

The Emigrants Study Guide

The Emigrants by Vilhelm Moberg

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Plot Summary

Karl Oskar inherits his land in 1844, which is the same year when King Oskar I ascends the throne of Sweden and Norway. With the property Karl also inherits a debt worth three quarters of its value. He must work for as long as he lives to repay it.

Karl Oskar meets Kristina when she is seventeen. He has to wait three years before they can get married. To be approved by his wife's parents he also has to have a farmstead.

Karl Oskar's brother Robert is known for his disobedience. When he is fifteen, he is sent to work as a farmhand for Aron of Nybacken. He resents working for others so much that he considers killing himself on the way. He simulates his own death, but is caught by Aron himself as he tries to reach Karlshamn by the sea. He is punished and taken back to Nybacken.

Robert lives in Nybacken in one room with Arvid, who is nicknamed the Bull of Nybacken after being accused of impregnating Aron's heifer. Arvid thinks his life is ruined because of this rumor. Both are not allowed to see their families. Robert's duties involve attending animals and serving everybody else. He has two books. They are the History of Nature and the Bible. In spare moments, he reads to Arvid about America and the world. Arvid becomes curious about America and decides to join Robert when he learns about his intentions to migrate.

Karl Oskar's debts increase in the wake of droughts and wet weather. He finally has to borrow money from Kristina's uncle, Danjel. When he visits him he finds he hosts other people while refusing to charge him interest on the money he lends. Danjel starts practicing Åke Svenson's faith after experiencing a vision of him and Jesus Christ. He abandons drinking, swearing, and marital sex.

Punished and beaten by Aron Robert decides to leave his employer. He comes home and shows his family the red marks he has from flogging. Although Karl Oskar allows him to stay at home, Sheriff Lönnegren searches for him in order to deliver him back to his employer. Robert becomes a fugitive.

Dean Brusander decides to stop Danjel from practicing his faith to prevent the disruption of the unity among the community where only the pure Lutheran religion can be practiced. Along with Sheriff Lönnegren they visit Danjel and order him to stop practicing. As Danjel continues preaching, he is fined and jailed.

Karl and Robert agree to travel to America together. Soon, Danjel also joins them. In April, Karl with Kristina and their children embark on their journey to America. They drive to Akerby where they meet Danjel with his family, Ulrika, her daughter, and Jonas Petter who left his wife. They board the ship Charlotta on 14 April 1850 in Karlshamn along with 78 other passengers.



Most passengers experience seasickness and scurvy. Kristina, while pregnant also gets both. One night she starts bleeding heavily. She barely escapes death if not for Karl's intervention, who asks Captain Lorentz for help. In the morning Kristina is alive, but Inga Lena, Danjel's wife, passes away. She is the eighth person who dies on the Charlotta during the trip.

They reach New York just before the Midsummer. Robert and Elin have been learning English and are ready to seek employment. Karl Oskar also prepares himself for his new life, discarding all items that separate him from the New World.



Part 1: Chapter 1, King In His Stone Kingdom

Part 1: Chapter 1, King In His Stone Kingdom Summary

Karl Oskar inherits his land in 1844, the same year when King Oskar I ascends the throne of Sweden and Norway. With the property Karl also inherits a debt worth three quarters of its value. He must work for as long as he lives to repay it.

Chapter one depicts Karl's family Nilsa, who lived in Ljuder, Smaland for generations. Its presence there predates the discovery of America. His parents, Marta and Nils Jakob's son own a homestead called Korpamoen. He receives two royal names that are to assure him success while inheriting a long Nilsa nose that is to bring him luck. His father works hard all his life clearing their land from the rocks until one day he breaks his hipbone and becomes a cripple. He has one brother, Robert, and one sister, Lydia. Karl's way of doing things clashes with his father's views leading to his departure from home as a teenager and hiring himself as a farmhand.

Karl meets Kristina when visiting Berta, a woman known for her healing knowledge. Kristina is recovering at Berta's place from gangrene she had acquired after breaking her kneecap. Her relative, Ake Svenson, is the founder of the Akian sect, which his despised in the local community. Karl wants to marry Kristina after a few encounters with her, but due to their young age, they have to wait three years to comply with the Swedish law.

In their first year of marriage, they have a daughter Anna. Their son Johann is born in the second year. Later they also have twins, but the boy dies and only the girl Marta survives. Bad weather leads to poor crops and Karl becomes unable to pay his debts. The entire spring is cold while it snows in May. He becomes even more despondent when he learns that his wife expects another child. As the first member of his family who is able to read, he acquires an Almanac in 1848 from which he learns star constellations.

Part 1: Chapter 1, King In His Stone Kingdom Analysis

Nilsa family lived in Smaland in the South of Sweden for generations. Their origins occur before the discovery of America. They keep the same land without significant changes. Their presence there is evident through records in form of births, marriages, and deaths. These records mark their existence. When they migrate, these records end. Their lives are erased from the history of this nation. This is the end of their lives in the Old World.



Nils Jakob's life has been intertwined with the earth that determined his survival. His work on the field fills his entire life. Old traditions shape his life and provide meaning until they become not enough. Their homestead that is one sixteenth of the original size cannot not be divided endlessly. Nils Jakob's children continue to perform the same work on the same land but Karl Oskar is different. He has a strong will and his own way of doing things. His initiative is not appreciated by his father who reprimands him. Karl's behavior threatens his believes.

His father works as a timber man, cabinetmaker, carpenter, and even a smith to make a living for his family. His wife also works hard all her life that causes at some stage a miscarriage. Karl develops his own way of seeing things watching his parents struggle for survival. While his father endures his fate, Karl believes that it is up to him how to live life. According to him, things can be changed. He questions old ways even though older people rely on them by proving that individuals can shape and change things.

For Kristina, she made a swing that ended with her broken knee. She thinks it was her destiny, because it allowed her to meet her husband and change her life. It reassures her about the power of God. Their growing family with poor crops force Karl to provide a new means of survival for his family.



Chapter 2, The Farmhand Who Drowned In The Mill Bbrook

Chapter 2, The Farmhand Who Drowned In The Mill Bbrook Summary

In Chapter 2, Karl's brother Robert has his first experiences in employment working at first as a herd boy and then as a farmhand in Nybacken. His sister works as a maid. His knowledge is based on two books he receives. They are the History of Nature at school and a Bible from his parents. He is then sent to work for Aron in Nybacken. Robert resents working for other people so much that he considers killing himself on the way. At the stream, where he stops, he loses his shoe. He decides to simulate his suicide by throwing out his jacket into the stream. He then joins Jonas Petter of Hasteback on his ride to the mill, where they find other farmers. They eat, drink, and share stories such as told by Jonas Petter about Axelina who seduces her master and becomes the richest woman in the area. Even though the farmer gives all to their son, she inherits the lot when her son dies. Another story refers to Fredrik of Kvarntorpet who becomes famous for evading justice when squandering all the money from the farmers who want to send him to America. He initially trades his master's oxen for money that he keeps to himself. The farmers decide to send him to America and fund his trip but he spends it on drinking and debauchery in Gothenburg. He disappears as soon as his master reports him to the police.

Robert is left alone in the mill and wonders about the records in the church book about him if he were to disappear. He thinks that the words written about those who do not exist must also indicate that they are free. It would happen to him if he traveled to America. Drunk, he falls asleep. When other farmers arrive they fail to recognize him, announcing that his clothes were found and he is considered dead. Robert decides to travel to Karlshamn. On the way, he is caught by his master, Aron of Nybacken, who punishes him by hitting him in the ear and takes him back to the farm.

Chapter 2, The Farmhand Who Drowned In The Mill Bbrook Analysis

Robert has the propensity to run away from his home since he is a child. He ventures on his own spending much time in woods. He dislikes restrictions imposed on him by his situation. For him freedom is most important to be able to explore the world. His parents disregard his interests wanting him to be responsible to be able to continue what they have been doing. This imposition discourages Robert from farming. He is unable to adjust to the life his family leads, especially knowing that the world outside of Sweden offers better opportunities.



Robert knows that he would have to work as a farmhand for quite some time. This prospect is for him so dreadful that would rather kill himself. It is similar to be sentenced to death in the same way that his cat awaited its death tied in the sack that has been placed in the river. The memory of this incident haunts him for quite some time in every daunting situation. This experience instills a fear of the inevitability. The future awaiting for him drives him to despair. For Robert, lack of freedom is death. If he cannot be dead at least he could be dead in the minds of others. In this way he would be able to get away. His records in the church book would also change. With no records and no information about him, he attains freedom.

His master Aron finds him and brings him back to the farm. He is subjected to his moods, punishment at will, and barely enough food to survive. If injured, he has no prospects to get justice.



Chapter 3, What The Bedbugs In The Stable Room Must Listen To

Chapter 3, What The Bedbugs In The Stable Room Must Listen To Summary

Chapter 3 shows Robert's life in Nybacken. Robert learns all about the farm and his work that involves attending and feeding horses from four o'clock in the morning till evening giving hand to everyone, including Arvid's wife, mother, and other maids. He shares his room infested with bedbugs with Arvid. Arvid is an older farmhand and is Aron's bigger hand. He is also more experienced as he has served on other farms as well. After realizing what his work entails, Robert decides to escape. His additional punishment for being late involves no free days without being able to visit his family. Arvid accused of impregnating a heifer is called a Bull. Such rumor spread by the old mistress makes everybody avoiding him. Robert is his only companion, and they both want to leave the farm.

