Foxfire 9 Study Guide

Foxfire 9 by Eliot Wigginton

Contents

Plot Summary

FOXFIRE 9 is a novel which provides a little information about a variety of different topics in an effort to preserve the historical value of such information. Presented as a series of interviewers between high school students and older folks in the community, and combined with photographs, this novel is a wonderful piece of literature.

"Foxfire 9" is the ninth book in the Foxfire series. Foxfire began as a student newspaper and has grown into a business firm in their belief that history should be preserved. Still seeking to teach the community about older traditions and olden ways of making household items, the Foxfire series is known for presenting a vast range of topics for readers to learn about. In this particular installment, the first section relates to foxfire as an actual event. This section explains that foxfire is the glow on rotting timber that results from a mushroom that attaches to decaying objects and glows in the dark under certain circumstances. Next, a chapter on herbal remedies and healers discusses remedies used in the past to cure a variety of ailments, from aches to yellow jaundice. Also discussed are herbal doctors who use faith healing and herbal remedies to cure their patients. In the next section, the general store is discussed, with several interviews of those who own and operate stores which provide mountain people with goods and supplies. Quilting is covered in the next chapter as different types of quilts are shown. In the following chapter, Nola Campbell, a Catawba Indian is interviewed, who talks about her life on the reservation as well as her art of pottery. Jud Nelson is interviewed and discusses his art of wagon making, as well as his own memories of childhood in the mountains. In "Two Men of God" two stories of religious faith are told. D.B. Dalton is interviewed in the following piece and discusses why he believes he has lived a full and rich life. In "Haint Tales and Other Scary Stories," several individuals tell frightening stories of panther attacks, mad dogs, and ghosts. In the following section, several log cabins are examined in a variety of stages to discuss their construction. Finally, Carolyn Stradley is interviewed, and discusses her difficult life and her courageous struggle to survive and succeed under dire circumstances.

FOXFIRE 9 is another wonderful novel, filled not only with delightful tales of a simpler time in a remote setting, but also with technical information about a variety of different arts and crafts. While dry at times, this novel is generally a pleasure to read and can teach not only about the benefits of hard work, but also about courage, strength, and a drive to succeed. In all, the characters presented in the novel show us that even a harsh life can be filled with happiness, joy, and pleasure.

Introduction and Foxfire - What Is It?

Introduction and Foxfire - What Is It? Summary and Analysis

The Introduction, written by Elliot Wigginton, explains that this edition is that last edition required for the contract with Doubleday. He notes this is good in that the series has required them to limit their stories on certain topics so that many can be presented at once. Foxfire as a company started their own publishing house and has begun publishing their own books, which focus more on single topics, allowing the group to give much more detailed information on the topic. Elliot also notes the group is experimenting with publishing children's books, plays, poetry, photography, out of print works written by Appalachian mountain people, and materials to be used by teachers. These materials are designed with the same philosophy as Foxfire—that hands on learning and real world experience is a far better educational tool than simple instruction. Elliot closes by noting he hopes Foxfire can one day sustain itself and be a viable institution in the community and that he and the others plan to take what they have learned, and move forward.

In "Foxfire-What Is It?" high school student Curt Haban first discusses the botanical characteristics of foxfire. He notes that it is treated in many fantasy stories as a magical plant, often associated with witches and elves. He then quotes several reference books that note foxfire is the light or glow that appears on decaying wood as a result of certain young mushrooms that grow on such wood. Biology teacher Billy Stiles explains that only buttons, or very small young mushrooms, produce foxfire. Curt then explains that the light of foxfire is actually the result of a chemical reaction within the fungi pigment. Curt then interviews Clyde Hollifield, who with his wife shows children how foxfire works in presentations. Clyde admits he doesn't know the physical reasons for foxfire, but he believes it is the fire of very small people who live in the woods. He notes the glow can last a very long time, but that one can only see it on very dark nights. He explains that foxfire is very wet, that it must be broken up into very small pieces, and can be seen best in poplar and oak, but rarely in resin-producing tree. He finishes by noting one of his favorite things to do is get a bucket of foxfire and throw it over a waterfall. Since water doesn't put it out, the water will carry along the stream and make the river glow.

Remedies, Herb Doctors, and Healers

Remedies, Herb Doctors, and Healers Summary and Analysis

"Remedies" begins with an interview with Flora Youngblood, who is an herb doctor whose father was both an herb doctor and a faith healer. She also weaves honeysuckle baskets. Flora notes she was born in 1906 and was the seventh of nine children. Her father, Henry, was a gentle man who grew up near an Indian chief who raised his interest in herbal remedies. At the age of 21, Henry went to live on the reservation where he learned both herbal doctoring as well as faith healing. At 31, he began gold mining, farming, and married. He developed arthritis but continued to practice doctoring. People came from all over for his remedies, and Youngblood describes several occurrences where people were treated using such ingredients as alum, hog lard, barbell, whiskey, snake button, and others. Flora recalls her father tending to a gunshot wound of her mother, as well. He did not set prices for his services but rather accepted whatever the customer had as payment, whether a service, barter, or money. Her mother sewed all their clothing, and quilted as well. Flora recalls her father setting her arm, going to school, and playing with her sister. She also remembers catching a turtle for a pet and her mother cooking it for dinner. They traded eggs, chickens, broom straw, and other items for goods at the local general store. Flora married her husband when she was eighteen. Her husband farmed while she raised the children and tended to the animals. She also practiced herbal doctoring. As a young girl, she learned to weave baskets using honeysuckle vines. Flora states that gathering vines is best in the spring. She boils them with washing powder to remove the bark. There are several diagrams and drawings presented next, showing each step of the basket weaving process.

Next, there is a listing of home remedies given by Flora herself and several other local residents who use them. Thirty pages of the article offer remedies for a wide variety of ailments. Many of the ingredients are herbs, while some are oils such as kerosene, or turpentine. Bloodroot, apples, barbell, flax seed, resin, lard, tallow, onion, caster oil, and alum are all popular items used. Some remedies, however, are not made from herbs, but are simply superstitions. For burns, Flora notes that she, as the seventh child, has the Biblical power to blow out fire, using Bible verses. For a nosebleed, Annie Henry advises letting the nose bleed on a knife and then burying the knives. Such "remedies" are common, but others, such as using caster oil for constipation, vinegar for hiccups, and salt for stings are common around the country. Flora also explains in this section that she cures thrush by repeating a verse and blowing in the mouth of the afflicted for three days in a row.

In the next section, John Bulgin, whose grandfather, Dr. Brabson, was a doctor, is interviewed. John shows the Foxfire staff a collection of operating instruments, and explains that Dr. Brabson's father-in-law was also a doctor, Dr. Rush. Brabson studied under Rush. Their family was wealthy and helped for whatever the families could pay.

