

The Courage of Sarah Noble Study Guide

The Courage of Sarah Noble by Alice Dalgliesh

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Plot Summary

Eight-year-old Sarah Noble and her father are setting out for Connecticut to go and build a house on the plot of land her father has purchased. Along the way Sarah Noble must deal with the challenges of growing up as she must now depend on herself for a lot more things. Obstacles appear in her way such as sleeping out in the wilderness to confronting her fear of Native Americans.

The first night Sarah and her father are in the wilderness she hears noises and distracts herself by saying that it is simply an owl or a fox or a skunk. The next day the two arrive at a small settlement owned by the Robinson family. While Sarah is there she observes the household and decides that is not what her own home will be like; getting by the children about how Indians will harm her and living in a place lacking love. She takes comfort and courage from the cloak her mother put around her before she left and deals with family as best she can.

As Sarah and her father arrive to the plot of land he builds and shed and Sarah is faced with her first real issue. While Sarah's father goes to work on the settlement to build the house he will be gone all day and will have to leave her alone. Sarah gathers her courage and tells him she will be fine. As he leaves Native American children arrive to see Sarah reading her bible. She reads to them, but when she is finished and tries to talk with them they all flee at her impatient tone as none of them speak the other's language.

Over time as the house is built Sarah makes friends with the children and starts to learn more about Native American culture. Sarah meets Tall John's children, who are her favorites and have a close relationship with them, which comes in hand for Sarah's next obstacle. With the house built Sarah's father must leave to go and fetch the family, leaving Sarah with the Native Americans. She is sad to know that she will be left behind but has courage and stays with Tall John and his family.

Over the months she becomes accustomed to their way of life, from the eating style to wearing their clothes. Still she holds onto the fear that the Native Americans from the north will come and attack them, though Tall John does his best to tell her not to worry. It's one day in October however when Sarah's father returns to take her back to the finished cabin and their family. Tall John comes with the two to see his "daughter" off, and when Sarah returns she sees all of the changes her family went through. Her mother comments on what she's wearing and how she is glad her daughter returned safe from living with people she believes to be heathens. The book ends with Sarah lying by the fire drifting off to sleep after talking with her parents about how grown up she is and her hopes to be married and have a job as a teacher in the future. In the end she drifts off with her cloak hanging on the wall.



Chapter 1

Summary

The book starts with Sarah Noble and her father camping out in the wilderness. The two are on their way to Connecticut to go and build a house for their family. As Sarah lies there she sees her father sitting across from their little camp with his musket across his lap. This is the first time the two are staying out in the wilderness and as Sarah begins to hear the noises of the forest around her; an owl, a fox, and a wolf. She begins to get scared, calling for her father to tell her of home.

Her father starts to recount the tale of how he came home to tell their family about the land he bought in Connecticut. Sarah begins to visualize the scene as she sees her mother with her younger sister. It's here that the reader also realizes that Sarah comes from a large family with at least three sisters and brothers. There's a repetition of the wolf's howl getting farther and farther away as the two sit there talking about the memory of buying the land, Sarah getting sleepier all the while. The chapter ends with her falling asleep and Sarah's father staying awake the whole night.

Analysis

The book begins with Sarah as she stays in the forest for the night thinking about how she and her father were going to Connecticut. In the beginning she seems to be a pretty level-headed child but a little further on into the chapter it's seen that she is still immature and easily frightened like most kids. An example is when she calls out to her father after being scared by hearing a wolf howl in the distance.

Further on in the chapter it's revealed to the reader that Sarah, who comes from a large family, is perhaps the oldest since she comes on the trip with her father. Around this time most fathers going to build a home elsewhere would take their sons with them if they were able. By taking Sarah it's likely she's the eldest; especially when she says that many of the others were too young to come. There is also the assumption that Sarah is adventurous, willing to help, and a good enough cook for her father to consider her coming along on the trip.

There's a repeated mention of the wolf howling in the chapter as though to show the passage of time and potential danger as Sarah and her father recount the tale of buying the land and telling the family. As Sarah grows calmer and less afraid, the wolf's howls also fade. Also there's a repetition of light within the first chapter with the mention of the bright star at the beginning and then the light of day at the end. By the end of the chapter there's also the introduction of a theme, which is the question of bringing Sarah into the wilderness was a good idea. This goes along with Sarah recounting her mother's words to have courage throughout the first chapter.



Discussion Question 1

Discuss the use of light in the first chapter.

Discussion Question 2

What is the symbolism of the wolf's howling?

Discussion Question 3

What was Sarah's family like before she left for the wilderness?

Vocabulary

comfortable, wilderness, musket, journey, fussing, courage



Chapter 2

Summary

Sarah and her father arrive the next night at a small settlement with houses. Sarah remarks on how the candles look from the outside and asks her father to take her off the horse to walk to the cabin. When they arrive there a woman shows up in the doorway and lets them inside. There are four children, two boys and two girls, and their mother, Mrs. Robinson. Her husband is away. Sarah meets the children and Mistress Robinson wants to take Sarah's cloak from her, but Sarah replies that she is cold and will keep it on.

Sarah and her father join the family around the table and Sarah finally allows them to take her cloak. Abigail, one of the children, takes it and hangs it up, remarking on how she wants a new cloak. Mistress Robinson put that to rest and Sarah begins to compare her to her own mother, decidedly remarking that she is not like her mother much. Mistress Robinson remarks on how young Sarah is and that opens a discussion on Indians. The children tease Sarah about how the Indians are going to come and kill her in the forest, but Mistress Robinson remarks on how the Indians were nice and sold the family their land for a fair price. It's later when Sarah is laying there trying to sleep that she asks for her cloak back and lies about being cold when in reality she just wants the cloak near her.

Analysis

In this chapter Sarah is experiencing dealing with other families than her own. Yesterday she was scared to death in the forest and she expects the cabin to be better. She remarks that the candles seem to ask her to come in, and in the beginning the people seem nice seeing as Mistress Robinson allows them to stay the night. However, as Sarah comes into the house and her father leaves to go and tend to Thomas the horse she is faced with these people all on her own. No matter how grown and tough she pretends to be this chapter reveals how vulnerable Sarah is.

