

# **Frightful's Mountain Study Guide**

**Frightful's Mountain by Jean Craighead George**

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## Plot Summary

“Frightful’s Mountain” is a young adult novel by Jean Craighead George which serves as the final installment in a trilogy which includes her novels “My Side of the Mountain” and “On the Far Side of the Mountain”. In “Frightful’s Mountain”, Frightful, the female peregrine falcon formerly a pet of Sam Gribley, attempts to reintegrate into the wild, while maintaining her ties with Sam and Bitter Mountain. The novel begins where “On the Far Side of the Mountain” ends: Sam, knowing that it is illegal for him to keep a pet peregrine falcon, and wanting Frightful to have a good and full life in the wild, refuses to call Frightful to him when he sees her flying around in the sky. Frightful then befriends and becomes the mate of Chup, a male peregrine falcon, and becomes the adoptive mother to Chup’s motherless children, Drum, Lady, and Duchess. It is a crash course for Frightful, who must not only learn to eat new kinds of food –primarily ducks and other birds, whereas she had been trained to hunt small game by Sam –but to care for wild baby falcons.

As November comes on, and all the falcons and other birds migrate south, Frightful stays on, determined to find her old mountain, and her old home. She is electrocuted on a utility pole, nearly killed, by nursed back to health by falconers Jon and Susan Wood, and is released in the spring. Frightful seeks out Bitter Mountain, and finds Sam, where she spends some time with him and hunts. She then decides to nest on the bridge in the town of Delhi. She attracts a mate named 426, a bird tagged and tracked by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, and she lays three eggs. Yet, as this happens, a construction crew moves onto the bridge to begin work. Sam sneaks up to the bridge every day, and spends hours keeping Frightful calm, so she can incubate her eggs. Leon Longbridge, the local conservation officer, and a group of school kids, including Molly and Jose, try to get the construction to cease until Frightful’s babies hatch, but the crew cannot stop work without orders from the state government. The construction crewmembers feel bad they cannot stop work, but they have no choice in the matter. Attempts to move Frightful and her eggs fail, so when it comes time to paint the bridge, the crews decide they will paint the section of the bridge with Frightful on it, last. Finally, Frightful’s babies hatch.

One morning, two agents from the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service show up to remove two of the baby falcons. In reality, they are Bate and Skri, two poachers arrested in “On the Far Side of the Mountain”, and back in the business of illegal selling of falcons. Sam helps track them down, and the police arrest Bate and Skri as they hide out in the old summer lodge of nature writer John Burroughs. From there, Frightful’s two babies will be raised and hacked into the wild. Meanwhile, Frightful raises her daughter, Oski, on her own on Bitter Mountain with Sam. Ultimately, they all fly south for the winter. When Frightful returns, she visits Sam as usual, but decides to nest in town, rather than on Bitter Mountain. Oski, however, decides that Sam’s mountain is a perfect place to nest.



# Frightful Takes Off – The Wilderness Tests the Eyases

## Summary

Frightful Takes Off – Frightful is a peregrine falcon, and remembers being taken by Sam Gribley to be raised when she was barely two weeks old. As she grew, Sam trained her to hunt and come when called. Frightful views Sam as her family, and they have relied on each other to live. Frightful is determined to find Sam, having been taken away by two strange men. She is left on a perch in a pine forest with other birds of prey by the men. One, a sharp-shinned hawk, is killed by an eastern coyote. Frightful is terrified, but is surprised and happy when Alice, Sam's little sister, finds her and sets her free. Alice tells Frightful to fly away, that Sam has to have a falconer's license to own Frightful, and Sam is not old enough.

Frightful takes to the sky, and the landscape is unfamiliar to her. Frightful keeps an eye on Alice as she travels along, and watches as a dog named Mole, beaten as a puppy and terrified of people, stays out of Alice's sight. Mole nearly comes upon her, and Frightful scares him by beating her wings and taking off to the sky. Some crows try to attack Frightful, but she seeks shelter in a pine tree, and sleeps for the night. In the morning, Frightful is very hungry. She continues on to an escarpment, where she sees Alice and Sam. Alice attempts to give Sam a baby goshawk, since he cannot own a falcon, but Sam says they must return the baby bird. Frightful calls for Sam, but Sam does not call for her. As Frightful rises up into the sky, a male peregrine falcon nears her, singing a mating song. His name is Chup. Frightful flies with him above Schoharie Valley.

Frightful Goes to Falcon School – Frightful follows Chup high into the sky, then leaves him, looking for her home mountain with Sam on it. When a female goshawk comes after Frightful, she returns to Chup. They both come down on cliffs above the Schoharie River. Chup is very respectful to Frightful, and she thanks him. Chup then tends to three baby falcons, called eyases, feeding them, and gives Frightful some food as well. Chup's mate had gone out several days before, but had never come back. Chup knew then he must care for the young and find a new mate.