Together, they developed a cure for "milk sickness," which is a disease that causes fever, stomach aches, loss of appetite, constipation, coma, and in many cases, death. It is caused by drinking the milk of a cow who has ingested the white snakeroot plant. Bulgin still has a ledger in which Brabson kept a listing of accounts. He remembers stories of his grandfather's feet being frozen to stirrups after long medical trips. Bulgin admits he still uses the barter method for payment in some cases.

The General Store

The General Store Summary and Analysis

This chapter begins with a tale of a general store owner who could not read. He used pictures to record items purchased in order to issue credit, and on occasion, had difficulty deciphering his drawings. In the first section, the Moore family is interviewed about their general store, known as the Fort Hembree store. The family tree is listed, from Aaron Moore, who immigrated from Ireland, through John Singleton, the author. Aaron Moore immigrated in 1740, was a captain in the Army, and settled in Rutherford County. One of his children was John Moore, who gave life to another son named John in 1811. A newspaper article about John notes he was adventurous. Eventually, he purchased land and found gold. He sold this land, along with his mine, for a large sum and moved back to Tusquittee, where he died. It was John who, during his life, opened a tannery and general store in Hayesville, N.C, called Fort Hembree. A ledger from the store at that time shows such goods as leather, tanning services, sheep skin, bull hide, and other tannery items. There are also recipes, as well as home remedy recipes. Several pages of the ledger are presented, and the authors discuss buying patters. The researchers found that few people spent more than $10 in an entire year, that many bills were paid through goods and services rather than money, and that few accounts were held by women. Several specific accounts are then presented. Goods that could be purchased include staple supplies, padlocks, chains, dictionaries and many other items. One of John's sons was William Moore, nicknamed Captain Irish Bill. He was a highly successful captain in the army, where he received his nickname. He and his wife Hattie moved to the area and built a log cabin. They often had to battle roughriders or bandits. He kept sheep in the summer and hogs in the winter; each hog was specifically branded. The family was quite prominent. They kept race horses, and Irish Bill often had problems breaking them. A letter to Irish Bill from a member of his family discusses the sale of hogs. An article about Irish Bill discussing his army career is also included. William's son, Lawrence, is discussed next. As a farmer, merchant, and blacksmith, he started out poor but eventually made a decent living. He ran a general store for fifteen to twenty years, along with a blacksmith shop. He also, at one point, drew a family tree, which is included in the book. Frank Moore is interviewed next and tells of his school years, which only lasted through the eighth grade. He then married and had several children. Growing up, his family was poor, so he learned to trap for fur trading. He became a highly successful trapper.

In the next section, a general store operated by Patton D. Queen is discussed. Jack Queen, a relative, now owns the ledgers from the original store, which was open in the early 1900s. His mother, Ollie, tells of her time in the store as a little girl. She remembers it was made of wood with no electricity and was fully stocked. The ledgers were kept to track accounts, and one could pay with money, goods, or services. A list of items sold shows a variety of goods, from window hinges to mutton to paper. Several items, such as Japanese oil, Vermifuge, and box sprigs were unknown to the authors, but Ollie was able to explain the items. The store also loaned money to customers.

Martha and Ed Roane are interviewed next about their own general store. Martha Roane first discusses her life as a child, where she grew up in a nice home. She recalls chores and raising sheep. She also recalls using castor oil for colds, and tea for measles. She taught in several schools; while teaching in Tiger, Georgia, she met Ed, who owned and operated the general store. They were married soon after and farmed as well as ran the store. Her grandfather had also owned a general store. Ed Roane discusses his store, which opened in 1927. The store sold hardware as well as general supplies. People would trade goods, and Ed would turn around and sell them. During the depression, however, Ed and Martha did what they could to help others who couldn't find employment. They gave credit, raised money, and loaned money to those who needed it. Those individuals would then pay off the debt by working the farm, tending the gardens, or helping with the cattle. The couple also had a sawmill and a gristmill where people could work off their debt. Word War II came, and the store was successful as people returned the money they owed. Ed opened another store and moved goods back and forth by truck. The couple then discuss their most popular products, which included stick candy, coffee, flour, meat, seeds, soap, and other basic staples.

The next section is on Roy Roberts, another owner of a general store. Roy worked many jobs, and the interviewers note his sense of humor. He also shows them how to make wooden toys and charcoal, which he makes for commercial use. Roy states he was born in the area and notes that back then, people raised everything they needed. They often doctored themselves or had to cross a mountain to fetch a real doctor; they had a man who pulled teeth with forceps. During the Depression, Roy went to Detroit to work, where he was a cabinet maker, receiver, and security guard. He made good money, and when a general store came up for sale back home, he purchased it. He eventually moved his store to another location by the post office and train station. He purchased as many goods as possible at wholesale and also sold soft drinks and pulpwood. They originally loaded and unloaded it by hand, but eventually he built a mechanism to load it mechanically. In addition, he sold ham to the train engineers as they drove through town; he also sold herbs. He, like the others, sold on credit and took payments of money, goods, or services. He points out that most paid their debt eventually. At one point, a young boy paid him with skunks, and Roy decided to begin raising them. After being sprayed many times, he learned to de-scent them. He then decided to try making charcoal. He designed and built his kilns and in the process of making them, digs up several graves. He assumes they are the bones of slave workers who built the railroad. At the top of each kiln is a metal plate that can be removed. These blow off in the event of spontaneous combustion inside the kiln, but Roy also used them to change the area of heat to evenly bake the wood. He sold the charcoal and did well, until the briquette plant closed. He then sold his remaining charcoal in ten pound bags. He admits he lost money on the operation but notes that in its prime, the store was making $70,000 a year.

In the final section of this chapter, Earl Gillespie is interviewed about his work in the produce industry. Earl recalls his family raised their own food, and gathered nuts from the woods. The family also had cattle as well as grew cabbage. His father worked in produce, in that he would pick up vegetables for others and sell it at the market. When he was fourteen, Earl began to do the same. Eventually, he began buying and selling

apples, as well and raised enough money to open a small store. They lost the store during the Depression but opened a new store in Clayton afterwords. His store sold not only produce but also wholesale as well as some hardware and clothing. He also had a coffee mill. He remembers that when a train hauling items would crash, he would offer to buy the stock at a reduced price. He and his brothers would haul the wholesale produce to areas such as Atlanta, which kept them in business. They would pick it up from the farmers, grade it, package it, and then haul it over muddy roads. In Atlanta, they would then go to the market and sell everything they could. Earl's son, Jim, notes that the life of cabbage now is much smaller than it was in the past, since it is grown differently. Also, he notes that packaging is all done automatically now; whereas, it was done carefully by hand previously. He finds it amazing that the produce industry is one of the few that still operates without contracts.

