold Mountain more a "man's book" or a "woman's book"?

2. Is there any significant sequence to the episodes of Inman's journey? Must Frazier tell these things in this particular order or could the events be reordered without any significant change to the novel?

3. Cold Mountain is a novel about a handsome couple separated by war. The man fights his way back to the faithful woman he admires, but he always takes time to help and protect the innocent.

The couple is joyfully reunited, experiences perfect physical love, and produces a child. How does this novel successfully avoid sentimentality? Or does it?

4. Do you detect signs that the author of Cold Mountain is trying to be "politically correct"? How might the novel have been more sensitive to the feelings of blacks or women?

5. Are there any elements of the novel that seem anachronistic, more appropriate for a novel about people in the late twentieth century than for a novel about people in the mid-nineteenth? Would any such elements be a strength or a weakness in the novel? Why?

6. Cold Mountain takes place in an era when most Americans claimed to believe in a paradise beyond the grave. What does Cold Mountain seem to say about the afterlife? Would an overt statement of belief in an afterlife (by Inman, Ada, or the author) change the effect of the ending? Why or why not?

7. Does the "Epilogue" balance the novel's tragic ending or simply contradict it? What negative elements can be found in the "Epilogue"? What positive elements can be found in the final chapter ("Spirit of Crows, Dancing")?

8. Is it true that Inman kills only in self-defense? Does it matter?

9. At the end of the novel, why does not Inman simply kill Birch? Is his hesitation a sign of suicidal wishes? If Inman had been faced with such a youthful adversary early in the novel, would he have hesitated? Why or why not?

10. Cold Mountain, like Margaret Mitchell's Gone with the Wind (1936; see separate entry), is a historical novel written by a Southerner and set in the time of the Civil War. How are these novels different? Are the differences between the social classes of the characters significant?

Why or why not?

11. Compare the hesitation scene, the one in which the main character looks closely into the face of the person who is about to kill him, to the parallel scene at the end of Flannery O'Connor's short story "A Good Man Is Hard to Find" (1955). What similarities do you find?

What happens in the minds of these main characters just before they are shot?

Topics for Discussion

Can Inman be labeled heroic or would some other description be more apt?

What is Monroe's function in the novel?

? ? · yo ? ¦ ? yo » ?yo What is Stobrod's function in the novel?

What is Swimmer's contribution to Inman's spiritual makeup?

What do the catfish and bull carcass show about Veasey?

Could Inman and Ada have lived happily ever after had he not been killed? What factors argue for that outcome?

What role do bears play in the story line?

What role do crows play in the story line?

Which of Inman's brief encounters on the trek home most influences him and how?

Literary Precedents

Cold Mountain is a historical novel, an adventure narrative, a naturalist essay, a love story, and a tragedy.

Since the backdrop of Cold Mountain's action is so obviously historical, one might expect its most significant literary precedents to be those of the historical novel, a genre launched by Sir Walter Scott in 1814 with his book Waverly. Like most historical novels from the lowly costume romance to Tolstoy's unsurpassed War and Peace (1865-1869), Cold Mountain mixes fictional and historical figures, with the latter playing negligible roles. However, Cold Mountain's central aim is not that of the purely historical novel. Although it does aim to present a society under the impact of momentous events by showing the effect of those events on the personal lives of fictional characters, this is not its central aim.

Another literary precedent for Cold Mountain is Homer's Odyssey (circa 800 BC), a book Ada reads to Ruby in the evenings after their work. Inman is an American version of Odysseus who, like the Greek king of Ithaca, wants only to return to his harsh and isolated land. Like Odysseus, Inman suffers exotic adventures involving the temptations of women and the dangers of capture and death. Near their final destinations both Odysseus and Inman find welcome shelter among kind animal herders, Odysseus with the loyal swineherd Eumaeus, Inman with the reclusive goatwoman. When these men finally reach home looking like beggars, neither is immediately recognized by the faithful woman who represents everything for which he has returned. At the end, both heroes slaughter a crowd of homegrown adversaries. (Inman's killing of the four Home Guard is fully as impressive as Odysseus's killing of the one hundred and eight Suitors.)

Cold Mountain clearly borrows The Odyssey's episodic plot of wonders and dangers strung along the thread of a journey. But differences between Inman and Odysseus are far more significant than similarities.