Without her father there Sarah retreats to the comfort of her cloak, despite it being warm inside the cabin. There is also the fact that Sarah refuses to give up the cloak until her father returns. This is important because with her mother giving her the cloak it is almost like a suit of armor to Sarah as she seeks comfort from it, like she would her mother. When thrown out of her own element and comfort zone Sarah retreats back into the cloak as though it can save her, thus reiterating the fact that she is only eight years old and traveling around in the wilderness, albeit, with her father. Furthermore, at the end of the chapter when Sarah is settling in to sleep she asks for the cloak once more, lying and saying she's cold when in reality she just wants it to comfort her, acting as a stand-in for her mother who is back with the rest of her family.



Here we see mentions of Native Americans, or Indians as they were known in this historical fiction novel and will sometimes be referred to in this guide to maintain the novel's vocabulary. These mentions can also be foreshadowing to a possible meeting later. The boys seek to go ahead and tease Sarah about the Indians in hopes to scare her as children like to do. Mistress Robinson mentions how they will keep their rights to fishing in the Great River. This implies that more than likely Sarah will meet the Indians, and it's probable that when she does she will think back to what the children said when they teased her and caused her to believe that Indians are vicious heathens waiting to scalp her.

In this chapter there is also a keen sense of longing. While in the cabin Sarah looks at Mistress Robinson and then thinks back to her mother, as she does often, and compares the two. By making these comparisons Sarah is secretly seeing how much of a mother-figure this woman is and if she is enough like Sarah's mother to make Sarah feel comfortable in this house. It shows just how much she misses her family, especially her mother. While the two women do share similarities they are ultimately too different, and when this becomes apparent Sarah grabs for the cloak her mother gave her. As she is missing her mother, Sarah repeats to herself just as she drifts off to sleep the comforting motivational reminder that she has to have courage.

Discussion Question 1

What reveals that Sarah feels very vulnerable and frightened?

Discussion Question 2

Discuss the symbolism of her mother's cloak.

Discussion Question 3

Why do the candles in the windows seem inviting to Sarah?

Vocabulary

settlement, pleasure, colony, cloak, heathen, material



Chapter 3

Summary

The journey is winding down to an end as Sarah and her father arrive to the area that their little house will be built upon. Sarah is weary as she walks, picking flowers to tuck into Thomas's reins and to put in her hair. She remarks that they must be well-dressed for when they come home, but at the mention of the word home stops to think about what that will entail. Sarah asks where they will live if there is no house, to which her father replies that he and Thomas will build a small hut around a cave until one is built. Sarah laughs at the thought of Thomas building a cabin and then her father mentions it will be a cabin like Mistress Robinson's house. Sarah, however, replies that it won't be like that and when prompted to further explain says that her house was absent of love and that theirs should not be.

When the group comes to a stop at a small hill Sarah's father explains that this was cleared as an Indian hunting ground. Sarah remembers the things the Robinson children said about Indians and is afraid. It's then that a bush rustles: a deer is behind it. Sarah's father goes to shoot it but when Sarah pleads with him he lets it go. Sarah listens to her father describe the scene and being able to see the Great River, to which she remarks that she doesn't see any Indians and is still scared of them. However her father tells her that she has nothing to worry about because the Indians were good people and that the Robinson's should learn to watch what they say. He mentions that there are people who refuse to help others and those that do help others and that their home will be one filled with love and willingness to help anyone that needs it.

Analysis

The physical journey has come to an end but it's apparent that Sarah's emotional and mental journey is still in progress. While they work to get to where their house will be built, Sarah busies herself by picking flowers for herself and Thomas, something most children do. However when she starts to think about what a home is like and if this is going to be her home there's mention of the themes of Security and Home. Sarah already knows that they are going to be leaving her home but it's now that she wonders what this new home is going to be like, what it will feel like, and how others will perceive it. Already she has an idea of what her family's house will not be like as she thinks back to the Robinson's household and tells her father that their home will not be like that. In a way she's rejecting the idea that their house will be cold and loveless.

However already the reader can see that Sarah is going to deal with issues concerning the Native Americans. The Robinson children got into her head with their jokes and despite her father reassuring her that they are good people she will never truly believe that until she she experiences it for herself. This further points to the idea that it will not



be long before Sarah has a run-in with some Indians and will have to form her own opinions on the matter.

With the show of her trying to spare the doe it can be traced back to the idea that despite the fact that she has probably eaten deer meat before the thought of seeing how it is processed into what she eats is more than she wants to see at this time. Also the fact that she sees the beauty of nature more than the benefit it can lend when they kill animals for food.

Discussion Question 1

Compare Sarah's idea of a home to the reality of the Robinson's home.

Discussion Question 2

How did Sarah deal with the killing of the deer, and what does this tell the reader about Sarah's personality?

Discussion Question 3

What does Sarah's father tell her about the Indians that makes her feel better?

Vocabulary

wearily, harness, coarse, gentle, kindness, cleared



Chapter 4

Summary

Sarah and her father arrive at the small plot of land that they will build the cabin on. For the night they go ahead and have a makeshift camp by the cave and plan that tomorrow Sarah's father will go and build a shed and a fence. That night they make a small fire and eat bean porridge listening to the sounds of the forest. Later on that night when the two head to bed Sarah is once more frightened by the sounds of the night. She starts to tell her father not to be afraid as she talks all about what she believes the sounds to be: an owl falling, a woodchuck, and then what she finally realizes is a skunk. The two of them laugh and her father says that he's lucky to have her here to keep him from being afraid of all of the noises. She's proud of keeping her courage up and then goes to sleep, waking up to a very bright morning.

Analysis

In the beginning of the chapter it's obvious that Sarah is glad to be where they will build their new home. They have a good time listening to the birds and such while they eat their dinner. It's the transition from day to night when the themes of Uncertainty and that of Light and Dark come into the story.

During the day Sarah is perfectly happy and not frightened at all unless she thinks about the Indians, even though she has never met one. However at night she begins to fret at all the sounds that during the day she was happy to listen to. It reiterates the fact that things are different at night and that Sarah is still easily frightened since she has no idea of what is going on around her. This is just like with her fear of Indians; both of these things are uncertain to her, she has no definite idea of what the sounds are or how Indians will react to her being around. As such she is scared of them, thinking of everything they could be and not knowing is what is causing the fear which is ultimately rooted in Uncertainty.

