

Faith of My Fathers Study Guide

Faith of My Fathers by John McCain

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Plot Summary

"Faith of My Fathers" by John McCain with Mark Salter is a memoir that highlights John McCain's ancestry, focusing primarily on his grandfather, father, and on his own life. Not glamorizing their existence, this book is a real account of the triumphs and pitfalls of the military men. It carries the reader through wartime strategies from the First World War through the Vietnam war.

John McCain's grandfather, John Sidney McCain Senior, also known as Slew, came from a long line of military men. The family fought in wars for their country for over 200 years. However, he was the first one to choose the Navy. The rest of his family was part of the Army. Slew's career did not seem very promising at first. His grades at the Naval Academy were very low and he was constantly earning demerits for poor behavior. He served as an engineering officer during World War I and worked his way up the ranks to a point where he commanded all land-based aircraft operations in the South Pacific during the Second World War. Over time, Slew proved to be a brilliant tactician and a powerful leader. He was awarded the Distinguished Service Medal for his leadership in the early days of the Guadalcanal Campaign in the Solomon Islands. One of the keys to his success was his abiding faith and respect for those that served under him.

John McCain's father, John Sidney McCain Junior, also known as Jack, began his Navy career following in his father's footsteps. He also had little respect for grades at the Naval Academy and was also constantly getting demerits that threatened his graduation. After his time in the academy, he became very dedicated to his work. John remembered how the Navy consumed almost every one of his father's thoughts and how he worked ceaselessly even on holidays. He and his wife got to know prominent political and military figures as he rose up the chain of leadership. Both Jack and Slew were four-star admirals in the Navy. Jack was Commander in Chief in the Pacific during the Vietnam War when his son became a prisoner of war.

John McCain, the author of this book, followed the path of his predecessors by almost flunking out of the Academy due to poor academics and far less than exemplary behavior. After the Academy, he became a naval officer but was still more intent on partying than working. After a while the thrill wore off, and he began to become more focused on his work. Like his ancestors, he was dedicated to being part of military action on behalf of his country and was eager to enlist during the Vietnam War. The first carrier he was on became damaged due to an inferno that claims many lives. John was concerned that this tragic occurrence would keep him back from the action, but he soon had the opportunity to sign up for another mission. During his time on the next carrier, John's plane was shot down and he became a prisoner of war. This novel details his experiences as a prisoner of the Vietnamese as well as lessons he learned during the war and from his forefathers.



Preface - Chapter 6

Preface - Chapter 6 Summary and Analysis

"Faith of My Fathers" by John McCain with Mark Salter is a memoir that highlights John McCain's ancestry, focusing primarily on his grandfather, father, and on his own life. Not glamorizing their existence, this book is a real account of the triumphs and pitfalls of the military men. It carries the reader through wartime strategies from the First World War through the Vietnam war.

In the Preface, McCain explained why he decided to write this book. He wrote about the difficulty he had in choosing how to document the lives of his heroes, his grandfather the naval aviator, and his father the submariner. McCain talked about what it was like to be raised in a family focused on the military. The men in his family had been raised to go to war for two centuries, serving as officers in the Armed Services of America. He talked about how it influenced his own life.

Chapter 1 introduced John Sidney McCain Senior and John Sidney McCain Junior. This chapter focused primarily on the grandfather's experiences. He was so adept at fighting that he didn't know what to do with himself in times of peace. He was very close to the men under his command and wished them well as he headed home to his wife, Catherine Vaulx McCain. They had a celebration to welcome him home. During the celebration, he stated that he felt ill, then collapsed, and died at the age of 61. The chapter ended with a previously unrecorded incident where John's grandfather needed to make a decision during a typhoon that resulted in damage to several carriers and ships as well as the death of six men. He was ordered to relinquish his command.

Chapter 2 talked about the incident where he was relieved of his command. John was almost nine years old when his grandfather died. During World War II, he didn't see his grandfather very often. When his grandfather showed up, McCain's mother would find a camera to take a picture of the grandfather and grandchildren together. He remembered him as a small man who lived large. His family members called him Sid, and his fellow officers called him Slew. Although he was very serious about his job, Slew was notoriously disheveled. Some of the sailors who served under him affectionately called him, "Popeye the Sailor Man."

Slew was the first McCain to choose the Navy over the Army. This had a big impact on John McCain as he was growing up. He remembered one time in his own naval career where he was stationed at an air station named after his grandfather. Slew's career wasn't always so promising. He was almost rejected while he was at the United States Naval Academy in Annapolis for schooling due to defective hearing, but he made it through because they needed officers at that point in time. He did not do well academically, but this didn't affect his career. He first served on the USS Ohio and the USS Baltimore, where he was perceived as a partier and not up to standard. After that he was ordered to serve on the USS Chauncey, where he was highly regarded. During



World War I he served as an engineering officer on the USS San Diego then in 1935, he enrolled in flight training. While he was not a great pilot, he did enjoy flying.

Chapter 3 began by showing how far Slew had come professionally. In the Second World War, he commanded all the land-based aircraft operations in the South Pacific for five months. During this time, he was part of the Guadalcanal campaign where he received the Distinguished Service Medal for his courage and leadership. His success there led to a promotion to the position of Chief of the Bureau of Naval Aeronautics. Although it was an honor, it wasn't the right job for him. He was much better at fighting and administrating. Still, he did the job well and his experience at Guadalcanal taught him what they needed for the Navy in the Pacific. He was appointed to a new post as Deputy Chief of Naval Operations for Air.

The man was a born leader who garnered respect from those who served under him. He was also a bold and courageous fighter, fighting to save damaged destroyers when others would have sunk them. He received the Navy Cross for his work. In October of 1944, Slew was part of the Battle of Leyte Gulf. His task group was ordered to detach from the fleet and sail away to Ulithi Island to refuel. It was 660 miles away. While they were gone, the Japanese began a serious invasion. They sent for McCain who came quickly to help them. With strategic planning and bravery, he helped save the forces from destruction. He received his second Distinguished Service Medal for his "gallant command" of fast carriers between October of 1944 and January of 1945. Slew received a third Distinguished Service medal for his service in the last three months of World War II. Task Force 38 was considered the most powerful naval task force ever assembled for combat during Slew's command. Nearly a decade after his death, people were still mourning him and remembering his bravery and leadership.