For Chup, with Frightful, everything is back to normal. For Frightful, little is familiar, for she has been raised by a person, not falcons. She settles down in the nest to cuddle with the eyases, and to keep them warm. The littlest, a male named Drum, snuggles close. The other two, Lady and Duchess, do as well. Within an hour, they are hungry again. Chup brings back food, and expects Frightful to feed the babies. Frightful does not know what to do, so Chup feeds them. He goes out to catch a pigeon. Frightful begins feeding Drum, and gets used to it, though Chup must feed Lady and Duchess. Weeks pass, the babies grow and are able to feed themselves from the food Chup and Frightful bring back. As they hunt, Frightful senses she should hunt other birds like



ducks, but has not been trained to do so. Instead, she watches below as Mole roots up a rabbit, and then snatches it away before Mole can eat it. Annoyed, Mole barks after Frightful as she flies away with the rabbit.

The Eyases Get on Wing – Frightful brings back the rabbit and eats, but Lady and Duchess are not used to rabbit. Until Chup comes back and eats some of the rabbit, they do not try it. They do not like it, but after Drum decides to give it a good try, they do as well. Frightful begins working together with Mole to find food, and Mole becomes healthier as a result. Frightful continues to bring food back to the eyases. At five weeks old, the eyases are as big as Frightful and Chup. They have come to like small game as much as birds. They are also beginning to half-jump, half-fly to small distances. Eventually, they begin to fly greater and greater distances, with Frightful watching over them carefully.

The Wilderness Tests the Eyases – Frightful watches as Drum, Lady, and Duchess, now scattered about the area, begin to fend for themselves. Frightful's instincts tell her not to feed the fledgling birds, for they must stand or fall on their own. Drum eats a rabbit provided by his parents, while Duchess takes down a duck. Chup drops a pigeon to Lady. Over the next several days, the three fly better and better, and begin catching most of their own food. Eventually, Lady flies to a small town where she comes to land on a church tower. She stays there, feeding on the pigeons that live in the town. Drum follows a migrating food source to the Delaware Bay. A short time later, Duchess follows. Chup moves south as well as September comes on with cold air. Only Frightful remains, not feeling the impulse to head south with the thousands of other birds that come and go. Still, she waits, seeking out her mountain and Sam, but the winter sets in, and it is too late for her to go south.

## Analysis

"Frightful's Mountain" is a young adult novel by Jean Craighead George, and comprises the final installment in a trilogy which includes "My Side of the Mountain" and "On the Far Side of the Mountain". "Frightful's Mountain" picks up where "On the Far Side of the Mountain" left off, and follows the trials and tribulations of female peregrine falcon, Frightful, as she attempts to balance her domesticated upbringing and being set free into the wild without any prior experience. There is a theme of nature in the novel that is present from the very onset of the novel – and it is something to which Frightful must aspire and achieve, or fail and perish. Frightful has lived her life according to Sam's authority and care; Sam is Frightful's family, and Bitter Mountain and its surrounds are Frightful's world. When Sam refuses to call Frightful to him, he knows it isn't just a matter of legality. He wants what is best for Frightful, and so he lets her go into the wild.

Frightful has a very difficult time adjusting to the natural world. Much is different from her upbringing. There are numerous examples of this. Falcons, naturally, target other birds for their meals, from ducks to pigeons. Frightful has grown up eating ground game, and hunting small animals on command, not based on instinct or when she is hungry. This is something she quickly learns she must do on her own. At the same time, she is also



given a crash course in motherhood, as Frightful – who has never before mated and had children – must now care for three natural baby falcons, who behave the way nature has intended them to, and not the way Sam has intended them to. It takes Falcon some trial and error, but she succeeds in keeping Chup's babies fed, and helping them to fly.

Sam's freeing of Frightful also means two more things for her, which ultimately become strong themes found throughout the novel: independence, and home. Frightful alternates between her newfound independence and ability to survive on her own, and wanting very much to return home to Sam. Frightful is able to feed herself in the wild, and to exist on her own if needs be, but the onset of winter may prove to be more than she can handle, for she has never been on her own in the winter before. Sam has adapted to his environment on the mountain, securing his independence, but everything about Frightful's life is new to her. As she struggles for independence, she also struggles for home. Everything in a bird's life moves in cycles, coming full circle: from mating and raising baby birds to flying south for the winter, to coming back in the spring, mating, and raising baby birds once more. Frightful falls into that cyclical pattern by way of her desire for home – and for Sam.

## Discussion Question 1

For what reasons does Sam let Frightful go free? Would you have done the same thing? Why or why not?

## Discussion Question 2

What is it like for Frightful to be thrown back into the wild at first, especially with Chup and his family? How does she respond? How does she cope?

## Discussion Question 3

What is Frightful's ultimate goal, it would seem? Why?

## Vocabulary

nurtured, caroled, agile, pantaloons, ravenously, bulleted, deference, eyas, voraciously, catholic, chittering, nictitating, astonished, ocular, acute, elegant, laboriously



# Frightful Peregrinates – Frightful Finds Sam

## Summary

**Frightful Peregrinates** – In the coldness of winter, against snow and rain, Frightful struggles to find food. She looks to hunt with Mole, but cannot find him anywhere. She continues on through the day, growing hungry and weak, and finally settles in the abandoned church near Beaver's Corners. She stays there a few days, then heads southwest, flying over Bern and North Blenheim. She picks up the migratory route of other birds before her, the Atlantic flyway. She comes down to rest on the roof of the lodge of nature writer John Burroughs, where she discovers Mole. He has been adopted by Hendrik and Hanni Von Sandtford, friends of Sam and Alice Gibley. Hendrik and Hanni discover Mole while restoring an old family farm. Mole has been renamed General by Hendrik and Hanni. She hunts again with Mole, then takes to the sky again, seeing her mountain in the distance.

