

# **Empire of the Summer Moon: Quanah Parker and the Rise and Fall of the Comanches, the Most Powerful Indian Tribe in American History Study Guide**

**Empire of the Summer Moon: Quanah Parker and the Rise and Fall of the Comanches, the Most Powerful Indian Tribe in American History by S. C. Gwynne**

(c)2015 BookRags, Inc. All rights reserved.



# Contents

<a href="#">Empire of the Summer Moon: Quanah Parker and the Rise and Fall of the Comanches, the Most Powerful Indian Tribe in American History Study Guide.....</a>	<a href="#">1</a>
<a href="#">Contents.....</a>	<a href="#">2</a>
<a href="#">Plot Summary.....</a>	<a href="#">3</a>
<a href="#">Chapters 1 through 3.....</a>	<a href="#">4</a>
<a href="#">Chapters 4 through 6.....</a>	<a href="#">6</a>
<a href="#">Chapters 7 through 10.....</a>	<a href="#">8</a>
<a href="#">Chapters 11 through 15.....</a>	<a href="#">11</a>
<a href="#">Chapters 16 through 19.....</a>	<a href="#">14</a>
<a href="#">Chapters 20 through 22.....</a>	<a href="#">16</a>
<a href="#">Characters.....</a>	<a href="#">18</a>
<a href="#">Objects/Places.....</a>	<a href="#">21</a>
<a href="#">Themes.....</a>	<a href="#">23</a>
<a href="#">Style.....</a>	<a href="#">25</a>
<a href="#">Quotes.....</a>	<a href="#">27</a>
<a href="#">Topics for Discussion.....</a>	<a href="#">29</a>



## Plot Summary

Cynthia Ann Parker and her family lived in the frontier of Texas in the early 1800s when Indian problems were plaguing the settlers. The Parker men were well aware of the dangers and should have known they were putting their families in danger. There were some who said the Parker family was so afraid of God that they had no room to fear anything else, such as Indians. When a small band of Indians arrived at the Parker fort one day, the family was caught completely off guard. One of Cynthia's uncles went out to meet the Indians and was killed. Cynthia, her mother and three siblings ran only a short distance before they were caught. Cynthia's mother was forced to give up two of her children. Cynthia and her brother were taken along with two adult aunts and a young cousin.

Cynthia was soon adopted into the tribe and treated as a full member. Her uncle continued to look for her for several years. A white soldier encountered Cynthia and offered a sizable ransom for her return but was refused. It was much later revealed that Cynthia married and her husband kept her hidden whenever there were white visitors in the camp.

Cynthia married an important leader named Peta Nocona and had three children. The oldest, Quanah, was twelve when the Indian camp was attacked. Peta Nocona was killed though Quanah refused to admit it for many years. Cynthia was separated from her two sons and the white soldiers captured her. She was carrying her infant daughter and revealed herself as a white woman to keep from being killed. Cynthia hated living in the white man's world and moved in with several family members before finally finding a niche and beginning to settle in. However, her young daughter died and Cynthia was devastated by her death.

There were dozens of battles between Indians and whites over the years of Quanah's life. In many cases, the Indians attacked and the whites sought the bands responsible in an effort to exact retribution. The military underwent dramatic changes over the years with the earliest conflicts ending in the slaughter of whites who didn't understand the Indian method of fighting.

Meanwhile, Quanah was taken in by another tribe but was treated cruelly because he was an orphan and was half-white. He made war on whites for years but abruptly changed his position and urged peace. Quanah moved onto the reservation and embraced the white man's ways. He had a telephone and a car. He had a railroad named for him and often traveled on the train. He lobbied for what he believed to be right, including a school district for Indian children. He built a large home for his extended family. He was generous and his home was filled with guests. He died in 1911 of heart failure.



# Chapters 1 through 3

## Chapters 1 through 3 Summary and Analysis

By 1869, the white settlers and those seeking to make a profit from the land were headed into Texas and farther west. There were established trails and a railroad, effective weapons and plenty of ideas. The only thing that stood in their way was the Indian tribes. The greatest of these was the Comanche and an important band of the Comanche tribe was the Quahadis.

In chapter two, Cynthia Ann Parker's family was given several 4,600-acre plots of land in central Texas. In 1836, Indian attacks were common and the Parker men would have been fully aware of the danger. Despite that, the gate to the Parker clan's fort was open when a group of Indians rode up. One of the adult men, Benjamin Parker, was killed when he took food out, believing it would appease the Indians' demand for a cow. Cynthia and her brother, John Richard, were taken by the Indians. Two adult women, Rachel Parker and Elizabeth Kellog, were taken hostage as was Rachel's young son. Several other members of the family were killed or brutally beaten. The Indians made off with a few horses and undoubtedly called the raid a success.

The grueling ride back to the Indian camp was a nightmare for the captives. Rachel wrote about her experiences after she was returned to her family. The adult women were brutally raped. Though Rachel didn't disguise that fact, she also didn't try to guess what the younger children thought about the events.

In chapter three, the author explained that the Comanche Nation was a huge "empire," and as such, was a formidable enemy for those who tried to encroach on the lands the tribes called their own. In the 1820s, the Mexicans encouraged white settlers in Texas as a means of buffering themselves against the Indians. While the tribes were often portrayed as highly socialized hierarchal, they were much more simplistic. The Comanches never made woven baskets or built houses. There was no organization other than the loosely grouped hunting parties. They were not very good at defending themselves and had been repeatedly pushed around by other tribes. However, that changed when they adapted to the use of the horse. They were adept at riding, taming, breeding and stealing horses and became very wealthy in that respect. With that came the power to hunt, raid, move and fight. The Comanche warriors could send out twenty well-aimed arrows in the amount of time it took a white man to fire once and reload.