In Chapter 4, Slew first met his grandson John in 1936 while McCain's father was stationed in Panama. John McCain was left in Slew's care while his parents attended a dinner party. They left strict orders about how he should be taken care of and not coddled. Slew was supposed to put John in his crib, and any kind of protest was supposed to be ignored. When the parents came home, they found Slew sleeping in bed with his tiny grandson. Roberta Wright McCain, John's mother, was the daughter of a successful oil wildcatter. Her parents did not appreciate McCain's father, who was a young ensign serving on the battleship, USS Oklahoma. The two dated for over a year before McCain's grandmother ordered an end to the relationship. The two eloped. Slew knew about the wedding and was there to stand at his son's side for the marriage. He and his son had a very close relationship. McCain closed the chapter by describing the relationship of a sailor and his children. Although the children don't see their father much, they are brought up to understand why their fathers are away, and it is a source of pride.

In Chapter 5, John's father was a small man, weighing only 133 pounds when he left the Naval Academy. Right before he entered the Academy, John Sidney McCain Junior, also known as Jack, spent two weeks with his father aboard ship as it was being serviced. It was a time he greatly treasured. Like Slew, McCain's father did not thrive academically. His behavior was even worse. The only areas he excelled in were Seamanship and



Flight Tactics and Ordnance and Gunnery. Unlike his father, he excelled in personal hygiene. Even though academics were not a top priority, and even with his tendency to get in trouble, one thing McCain's father considered sacred was the Academy's honor code. According to McCain, his father was a small man with a big heart, and honor was of utmost importance. He was also a staunch defender of the Academy itself.

In Chapter 6, McCain's father was an aspiring man who became the first Navy son of a four-star admiral that would reach the same rank as his own father. He was obsessed with the Navy. Although he was slight in stature, he continued to exercise to keep himself ready for combat. He married a woman who, like him, enjoyed the Navy culture. She was naturally charming and beautiful, making up for her husband's lack of social graces. Between his devotion to his career and her social skills, the two made a formidable team. A devout man, McCain's father prayed aloud for an hour twice a day, reading his tattered prayerbook. In the middle of his career, McCain's father developed his Seapower lecture. He became the Navy's First Chief of Information and then later became the Navy's senior liaison officer to the United States Congress. He improved his lecture and audiences gave him the nickname of "Mr. Seapower."



Chapters 7-12

Chapters 7-12 Summary and Analysis

In Chapter 7, one of John McCain's earliest memories was when the Japanese sank the fleet in Pearl Harbor when he was five years old. John's father left right away and John McCain saw very little of him over the next four years. Jack commanded three submarines during the war, the second being the USS Gunnel. It was a wreck on a sense and beacon ship during the American invasion of North Africa in Operation Torch. It used infrared searchlights to line up the invading armada along the landing beaches. After the mission was over, it was supposed to fly the American flag under illumination and head for safety. As they were heading out, they were caught in friendly fire. The USS Gunnel's next stop was a British submarine base in Scotland. On the way there, they encountered difficulties including enemies chasing them and malfunctioning engines. All four of its engines gave out and left them stranded in waters infested with German submarines. It used its auxiliary engine as it headed towards its destination. At one point, the submarine was surrounded by three ships, and Jack ordered them to send out a red smoke single rocket. It saved their lives. The ships were British and were just about to blast them. Seeing the smoke signal, they held their fire.

Jack was very resourceful and knew what it took to help the submarines work better. He figured out a formula that helped target torpedoes towards unseen enemy ships while submerged, he invented an electric firing device for the ship's guns, and took time to learn about all the men under his command. He had a great deal of respect for the men under him, and they had the same amount of respect for him. On their second combat patrol, the crew of the USS Gunnel had their greatest success while patrolling the waters between Midway and Nagasaki. The ship sighted seven large Japanese freighters and two smaller vessels, including a fishing trawler. In a harrowing ordeal, the USS Gunnel submerged 300 feet for many hours. The enemy was looking for them, and when they had less than one hour left of oxygen, they made the decision to surface, preparing for battle as they recharged. When they surfaced, the Japanese showed no evidence of sighting them. Jack received a Silver Star for his bravery under fire and his aggressive fighting spirit. Jack took command of the USS Dentuda after five combat patrols while aboard the US Dunnel. It was while he was commander of the Dentuda that he had his last meeting with his father.

Chapter 8 is a very short chapter in which McCain talks about his father's career. In 1965, Jack went to New York to serve as vice chairman for the delegation to the United Nations Military Staff Committee and Commander of the Eastern Sea Frontier and the Atlantic Reserve Fleet. After his success in World War II, he served as second in command on the USS St. Paul in the Korean War. He also commanded the amphibious assault of operation Steel Pike 1, a controversial operation that included the invasion and military occupation of the Caribbean nation. It was the largest amphibious operation that was ever undertaken during peacetime. Because of his actions in this operation, Jack was awarded the Legion of Merit. At this point, Jack was a three-star admiral.



Several years later he was sent to London in order to assume command of all the US naval forces in Europe. This job gave him his fourth star, something that would have made his own father proud. As the chapter closed, John pointed out that his father had command over more than 1 million sailors, soldiers, and airmen. He had command during the war in Vietnam, and John himself was his father's subordinate when he was a lieutenant commander held as a prisoner of war in Hanoi.

In Chapter 9, John switched to his own life story. He began by discussing problems with his temper and his education. Education for Navy families was very eclectic. Since the family moved so many times, the children knew a lot about certain topics and nothing about others. He felt that his mother was a terrific teacher because she used her travels to educate the children, and made life fascinating. When John grew older and entered high school, his propensity for trouble came to the forefront. Unlike his father and grandfather, there were some subjects in school that he enjoyed, including literature. John, like his father, wasn't very large, and other students took the opportunity to pick on him. He is not as easy-going as his father was, however, and often fought the children to establish his grounds. Since he moved around a lot, he was always fighting, and never made too many friends. When he was in high school, his parents decided to educate him properly and arranged for him to attend Episcopal High School. John enjoyed this, but he realized he was different from other students there. He knew that he wanted to enter the Navy. His time at Episcopal High School prepared him a bit for the Academy since he had to wear jackets and ties, compete in athletics, and earned demerits for infractions. He discovered that he was good athletics and earned his place among his peers by getting attention for trouble making. One of his teachers really inspired him. His name is William P. Ravenel. He was in charge of the English department at the Episcopal High School and coached the varsity football team. He spent time talking with John, and made him feel worthwhile. This gave John a sense of honor in fairness. After high school he went to the Academy for his plebe summer.