The theme of Courage is also demonstrated. While listening to the sounds in the forest Sarah tries to rationalize what they are and that they are harmless. As such, she tells her father not to be scared, when in reality she is just trying to reassure herself that she shouldn't be scared. Still, Sarah feels pride at her father telling her that he is glad she's there to keep him from being afraid despite the fact that the reader knows he's just amused with the situation.

Discussion Question 1

How is the theme of Light and Dark demonstrated in this chapter?



Discussion Question 2

How have Sarah's views on Native Americans and her beliefs about them changed so far throughout the book?

Discussion Question 3

Why is Sarah the most afraid at night?

Vocabulary

divided, hollowed, comfortable, visitors, wove, pattern



Chapter 5

Summary

Sarah's father spends the next few days building a small shed and a fence before he tells Sarah that now he and Thomas must be away during the day to go and build the house. He asks if she is alright staying alone in the cabin and despite the fact that Sarah is uneasy about the idea she agrees nonetheless. As her father heads out with Thomas, Sarah takes out her bible and starts to read from it, remembering the times she would read to her doll Arabella and her younger sister. In the end though, Sarah feels alone and starts to read the story of Samuel. While she is reading Sarah starts to hear noises and before she can really understand what is going on she is surrounded by Native American children.

Despite being scared she begins to read the rest of the story aloud to them as the children creep closer and closer. Sarah observes the children and how they come very close to her before she finishes the story. Once she is done she introduces herself to the children, to which they chatter back at her, but she cannot understand what they are saying. Sarah remarks on how foolish they are because they don't speak English. The children flee and leave Sarah alone. She laments on how rude she was and how they will probably never come back because of that.

Analysis

In this chapter Sarah is once more having to go and act more mature than she is. Despite the fact that she is scared at being left alone she tells her father that she is fine because she understands the importance of having the cabin built. However despite the fact that this is a very mature thing to do Sarah still goes running for her cloak to comfort her as she had done earlier. The small shed, while secure physically, isn't mentally reassuring to Sarah like a home would be. She's obviously worried about being left alone and as such seeks the comfort of her cloak once more like armor.

Furthermore in this chapter Sarah shows the mind-set of the people at the time. While she is reading the bible to the indian children Sarah has the thought that they understand her and like the story so they won't hurt her. However when she finishes and introduces herself she expects them to answer back in English rather than their own native language. When they don't live up to her expectations she calls them foolish. In reality though it is Sarah who is foolish for being so impatient and expecting things from people that obviously had very little dealings with white frontiersmen, especially the children.

It's only when the children flee that Sarah is thrown out of that mind-set and she begins to wish that she had been nicer. It shows that while many of the ways of her upbringing have been imprinted upon Sarah that she is still capable of looking to people from a



different culture and being ashamed of being inhospitable. It could also be the fact that she realizes that she isn't going along with what her father had told her earlier about their home being full of kindness and willingness to help anyone. For all intents and purposes the shack is Sarah's home at present until the other one is built and so she should've shown more compassion in tune with what she wants her home to stand for.

Discussion Question 1

What actions on Sarah's part indicate that she's at least willing to give other cultures a try?

Discussion Question 2

What shocks her about the Indian children?

Discussion Question 3

Why does Sarah keep running for the cloak?

Vocabulary

delight, among, namesake, entrance, palisade



Chapter 6

Summary

The Indian children frequent the little shack over and over as Sarah's fear of all of them is completely forgotten. She has two favorites among the group, a tall boy and a girl, siblings. In the end she and the Indian children have a small system going on. She will try and teach them simple words of English and they in turn will show her where wild berries are growing in the forests. Often times she will go and pick them to have them waiting for her father when he returns home.

They also trade with the Indians for corn, which Sarah makes corn cakes out of. Sarah's father returns to the shack to tell her that he needs help with the logs and one Indian, Tall John, as he calls him, will help him. Sarah asks if she can go to the Indian's village as they want to show her their home and her father says that if it was Tall John's house then it was fine. It turns out that Sarah's favorite Indian children are Tall John's kids, she calls them Small John and Mary and goes to their house frequently.

Analysis

Already the reader can see the change that Sarah is going through. In the beginning of the novel she is very scared of Indians; however as she gets to know some Native Americans she learns that they are not scary but rather nice people. This also shows that she is maturing as she is willing to show the children things from her world and learn about things from theirs. She even shows a willingness to go to their camp, something that would have scared her senseless earlier in the book.

A friendship can be seen building between the Noble family and the Indians. There is the connection between Sarah's father and Tall John, as he is willing to help with building the cabin, and then there is the relationship between Sarah and Small John and Mary. There is also the fact that these are Tall John's children, which brings the friendship full-circle more or less because both adults and children are on good terms with one another.

As usual the theme of Courage is weaved in the chapter and it shows. Already Sarah is breaking out of her shell by interacting with the Indian children and befriending them. Not to mention she is willing to go and visit their village without fear and run around in the forest with the Indian children picking berries. However she isn't completely free of missing the comforts of her home. Once more Sarah thinks of her mother, revisiting the theme of Family and the fact that she misses them and the comforts they bring, such as the bread Sarah's mother makes.



Discussion Question 1

What has Sarah concluded about the Native Americans?

Discussion Question 2

What indicates that Sarah is still homesick?

Discussion Question 3

What action that Sarah takes indicates that she trusts the Indians more than she did at the beginning of the novel?

Vocabulary

lively, strange, mortar, pestle, wondered, traded



Chapter 7

Summary

It's fall and the house is finished. Sarah, her father, and Tall John are there admiring it before Sarah asks when the family will be coming to live in it. However her father tells her that he is going to fetch their family but she will have to stay there with the house with Tall John and his Squaw, who will look after her. Sarah tells him that she is afraid but he reassures her. Sarah's father tells her that continuing ahead despite being afraid is the best kind of courage.