Quilting - The Joy of My Life

Quilting - The Joy of My Life Summary and Analysis

In this section, the authors present a visual representation of many of the common types of quilting used in the Appalachian mountain area. First, they note several women quilters who assisted their writing, including Ruth Holcomb. Kim English notes that Aunt Arie, often consulted in Foxfire books, noted that quilting was the joy of her life and that she thoroughly enjoyed her work. Kin researches crazy quilts, which are friendship quilts that have been personalized. In the next pages, various quilts are photographed; each has a small description of the quilt and the type of pattern. Fishtail patterns only use five primary pattern pieces. The fan design, or shell design, is used in older quilts. The Irish chain quilt is a single or double lined pattern quilted diagonally across one another to form diamonds. Some quilts shown are made of velvet and other dress fabrics, while others are made of simple cotton. A friendship quilt is a quilt done in a group, where each individual makes a single square, and as a group, these squares are joined, then the top is quilted. Another pattern is the monkey wrench or churn dash, which consists of several squares in rows.The Dresden plate pattern, which is a series of circles contained within squares, is also used often. Other patterns include the "Joseph coat of many colors," "grandmother's flower garden," "drunken path," "bear paw," "spiderweb," and the "log cabin." The Dutch doll pattern is a series of small Dutch doll patterns enclosed in squares.

Nola Campbell - Catawba Indian Potter

Nola Campbell - Catawba Indian Potter Summary and Analysis

This chapter introduces Nola Campbell. As authors Allison Adams and Oh Soon Shropshire note, Nola is a relative of some members of the Foxfire staff. The pottery she makes is not created with a potter's wheel, but is made from coils of clay shaped together; the pieces are unglazed. Nola states that her mother moved from South Carolina to the Indian reservation on which her mother lived. Nola's father is full Catawba Indian and her mother is Caucasian. Nola herself wishes she were darker like her father. Nola is one of seven children, four of which are still living. She explains that she was not present for the birth of her twin sisters but was highly jealous of them when they were born. She worked the cotton fields at age six and began school the following year. She went through the fifth grade, but Indians were allowed to go no further. She recalls being caught with girls who were smoking and later beating up the boy who tattled on them. She also tells a story of being sick from eating snuff as a child. On another occasion, she and her sister went to fetch an axe for their father. Her sister jokingly said she would cut off Nola's toes; when Nola called her on it, her sister did cut her toe so there was only skin holding it on. Her mother used pine resin, spiderweb, and soot to heal the wound. She reminds the interviewers that times were harder when she was a child. For Christmas, she recalls receiving new shoes, fruit, and nuts. Nola's father died when she was ten. Her mother moved the family off the reservation to work on a nearby farm. While Nola notes she doesn't mind hard work, she believes they were treated much more harshly due to their race. On one occasion, the children were not paid for their work, and their mother refused to go collect their pay, but their uncle collected their pay, and soon after moved them back to the reservation. Nola married Raymond Harris, who was in the service. When he finished his enlistment, he farmed for a living. He served as chief of the tribe for three years but became ill and died at age thirty-eight. Nola remarried and had a total of ten children.

Nola remembers dances at the reservation, both socially and for purposes such as rain. She recalls doing a rain dance for people she worked with and laughing when it actually rained. She doesn't believe in such superstitions but knows many Indians do. She notes that Indians won't sweep dirt out the door after sundown, won't leave clothes out at night, and won't place a baby's feet on the ground. Many believe in ghosts and the bad luck of black cats as well. Nola wishes she had learned more about Indian traditions. Nola says she owns the land she lives on but that the reservation was originally leased land. When the lease expired, the government simply took their land away. While many filed law suits, Nola doubts it will be fruitful. She holds nothing against the whites since her mother was one, but also loves the Indians. She has worked hard throughout her life and is happy with her accomplishments.

Nola explains that she learned to make pottery from the Catawbas. She credits another potter, Georgia Harris, as being the best as she herself learned from Georgia, who is her sister-in-law. She learned pottery at age thirteen and began by making small pots. She knows the art will be lost if one of her children or grandchildren does not learn it, as there are few who still know how. She recalls a trip she and another potter made to Washington, D.C. to make pottery in a demonstration. She has also traveled to South Carolina and Union to demonstrate her art. In addition, she teaches once a week at a local pottery school. Nola admits she receives good money for her pots, peace pipes, and ducks. She tires of making pots at times, since each piece takes so long. She admits it is hard work; finding clay is most difficult and it takes two kinds of clay. Her sons and husband help her find the clay, dry it, mix it, and dry it again until it is workable. Following this interview are several images of various stages of Nora's creation of pots and jugs. Nola first rolls clay into cylinders, and then molds the cylinders together and smooths the inside of the pot. She then dries the pot, and smooths it with rocks. When done, she bakes the pots in her oven, and then moves them to a pit in the ground. Wood is then laid in the hole in layers, the pots are added, and a layer of newspapers covers the pots. The wood is lit, and the pots are allowed to dry in the fire and cool for several days.

The Jud Nelson Wagon

The Jud Nelson Wagon Summary and Analysis

In this section, student David Brewin follows Jud Nelson for three months, documenting how to make a wagon. Jud discusses his parents, and says he is born in 1913. His uncle was a blacksmith, a fiddle player, and an excellent wood carver. He recounts several stories of his uncle welding springs; once a drunken man in a bar raised his head long enough to utter common sense, and then laid it back down. He notes this man was nicknamed Square, and that he liked his whiskey, as he demonstrates when two men ask him to sample their whiskey and he drinks the entire bottle. Jud continues by stating that blacksmithing was a good living, as was hand cutting crossties for the railroad. Jud's own father was a carpenter and cotton farmer. He recalls his father returning to the farm with new shoes, cheese, and soda after selling cotton. His father also made sorghum syrup, which was used to sweeten food. Jud remembers George Adams' father coming in for the first time with maple syrup, and George stealing it later, only to discover he had been tricked and had instead eaten castor oil. He also remembers sorghum used in remedies, such as a mixture of it and sulfur to ward off flu. Jud and his uncle built their own syrup mil. Jud worked with his father in a blacksmith shop, and he notes the intelligence of his father, and his admiration of his father's work. When Jud was seventeen, he began working for a local blacksmith and at twenty-two opened his own shop. He was married in 1934, built a new log shop, and began working on wagons. He went into the navy in 1941, returning in 1945. He enjoys his work and believes he is skilled. The next forty pages shows Jud making a wagon from beginning to end. He makes the hubs of the wheels first, then the spokes, and then the rims. Metal tires are added, and the axles are put into place. Then, the undercarrage, front end, and rear end are completed. Next, the break assembly and bed are put into place. Stay chains and tongue chains are added, and finally, a nameplate is added to indicate the builder of the wagon.

