

# **Crow Killer; the Saga of Liver-Eating Johnson Study Guide**

**Crow Killer; the Saga of Liver-Eating Johnson by Raymond W. Thorp**

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## Plot Summary

"Crow Killer, The Saga of Liver-Eating Johnson," written by Raymond W. Thorp and Robert Bunker, is the true story of John Johnston (last name is alternately spelled "Johnston" and "Johnson"—the latter version was a spelling mistake made by the Union Army when he joined in 1864). The tale begins with the stark pronouncement that in May 1847, Crow Indians killed and scalped Johnston's young, pregnant wife. Johnston had been away for months on a fur trapping expedition and upon his return to their cabin finds the skeletal remains of his wife and the evidence that she had been pregnant. For many years after, Johnston is bent on killing Crow, scalping them and extracting and eating their raw livers. This explanation thus explains the title of the book. In 1972, the story was made into a major motion picture starring Robert Redford. The movie's title, "Jeremiah Johnson" uses the middle name of John Jeremiah Johnston.

The story quickly flashes back to a young twenty-year-old Johnston who arrives in St. Joseph, Missouri, to begin a career as a fur trapper. Johnston is six feet tall and 190 pounds. He has a stubble of red hair and cold, light blue eyes. Johnston buys supplies from a local supply store owner, Joe Robidoux. Robidoux sells Johnston a rifle, traps and a spirited Comanche pony. Johnston becomes the young apprentice to a seasoned trapper, John Hatcher who is the epitome of the mountain man, tall and muscular with long blond hair and heavy beard.

On one of their fur expeditions Hatcher and Johnston are attacked by Arapaho Indians, Johnston taking an arrow in the shoulder. Despite his injury, Johnston is able to take out one of the attackers and Hatcher handles the other two. Afterward, Hatcher teaches Johnston how to scalp Indians. After several years of trapping, Johnston becomes one of the most powerful and formidable mountain men, a legend in his own time. Johnston, now at 6'2" and 240 pounds allegedly kills an Indian just by slamming him to the ground. His powerful kick is deadly and feared by the Indians.

Johnston travels to the Flathead Indian camp and trades furs and other items for the daughter of the sub-chief. The girl, The Swan, becomes his wife and takes her back to his cabin. It is soon after that when Johnston returns after a fur expedition to find his wife brutally murdered. In 1848, word spreads of the despoiling of the Crow Indians by John Johnston. Crow Indians were found not only murdered but mutilated—their bodies cut below their ribs and their livers removed. Johnston's friends knew that Johnston was killing the Indians and eating their livers raw. Even Johnston's friends were unaware as to the reason he ate their livers—perhaps something vaguely related to principles. Johnston feels certain that one of the Crow he killed was the killer of his wife. He shows the murderer's scalp to his father-in-law as proof of his fulfilled vengeance.

Johnston maintains the life of a Mountain Man a fur trapper. His 'family' becomes the other Mountain Men who share the same life. Johnston estimates that he killed 400 to 500 Crow during the 25 years of his vendetta. Johnston finally makes peace with the Crow and becomes a friend to them. Later in life he has several stints as a law enforcement officer in several small towns. Towards the end of the saga, the frontier



begins to get too crowded for the Crow Killer, most of his Mountain Men contemporaries are gone, the furs are becoming scarce and there are not many Indians left to kill. In the late 1890's Johnston becomes ill and dies in a Veteran's Hospital in 1900. His headstone has no mention of the Liver-Eating Crow Killer; rather, it has an abbreviated inscription attesting to his brief time with the Union Army, Company H out of Colorado.



# Part 1: The Young Trapper, Chapters 1 through 5

## Part 1: The Young Trapper, Chapters 1 through 5 Summary and Analysis

### Chapter 1: The Making of a Legend

In May 1847, Crow Indians kill and scalp John Johnston's pregnant wife. His anger drives him to lengths that most people could not understand. For many years afterward he is bent on killing and scalping Crow Indians—and eating their livers raw. In Johnston's mind, his actions are ones of revenge coupled with principal. Even though Johnston has unpleasant run-ins with other Indian tribes, he reserves this barbaric act for just the Crow. Johnston is not insane or inhuman—his story is much more complex. He has an undeniable respect for great warriors of Indian tribes. As unbelievable as it may seem, Johnston ultimately gives up his vendetta and becomes a brother-in-arms of the Crow.

### Chapter 2: The Hair Merchants

Young John Johnston travels north up the river on a steamer from St. Louis, Missouri, to St. Joseph.

Johnston is setting up traps by himself when he meets up with old John Hatcher. Hatcher warns Johnston to be on the look-out for Indian attack. Soon after, the two are attacked by Arapaho Indians but are able to kill them. Johnston watches with interest as Hatcher attaches the scalp to his fur belt. Hatcher urges Johnston to try his hand and is amazed at how deft his young partner is in scalping his first Indian.

### Chapter 3: An Apprenticeship

Despised "boughten Frenchies" had encroached on Mountain Man territory, stripping away their beaver bounty. Hatcher and his new partner are then forced to concentrate on bear and mink. One day Hatcher injures a grizzly bear which then turns on him. Johnston shoots the bear but failed to stop him and infuriates him further. Johnston draws his Bowie knife and plants it in the beast's heart. Johnston develops into a formidable trapper and Indian fighter. He is particularly good at scalping and develops a keen sense of smell. While staying at Hatcher's cabin, Johnston meets quite a few colorful mountain men as they pass through including "Bear Claw" Chris Lapp. Lapp got his nickname from the necklaces he makes from bear claws.

After several years of trapping, Johnston becomes one of the most powerful and formidable of Mountain Men. Johnston, now at 6'2" and 240 pounds, allegedly can kill an Indian just by slamming him to the ground. His powerful kick is legendary and feared



by the Indians. His friend, Del Gue, swears Johnston killed two Indians with just one kick. Johnston is made a member of the camp police to keep peace among the Indians. He breaks up a knife fight between a Blackfoot and a Shoshoni by busting their heads together and killing them. Johnston's naturally suspicious nature and his uncanny sense of smell (for humans and animals) never leaves him off guard. Johnston is fearless and admired by the other Mountain Men. Although he has killed hundreds of Indians during his time, he is proud to say he never killed a white man.