The next day Sarah and her father say farewell, but she says that while she likes Tall John and his squaw she's worried about whether or not the Indians from the north will come down. She says that Tall John is scared of them, too. Her father says farewell and not to worry, but he wonders if leaving her is the best thing to do. As Sarah watches her father ride off on Thomas Sarah starts to cry into her cloak as Tall John swings her up on his shoulder and heads off toward the village.

Analysis

While the home is now completed the next task comes out, having to get the family to Connecticut. Even though Sarah is scared to stay alone she still says she's alright, mustering her courage to stay alone with the Indians while he's away. Once more Sarah has to act older than she is and make do with the situation at hand, despite the loss of security that her father affords her. She repeats the mantra of "keep up your courage Sarah Noble" as a way to convince herself that she must be brave and not stop in the tumultuous time. Her father also speaks to the best kind of courage to have thereby making the theme of Courage prominent in this chapter.

There's another mention of foreshadowing of a dangerous meeting with the Indians from the north. Already the reader can tell that from what Sarah has said that she is not completely over her fear of Indians, despite the fact that she gets along well with the Indians of the Great river. This also alludes to the fact that eventually Sarah will have a run-in with these Northern Indians and must keep her courage about her.

Like the previous chapters Sarah seeks comfort within her cloak as she starts to cry into it as her father leaves. The cloak is like a surrogate for Sarah's mother. Seeing as her mother gave Sarah the cloak it is almost as though she is crying into her mother and holding onto her, even though now she is on her own without her family for a time. It also is the one thing that doesn't change for Sarah. Throughout the book she has been through change constantly—from physical change such as the land that surrounds her and the culture she lives amongst with adapting to the Native American customs—but the cloak has remained a constant for her.



Discussion Question 1

What type of courage is the best kind according to Sarah's father.

Discussion Question 2

Discuss the Indians from the North. Why does Sarah fear them?

Discussion Question 3

Why is Sarah afraid when her father says he is leaving her behind?

Vocabulary

scarlet, promised, language, afraid, squaw, solemn



Chapter 8

Summary

It's the first night without her father and Sarah remarks on the strangeness of it all. She had spent the day playing with the Indian children and felt fine, but when she is at dinner Sarah cannot help but think of her own family. She misses her own family but remarks on how nice Tall John and his family are but also how different they are. As she is brushing out her hair the children come close to touch it, fascinated. Then as Sarah is saying her prayers she begins to cry, missing her father as she prays for them and for the Indians. She drifts off to sleep and Tall John explains to his children that Sarah was praying to the Great Spirit just as they do.

Analysis

This is the first time that Sarah is truly on her own and it is a big change for her. Now she must learn to get along with the lifestyle that the Indians lead. Furthermore she must work to keep up with certain aspects of her life that she is used to, such as brushing her hair out and praying. Religion seems to be an important motif throughout the book as it reappears at the times where Sarah is left with uncertainty and a new challenge that she must learn to overcome. In the time that this book is set in religion was a good thing to take courage from, believing that God is with them and that everything happens due to what He feels is best.

An interesting point to make is at the end of the chapter where Tall John is explaining to his children that she is praying to her Great Spirit as he calls it. This part shows how even though Sarah is so different from the Indians in some ways there are certain parts of her culture that mesh with theirs, even if they are called different things. This also goes along with the fact that throughout the book every time Sarah finds herself in a new household she immediately compares it to her own family household, noting the similarities and differences to see what she likes or doesn't like.

Discussion Question 1

Compare Tall John's family to Sarah's family.

Discussion Question 2

What do the Indian children think when they hear their names in Sarah's prayer?



Discussion Question 3

How does Sarah feel about living with Tall John?

Vocabulary

longed, willing, nightgown, silk, wasting, puzzled

Chapter 9

Summary

It is October and Sarah is accustomed to how the Indian village goes about their business. She helps the women with drying the corn and mentions that they have made her clothing out of deerskin just like theirs for when the months turn cold. She has fit in well with the village playing games with the children and learning things like weaving baskets. However at night she wakes to hear a long, low whistle and worries that it's the Northern Indians coming to get the village. Sarah can feel that there is something going on with the Indian village and a growing danger.

In the morning Tall John tells her that there was a threat but it was taken care of. Sarah, her fears forgotten, starts to play a game with the children where they all line up their moccasins and hide a pebble in one of them and must guess correctly which pair it is in. Sarah feels someone watching her and turns around to see her father standing there. He tells her that he mistook her for one of the Indian children and says that its time to go home and see her family. Sarah says farewell to Tall John and his family and Tall John swings her up onto his shoulder like before.

Analysis

In this chapter the reader can see how much Sarah has grown. She is beginning to become familiar with the culture of the Indians and even likes it. She has made friends with the Indian children and is like one of Tall John's own. There are a few things that are key to showing that Sarah has become accustomed to the culture but the biggest one is the moccasins. Before Sarah would wear heavy leather shoes but now she wears deerskin moccasins and comments on how light they are. These are symbolic of the fact that she is distancing herself from the rigid life she knew back with her family in favor of the rather uninhibited life the Indians lead. It makes her a freer person who is now of two cultures rather than one. It's shown how accustomed she is to this life especially when she elects to keep the moccasins on her feet rather than change back into the heavy leather shoes.

A looming threat is hinted at in this chapter. The theme of Light and Darkness comes into play when Sarah awakes in the night listening to the sounds. As usual she feels insecure and scared in the dark as she listens, wondering if its the Indians that are going to come in and attack the village. However in the light Tall John tells her that there is nothing to worry about as though that during the day when everything is light there is nothing to fear and Sarah can forget the worries she once had.

The theme of Home is once more expressed in this chapter as now Sarah has two families. One family is, of course, her biological family to which she's about to return to. The other family is Tall John's family which has taken her in as one of their own. Sarah



has formed deep relationships with them in the Indian village, and it shows especially at the end of the chapter as Sarah is reluctant to leave them and Tall John is sad to see her go as he swings her up on his shoulder like he usually does.

Discussion Question 1

What indicates that Sarah now feels comfortable with Tall John and his family?

Discussion Question 2

Why does her father mistake Sarah for one of the other Indian children?

Discussion Question 3

Discuss the theme of Home in this chapter.