Chapter one included a scene in which Ranald Slidell Mackenzie was in pursuit of a Quahadi Indian named Quanah. Quanah was an impressive young chief, the son of an Indian father named Peta Nacona and a white mother, Cynthia Ann Parker. Cynthia had been captured by a Comanche band when she was young and was adopted into the tribe. Mackenzie was learning about the Indians while in pursuit and was beaten on several occasions before the men under his command began to understand how to meet the Indians without suffering great losses. Chapter two then dropped back in time



and told the story of Cynthia's kidnapping and a history of the clash between settlers and the Indians.

There was some information about Cynthia's family. They were Calvinists and rigidly religious. They believed in predestination and the wrath of God. As one writer put it, the group as a whole was so fearful of God "that there was no fear left over for anyone or anything else."



# Chapters 4 through 6

## Chapters 4 through 6 Summary and Analysis

In chapter four, Rachel Parker Plummer's written words indicated that she wasn't afraid to write about her captivity because she knew she would be dead before they were published, and she was correct. The author noted that Rachel wrote about her own horrors at the hands of the Indians but said little about what happened to Cynthia Ann. In truth, Cynthia was probably adopted into the tribe and treated as a member of a family. One reason for this was that the Indians had low birth rates. Another was that captives were often ransomed back to the whites. Rachel wrote that her son was literally torn from her arms once the Indians realized that he was no longer nursing and she never saw him again. Cynthia Ann and her brother were taken into a "middle band" of Comanches while Elizabeth Kellogg, the fifth member of the Parker clan to be taken captive, was sent with a band of Kichai Indians, possibly as a trade or a gift.

Rachel was forced to clean buffalo hides - a grueling and dirty job. This was another reason that women were sometimes taken captive. The price of buffalo hides had risen dramatically and the Indians were hunting many more than in years before. They needed women to do the work of cleaning them. Rachel kept working as required but reached a point where she wanted to commit suicide but couldn't. She decided to push the Indians into killing her and attacked a woman who acted as a keeper. The men gathered around to watch but no one interfered and Rachel began to look for someone who might purchase her away from the Indians.

According to historians, about a thousand people lived in each of four or five "major bands" of Comanches a half-century before Cynthia Ann was kidnapped. They were the Yamparika or Yap Easters, the Kotsoteka or Buffalo Eaters, the Penateka or Honey Eaters, the Nokoni or Wanderers, and the Quahadis or Antelopes, which is where Cynthia Ann ended up and the band that her son, Quanah, would later lead.

In chapter five, there were centuries of peace talks and battles. Attempts to create lasting effects among the Indians included the planting of missions, but they all failed.

In chapter six, Mirabeau Buonaparte Lamar was elected president of the Texas Republic in 1838. He was probably chosen in part because he had proven himself brave in battle and in part because Sam Houston, always the pacifist if possible, had been unable to resolve the continuing conflicts with the Indians. Lamar was faced with problems from the beginning. He had no money and a desire to "build his empire." He saw the Indians as the only significant threat and the Texas Congress agreed that pushing the Indians out of the territory - or killing them - was the most reasonable answer. The author noted that Lamar's plans resembled genocide, and that the major difference between his plan and some others of the time was only his candid stating of his plans.



In 1939, Lamar recruited two thousand "revved up, patriotic, adventure-hungry Texans" to carry out the plan. Within a year, many of the Indians were starving and homeless, and headed toward reservations. Those remaining were anxious to fight. The Comanches had fought many others but discovered that the Texas recruits seemed to care little if they faced impossible odds. The Texans were mean and willing to "take absurd risks" in order to hold onto their land. What's more, they weren't at all opposed to killing Indians. In 1940, a group of Comanches asked to talk to the San Fernando army commander, Colonel Henry W. Karnes. Karnes agreed to take peace only if the Indians turned over all their hostages. They brought only one, Matilda Lockhart, who had been in captivity for about a year. The girl had been brutally beaten and her nose burned almost completely off. The settlers reacted with hostility. Every Indian who had come to town was summarily hunted down and killed. The Indians retaliated, killing all their hostages, including Matilda's six-year-old sister. The author noted there's no way to know the torments the Indians put on the captives before killing them.

The author noted that Rachel told of the brutality of the Indians, a fact that many writers and historians basically ignore. The author took the stand that the Indians were barbarically cruel and cited the killing of an infant in a horrific manner as proof. The author noted that they "made a good deal of brutal and bloody war that was completely unnecessary." There was another side of the Indians. They were often fun-loving men who were vain about their appearances, bragged a great deal and were incurable gossips. The two sides presented in this way may seem at odds with each other but it seems more likely that this was a complex human being.

There was an interesting note made about Sam Houston, who had served as president of the Texas Republic for a period of time. Houston was said to have been talking to a Comanche chief who asked that Houston set a boundary and keep the white settlers from crossing it. Houston reportedly replied that if he built a wall as a boundary that was so high "that no Indian could scale it, the white people would go crazy trying to devise a means to get beyond it." Houston himself was a pioneer, traveling well beyond the established white settlements of the day to forge new trails into new land.