#### Chapter 4: A Madness

Johnston augments his income by operating a woodyard, selling cords of wood to steamboat operators traveling down the Missouri River. Johnston stumbles upon a tragic incident involving Blackfoot Indians. The Morgan family traveling from Connecticut to Missouri was attacked by Blackfoot Indians. The two Morgan sons were killed and scalped. The 18-year-old daughter was tortured and raped and then killed and scalped. Mr. Morgan was scalped but was still alive when Mrs. Morgan came looking for her family. She had a hatchet with her and when she saw what the Indians had done to her family she attacked and killed four of them. The Indians took off with Mr. Morgan, still barely alive. The tragedy of the Morgan Family became an epic legend of the west.

He helps Mrs. Morgan—later known as The Crazy Woman—bury her children. She has a fourth grave dug for her husband and places his scalp, that the Indians had dropped, in the grave. Johnston builds a lean-to for Mrs. Morgan. She remains there safely, never bothered by the Indians who were frightened of her. Soon after, Hatcher decides to take off for California and gives his cabin to Johnston. Johnston takes on a Mountain Man named Del Gue as his new trapping partner.

#### Chapter 5: Oath of Vengeance

In the Spring of 1847, Johnston travels to the Flathead Indian camp and offers gifts in exchange for the subchief's daughter. The girl, known as The Swan, is a comely maiden. Her name came from the normal shape of her forehead—her mother failed to flatten her forehead with a stone when she was a baby. Johnston brings her home to his cabin, equips her with a gun and a pony. He takes off to do some trapping while she stays alone in the cabin. She learns in later months that she is pregnant. Sadly, Crow Indians see that she is alone and attack her, killing and scalping her. They steal most everything from the cabin including The Swan's pony and Johnston's other horses. Johnston returns home months later to find a vulture picking clean the his wife's skull. He sees the remnants of the child she was carrying and an eagle's feather telling him that the killers were Crow. He takes his wife's and child's remains and secretes them in the forest where they will not be disturbed. He vows then and there to avenge the murderers of his family.



## Part 2: Liver Eating Johnson, Chapters 6 through 10

### Part 2: Liver Eating Johnson, Chapters 6 through 10 Summary and Analysis

#### Chapter 6: A Man's Reputation

Sometime in 1848, word spreads about the despoiling of the Crow Indians by John Johnston. Crow Indians were found not only murdered but mutilated—their bodies cut below their ribs and their livers removed. Johnston's friends knew that Johnston was killing the Indians and eating their livers raw. They were not sure of the motive—only Gue knew he had taken a Flathead wife. Apparently, an Indian grew suspicious when he saw Johnston visit the bones he had secreted in the forest.

The legend of "Crow Killer" and "Liver-Eating Johnston" grows. White women threaten their disobedient children with a visit from "Liver-Eating Johnston" unless they behave. Townspeople close their shades as Johnston passes through town, the chill of Death seems to ride with him. He is a lonely and solitary figure.

#### Chapter 7: Twined Scalps

The Fort Laramie Treaty of 1851 laid out specific boundaries for Crow Indian territory. However, since killers of The Swan had ventured out of their territory, the Crow Killer would do likewise in going after them. The Crow nation is a proud and brave one. The warriors are excellent hunters and good family men, even listening to the wisdom of their wives. Fifty Crow Indians are traveling to the Bitter Root Mountains which is Flathead country. Johnston furtively follows them, attacking them one by one. One Crow he kills is wearing a scalp on his belt. The long black hair is not that of a white woman. Johnston feels certain that he has killed his wife's murderer; but the murderer had help and they are all due a share of Johnston's vengeance.

#### Chapter 8: Crow Against Flathead

Johnston hurries toward the Flathead camp to warn them of the Crow who are on their way to attack them. The Flathead camp is nestled in a valley. They have 500 horses corralled nearby which they had brought to trade with the Crow. Johnston is greeted warmly by Bear's Head, his father-in-law. Johnston shows Bear's Head his daughter's scalp. Bear's Head tells Johnston he will have his warriors ready to attack the Crow and finish the vengeance for his daughter's murder.

Bear's Head gifts Johnston with a new black steed, white buffalo blanket and beaded saddle. The confrontation left the Flathead with sixty dead warriors—the Crow though way outnumbered lived up to their reputation as great warriors. Johnston returns to his



cabin no doubt reminiscing along the same path where he had brought The Swan years before. Now he had his revenge.

#### Chapter 9: Winter Holiday, Spring Council

Johnston returns to his cabin and readies for winter. He fixes up and improves his cabin by adding bearskin rugs and buffalo fur hangings. He visits the secret grave of his wife and child—he gazes intensely at their skulls as he holds them in his hands. With his keen senses, however, he is aware that he is being watched by Indians. They dare not confront him but take note of the skulls and the Crow warrior's feather that he keeps with the skulls. As word spreads about his obsession with the skulls, his formerly intimidating reputation is softened as the town's women appreciate his defense of his dead wife and child.

Word also spreads about the apparent cowardice of the Crow Indians. Among the Cheyenne, Blackfoot, Arapaho and other Indian nations, the Crows become a laughing stock. They are mocked and ridiculed as "woman-like" in their vulnerability to this single enemy, the avenging Mountain Man. The Crow elders decry the actions of the foolish young warriors who brought such anger and retribution upon the entire tribe. Though Johnston has apparently ended his vendetta, the Crow still suffer from the humiliation suffered at the hands of Johnston.

The Crow hold a spring council and decide to send out twenty of their bravest warriors to find and kill the Crow Killer. The warriors will be sent out on separate paths—surely one would get through and kill his prey. Although they fight and hunt the enemy for years, none ever return to the tribe.

#### Chapter 10: A Missing Chapter

Johnston killed all twenty of the braves sent out by the Crow Chief, Big Robert, scalping each one and eating this liver raw. There is a lack of detail as to the exact way he killed them but he swears all were in direct hand-to-hand combat. One thing that Johnston insisted is that each one knew before they died that he was being killed by Liver-Eating Johnston





## Part 3: A Man Among Men, Chapters 11 through 18

### Part 3: A Man Among Men, Chapters 11 through 18 Summary and Analysis

#### Chapter 11: The Eighteenth Warrior

Johnston becomes with some of his Mountain Men contemporaries visiting with them and exchanging experiences. Due to his formidable reputation, others seek him out to even some personal scores. Johnston is of the mind that vengeance is a private, personal thing. If he agrees to help anyone, he will step back at the conclusion and allow the person to take full credit for the act of vengeance.