Two Men of God

Two Men of God Summary and Analysis

The first story in this section discusses Charles Phillips, the grandfather of Foxfire student Curtis Weaver. Curtis' mother, Catherine, explains that Charles was a Missionary Baptist preacher. He was called by God to serve in August of 1956, learned to read, and preached until he was ordained in 1957, after which he was allowed to pastor. One day, he felt compelled to go outside his home to pray at a specific rock, which he did from that day forward. If he couldn't sleep, he would read his Bible and pray, believing that someone needed his prayers at that moment. He used stones to indicate souls he had prayed for that were saved, and souls he had prayed for that were not saved. Many would come to pray with him at the praying rock, including both other preachers and sinners. Catherine notes there was a broken bottle top left at her father's funeral, which belonged to a preacher who backslid into alcoholism. The bottle was placed with the other stones, and the preacher still stops to pray at the rock. The rock, Catherine states, stands as it did when her father was alive, including the stones in the piles they were in at the time of his death. His life, she notes, was lived for God, every day,

In the next story, Henry Harrison Mayes is interviewed. Henry is a retired coal miner and is determined to bring the word of God to everyone on earth as well as on other planets. He builds signs and stands with devotional messages on roadways all over the United States. He explains that he was in a horrible mining accident as a young man and promised God he would deliver his word if he survived. Since then, he has made signs to remind humans to repent of their sins and to accept God. He is highly religious and despises racial hatred. He is self educated. He tells a story in which he went to a strip show in order to understand it, so that when he stood against it, he could say he had witnessed it himself. He left his church when they questioned this action. He currently has as many as seventy-five cross signs throughout the United States. In some cases, he has put them in illegally, and in one case, asked President Carter to assist in getting the highway department to allow him to place his signs, and he was granted permission. After several heart attacks, he now puts messages in bottles and sends them to missionaries around the world to distribute in prisons. The messages are written in fourteen languages; with each batch to each missionary, he sends a new dollar bill for each member of the missionary's family as birthday gifts. He notes that where the river leads, the water joins New Orleans, and then heads to the ocean. He also wants to put signs on other planets as he believes this planet will be used up soon. He notes he and his wife pay for all their own expenses and have nearly $75,000 in the business already but that God will return any investment fourfold. Henry strongly believes he is a universal watchman of the world and that he is only a servant of God.

Life Is Good

Life Is Good Summary and Analysis

In "Life Is Good," Dana Holcomb, a Foxfire student, interviews her grandfather D.B. Dayton. Her grandfather lives in a bricked over trailer next to the general store he owns. His daughter runs the store now, giving him time to do woodworking and tend his beehives. D.B. explains that his parents were very strict and that his father had heart problems for many years before he died. His mother was crippled for most of her life due to an incident as a child that broke her spine and leaving her crippled in one leg. He recounts stories of his mother and father getting along well until Christmas, the only time of year his father drank. Then his mother would yell. He also discusses his father as well as himself having to pay poll taxes to vote. He and his parents and siblings moved to Scataway to work for Vogel Lumber Company as fire watchers, who made sure no fires burned the rail fences. They slept on straw beds, swept with homemade brooms, went barefoot for the summer, made soap from lye, and ate hominy. They also washed clothes by hand and made clothing lines from telephone wires. At one point, D.B. climbed an apple tree and fell, breaking open his head. He did not see a doctor. He notes that people were healthier then and had turpentine, castor oil, salts, and soot for remedies. D.B. had phthisis, or tuberculosis, as a child, and was cared for at home, even after catching whooping cough. He recalls when individuals would help those that were ill grow their crops or repair their farms and notes this does not happen anymore. They had no electricity, farmed by hand, and sold sassafras for extra money. They traded their eggs for other staples and would only use them on Easter when they would be dyed. D.B.'s mother made pumpkin meat in the winter, grew vegetables, and made apple butter and other goods. His grandfather had a mill; nearly everyone brought their corn there to be made into syrup. They ate cornbread, sowchy, and ramps. His father worked for food rather than money and raised hogs. The children helped work the farm, and the family had little money. They helped carry corn to the mill, picked peas, and drive turkeys. D.B. also recalls the first time he ate a banana and admits he didn't know how to peel it. D.B. also recalls his sister lying to their father, claiming D.B. had made her carry a stick larger than he carried. When his father found out she had lied, he whipped her. D.B. also notes no one, at that time, worried about robbery. He also recalls two dogs they had when he was a child. The smaller dog would bark when a snake was found, and the larger dog would immediately come to the smaller dogs' rescue. They also broke small bulls. D.B. has never ridden a trai, nor a plane and was twelve before he saw his first car. D.B. recalls swapping cows on Halloween and scaring a local boy as he courted a young woman. Pitching horseshoes and revivals were popular pastimes. In school, D.B. remembers crooking pins for others to sit on and gathering wood for teachers. He believes school taught him nothing but real life experiences did.

At age twenty, D.B. ran a store out of his father's barn loft and moved it to his mother's porch soon after. He learned to drive with a neighbor before he was married at age twenty four. He married Sadie when she was sixteen, and since he already had a house, moved into it. D.B. recalls several incidents when doctors were unable to assist

in his wife's births. He also recalls working for the WPA, building roads, hauling acid wood and tanbark, and hauling fence posts. D.B. began selling produce and made enough money to build a store. Now, D.B. plays checkers with other older men, tends the beehives, and sells other products he makes. He claims he wouldn't live in a city, no matter what was offered.

Haint Tales and Other Scary Stories

Haint Tales and Other Scary Stories Summary and Analysis

In the first portion of this chapter, several local residents recount tales about panthers in the wild of the mountains. Some claim never to have seen them, but they have heard horror stories. Often called painters, panthers are often seen on the roadway; some people interviewed claim to have escaped panthers only because of hunting dogs of the rearing of their horses. Panthers are said to have chased a woman on horseback, eaten a midwife as she traveled home, and stolen and eaten babies. Many note the scream of a panther sounds much like that of a human being. Others note that panthers often enter homes in search of food, and in some stories, kill the residents. In the second section, stories of rabid dogs and other animals are given. One woman tells a story of a wild animal escaping the circus who followed her home. She believes the animal may have been a hyena but is unsure. Another tells of a bald eagle who stole a baby from a carriage and took it back to the nest. In another tale, a young boy is bitten by a rabid dog and dies. In another story, dogs are attacked by a rabid dog and go mad within two weeks. Several speakers note the difficultly in determining if a dog was rabid and note there were many rabid animals in the area. Several mention a madstone, which is a stone taken from the stomach of a deer, that was used to cure rabies. The stone was simply placed against the bite, and the poison drawn out.