**Frightful Finds the Enemy** – Mole leaves the lodge daily to go to the town garbage dump for food. One day, he returns bloody, having lost a fight over a female Labrador. Eventually, Frightful decides to head for her mountain, and is heading over White Man Mountain when she hears Duchess's cry below. Duchess has been captured by Bate and his fat friend, Spud. Bate is the man with one brown eye and one blue eye who impersonated conservation officer Leon Longbridge, and originally stole Frightful. Bate and Spud have been living in a hidden cabin in the woods, and are looking to sell more birds to Skri. Bate sees Frightful and wants to catch her. Spud worries that they'll be caught by a man from Roxbury, but Bate is not worried. He knows Frightful is worth \$25,000, and seeks to catch her. Nevertheless, Spud helps Bate prepare a net and duck as bait – but Frightful turns away to head to Sam's mountain, Bitter Mountain.

**Disaster Leads to Survival** – Above a logging road, Frightful sees a man she mistakes for Sam, named Jon Wood. She lands on a utility pole, is nearly blown off by wind, uses her wings to steady herself, and is electrocuted. Jon picks up Frightful, believing she is dead, for she is not moving and her feathers are burned. He calls her death just another utility pole disaster that didn't have to happen. He makes a note to report the death to the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service. Peregrine falcons are endangered species. Once down to zero in the East due to DDT, they have made a comeback in large part due to falconer Heinz Meng, who breeds them in captivity and releases them into the wild using hacking. Now, they are being killed by utility pole wires. When the birds touch both wires, they complete a circuit, and electrocute themselves. If one wire was lowered, then the birds would only touch one. He decides to call the utility company president.

At home, Jon says hello to Sammy, a recovering bald eagle that he has been caring for in one of his two large bird mews. Jon, and his wife, Susan, have spent their lives caring for birds and living off the land. Jon is a licensed falconer. When Jon shows Frightful to



Susan, he is amazed to discover that Frightful is still alive. Frightful feels at ease with Jon and Susan. They are preparing to leave for five days to show birds to seven elementary schools, and want to take Frightful with them to show what happens because of utility poles. Susan finds it odd that a bird in the wild after migration could be so tame, and considers Frightful to be a mystery.

Jon then calls his friend, Peter Westerly, and tells Peter about the smoke he saw rising from Jebb Harper's cabin, which Jebb has stopped using since he got rheumatism. Jon explains he heard the voices of men talking about hawks, and he believes it is Bate and his accomplice, Spud. Jon also knows that the Arabian agent, Skri, is also back in the area. Peter agrees to get in touch with the real Leon Longbridge. Hanging up, Jon and Susan discuss Frightful. They believe she is a trained falcon because she is so cooperative, especially when they put her in one of the mews. Susan believes Frightful has a destiny to fulfill, so she decides to nickname Frightful, "Destiny".

As they leave to visit schools, Jon stops to talk to a highway repairman, who says that all bridges in the state are to be repaired by decree of the governor following a hundred-year flood event that collapsed the Schoharie Bridge, with five people dying as a result. They will be repairing the Margaretville bridge next, followed by the iron bridge in Delhi the first week in May. Above them, Frightful sees Duchess, and the two birds call to each other. Jon wonders what is going on, for now he has seen two falcons in a short amount of time.

Hunger is Frightful's Teacher – Jon and Susan visit the elementary school in Roxbury first, near their home. They introduce the birds they bring, including Frightful, to an audience of kids. They explain the dangers of utility poles using Frightful. The students want to write letters to the utility companies about it, and the teachers let them. Their letters are sent to Lon Herbert, President of the New York Electric Company. By the end of the school visits, more than six hundred letters are in the mail to Mr. Herbert. Back home, Jon is surprised to see Duchess in the sky again, and can't understand why he has seen two falcons in November, when they should all be south. He realizes that Frightful must be hungry, so he puts out a rat for her and Duchess. Neither bird goes after it. For the next few days, Jon attempts to get Frightful to eat rats, but she is on a hunger strike, refusing to eat what she does not know. Eventually, she comes around. She makes more trips to schools with the Woods, and the result includes several hundred more letters to Mr. Herbert. The Woods invite kids to read their letters at their mews, and a TV station films it. Three repairmen arrive to insulate three poles as a result, but only three. Jon is let down, but knows it is at least something.

Frightful Finds Sam – In March, with Frightful healthy once again, Jon and Susan release her to the wild. It is a bittersweet experience whenever they release birds – happy to have helped, but sad to have said goodbye. Instead of heading south, she heads toward Delhi, which confuses Jon and Susan. Frightful returns to her mountain happily, where Sam is waiting.