Gue and Johnston take off on a long expedition through the woods. Gue fears Indians are watching them and that the bright campfire they built would target them. Although at first Johnston tells Gue that the Blackfoot were in the area, the truth is that Crow are following them. Johnston and Gue kill the fire and hide in the thick forest. Soon Johnston kills a warrior with his Bowie knife after kicking him to the ground. It was Gue's opportunity to ask Johnston about his feuding with the Crow.

Johnston estimates that this warrior is the eighteenth out of the twenty that are hunting him. He reveals that he's probably killed four to five hundred Crow warriors in all. Gue watches as Johnston scalps the Indian with a surgeon's precision. He begs him not to eat his liver, promising it would make him heave. Johnston is not persuaded and continues on with his ritual, slicing the warrior's abdomen and thrusting his hand inside for the liver.

#### Chapter 12: Captive of the Blackfeet

Johnston takes off with 40 gallons of whiskey to trade with the Flatheads—some 500 miles away. After making his way some 200 miles, he is ambushed by a young Blackfoot chief, The Wolf, who recognizes the notorious Crow Killer. The Wolf captures Johnston and brings him to his camp where he is tied up and guarded by a Blackfoot warrior. The Wolf confiscates the whiskey for his warriors and in good English tells the Crow Killer that he will trade him to the Crow for goods and supplies.

While the rest of the tribe is getting drunk, Johnston is able to loosen the ties on his hand and ambush the guard. He kicks him broadside and knocks him out. Johnston takes the Indian's knife and surgically removes his leg at the hip—while the warrior is still alive. He steals away successfully with the leg over his shoulder. Naked to the waist, Johnston is facing a long trek through the bitter winter back to his cabin. He uses the leg as his source of food during his journey back. Along the way, he fights with a large mountain lion over the leg and encounters a grumpy grizzly he wakes from



hibernation. Although emaciated and gaunt from weight loss, he finally makes it back to the cabin where Gue is surprised by Johnston's entry, hardly recognizing the thin and wasted man before him.

#### Chapter 13: Mountain-Man Rendezvous

Against Johnston's wishes, Del Gue spreads the word around about Johnston's capture by the Blackfoot. The Mountain Men decide to gather to take revenge upon the Blackfoot for humiliating the Crow Killer. Forty Mountain Men gather in a narrow valley near Virginia City, Montana. The group represents a wide-range of scurrilous characters. Anton Sepulveda is mounted on his black steed, a man famous for his talent for wielding a knife. He and another in the group, Apache Joe, together had routed an entire Apache village. Bald Head Pete is present as well. He was scalped as a youngster by the Pawnees but got his revenge, having enough Pawnee scalps now to cover a roof. Mad Mose who also had been scalped when young captures Indians and cuts their ears off but leaves them alive to suffer. Hatchet Jack dismembers his victims, burning all parts piece by piece. The forty ruffians mount their steeds and head toward the Blackfeet and ultimately are able to defeat them.

#### Chapter 14: Boots and Biscuits

Itching for some fighting, in February 1864, at age 41, Johnston joins the Union Army in St. Louis. He is reprimanded for scalping some Cherokee since that tribe is on the side of the Union Army. Johnston is discharged in September 1865 at which time he returns up north for fur trapping. He trades his Union Army uniform to some Pawnee for a horse and more comfortable garb—especially for a pair of doeskin moccasins. From the Pawnee camp he sets off for to meet up with Gue at Little Medicine Bow having been forewarned by the Pawnee that the Sioux and Cheyenne are still warring.

After killing a Cheyenne brave and scaring off three others, Johnston meets up with Gue who has only bad news for him. Many of the Mountain Men who had helped him avenge the Blackfoot tribe are dead. More bad news, the Blackfoot chief has a bounty on Johnston's head—any brave who kills the Crow Killer will be made a chief.

Known not only for his killing skills, Johnston has a reputation as an excellent biscuit baker. One balmy day, Johnston spends the entire day baking biscuits. He is washing his pan out at the river when he senses that an Indian is near. He sees a large Crow standing in his cabin stuffing one biscuit in his mouth after another. Johnston sneaks around and is able to overcome the large warrior.

Gue is not present during this episode but returns soon after. The Indian is laying dead with the familiar slit under his ribs. Although he was spared witnessing his friend eating the liver, he hears more than he wants to about how good warm biscuits and warm liver are together. The Indian is the twentieth and last Crow sent to hunt him down. This brave had been tracking him for 14 years. The two friends talk admirably about the tenacity of the Crow Indians.

#### Chapter 15: Portuguese Phillips



From 1866 through the early-1870s, hostile Indians engage in a multitude of fighting and massacres. Johnston becomes involved in some of the fighting and in helping one of his friends, an Army scout, Portuguese Phillips during these wars. The Sioux were first on the warpath drawing in the Cheyennes, the Arapahos, the Blackfeet and the Crow. The Indian nations recognize that the white man intends to take all their land. Every settlement and every trail is a target for the Indians. Fort Kearney is of particular abhorrence to the Sioux. The US have violated an agreement with the Sioux in erecting the fort thus enraging the Indians. Red Cloud, the Sioux Chief, vows to kill all 250 inhabitants, including women and children. He lures a group of 80 infantrymen out to hunt down what is purported to be a small group of rouge Indians. Instead, the infantrymen are ambushed by 1,000 warriors.

Colonel Carrington is left with a small garrison of soldiers along with the women and children. He needs someone to get help from Fort Laramie some 200 miles away. Portuguese Phillips, a Mountain Man, volunteers for the dangerous assignment. Carrington gives Phillips his chestnut Arabian horse—the best in the West—for the long journey through snow and rough terrain. Carrington orders the women and children to stay in the arsenal. If the Indians gain entry, the soldier guarding the arsenal is instructed to blow it up.

About half-way to Fort Laramie, Phillips stumbles upon the campfire of Johnston and another Mountain Man. The men provide Phillips with food and drink and a warm place to sleep the night. Johnston wakes Phillips up a few hours before dawn. Phillips' horse as well as Johnston's are ready to travel—Johnston will be going with Phillips.

Johnston leads Phillips on the way to Fort Laramie, taking short cuts and making up for lost time. Johnston stays with Phillips until they are near the Fort at which time Johnston departs allowing Phillips to continue his solo trip to Laramie. He wants to ensure that Phillips gets credit for his bravery in saving Fort Kearny. Another blizzard blows up but Phillips finally makes it to Fort Laramie. As soon as they enter the grounds, the horse falls dead from exhaustion. They had made the trip in three days. Phillips makes his way to the Commander, hands him a note and collapses just like the horse.