Vocabulary

spread, dew, moccasins, pleasant, raided, charming



Chapter 10

Summary

Sarah and Tall John are on their way to Sarah's home; she is riding on his shoulders as he wades through the waters. Only once does Sarah look back at the Indian village, remarking on how kind they have been to her. When they get across the river Sarah sees her mother standing there in the doorway with baby Mabel in her arms. Sarah is excited to see her mother and Tall John puts her down telling her to go to her mother and he even calls her his daughter.

Sarah races to go and meet her mother, who holds her tightly and remarks on her outlandish outfit. Mabel is put down and starts walking a bit, which amazes Sarah. She comes into the house and looks around at all of the decor; it looks like a home now. The chapter ends with Sarah asking about Arabella, to which her mother says she thought that it might be for Margaret as Sarah would've outgrown it.

Analysis

The theme of Change is present in this chapter. Sarah is back with her family and sees many changes, especially with baby Mabel. When she left Sarah saw her baby sister as a sickly thing and yet now as she returns to them the baby is up and walking along, albeit on unsteady feet. She also worries about if her mother will recognize her or not as she is tanned and grown up. There is also the fact that the cabin is fully built and different from what she knew and Sarah must leave Tall John and his family.

Already it's seen that Sarah is fond of the Indian family as they are of her. This can be seen as Tall John sets her down when she starts squirming at the sight of her mother. He calls her his daughter, denoting the fact that she has grown in his heart as one of his own and that she will always have a place among them. However despite the fact that Sarah has changed so much since her family has seen her some things never change such as when Sarah asks for Arabella and refuses to give it to her little sister, stating that she is never too old for it.

Discussion Question 1

What indicates that Tall John sees Sarah as one of his own?

Discussion Question 2

What indicates that Sarah's mother doesn't understand the Indians the way Sarah does?



Discussion Question 3

What shows that Sarah will always maintain some of her Indian ways?

Vocabulary

waded, quivers, unsteady, outlandish, outgrown, wonder



Chapter 11

Summary

Sarah is back with her family around the fire as the other children are asleep in bed. Sarah's mother laments on the fact that her father left Sarah with the Indians for a time and that they are heathens. However when Sarah and John defend the Indians and say that they are almost as good as her at being parents Sarah's mother is less than pleased. Sarah stands up to say that she is going to put Arabella to bed.

Sarah's parents look at her, and Sarah's father remarks that she was too much like a woman during their trip and it is good to see that she is a child. Sarah replies that she is not much of a child now and someday soon wishes to be a mother of twelve children and be a teacher, perhaps to the Indian children. Sarah's mother tells her it is time for bed, and Sarah is glad to have her mother back. The book ends with Sarah telling her doll to have courage, and if the Northern Indians come down to attack then their friends the Indians will tell them. She goes to sleep, her cloak hanging on a peg, the light from the fire lulling her to sleep.

Analysis

The story comes full circle with Sarah back with her family and for the better. She shows how much she has grown when Sarah defends the Indians from her mother's narrow-minded view of them. It shows that she is capable of looking at other views and is willing to contest them with the popular view. Furthermore she acts like a mother to her doll Arabella, putting her to bed and telling her to have courage.

Her parents further mention the theme of Change as they say that it is good for her to be a little girl again. Yet Sarah is the one to mention that she is grown only to have her mother tell her it is time for bed as a mother often does to her child. It is a way to downplay her claims of being grown up but not completely erase the fact that Sarah has changed throughout the story.

The cloak is also retired in this chapter. As Sarah is back with her family in their new house her sense of security is restored. Her house is now a "home" and she is able to retire the cloak seeing as she doesn't need it anymore. Sarah feels safe and comfortable with living in this new place around Indians, and so the armor she had with the cloak can be set aside until she needs it another time.

Light and Dark as a theme are demonstrated at the end of the story as Sarah is lying by the fires. The fire presents a merging of light and dark seeing as it will light up a space but not entirely, some darkness is still left. This can be symbolic of the fact that Sarah is beginning to see that while there is danger all around there are certain things she no longer has to fear.



Discussion Question 1

Compare Sarah's character at the beginning of the story to the end of the story.

Discussion Question 2

Discuss the theme of Change in this chapter.

Discussion Question 3

What is representative of Light and Dark in this chapter?

Vocabulary

cozy, savages, believe, housekeeper, wigwams, securely



Characters

Sarah Noble

Sarah is an eight year-old girl who makes the journey from Massachusetts to Connecticut to help her father build a home on some land he purchased. Along the way she encounters challenges that test her courage, from being afraid of unknown sounds and creatures out in the wilderness to dealing with new people and an unfamiliar culture. She meets the Robinson family, whom she does not get along with as they tease her about Indians killing her. She is fearful of Indians and worried that they will harm her. As she goes through the journey to the place where her new house will be built Sarah must learn to get over her fear of Indians. As her father is away working she begins to spend time with the Indian children and her fear soon dissipates. She is very inquisitive and often times compares the people she meets to those she knows already.

Often times she must act more grown up than she feels such as when she is left with Tall John and his family while her father goes to fetch their family. However it's shown that Sarah is resourceful and willing to make nice with those she is around, such as the Indian children and especially Tall John's family. She has an appreciation for the Indians by the time she comes back and shows how much she has changed by challenging her mother's views on Native Americans, stating that they are friendly and not heathens but rather not all that different from the settlers. In the end she has grown into a confident girl who no longer fears the idea of living with Indians in this new house in Connecticut.

John Noble

John Noble is Sarah Noble's father. He and Sarah set out to build a house on the plot of land he bought in Connecticut. He is a very loving father who indulges his daughter and is very protective of her. Often times he wonders if bringing her out to the wilderness as he has done is the right thing but in the end feels it was. He is very sympathetic toward the Indians and has no quarrel with them, as shown by telling Sarah many times that the Indians they are living around are nice people. He also makes friends with Tall John and even feels comfortable enough with him to leave Sarah in his care as he heads off to get the family. It's shown that he is different from his wife in the fact that he feels Indians are just like them, a view that Sarah later on comes to share with him.