As Arvid cannot read, Robert reads him his book the History of Nature. It provides them with hope. Through this book like through a window, they can see beyond their poverty that surrounds them. Arvid becomes so despondent about his situation on the farm that he decides to kill the old mistress. Robert only just manages to stop him. For Robert, travel to America is the answer, but Arvid is unable to raise enough money for transportation. He is determined to change his situation, thinking he may be able to walk to America. Their existence on the farm is determined by their seven masters. The first is Aron their boss, and the last is King Oskar from whom the rest of authority spreads. For Robert, the only way to his freedom is abandoning the Old World that provides neither hope nor solution to his predicaments.

Chapter 3, What The Bedbugs In The Stable Room Must Listen To Analysis

Robert's life in Nybacken is grim. There is no hope for him to attain the life he would like to live. He watches Arvid's suffering caused a malicious rumor of making pregnant the heifer. Lack of knowledge and ignorance among farmers leads to condemnation and Arvid becomes the victim. Both Robert and Arvid are equally eager to leave this place. Robert depends on his work for money, as he can only get his inheritance if his brother repays him his share. His engagement on the farm becomes oppressive as he is not even permitted to visit his family. He can be punished at will that results in an injury to his ear. Their lives are so controlled that their existence becomes unbearable. Their seven masters mean that freedom is unlikely while their duties are accountable to all of them. Their only escape for now provides reading Robert's book.



Chapter 4, Karl Oskar And Kristina

Chapter 4, Karl Oskar And Kristina Summary

In Chapter 4, Karl Oskar experiences more adversity when droughts destroy crops. He becomes desperate and talks only about work. His worries about debts makes Kristina anxious while wondering about his feelings about her. When their neighbors' barn burns down she thinks it's a punishment from God, and urges Karl to go to confession. Drought continues arising fear in people about the end of the world.

Kristina knows that Karl Oskar is stubborn but does not drink in excess and is not tempted by the popular in the village Ulrika of Vastergohl. She becomes reassured when he explains that his bad mood has nothing to do with his feelings for her that remained the same. His debts force him to borrow money from Kristina's uncle, Danjel Andreasson, who starts practicing the banned faith of Åke Svensson, now dead, but earlier admitted to the lunatic asylum. Danjel believes that only being reborn in Christ leads to the life without sin that yields the protection from God. He offers other people his house, food, and refuses to charge interest on the money he lends.

Chapter 4, Karl Oskar And Kristina Analysis

Karl Oskar's future seems to be determined by weather. Droughts and wet months endanger crops. Kristina is getting pregnant almost year after year, and Karl Oskar's debts grow bigger. These problems lead to resentments and fights between them. Kristina fears that Karl offended God. Drought eventually results in the fire destroying the neighboring barn. Although Kristina attributes at first all events to God's making, she eventually criticizes Karl for contributing to their problems by making her pregnant. She views this is clearly his responsibility. Karl does not seek absolution for his sins. It seems the earth is cursed even now, as it is stated in the Bible, and even his hard work is not sufficient to provide for them. On one hand he refuses to submit to religious views, but on the other he finds that his misfortune is attributable to what the Bible is saying. This conflict makes it more difficult to resolve his problems. They both seek desperately any means to avoid starvation, but they see that it has to be up to them to find solution. Karl decides to borrow money from Kristina's uncle, Danjel.

They are both preoccupied with worries about their future. Their faith provides them with little consolation. It helps them little in finding means to escape their poverty. Kristina is torn between her religion and practical solutions that seem to be against what the Bible preaches. She knows that if they abstained from sex, they would have less children, making it easier to cope with finances. It would be against the Bible though to be disobedient to her husband.



Chapter 5, Åke Returns From The Insane Asylum

Chapter 5, Åke Returns From The Insane Asylum Summary

In Chapter 5, Danjel Andreasson starts practicing Åke Svenson's faith when Jesus Christ and Åke appears in front of him, who tells Danjel to continue his previous mission. Danjel experiences his rebirth in Christ. He stops manufacturing the alcoholic drink brännvin and swearing and shares his possessions with the poor, including notorious drunkards.

His wife worries that he is going to end up in a lunatic asylum, just like Åke Svenson, especially tha Danjel stops locking his house and abstains from marital sex. She knows that she has to obey her husband as the Bible says. When she also experiences rebirth, she agrees with Danjel's teachings.

The local pastor, Dean Brusander, condemns Danjel's practices claiming that they can only be conducted in church. If branvin and other alcoholic beverages are no longer produced, the price of rye may drop. People would not want to work for lower wages and become insolent. Brusander interviews Danjel, recording his refusal to abandon his beliefs, banishing Danjel and his followers from church.

Chapter 5, Åke Returns From The Insane Asylum Analysis

Danjel Andreasson has a vision he has to follow. He believes he is reborn and now begins to live in the spirit as opposed to the flesh as before. His all possessions become gifts, he organizes gatherings and administers communion. His wife is concerned about their safety and all the more about his safety as he may also end up like Åke in a lunatic asylum. When Danjel stops sleeping with her, she feels abandoned but this feeling turns into guilt. She obeys her husband finally, thereby also experiencing her rebirth.

His teachings are contrary to the local evangelical and Lutheran religion. The local dean believes that religion has to be preserved in the same form. Previous kings punished any deviations from faith with death. Even though the country is more tolerant now the dean cannot allow for the purity of religion to be tarnished. His other concerns about the effects of Åke's faith involve lower prices of rye that can result in farmers' bankruptcy. The dean has the authority and he intends to use it. He cannot allow such gatherings to continue. He questions Danjel and issues him with a warning not to undermine the local religion that threatens the unity of the community. There will be other consequences if he disobeys.



Chapter 6, Suitable Chastisement

Chapter 6, Suitable Chastisement Summary

In Chapter 6 Robert decides to leave his work after he is flogged by his employer for accidentally breaking the wagon shaft. The shaft broke when he was passing through the gate on the wagon hitting the gate. Some time earlier he was hit in the ear, losing some hearing. Upon his return home, he complains about the mistreatment and his brother Karl decides to defend him. He goes to see Aron finding him pulling the bucket out of the cattle well. Karl grabs Aron by the throat warning to leave his family in peace.

Soon after Sheriff Lönnegren appears at Karl's house searching for Robert who has been reported by Aron. Robert manages to escape just in time. Sheriff demands that Karl tells him where Robert is but he refuses. He would find Robert if he remains in the district. Robert becomes a fugitive. Both brothers communicate to each other that they have been both thinking about migrating.

Chapter 6, Suitable Chastisement Analysis

Despite Robert's efforts to work hard, he has an accident when he is unable to properly hold the horse while passing the gate. It results in breaking the wagon shaft. Aron again punishes Robert by hitting him with a wooden pole containing nails. This incident is too much for Robert to bear and he leaves. His employment turns into maltreatment as his boss treats him as he pleases. He is allowed to do this in accordance with the servant law. Such law provides for suitable punishment if the servant is lazy. It protects the interests of the farmers that is also endorsed by the church.

Karl is the only person in the family capable of standing up to Aron. He feels responsible for Robert. It is his duty to ensure that Aron never endangers his family again. His intervention results in frightening Aron who nevertheless reports to the Sheriff that Robert is missing. The Sheriff has an obligation to act in accordance with the law even though Aron's punishment may have been excessive. He holds Karl accountable should he hide his brother. Karl finds himself in a difficult situation through seeking justice for his own brother. Robert becomes a fugitive. Only if he remains in another district will he have a chance to escape the Sheriff.



Chapter 7, About A Wheat Field And A Bowl of Barley Porridge

Chapter 7, About A Wheat Field And A Bowl of Barley Porridge Summary

In Chapter 7, we follow Karl's struggle with his poverty. He feels responsible for his family that is now facing hunger. Kristina fears the uncertainty of travel to an unknown land. Famine spreads among the farmers. Karl becomes even more convinced now that America would be their salvation from their current life that can only bring them suffering that ends with a room they obtain when they are old, just like their parents.

Kristina has a son, Anders Harald. While they attend christening, their daughter Anna eats too much porridge prepared for the guests, and dies from stomach swell following her starvation. While Karl makes a coffin for Anna, Kristina makes up her mind that she too wants to go to America.

Chapter 7, About A Wheat Field And A Bowl of Barley Porridge Analysis

Karl Oskar questions the suffering of all people regardless whether they sin or not. Famine affects equally those who wrong and those who are innocent. His poverty is growing, giving neither him nor his children hope for a better life. Although Kristina thinks Karl always wants more, he thinks it is his responsibility to assure that his children have better prospects than just becoming farmhands. In his current situation his property can only be given to one child. The rest of their children would have to work for others. The order imposed by God classifies him at the bottom of the four class society. In America there are no classes, and there is fertile soil devoid of rocks. His suffering increases with the death of his own child.