Inman hates war, and he is a far more reluctant adventurer than Odysseus. In the novel's final chapter, Inman finds himself faced with a conflict that Odysseus would never feel: to kill another or to risk dying himself. Inman feels this only fleetingly and only, perhaps, subconsciously—but Odysseus would never feel it at all. Inman has none of Odysseus's hearty, aristocratic arrogance. He is no pagan king, no leader of troops, no hero protected by the gods—neither by Odysseus's Athena nor by Robert E. Lee's Almighty.

As does James Joyce's Ulysses (1922), Cold Mountain borrows Homer's basic plot partly for relatively unimportant structural purposes and partly for highly significant thematic purposes. Frazier's hero is in fact Odysseus by way of Hesiod. Hesiod was Homer's near contemporary and the author of the didactic poem Works and Days (circa 735 BC). Precisely as did Hesiod's Works and Days, Frazier's Cold Mountain sets itself deliberately against the Homeric world view. Inman, like Hesiod's virtuous and wise man, is uninterested in conquest or plunder. He stands for justice, hard work, and

survival, not adventure and glory. Inman, like his co-protagonist Ada, wants only to live decently and fully in the natural world, to turn survival, if possible, into celebration.

Inman's, Ruby's, and Ada's attitudes toward physical labor owe more to the tradition of Hesiod than to that of Homer, which expresses an aristocratic scorn for such lowly activity. And Inman's and Ruby's knowledge and Ada's increasingly precise observations owe even more to the work of such naturalists as Henry David Thoreau and John Bartram, the latter an eighteenth-century author quoted several times in Cold Mountain. Bartram is the author whose work Inman carries in the "scroll" that gives him such comfort. But the BartramThoreau tradition is finally not held up as a source of ultimate truth about the natural world. Such writing, for all its extraordinary precision and accuracy, is finally too Romantic. It cannot encompass the "dreadful but quiet war of organic beings" acknowledged by the Charles Darwin epigraph at the beginning of Cold Mountain and by the harsher aspects of the novel itself. Bartram and Thoreau, like Monroe's beloved Emerson, seem incapable of recognizing the reality of such bestial nightmares as Cold Mountain's episode in Junior's tilting house. However, an author whose work does acknowledge this "war" yet still manages to evade despair and embrace joy is the Southern novelist and poet Robert Penn Warren. Warren's long poem Audubon (1969) is perhaps one of the most important works that have shaped Frazier's view of remote America. Its protagonist is, like Bartram, an American naturalist and epic wanderer. In Frazier's nineteenth chapter (entitled "To Live Like a Gamecock") one can detect echoes of part II of Audubon, in which the title character suffers a dreamlike experience of foulness and treachery in a backwoods inn and is delivered from death by a chance occurrence that seems almost miraculous.

Cold Mountain's love story owes something to the most famous one in American literature, Hawthorne's The Scarlet Letter (1850; see separate entry). Like Hester Prynne, Ada Monroe grows from a beautiful ornament into a decisive figure of considerable consequence. Adversity brings out her potential for action and judgment. Her emotionally and spiritually ravaged lover suffers the fate that has been inevitable from the novel's beginning, and she must live alone with their child, quietly cherishing his memory.

From The Scarlet Letter Frazier seems to have learned not only how to delay the longed-for, temporarily happy ending but also how to conclude plausibly the inevitable frustration of the lovers' plans for a future together.

Thus, Cold Mountain is also a tragedy, and in terms of climactic effect a tragedy similar to King Lear, a narrative whose villains and innocents are similarly polarized almost to the extremes of melodrama. Like Lear and Cordelia, Inman and Ada are joyfully reunited after truly horrendous trials—only to be immediately ripped apart again by death. Many readers have reacted to the ending of Cold Mountain with considerable fear and pity.

Some have found the ending nearly intolerable. As in Shakespeare's play, evil is destroyed in Cold Mountain, primarily by the scourge figure Inman. But the price for

such destruction is so high as to cause the characters, and some readers, considerable grief, a grief only slightly alleviated by Frazier's "Epilogue."

Related Titles

The only other book published by Charles Frazier to date is a Sierra Club Travel Guide entitled Adventuring in the Andes (coauthored with Donald Secreast, Sierra Club Books, San Francisco, 1985).

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