In Chapter 10, John was surprised at how much he enjoyed the Academy. That was before the Naval Academy school year began for real. He enjoyed the physical assertion of the training over the summer as well as a camaraderie among friends. When the school year started, the upperclassmen made life difficult, and he didn't have the patience to withstand it. He disliked the academics and frequently found himself in trouble. One student in particular made his life difficult. He and his friends retaliated when the student was a senior. They had the boy's cruise box sent to a fraternity at an Ivy League school so he never had it when he was assigned for his summer cruise. In retrospect, John wished he hadn't been so harsh. He felt it wasn't honorable. The student later died while attempting a dangerous maneuver in his airplane in front of his parents. John felt a connection to him, understanding how the death might have been caused by an impulse to impress his father. John identified with this Impulse.

In Chapter 11, while John was in the Academy, the upperclassman bothered him, but he was particularly bothered by a company officer John called Captain Ben Hart, which was not his real name. Hart was a real stickler for the rules, and most of the other officers did not respect him. He was determined to garner respect from those under him. Although he knew that McCain was a troublemaker, Captain Hart had a hard time



pinning him for anything except for minor infractions. John received many demerits for being slovenly, being sarcastic, and making trouble. At the Academy, students received their midshipmen's class standing through a combination of grease grade and academic performance. The company officer assigned to the grease grade. Although he was not a stellar student, John made it through, especially thanks to his interest in history and English. For one term paper in history class, he wrote about his grandfather. While researching for the paper, he wrote to Admiral Nimitz. The national hero wrote a wonderful letter about his days with Slew sailing around the Philippines.

In Chapter 12, John had already developed a reputation for being disreputable, but experience on the USS Hunt during a first-class cruise to Rio de Janeiro in June of 1957 almost changed his reputation. Lieutenant Commander Eugene Carroll was the skipper of the USS Hunt. He spent much of his time yelling at John, then calling him back over for more lessons on commanding a ship. This became a very positive experience for John who enjoyed commanding the ship to a point where he began to consider becoming an officer in the Surface Navy rather than following his grandfather's footsteps in naval aviation. Under Carroll's tutelage, John developed confidence and skill. While on this cruise, he met a fashion model in Rio, and they struck up a relationship that lasted until the following Christmas when time and life differences drew them apart. The summer was a wonderful experience, and John finished it determined to change his attitude. He was respectful, rarely got into trouble, and pulled up his grades. There was such a change in him that Hart even commented on it. When John asked Hart about his class placement, Hart got his revenge by telling him that he was still at the bottom of the class. This upset John so much that he decided to retaliate by going back to his old ways.



Chapters 13-18

Chapters 13-18 Summary and Analysis

In Chapter 13, when McCain became a naval officer after the Academy, his behavior did not change much. He attended flight school in Pensacola and moved on to advanced flight training in Corpus Christi, Texas. Like his grandfather, he enjoyed flying, but enjoyed having a good time just as well, if not more. When he was in Corpus Christi Bay one morning an engine quit while he was flying, and he was knocked unconscious as his plane hit the water. He came to just in time to get the canopy open and swim to the surface of the water. His father heard of the accident and asked a friend to check in on him. The Admiral came to John's room to check on him, and found a very unkempt area and a groggy John who only suffered from a sore back. He was back partying that evening.

It was during his deployments on several Mediterranean cruises during the 1960s that John began thinking more about his career. During his second cruise on the USS Intrepid, he began to get more serious about his work, and his desire to party became secondary. While training, McCain discovered that he enjoyed the Army exercises where they had to evade the enemy. He did very well in this. He had some brief training on what it was like to be a prisoner of war, but the main focus was on escape and evasion. The author's reminiscing about this experience foreshadowed what was going to happen to him later on in the book. He met an Air Force major that had been a prisoner of war in Korea. The man talked about the difficulty of solitary confinement. McCain was in awe of his courage.

Although he was working on improving his image, McCain sometimes messed up. One time he flew too low while over southern Spain, and knocked out some power lines, creating a small international incident. In October of 1962, his squadron was ordered to fly their planes back to the carrier earlier than expected. They found out that they might be seeing some action. It didn't come to fruition, and the crisis was resolved peaceably. The incident whetted their appetites for action. McCain decided that he wanted to go to Vietnam. He remembered listening to his father and grandfather recall their experiences in war. They didn't glorify it, yet spoke proudly of the men they served and the battles they want. McCain remembered a humorous incident where his father and grandfather were talking about their experiences to a elementary school crowd and found it extremely difficult to tell their tales while keeping the language clean.

John McCain served as Chief of Air Basic Training in Pensacola for nine months. He transferred from there to Meridian, Mississippi, so he could prepare for his combat tour in Vietnam. It was a remote location without much entertainment. For fun, John and his comrades decided to start a Key Fess Yacht Club and they held events there weekly. This drew in more people from the town, and the place gained in popularity until aviators began flying in to check it out. During this time, John was in a serious romance with Carol Schepp, a divorced mother with two young sons. The two were married on July 3



of 1965. One year after the marriage, John adopted the sons, and a few months later he and Carol had a baby girl named Sydney. Later that year, around Christmas, John was in an airplane that had an engine flameout. He ejected at 1,000 feet. Realizing that he could have died strengthened his urgency to get to Vietnam so he could have his turn at war. At the end of 1966, he was sent to Jacksonville, Florida, for training.

Chapter 14 is the beginning of part three in this novel. It is a very short chapter highlighting a devastating inferno. When John was 31 years old, he was on the port side of the USS Forrestal when a Sunni missile struck the belly fuel tank of his airplane, ripping it open and setting 200 gallons of fuel on fire across the deck. He described the chaos surrounding him as bombs went off and shipmates died while trying to save each other. John received injuries from small pieces of shrapnel that exploded from a bomb and tore into him, but his injuries were minor compared to many around him. When the blaze was brought under control, 134 men were either dying or dead and many more were wounded. Over 20 planes were destroyed, but the ship was saved. It limped along for over a week until it reached the Subic naval base in the Philippines where it went through two years of repairs before it was seaworthy enough to return to duty. John was concerned that this might be the end of his military career and wanted to return to the action. He met R. W. "Johnny" Apple, a "New York Times" correspondent in Saigon who offered to take John back to Saigon for the daily press briefing. It was the beginning of a lifelong friendship. When McCain returned to the USS Forrestal, an officer from the USS Oriskany addressed the squadron asking if anyone would volunteer for combat duty aboard his ship. John signed up. He had a brief break where he was able to meet up with his wife and children in Europe for a pleasant holiday on the French Riviera and visit his parents in London before he went back to war.