Kristina views their trip as dangerous due to the uncertainty of their safety during such a trip to an unknown land and she is reluctant to expose their children to all these dangers. She realizes that such journey would change her entire life. She may lose touch with her family and have irreversible consequences for the future of her family. She thinks it is safer to remain at home. It is better to tackle their difficulties than face new and unknown. They are still able to dress and have some food. Only when her daughter Anna dies, she realizes that death can occur anywhere. Their safety is not guaranteed where they are.



Chapter 8, With God's Help And With The Assistance Of The Authorities

Chapter 8, With God's Help And With The Assistance Of The Authorities Summary

In Chapter 8, Dean Brusander undertakes to stop Danjel from practicing the Åkian faith. He idealizes the unity through religion. The established order must be preserved. It is also his duty to prevent further dissents that begin to spread among the community. He will do that with the help of Sheriff and churchwarden.

As Danjel is preparing to administer communion at his house, there is a knock on the door. Inside is the former soldier Severius Pihl, maid Sissa Svensdotter, Ulrika of Vastergöhl, her daughter Elin, and two other men and women. Danjel opens the door hearing Sheriff Lönnegren shouting that he will break inside. Outside is Lönnegren, Dean Brusander, the churchwarden Per Persson of Akerby, the village bailiff, and the assistant pastor Krusell. Sheriff declares that the meeting is unlawful while the Dean insists that communion can only be administered by those who are ordained. Danjel refuses to obey such law. When the Dean reprimands the guests, Ulrika reveals that the churchwarden offered her money for sex. Sheriff also intended to have sex with Ulrika once, ordering everyone to disperse. A row erupts and Danjel starts singing. Communication with the guests become impossible forcing the Sheriff with his friends to leave. The guests follow. Danjel is later called for questioning by the Sheriff who forwards his case to the civil law court.

Chapter 8, With God's Help And With The Assistance Of The Authorities Analysis

Brusander is mindful of what is happening around the world. Disobedience in the parish has been greater than ever, and there has been many escaped servants. He fears that unrest among nations has its source in disobedience of authorities. It happens because the old ways are disapproved and rejected, so chaos and evil reigns. Only holy bonds can keep society together. According to him, any signs of disobedience need to be dealt with immediately. The Åkian faith threatens unity among the community. He observes that along with the spread of knowledge, heresy also spreads. He feels responsible not only for the community, but for wider implications that pertain to the entire nation.

For Danjel and his guests, their faith is enacted through a deeper experience of Christ. They become reborn when Christ resides in them. Danjel explains to them that once Christ resides in them they reside in Christ. These teachings are at odds with Dean Brusander, who cannot accept any deviation from the way religion is practiced. He claims that Danjel's meetings are illegal. Danjel thinks he is following what Christ

himself related through his relative to do. He does not understand the imposition of fines that later change into sentences. Some followers are discouraged but Ulrika keeps practicing. In this way Dean Brusander strives to prevent the threat of the new religion. For Danjel his faith is constructive while Brusander perceives it as destruction. Mostly it undermines his authority.



Chapter 9, America Chest

Chapter 9, America Chest Summary

In Chapter 9, Karl Oskar prepares for his journey to America. The news about his trip spreads in the village. Other villagers warn him of potential losses and less likely gains in such an undertaking. Karl responds that there is little to gain by remaining here, as even they themselves haven't changed. Karl's family learns about American nature and culture. They pull out their old big chest in preparation for the trip.

Their uncle Danjel faces court and fines due to his preachings. Learning that Karl wants to travel to America, he decides to join him to escape courts. Karl agrees to arrange for additional tickets for Danjel, his family, and Arvid, who is now Danjel's farmhand. Arvid had to leave Nybacken, as Aron no longer wanted to employ a farmhand called bull. Only Danjel, shunned by others, could employ him.

Robert hides at Jonas-Petter's house from Aron who is still searching for him. Jonas-Petter endures an unhappy marriage with his wife Britta. He finds their arguments and her criticism so irritating that he threatens to kill himself rather than bear it. He shares with Robert a story about a woman, who cut her husband's penis for being unfaithful to her. Jonas-Petter also wants to go with Robert to America. The only way Jonas-Petter can find peace to prepare for the trip is when he frightens his wife by sharpening his knife.

Chapter 9, America Chest Analysis

People in the village become aware of Karl's intention to migrate. They consider it too dangerous and unnecessary, but Karl has already made up his mind. He has always been doing things his own way. The more he learns about America the more he is convinced that this is the right thing to do. He can see photographs in newspapers that prove that the lands there are better for farming. The big old chest they pull out in preparation for their trip symbolizes old ways. The chest has been in their family for generations. After all not all that old is bad, as the chest withstood the test of time. They seem to be forever torn between the old and the new.

Uncle Danjel's life becomes unbearable due to his persistence in his faith. He is convinced that Christ lives in him. Not being responsible for his actions he has to continue preaching despite all odds. The pastor is equally adamant to stop Danjel from doing it. Despite fines and courts Danjel persists in what he believes is right. He realizes that if he continues to live in Sweden he will live the life of persecution. He is also convinced that Christ sent him a message to join Karl in his journey to America. It is also the only way he can retain his faith. He has no choice but to follow his relatives.

Another volunteer for the trip is Jonas-Petter who resents his wife and resents living with her. He thinks she married him because of the farm. He has to scare his wife in

order for her to leave him alone. He does that through sharpening the knife that suggests he may want to kill himself. Jonas-Petter doesn't see any future with her, nor in this country if he had to divorce her. His only solution is to travel with Robert and Karl to America.



Chapter 10, A Peasant Bows For The Last Time

Chapter 10, A Peasant Bows For The Last Time Summary

In Chapter 10, we see Karl Oskar preparing for his journey to America. He takes with him as much as he can, including knives, rules, chisels, gun, and even gun powder. Kristina, packs woolen garments that are to be few in America, needles, threads, sheets, mattresses, and plenty of food. Warned by Berta of Idemo, she takes camphor against sea sickness that apparently troubles married women more. Snakes and insects that pervade the land make her again uneasy about the journey.

Karl Oscar sells his farm at a lower price than its value. Their journey costs half of the proceeds. The remaining five hundred Swedish daler will need to be sufficient to pay further transport on their arrival in America.

He needs to obtain his birth certificates from Dean Brusander, who one last time tries to persuade him to give up his plans. Brusander warns him against endangering his family in a country full of troublemakers, suited only for those who are lazy, but want gain and vain enjoyment. This country is to be chaotic, full of wild Indians, and spiritual emptiness. People benefit in Sweden from their obedience to God and authority. Most of all the US would certainly fall apart in as little as 50 years. Karl Oscar remains adamant and Brusander issues him certificates, giving him his blessing, and wishes that he does not regret his decision. From then on, the parish register contains only information about Karl's migration and unknown whereabouts.

Chapter 10, A Peasant Bows For The Last Time Analysis

Kristina questions their trip to America when she learns about everything they may have to endure. This information is based on rumors relayed by Berta of Idemo. These rumors become so overwhelming for Kristina that she has second thoughts about their undertaking.

Karl Oskar faces Dean Brusander for one last time. Brusander tries to persuade him not to travel by imposing on him his distorted view of America. Karl is aware that he has no ability to argue with him, so he listens to what he says. He is angry that he does not know how to deal with Brusander. Dean claims that America is dangerous and full of rebels. Even God is against America that is going to have an impact in a short period of time. Karl finds again that his masters try to tell him what to do. He feels like during one of the classes. There is nothing he could say to defend himself as all his words would



be twisted by the Dean. Unable to argue, Karl persists in what he wants to do. Finally Dean uses one last argument about Karl's family that will need to be looked that may stop Karl from traveling. This is also futile because Karl has already arranged care for his parents through the reserved rights. He has no obligations. He has to endure Brusander's criticism one last time.



Chapter 11, One Emigrant Pays No Fare

Chapter 11, One Emigrant Pays No Fare Summary

In Chapter 11, Kristina learns that 70 migrants drowned on board Betty Catharina and hesitates about their trip. She fears that she exposes their children to dangers they are unable to face. Karl reassures her that people also die on land. She finally decides to rely on his judgment. There is little she can do to dissuade him from the trip now.

The chest is ready for the voyage and signed with Karl Oskar's name when Kristina realizes she is pregnant again. When preparing for the trip she finds Anna's shoes that bring back the memories of her. The news about Kristina's pregnancy is unexpected for Karl who expresses his discontent. Kristina reminds him that he is more responsible for this. Karl concludes that their unborn baby would get a free ride to America, saving them money.

All migrants have different reasons for their migration. Karl Oskar travels in search of a land to prosper. Kristina follows her husband. Robert Nilson despises his masters. Danjel Andreasson wants to practice God in his own way. Inga-Lena wants to be with her husband. Arvid wishes not to be called a bull. Ulrika regards Sweden as a hellhole while her daughter Elin listens to her mother. For Jonas Petter, it is an opportunity to get away from his wife whom he despises.

Chapter 11, One Emigrant Pays No Fare Analysis

Just as everything is ready for the trip further news about drowning of emigrants on ship make Kristina worried. She apprehends how dangerous this trip can be. She fears that she endangers her children. Her pregnancy makes her reluctant to leave her home.