Sam is thrilled to have her back, but does not have a license, so he cannot keep her. He suggests that Frightful can stay, provided he doesn't harness her or put equipment on





her, that way her presence will not be illegal. Sam tells Frightful he has missed her, and Frightful senses the love and gentleness in his voice. Sam fills Frightful in on all that has happened in the past several months. He is now hunting squirrels, but misses small game like pheasant when Frightful was around. Alice and Mrs. Strawberry are now raising pigs to sell and eat, which Sam admits is good. Sam has been helping Mrs. Strawberry and Alice with farm work. The watermill now generates electricity, giving power to Bando and Zella's cabin. Alice comes along, and is thrilled to see Frightful. Frightful takes to the sky to hunt, and comes to rest on the iron bridge near Delhi. She is glad to have found Sam and Alice, but needs a new perch. She believes the bridge is perfect, for she can see plenty of pigeons and has a good view.

The next morning, Frightful goes to Sam, and they go hunting. When Frightful returns to her bowstring bridge perch, she feels more and more at home, sees Chup flying north, but does not go after him. Her love of Sam and her new home keep her in place. Frightful sleeps on her breast that night, having never done it before, and not knowing why. The following day, Chup visits and Frightful flies with him for a while toward the Schoharie River, before turning back. She goes to visit Sam on Bitter Mountain, and Bando is also there. He is amazed to see Frightful. Bando thinks Frightful is imprinted on Sam, and probably won't mate. Sam hopes that she does.

As the spring comes, so does mating season. The falcons prepare for it. Frightful sees Lady returning to the Schoharie River. The narrator explains that, while the insecticide DDT has been banned in the United States, it has not in South America. After a few years of eating contaminated insects in South America, Lady will die. Frightful visits Sam, who is eating a bowl of wild grain cereal. Returning home, Frightful meets a male falcon named 426, raised by Heinz Meng, and tagged by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service. He brings food for Frightful and they court for three days. Frightful then brings 426 to the mountain to meet Sam. Sam is thrilled she has a mate, and follows them to her nest on the bridge, though he cannot tell if Frightful is nesting on the bridge. Eighteen miles away, Joe Cassini reports by cellphone to the Department of Transportation in Albany that work on the Margaretville Bridge is complete, and they are moving on to Delhi. Meanwhile, Frightful lays an egg, though does not incubate it. She continues to fly around with 426.

## Analysis

Nature continues to exact its toll on Frightful through the course of the winter. Game is scarce, so there is little that Frightful can hunt. She teams up with Mole to do some hunting, but this is barely enough to get by. Frightful must rely on her instincts, and on all the knowledge she has, in order to survive. Yet, even this is not enough when it comes to the reappearance of Bate, Spud, and Skri. Bate and Spud attempt to capture Frightful, but Frightful manages to avoid them and their trap. The reappearance of Bate and his friends also creates a vacuum for justice, in which justice must soon appear in order to end the operations of Bate and the poachers. Wherever evil flourishes, justice follows – and this is certainly true with Bates, Spud, and Skri, who have been caught before for the very same crime they are once again committing.



Unfortunately, there is one enemy that Frightful cannot escape – and that is a utility pole. She is electrocuted and nearly killed, but saved and nursed back to health by Jon and Susan Wood. But rather than fly south for what remains of the winter, Frightful flies to Sam's mountain, where she reunites with him. Sam is thrilled that she is back, and decides that she can stay, so long as he doesn't attempt to keep her the way he did before. Frightful is happy to visit with Sam and to hunt with him, but her time in the wild has also led many of her natural instincts to revive – the theme of nature shining through once more. Frightful's instincts are telling her that mating season is approached, and so she must find a suitable place to nest and raise young. This, as it turns out to be, is the Delhi bridge -a foreshadowing of great conflict to come between man and nature. This is an incredibly important point for Jean Craighead George, as will become apparent in later chapters and in the theme of man versus nature, as wild animals find it difficult to live naturally in a world that has been changed by humans. George seeks to raise awareness here of how wildlife seeks to fit into the habitat of man. Here, Frightful considers a bridge an appropriate and safe place to seek out a mate and raise young. However, Frightful has no idea about the real purpose of a bridge, or how the coming repair work will affect her.

At the same time, the theme of "Justice" also comes to the fore by way of the Woods, who have begun local school children on a letter writing campaign to the electric company to adjust their utility poles to protect the birds, especially the falcons, that land on them. In so doing, the Woods and the children become bird advocates, seeking to secure a measure of justice for the birds that they are unable to secure for themselves. Jon and Susan hope that this will save the lives of many birds and falcons. Justice doesn't only have to do with the law, but with what is morally right and morally wrong. If people have the power to protect animals from needless deaths, then people have the responsibility and the sacred duty to protect animals from needless deaths. Initially, only three utility poles are selected to be made safe for birds, but Jon is hopeful because it is at least a start. Here, the reader should note that George makes her case for the right treatment of nature by man, through the near-death of Frightful, and the reluctance of the electric company to address the electric line situation.

Sam is later thrilled to discover that Frightful has a mate - and the theme of "Nature" becomes readily apparent. Whereas many of Frightful's natural instincts are kicking in, her love of Sam cannot be erased. Frightful continues to visit Sam on the mountain, drawn there because it is home, and Sam has always meant safety and warmth. Frightful even goes so far as to bring her new mate, 426, home to the mountain to meet Sam. But while courting with 426 goes well, danger is lurking for Frightful as she lays her first egg. Construction crews will soon be descending on the Delhi bridge to do major repair work, which will threaten not only the life of Frightful, but ultimately, her baby's lives as well.