In the third section, several individuals tell stories of ghosts. In one case, a house and outbuilding are haunted by a little girl who passed away. Footsteps are heard, doors and opened and closed, and knocking is heard. In other tales, a baby who is killed by her mother can be heard crying; a deceased mother and daughter can be heard screaming; lights are seen chasing people in a graveyard, and headless men are seen walking. In another story, a young girl whose mother has recently passed away is sent to the barn in pitch blackness to milk the cow as punishment for being late. She is frightened but sees the ghost of her mother, which calms her. In the fourth section, one woman states that her grandmother would always make a cross in the dirt and spit in it while make a wish for someone anytime she had to turn around. Also, she states she believed spinning in a chair was unlucky, as was walking with only one shoe, and planting ceder trees. Also, in another story a witch is said to cause the death of pigs as retaliation for a man not selling them. In the final story, a shape changer is said to fool his brother by changing into a deer while his brother is hunting.

A Second Look At The Log Cabin

A Second Look At The Log Cabin Summary and Analysis

The first section of this chapter discusses a large log cabin called the Rothell house that was originally built in the 1700. The Foxfire organization purchased it when it was for sale and moved it to their land as a restoration project. They disassembled the log cabin piece by piece, moved them, and then rebuilt the cabin. Mitch Anderson is a local individual who remembers the Rothell house from his childhood. He recalls there was a garden in front of the cabin, a barn, a smaller servant home, and a well. The house was large and often served as a gathering place for locals. Much of the home was carpeted, and there was electricity. The upstairs area was bedrooms originally, but this changed to sewing rooms, with only a single bedroom upstairs. The central room upstairs was used often for singing and large gatherings. It had benches down the sides of the room and kerosene floor lamps, which are pictured, as well as a piano. In the main hall on the bottom floor were ten rocking chairs with tree hats above each. There were three bedrooms as well. Another room was set aside to board school teachers. The room was well furnished, and the goal was to keep the teachers well protected. The dining room consisted of a huge table with nineteen chairs, as well as cupboards for china and silver. The boys' bedroom was furnished with beds and wash stands for each, as well as dressers and mirrors. The beds were hand carved. In the kitchen, an electric stove was used as was a wood range. The stove was equipped with a water tank so the family would have hot water. They hung meat, washed clothing, and made hominy in the cellar. They also used it for storage. When the last family member who lived in the home died, the family chose to rent the home, and it sat empty. Several photographs follow showing the dimensions of the home, and the disassembly and reassembly of the cabin.

In the next section, puncheon floors are explained. These floors are handmade wood floors, made from six foot boards three inches thick set on wooden floor joists. The boards are first cut from the logs,and then dried for at least three months, then sanded using a hand plane. They are then put into place using a wedge to fit them tightly together. Next, the making of a maul is discussed by Carlton Nichols. First, the wood is chosen when still green, and is baked for two hours by a fire. It is then air dried until hard and shaped as needed. In the next section, Frank Vinson makes a broadax handle. He takes the log and carves it into a rectangle. He then rounds the corners, shapes it, clamps both ends to a straight board, and shoves a wedge under the wood. This will curve the handle, as needed. Once dried, he makes a hole in the handle, and pounds in the axhead.

Carolyn Stradley

Carolyn Stradley Summary and Analysis

The final article in the book is about a woman named Carolyn Stradley. She owns her own paving company in spite of a hard life as an orphaned girl. Carolyn grew up in the mountains of Blairsville. As a young child, her family moved back and forth to Atlanta often as her father worked many jobs. By her sixth grade in school, the family still did not have electricity. She remembers always being responsible for things such as gathering water, feeding animals, and other chores as her mother was often very ill with heart disease. She died when Carolyn was only eleven. Carolyn admits her father was an alcoholic and that her father remarried less than two weeks following her mother's death. He moved to Atlanta with his new wife and left his children alone in the mountains to survive on their own. Eldon, Carolyn's older brother, began working at age fifteen to support them. Carolyn remembers winters being particularly hard without heat. She washed her clothing every night, as she only had one pair of socks. She recalls feeling very left out and being made fun of. One year, someone gave her a bar of soap as a cruel joke, but she notes it was a wonderful gift, as she never had anything but lye. Carolyn worked through the summers and used the money to buy clothing for winter. She canned the food they grew and also kept other people's children for a fee. She cleaned the schools for food, but notes she never begged for anything, and worked for every single thing she received. She notes that no one cared about her or her brother,and recalls one Christmas when she went to a local pastors' home, not wishing to be alone. He politely asked her to leave, and she is, to this day, furious over a man of God's refusal to take in an orphaned girl on Christmas. She credits her faith in God for her survival. When she was thirteen she moved to Atlanta with her brother, continuing school. She is a licensed pilot, has done skydiving, and can scuba dive, but she still prefers to read a good book. She signed her own report card and wrote her own notes, and no one ever knew she was without parents. She also began working and during tenth grade, met a man. They dated for a year and then married. When she became pregnant, she quit school, and went to work full time. They lived a normal, happy life until Arther, her husband, became ill with strep throat, which spread to his kidneys, and he died. Carolyn went back to school at night and received a diploma in civil engineering. She became a division manager for the company she worked for and then quit to form her own company. She tries to show appreciation for her staff and cares for them like family. Carolyn admits she had a rocky relationship with her alcoholic father throughout her life, but that she tried to help him right up until he died. She now cares for the stepmother who refused to take her in. Carolyn believes she lives life honestly, without shame, and that she gives the world all she can.

Characters

Foxfire Staff

The Foxfire staff is perhaps the most important group of individuals related to the novel, although their contribution seems smaller than that of those interviewed. Each article begins with a small passage written by the Foxfire interviewer, which establishes the setting for the rest of the piece. However, one must also realize each interview has been painstakingly transcribed after listening to hours of tape recordings. Thousands of photos have been taken and developed. Processes have been examined and written out in detail. These students spent much of their own time traveling to meet those interviewed and took the time to truly tell those people's stories. Unlike many high school students, these kids sought to discover their heritage and to present that heritage in an honorable and cherished way. The staff of Foxfire adults who help the youths through their interviews are given little credit, and yet their time and effort has obviously allowed these children to really appreciate their lives in a whole new way.