When she finds one of Anna's shoes she realizes she has memories attached to this house. Despite their troubles they are connected to their place through their past experiences. She also knows how headstrong and stubborn her husband can be, and there is nothing she could do to stop him from the trip that is decided now. Her second thoughts about the trip turn into hesitation. Karl tries to make the best of the news of her pregnancy. He is angry at first, but then he finds that their unborn baby saves them money during their trip. There is a good side to their unfortunate circumstances and he knows how to take advantage of it. He manages to cheer up Kristina who has no choice but rely on her husband's wisdom to get them through difficulties.

The next day they are to travel with other migrants. Each of them is different and has different reasons for migrating. They share one common goal, united through their troublesome past with the same hope for the future. While some are confident about their decision, others follow their loved ones. Karl wants to find a land that he can work on and prosper. Robert is unable to get on with masters. Arvid is keen to run away from a place where he is called bull. Ulrika thinks that Sweden is an evil place, while Jonas

Petter is driven out of the country because of his unhappy marriage. For Danjel, migrating is the only way he can practice his faith in his own way. Kristina is half regretful of this decision, but she goes where her husband goes. Inga Lena, like Kristina, follows her husband to any end it would bring her. Elin is mindful what her mother tells her and follows her.



Chapter 12, All Gates Open To America

Chapter 12, All Gates Open To America Summary

In Chapter 12, Kristina and Karl embark on their journey on Thursday April morning that is to be a lucky day, named after their trusted God Thor. Their parents and sister bid them farewell. Karl's father expresses his discontent describing their departure as a funeral procession. Only Kristina can hear it. They may not see each other again although Karl promises to buy back their homestead Korpamoen.

They travel in their wagon to Akerby Junction where they meet Danjel with his wife, Ulrika with her daughter, and Jonas Petter. Nineteen migrants pass farms they have never seen before on their way to Karlshamn. Robert tries to get to know Elin, while Jonas Petter tells stories about women who wronged their husbands, including a story of Lotta Andersdotter, who killed all her husbands. Her crimes are discovered and she hangs herself.

While Robert learns English, Elin thinks that in accordance with what Danjel says, she will know the language as the Holy Ghost will fill them with this knowledge upon their landing.

They stop at the inn. Kristina is suspicious of Ulrika's past fearing she may still be interested in men. She does not talk to Ulrika only follows her when she looks at her husband. Inga Lena fears seasickness, but her husband assures her that if she has faith in Christ, she would not suffer from any illness. Robert is not given any opportunity to say what he knows about the illness.

Elin is afraid of America, a country she she knows nothing about, but Robert reassures her that women and servants are well treated there while unfaithful husbands are hanged. In this way, there are no deceitful people left. They arrive in the harbor asleep. Their ship Charlotta turns out to be so small that none of them can hide their disappointment.

Chapter 12, All Gates Open To America Analysis

For Kristina and Karl, this is the first major trip in their lives. Such trips, however, existed in the past since ancient times. Previous departures were made by the Vikings to conquer new lands. Their trips were different but the tradition of migration existed for a long time. When they depart they rely on their God Thor to assure that their trip is going to be lucky, and start their journey on Thursday. There are other good signs, such as new moon as well as signs that can be interpreted as bad omen, such as being stopped by the narrow gate outside their house. Karl tries to look forward. He believes that his life can be improved. He is headstrong in his decisions, thinking that he can influence what happens to him.



The departing family is viewed by Marta and Nils as if they are seeing them for the last time. Nils thinks of this as a funeral procession. For him, his son will die unless he is going to hear from him again. The dangers of such trip may also cause death. Kristina's parents think as well they will see Kristina next time in heaven.

While Elin relies on uncle Danjel and their faith with providing them with everything, Robert tries to help her learn English. They begin their adventure together in different spirits but united through their goal.



Part 2: Peasants At Sea, Chapter 13, The Charlotta Karlshamn

Part 2: Peasants At Sea, Chapter 13, The Charlotta Karlshamn Summary

In Chapter 13, we follow Captain Lorentz sailing on Charlotta to New York on 14 April 1850 from Karlshamn. Charlotta's length is 124 feet and its width is 20 feet. Its passengers are mostly peasants who have never experienced sea before. Their shoes and clothing are not suited to the life on boat. They are happy to leave poverty behind although regret abandoning their parents. For Captain Lorentz, the sea is his career and life, where spends his entire time. He does not like human cargo on board and does not understand peasant migrants.

As they begin their journey, trouble on board ensues. His second mate, a Finn who is responsible for the passengers reports that a man with a big nose makes a trouble insisting on sleeping with his family rather than among other unmarried men. Captain Lorentz finds Danjel kneeling, and praying on board. He is concerned about his safety. Lorentz prefers that Danjel thanks God after they safely finish their journey. He doesn't like religious people, who once boarded the ship with bleeding feet claiming that as God is in command they have to steer in a different direction. He had to threaten them with guns. In their case, he would have done Sweden a favor. If only the praying man practices his religious nonsense in this way, he will remain harmless. Lorentz is responsible for his passengers as he is for any cargo on his ship. He does not like 'human cargo' that is most unhealthy. Such passengers die during the trip, and he has to read funeral prayers. He has guides that he follows, including medical, to take care of diseases. He also has some Swedish soil that he puts in the mouths of the dead people, according to the custom among Swedish peasants who maintain it at sea.

Part 2: Peasants At Sea, Chapter 13, The Charlotta Karlshamn Analysis

Charlotta is not what everybody thought it would be. It is a cargo ship that also takes passengers on board. Its deck is the size of a big room carrying 94 passengers in total. Captain Lorentz who is in command is unhappy about peasant passengers. He thinks peasant migration is pointless, as it is pointless to change one lot of land for another. He likes the sea, lives on sea, and harbors makes him humiliated. The only occupation he thinks a man should hold is to sail a ship. If he could avoid harbors altogether he would, but from time to time he has to spend some time in ports. Such times are degrading and humiliating.



He is even more critical of the peasants on ship. The only sane place to be is the ocean. If he ventures to a land, he only visits ports and New York has not been his favorite port until it recently changed. He fears mostly religious passengers who may interfere with his sailing. Such passengers are hard to manage and his responsibility is to safely reach the shore. One responsibility he does not like is burying passengers on board.



Chapter 14, Forty Paces Long And Eight Paces Wide

Chapter 14, Forty Paces Long And Eight Paces Wide Summary

In Chapter 14, the passengers experience their first hardships on the ship. They are separated into sections for married and unmarried couples. Karl, Robert, Jonas-Petter, and Arvid sleep in the bunks, some of which they share. They have little space under the deck where the air is damp and full of urine and vomit. Robert and other boys examine the ship the size of some households, being forty paces long and eight paces wide. He learns that because it has a gaff sail it is called a brig. Robert meets a man who has been to America, where he worked for a Mormon priest until the priest was hanged in one of the towns.

The second mate distributes water and food, explaining the rules on ship such as not throwing out anything against the wind. Peasants wonder what sort of law applies on sea if they disobey.

Kristina sleeps on the floor in the bunk that is too small for her and the children that keep her awake. There are 30 people in her family compartment room that is the size of her house room. She feels embarrassed to change clothes or feed Harald from her breast in front of others. The children are restless and want to get out. She feels nausea and misses potatoes. Unhappy about overcrowding, Karl is told that there will be more space later when people die. One girl on board is already sick from throat abscess that is treated with little success with boiled porridge placed around her neck. Next to Kristina is a couple from Oland, who carries a grindstone with them for their son. She is also close to Ulrika who exposes herself even to Karl. This place reminds her of a grave. She fears that she is not going to get out of here alive.

Chapter 14, Forty Paces Long And Eight Paces Wide Analysis

Conditions on Charlotta are dire. The ship itself is so small that it seems easy to drown. There isn't enough space in the bunks under the deck. The ship is unsuited for the peasant way of life. Sailing is new to all of them. Karl's new shoes are excessively big for walking on the deck.

The passengers question different rules on the ship. The law used on land could not be applied here in the absence of sheriffs and courts.

In a room the size of Kristina's room in Korpamoen she has to sleep with 30 other people. Unhealthy conditions and noises keep her awake. Foremost, all this reminds

her of grave. As the trip progresses she thinks she is not going to survive this trip. There is no way for the fresh air to get through under the deck.



Chapter 15, Cargo of Dreams

Chapter 15, Cargo of Dreams Summary

Chapter 15 features different outlooks of family members on their voyage. Karl Oscar is afraid that his journey is not turning out the way he wants. His only possessions are on his chest, where he keeps the money he received from the sale of his household. He needs to keep going no matter what, as he is not going to give satisfaction to the people from his village to sneer at him. He will work as hard as he can, for he cannot go back with nothing. He dislikes not being able to sleep with Kristina, fearing she may want to go back while he may be tempted by other women. He does not believe in faith and destiny and must cheer up his wife.

Kristina regrets that she agreed on this trip, wishing she could go back. She also regrets she cannot sleep with her husband. She is unable to resist Karl, making it difficult to avoid pregnancy. Deep down she wants what he wants as well.

Robert has earache and hearing problems in his left ear. He hopes he can improve in America. He fears that if the ship breaks they won't get help in the open sea. He is attracted to Elin, but is shy to touch her. If only the ship could speed up so that he could cure his earache.