## Discussion Question 1

What makes Frightful's first winter on her own especially difficult for her? Why?



## Discussion Question 2

Why is Frightful so determined to return to Bitter Mountain, and to Sam?

## Discussion Question 3

Why does Frightful refuse to follow Chup back to his cliffs? What does she do instead? Why?

## Vocabulary

tittered, vividly, orient, unperturbed, acrid, wistfully, intolerant



# There are Eggs and Trouble – Sam Battles Bird Instincts

## Summary

There are Eggs and Trouble – Frightful lays a second egg, though still does not incubate this egg, or the first. After she lays a third egg, she begins the incubation process. 426 hunts for Frightful while Sam visits, at last discovering where Frightful has nested. Sam is thrilled that Frightful is still wild enough to mate.

On May 8, the repair crews arrive at Delhi Bridge. Betty Christopher, the coffee shop owner, is thrilled to see that the bridge will be repaired, and tells Joe Cassini this. Framing is constructed around the pilings to support the bridge while the pylons are deconstructed and rebuilt. The noise scares Frightful, and Sam tries to intervene on her behalf, telling Joe that nesting peregrine falcons are on the bridge. The crew will not stop work without orders from the state. Sam climbs up to see Frightful. He sees the real Leon Longbridge and two kids, Jose, Molly, Maria, and Hughie, who have also noticed falcons on the bridge. Joe tells Leon and the kids to get off the bridge while it is under construction. The kids decide to have a meeting about what is going on. They know all about falcons, thanks to Jon and Susan Woods. Sam, meanwhile, comforts Frightful, telling her it is alright. She settles on her eggs, but remains alert. Sam knows that 426 will not bring food while the jackhammers are going below, and that Frightful cannot leave. He decides he will dress like a construction worker to get up to the bridge, and then will cover himself with some kind of camouflage so he can stay with Frightful day after day and bring her food.

The Kids are Heard – Sam tends to Frightful for fifteen days, while 426 brings food when all is quiet. Joe eventually sees what he believes to be the falcon nest so many people are getting riled up about, while Dan Martin, a Mohawk Indian, is confused, because falcons like bare ground. Dan watches the spot for the next few days. Sam, meanwhile, knows there are only nine days left in the project on the bridge. He sleeps in a lean-to he has built along the river, where he also fishes for Frightful. One day, Molly sees him climbing around, and he pretends to be examining the bridge.

Another day, Sam overhears Jon Wood and Leon Longbridge discussing the situation. They can't understand why Frightful hasn't left, and imagine something must be holding her there. They also wonder if it will be possible to move both Frightful and her eggs, and Jon wonders if the bird they are talking about is actually Frightful, though Jon refers to her as Destiny. They also wonder about all the sticks and the unusual nest. Sam realizes he is in danger of being found out, and decides that moving Frightful's nest will be a good idea.

Meanwhile, the kids of town have banded together to picket the construction job, holding up signs in support of nesting falcons. Joe tells the kids to leave or they'll be



arrested. Leon arrives to direct the kids into town, where they are filmed and interviewed by a TV news crew. The construction ends, and Frightful's eggs hatch. But just as soon as Sam thinks they are safe, the construction crews prepare to paint the bridge.

There Are Three – Leon Longbridge wedges a wooden scrape into a nearby sycamore tree, while Jon climbs up to see Frightful and get her eggs. Sam watches from nearby, hoping the plan to move Frightful will work. 426, alarmed, screams, which causes Frightful, though she knows Jon, to leave the nest. Jon carefully picks up the eggs to bring them to the sycamore tree. Frightful does not follow, so Jon returns the eggs, which have gone cold. Joe and Dan arrive for work. Rain is coming. They decide to begin by sandblasting rusted spots instead of painting because of the rain. Dan and Joe talk to Leon, who explains they have been unable to move the eggs. Joe admires Frightful, calling her spunky, but work continues on unabated. Because of the noise, 426 will not go near the bridge, which means Frightful has not eaten in eleven hours. Sam is worried about her, and wonders how he can feed her with workers all over the bridge.

On day thirty-one of the ordeal, the falcon chicks begin to hatch from their shells, eating their way through the eggs. There is Oski, a female, who has wide eyes, and two boys named Blue Bill and Screamer. As the crewmembers work, they do their best to avoid coming near Frightful. Though they cannot stop work, they are doing their best to be respectful. It is now June, but still very cold. Molly, Maria, Jose, and Hughie watch from below, as does Sam from his vantage point. The children decide to write to the governor, hoping to stop the painting. The following Monday, Joe and Dan meet early to discuss the situation. The state has mandated the bridge still be painted, so they decide to save Frightful's area of the bridge for last, and will move her chicks when they are ten days old, hoping Frightful will go with them, too. A short time later, Flip Pearson and Dr. Werner of the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service arrive to move the birds by way of cherry picker which Dan operates. The kids arrive as the baby birds are brought down. Joe urges Pearson to let the kids see the birds – and Molly explains that there should be three birds, not two birds. Pearson explains one must have died. He angrily tells everyone to back off. When they leave, Jose decides to go and tell Leon Longbridge what has happened.