Clyde Hollifield

Clyde Hollifield is a resident expert on foxfire. He and his wife often put on shows for children demonstrating foxfire and allowing them to understand the components that make up particular skills. Clyde notes his interest in foxfire stems from the many legends about the glowing fungus. He discusses his belief in the "little people" who live in the mountains and the idea that foxfire is their version of fire. He believes foxfire is barely a part of the physical world. He discusses his experiences with foxfire, including how he prepares for a demonstration. He admits he knows little about why it glows but finds it magical. While Clyde may not understand the physics behind the phenomenon, it is clear he enjoys talking about it and showing others how it works. Such a childlike awe of a natural event is so rare in adults that it is refreshing to read about someone like Clyde, who finds this event mystical enough to teach it to others.

Flora Youngblood

Flora Youngblood is an older woman interviewed about her knowledge of herbal remedies. Her father, Henry Cantrell, was an herb doctor all of his life, and it was from him that Flora was able to learn her craft. Coming from a big family, Flora is no stranger to hard work. Her father had gone to live with the Cherokee Indians on their reservation at the age of twenty one to learn their herbal remedies and medicinal practices. He stayed for ten years and learned well. After he left, he began to gold mine and farm but remained one of the only doctors in the area. He developed severe arthritis but continued to practice long after the onset of his illness. He taught Flora about how to mix herbs and various remedies, how to grow certain herbs, and where to find others. Flora herself married at seventeen and began farming. She had eight children and

weaves baskets in her spare time. Her knowledge of herbal remedies is clear in her discussion of such remedies, and although they may seem obscure now, Flora will swear by such remedies, as will many who used them as children.

Martha and Ed Roane

Martha and Ed Roane are two more individuals who were interviewed because they at one time owned and operated a general store. Martha grew up in the mountains and became a school teacher in Tiger, Georgia. Ed, her now husband, owned a store in Tiger, and gave her a box of candy. She soon left to teach in Center, Georgia, and Ed began writing her. When she returned, the two were married. They had five children, and the children, as they grew, were responsible for taking care of the cows, yard work, and other tasks. Martha admits she grew up around general stores, as her father and grandfather both owned and operated their own. Ed opened his store inn 1927. The couple had a difficult time during the depression. They continued to borrow money against their land during that time to pay for their goods, since they allowed those out of work to continue buying on credit and paying as they could, or trading. When World War II began, the couple collected much of the money owed and opened another store. When times were tough, they would operate a moving store. Ed and Martha are prime examples of individuals who give to their neighbors and who work hard for what they have. Their tenacity and determination allowed them not only to operate a store during the Depression but to help others survive.

Henry Mayes

Henry Mayes is a highly religious man living in Kentucky who spent his life placing religious signs in view of the public in an effort to remind mankind that they will be judged. Henry believes all individuals deserve to be saved but that some choose to ignore God. He makes huge cross billboard signs, cardboard signs, and signs in bottles that are carried throughout the world in his effort to spread the word of God. He even hopes to reach other planets someday, simply because he believes mankind will soon ruin the Earth. Henry is not an overbearing man, nor does he appear to be a religious fanatic, but instead is simply a man who believes firmly in God and wishes to spread God's word to others. After a heart attack, his efforts are limited, but Henry still sends messages in bottles to missionaries throughout the world to spread his message.

D.B. Dayton

D.B. Dayton is the grandfather of Foxfire staff member Dana Holcomb. He is interviewed primarily for his recollection of his past and his excellent storytelling, which the Foxfire staff believes others will enjoy. D.B. grew up in a happy home but has stories of his father being drunk at Christmas and his mother's frustration. He tells of elections at the time of his youth and his homes and surroundings as a child, including the makeup of his bed, household items such as brooms, clothing, shoes, and quilts. He

reminds the young interviewers that health care was much different, as people went to the doctor very rarely. Throughout his life, he has been hard working, honest, and religious, and his story is one of hardship blended with a strong pride in work and in family. D.B.'s story is important not from a technical standpoint but from the standpoint that a hard life can be a successful life, if one is able to enjoy what he or she does.

Nola Campbell

Nola Campbell is interviewed primarily for her knowledge of pottery, but her story is one of courage and strength in a racist environment. Nola is part Indian, in that her father was pure Indian, while her mother was white. She grew up on the Catawba Indian reservation and recalls several stories of her early childhood. She began working in the fields with her father at an early age but was forced to go to school. She can remember being poor, and there being little money left for luxury items, so often made their own toys. When her father died when Nola is ten, however, Nola and her sister were moved off the reservation and onto a farm so they could work. They were worked harder than most because of their race, until their brother rescued them. They moved back and forth between the reservation and farms for many years thereafter to survive; Nola eventually married. Unfortunately, her husband passed away at a young age, but Nola remarried. In all, she had ten children. She knows much about her Indian heritage and has worked hard for everything she currently has. She is proud of her mixed heritage and proud to have learned her pottery skill from her sister-in-law. Nola has gone to Washington, D.C to demonstrate her skill, as well as many other places. She is a true testament to the idea that learning the skills of one's heritage is useful to preserving the art.

Jud Nelson

Jud Nelson was interviewed for the book as a knowledgeable source on building wagons. He was born in 1912, to a family of blacksmiths and woodworkers. They also grew their own sorghum, which was used in syrup as well as home remedies. At age 21, Jud opened his own blacksmith shop, built his own home, and did blacksmith work for the navy, as well. Jud shows the interviewers how to make a wagon in detail, allowing them to photograph and document each step. Jud's technical knowledge of building a wagon makes his interview particularly useful.

Mitch Anderson

Mitch Anderson is one of the prime individuals interviewed about the Rothell log home. He moved in near the cabin with his parents in 1915, and was raised there, so he knows much about the construction of the home. He and others used to gather in the home on Saturdays and Sundays to sing, and Mitch additionally helped rewire the home and make repairs on it. He explains the layout of the home, including most of the furniture, as well as explains much of the happenings of the time.

Carolyn Stradley

Carolyn Stradley is the final person interviewed for the book. She has led a very difficult life, in that her mother died early; her father abandoned her and her brother, and they were left to fend for themselves in the mountains. Her brother was gone much of the time, and she was left alone to either survive or die. She went to school, eventually moved with her brother to Atlanta, and found herself pregnant before graduating. She married and had the child and was rather happy until her husband became ill and died. Carolyn pulled herself up again, went back to school, and graduated college with a degree in civil engineering. She now owns her own concrete company and spends much of her extra money on helping others. Carolyn is a wonderful role model for those from a difficult background, in that she has consistently overcome an alcoholic father and many other tragedies to create a full and rich life for herself.

Objects/Places

Foxfire

Foxfire is the glow as a result of a mushroom that grows on rotting timber.

Crazy Quilt

A crazy quilt is a friendship quilt that has been personalized in some way.

Catawbas

The Catawbas are the Indian tribe to which Nola Campbell is related.

Lye Gum

A lye gum is a hollow log set upon on boards into which ashes are poured. In spring, water is poured into the gum, flowing through the ashes. This produces lye.