Arvid feels lucky to be here because his life is easier. He does not have to work and yet gets food. He admires Robert and his knowledge of English and America. He doesn't have to feed horses in the middle of the night while no one complains about him. He fears the ship is too small and may drown, hoping that the ship will be protected by God. He is aware that the crew looks down on peasants.

Chapter 15, Cargo of Dreams Analysis

All migrants risk everything they have in their determination to escape poverty. Karl has his entire life's possessions with him, mindful of the responsibility he has and adversity he faces. Despite the disapproval he meets he has made up his mind. Regardless of what happens he needs to make sure that his family doesn't suffer because of him. He would not want to give any satisfaction to the people at home. He thinks he can change his destiny if he wants to.

Kristina bears the hardship of the trip with difficulty but she is used to submission. She does not like her weakness towards her husband knowing that it results in pregnancy. With more children it becomes more difficult to feed the family.

Robert does not like the sea and does not like this ship that seems too small for this trip. The memory of the cat he drowned comes back, especially in times like this. His persisting earache constantly reminds him about the treatment he received in Sweden.



Arvid seems the happiest about the migration. He finally exchanged his life as the Bull of Nybacken for the life on ship where he can be lazy. It is the first time in his life he doesn't have to earn his living, yet gets the food. He also does not suffer from seasickness.

Danjel is happy about the trip, but his followers begin to have doubts. He has to trust God that if he was to take them away from evil powers he will also deliver them safely to the new land.

Inga-Lena fears that Danjel may not be able to assure their survival. She tries to take care of him, but sometimes it is beyond her abilities. She fears that his gracious attitude towards others may leave them penniless.

Ulrika is glad to get away from her past that ruined her life. Away from Sweden, her daughter Elin may also be able to have a better future.

Jonas Petter's main intention to free himself from his wife has been accomplished. His life of a dog on the farm has finally ended. He can now find some peace.

Inga-Lena fears that Danjel may not be able to assure their survival. She tries to take care of him but this also seems difficult. She thinks they will have not enough money to build a house.



Chapter 16, Happenings On Board The Ship

Chapter 16, Happenings On Board The Ship Summary

In Chapter 16, the peasants try to get used to their life on the ship. They are used to plenty of water from wells thinking that water here is insufficient. When they want to complain they are always told that the captain is asleep. Karl Oscar learns from Mans Jakob from Oland that the most fertile land is in Minnesota. They can't find it in Robert's book, but Karl tries to remember it, especially that Minne in Swedish is memory.

Kristina finds it difficult to cook on a moving ship. She is devastated when discovering body lice in her clothes. She accuses Ulrika, who sleeps near her of infesting her with lice. Ulrika denies it calling Danjel for help. He assures them that Ulrika cannot have lice as only those with evil spirits have them. These insects are also godly creatures sent to remind people that they need to keep clean. It turns out that everybody on ship is infested with lice except for Ulrika. They all start cleaning.

Robert learns that the ship has cargo on the bottom to keep it deep in the sea. He is interested to hear about the United States from a man, who claims to have traveled there but has to keep secrecy to the US president, who is his friend. Robert becomes suspicious if this man is not an escaped farmhand, Frederik Thron, who is known to be a liar.

Robert ponders over the fate of pine trees used in masts that travel as opposed to pine trees that remain in one place, comparing it to the fate of farmhands who stay at home and those who travel.

Chapter 16, Happenings On Board The Ship Analysis

The migrants find it hard to get used their different lives on the sea. They deal with new challenges such as lice. They feel frustrated about the insufficient water and other inconveniences they have to suffer yet are unable to change. They attend to washing and cleaning.

Karl meets a man from Oland who carries a grindstone for his son in America, concerned whether he can deliver it safely. Karl finds out from him that the best soil can be found in Minnesota or Mississippi river.

For Robert it becomes obvious that his place is not on ship but on land. He is wary of his decision to migrate, and ponders whether it was the right decision. When observing the wooden masts, he thinks that human fate is similar to the fate of these pines as some pines remain on land while other travel. In the same way some farm hands travel while other remain where they have been born.



Chapter 17, The Ship Was Covered With Waves

Chapter 17, The Ship Was Covered With Waves Summary

In Chapter 17, Charlotta experiences the first storm on the North Sea. In the middle of the storm Robert wakes up when his brother's body rolls onto him, immediately remembering the word 'dead sea' he is learning. He gets up but he is unable to maintain balance. Feeling dizzy he goes back to bed, where he can't breath or sleep as Karl Oscar's body rolls over his. Jonas Petter above him vomits. Robert remembers again how he drowned the cat, thinking that this is his punishment, and confessing to Karl about it. He tries to go out, but the sack is sewn. Karl Oscar drags him back inside.

Kristina thinks she is swinging but cannot jump off. She fears they are sinking, vomits, but is too weak to reach for the water. Other children wake her up.

Inga-Lena suffers from sea sickness, but is afraid to admit it to Danjel. She prays for her strength. Her husband prays for her faith. The only person that doesn't seem to be afflicted with anything is Ulrika, fearing that there may be some old body left in her that is sinful.

Danjel Andreasson observes suffering on ship, while angels cease to appear. He reads the Bible to overcome his doubts. Danjel can finally spread the word of God among the passengers. Those who believe have no reason to fear the waves. As he himself becomes seasick at times, he prays to God for forgiveness.

Chapter 17, The Ship Was Covered With Waves Analysis

The first storm afflicts all passengers in the same way regardless their age, health or differences. They all experience seasickness although in different way. Robert finds himself again ridden with angst about memories of drowning his cat. Kristina and the couple next to her are coping badly with the trip, with Mans Jakob becoming delirious.

All suffer, including Inga-Lena, who is reprimanded by Danjel that she may have not enough faith. If her faith is stronger, she would not be sick. She only wishes this to be the truth. She is forced to pray as the only resort to cope with her affliction. Those who have Christ in them should not be sick after all. She suffers in silence and submission. She is afraid that Danjel has many other worries. Danjel himself has to overcome his own doubts and resorts to the Bible. His other task is to reassure other passengers as well. He also becomes sea sick and more doubts trouble him. He has to pray more.

Even this incident has not broken his faith. He firmly believes that God would deliver them safely although the winds are westerly, contrary to what he expected.



Chapter 18, A Bushel Of Earth From Sweden

Chapter 18, A Bushel Of Earth From Sweden Summary

In Chapter 18, the first casualties of the trip occur. The girl with an abscess not treated in accordance with Captain's instructions dies. Her abscess breaks because the peasants don't have enough courage to cut it. Also Mans Jakob who is too old to endure such trip dies. His wife moves in with other unmarried women, allowing Karl Oscar to sleep with Kristina.

Only Karl Oscar and Ulrika of Vastergohl avoid sea sickness. Kristina is confined to her bed. She does not eat and vomits even water she gets from Karl. He tries to give her some medicine when a second mate enters their room concerned about the burial of the girl who has just died. During the girl's funeral, Kristina admits that she does not believe she would be able to reach the shore alive.

Chapter 18, A Bushel Of Earth From Sweden Analysis

As passengers continue to struggle with seasickness, there are first casualties of the trip. The girl who suffered from abscess has been treated, but not in the way Captain Lorentz advised. Compresses from porridge haven't helped, and no one has courage to intervene. Peasants neglect to apply his advice hoping somehow that her disease would go away.

Another person who is found dead is Mans Jakob, who turns out to be too old to undertake such trip. He is unable to cope with difficulties of this travel and is not going to deliver the grindstone to his son. His wife regrets that she has not persuaded him to stay at home.



Chapter 19, At Home And Away

Chapter 19, At Home And Away Summary

In Chapter 19, the migrants pass the last stretch of land as they pass the English Channel before they reach their destination. They overcome their seasickness and are now accustomed to the life on ship.

After they tell each other about the wretched existence in their homeland, they speak with less anger of their homeland. They still have relatives in Sweden which remains close to them. The more displaced they feel the more they feel that Sweden is their home, which they understand to be a cottage with steady walls on a steady ground. They encounter a Swedish ship on the way back to Sweden that reminds them of what they have left behind. It makes them realize that they are irreversibly moving away.

Chapter 19, At Home And Away Analysis

Following the storm, the ship reaches the English coast. They admire and ponder over the coast they are passing. They can only imagine what this foreign land is like based on what they see. This is the first foreign country they see and this is also the last stretch of the Old World. This is a place of crossroads of many ships and the point of realization for the passengers that they are going away. It is also the point of no return. The only way is forward towards their destination.

Even though they spent many difficult years in Sweden, it remains their home despite the fact that they in reality are homeless. Now they are lost amidst the ocean.



Chapter 20, Stories On The Afterdeck

Chapter 20, Stories On The Afterdeck Summary

In Chapter 20, we find Robert teaching Elin English, its pronunciation, and spelling, wondering why Americans could not agree on the same pronunciation of their language. He teaches Elin the position of the tongue while pronouncing English words. Their lesson is interrupted by Ulrika, who watches over her daughter when he speaks with her.

When she leaves, Frederik Mattsson appears. Robert asks him to read in English, but he responds that he is tired of it. Frederik also refuses to talk about America because he promised his secrecy to the US president. He was to work in a brothel on a ship, on Mississippi river, shooting those who misbehaved, and as a male prostitute in a male whore house in Chicago.