Sometime later, Johnston receives the sad news that the Crazy Woman Morgan had died—she starved to death over the harsh winter.

#### Chapter 16: A Sioux Liver

In defense of settlers' women and children at Fort Hawley in 1869, Johnston's distinctive contribution, the eating of a Sioux liver, stems from the Mountain Men calling in their marker for their help in avenging Johnston's humiliation at the hands of the Blackfeet. Settlements near the Fort have been under Indian attack. Johnston and many of his Mountain Men cohorts are on hand to help the Union Army fight against the Indians. One day a white woman is attacked by Sioux, scalped and left for dead. The Mountain Men surround the Sioux and eventually kill them all. Johnston's friends challenge him to eat a Sioux liver. Johnston, not one to back down from a challenge, cuts open the



warrior's side, extracts and chops on the liver. Strangely enough, just before this incident, Johnston had made peace with the Crow.

#### Chapter 17: Monument for A Foe's Friend

In the winter of 1968, Johnston and fellow Mountain Man X. Beidler, set off for a fur trapping expedition. They do well and are returning to Johnston's cabin when they sense that they are being followed. The trappers make a huge fire that night to openly mark their spot. As the twenty young Blackfoot braves approach, Johnston and Beidler ambush and kill all but a few who are injured and get away. On their way back, they pass by the Crazy Woman's cabin. Johnston is aware that she had died of starvation but was surprised to see that she was given a respectful cairn. The Crow, his enemy for 25 years, out of respect for him had given the Crazy Woman an honorable burial. Soon after, the Crow Killer knowing it was time, sets off to meet up with the Crow to make his peace.

#### Chapter 18: Target for Gray Bear

Johnston travels to where the Judith River empties into the Missouri. The Crow Chief Gray Bear and twenty-six braves are there on their way back from fur trapping. Chief Gray Bear is at a near-by spring taking a drink when he is surprised by a white man emerging from the brush. It is Crow Killer Johnston who is holding both hands up in peace. Gray Bear has a look of recognition and fright on his face seeing the man who had killed so many in his tribe.

Johnston tells Gray Bear he is done with killing Crow attributing his change of heart to the honorable grave the Crow gave his friend The Crazy Woman. Chief Gray Bear accepts his offer of peace. Johnston rides off with his back a full target to Gray Bear. He would have feared attack had he not just turned his back on a friend.



# Part Four: Brother of the Crows, Chapters 19 through 24

## Part Four: Brother of the Crows, Chapters 19 through 24 Summary and Analysis

### Chapter 19: White Chief of the Shoshoni

After a favor to The Fox, the Shoshoni Chief, Johnston is made an honorary Shoshoni Chief. Some time later, an old Mountain Man friend, Anton Sepulveda, and his new partner, Pancho Robles, come looking for Johnston. Along the way to Johnston, the two Hispanic Mountain Men pick up nine more cohorts to travel with them. While searching for Johnston, the men meet up with a Shoshoni brave who is also looking for Johnston. Nez Perce Indians had killed his father, Wahni, along with Shoshoni women and children. Since Wahni was a friend of Johnston, his son is hopeful that Johnston will help him avenge the deaths. As an honorary Shoshoni Chief, Johnston will be compelled to help. With the addition of Shoshoni, Flathead, Ute and Crow braves, and his Mountain Men Johnston has 150 warriors under his command.

Johnston's "army" traveled to the Lehmi River, rough country that borders Nez Perces territory. Johnston is suspicious of the Utes and as it turned out he had reason to be. The Utes ride ahead as scouts but actually warn the Nez Perce Indians who in turn ambush the Mountain Men and the Indians riding with them. Johnston and the others, however, are quick to recover and are able to fight them off. Although 63 Nez Perces warriors died, several Mountain Men including Sepulveda and Mose died in the attack.

### Chapter 20: Biscuits for Blackfeet

Fort McPherson is a common meeting place for Johnston and the other Mountain Men. Others interesting in joining the Mountain Men—Indians, soldiers, plainsmen and others—also gather there as well. Buffalo Bill Cody shows up himself at least once. Cody is not a favorite of Crow Killer Johnston whom the Mountain Man considers a fraud. Johnston considers Cody to be the worst shot in the West and someone who never killed an "Injun." Johnston, Gue and several others go off on an expedition, bringing their pelts back to Johnston's cabin. Soon after their arrival, Blackfoot steal their mounts that are loaded with pelts. Knowing that they are surrounded by Blackfoot, Johnston whips up several pans of biscuits laced heavily with strychnine. The Mountain Men escape through a tunnel in the back of the property leaving the biscuits out to lure the Blackfoot. Later, 29 dead Indians are found in Johnston's cabin.

### Chapter 21: A Last Departure

Johnston and Gue return to Old Hatcher's cabin for some fishing and rest. When they get ready to leave, Johnston takes most everything with him. Saying he will never need



the cabin again, he sets fire to it as they depart. This is the cabin where The Swan was killed—Johnston is destroying one of the last visages of that tragic event.

#### Chapter 22: Mariano and the Ute Chief

Johnston and Ute set off to see another Mountain Man, Mariano Modeno. Modeno is married to a Flathead Indian woman whom he renamed "John." Modeno built a large house, in fact an estate with cleared land and farm animals, for John in the Big Thompson valley in Colorado. As the partners ride up to the porch where Modeno is sitting in a rocker, they see that he is working on a Ute scalp. Modeno convinces his friends to hunt down and kill the Ute Chief Captain Jack. Although Johnston is able to kill several Utes that summer, he is unable to find Captain Jack. Modeno makes his partners promise to stay at his house while he hunts down Captain Jack. Three weeks later when the partners have almost given Modeno up for dead, he comes riding in happily holding up the bloody scalp of Captain Jack. Johnston sees Captain Jack hanging in a tree in the distance. He is hung by his arms, not his neck. He is dying in agony with black hate-filled eyes.

#### Chapter 23: The Piegan Princess

In 1876, Johnston discovers an abandoned young Piegan woman, starving and without defense in the Black Hills. She proves her worth to Johnston when she kills a Blackfoot warrior who was about to kill Johnston. It was the first time that Johnston, to his recollection, is saved by someone else. They stay together through two winters, trapping and traveling through the area. He shares what they earned together when he sends her off to safety to a compound for Indian orphans and widows. The girl, Waving Grass, tells the astonished authorities at the compound that she is the wife of Liver-Eating Johnston.