Madstone

A madstone is a stone taken from the stomach of a deer that is said to be able to draw poison from a snake or animal bite, especially one with rabies.

General Store

A general store is, in this book, a place where individuals can buy many of the basic necessities for living in the harsh conditions of the mountains.

Herb remedy

Herbal remedies are home cures that are made from plants and minerals growing naturally.

Haint Tale

A Haint tale is a scary story, often about panthers or ghosts.

Praying Rock

The praying rock is where Charlie Bry Phillips went to pray for individuals who were ill or needed saving. This was simply a rock outside in the forest behind his home, but he believed the rock to be chosen by god.

Ledger

A ledger is a written record of store accounts in the general stores of the novel. This listing records customers and a running total of their charges and credits.

Themes

Independence

One of the primary topics presented throughout the novel is that of the fiercely independent nature of the mountain population. In each article, the individuals presented show a separation from themselves and mainstream society. Their entire way of life is based on a lack of modern conveniences and of learning how to fend for oneself. These individuals, in most cases, care for their own illnesses using home remedies or remedial care, and rarely see doctors. These individuals rely on their neighbors and on themselves to provide food through harsh winter conditions. They raise their own vegetables, their own livestock, and their own fruits, and can or preserve these goods to last them throughout the year. Many older individuals recall making their own clothing, their own bedding, and even their own houses. They made their own brooms, shoes, wagons, pottery, and other household items, including soap. With little education, these people learned to take care of themselves and their loved ones in a way that is nearly lost to the rest of modern society. Many of these people still practice their arts. While we find such skills artistic, these individuals use them in order to survive.

In addition, many of these individuals are fiercely against government intervention, showing another layer of independence. While they understand a need for government, they feel that all too often people turn to the government for assistance instead of learning to help themselves. They often show a reluctance to live in modern society as the pace is so fast, and one rarely has time to enjoy the benefit of hardship. They are certainly not against modernization, as many have running water, electricity, and other conveniences, but they limit such luxuries to things they need or things that make simple survival easier. They care not for frills they find unnecessary.

Benefits of Simple Living

Another theme throughout the novel is that of the benefits of simple living. First, many note a unique sense of pride in their accomplishments as they are able to fend almost entirely for themselves. Their abilities to tend their own gardens and raise their own cattle, or trade others for the foods they need, never leaves them hungry. Their abilities to make their own bedding and clothing allows them to not have to spend money on such items. It is this pride in hard work that has allowed this society to survive, even in their harsh conditions. Additionally, their knowledge in pottery, wood working, building log cabins, and other useful skills allows them both to earn money through the sale of their goods as well as to make creations for their own use. In many cases, such skills also earn them a place in history through contributions to the Smithsonian museum and other places of historic interest.

Aside from these benefits, many point out there is a great benefit in not relying on modern society to live. These individuals do not worry about economic conditions, and their lives are not dependent on the stock market. They know how to live without assistance and without any modern convenience; it is this ability that perhaps is the largest benefit for this society. Without dependence on others, these individuals are strong of health, mind, body, and spirit, and can survive nearly anything many would be unable to even comprehend.

Religious Faith

Another topic throughout the novel is the unquestionable faith of the individuals living in this mountain region. For many, it is their faith in God that has allowed them to survive such a harsh environment. If something positive occurs, many of these individuals praise God for allowing such a blessing to happen. If something negative occurs, these individuals thank God for getting them through their difficult times. Prayer is used to cure the ill, for a healthy harvest, for healthy livestock, for calm winters and breezy summers, and for all other things in between. There are stories of priests helping to save sinners, helping to rebuild homes, and helping people to find their faith. For many, a life without faith would be a life not worth living. When entrenched in a harsh environment, it is easy to see where God would play a vital role, in that many need a powerful figure to which they can beg forgiveness, ask for help and seek salvation. Their belief in everlasting peace and joy may be the only thing they are able to look forward to during a difficult life.

Style

Perspective

The novel is written in the first person perspective. At the beginning of each chapter, the writer of the article prefaces the piece with information about his or her own experiences with the subject of the article and gives some background information on the topic. This perspective helps to introduce the topic in a way that is personable and knowledgeable, as well as trustworthy and authentic. Then, each person interviewed tells their own story in the first person perspective. Again, such a perspective allows the speaker to add his or her own personal stories to the topic, making it possible to relate to the material. On occasion, these individuals will tell a story in third person, since the event did not take place in his or her own presence. Even these stories, however, since related from the perspective of the already-authenticated speaker, seem believable. In addition, this perspective allows the speaker to tell the story in his or her own dialect, which further authenticates who they are. The biases of those speaking in the novel are quite clear, and since they all believe firmly that their mountain lives are full and rich, these biases simply serve to further enrich their stories. Their opinions are clear and benefit from the first person perspective, as well.

Tone

The tone of the novel is generally a partisan tone. The individuals who tell their stories generally believe firmly in their ways as self-sufficient, independent individuals. Their lives have been lived in such a way as to make them proud of both their heritage and their abilities and desire to live outside mainstream society. They are generally biased, in most cases, against larger cities and modern ways, not because of their fear or dislike of such ways of life, but because of a lack of need for them. The tone of these individuals makes it clear that, in their minds, their own ways of life are traditional and certainly sufficient for them and for their children and grandchildren. While they realize the world has changed, they still carry a tone of pride in their histories. In some cases, their tone changes to combative as they discuss their hardships and the interference of government or other local groups of individuals, but this is rare. In other areas, the speakers have a reverent tone as they discuss their faith in God and their religious beliefs. In most cases, however, the speakers are friendly, enlightening, simply, and overall peaceful in their discussions of their beliefs and their lives. They present stories that are entertaining and educational without being overly critical, boastful, or combative.

Structure

The book is comprised of several individual articles, each of which presents a different topic or subtopic. The book begins with an introduction and is followed by the individual

articles. This is then followed by a list of contributors and an index. Each chapter is of unequal length, and while some present the topic in one large section, still other topics are broken into smaller subsections. The novel is 493 pages in length.

The language style of the novel is simple and is an easy read for almost any audience. Nearly all the introductions to articles are written by high school students in such a way as to be simple yet descriptive, without the need for difficult words or language. The articles themselves are the words of often-uneducated or slightly-educated individuals, whose language style is simple, friendly, and easy to read. While at times their discussions of specific skills or tasks, such as log cabin building, quilting, or wagon building, can be a bit dry and technical, it is still easy to follow and to understand. The editors expand some thoughts to provide a more complete understanding of certain passages but still hold to the speakers' way of conversing. This helps the flow of the discussion tremendously.