Robert learns the truth about Frederik from another sail maker. Frederik was born in Sweden in the same parish as him called Asarum in Blekinge. Frederik has never been outside of his parish, running away from Sweden where he made three women pregnant. Everyone on ship calls him an American, because they knew he has never been there. Robert realizes that it is easy to tell lies and after all, if God created it, he must have known that people cannot survive without it.

Chapter 20, Stories On The Afterdeck Analysis

Robert finds out that all is not what it seems after he discovers the true identity of his friend, Frederik. His analysis of English language he is trying to learn with Elin are interrupted by her mother. Robert questions Frederik's strange behavior when asked about America. When he makes inquiries among the sailors, it turns out that Frederik is from Belinge in Sweden, and has never traveled beyond. Frederik invents stories in the same way he did when he was in Sweden from which he escaped. Robert ponders how easy it is to mix truth with lie. He is not upset about this experience, but tries to learn from it, drawing conclusions about the usefulness and harm of telling lies. He understands that for Frederik his lies are a means of escape. Robert himself realizes that he would not be able to survive only telling the truth.



Chapter 21, It Was Called Ship-Sickness

Chapter 21, It Was Called Ship-Sickness Summary

In Chapter 21, Kristina recovers from sea sickness but gets scurvy or shipsickness like everyone else on ship. They lack fresh food, milk, or bread, receiving only old salted food. Even water tastes stale now. She is concerned about her children that look pale and sick as well as about Inga-Lena, who is very ill but hides her sickness from her husband to spare him worries. He thinks the only person righteous on the ship is Ulrika, who avoided sickness. She must be the reason why the ship has not drowned. Kristina does not accept that. She wants to tell Danjel about Inga's sickness, but finds it hard to reprimand him.

Karl Oscar is afraid that he is going to be unfaithful to Kristina. He is not sleeping with her because she is sick and is tempted by Ulrika. He decides that they must separate from Ulrika once they land. He is never to repeat such journey, thinking that people are unsuited to the life on sea. Kristina fears she will never recover and die on the ship.

Chapter 21, It Was Called Ship-Sickness Analysis

Both Kristina and Inga Lena are sick. They both feel tired although they overcome their sea sickness. Kristina has scurvy, while Inga Lena is afraid to tell Danjel that she does not feel well and suffers in silence. She even asks others not say anything to him. Many other passengers have scurvy and Karl realizes that the ocean doesn't agree with him. For Kristina, life on board is similar to living in a grave and she becomes certain that she would not be able to survive this trip. Karl decides to stay on land for as long as he can.



Chapter 22, Story Told At The Main Hatch

Chapter 22, Story Told At The Main Hatch Summary

In Chapter 22, passengers occupy themselves with telling tales. For the first time in their lives they have spare time filling unsure what to do with it. At first they stare at the sea. Then they spend time with others, sharing food, brännvin, and tales. Jonas Petter recounts a story that happened a hundred years ago. A pastor in Ljuder, Dean Drysell, who used to have many affairs, including his maid, had a stroke and died. He couldn't be buried because of his erection that wouldn't go away. Pastors prayed in vain while his condition would persists until his maid Magda confesses that she may be the reason for this. She once prayed to God to punish the pastor for his many affairs and abandoning her. She suggests that she would pray again to undo it. The pastors agree and after Magda spends the whole night praying, Dean Drysell's erection disappears.

Chapter 22, Story Told At The Main Hatch Analysis

The peasants unused to inactivity are unable to cope with the huge amount of time they have. This inactivity in the end is filled with telling stories. As is the case with many of them they involve death, or have morbid features. One such story is the story of Dean Drysell, who dies and cannot be buried because of his erection. Only one person can help him, his maid with whom he used to have an affair. During these meetings a sense of home can be regained. Migrants share the story of an event that occurred a hundred years earlier. It reconnects them and they can gain a sense of unity among them.



Chapter 23, Peasants At Sea

Chapter 23, Peasants At Sea Summary

In Chapter 23, peasants use Almanac for the Year after the Saviour Christ's Birth the 1850th, where they read weather predictions, crossing the days that pass to assure that their lives have consistency and meaning. They don't know how to interpret the westerly wind that blows against their direction of travel. They miss various signs of seasons, weather patterns, but mostly they are uneasy about not knowing how far they traveled. The sea is the same for them. Their world consists of the ship deck. They quarrel now more as if all their friendly gestures have been used. Women fight in the kitchen with pots and pans, while the ship does not seem to move. They are only told that they are some halfway through their journey. Their captain tells them that he can only tell them when they will arrive in New York if they furnish him with information about the direction of the wind that is likely to blow in the days ahead.

It is the middle of May and the solitary presence on ship makes peasants feel as if they are the only people at sea. When a bird appears on the ship, all give way to supernatural stories. All want to feed the bird, wondering how it reached the ship so far away from the land. After some time the mystery bird disappears in the same unexplained way it appeared. Now everybody is convinced it is not a real bird. For peasants it was something to remind them of the earth. For the seamen the disappearance of the bird is a bad omen. The endless journey makes them understand that they would never again travel such distance again. It would have to be their last voyage.

Chapter 23, Peasants At Sea Analysis

Towards the middle of their journey, peasants become impatient with time. They manage to regain some consistency in their lives when starting to count days and weeks with the help of "Almanac" that even predicts weather. The wind blowing in the opposite direction to their travel confuses them. They are unsure if this is a sign that things are not as they wish, but it certainly delays them. This delay seems to indicate that time is not of the essence.

Every sign now becomes significant. When a bird appears on ship, it is welcomed on, but many wonder if it can be a real bird even though everybody feeds it. They are certain that the bird's presence is mysterious after it disappears again. For old seamen, it is a bad omen that is confirmed as there is another storm.

This trip is so harsh for that passengers know they can only do it once in their lifetime.



Chapter 24, A Long Night

Chapter 24, A Long Night Summary

In Chapter 24, Karl Oscar's son Johann wakes him up in the middle of the night because Kristina is bleeding heavily. He is helpless not knowing how to stop the bleeding. He decides to see Captain Lorentz, who also replaces a doctor. Although Kristina thinks that her destiny is to die, her attitude is contrary to Karl's, who thinks that things can be changed. He rushes to see the Captain, who is angry at first for waking him up, as he barely gets the chance to sleep. He is about to send Karl Oscar away, but changes his mind, and agrees to help him, especially hearing about his dying wife. The Captain asks about the symptoms of her illness and comes to the conclusion that her bleeding must be due to scurvy. He finds out from his manual "Medical Adviser for Seafarers" how to stop bleeding. The Captain feels sorry for Karl as he thinks he will lose his wife.

Lorentz places packs of sea water on her body in accordance with the manual, and gives instructions to Karl how to tie towels around her limbs. He returns to his cabin hoping that Karl may find another wife soon. Nevertheless peasants need their wives only for labor, and when their wives die this is their major loss. He thinks that Karl would make a good seaman. Kristina's death would only be the eighth, being a good result considering 78 passengers on board.

Karl Oscar cares for Kristina all night. She asks him to be good to their children. She refuses to take sugar he has in his pockets which he kept from home. She is ready to die although Karl doesn't want it to happen. It is the first time he regrets going on this trip. He asks her forgiveness. Kristina becomes delirious thinking she is swinging on a rope again. Her bleeding finally stops. In her delirium she asks him to let her down from the swing, and falls asleep. He is angry with himself, blaming his stubborn nature for this misfortune.

In the morning, she opens her eyes, saying that she is less tired but falls asleep. When Danjel appears announcing death, Karl assures him with fear that Kristina survived. Danjel clarifies that he meant Inga Lena, who died without revealing her sickness to him. Kristina survives.

Chapter 24, A Long Night Analysis

Karl Oskar yet again proves that faith may not be solely responsible for all life on earth. When Kristina starts bleeding at night her life seems to be fading away. Captain Lorentz is certain that Kristina is dying. Karl decides to fight for her. He challenges his own fear that she may indeed be dying. He wakes up the Captain in the middle of the night. They try to stop the bleeding and Karl follows all instructions given to him by the Captain staying with her all night.

He does not give up even when Kristina herself farewells him. He is able to save her contrary to Danjel who knows nothing about his wife's sickness. Inga Lena becomes the victim of her own submission, disregarding her suffering, fearing that this is an unnecessary burden for her husband. Danjel would have to reassess his approach.



Chapter 25, Another Three Shovefuls Of Earth From Sweden

Chapter 25, Another Three Shovefuls Of Earth From Sweden Summary

In Chapter 25, Captain Lorentz prepares the eighth funeral on ship that is to be held for Inga Lena. He follows his manual on how to bury corpses on board, pondering over her burial in the context of differences between his and her life that has been spent on fields or in barns yet finding her grave in the ocean. She would not be registered anywhere. Her only mark on earth would be her children. He has spent his life sailing, even though he is sixty years old. Knowing there is no escape from death he pretends to live for ever and in the best way he can.

Inga Lena's funeral is on a sunny day at the beginning of June, on the Atlantic Ocean. Peasants gather around her body. The Captain looks for an appropriate prayer just as Danjel appears and says his own prayers. After the Captain inserts a scoop of Swedish earth, into Inga's mouth her body is thrown into the ocean.