#### Chapter 24: Eight Scalps for the Crows

As a scout and working with Chief Black Eagle, Johnston and Gue find a white woman who had crawled for miles over rough terrain for help. She was scalped and near death. The white woman tells Johnston that her family had been attacked by Sioux. Johnston and his party travels and finds the Sioux who had attacked her settlement and killed her family. Responding to Chief Black Eagle's request, Johnston kills all but one Sioux. Black Eagle asks him to eat the Sioux warrior's liver. Johnston slices the warrior and removes his liver, bites into it but spits it out, telling Black Eagle the Sioux livers are not fit to eat.



## Part 5: The Old Trapper, Chapters 25 through 28

### Part 5: The Old Trapper, Chapters 25 through 28 Summary and Analysis

#### Chapter 25: Burial for Bear Claw

After the winter campaign of 1876-77, the power of the Indians is in deep decline. Although the Mountain Men help with occasional uprisings, their lives forever are changing. With the decrease of the Indian population, comes an influx of Texan cowboys herding their cattle into the vast and empty plains—an unwelcome sight to Johnston and the others.

Although fur is scarce, Johnston and Gue take off for a trapping expedition. After they load up their bounty, they drop by Bear Claw Chris Lapp's cabin to check on the old man. Sadly, they find him dead and scalped. He had been shot with a stinger gun by Blackfeet. Gue and Johnston find the three Blackfeet murderers at a campfire where they are trying to open up a chest they had stolen from Bear Claw. They kill the Indians and behead them. Inside the chest are Bear Claw's prized bear claw necklaces. Johnston and Gue return to Bear Claw's cabin, dig his grave and decorate it with the heads of the murdering Indians stuck atop poles surrounding the grave site.

#### Chapter 26: Sheriff Johnson

Johnston and Gue spend some time in Leadville, Colorado, where the Crow Killer has a run-in with the town's sheriff. After the sheriff learns who Johnston is, he backs off out of respect for the living legend. As word of this incident is spread, Johnston is soon named Deputy Sheriff of Coulson in Custer County. Johnston is a popular Deputy Sheriff with the populace because he keeps the peace. Another law enforcement officer tells him to arrest more people but Johnston refuses. Johnston doesn't have to arrest the trouble-makers—he just scares them into behaving; but his career in law enforcement lasts only a short year as the coaxing of his remaining Mountain Men friends and the lure of the old life draw him back to his former life.

#### Chapter 27: Last Trail

Johnston finds another of his old Mountain Man friends, Arkansas Pete, dead and scalped near the house that he had built in the woods. Pete had been shot and killed through the heart. His remains were eaten by wolves. Johnston determines that an Assiniboine warrior is the culprit. He tracks the Indian and kills him, makes a slit under his ribcage and takes his liver. On this occasion, Johnston did not eat the liver. Rather, he used it as bait in trapping an otter.





## Chapter 28: Lodge by the Sea

Through the latter '80s, Gue and Johnston continue trapping together until Gue decides to go off alone to find better trapping. They say Mountain Man good-byes: 'Watch out for your scalp and see you some time, some place.' Johnston builds a cabin in Bear Creek and becomes a Marshal in nearby Red Lodge for a short period. Johnston's health began to fail him in the late 1890s. He enters the Veteran's Hospital in December 1899 and dies one month later in January 1900. The sole notation on his headstone is 'Jno. Johnston, Co. H, 2nd Colo. Cav.' There is no mention of the Liver-Eating Crow Killer John Johnston.





# Characters

## John Johnston, The Crow Killer

John Johnston is the subject of the book "Crow Killer, The Saga of Liver-Eating Johnson," written by Raymond W. Thorp and Robert Bunker. It is the true story of John Johnston (last name is alternately spelled "Johnston" and "Johnson"). The introduction of Johnston is quick and stark. In the very first paragraph of the story, we learn that in May 1847, Crow Indians killed and scalped Johnston's young, pregnant wife. Johnston had been away for months on a fur trapping expedition and finds the skeletal remains of his wife and child when he returns. For many years after, Johnston kills and scalps Crow Indians, each time extracting and eating their livers raw. This explanation thus explaining the title of the book. In 1972, the story was made into a major motion picture starring Robert Redford. The movie's title, "Jeremiah Johnson" uses the middle name of John Johnston.

In the Spring of 1847, Johnston takes off flanked with gifts for the Flathead Indian camp. He offers these items in exchange for the a secondary chief's daughter. The girl, known as The Swan, was a comely maiden. Her name came from the normal shape of her forehead—her mother failed to flatten her forehead with a stone when she was a baby. Johnston brings The Swan home to his cabin, where they apparently get along well. He takes much effort to learn her language. Johnston embarks on a trapping expedition leaving The Swan alone in the cabin.

Tragically, Crow Indians ambush her, killing and scalping her. They steal most everything from the cabin including The Swan's pony and Johnston's other horses. Johnston returns home months later to find a vulture picking the bones of his wife's head and the small skull of his unborn child. Seeing an eagle's feather he knows that the killers were Crow Indian warriors. He honors the remains of his family by secreting them in a secluded spot in the forest. This is the turning point at which he vows to avenge their deaths.

Sometime in 1848, word spreads of the despoiling of the Crow Indians by John Johnston. Crow Indians were found not only murdered but mutilated—their bodies cut below their ribs and their livers removed. The legend of "Crow Killer" and "Liver-Eating Johnston" grows. Townspeople threaten their disobedient children with a visit from notorious "Liver-Eating Johnston" unless they behave. They fear the strange mountain man and close their shades as Johnston passes through town—the chill of Death seems to ride with him. He is a lonely, tragic and solitaire figure.

Outside his Mountain Man trapper life, Johnston joined the Union Army and served for a year. He also served time as a scout for the US Army in the Black Hills when the Indian uprisings and massacres against settlers was on the increase. During this time, he had dealings with a few Mountain Men who were more famous than he—Kit Carson and Buffalo Bill. Johnston looked down on Buffalo Bill as a tenderfoot and the worst shot in



the West. Johnston's reputation for toughness led to his being named Deputy Sheriff in Coulson in Custer County. His career in law enforcement is cut short by the lure to return to the old life.

Johnston and Gue part ways and say their last good-bye. In the early 1890s Johnston moves to Bear Creek and becomes the marshal of Red Lodge. By 1895, Johnston becomes ill, eventually moving into a Veteran's Hospital and dying in 1900. The sole notation on his headstone is 'Jno. Johnston, Co. H, 2nd Colo. Cav.' There is no mention of the Liver-Eating Crow Killer.