Sam Takes Charge – Sam watches everything unfold from his lean-to along the river. One of the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Services men looks familiar, but Sam can't place him. Sam wonders why Frightful is going with them, but then discovers that Frightful is feeding Oski. 426 is too afraid to return to the bridge following the arrival of the two strange men. When Leon arrives at the bridge, he explains to everyone that Pearson and Werner are impostors, that they are actually poachers. Leon explains he has already called the police, who report some poachers may be living on White Man Mountain. Molly and the other kids want to go along with Leon to the mountain, but Leon tells them all to get on to school. Joe tells Dan he has grown fond of the birds, and hopes the poachers are caught. Work for the day is called early as a thunderstorm comes on. Sam rushes to see Frightful, and to bring Oski to his mountain. He anxiously awaits Frightful to arrive. If she doesn't, he knows he could be arrested for harboring an endangered species.



Sam Battles Bird Instincts – Terrified of Sam taking her baby and of the storm, Frightful takes to the sky and does not follow him. Back at the bridge, Frightful is dismayed to see 426 and her other two babies gone. After school, the children look sadly at the bridge, believing it is now lifeless without the falcons. Leon Longbridge arrives to read them a letter from the governor, which says work will be suspended on the Delhi bridge until the falcons are able to leave their nest. Molly and Jose are very sad, believing it has come too late. They want the poachers, who the readers to know to be Skri and Bate, caught. Frightful, meanwhile, finds 426, and then sees Sam putting her baby bird into a new tree box. He jesses Frightful to help her feed her young, but the sound of Frightful's wings on the new box scares her, and she flies away, back to the bridge.

There, a falconer named Perry Knowlton sees that Frightful is jessed, and calls the Woods to see if they have lost a falcon. They have not. Perry calls Leon as he follows Frightful, and asks him if he knows of any other licensed falconers in the area, besides the Woods and himself. Sam, meanwhile, has put on a burlap bag covered with a tanned chicken and feathers that enable him to feed Oski without getting her used to people. He then moves Oski to the roof of his millhouse, where Frightful begins feeding her once more on her own.

## Analysis

Frightful's reorientation to nature continues through the spring, as the theme of nature comes back to the fore. Only vaguely familiar with mating, and have no experience around baby falcons, Frightful mates with 426, and begins laying eggs. At this time, the world of men intervenes in nature, by way of the construction crew working on the Delhi bridge, and by way of Sam, who tries to get Frightful to relocate where she is looking to hatch her young. The bridge itself becomes an important symbol for Frightful's journey back into the wild. Bridges are used to get from one place to another, to make a journey or a transition. Frightful has nested in the center of the bridge, caught between the animal world and the world of man. Frightful is terrified of the bridge crew, and can't understand what is going on. While she does not know exactly what Sam is doing, she trusts him, and his presence largely reassures Frightful. Sam's first goal is to preserve Frightful's intended nesting spot for as long as possible, and he does this by simply staying with her through most of each day that the construction crews are working on the bridge. This is later followed by attempts to get Frightful to leave the bridge – both by Leon Longbridge and by Sam. Only when two agents from the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service arrive to take care of the birds does the problem seem to have been settled.

Sam has relocated Frightful and her chick, Oski, to Bitter Mountain. Here, Frightful's natural instincts, in accord with the theme of nature, and her domestication are at war, as are Sam's desires to protect Oski and Frightful, and let them survive on their own. Frightful knows she has ties to Sam, and her domesticated upbringing make her want to allow Sam to call the shots and run the show, and to regiment her life, and Oski's life. At the same time, Frightful's natural instincts, especially of motherhood, cause her to continue caring for Oski on her own as needed, and not under the purview of Sam.



Frightful comes to feel very reassured on Sam's mountain once more, knowing it is a safe place to raise Oski.

In this section of the novel, justice and injustice as a theme contend with one another for dominance. They are demonstrated through Leon Longbridge, who brings both good and bad news for the kids, and for the construction crew that has come to admire and respect Frightful and her babies. The good news is that some measure of justice has been afforded the birds: the construction crews are given leave to stop work until after Frightful and her young can leave the bridge. The sad news is that it is already too late: the birds are already gone. The worst news is that the two representatives of the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service are actually imposters, and are truly poachers –namely, Bate and Skri. This causes terrible unhappiness among the children, who believe everything has happened too late, and that the poachers have gotten away. Leon, the local adults, and the police aren't as letdown. They are determined to find the poachers and bring them to justice.

The sort of justice that Bate and Skri are facing now is tremendous. This will be their second offense for poaching, which could very well lead to time in an actual federal prison, a serious sentence for serious time. They have also impersonated agents of a federal agency, which is a major crime, in and of itself. At the same time, Sam struggles with having Frightful and Oski on his mountain. He knows what the laws are, but believes that he may avoid them by not harnessing or jessing either Frightful or Oski. If they stay of their own free will, there is nothing that the law can do to stop them, or Sam. Sam decides to make things as comfortable as possible so that Frightful does stay, but will not do anything to try to stop her from leaving if she decides to do so.

## Discussion Question 1

For what crimes now can Bate and Skri be convicted if they are caught?

## Discussion Question 2

What is so sad about the governor ordering work to be suspended on Delhi bridge?  
How do the children react to this news? Why?

## Discussion Question 3

If you were a member of a construction crew working on a bridge with an endangered species living on it, how would you react? How would you handle the situation? Why?