In Chapter 15, McCain reported for duty on the USS Oriskany on September 30, 1967. He participated in Operation Rolling Thunder, a three-year bombing campaign of North Vietnam. The Oriskany pilots saw more action and suffered from more losses than any other carrier. John expressed frustration at the orders they had to carry through. The pilots felt that they should be bombing different areas than the ones they were ordered to bomb. Finally, they were told to escalate the bombing campaign, and for the first time that they might be helping win the war. John asked to fly on a mission where they were going to target the thermal power plant in Hanoi. This was his first attack on the enemy capital. He was warned to be careful then headed out. John recognized the target just as he was warned that the enemy was flying towards him. He knew he should roll out and fly evasive maneuvers, but he was just about to release his bombs. He made the decision to release the bombs, but the enemy got him, blowing his right wing off.

In Chapter 16, as John's plane was going down, he instinctively reverted to his training. He radioed that he was hit and pulled the ejection seat handle breaking his left arm, his right arm in three places, and his right knee as he was ejected. He was knocked unconscious, and came back to consciousness in the shallow water of Truc Bach Lake, surrounded by the Vietnamese who immediately started attacking him. An army truck arrived, and he was placed on a stretcher then brought to "Maison Centrale." John was a prisoner of war. He was placed in an empty cell where he drifted in and out of consciousness for several days. When he was awake, he was interrogated, but he



refused to give them information. After four days, his condition became more serious and his life was in danger. He tried to bargain with the Vietnamese by telling them he would give them information if they took him to a hospital. They refused to take him, leaving him to die. Later, they came to him excitedly telling him that his father was an Admiral so they would take him to a hospital.

Meanwhile, John's parents were informed of his death and they notified his wife and siblings. Johnny Apple had written a story stating that John was missing, and now they knew he was a prisoner. John was moved to a hospital, and it was filthy. He was interrogated more as his condition stabilized. He did give the enemy his ship's name and his squadron number and confirmed that his target had been the power plant. Any other information he gave was false. While he was beaten, he realized that other prisoners of war were getting far worse treatment. He suspected it was because of his famous father. This proved to be true.

The Vietnamese were big on propaganda and wanted to make it seem as if they were treating their prisoners fairly. One visiting Frenchman interviewed John, and he was encouraged to speak against the United States, but he refused to do so. He answered the Frenchman's questions, but would not say anything negative about the United States and also wouldn't say anything positive about his treatment as a prisoner of war. This made his captors very unhappy.

John was taken to another prison camp at the mayor of Hanoi's official residence. This camp held American prisoners of war, and John was thrilled to be in the company of Americans again. His roommates, George "Bud" Day and Norris Overly helped him get stronger and helped build him up mentally. Listening to their experiences reinforced the idea in McCain's mind that he was getting special treatment because of his famous father. One evening towards the beginning of February, Norris was informed that he could be released along with two other prisoners. McCain wished him well and sent him off with a letter to his wife in Norris' pocket.

In Chapter 17, John and Bud were roommates for another month before Bud was moved to another cell and eventually another prison. John was moved to another building. He suffered from dysentery and weighed slightly over 100 pounds. John was now in solitary and struggled to keep sane. He fought moodiness, anger, and hypochondria. While he was in solitary, he worked on exercising since his arms were still so weak that he couldn't even do a push-up. When he was put together with other prisoners, at first he couldn't stop talking for several days. He commented that this is a common phenomenon for prisoners released from solitary. While he was in solitary, he had a lot of time to reflect over his life and found himself regretting many of his previous actions, but he never regretted choosing his career. McCain made up stories and remembered books to keep his mind active.

Back with others, he discovered that the prisoners of war found ingenious ways to communicate with each other. They devised their own alphabets and would leave messages for each other in washroom drains. If they were caught communicating, the



punishment was very harsh, yet the idea of not communicating was even worse. There were more than 80 Americans held as prisoners, and communicating kept them alive.

In Chapter 18, the prisoners called the mayor of Hanoi's official residence "The Plantation." In this chapter, John highlighted the daily rituals that the prisoners went through. He talked about the propaganda they had to listen to, stating that it was so one-sided that it was almost ludicrous. Sometimes they got to take baths, and sometimes they found out there was no water. Food was minimal. The prisoners were taken out of their cells for interrogation randomly. Sometimes they had several interrogations in one day, and sometimes they went weeks without one. Some of the interrogators were pleasant and others were abusive. John still felt the power that his father wielded throughout the interrogations made it so that he suffered less harm than the other prisoners of war. This made him feel guilty at times.

He remembered one difficult interrogation after which he was left in the interrogation room for the night, tied up. A gun guard loosened the ropes then tightened them again before dawn when his shift was nearly over. At Christmas a few months later, the guard casually drew a cross in the dirt then wiped it away. There was an Air Force major in the cell next to John. The two communicated incessantly. They remained friends even after the war, claiming they never had been closer to another human being. They kept each other alive through contact and encouragement.



Chapters 19-24

Chapters 19-24 Summary and Analysis

In Chapter 19, after months of leniency, the Vietnamese deemed John strong enough for an interrogation. He was asked if he wanted to go home, and John replied that he would not go home out of turn. What he didn't realize at that point was that his father was about to assume command in the war effort as Commander-in-Chief, Pacific. The Vietnamese had planned to use his release for propaganda tied to the event, shaming his father.

Chapter 20 highlighted the Code of Conduct for American Prisoners of War. It offered the history of the Code, and detailed six parts of it. McCain lived in trepidation for a couple of months, knowing that his life was going to be more difficult after his refusal to be released. In late August, the Vietnamese began beating him seriously. Things got so bad that he decided to try to take his own life. In retrospect, he does not think he really intended to kill himself, but it never came to a point where he would find out. The Vietnamese would not let him kill himself and after the fourth day of beatings and other torture, he gave up. He signed a statement of confession, an act that would haunt him and fill him with regret for the rest of his life. He was particularly dismayed over the thought that he might have caused his father disappointment.