## Del Gue

Del Gue is the long-time partner and friend of trapper John Johnston. Gue is the Mountain Man that lived to relate the majority of the story of the Crow Killer, John Johnston. Del Gue was as familiar with the terrain of the rugged upper middle-west where most of the story of Johnston took place as the Liver-Eater himself. Although Gue witnessed some of the murder and mayhem himself, he learned many details from the Flathead Indians whose sub-chief was Johnston's father-in-law.

Del tells another cohort, "White-Eye" (J. F. Anderson) vivid details of the tale of Johnston. Johnston's escapades took place during the 1840s and '50s. Del survives well into the latter part of the century and relates many of the episodes of John Johnston between 1885 and 1890. "White Eye" worked with one of the authors of the book (Thorp), relating the details of the Johnston sage to him in the early 1940's.

The plucking and eating of the of the raw livers from Indians made Gue a little queasy. In one trapping expedition, Gue fears Indians are watching them and that the bright campfire they built might target them. Johnston and Gue kill the fire and hide in the thick forest. Soon Johnston kills a warrior with his Bowie knife after kicking him to the ground. It was Gue's opportunity to ask Johnston about his feuding with the Crow. Johnston tells Gue that he has probably killed four to five hundred Crow warriors in all. Gue watches as Johnston scalps the Indian with a surgeon's precision. He begs him not to eat his liver, promising it would make him heave. Johnston is not persuaded and continues on with his ritual, slicing the warrior's abdomen and thrusting his hand inside.

When Johnston returns from his capture by the Blackfoot, he is so gaunt and thin that Gue hardly recognizes him. Against Johnston's wishes, Del Gue spreads the word around about Johnston's capture by and escape from the Blackfoot. Johnston is angered by Del's action but to no avail. The Mountain Men will gather to take revenge upon the Blackfoot for humiliating the Crow Killer. Gue is defending his friend and giving him the respect he is due.

In another incident after Johnston kills several Cheyenne, he meets up with Gue who has only bad news for him. Many of the Mountain Men who had helped him avenge the Blackfoot tribe were dead. More bad news, the Blackfoot chief has a bounty on Johnston's head—any brave who kills the Crow Killer will be made a chief.



Gue remains a true and loyal friend and partner to the Mountain Man John Johnston until the end of Johnston's life.

## **Old John Hatcher**

Old John Hatcher, a famous trapper and contemporary of John Johnston. Hatcher admired Johnston and spread stories about his friend.

## **Joe Robidoux**

Joe Robidoux was a sly trader who cheated John Johnston as a young man.

## **The Crazy Woman**

The Crazy Woman, Mrs. Murphy, went insane after her family was killed by Indians. Johnston and other Mountain Men took care of her by bringing her supplies now and then. After she died, the Crow gave her a respectful burial, in honor of their enemy and her friend, Crow Killer Johnston.

## **The Swan**

The Swan is the beautiful Flathead Indian girl that Johnston marries. She and her unborn child are brutally murdered by Crow Indians. The killers scalped her.

## **The Wolf**

The Wolf is the young Blackfoot warrior who is filled with pride when he ambushes and captures the notorious Crow Killer.

## **Gray Bear**

Gray Bear is the Chief of the Crow with whom John Johnston makes peace. He seeks Gray Bear out in peace ending his 25-year vendetta against the Crow Nation.

## **Waving Grass**

Waving Grass, also known as the Piegan Princess, was a young Piegan Indian who had been abandoned by her tribe. Johnston saves her from starvation and allows her to ride with him. They ride together, trapping and fighting Indians, for two years.



## Objects/Places

### St. Louis, Missouri

Young John Johnston travels on the steamer Thames from St. Louis to St. Joseph where he begins his career as a fur trapper. St. Louis is also where Johnston joins the Union Army in later years.

### St. Joseph, Missouri

As a strapping twenty-year-old, John Johnston begins his trapping career in St. Joseph, Missouri, where he teams up with veteran trapper John Hatcher.

### Little Snake Valley

John Hatcher's cabin is in Little Snake Valley. He takes his young trapping partner, John Johnston, there on their first trip together. Little Snake Valley is located in what is now northwestern Colorado.

### Musselshell, Montana

When trappings were scarce, Johnston operated a side-line in Musselshell in east central Montana. He cut cords of wood which he sold to steamboat operators on the Missouri River.

### Bitter Root Mountains

Johnston's wife is a Flathead Indian. This tribe is located in the Bitter Root mountain range.

### Continental Divide

In 1861, the Crow Killer helps Del Gue set up a winter trapping camp east of the Continental Divide, near North Platte in Wyoming.

### Fort Laramie

John Johnston and his partner Del Gue sell and trade a large amount of their fur bounty at Fort Laramie.



## **Fort Kearny**

Fort Kearny was built on Cherokee land against an agreement between the US government and the Cherokee Nation. The Cherokee Chief, Red Cloud, wages a brutal attack on the Fort, vowing to kill all inhabitants including women and children.

## **Fort McPherson**

Fort McPherson is a common meeting place for Johnston and the other Mountain Men. Also often gathering there were plainsmen, Indians, soldiers and wolfers who might be interested in joining the Mountain Men in their trapping expeditions.

## **Black Hills**

In the late-1870s, the government had closed the Black Hills to settlers but when gold was discovered there the government reversed its ruling. This act brought on the fury of the Indians elevating their attacks from individual settlers to those against the US Army led by such chiefs as Sitting Bull and Crazy Horse.



# Themes

## Sadness/Tragedy

From the first sentence when the reader is told that John Johnston's pregnant wife had been killed and scalped by Crow Indians, tragedy is front and center as one of the main themes of the true story of Crow Killer, The Saga of Liver-Eating Johnson. The fact that for years after, acting in revenge Johnston kills and scalps Crow Indians, is testimony to his anger, sadness and his unquenchable need for revenge.

The lead-up to the main tragedy of Johnston's life begins when Johnston embarks on a trapping expedition leaving his Flathead Indian wife, The Swan, alone in their cabin. Tragically, Crow Indians are watchful and see the vulnerable young woman is alone. They ambush her, killing and scalping her. Also a tragic victim is the unborn child of The Swan and her Mountain Man, John Johnston. Johnston returns home months later to find a vulture picking at the bones of his wife's head and the small skull of his unborn child. Seeing the skull is Johnston's first knowledge that his wife was pregnant. Seeing an eagle's feather he knows that the killers were Crow Indian warriors.