Sarah's Mother

Sarah's mother is not mentioned in much of the story other than to have been the one to give Sarah her cloak and tell her to keep up her courage. It's seen through Sarah that she idolizes her mother who is often very fussy about her children. However it's seen that she is very loving to her family as she is beyond happy to have Sarah return safely to her. Sarah's mother does not share the same views on the Indians as Sarah and her father have. She is very critical of them, believing them to be nothing more than



savages and is shocked to hear that Sarah had been living with them as John came to fetch her and the rest of their children.

Mistress Robinson

Mistress Robinson is the owner of the settlement Sarah and John come to stay at their second night of travel. According to Sarah, Mistress Robinson does "not have the face of a mother." She is left on her own as her husband is away working but is nice enough to let Sarah and John stay the night. Mistress Robinson is a very strict mother who runs a house devoid of love. As mentioned by John she should teach her children to have better manners when speaking about people. She also has a critical view on Indians similar to Sarah's mother, believing them to all be savages and that John is wrong to take Sarah on this trip with him.

Abigail

Abigail is Mistress Robinson's daughter. She is the one who takes Sarah's cloak to hang it up, remarking on the pretty color of it and how she wants a new cloak. Abigail is perhaps one of the nicer children of the bunch as she tries to comfort Sarah, who is upset at the boy's teasing about the Indians coming to get her.

Lemus

Lemus is Mistress Robinson's son. He is very childish and immature, and like all boys he loves to tease people. He teases Sarah, telling her that Indians are going to get her in the woods. He is very unsympathetic as he doesn't stop teasing Sarah even though she is visibly upset at hearing him say those things.

Tall John

Tall John is almost like a second father to Sarah. He speaks a few words of English and is a very helpful man. He helps John with building his home on the plot of land and also takes care of Sarah while John is away. Although Tall John is a man of very few words, he is very loving. He is understanding, relaying what Sarah is doing to his children when she prays for all of them. By the end of Sarah's stay in his home he is shown to be visibly sad at having to give her back to her family. He picks her up on his shoulders in a way that is much like a father would and even calls her his daughter when he sees her off to her family.

Small John

Small John is the son of Tall John. His real name is not Small John but Sarah cannot pronounce his real name and so gives him this one instead. Not much is mentioned



about him other than he is a tall, serious boy. He also tends to take after his father with using as little words as possible to speak and doesn't know that much english. However like all children Small John is curious as he hears Sarah praying for him and asks his father what she's doing.

Mary

Mary is Tall John's daughter. Like her brother, Mary is not her real name but Sarah cannot pronounce her real name and so gives her this one instead. Mary is said to be a bright-eyed girl, contrasting her brother. She does not speak english either and so she can't really communicate with Sarah. However, like most children Mary is curious as she hears Sarah praying for her and asks her father what she's doing.

Thomas

Thomas is the pack horse that come along on the journey with John and Sarah. He is a fairly alert animal, keeping his ears perked for danger. He is also gentle as he carries Sarah. Often times Sarah can distract herself from her problems by focusing on Thomas and using him for comedic relief. Thomas also helps with hauling logs for the cabin and taking John back to fetch the rest of the family.



Symbols and Symbolism

Wolves

Wolves are weaved throughout the book. The author uses them often to show Sarah placing a name to her fear in order to overcome it and also to how time and distance are passing by mentioning their howls getting further and further away.

Cloak

The cloak is symbolic of Sarah's mother's warm arms around her and keeping her safe. Furthermore it is the symbol of Sarah's courage and metaphorical armor. Sarah clings to the cloak in the beginning of the book, but by the end it seems like she has moved past her attachment to it.

Indians

The Native Americans, referred to as Indians in the novel, present an alternative way of life for Sarah. They provide another family to Sarah and a means to grow up and see a new way of life different and yet the same as her own.

Bible/Religion

The Bible is a way of bridging the gap between the Indians and Sarah. In the beginning the Indians come to her shed when she is reading a bible and the story provides her the courage to keep reading because she feels they like it. It also is a way of showing the similarities between the two as when Tall John explains to his children that Sarah praying to her god not unlike their own.

Moccasins

Moccasins are a representation of Sarah's acclimation into the Indians' culture. She says she walks light like the Indian children and how her feet can't bear to go back into those leather shoes, further emphasizing the fact that Sarah has become a child of two worlds.

Clothing

Clothing is used to show the differences between the cultures. Sarah sees the Indians' clothing as hardly any clothing at all but soon enough comes to like deerskin clothing, showing how she has grown up from being picky to accepting.

Arabella

Arabella the doll is a representation of Sarah's youth. Throughout the novel Sarah acts grown up but with Arabella the doll the author shows that Sarah is still a young girl.

Thomas

Thomas the horse is often comic relief. There are serious talks but Sarah or her father will mention something to do with Thomas and the scene is changed as Sarah will laugh often with him or improve the somber mood.

Light/Dark

Light and dark show the duality of life. Often times something in the dark is not so scary in the light. As such it can be applied to the problems in Sarah's life and how she will always look to the light when she is scared.

Nature

Nature is all around Sarah in the book and as such it becomes a part of her, especially when she lives with the Indians. She starts to become more in tune with nature during her stay with them, and it provides a comfort to her almost like a mother.

Settings

Wilderness

The wilderness is where a fair time of the story is spent. It serves as a reminder to Sarah that she is no longer home and as such must be careful and keep her wits about her. It also serves to be a reminder for the reader that Sarah is still a child. The prime example of this is when Sarah hears noises in the night and calls for her father, scared. It also can be linked to reality for Sarah, seeing as everything is more real to Sarah in the wilderness, from the animals she sees along the way to the Native Americans living just beyond the bend.

New Milford, Connecticut

New Milford, Connecticut is the land Sarah and her father are traveling to. John Noble bought a piece of land there to build a new house on it. In Connecticut there are Indians living just beyond the bend of the New Milford area, and because they are so close it prompts the settlers and Indians to interact. This pulls Sarah out of her shell and makes her have to grow up.

Mistress Robinson's Cabin

Mistress Robinson's cabin is the first settlement that Sarah and her father come across in the book. It's important because it serves to show Sarah what she doesn't want her home and family to be like. It also is where a few themes, motifs, and symbols are introduced, for example the Security Sarah feels when she puts the cloak around herself for security and Courage and the Light from the fire beckoning her in. This is also where the reader is introduced to Sarah's fear of Indians as the children tease her about the Indians coming to hurt her.