The prisoners were treated abominably through the end of 1969. On Christmas Eve in 1968, John initiated a minor uprising during a Christmas service that the Vietnamese had planned to use for propaganda. He was beaten for his role in the uprising. John recalled the heroic efforts of others who were imprisoned. Some tried to escape, and others participated in various forms of resistance. He stated that these men were a lantern for him, leading the way with their courage and faith, showing honor.

In Chapter 21, while John McCain was in captivity, his father became commander of the Pacific. He asked to have the change of command ceremony on board the USS Oriskany, the carrier John was on the day he was shot down. Jack McCain was frustrated with the way America fought the Vietnam War. During his appointment, according to Admiral Vasey, Jack "fired some tough messages to Washington." One of Jack's greatest strengths was his just policy. He was truly interested in other people's opinions, and forthright with his own thoughts. When he traveled to Vietnam, he talked with the troops to garner more information, feeling that their views on the war were just as important as the views of the commanders. He didn't shirk from his duties, even when it became personal. Near the end of the war, he knew that Hanoi needed to be attacked with heavy artillery. The fact that his son was imprisoned there didn't deter him. He never capitalized on his son's position as a prisoner of war, nor did he try to wield power to have his son released. Only those closest to him knew that he kept a personal file, which contains all the recorded information about his son and other prisoners of war. This included copies of some of the letters John sent to his wife.



John McCain wrote about the communications while he was prisoner. He never received many of the letters his wife sent, and most of the packages she sent were opened and items were missing. He deeply resented the Committee of Liaison with Families of Servicemen Detained in North Vietnam. This group arranged with the Vietnamese government to process communications to the prisoners of war. John felt that they exploited suffering families for their own propaganda. With all of their communications scrutinized, John recalled how some prisoners worked out ingenious ways to pass messages to their families using codes.

Some of the early releases contacted Jack McCain to tell him that his son had been seriously wounded, but was now doing fine. They highlighted his bravery, and never told Jack about the way John broke down and signed a confession. After the war, John and Jack discussed it once, and Jack commented to his son that he had done the best he could, and that's what was expected from anyone. Although he didn't outwardly show how much it affected him to have a son imprisoned in Vietnam, John's mother told him that the war had been a great burden on Jack. She would hear Jack praying in his study asking God to "show Johnny mercy." John McCain learned that his father would spend many a Christmas and New Year's Day with troops, but would separate himself and walk more North, standing alone for a long period of time facing the area where his son disappeared. At the end of his second tour, Jack lobbied with Washington asking for an extension of his command so that he could stay through to the end of the war, but his request was turned down. After 41 years of active duty, he retired from the Navy. He died nine years later, beaten down by the stress from the war. Like his own father, he had sacrificed his own life in order to hold command during his country's war.

In Chapter 22, the focus of this chapter once again shifted back to John McCain's experience in the prison camp. Beatings were getting even worse, and the prisoners suffered from boils and other terrible effects of the heat. The summer of 1969 was particularly terrible, but things began to get better during the autumn. In August of that summer, the Vietnamese had released three men who showed the American public that they were not well treated in imprisonment. This created an uprising that damaged the reputation the Vietnamese had tried to establish, showing them as captors of good will. The event contributed to better treatment.

It filled McCain with regret to realize that during their imprisonment, he did his friend Bob Craner a grave injustice. The prisoners had very few belongings, and one of the most important was the washrag since they were constantly battling heat and grime. After a punishment in 1968, McCain realized he didn't have his wash rag any longer, but saw another one hanging on the line so he took it. Months later, he found his own wash rag and replaced the stolen rag on the line. During communications that night, he found out that he had stolen Bob's wash rag. On Christmas day, he made his confession to his friend who responded in a humorous manner. John absolved his guilt by sending Rob a cartoon with 500 wash rags in it as a Christmas present the first Christmas that they were free.

In Chapter 23, on December 9, 1969, John and another prisoner were moved to Hoa Lo, a compound where many of the senior officers were held. They called it the Hilton.



Treatment was improving in the prison camps, and John found many opportunities for communication. Back in the United States's his wife was fighting for her own life. She had been in a car accident that left her with two fractured legs, a fractured arm, and a broken pelvis along with internal bleeding. She refused to have an amputation, even when the doctors recommended it. Caroline knew that she had to take care of their three young children, and with the help of the Navy families around her, was able to heal after many surgeries and a lot of therapy. Although he didn't know about the incident at the time, John was grateful for the fact that he knew that his wife and children were most likely fine since the Navy takes care of its own.

In April, the prisoners were given more freedom and were allowed out of their cells on a daily basis to play ping-pong and pool. In June, John was punished and sent to "Calcutta" for punishment. It was a room that was only 6' x 3' that contained a tiny louvered window for ventilation. He had to remain in that room for the three months, and he determined that it was one of the worst punishments he had ever experienced in his life.

In Chapter 24, 1970 brought one of the highlights of John's imprisonment. He was transferred, along with many other prisoners, to a place that they called "Camp Unity." It was here that John was reunited with many of his old friends, including his first cellmate Bud Day, who were prisoners of war. The first night together, no-one slept. Everyone was so uplifted by being in the company of the other men.



Chapters 25-28

Chapters 25-28 Summary and Analysis

In Chapter 25, in February of 1971, the prisoners began a dispute regarding their right to conduct religious services. On Sunday, February 7, they decided to hold a church service. This became known as the Church Riot. In an attempt to improve their public image, the Vietnamese encouraged the prisoners of war to write home frequently. On John's suggestion, the prisoners boycotted by refusing to write. On March 17, John and 24 other prisoners were taken to a different camp that they called "Skid Row." This group was singled out because they were the ones who caused the most trouble for the Vietnamese. Each prisoner was held in solitary confinement in a 6 x 4' cell with no ventilation, lights, or bathing facilities. When the August monsoons threatened to flood Skid Row, they were transferred back to Hoa Lo. Unfortunately, they were not taken back to Camp Unity, but rather to Heartbreak Hotel where they were kept in tiny, dirty rooms with four or five prisoners. They almost felt relief when they were taken back to Skid Row several months later. Morale was very low until they were transferred back to Camp Unity in November of 1971.