# Chapters 7 through 10

## Chapters 7 through 10 Summary and Analysis

In chapter seven, the Indians began facing the harsh realities of the settlers' effects on their world. The large game moved out so the Indians began hunting smaller game until it, too, was scarce. Many of the Indian bands then began trading with whites. That contact was sometimes friendly. The Indians began to learn English and Spanish and adopted the use of cotton material for clothing because it was more weather-friendly than animal skins. A Penateka chief named Buffalo Hump had a vision in which he drove all the whites to the sea. He sent word to other Comanche bands and had soon gathered some four hundred warriors ready to make war on the whites. The group included some six hundred women and children who would follow along to provide "logistical support." Buffalo Hump knew it would take weeks to accomplish the goal. The first battle was on August 6, 1840, when the warriors arrived at Victoria, a town near San Antonio. They greatly outnumbered the whites but didn't attack. Instead, they were immediately sidetracked by the fact that there were thousands of horses and a warehouse filled with merchandise, available for the taking. They did make several attacks and took some hostages, including Nancy Crosby who was the granddaughter of Daniel Boone. Rather than continue their attacks, they gathered up the horses they could and loaded up all the possessions they could carry, and headed home. But the number of horses and huge amount of plunder meant they couldn't make a quick escape and they were easily tracked.

They were confronted by a group of military men led by Major General Felix Huston. These weren't the farmers the Indians usually met. Instead, these were young men who weren't afraid of anything and were anxious for battle and glory. Their initial confrontation with the Indians was one sided in favor of the Indians. The young men, who would become known as Rangers, were on foot with inferior fire power. When it seemed they might be slaughtered, an Indian leader was killed and the Indians lost their momentum. The Rangers mounted up and pursued, and counted the battle a victory though the author wasn't certain.

In chapter eight, there were two opinions about Cynthia Ann Parker's life. Some believed she was contented and loved the life but others believed she was degraded and hated the life. She was away from white civilization for twenty-four years and sighted twice during that time. There were other reports of her life from other captives, including Bianca Babb who was ten when she was captured in 1866. She described being happy and loved by a woman whose husband had been killed during the raid in which Bianca was kidnapped. The woman protected her and was grief-stricken when Bianca was rescued. Though Bianca also described hardships and had seen the Indians murder whites, she applied for formal adoption into the Comanche tribe.

In 1846, Indian agent Leonard Williams was sent to invite a particular chief to treaty talks and to try to purchase any captives he encountered. In the camp of Pah-hah-yuco,





near the Washita River, he discovered Cynthia Parker and offered what amounted to an exorbitant sum for her release but was refused. Williams later reported that Cynthia, for whatever reason, had chosen to remain.

Cynthia and her husband, Peta Nocono, were living with the Penatekas, having survived constant moving at a time when many bands were moving along the Trail of Tears to Indian Reservations. The moving was brutal work and the women were responsible for much of it. There was the constant threat of disease from contact with the whites, often spread through Indian camps by fear and superstition.

The fact that Cynthia Ann had apparently told Williams she didn't want to leave the Indians was a shock to the white world. A second agent, Robert Neighbors, reported in 1847 that he'd had no more luck with his efforts to retrieve Cynthia. He reported that friendly Comanches had assured him he would have to fight for her return.

In 1851, Victor Rose encountered Cynthia. She assured him she would not leave the Indians and pointed out her husband and her three children. The oldest, Quanah, was probably born between 1848 and 1850. Cynthia had been formally adopted and was considered "Nautdah," or "Someone Found." From Rose's description, it was clear that Cynthia and her family had changed bands.

In chapter nine, Cynthia's uncle, James Parker, was a shady character who was often accused of malfeasance but never convicted. James found Elizabeth and borrowed money from Sam Houston to rescue her. He made several trips into the woods, hoping to find the other captives. Meanwhile, a philanthropic family arranged for the rescue of Rachel Plummer. She was taken to Santa Fe and prepared for the trip home when Indians attacked the city. The family fled taking Rachel with them. She eventually endured a harrowing trip back to her family and apparently reunited with her husband but her health failed and she died in 1839, just two days before her infant son. James continued his search for Cynthia, her brother John, and James' grandson James Plummer. Some believed that John died but he apparently served in the Civil War and may have later returned to the Indians. James Plummer was eventually rescued and reunited with his father. The elder James apparently gave up on rescuing Cynthia Ann after Williams' report of her situation.

In chapter ten, the Rangers are established. Though there was little money for them, there were plenty of young volunteers led by John Coffee Hayes. Hayes soon abandoned the old way of fighting and learned from the Indians. The men traveled light, lived in harsh conditions and practiced incessantly until they could shoot from under the neck of a horse, just as the Indians did. Hayes became a major before he was twenty-five. With a new generation of handguns, the Rangers became more proficient.

Chapter seven began with the words, "In legend and history, the Penatekas were the largest and most powerful of all the Comanche bands." This seemed to be the author's way of making a point of the differences between legend and history and the fact that sometimes they were one and the same. He furthered this thought in chapter eight with

his notation that there were some instances in which history was cold and hard facts and some cases in which it was "colored with rumor."



# Chapters 11 through 15

## Chapters 11 through 15 Summary and Analysis

In chapter eleven, the Comanche Indians, including Cynthia Ann Parker and her family, were camped on the Pease River in the fall of 1860. All that previous summer, Cynthia's husband, Peta Nocona, was busy raiding white settlements in the Fort Worth area. One of his main targets that year had been Parker County, named for some of Cynthia's relatives. The raids were so frequent and the Indians so difficult to catch that a new band of militia was raised with a sole purpose - to "punish" the Indians. Peta Nocona's raids increased in brutality. In one case, a family was attacked and the wife, nine months pregnant, beaten, scalped and raped. There were forces at work escalating the conflict, including the fact that whites were moving farther into territories that had previously been home only to the Indians. As Peta Nocona continued to raid, steal and murder, the conflict between Indians and whites became all-out war. At one point, Indians were given about twenty thousand acres of land but the nomadic tribes could not support themselves on that land. The whites wanted the Indians to change their fundamental way of life, becoming farmers and settling on land allotted to them.