Indian Village

The Indian Village is important because it is where Sarah's courage is tested the most. Not only must she learn to get over her fear of Indians but later on must live alone with them. It is here in the Indian Village where Sarah gains the most knowledge and has the most transformation. As she waits for her father and lives with Tall John, Sarah starts to assimilate to their culture and because of this loses her fear of the Indians and becomes more comfortable with living in Connecticut.

The Shed

The shed is a mid-way point between Sarah in her old life and Sarah in the Indian village. It's built into a cave with a sturdy fence around it and Sarah must stay alone in the shed while her father works. Already the shed is a step toward living in her new home though it represents even more than that: this is the place where Sarah has her first dealings with the Indians. Rather than going into hysterics when they visit she sits there reading to them and hopes they will come back when they leave. It serves to show the way that Sarah is starting to make changes to herself and her lifestyle in an effort to deal with the reality of the situation.



Themes and Motifs

Courage

Courage is the main theme throughout the book. From the very first chapter Courage is stressed in the form of a mantra—"Keep up your courage Sarah Noble," a mantra that is referenced in the title of the novel. Courage is weaved throughout the book in various ways. The first is in the novel's opening chapter with Sarah and her father in the forest at night. While the situation isn't that serious it sets up for the rest of the book to be about keeping with Courage to overcome adversity. However there are a few places where her Courage seems to falter, namely in Mistress Robinson's cabin. She allows the children's teasing to get to her and thus induce even more fear of Indians into her.

The next place where Courage is needed is when Sarah is left alone in the shed while John goes out to work. She is left there surrounded by Indian children. However despite the fact that she is afraid of the children she keeps on reading to them and trying to be polite. In essence this is where the novel kicks off as Sarah starts to overcome her fear of the Indians by interacting with them on a close-range basis.

However the real test of Courage comes when Sarah must live in the Indian village while John goes to fetch the rest of the family from Massachusetts. It's in Chapter 7 where the central message is conveyed by John when he tells her that to be afraid but to be brave is the best kind of Courage. It's here that Sarah takes the first step toward her biggest change, emotionally and physically. Throughout Chapters 8 through 10 it's seen that because she had the Courage to stay with the Indians she is a better person for it, and not as different as she once thought, as exemplified in the last chapter.

Light and Dark

Light and Dark permeate through the book in subtle ways. In the first chapter Sarah is looking up at the stars while lying in the wilderness. Light and Dark play a subtle role throughout the story as each time it gets dark Sarah is afraid. The first chapter shows this as she hears the noises of the night and calls to her father. This is to show that even though she is being so grown up and helping her father on this journey she is still a child who is afraid of the Dark, like all children are at one point in their lives.

With Light, Sarah often associates it with welcoming and feelings of security. A prime example is when she sees the Light from the Robinson's cabin that seems to welcome her. As she steps into the cabin she is not on edge like the night before in the wilderness but at the same time keeps inside her shell. However there is another mention of Light in Chapter 9 that has a different meaning.

This is around the time she starts to wear the deerskin clothes from Tall John's wife and mentions how she feels light and free. This is important to note on the fact that Sarah has fully accepted the Indians at this point and the fact that they are not out to get her.



At one point in the book Sarah lies awake at night, scared of an attack. However by the morning Tall John allays her fears and sends her on her way to go and play. This is also a turning point for Sarah as she will take what she has experienced in the villages with her for the rest of her life and always feel like she has a home among them.

By the last chapter Dark and Light combine together with Sarah lying by the fireplace to go to sleep. The fire presents a merging of Light and Dark seeing as it will light up a space but not entirely, some darkness is still left. This can be symbolic of the fact that Sarah is beginning to see that while there is danger all around certain things she no longer has to fear. In many ways it also symbolizes the fact that she has grown up so much that the things she at once feared are now insignificant to her.

Uncertainty and Change

During the time this book is set Uncertainty is everywhere. Sarah is uprooted from her life in Massachusetts as she helps her father to go and build the cabin in Connecticut. Already Uncertainty appears in the first chapter as Sarah listens to the sounds around her, unsure of what they really are in the darkness. However, Uncertainty is necessary in order for Sarah to grow as a character. Without Uncertainty to introduce fear then Sarah would never have to keep her courage with her in order to face the challenges set in front of her.

The biggest source of Uncertainty for Sarah is the Indians. She is only eight years old and as such where she lived in Massachusetts it is probable that she has never had to deal with Indians before now. Because of this Sarah has no idea of what to expect should she run into Indians. In the second chapter Sarah hears from the Robinson children about how Indians are going to drag her off and kill her. It introduces fear into Sarah because she has no prior knowledge to counteract their claims.

As Sarah goes through the novel she mentions the fact that she does not want to run into Indians, despite her father telling her that they are friendly. Yet by the time Sarah meets the Indians in Chapter 5 the Uncertainty about them melts away as she finds herself wishing for them to come back again sometime. The next problem with Uncertainty is when she has to live with in Indians in Chapter 7. She doesn't know what to expect and that scares her, especially at hearing of the Indians of the north. There is also the underlying wonder of how her family is going to make the trip over and if they will all make it in one piece.

Yet by the end of the book Sarah shows less anxiety at Uncertainty as with the Indians of the North. She is convinced that if the Indians from the north should attack then their friends in the Indian village will alert them in time. She further exemplifies how much she has changed in Chapter 11 when she contests her mother's view on Indians, remarking on how they are not so different from the Noble family. In oh so many words Sarah puts her mother's ill-mannered views of them to rest in such a way that no one can reprimand her for it, and that is perhaps the biggest change in the book.



Security

Security is explored throughout the book. As a child Sarah wants to know that she is safe. For a large part of the book Sarah's cloak and her father are her main sources of Security. Together they represent parents looking out over their children. John in the literal sense as Sarah's father and the cloak in place of Sarah's mother. In Chapter 1 Sarah recalls her mother draping the cloak around her shoulders and telling her to keep up her Courage. Thus throughout the story that mantra and the cloak are her main source of Security.