## Vocabulary

serene, piped, affirmative, mortality, flitting, graceful, maneuver, abandon



# A Pal Finds a Pal – Frightful and Oski Run the Show

## Summary

A Pal Finds a Pal – Oski is six days old, Sam realizes as he tends to a fire. He then remembers why the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Services people looked so familiar: they are Skri and Bate, impersonating real agents. Alice comes to borrow some rawhide from Sam for a collar and leash for the dog that Hanni and Hendrik have asked her to tame and give the love of people to – a dog they call General, whose real name is Mole. Alice reveals that two park rangers tried to kill Mole for eating small game near the John Burroughs house, but that Hanni saved the dog to bring him back. Sam has since found out the National Park Service does not, as he previously thought, own and operate the house – so there should not be park rangers there.

Frightful calls for 426, but when he does not come, she calls for a new mate. Chup answers the call, and Sam is glad to see him arrive to help. He removes Frightful's jesses. Molly and Jose, meanwhile, discuss how they can help catch the poachers, remembering two poachers were caught near Beaver's Corners and Rensselaerville, in a cave near an old church. Molly imagines they must be there, again. They ask Leon about it, but the cave has already been checked, and nothing has been found. As Sam heads out, he comes across Mole, who has escaped from Alice and Mrs. Strawberry, and convinces Mole to come along with him. Sam will not ask Bando to go, since his wife, Zella, is pregnant and will soon have a baby.

As Sam and Mole travel along, they are visited by Frightful, who can fly the distance between them and Oski in a matter of minutes. Leon follows Frightful home, and is amazed at how Sam survives on the mountain. He does not poke around in Sam's house or mill, respecting his privacy. Leon also comes to suspect that Sam has something to do with Frightful and her surviving eyes being on the millhouse.

At the Burroughs lodge, Sam climbs a tree to look through a window to see some men inside. Nearby, he finds a U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service truck hidden by the brush. In the car are cages, bird pellets, and ammunition for guns. Sam realizes he has found Bate and Skri. He memorizes the license plate number. Mole, meanwhile, chases a skunk under the lodge, and gets sprayed. The stench rises through the floorboards of the house, sending Bate and Skri into a panic. Suddenly, two police officers, along with Sean Conklin, close in to arrest Bate. Skri tries to get away but Sean's assistant, Henry Ryan, has removed the spark plugs in the truck. The two baby eyes are safe and sound. It is revealed they will be raised and hacked back into the wild by Perry Knowlton. Sam tries to appeal on their behalf, but the law is the law. Sam cannot bring them back to their parents, and he laments that everyone wants to save falcons, but no one will do what it takes –from returning them to their parents to stopping work on a bridge.





Frightful and Oski Run the Show – Frightful and Chup feed Oski as Oski grows. June finally starts to warm up, and Sam decides to sleep outside at night with Jessie the raccoon. Jessie tries to eat Oski, but Oski fights back, and slashes Jessie's shoulder open. Sam bandages Jessie up, and tells Jessie that she must be friends with Oski, as she was with Frightful. Sam also decides he has to rework the box that Oski is now living in, to make it impossible for anyone to climb up into it by using a metal pole. Sam realizes, as time goes on, that the bond between he and Frightful is breaking. He finds it good for her, and sad for him. Bando helps Sam to fix the box up, and sticks around a little while. He explains that he has a cell phone in his pocket that Zella will call him on if she goes into labor, and can leave right away.

Frightful continues to feed Oski as she gets older, and also spends time in town killing diseased pigeons so the disease will not spread among them. Leon, Molly, Jose, and Hughie watch Frightful, and Leon explains that the kids can visit Perry Knowlton's to see the chicks in a few weeks. The children decide to focus their efforts on getting the utility poles fixed in the meantime. Oski begins to jump and fly very short distances. Sam watches, worriedly. When Mole investigates, Frightful knocks him into the millpond. Sam rescues Mole. They decide to stay out of the way until Oski can fly. Sam reads to Mole about Thomas Paine.

## Analysis

The hunt for Bate and Skri is on. Not only are state and local agencies after them, but so too is Sam, who, along with Mole, is on their trail. But unlike before, in the events of "On the Far Side of the Mountain", in which Bando helped Sam to track down Alice, Bando must remain behind with his wife, who is pregnant and near birth. Much now rests on Sam's shoulders. He manages to track down Bate and Skri to the wilderness summer lodge of nature writer John Burroughs, and the importance of this event and place should not be missed by the reader. In the home of a writer who desired conservation and the right use of the natural world, two poachers –diametrically opposed to that point of view – are taken into custody by police, the arbiters of justice, in this case, in defense of the natural world. It is a fitting measure of justice that is delivered, and completes the picture of the theme of justice – at least as far as the legal system is concerned.

Fortunately for the two eyases, they will be hacked back into the wild by Perry Knowlton, another local falconer who, like John Burroughs did, loves nature. This ensures that, although the birds will now be hacked by humans as required by law, the birds will have a chance at living nearly their whole lives in the wild as wild birds – a chance they never would have had before. Sam is unhappy, wishing that he could bring the two baby birds back to Frightful on Bitter Mountain, but he understands things are the way that they are, and they must be the way they have to be. Sam returns to Bitter Mountain to continue to protect Frightful and Oski, and watch her grown up.