It was John Salmon "Rip" Ford who was put in charge of the next band of militia charged with taking control of the Indian situation. While bands had been formed before, Ford's objective was different. He was to take his men deep into Indian territory and strike the Indians where they lived. Ford's Rangers picked up the habits of Hayes' Rangers from years earlier, and they answered a vital question: Indians could be chased and destroyed in their home territories. At the Battle of Antelope Hills, Ford's men proved that point for the first time.

In chapter twelve, Sul Ross, a twenty-three-year-old military man, was put in charge of a military expedition against the Indians. Ross led his men deep into Indian territory and there found an encampment and a group of Indians loaded with provisions and obviously headed for another camp. There was a fight and many of the Indians were killed. Three were escaping and Ross pursued. As he was about to overtake them, one of the riders wheeled on the soldiers, revealed a baby and somehow indicated to the soldiers that she was white. That woman was Cynthia Ann Parker. She was held by some of the soldiers while others chased the other two riders. One of them was a woman but the second was a warrior who had been identified as a leader of the tribe. He was killed and was later identified as Peta Nocona. Cynthia was brought to her husband's body and she "wailed" but the soldiers didn't allow her to remain for long. Through an interpreter, Cynthia told what she could remember about her background, including that her father had been killed and she and her brother taken hostage by the Indians. She was taken to Fort Cooper where the white women tried to clean her up. She gave in to the ministrations but escaped whenever possible. Meanwhile, Ross sent word to Isaac Parker and he went to the fort to claim Cynthia. Cynthia believed that her two sons, Quanah and his brother, had died in the raid. However, they had actually been able to escape.



Cynthia first lived with her uncle, Isaac, and later with her cousin William before moving in with her younger brother, Silas. It was while she was living with Silas -

Prairie Flower had learned English quickly and had adapted well. But when Prairie Flower died of pneumonia in 1864, Cynthia seemed to give up. She died six years later and her body was moved multiple times before finding a final resting place.

In chapter thirteen, Quanah was only twelve when his father was killed. He would not yet have been a full-fledged hunter and he and his brother had no provisions when they fled the camp. However, they made it to another band of Indians. There, he found the life he'd lived as the oldest son of a powerful chief was over. As an orphan, he had little in the way of comfort and was treated poorly. He came to realize that he was treated with more contempt than other orphans because of his white blood.

He was skilled and fearless on the battlefield which earned him a position as a war chief at a very early age. In one case, Quanah was among a group of Indians being led by Bear Ear. When Bear Ear was killed, Quanah rallied the warriors - a feat few had tried. Typically the death of a leader meant the Indians simply left the fight but Quanah succeeded in taking control on the battlefield.

In chapter fourteen, the Civil War took most of the able-bodied fighters away from the Indian territories and there were several major Indian-on-Indian battles. When several groups of Indians banded together, the military sent Kit Carson as leader of a military group to put down the uprising. Later, a military leader named J.M. Chivington went into the territory with a single purpose - to kill Indians. Their massacre of an Indian band became public knowledge and there was an outcry over the killing of so many Indian women. However, those living in Indian territory knew that many of those women were warriors themselves.

In chapter fifteen, the Civil War ended and there were peace talks. Quanah, then eighteen, was present for the talks though he didn't hold a role in the tribe that would have prompted his presence. The Indians agreed to move onto reservations and, to the government's amazement, thousands showed up at the appointed time, probably at least partly because many were hungry and desperate. The government wasn't ready and there were not enough provisions, a fact that caused the Indians to lose what little faith they had in the peace treaty promises.

The author noted that Cynthia hated her life with the white people after her years of living with the Indians and that she often tried to run away with Prairie Flower. She finally began to settle down and seemed to accept her new fate when she was living with her brother Silas. The author attributed this to her realization that she was never going to be returned to the Indians. It could also be that she'd finally found a place where she fit in. She was respected in the neighborhood for her ability to tan hides and she began to work at spinning, weaving and sewing. It seems likely that she'd finally found a way to feel useful which may have attributed a great deal to her new attitude.



There was an interesting note about Quanah's version of events during the battle in which his father was killed. Quanah, when questioned about it years later on the Indian reservation, refused to admit that he was in the Indian camp at the time of the battle or that his father had been killed there. The author noted that the Quanah seemed to be ashamed that the Indians had been caught off guard there and had suffered such a defeat. Quanah also wouldn't talk about his own battles or the people he'd killed, which was probably a good thing and may have saved him from retribution. One detail Quanah did reveal was that Peta Nocona often had his wife hide or blacken her face with ashes whenever there were visitors in the camp for fear that she'd be recognized.



# Chapters 16 through 19

## Chapters 16 through 19 Summary and Analysis

In chapter sixteen, the government continued to try to provide basic requirements for the Indians, such as food, but the system didn't work. One problem was greed among those in charge of the supplies and they decided to put a Quaker in charge. The next problem was that each time a party went off the reservation and on the war path, they were coaxed to return with fresh supplies. The Indians came to associate the supplies with their attacks and continued their ways. They were also usually allowed to keep whatever livestock they stole while they were away. In short, there was little incentive to stop.

The whites, meanwhile, began using Spencer repeating rifles. Led by Ranald Slidell Mackenzie, the military went looking for a particular group of Indians, this one led by Quanah. The large band of Indians left their camping grounds and escaped, but such a large group left a trail that could easily be followed. Mackenzie and his men soon found themselves confused as the trail doubled back on itself. The Indians, to the amazement of the whites, put distance between themselves and their pursuers. When a storm finally drove the white pursuers back in search of shelter, the Indians continued on and made their escape.