In Chapter 26, John discussed the ways the prisoners passed time. He served as the entertainment officer and room chaplain. The prisoners celebrated all holidays and birthdays with special celebrations and gifts that they made out of their meager possessions and scraps of material. They put on plays on a regular basis. John was particularly talented at captivating audiences with the retelling of novels and films. During the Christmas season, the prisoners put on a production of "A Christmas Carol," adding details to make it more entertaining and amusing for their audience. They borrowed a Bible that a captor grudgingly gave for a short period of time so that they could copy the Christmas story. On Christmas night they held a simple service that began with the Lord's prayer. The former conductor of the Air Force Academy Choir directed some of the prisoners as they sang for this service, and the group sang hymns and retold the story of the Nativity in a poignant service. After the service, they held a Christmas dinner for which they designed the room to resemble a much loved military ritual wherein the officers sat according to their rank as they ate and drank informally. The treatment of the prisoners improved even more, and the Vietnamese gave them several decks of cards, which they use to pass time. They also taught each other classes which ranged in subjects from languages to meat-cutting and quantum physics. John taught lessons in literature and history. In April of 1972, President Nixon resumed the bombing of North Vietnam. This improved the morale of the prisoners since they knew it would take heavily artillery to finally win the war.

In Chapter 27, in October, the bombing came to a halt as peace talks resumed. On December 18, B-52s rained down on Hanoi. The prisoners of war were ecstatic, even though the bombs were falling all around them. The Vietnamese captors grew increasingly unsettled and terrified. The senior officers in the camp had warned the other prisoners not to show emotion when they were told that they were going to be

released. They knew that the Vietnamese would record the event for their own propaganda. This proved to be true, and as they were informed of their freedom, the prisoners showed no emotion. The cameramen left disappointed. Back in their cells, they began a real celebration.

In Chapter 28, John and the other passengers cheered when the pilot announced that they were flying over the Tonkin Gulf and were now in international airspace. When he left Clark to go home, he felt different emotions. He was excited about seeing his family, but felt a little lonely about his separation from the other prisoners of war. Years later, John recalled his experience in the war. It changed him for the better. He felt honored to serve as his father and grandfather had. He used his experiences to move on to the life in front of him.



Characters

John Sidney McCain Senior

John Sidney McCain Senior, known to his family as Sid and to his friends as Slew, was a naval aviator who became a four-star admiral. His grandson, John McCain, remembers him as a slight, gaunt, hawk-faced, and rail-thin man with a low timbre voice and a vivacious presence. He constantly smoked cigarettes he rolled himself and was notorious for living large. His early years contrasted with his latter ones in that he showed little aptitude for learning and constantly found himself in trouble when he was young. In spite of his status, he had little regard for his appearance and was often unkempt. The man was a born leader who succeeded because of his respect for those that were under his command. He was a brave man in combat, and was the first McCain in several hundred years to choose the Navy. He put all his energy into his fighting and died shortly after World War II ended.

John Sidney McCain Junior

John Sidney McCain Junior, also known as Jack, was a slight man who traveled around a lot when he was younger. This affected his education, and he found his greatest love for learning not from schools, but from his mother who turned their travels into interesting lessons and adventures. Jack entered the United States Naval Academy at the tender age of 16. Like his father, he had little regard for academia or following the rules. After school, he became more serious about his work and dedicated his life to his career as a submariner. Jack married a woman who had good social graces and they, along with his hard work, helped pave the way for his job promotions, which led to his position as a four-star admiral, just like his father. Jack was very devoted to his family, and he was a fair man who never used his position of power to garner benefits unavailable to others. This is shown when he repeatedly refused special favors when his son, John, was a prisoner of war in Vietnam. Only his family saw his grief over his son's captivity, but he never allowed himself privileges other families of POWs could not have. Jack was also very devoted to his God and would spend hours a day on his knees in prayer.

John McCain

John McCain had many of the same attributes as his father and grandfather. He had a love for the sea, was small in stature, and cared little about academia or discipline when he was at the Academy. He also had a very hot temper. Like his forefathers, John was eager to fight for his country in a war so he enlisted during the Vietnam War. By this point in his career, he had turned away from partying and was serious about his work. During the war his plane was shot down, and he became a prisoner of war. This was a challenging time where he learned much about the faith of his fathers and the courage



of the soldiers fighting the war with him. He learned about himself and recognized what it meant to truly be devoted to his country.

Rear Admiral Joe Vasey

Rear Admiral Joe Vasey was a friend of John McCain Junior. He frequently traveled with Jack on trips with political agendas.

Admiral Halsey

Admiral Halsey was a good friend to Slew McCain. They had such a close friendship that even one McCain was under his command, they were able to speak honestly to each other.

Roberta Wright McCain

Roberta Wright McCain was John McCain's mother. She had a knack for making everything in life adventurous and excelled socially. This was an attribute that greatly helped his father's career.

William D. Ravenel

William D. Ravenel was a teacher in John's high school who greatly influenced his life. He taught English and coached the junior varsity football team. Ravenel saw the good in John, and his regard showed John's classmates that he did have some merit.

Captain Ben Hart

Captain Ben Hart (not his real name) did his best to get John McCain kicked out of the Naval Academy. John spent a lot of time fighting against him and outwitting him in order to graduate.

Lieutenant Commander Eugene Ferrell

John McCain credits Eugene Ferrell for teaching him the craft of his grandfather and father. Ferrell gave him cause to love the work that his ancestor loved.

Carol Shepp

Carol Shepp became John McCain's wife. She was a divorced mother of two young sons. A year after the marriage, John adopted the boys.



R.W.

R.W. "Johnny" Apple was a New York Times correspondent based in Saigon. He met John McCain after the fire on the USS Forrestal and the two remained lifelong friends.

George

George "Bud" Day was a fellow prisoner of War in the Plantation who inspired John McCain and became one of his best friends for life.

Bob Craner

Bob Craner was a prisoner of war put in a cell near John McCain when he was staying at the Plantation. The two became very close friends in a friendship that lasted a lifetime.

Orson Swindle

Orson Swindle, a Marine pilot from Georgia, was one of John McCain's cellmates when they were prisoners in the Vietnam War. They became lifelong friends.



Objects/Places

The USS Proteus

The USS Proteus was the submarine tender on which John Sidney McCain Senior and John Sidney McCain Junior met several hours after the end of World War II. John McCain has a photograph of the event, which he prizes.

The United States Naval Academy

The United States Naval Academy in Annapolis was the school that all three of the McCain men highlighted in this book attended.

Guadacanal

John Sidney McCain Senior was awarded the Distinguished Service Medal for his leadership during the Guadalcanal campaign. It was the first amphibious operation conducted by American forces since the Spanish-American War.