Sometime in 1848, word spreads of the despoiling of the Crow Indians by John Johnston. Townspeople fear the strange mountain man and close their shades as Johnston passes through town—the chill of Death seems to ride with him. He is a lonely, tragic and solitaire figure.

Johnston honors the remains of his family by secreting them in a secluded spot in the forest. This is the turning point at which he vows to avenge their deaths. Throughout the rest of his life, Johnston returns to the spot in the forest where his family's bones are hidden. He takes the skulls in his large, rough hands, holding and caressing them for hours. The unending sadness that the man is enduring is without question.

## Violence

The title of the book by Raymond W. Thorp and Robert Bunker, Crow Killer, The Saga of Liver-Eating Johnson, is a very strong indication that violence—even unthinkable violence—will be an integral part of the story of Mountain Man, John Johnston. The very first paragraph tells us that Johnston's wife was brutally killed and scalped by Crow Indians. From that point on, vengeance is part of Johnston's soul. He seeks out Crow Indians and kills and scalps them, topping off each event by slicing the warrior under his ribs and extracting and eating his liver—raw. Johnston estimates to one of his fellow Mountain Men that he killed and scalped 400 to 500 Crow Indians—and of course had their livers afterward.

Johnston at one point is captured by a Blackfoot Indian Chief. He is tied up and being guarded by a sentry at the Blackfoot camp. The wily Johnston is able to free himself and ambush the sentry. He knocks him down with a strong kick. While still alive, Johnston



takes the Indian's knife and, like a surgeon, removes the warrior's leg at the hip. Johnston steals away with the leg over his shoulder. He is half-naked and without a horse and facing a bitter winter. Johnston makes it back to his cabin eventually, gnawing on the leg for sustenance all the way home.

Johnston's contemporaries, the other Mountain Men, have reputations almost as scary as Johnston's. Anton Sepulveda and Apache Joe together routed an entire Apache village. Bald Head Pete was scalped as a youngster by the Pawnees but got his revenge, having obtained enough Pawnee scalps to cover a roof. Mad Mose who also had been scalped when young captures Indians and cuts their ears off but usually lets them live. Hatchet Jack dismembers his victims, burning all parts piece by piece.

The violence is a constant in this saga however it is not one-sided. The Indians are just as brutal and savage as the Mountain Men.

## Resolution/Honor

After having killed a multitude of Crow Indian avenging the murder of his pregnant wife, Johnston finally encounters the Indian warrior who actually killed her. After killing this Crow warrior, Johnston looks with great interest at the scalp on his belt. It is not the long hair of a white woman, rather it is the long dark hair of an Indian woman. Johnston is sure that the scalp is that of his murdered wife. Johnston visits the Flathead Indian camp, the birthplace of his wife, and meets with Bear's Head, his father-in-law.

Johnston shows Bear's Head his daughter's scalp. Bear's Head knows there were others involved in The Swan's murder and readies his warriors to attack them and finish the vengeance on his daughter. The confrontation left the Flathead with sixty dead warriors—the Crow though way outnumbered lived up to their reputation as great warriors. Johnston returns to his cabin feeling a measure of resolution for now he had his revenge. However, the Crow are humiliated by the number of their tribe killed and mutilated by Johnston, and out of honor for the dead, sends out twenty warriors on different paths—instructed not to return until the Crow Killer is dead.

Johnston obviously has a strong instinct to help his fellow Mountain Men. However, out of honor for his friends, he does not want to take any glory away from his friends by helping them. For example, when his friend, Portuguese Phillips is scouting for the Union Army and traveling to an Fort Laramie in an attempt to get help for an Indian attack upon Fort Kearny. Johnston escorts him through some of the most dangerous and rugged terrain but departs when they are near Fort Laramie. Johnston allows Phillips to continue the trip solo in order to become known as a hero for his bravery in saving Fort Kearny.

When Johnston sees that the Crow honored his friend, the Crazy Lady, with a respectful burial place, Johnston realizes that the Crow are reaching out to him in peace. He seeks out the Crow Chief Gray Bear and ends his 25 year vendetta against the Crow.

# Style

## Perspective

The true story of John Johnston, "Crow Killer, The Saga of Liver-Eating Johnson" is authored by Raymond W. Thorp and Robert Bunker. Much of the the story taking place in the middle decades of nineteenth century in the rugged terrain of the mid-western and plains states is told word of mouth. In that sense, the saga of the Crow Killer must be considered if not folklore then at least folk history.

The raucous and dangerous life the Mountain Men lead produce a breed of men who are loyal to one another and even protective. Therefore, it would not be a leap of faith to imagine that those friends and admirers of Johnston relating his legendary life in the wild would present it in the most positive and heroic manner. Based on that plausible assumption, one could question whether Crow actually killed the "400 or 500" Crow Indians over a twenty-five year period. Could the number have been lower? Did it grow with each telling and each man telling the tale? Whatever the number of Crow he killed, did he really eat all of their raw livers?

There has been much more print history about the more famous Mountain Men such as Kit Carson and Buffalo Bill. By contrast, there has been very little written word about John Jeremiah Johnston. Rather the story is told as related by Del Gue, Johnston's friend and trapping partner, and by "White Eye" Anderson who at age ninety in 1940 related episodes with first-hand knowledge to author Thorp.

## Tone

The overarching tone of "Crow Killer, The Saga of Liver-Eating Johnson" is a rather clinical, unemotional account of the violent life of Mountain Man John Johnson. The authors, Raymond W. Thorp and Robert Bunker, do not take sides between Johnston and his Mountain Men contemporaries and the Indians that they encounter in pursuing their survival. It is truly a saga of only the strong survive—survival of the fittest. The authors are relating the overall tale and the individual episodes in a matter that by design does not evoke guilt or sympathy.

The Mountain Men facing one threat after another ranging from blood-thirsty Indians to charging grizzly bears are presented with an uncanny lack of fear or even surprise. The story is obviously written to ingrain in the reader's thoughts that the harrowing events that the Mountain Men are forced to contend with on a daily basis are just part of their life. Their fear is only heartened by their tenacity. No matter what odds they face, they never give up the life. Their focus stays consistently on fur trapping and making a living. Having to kill Indians is just an annoying side-bar to their careers.

The only emotion derived from the story is the sadness and tragedy that is obvious when Johnston discovers his wife and unborn child brutally killed by Crow Indians. That





sadness hovers over Johnston the rest of his life. Another strong emotion that is apparent is the loyalty and protectiveness the Mountain Men have for one another. They are such lone and solitary men that all they have is each other—they are protective of that.