In Chapter 2 Sarah is without her father for a short time in the Robinson's settlement and so she draws the cloak around her in an attempt to wrap herself in comfort in lieu of her father unpacking their things. Furthermore, in Chapter 4 Sarah pulls her cloak around her in an attempt to feel secure while listening to the noises of the night and sitting there with her father. In Chapter 7 Sarah is left with the Indians as her father returns for the rest of their family and she pulls it close to her as Tall John takes her back to the village. Initially Sarah keeps her cloak about her in the village as she stays there, taking the comfort from it.

However as Sarah spends time in the village alongside the Indians she starts to use it less and in favor of wearing deerskin and moccasins. This is signaling the point that Sarah is less insecure about where she is and who she is. Yet there are still times where Sarah will retreat back to the cloak when she feels uncomfortable. As much as Sarah pulls the cloak around her for comfort, by the end of the book Sarah is seen hanging the cloak on a peg in the home as she goes to sleep. It makes the point that by the end of the novel she feels secure and so she can retire the cloak for the time being.

Home

Home is an important motif in the story. As a child Sarah wants to know that she is safe and that she has a home. The whole reason for Sarah and her father starting on this journey is to go and build a home on the piece of land he purchased. As such it drives Sarah's father to go and work hard to get it up, often leaving Sarah on her own in the shed during the day, thus pushing her out of her comfort zone and causing her to adapt.

In Chapter 2 Sarah gets a prime example of a house that is not a "Home." Often times she mentions how Mistress Robinson doesn't have the face of a mother. Furthermore Sarah tries to keep her cloak on her as a sign of security. She also mentions how Mistress Robinson clucked and fussed at her children but not in a loving way. As such this exemplifies the fact that not all houses are homes. It also provides Sarah with an example of what a Home shouldn't be like; something she mentions to her father in Chapter 3.

In contrast, Sarah does find a Home in the Indian village with Tall John and his family. Often Sarah is worried over Indians being inhospitable and yet in the end they are more loving and accepting than the Robinson family Sarah stayed with earlier in the book.

They provide an example of what a Home is and the fact that even though Sarah comes from a different walk of life than Tall John and his family it doesn't matter, a Home is a Home as long as there is love and kindness.

Styles

Point of View

The point of view in this book is third person omniscient, with a focus on the character of Sarah Noble. The reader is treated to the interior thoughts of all of the major characters, but central are the thoughts and fears of Sarah Noble as she deals with situations and events that ask her to act with a maturity beyond her years. From this point of view the reader sees Sarah as she struggles to overcome her fear and prejudices, and sees her willingness to try new things and engage in an understanding of the people she has encountered.

Language and Meaning

The language of the book is geared toward those who are just entering into reading chapter books. The language is kept simple, providing many contextual clues for words that may be unfamiliar to younger readers. Those unfamiliar with early pioneers or the historical context may benefit from exposure to some basic historical information.

Structure

The book is divided into very short chapters averaging 3-5 pages each. The storyline progresses in a linear form, and while there are flashbacks, they occur as Sarah's memories of things from home.



Quotes

Keep your courage up Sarah Noble.
-- Sarah (Chapter 1 paragraph Page 1)

Importance: This is arguably the most important quote because it serves to give Sarah the strength to keep going in difficult times. Sarah returns to the mantra throughout the book, and the phrase is also referenced in the title of the novel.

She is not my mother... her face is not like a mother's face.
-- Sarah (Chapter 2 paragraph Page 7)

Importance: This serves to show that Sarah does not like Mistress Robinson's household and is convinced that her home will not be like that.

Mistress Robinson should teach her children to watch their words. She should watch her own. And there are people in this world who do not help other along the way, Sarah, while there are those who do. In our home all will be treated with kindness-always, Sarah. The Indians, too, and they will not harm us.
-- Father John (Chapter 3 paragraph Page 18)

Importance: This quote serves to show John's view on Indians as well as to set in place the fact that the Indians will be nicer people.

Indeed it is. And a good thing I have you here Sarah, to keep me from being afraid of all these strange visitors.
-- Father John (Chapter 4 paragraph Page 22)

Importance: This shows the relationship between Sarah and her father as well as reiterate the fact that Sarah is a child and still afraid of the dark and unknown. Therefore this quote also touches on the theme of Light and Dark.

How foolish, why can't you speak English?
-- Sarah (Chapter 5 paragraph Page 28)

Importance: This shows how narrow-minded Sarah is at the beginning of her encounters with the Native Americans and also shows the culture she comes from and reflects the mindset of the times.

To be afraid and to be brave is the best courage of all.
-- Father John (Chapter 7 paragraph Page 36)

Importance: This fits in with the first quote on courage. John is telling Sarah that even if she is afraid as long as she is brave she has not lost her courage.



Am I doing the right thing to leave her here?
-- Father John (Chapter 7 paragraph Page 37)

Importance: There is a constant struggle in John to validate if taking Sarah out into the wilderness or not was a good idea. He especially wonders about this when he has to leave her on her own and trust her to other people.

Oh! It is Tall John's children that I like!
-- Sarah (Chapter 6 paragraph Page 31)

Importance: This quote explains the fact that it's a coincidence that Sarah happens to make best friends with the children of the Indian that John trusts and is willing to help him build the cabin.

She speaks with her Great Spirit as we do with our Great Spirit.
-- Tall John (Chapter 8 paragraph Page 41)

Importance: This quote, spoken by Tall John to the children, shows the fact that there is not as vast a difference between the Indians and the settlers as believed and shows how kind the Indians are.

Sarah! I had thought you were one of the Indian children!
-- Father John (Chapter 9 paragraph Page 45)

Importance: This quote exemplifies the fact that Sarah has become more open-minded and as such has embraced a culture different from her own almost to the point where she is unrecognizable to her father.

Arabella is my child, and I have not outgrown her.
-- Sarah (Chapter 10 paragraph Page 50)

Importance: This quote reaffirms the fact that Sarah is still a child, no matter how grown up she has seemed in the book.

It is good to see that Sarah is a little girl again. She has had, in these months to be too much of a woman.
-- Father John (Chapter 11 paragraph Page 53)

Importance: Once more this reiterates the idea that even though Sarah has acted older than her years she is a child and can still act like the young girl she is.