In chapter seventeen, the year was 1872 and the Indian attacks continued, just as they had twenty years earlier. Mackenzie was told to put a stop to the attacks and he put everything into the task. He showed restraint when he learned of the location of Shaking Hands' camp on the Red River. Mackenzie's men attacked but with orders they were to avoid killing old men, children and women, unless it was unavoidable. When the battle was over, there were more than a hundred prisoners. Shaking Hands was in Washington to talk peace. That night, Mackenzie took the horses they'd captured several miles away but during the night, the Indians returned and stole most of them back along with some belonging to military Indian scouts. The next night, the Indians stole more of the horses. Mackenzie swore he would never again let that happen. From that point, he slaughtered all the horses in a camp when the battle was over.

In chapter eighteen, the whites discover that bands of Indian tribes were mingling, a phenomenon that had never happened before. The Indians began to discover the power of possessions. Those on the reservations were given small items such as cheaply made axes and pans. These changes meant the various Indians were "losing their identities." Then the buffalo men emerged onto the scene. With the slaughter of huge herds of buffalo, the Indians lost their last hope of returning to their previous way of life.

It was in the midst of these changes that a tribal prophet, Isa-tai, came on the scene. He was able to rally the Indians to a frenzy of bloodlust. Quanah had longed for revenge against the whites who killed his father and took his mother. Together, Quanah and Isa-tai called on various bands of the Comanche tribes and many of them agreed to join



forces in a final stand against the whites. Under the leadership of Quanah and Isa-tai, the Indians' first attack was to be the trading post at a buffalo camp. The plan was simple - the Indians would attack while the whites were sleeping, slaughtering them all. The reality was that a white trader learned of the plan and kept the men awake all night, first with a manufactured chore that couldn't wait then with free drinks all around. The Indians attacked but were driven back, having killed only three. Then the whites used their superior rifles to pick off the Indians at great distances, effectively putting a stop to the fight that became known as the Second Battle of Adobe Walls. The attack was one of several and came at a time when whites were nearing the end of their patience. A no-tolerance policy was adopted and the military turned their attention to bringing all Indians to the reservation and killing those who didn't comply.

In chapter nineteen, Quanah's band was among those who chose to hide in the Texas Panhandle. In the spring of 1875, there were few Indians still off the reservation. Quanah led the largest band. In March, Mackenzie took over the command at Fort Sill and learned about Quanah. Quanah saw a series of signs about this time and began urging his people to accept the move to the reservation. Upon Quanah's arrival on the reservation, he and Mackenzie met and were soon friends.

The uniting of the various Comanche tribes under the leadership of Quanah and Isa-tai was unheard of until these two men pulled it together. This was an early look at the leader Quanah was destined to become. An interesting point is that the Indians were largely superstitious when it came to fighting. They needed signs and rituals to prepare themselves for battle but the large number of bands coming together meant they had to find a new way of preparing. Isa-tai was able to convince the Indians that his ideas would work. The author noted the Indians are, at the end of the day, "intensely practical."



# Chapters 20 through 22

## Chapters 20 through 22 Summary and Analysis

In chapter twenty, Quanah quickly adapted to his new life and took on a leadership role in an effort to help his tribe members adapt as well. He spent time with and learned from the whites he came in contact with. This wasn't popular with his own people and many of the Indians hated him for this attitude. By 1880, there was no doubt that Quanah was the leader of the Indians and was the man the Indian agents called on. Quanah and a group from his band convinced the agents to allow a small number of Indians to leave the reservation in search of buffalo. For whatever reason, he was allowed to go and discovered for himself that the great herds of buffalo were no longer in existence. However, Quanah found a large herd of cattle belonging to a former military man, Charles Goodnight. Quanah quickly set to negotiating with Goodnight who agreed that, in return for not fighting, Quanah could have two cows each day for an indefinite period.

Back on the reservation, Quanah began to look for ways to make money. Cattle were routinely driven across the reservation and allowed to linger there where the grass was good and the herds could be fattened for market. Quanah demanded "payment" and the cattlemen who declined found themselves victims of missing horse, stampeded cattle and other mischief. Through gifts, payments for leasing some reservation property and what he "earned" from those passing over reservation land, Quanah soon had a sizeable herd of cattle of his own. He was, by the standards of the time and circumstances, becoming a wealthy man.

Quanah decided to build a house which still stands near Cache, Oklahoma. It was, for the time, an elaborate clapboard structure where his extended family lived. He had multiple wives which angered some officials but refused to give up any of them. Two of his daughters married white men and he adopted two boys, one from a circus. He was always willing to feed anyone who appeared at his door and opened his home to many, including those who were sick or dying. The sick usually wanted healing or to be assured that Quanah would arrange their funerals. Meanwhile, Mackenzie became increasingly ill. He was erratic and unpredictable in his moods until he was finally relieved of his command. He died at forty-eight in a mental hospital. No one knew the cause of his illness or death but some theorized it was either the result of a childhood injury or post traumatic stress disorder.

In chapter twenty-one, Quanah continued to adapt. He had one of the first telephones in the area and bought an old car. The Quanah, Acme and Pacific Railroad was named for him and he often rode the train, blowing the whistle and ringing the bell. He realized that Indian children needed a better school, so he donated the land and convinced the government to establish a school district, then became a board member overseeing the district. As a contrast to Quanah's popularity, Geronimo was not well liked. He also drank and gambled a great deal. He died after becoming drunk and falling from his horse.





In chapter twenty-two, Quanah sought to establish a relationship with his white family and succeeded at least to some degree. He died in February of 1911 shortly after returning home from a trip. The cause of death was rheumatism-induced heart failure.