Quotes

"Will Foxfire Press ever generate enough income not only to survive financially on its own, but also to achieve our collateral dream that it become a successful, viable, business in our country that can employ a number of local people? I just don't know. It hasn't come close in four years, and many of the projected titles, being of purely regional interest, will probably have difficulty earning out their costs of production. The play, for example, has yet to sell five hundred copies. Does it really matter? Well, yes and no. The realist within me says 'Of course it matters. You can't play if you can't pay.' The less pragmatic individual within me says, 'Look, the experiments are worth trying if only for what lessons can be learned from them and for the fun we'll have in the doing.' We'll see. I can't resist the notion, though, that a fitting initiation of our twenty-first year is not the continual repetitious application of a so far successful formula, but putting what we've learned so far to work on a clean slate." - Introduction, page xiv.

"Foxfire does not appear as a mushroom. It resembles instead a stain that has been applied to the wood. When wood or a stump is decomposing, certain fungi or mushrooms grow within the wood to aid the decomposition process. All mushrooms start their lives in the form of spores, which later grow to what are called buttons, the young mushrooms...Throughout the mushroom's life, it lives off the wood or stump itself like a saprophyte. It is the mycelium...of the young mushroom, or button, that glows- not the full-grown mushroom." - Foxfire - What Is It?, pg. 5.

"A headache is an inner fever in the stomach. You've got a fever in your stomach and it don't show up anywhere else but up here in your head. You take something for the stomach, like a wee dose of Epsom salt. You take a teaspoonful to a half a glass of water. Stir it up real good and drink it down. That cures the headache." - Remedies, Herb Doctors and Healers, pg. 59.

"The reason I've kept all the books and papers and photos I have kept is that the old resident people have meant more to me than anything. I know of these people that Lawrence R. once spoke of, but they're gone to everywhere else. If it wasn't for these records here, they'd be a forgotten race of people. Grandpa told about all of them - how many children they had, their names and who they married. That means a great deal to my age, but to children under me it don't mean anything to them. To people my age and to people all over the country my age, that's the most important thing of the whole outfit is to remember these old people. It's just a background of the county here. Of our township." - General Stores, pg. 136.

"I personally don't hold nothin' against the white people 'cause my mother was white. I love the white people, and I love the Indians. I'll fight for the Indians quicker than I'll fight for the white people, though. If somebody stands up there and cusses the ol' black Indians, then they're gonna have me to whip if I can fight 'em, and I'll try! I've got in more fusses about the mistreatment of the Indians than anything in the world. I might get whipped, but somebody will know I was there." - Nola Campbell, pg. 251.

"My religion is the good that is in Catholics, Protestants, and Jews. My politics is the good that is in a common Democrat or Republican. There are good people in all walks of life. They all mean good; they just misunderstand, misinterpret God's word. The essence is, we're all the same. When something goes wrong, we're not gonna talk to Satan; we all know who to talk to - God." - Two Men of God, pg. 329.

"Put everything you've got on the alter and crawl on with it. Go whole totally out for the Lord. You've got to live it, you've got to dress it, you've got to preach it, and you've got to act it day by day. Because...somewhere there's somebody a-watching you. And if they're looking for mistakes in me, they're gonna find some, of course. You've got to do your best for the Lord. You cannot get up and use your mouth to preach the word of God and then turn around and curse somebody. You cannot do it. It's not right." - Two Men of God, pg. 328.

"On his way, this panther was laying on the fence on the side of the road and it jumped at him. I don't remember if he had a dog with him or what, but anyway he got away from it. Then he saw his wife. The panther was guarding her. It had killed her and had tore into her and ate the baby. My mother said that was true. Said all they found of the baby was one little hand and it was just mature enough to tell it was a hand. That panther was guarding the woman's body because when it got hungry again, it'd eat her." - Haint Tales and Other Scary Stories, pg. 373.

"For several years I have been aware of the many picturesque quilt patterns seen in homes around here. however, I had never realized the effort put into the actual sewing of those quilts. I have now begun to observe the quality of the tiny, hand-stitched rows of quilting. We have been told that traditionally the care and skill with which the stitches were made and the variety of embroidery stitches used by a young woman indicated that she was a good seamstress and considered very eligible for marriage." - Quilting - The Joy of my Life, pg. 207.

"So Ruthie and I both worked on that farm. We didn't finish elementary school like other children did. In the fall while school was going on, the owner of the farm said he wanted four or five bales of cotton done a day. It doesn't bother me to work. I like to work, but I didn't think it was right for him to do us like that. It was because we wan Indians. That's how come we had to work like that." -Nola Campbell, pg. 245.

"I ain't nothing. What God has got me doing is something you better not monkey around with or you'll be in trouble. Thousands on top of thousands of people will be turned away on the last day. The Bible says they'll come up and make all kinds of excuses saying, "I done this. I done that." God will say, 'Yes, but I had a little old man to warn you and you didn't heed it.'" -Two Men of God, pg. 345.

"So that's the way I've lived. I've stayed all my life right back in the mountains. I wouldn't live in a city if they was to give me the whole thing. I couldn't sleep a wink. I wouldn't live in Atlanta if you was to give it to me and make me keep it!" - Life is Good, pg. 369.

Topics for Discussion

Throughout the book, the individuals interviewed seem to enjoy their self-sufficient lives, even though they admit such a life is more difficult than life with modern conveniences. Why do you think they feel this way? How would you enjoy such a life? Why? Can you think of benefits to living in such a way?

In the discussion of home remedies, there are many remedies that seem questionable, but some that seem logical and commonplace. Choose two home remedies and discuss whether you believe such a remedy could possibly work. Why? What is the basis for your belief? What would you use for the same ailment?

The characters interviewed in the novel have lived vastly different lives than many of us. Choose one individual and compare and contrast his or her life to your own. What are similarities? What are some differences?

In the chapter on quilting, many different patterns are represented. Choose three, and discuss them in detail. What is the pattern? Describe its visual aspects. Does it have particular meaning? What was it often used for?

In "The General Store" chapter, as well as throughout the book, there is much discussion about a bartering system of business, where goods and services are traded for other goods and services, rather than money. Do you believe this system would be an improvement on our own, or a detriment? Why? What are some benefits of a bartering system, as explained in the book? What are some negative aspects?

The differences in toys played with during childhood shows some of the differences between the lives of these individuals and our own. Explain at least three of the toys discussed in the book, including the materials made to use them, and how they were used. Compare these toys to similar toys of your own life. What are the similarities and differences?

In "Carolyn Stradley," Carolyn proves to be a very strong, independent, capable, intelligent woman. Discuss her life in depth. What trials did she face throughout her life? What were some of the largest obstacles? What are her rewards? Do you admire her or pity her? Why?