USS Gunne

The USS Gunnel is the second submarine that Jack commanded during World War II. He commanded it for five combat patrols, including one where they almost ran out of air.

London

Jack was sent to London to assume command of all the United States naval forces in Europe. This appointment gave him his fourth star.

Episcopal High School

John had a very eclectic education while growing up due to his family's many moves. His parents enrolled him in the Episcopal High School for his later schooling years.

USS Hunt

The USS Hunt was an old destroyer that John McCain boarded for his first class cruise to Rio de Janeiro. It was on this destroyer that he found his love for commanding ships at sea.



Forrestal

When John McCain went to fight in the Vietnam War, he boarded the USS Forrestal. There was a serious inferno aboard that killed over 100 men.

USS Oriskany

The USS Oriskany was the carrier that John McCain took off from when he was shot down by the Vietnamese. When Jack assumed command of the Pacific, he requested that they hold the ceremony aboard the USS Oriskany.

Truc Bach Lake

John McCain landed in Truc Bach Lake in enemy territory when his plane went down. He was taken as a prisoner of war.

Maison Centrale

The Maison Centrale, which prisoners of war called the Hanoi Hilton, was the first prison that John McCain was taken to after his plane went down.

The Plantation

The Americans imprisoned in Vietnam called the mayor of Hanoi's official residence "The Plantation." This was the prison John McCain was put into after his stay in the hospital. He was placed in a cell with George "Bud" Day, who would remain a friend for life.

Calcutta

Calcutta was a place John McCain was sent to for three months while he was prisoner. It was a filthy 6' x 3' room with only one tiny louvered window for ventilation.



Themes

Keeping the Faith

"Faith of My Fathers" is not only the title of the book, but is also a common theme. It refers to faith in comrades, faith in oneself, faith in country, and faith in God. John McCain was inspired by his father's demonstrations of faith as he slipped away quietly on a daily basis to spend time praying. John is also inspired by his father's and grandfather's faith in the United States.

During his time as prisoner in Vietnam, John discovered that keeping faith in God, country, and each other with not only difficult, but it was imperative to survival. The Vietnamese knew this and tried in many different ways to break the prisoners' faith. They beat them, talked to them, and gave them false information so that they would think that others had abandoned them. The psychological warfare threatened to defeat many prisoners, but not those of the most dedicated faith. It was very important for those who still had the faith to keep in touch with the other prisoners who were struggling in order to remind them that they, too, shouldn't give up and should keep the faith.

The author dedicated an entire chapter to faith. Chapter 20, entitled "Lanterns of Faith," highlighted the importance of it. In this chapter John McCain remembered one poignant episode in which he was fighting against despair and fighting to keep his faith. He was thrown into someone else's cell after a long interrogation. Scratched onto one of the walls was the sentence, "I believe in God, the father Almighty." Another prisoner, perhaps try to keep the faith himself, had provided him the inspiration to keep going.

John also talked about his faith in his country. He had always appreciated it, but really fell in love with the United States while he was in prison. His dedication to faith, God, and other prisoners kept him going during beatings and help them keep from giving up vital information during interrogations. Although he wasn't a stellar student during his time in the Academy, he attributed his time there, along with the model from his forefathers, for his ability to keep the faith.

Family

John McCain wrote this book to detail how much he learned from his father and grandfather. It was the examples from their lives that enabled him to survive his years as a prisoner of war in Vietnam. The book opened with accounts from the life of John Sidney McCain Senior, a colorful four-star admiral who had a solid reputation for caring about those under his command, bravery beyond measure, and a willingness to defend his country to the point of his own death. He taught his own son, John Sidney McCain Junior that it was possible to succeed in a job that you enjoyed.



John Sidney McCain Junior, John McCain's father, taught John how important it was to defend the honor of one's name and to fight for one's country. He worked hard at a job that he enjoyed, and rose to the top is a four-star admiral, just like his father. One of the reasons John was able to survive while he was in prison camp was because he kept thinking about how his father would react to certain situations he was in. He wanted to please his father and to not let him down.

The McCain ancestors fought for the country for hundreds of years. Their ancestors fought in every American war including the War for Independence and on the side of the Confederacy during the Civil War. One of John McCain's ancestors served on General Washington's staff. Camp McCain in Granada, Mississippi, was named for John McCain's grandfather's uncle, Major General Henry Pickney McCain, and John trained on an airfield named after his own grandfather.

Code of Conduct

The Code of Conduct For American Prisoners of War was referred to repeatedly in this book. Men who followed the code were greatly admired by John McCain, and the Code itself helped him survive through many a difficult situation with honor. During his experience as a prisoner, John McCain only met two soldiers who did not adhere to the code, and he was profoundly affected by the situation, making it difficult for him to keep a positive morale.

After the Korean War, many Americans were shocked when the American prisoners decided to stay in the country rather than returning home. They felt that this was largely due to the brainwashing of prisoners of four. Due to this, the military drafted the Code of Conduct for American Prisoners of War.

In the Code, soldiers are reminded that they are an American fighting to protect their country to appoint where they are willing to put their life on the line. Those who adhere to the Code agree never to surrender on their own free will or to surrender the members of their command while they are still able to resist. Captured soldiers must make every attempt to escape possible and won't accept any favors from the enemy. They work together to keep the faith with other prisoners and do not give away any information that could be harmful to their fellow fighters. During interrogations, the prisoners of war can give their name, rank, service number, and date of birth but can answer no other questions. The soldiers agree to always remember that they are Americans fighting for their country and trusting in God and the United States of America.



Style

Perspective

"Faith of My Fathers" was written through the collaborative efforts of John McCain and Mark Salter. After his career in the United States Navy, John McCain served two terms as a United States Representative followed by an election and re-election to the United States Senate. He is proud of his family's history with its dedication to serving the United States during times of warfare. Mark Salter was a legislative assistant who became a senator's administrative assistant. He worked with John McCain on his staff for over 10 years.

This book is a compilation of stories and adventures, collected over many decades, reflecting on the failures and achievements of three McCain men. The authors researched thoroughly for this book and demonstrated the characters of Slew and Jack through anecdotes and letters gathered from historical references, coworkers, subordinates, and personal friends and family.

"Faith of My Fathers" shows how normal men became great men with elevated positions thanks to their faith and their sense of honor. Each generation was influenced by the generation that came before it, in urging the next generation to keep the faith. When John McCain was held as a prisoner in Vietnam, his own honor and lineage helped them get through the trials and also gave him a deep respect for those in prison with him. Each of the men highlighted in this book used honor and integrity to overcome adversity.