Quanah was one of the first of his people to see that changes to his lifestyles would be the only way to prosper in this new world. But what's remarkable was that he was able to embrace "white" ideas, such as the need for commercial enterprise.

There was an interesting story in which Quanah reportedly told a white man that the Indians had been driven off their land. The man asked how it happened. Quanah told the man to sit on a log and Quanah sat beside him. Then Quanah told the man to scoot over a little and the man did, with Quanah scooting into the man's previous seat. This repeated until the man scooted completely off the end of the log. Quanah then said, "Like that."

The house featured ten-foot ceilings and a formal dining room. There were stars painted on the roof which prompted the house's nickname - Star House. Quanah's home was truly a case of the old meeting the new. There were always guests and when the large house overflowed, guests or even family members slept in tipis that were always in the yard.



# Characters

## Cynthia Ann Parker

A member of a family of settlers, she was abducted by a Comanche band when she was nine years old. The Indians who raided her settlement demanded two of the Parker children, leaving two behind. Cynthia was subjected to brutalities during her first days in the control of the Comanches but was later adopted into the tribe with all the rights of a full-blood Comanche. Her abduction was noteworthy because her father had been a member of the militia of Texas at the time. However, her name became a household word when another militia member found Cynthia living with the Comanches a decade later. The man tried to ransom Cynthia but she was unwilling to leave with the man. Her refusal to return to the white man's settlement made news. There were additional efforts later to ransom her as well but those also failed, the Indians saying her "captors" would not release her for any amount of money and she refusing offers. She married an Indian and had three children. The oldest of those was Quanah who would become the last powerful chief of the Comanche people. Cynthia was, by all reports, a strong-willed woman. She apparently named her children herself; the second son being named "Peanuts" because Cynthia could remember eating peanuts prior to her kidnapping. She was forced back to her white family but hated it for many years. She died soon after the death of her daughter. Her Indian name was Nautdah or "Someone Found."

## Quanah Parker

Oldest son of Cynthia Ann Parker and Peta Nocona, he came to be the last of the powerful chiefs of the Comanche band. Quanah was just a boy when his father was killed and his mother taken back to her white relatives. Quanah and his brother fled and his mother believed he'd died. In truth, he and his brother made it safely through miles of wilderness to another Indian band. Quanah spent many years leading a group of Indians and making war against the whites. He was brutal and ruthless, and constantly talked against the whites. This made it almost unbelievable when Quanah suddenly began preaching peace. Quanah then showed his true leadership ability. He was intent on learning to succeed in the white man's world. When he saw that cattle were an important part of the wealth of whites, he began amassing cattle. He also set out to make things better for his people. An example of that is seen when he lobbied for a school district for the Indian children who were not accepted at the white schools. He was willing to try new things and loved to travel. He had a telephone and a car when such things weren't overly common. Quanah died in 1911 of heart failure.



## **Peta Nocona**

Husband of Cynthia Ann Parker, he was a powerful warrior. He refused several offers of ransom for Cynthia's return and often kept her hidden when there were visitors to the village. He was killed in a raid on his village.

## **John Coffee Hayes**

A Ranger, he was the first of the white men to decide that he must study the Comanche's ways of fighting and emulate them. Hayes' methods included having his men train for hours each day until they could shoot from under the neck of a horse and ride as well as the Indians. His methods were successful at the time but were abandoned by future military leaders who had to learn how to lead successful campaigns against the Indians.

## **Ranald Slidell Mackenzie**

A military man, he was an important leader during a time of frequent clashes with the Indians. He went crazy and died in a mental facility at age forty-eight. The author noted that he played a crucial role in the military maneuverings against the Indians but the newspaper notice of his death was a single paragraph.

## **Buffalo Hump**

An important Penateka Chief, he was leader of one of the fiercest and most powerful of all the Comanche bands. Buffalo Hump had a vision in which he drove the whites to the sea. To attain this goal, he sent word to many other Comanche bands in an effort to unite warriors from many bands. He succeeded in uniting the warriors but lacked the ability to keep the warriors on track with their ultimate goal.

## **Prairie Flower**

She was the daughter of Cynthia Parker and Peta Nocona. She was just a baby when whites took Cynthia from the Indian tribe. Prairie Flower was described as an engaging child and she learned English much more quickly than her mother. She died of pneumonia as a child.

## **Isa-Tai**

This individual is the Indian who emerged as a powerful medicine man and who joined with Quanah to lead the Indians on one of their final raids. They hit the trading post and engaged in the Second Battle of Adobe Walls but Isa-Tai's "medicine" was not strong enough to keep the Indians from running away in the face of the superior fire power.



## **Rachel Parker**

Cynthia's aunt, she was one of five captives taken from the Parkers' fort. Rachel wrote about her experiences during the initial days of her captivity. Rachel's son was literally torn from her arms by the Indians. She was ransomed by a philanthropic family and returned to her own, but died a short time later.

## **Leonard Williams**

This individual is the Indian agent who found Cynthia Ann Parker in an Indian camp several years after her capture. Williams offered a large ransom for Cynthia's return but the Indians and Cynthia refused. It was Williams' account of Cynthia's refusal to return that made her a household name.



## Objects/Places

### Victoria

This is the town near San Antonio where Buffalo Hump's forces, including united warriors from several bands, struck first.

### The Washita River

This is the river near the camp of Chief Pah-hah-yuco where the Indian agent discovered Cynthia Parker and was told that she wouldn't leave.

### Nautdah

Comanche for "Someone Found," this is the name used to describe Cynthia Parker.

### Pease River

This is where Cynthia Parker and her family were camped when her husband was killed.