Chapter 25, Another Three Shovefuls Of Earth From Sweden Analysis

Captain Lorentz prepares himself for the burial of Inga Lena. He analyzes the meaning of his funeral speech stating that we gain understanding in preparation for death. There would be no point to prepare for death all our lives, thus Captain interprets these words as meaning that the only way to use our lives well is to live life to the fullest. In his case he stopped thinking about it since he was young. Since there is no escape from it, there is no point thinking about it.

Inga Lena's life was spent on fields. She ends her life in the middle of the ocean never reaching any land. There will be no records of her in any parish. Her only mark on earth will remain her children. Her grave is boundless without any marking.



Chapter 26, Sailing Towards Midsummer

Chapter 26, Sailing Towards Midsummer Summary

Chapter 26 begins a few days before the Midsummer. Robert and Elin observe fish and different color of the ocean. Robert begins to like the ocean and for the first time thinks it is interesting. All passengers gather to see when they will approach America.

Elin learns about employment which Robert considers important. They both practice asking for work in English. His only work so far was farming and he learns only these words in English. He wants to inspire respect and astonish Americans with his language. Elin hopes to find work as a housemaid, and Robert urges her to read everything that pertains to this work.

The ship despite its slender features survives the rough weather on the sea. It is made from wood that comes from the same country as the people it carries, being as tough as they are.

Sick passengers spend their days on deck in the sun. Kristina recovers, but cannot as yet stand. All passengers clean themselves and prepare for landing. Also Karl wants to look neat and tidy to make a good impression. He discards the items from the Old World in preparation for the New World.

They enter the river mouth in the morning and only then the winter is blowing in their direction. Shabby and worn out the migrants step down on shore. Karl Oskar is unprepared for his unsteady gate upon landing although his whereabouts here would have to be steady and firm.

Chapter 26, Sailing Towards Midsummer Analysis

Elin decides to learn English after all without relying on God's help. Robert carefully chooses how to practice their English, selecting what is most suited to them when explaining what they do or how to ask for work. For Elin her life would be less harsh as maids don't have to get up as early as four o'clock in the morning as in Sweden.

They all survived their tough journey and feel more hopeful as their new lives are about to begin. Karl feels that it is time to say good buy to the Old World. He wants to get rid all that reminded him of this part of his life. He is also free of his debts that are not going to trouble his existence anymore. Despite the unknown, he makes the best of his current circumstances, trying to appear well.

Robert and other passengers gaze at the first house they see when they approach the shore that is the former prison turned into a saloon. He thinks that everything must be better here if even prisons are not real.

The shabby and worn out passengers disembark. Their slender brig despite its fragile appearance turns out to be as tough as the people it carries.



Characters

Karl Oskar

Karl Oskar comes from Nilsa family that has lived in Smaland for generations. Their records date to ancient times. His one feature showing that he belongs to his family is his big nose. This aspect of appearance is the permanent mark associated with the links he has with his parents. His character features strongly separate him from his parents through his rebellious nature while his nose reveals another type of bond that exists within his family. He has been given two royal names. His first name is after King Karl Johann and his second name after the Crown Prince Oskar. These names were to bring him luck.

Despite the connection he has with his family Karl shows he has a mind of his own. He would do things in his own way and make slats for the hayrick higher than what his father would tell to. This infuriates his father who in anger tells him to go if you cannot follow what he is told. Karl immediately decides to leave and the same day he becomes a farmhand. He is not only strong willed but also hot tempered. He makes up his mind quickly about his wife. He only needs to meet Kristina three times to know that he wants to marry her. As a husband, he is patient, abstains from excess drinking, but is also moody. In difficult times, he is less talkative and moody. When Kristina becomes pregnant, the crops are also not good. He needs to find a solution soon.

Kristina

Kristina's parents are farmers in Duvemala. At seventeen, she is tall and fully grown but retains some childish features. She likes to play and enjoys swinging. Kristina is related to Danjel Andreasson, who is a close relative of Ake Svenson, the founder of the Akian faith. Karl's parents warn him that this relation may create problems.

At twenty three she is married with four children but still enjoys swinging. She has faith in the power of God, but many times she realizes that it is her actions that are responsible for her future. She realizes that too many children in their situation contribute to their problems, but she is unable to resist her husband. Deep down she wants what her husband wants. She wants to support him and she would follow him despite her doubts.

Robert

Robert is ten years younger than Karl. He is disobedient since he has been a child when he often ran away. When left outside, he would disappear in the woods. To prevent him from wondering away, his parents would hang a cowbell around his neck, but it did not help. These habits developed a sense of freedom in him. He liked to work



as a shepherd, as it would allow him to be alone where he could just stare at heavens. He liked to sing and learned to whistle.

He quickly learned to read and write at school, and continued to learn from the two books he received, which were the History of Nature at school and the Bible from his parents. These two books were to assure that he knows all he needs to know. The History of Nature was to contain all he needs to know in his current world, while the Bible pertained to the world beyond. Despite his sense of freedom his parents made decisions for him. Such sense of freedom also meant that he did not like masters and authority. When his parents arranged him work in Nybecken, Robert was devastated. He was never asked if he wanted to do that and there was no way out of the arranged contract that had to be obeyed according to the servants' law.

Danjel Andreasson

Danjel is the closest relative of Ake Stevenson who is the founder of Akian faith. He lives at Karragarde and is 44. He follows the vision he has where Ake comes to him with Jesus Christ, who tells him to continue Ake's preaching. He is rather short with narrow shoulders and has thick hair and unkempt beard. He is slow but gentle. He has a peaceful appearance and mild speech.

Arvid

Arvid is an older farm hand who has grown sturdy, strong, but with a silky beard. He has a reddish skin and old frostbites that would bleed in cold weather. He is slow in speech and shy when around people. Arvid has been called Bull of Nybacken since the old mistress has seen Arvid driving their white heifer into a barn. She accused Arvid of impregnating the heifer since the heifer turned out to carry a calf. He went to school for only two weeks and couldn't read but pretended he can. He becomes interested in America and decides to join Robert.

Jonas Petter

Jonas Petter of Hasteback is known to be a kind man. He has been unhappy in his marriage with Britta Stavfa whom he had to marry because his parents told him so. Constant arguments with her made him lose his desire for her. He thinks that she has been married more to the farm than to him, reminding him constantly what she brought to their marriage. He invites Robert to hide in his place. As he cannot endure any longer living with his wife, he decides to migrate with Robert to America.

Ulrika

Ulrika has converted, accepting Akian faith since Christ lives in her. Before she accepted Christ, she lived in sin. It all started when she was four. She was sold at an



auction after her parents died. She was bought by a peasant couple and her foster father abused her sexually. She was forced to have sex with him until she ran away. Since then she also received things in exchange for sex. It was her who was judged but not her foster father for his actions. She has a daughter Elin but she is unsure who her father is. She worries about her and wants her to marry a rich husband.

Elin

Elin is ashamed about her mother and that only men come to visit her. When they visit her, she needs to go outside and wait. She dislikes what her mother is doing until she tells her what happened to her during her childhood. She listens to her mother and especially when she is comforting her.

Captain Lorentz

Captain Lorentz has a strong far reaching voice. He is about sixty and has a stocky built. He has an ugly face with a thick blunt nose. His eyes are protruding and he has a weather-beaten red skin. His mouth is broad and sunken out. He spends most of his life on sea. He considers the only worthy position of a man to be sailing the sea. The only painful and humiliating time is when he has to be in a harbor. He does not understand peasants, nor why they travel to other parts of the world to perform the same thing they always do. Even more he does not like religious people, who can cause trouble during the voyage. On one occasion, they insisted that he needed to change the course of the ship because it is possessed by the devil.

Inga Lena

Inga Lena prefers worldly duties to holy duties. She worries about her husband Danjel who gives away everything to the poor. She wishes he could walk barefoot like apostles in the old days. She goes where her husband goes and she would die where he dies. Although she trusts him, sometimes she forgets that her husband is the Lord's new apostle. It makes her feel guilty about questioning him. She is afraid they will become poor and no one will help them. Sometimes she also forgets that she needs to be submissive towards her husband as required in the Bible.



Objects/Places

Korpamoen

Korpamoen is not just a cotter's place. It is a farm with seven arable acres the size of 1/16th of the original homestead.

Duvmala

Kristina lived in Duvmala with her parents. It is in Algutsboda Parish.

Klintakrogen

A fair where Karl and Kristina met three times and where Karl said that he still likes her.

Nybacken

Robert is sent to Nybacken to work one year as a farmhand for Aron. It is one mile from Korpamoen.

Hästebäck

Jonas Petter lives in Hästebäck.

Kvarntorpet

Frederink Emanuel Thron came from Kvarntorpet but his whereabouts were unknown since 1833.

Kärragärde

Karragarde was the home of Danjel Andreasson. Prior to that it was the seat Akianism found Ake Svensson.

Vasterstad

Dean Wieselgren of Vasterstad once intended to abolish the alcoholic drink brannvin persecuting those who used it.

Idemo

Karl Oskar worked in Idemo where at Berta's place he met his wife Kristina.

Kråkesjö

Karl's sister Lydia served as maid in Krakesjö.