## Structure

"Crow Killer, The Saga of Liver-Eating Johnson," authored by Thorp and Bunker, is segmented into five parts:

- 1.Part One: The Young Trapper
- 2.Part Two: Liver-Eating Johnson
- 3.A Man Among Men
- 4.Brother of the Crows
- 5.The Old Trapper

Within each of the main parts, are individual chapters, numbering 28 in all, detailing the main segments of John Johnston's life as a Mountain Man in the rugged mid-west and plains of the early-1840s when Johnston first comes on the scene as a young fur trapper to his death in 1900—and all the Indian killing in between.

Many of the episodes that the authors relate begin with a preview of the story—including its final outcome. A stark example of this is the very beginning paragraph of the very first chapter which states, in part, "Crow Indians killed and scalped John Johnston's pregnant wife; for many years thereafter, he killed and scalped Crow Indians. Then he ate their livers, raw." Of course, this is what the name of the book stems from but then the author flashes back telling the reader the story leading up to this unthinkable behavior.

The authors use this preview/flashback technique quite often throughout the non-fiction work. Another example, is in Chapter 16 [unfortunately another 'liver' reference] entitled "A Sioux Liver." The chapter starts off with a startling revelation, "His distinctive contribution, however, the eating of a Sioux liver, was by way of a command performance required by those very Mountain Men who had "helped" him to a vengeance against the Blackfeet." As in the first chapter, the rest of this chapter then goes on to explain the continuation and apparent expansion of Killer Crow's partiality for raw liver.



## Quotes

"One May morning in 1845, Crow Indians killed and scalped John Johnston's pregnant wife, for many years thereafter, he killed and scalped Crow Indians. Then he ate their livers, raw." Page 21.

"He never attempted to dodge a difficult situation, yet he never sought an encounter or ignored one in his reckoning. His trade was trapping; the mountains were his home; and the killing of those who would disrupt either became, for one with his skills, merely routine." Page 36.

"Johnston stepped out into the open; moving closer, he heard a rustling behind the cabin and saw a huge vulture take wing. The clean-picked skull of the Flathead girl lay near the open cabin door—wind-blown or vulture-worried a little part from the remainder of her bones." Page 46.

"The capture of such a prisoner [Johnston] was a magnificent achievement for The Wolf, the young Blackfoot chief leaped down now into the trail from a rock above. As his warriors swarmed around him, he danced in jubilant pantomime, then cried in excellent English, "The Killer of Crows has at last been taken." Page 79.

"Seizing the guard's own knife Johnson quickly lifted the scalp and tied it to his own belt. Next he slit the buckskin down from the guard's left leg, felt the flash, ran the knife's keen edge around the hip, and cut to the bone socket. Seizing the knee with one hand and the ankle with the other, he twisted and snapped the whole leg from the body. All was done so deftly that his victim lived." Page 81.

"'Injuns air funny critturs,' he [Johnston] announced at last, chomping furiously. But Beidler knew, as he watched his famed companion, that he had more than tobacco to chew on. The Crows had given such a burial to Crazy woman out of respect for Johnson—their greatest enemy, her friend." Page 114.

"The several ladies on board [the steamer] stared long at the fearsome Mountain Men, and at last one asked Beidler whether he was married. Beidler replied that he was: 'To a squaw, ma'am.' And where was she now the enthusiastic passenger asked next. 'Sent her to Rome, ma'am.' 'How wonderful to Rome, Italy?' was the obvious question: 'No, ma'am, to roam on the prairie.'" Page 115.

"The Nez Perce was dragged almost from behind his rock before, suddenly, the quarter-inch loop cut through his neck. There was no use in Pancho's snapping the Indian's head to Big Anton, for Big Anton was dead. Instead, he sent it rolling over the rocks to Liver-Eating Johnson. The gift came in handy. For Johnson had emptied his rifle and six-shooters. . . Reaching quickly, he seized the gruesome object which rolled toward him and hurled it at his live foe. The two heads smashed together. Page 131.



"The mid-seventies. . .were the years in which the Government first closed the Black Hills. . .to settlers, then threw them open once again when the few who had gone in in secret, discovered gold. Those were the years when the Sioux turned from the killing of individual gold hunters to such exploits against the United States Army as those of Crazy horse and Sitting Bull, and when for one delirious summer and fall victory seemed theirs." Page 148.

"Leaning now over one of the dead warriors, slowly, expertly, so that all might see his proficiency, he made the necessary incision. Reaching in, he drew out a Sioux liver. The Crow warriors stood proudly erect, watching the proceedings and watching. The onetime Crow Killer stood now in front of this scalped and suffering Sioux brave. Holding the liver on high, he brought it down to his mouth; he bit. Then grimacing, he spat. He threw the organ into the face of the watching Sioux brave. 'Thet thar ain't fitten fer a dog ter eat,' said Johnson." Page 162.

"Del, though, still wanted better trapping; and though the two had been partners for most of their adult lives, they exchanged the swift good-byes which the code of Mountain Men allowed them—Watch out for your scalp, and Might see you some time, some place." Page 187.

"Johnston's section of the Cemetery is "San Juan Hill." There are no cairns here. . . [Johnston] is in row 'D,' and the 'tenderfoots' who walk past on their way to decorate other graves see no stakes round him, with grinning skulls. The second stone from the road (thar's no more trails) bears the abbreviated inscription, Jno. Johnston, Co. H, 2nd Colo. Cav." page 190.

## Topics for Discussion

What spawned the rage that John Johnston experienced? Describe what happened and how he reacted.

How did "Bear Claw" Chris Lapp get his nickname? What relationship does he have with John Johnston? What is the last encounter Johnston has with him?

Describe the fate of the Morgan Family as they travel west from Connecticut to Missouri. Who helped Mrs. Morgan and what nick-name did she become known by?

A Blackfoot Indian captures Johnston and keeps him in tethers at the Blackfoot camp. What is the Blackfoot Indians name and title? How does Johnston escape and how does he survive on his way back to his cabin in the harsh winter and on foot? What animals does he encounter and how do these skirmishes turnout?

John Johnston has a colorful group of Mountain Men friends. Name four of them and describe what each is famous for.

How many Crow Indians does Johnston estimate he killed and over what period of time. What incident causes Johnston to want to make peace with the Crow? When he meets with the Crow Chief to make peace, describe how the meeting goes.

Other than being a Mountain Man and a trapper, what other jobs or duties did Johnston take on? Describe the circumstances of this other work.