### Parker County

This is the Texas county named for some of Cynthia Parker's relatives and one of the main targets of Peta Nocona.

### The Battle of Antelope Hills

Fought between Ford's men and the Comanches, this battle was the first time the whites had taken an offensive stand against the Indians.

### The Red River

This is where Shaking Hands' band of Indians was camped when Mackenzie attacked, killing many and taking more than a hundred prisoners.

### The Second Battle of Adobe Walls

This is where Quanah and Isa-tai led a group of Indians who expected to find whites asleep and easy to slaughter. The whites were awake and the Indians were repelled.

## **Star House**

This is the name of Quanah's House on the reservation.

## **Quanah, Acme and Pacific Railroad**

This is the railroad named for Quanah Parker and on which he often travelled.



# Themes

## The Ability to Adapt

The ability of some to adapt to changing situations became an important theme in the book. The first real example of this theme is seen with Cynthia Parker. Cynthia was raised in a strictly religious home that probably kept her in tight check. She had likely only heard of the hardships and brutality of the Indians. But after living with them for a few years, she had become adapted to their way of life and - given the opportunity - refused to return. This adaptability was likely due, at least in part, to her age. When Cynthia was returned to the white's world, she wasn't nearly as willing to try to adapt though her young daughter, Prairie Blossom, was soon well accepted among the white people. Quanah is another example of this theme. When he was faced with the necessity of moving onto the reservation, he completely embraced the new lifestyle though it should be noted that he didn't give up all his Indian ways. He still performed and participated in rituals but he also saw the need to educate the Indians children. He learned to lobby Washington to accomplish goals and to make money through the use of the land the Indians were allotted. Finally, the military leaders are examples of this theme. When the earliest military leaders faced the Indians, they dismounted but discovered they were at a severe disadvantage. Hayes realized that his men would have to meet the Indians on their own terms if they hoped to win. Toward that goal, the military men practiced skills needed for fighting, including riding, using their horses as a shield and firing under the neck of the horse.

## Indians were brutal

The author noted on several occasions that Indians have been portrayed as a noble but misunderstood people when in fact they were brutal and had only sporadic compassion for others. This was seen repeatedly in the brutality of their attacks. For example, a pregnant woman was repeatedly raped and then scalped before being left for dead. She lived several days, long enough to describe the horrors of the attack. In another instance, a baby was beaten to death. The author noted that the Indians would expect nothing less from their enemies which had chiefly been other Indian tribes until the early 1800s. With the increase in attacks on frontier settlers, the whites set up military forces to keep the Indians in check. It should be noted that there were several massacres perpetrated by the whites. In one of those cases, there was a public outcry by the people in the East who had little first-hand knowledge of Indians. The author noted that the people who lived on the frontier and who knew the ways of the Plains Indians weren't eager to condemn the military for the massacre because those whites did know about the Indians' brutal nature. Despite this brutality, there were kindnesses shown and some of the Indians' captives sought to remain with their tribes, even when given the opportunity to return to the white man's world.



## The Importance of historical setting

The importance of the historical setting is seen all through this book but is especially important in a few scenes. The author noted that Cynthia had the bad luck to be adopted by the Indians at a time when they were facing their final moments as free tribes. In the book, her situation was equated to being adopted by Jews as World War II was about to break out. Cynthia personally had little to do with creating the overall situation, but she became a victim of it in several ways. Americans were forging into the frontier and seeking to expand the settled regions. The Parkers were on the cutting edge of that movement but they were living during a time when captives were routinely adopted into tribes or sold back to whites for ransoms. She was also alive during a time when Indian captives were discussed in drawing rooms and there was a great deal of interest in the Western frontier, especially by the wealthy who were safely at home in the Eastern United States and in other parts of the world. Cynthia's name became a household word because she refused to return to the white family. The historical setting is also important when it comes to Quanah's story. Quanah was destined to be a great chief but was also destined by the historical setting to be the last of his kind.



# Style

## Perspective

The story was told from a historical perspective of a researcher. Technically, it was written in the first person from the researcher's perspective but the story had a third-person feel about it. This was probably because the author avoided the use of personal pronouns. The author made many references to historical documents and seemed to have a good grasp of the subject. The reader should still be aware of the fact that this represented one author's research and that another researcher might interpret documents or events in another way. The author seemed to have specific purposes in mind when writing the story. For example, he pointed out in chapter two that some of the details offered about the raid on Parker's Fort may have seemed unnecessarily gruesome. He said that he included the information because it "typified Comanche raids" of this time period. It could be concluded that the author took at least some journalistic license. For example, consider the life Cynthia Ann Parker probably lived with the Indians. She didn't leave an account, didn't write any of it down, and the author had no way of knowing that she actually did the chores that he described. He admitted that this was only presented as a typical and likely scenario. The book included eight pages in the center of the book with eighteen photos. One of the pictures was of Cynthia Ann with her youngest child, Prairie Blossom, at her breast. Other pictures were of Quanah as an adult with various members of his family, including other Comanches and Indian fighters from the time period.

## Tone

The overall tone of the book was one of indifference. The author presented the majority of the details of the people and the historical setting in a factual tone without apparently making the reader see things in any particular way. There were a few exceptions. For example, the author talked about the fact that many people depict Indians as a noble but misunderstood group of people. The reality, according to the author, was different. The Indians were brutal and cold-blooded. There were several scenes in which the brutality is described in detail. For example, there was the story of a pregnant woman who had been raped and scalped. She survived for several days and described the brutality that she'd been subjected to. The author also described the scenes of several battles. In one case, women and children were slaughtered by the white soldiers. The author noted that there was a public outcry over the murders but those came largely from the people in the East who were safely away from the danger of Indian attacks. The people of the frontier who were dealing with the Indians on a routine basis knew about the brutality handed out by the Indians. They were more forgiving of the slaughter. The author noted that the battle marked a time when it became acceptable for an Indian to be killed without fear of reprisal. The author didn't, however, offer an opinion as to whether this was morally acceptable but left that determination to the reader.