Tone

The tone of "Faith of My Fathers" is subjective and written in the first-person. However, the information provided in first-person format is backed up from first-person accounts from journals and letters written by friends and coworkers of the McCain man. John McCain writes about his grandfather and father, telling the reader about their lives in order to show how their actions and character made him the man that he became himself.

John McCain uses his father's and grandfather's experiences to show similarity to his own life and to show how they are different. He uses their stories to show where he was inspired, and how they helped him remain loyal to his own country even under severe strain. It was their faith and their example that helps them get through prison camp.

Disrespect for men is very strong throughout the book, but it's not sugarcoated. He doesn't take away for humanity of the man who inspired him, and highlights some of their darkest days as well as their shining moments. For example, John McCain rates about a previously unpublished incident in which his grandfather was removed from command based on some poor decisions he made. He also made it clear that while



Slew and Jack were great leaders, they also had a propensity for trouble. John McCain even highlights stories showing his own ineptitude.

Even as he shows some of the more negative traits of the three men in the book, John McCain also shows how good can come after the bad. He shows how failures in weak moments can be followed by moments of great triumph. There is a strong message of salvation from negative situations when one keeps the faith.

Structure

"Faith of My Fathers" has a Preface followed by Acknowledgments and 28 chapters. The book is also broken up into sections, highlighting each of the three men that are pivotal to the story. Every chapter has a title, and the reason for each title is obvious within the chapter. It highlights the main focus of each chapter. The chapters in this book range from approximately 10 pages to approximately 20 pages per chapter.

The first section is comprised of eight chapters highlighting the life of John Sidney McCain Senior, also known as Slew. The beginning of this section highlights a poem by Frederick William Faber entitled "Faith of our Fathers." The section is also preceded with an image of John McCain's grandfather.

The second section is comprised of five chapters highlighting the lives of John Sidney McCain Junior, also known as Jack and John McCain. The beginning of this section highlights a poem by William Butler Yeats, entitled, "The Old Men Admiring Themselves in Water." The poem is followed by an image of Jack.

The third section of the book contains the bulk of the book. This is the section that focuses on John McCain's life during the Vietnam War. The 14 chapters are preceded by an image of John McCain and a quote written by Alfred, Lord Tennyson, entitled "Lancelot and Elaine."

The first two sections in the book detail each man's childhood and move progressively to the adult years. The first section of the book begins with an anecdote highlighting an important event where Jack and Slew are together. It moves on to Slew's death, then jumps back and begins to tell his tale from his earlier life. The third section of the book merges parts of Jack's life with parts of John's life, showing how they intertwine.



Quotes

"Our family lived on the move, rooted not in a location, but in a culture of the Navy. I learned from my mother not to take the constant disruptions in stride, but to welcome them as elements of an interesting life" (Preface, Faith of My Fathers, pg. viii.)

"For Halsey, the memory of my grandfather's friendship conjured up all the trials and awful strain of combat, the losses they had endured, and the triumph they had celebrated together as leading figures in a great war that changed the world forever" (Chapter 3, Faith of My Fathers, pg. 45.)

"A black car passing our house slowed down and the driver, a naval officer, rolled down his window and shouted, 'Jack, the Japs have bombed Pearl Harbor.' My father left for the base immediately. I saw very little of him for the next four years" (Chapter 7, Faith of My Fathers, pg. 79.)

"I was on leave from the Navy when I attended high school. And the Navy expected me to return when I graduated" (Chapter 9, Faith of My Fathers, pg.110.)

"I remember simply recognizing my eventual enrollment at the Academy was an immutable fact of life, and accepting it without comment" (Chapter 9, Faith of My Fathers, pg. 111.)

"The most important lesson I learned there was that to sustain myself respect for a lifetime it would be necessary for me to have the honor of serving something greater than my self-interest" (Chapter 12, Faith of My Fathers, pg. 152.)

"However, by my second cruise on the Intrepid, I had begun to aspire to a reputation for more commendable achievement spent long nights of drinking and gambling" (Chapter 13, Faith of My Fathers, pg. 157.)

"In those days, the military emphasized escape and evasion more than it dwelled on life in a prison camp" (Chapter 13, Faith of My Fathers, pg. 159.)

"I wanted to go to Vietnam, and to keep faith with family creed" (Chapter 13, Faith of My Fathers, pg. 162.)

"During the three years of Operation Rolling Thunder, the bombing campaign of North Vietnam begun in 1965, no carrier's pilots saw more action or suffer more losses than those on the Oriskany" (Chapter 15, Faith of My Fathers, pg. 182.)

"For the first time we believed we were helping to win the war, and we were proud to be usefully employed" (Chapter 15, Faith of My Fathers, pg. 186.)



"It's an awful thing, solitary. It crushes your spirit and weakens resistance more effectively than any other form of mistreatment" (Chapter 17, Faith of My Fathers, pg. 206.)

"In prison, I fell in love with my country" (Chapter 20, Faith of My Fathers, pg. 254.)

"A filthy, crippled, broken man, all I had left my dignity with the faith of my fathers. It was enough" (Chapter 20, Faith of My Fathers, pg. 257.)

"There were few things enhance life my father valued more dearly than his career. But his good name was one of them" (Chapter 21, Faith of My Fathers, pg. 270.)

"I derived much comfort, however, from knowing that the Navy takes care of its own" (Chapter 23, Faith of My Fathers, pg. 303.)

"Now, when I think about Americans, and how fortunate I am to be included in their number, I see the faces of our neighbors in Orange Park, and give thanks that by a lucky accident of birth, I was born an American" (Chap.23, Faith of My Fathers, pg. 304.)

"Like my father and grandfather, and the Naval Academy, the men I had been honored to serve with call to make to the cause, and I had tried to keep faith with them" (Chapter 28, Faith of My Fathers, pg. 348.)

Topics for Discussion

What was John McCain's family history and why was it important to him?

How did his mother, grandmother, and wife factor into the family military life?

Why did John McCain choose the career path that he chose?

What were some of the regrets that John faced?

How did he overcome the regrets and/or come to terms with them?

How did John's imprisonment affect Jack McCain's role of command? Do you agree or disagree with his decisions? Why or why not?

How did John react to Jack's decisions?

How did Slew and Jack influence John in his life?