Themes

The New versus the Old World

Nilsa family has always relied on old ways to do things. These ways have been tried and tested. They always tilled their land. Their traditions were a way of life in Smaland, providing a meaning to their life. They always relied on what has been tried and experienced. When traveling, old chests prove to be the best. They begin their travel according to their old God Thor who always delivered them safely from tribulations. Karl Oskar realizes that old may not always be enough, as whatever he tries to achieve seems to bring no results. In the Old World things are not always fair and just. His family suffers for no reason from the hands of hot tempered bosses when his brother is flogged by his master Aron. As much as the Old World provides the meaning and significance to existence, this Old World turns out to be at the same time unreasonable and cruel.

In the same way, Arvid suffers when he is called a Bull, even though his nickname is invented in connection with making the heifer pregnant. As much as the gossip is cruel, no one questions it. The Old World accepts what has been imposed for various reasons, such as convenience to leave things as they are because it is easier this way, lacking insight as to the consequences of spreading rumors that may not be true, reliance on ways that have been in place and don't need to be questioned. The old ways sometimes justify and condone cruelty while providing little incentive to learn. As much as traditions were useful they also condoned lack of knowledge which was the real culprit behind many misfortunes. The New World hence offers liberation from certain features of the old ways that were oppressive and cruel. It offers more justice and hope. The New World is fresh and new, while the old world seems weak. Dean Brusander defends the Old World because he can exercise his authority that cannot be questioned.

Life and Death

The entire process of migration is shown as connected to the cycle of life that features widely throughout the story. When Robert is hired as a farmhand he simulates his death and symbolically dies when the villagers think he is dead. The drowning of the cat also remains in his memory. He is enslaved just as he enslaved the cat. This incident reappears in his memory at times of horror. He thinks that just as his cat was compelled to death, the same fate is awaiting him.

Although nature and life force migration, their move to another country is perceived as death to the people who remain. Karl's father sees his son's departure as a funeral procession. Both sons travel so far away that they become dead to those left behind. The awaiting dangers also may result in the actual death.



Stories told throughout the novel by various characters contain the elements of life and death, such as the story of a woman who murdered her husbands, and when caught she hanged herself. Jonas Petter who is tormented by his unfortunate marriage to Brita-Stafva, seems to know all stories of women who engage in crimes.

Captain Lorentz is aware of death and he pretends that it does not exist. Such attitude is present in one who continually deals with death. As migrants attempt to physically escape death, they tend to encounter it while the Captain who deals with it on a daily basis, escapes from it mentally.

Intolerance of Religion

The local clergyman Dean Brusander is a Lutheran and exercises a powerful influence on his parish. Danjel's Åkian faith raises pastor's concerns that unrest and sense of unity will be disrupted. The Åkians represent a different point of view. For the local parish it threatens their point of view which they perceive as pure. Dean manages to persuade the sheriff that gatherings at Danjel's place are unlawful and they force entry to his house during one of them. Everybody has to disperse.

They disregard the fact that churchwarden drink and themselves spread sin through sex with other women. The purity of Lutheran church however cannot be questioned. to question it is to question God. Danjel and his other followers are fined and jailed. Danjel feels he is persecuted but he intends to fight. Only when he has another vision or perhaps does not want to appear in courts any more, he decides that he is going to join Karl in his trip to America. His treatment is better than that which was previously inflicted by kings who hanged heretics. Danjel considers church behavior as evil spiritual power from which he has to get away. In America he would not have to go to jail and he can freely practice his faith.

Style

Point of View

Moberg relates the story from the point of view of birth and rebirth that is part of human life cycle. The natural history involves life and death that influences lives. The author also includes his own way of perceiving life and death. The importance of perception on death seems to be derived from the importance on the perception of life. If death is not important, life also would be not important. Death for the author is also something inevitable that his characters are aware of, as the only certainty in life that it will occur sooner or later.

The author begins his story with the beginning of life of his main character Karl. Karl is connected to his family the lives of his parents. The beginning of his life coincides with the beginning of a new ruler, Swedish King. The new beginning is always the end of something else, in the same way that migration and various other events are symbolically compared to death. Karl's parents view his departure as a funeral procession.

Moberg instills reality in his characters, events, and the story. His style involves physical perception of reality and its connection with nature.

The perception on life as part of natural phenomena of life and death represents certain dark yet realistic view on the meaning of life. Although the captain of the ship who witnessed many deaths is aware of death as something that is going to happen sooner or later, he chooses to ignore it precisely because of this. He becomes less burdened by death when acknowledging its existence.

Moberg perceives the United States as the land of freedom and human rights. Karl become aware that he would not only earn more if he migrated to the US but also would be treated better along with having more choice about his own matters. He would also become free of debt that he found increasingly difficult to pay. He is also attracted by the new world, where he has no obligations towards his masters.

Setting

The "Emigrants" is set in the southern Sweden in Ljuder, the province of Smaland. It is an ancient land that goes back to the times of Vikings with families that existed in this place for generations. It is also a place with small cottages but large families. People who lived there worked on this land for generations. The place where the future migrants live is an arid and rocky land. It is a poor area covered by forest, requiring struggle to cultivate the land. People often have to clear the land from rocks and stones. Karl Oskar inherits 1/16 of the original homestead. He knows that this piece of land cannot be divided any further. The stony soil and poor crops determine that Karl and Kristina decide to migrate to America in 1850 to escape poverty.



Language and Meaning

Moberg uses language that is related to a physical reality. His language is accurate, yet creates a certain psychological connection. In tackling the lives of common people he describes their lives as simple yet complex manner using allegories and symbols when describing peasants as those that were part of the soil who worked on their farms for generations. Their houses were also inherited and built to last for centuries determining further about their place on earth. Those people lead simple lives away from major events but eventually they become driven out of their peaceful existence. In describing this change he compares their difficulties to drops of water that become a stream that changes in the end into a river. Such unrest that becomes a force eventually drives them out of their lands. His practical manner of describing events is evident when he mentions the importance of medicinal cures that were necessary for the migrants when they travelled. These medicines were important for their survival on land and on the ship thus they became part of the story.

Moberg includes the real information as part of the story among the figurative languages he uses to add depth and meaning. Some elements, however, don't require explanation and can be deduced by the reader who begins to understand the psychological state of the characters. In describing the events he uses various perspectives that incorporates the way they view the world while adding significance through further historical or other information. When he describes migration, he provides significance to these events through comparing them to other migrating events and describing the way their tradition is involved in their journey. Such tradition persisted in Vikings in their past as they traveled to conquer or to improve their lives. Migration hence has been part of human experience for many centuries as part of survival or migration as a purpose in itself. Migration has a long tradition that is evident when Moberg describes the way the migrants distrust the sea that was also the same way other Swedish and Vikings distrusted it.

Structure

The story is divided into two parts and twenty-six chapters. One part involves the life of Karl Oskar till the time he boards the ship Charlotta to travel to America. The second part deals with the migrants on board the ship Charlotta as they travel to America across the Pacific ocean. It unfolds along with the beginning of Nilsa family where its roots are explored and investigated.

We follow births of the members of the family and follow as they grow up, marry, and travel. Each chapter is devoted to specific event or an important moment in the life of all characters. Each chapter is a build up towards the end where migrants arrive at their destination. It is constructed in a similar way to the way people experience their journey, where they are most impatient towards the end, but the beginning is most difficult. Chapters where people experience an illness or a storm are longer as it seems when people experience it in reality. Exciting events, in the same way, are shorter in length.



Quotes

"God must look kindly on a farmer in a stone country" (pg. 18.)

"But America was the land for one who had taken the wrong road" (pg. 31.)

"The animals were bound in their stalls and the farmhands were bound to the animals" (pg. 37.)

"And beyond their eyes' reach their thoughts struggled further, their thoughts ventured on roads never traveled, down to a sea never seen, and across the waters of the ocean" (pg. 41.)

"His home was in the Old World, in the world that was frail, worn-out, decrepit, old and weak and finished" (pg. 47.)

"The New World was young and fresh, and full of splendor and riches beyond imagination" (pg. 47.)

"The cautious and the suspicious always have their objections: For sure, we know nothing" (pg. 91.)

"These germs of unrest are like seeds scattered by the wind: one takes root somewhere deep in a man's soul and begins its growth unknown to others; the sowing has been done in secret, thus the sprouting surprises neighbors and friends" (pg. 91.)

"Drought and crop failure hit the righteous and the unrighteous alike" (pg. 92.)

"For he who asked least often obtained most" (pg. 100.)

"No temper was more dangerous than he who twisted the tools of deceptive goodness into the service of transgression" (pg. 111.)

"Teach us all to remember that we must die and thereby gain understanding" (pg. 348.)

"Man must live in comfort and good cheer as long as life lasted - soon enough death comes with joy to no one" (pg. 349.)



Topics for Discussion

What contributed to Karl's migration?

What is the meaning of freedom in "The Emigrants?"

How did different views on life among the emigrants affect their different attitudes toward migration?

What does freedom mean for the characters?

In what way did the Old World differ from the New World?

How has religion influenced the life of Karl Oskar and Kristina?

What is the meaning of life and death in the book?

How do various characters in "The Emigrants" perceive migration?