## Structure

The book was divided into twenty-two chapters, ranging from seven pages to more than twenty. The chapters were both numbered and titled. Titles included A New Kind of War, A Lethal Paradise, Worlds in Collision, High Lonesome, The Wolf's Howl, Blood and Smoke, Dream Visions and Apocalypse, White Squaw, Chasing the Wind, Death's Innocent Face, War to the Knife, White Queen of the Comanches, The Rise of Quanah, Uncivil Wars, Peace and other Horrors, The Anti-Custer, Mackenzie Unbound, The Hide Men and the Messiah, The Red River War, Forward in Defeat, There Was a Man, and Resting Here Until Day Breaks. The chapter titles offered some clue as to the subject. For example, "The Wolf's Howl" included the story of a group of military men who heard the wolf's howl and feared that it was Comanches, though they found out it wasn't. "A Lethal Paradise" explained the "paradise" the Parker Clan felt they had found in Texas. However, that paradise turned to a hell when the Comanches descended, killing several and taking five hostages. The story did not follow a chronological order. The opening pages described the historical setting and offered information about Quanah, then moved into the abduction of Quanah's mother, Cynthia Parker, when she was only nine. This was typical of the author's style though he tended to explain the time setting as it changed, keeping the reader from becoming confused.



## Quotes

"She was the best known of all the Indian captives of the era, discussed in drawing rooms in New York and London as the 'white squaw' because she had refused on repeated occasions to return to her people, thus challenging one of the most fundamental of the Eurocentric assumptions about Indian ways: that given the choice between sophisticated, industrialized, Christian culture of Europe and the savage, bloody, and morally backward ways of the Indians, no sane person would ever choose the latter." (Chapter 1, p. 8).

"His mother's family offers a nearly perfect example of the sort of righteous, hard-nosed, up-country folk who lived in dirt-floored, mud-chinked cabins, played ancient tunes on the fiddle, took their Kentucky rifles with them into the fields, and dragged the rest of American civilization westward along with them." (Chapter 2, p. 21).

"Most of the disposed Indians took their ragged, starving families and headed north to the designated Indian Territory, where some twenty thousand officially relocated Indians now jostled with one another and with the native plains tribes - the last stop on what came to be known as the 'trail of tears.'" (Chapter 6, p. 77).

"However she landed with them, it meant that she was thrown into the middle of a social and cultural disaster of epic proportions. To use a later historical parallel, it would have been like being adopted by a Jewish family in Berlin in 1932." (Chapter 8, p. 110).

"He had invented a new form of warfare, and he had invented its implausible agent of destruction: a lightly armed and lightly mounted man on a fast horse who wore an old slouch hat and scraggy beard and spit tobacco and defied absurd numerical odds against him." (Chapter 11, p. 159).

"But it was painfully apparent from the earliest days that the real tragedy in her life was not her first captivity but her second. White men never quite grasped this." (Chapter 12, p. 181).

"In the moments before Ross's raid, she had been quite as primitive as any other Plains Indian, packing thousands of pounds of buffalo meat onto mules, covered from head to toe in blood and grease, literally immersed in this elemental world that never quite left the Stone Age - a world of ceaseless toil, hunger, constant war, and early death." (Chapter 12, p. 181).

"Comanche power was still strong, and still dominant west of the 98th meridian and east of the Rockies and the Grand Cordillera. But it was no longer unchallenged." (Chapter 13, p. 201).

"Quanah's conspicuous bravery on the battlefield meant that he became, at a very young age, one of a small, select group of Comanche men who would lead the tribe's

final raiding and military expeditions in the last years of their freedom." (Chapter 13, p. 204).

"They were allowed to leave the reservation to hunt, south of the Arkansas. But the treaty really meant that they would have to cease fighting and stop following the buffalo, which in turn meant that they would have to cease being Plains Indians." (Chapter 15, p. 230).

"Perhaps the People really had no idea what bean farming or sheep ranching was going to be like, or what it was like to live in a single place in a single dwelling and never move with the spring herds, or what Comanche men would find to do with themselves if there was no hunting or fighting and no way to prove their worth." (Chapter 19, p. 286).

"He bought a car, an old ambulance for which he was ribbed by his friends, who called it a 'dead wagon.,' and which was apparently driven sometimes by his 'bodyguard,' a deaf and dumb Comanche named George Washington whom everyone called Dummie." (Chapter 21, p. 311).



## Topics for Discussion

Describe Cynthia Ann Parker. How did she come to be a captive? What is known about her life? What kind of person was she?

Who was Quanah Parker? Describe his life. What were some of the most important events in his life? Why were these events important to him and what was their effect on him?

Describe the historical setting of the period in which Cynthia Ann Parker was captured. How did it change over the next two decades? How did it change over the course of Quanah's life?

What was the author's stand on the Indians as a misunderstood, noble group of people? Why did he seem to take this stand? What was the basis for this stand? Was he correct?

How did the military charged with engaging the Indians evolve over the years? What were the reasons for these changes? Were they effective?

Compare Cynthia's acceptance of her life with the Indians to Quanah's acceptance of his life on the reservation. How were the two similar? How were they different?

Compare the Parkers' insistence on carving out a home for themselves on the frontier with Quanah's determination to help his people make the best lives for themselves on the reservation.