There is a final measure of justice in the novel that has yet to be delivered. The problem of the structure of utility poles still means that birds will still be killed by electrocution



when they land on the poles, and touch both wires, completing a circuit. While the utility company has fixed three poles, the rest still need to be handled. The children of Delhi decide to continue to press the issue, going after the utility company with letters of insistence until the work can be done. It gives them something new to try to achieve, and will have a good and long-lasting impact on the nature in the area.

## **Discussion Question 1**

Why is Sam not allowed to bring the eyases back to his mountain to live with Frightful?

## **Discussion Question 2**

What is the importance of the scene where Bate and Skri are arrested at the former lodge of John Burroughs?

## **Discussion Question 3**

How does Sam reason that it will be acceptable legally to have Frightful and Oski on the mountain? How would you approach the situation? Why?

## **Vocabulary**

incognito, decapped, succumbed, expletive, circuitous, lugubrious, inadequate, oblivious



# Frightful Feels the Call to the Sky – Destiny is on Wing

## Summary

Frightful Feels the Call to the Sky – Oski has flown to the top of the millhouse, and Frightful watches intently. Bando comes running to Sam, telling him that Zella has had a baby girl, named Samantha, after Sam. He says that Zella says they now have a daughter as well as a son, referring to Sam. Sam is deeply humbled. Bando has been working on a cherrywood rocking chair for Zella, and brings it to surprise her at the hospital.

Four miles away, Perry Knowlton is hacking Blue Bill and Screamer, preparing them for release into the wild. Molly, Jose, Hughie, and Maria watch. Blue Bill is attacked by an eagle while he is practicing flying. Blue Bill is alright, but needs more time before being set free, and to make sure he has no injuries. Screamer, however, takes off and flies with the wind toward the town of Bovina. Screamer returns to eat, before taking off once more. Oski also begins to go further and further, ultimately joining Frightful on the Delhi bridge. Oski eats a duck that evening that is dying from pesticide poisoning, and goes to sleep for the night on Molly's Victorian house. The next morning, Blue Bill meets up with Oski, and they go flying with Frightful. As the days pass, the birds begin to migrate, but Frightful does not go south. She visits Sam, who thinks she has come to say goodbye. Instead, Frightful goes to Delhi. Blue Bill has already departed; Oski departs soon after. But Frightful stays, for Sam and her mountain are deeply embedded in her. Sam knows that Frightful must migrate, and to do so, he knows he cannot feed her.

The Earth Calls Frightful – At last, Frightful heads south. Sam and Alice call their goodbyes. Sam tells Frightful he'll be waiting to see her in the spring. Frightful meets up with Drum and other birds of prey and continues south with them. She and Drum hunker down as a hurricane passes through, and then continue on. They fly over Florida and through Cuba, on toward Belize. Frightful and Drum part ways, and Frightful comes to rest on Espanola Island. She eats and then heads to Gardner's Island, where she seeks out more food, and flies back to Espanola Island. In the tropics, falcons fly for pleasure, and Frightful enjoys this for two months. She also notes how tourists can walk right up to animals to take pictures, since all the wildlife is unused to humans, and don't know they are predators. Frightful feels the call to head back north on December 21, and narrowly avoids being attacked by Galapagos hawks. She travels for days and comes to rest on Cocos Island. Near Cuba, she meets up with Drum, and heads to Florida. Soon after, Frightful returns to her mountain.

Destiny is on Wing – Frightful visits her mountain briefly before going to check out nesting sites. Sam does not see her, but knows she has been around after she leaves by her footprints in the snow. Molly sees Frightful in town, and happily tells Leon about it. Frightful returns to the Delhi bridge, where she sees Chup. She refuses to go back



with Chup, and returns to her mountain. Sam and Alice arrive, talking about how Mrs. Strawberry intends to give her farm to them when Sam is of age. Sam and Alice hope a real farm will entice their family to move back. They agree that they are both becoming farmers: Alice on a managed farm, Sam planting wild crops all over the mountain on a wild farm. They are delighted to see Frightful. Frightful convinces Chup to stay in the area, though she decides to nest in town in compromise. But Oski lands on Sam's mountain, and begins to call for a mate.

## Analysis

As the novel "Frightful's Mountain" concludes, the themes of nature and independence once again move to the fore. As the winter sets in, both Frightful and Oski travel south. Oski, who has been born and raised in the wild, relatively free from human interference, takes to her natural instincts without hesitation, and because she has been raised well by her mother, is able to handle herself quite well, and quite independently, in the wild. Indeed, she is so well-adapted and so independent that she travels independently of her mother. Frightful, meanwhile, still feels the pull of home and Sam, but also feels the pull of her growing natural instincts to go south, which she ultimately does.

Frightful's trip south brings her down across the United States, where she travels part of the way with Drum. She heads along the eastern seaboard, ultimately flying across Florida and Cuba, and afterwards, to Hispaniola and Gardner Island. Here, Frightful enjoys several months between both islands, eating and flying for the pure pleasure of it. But as the seasons shift and it begins to grow cold in the south because of the rotation and axis of the earth, Frightful decides it is time to return north –based on instinct, once more. She feels the pull of home, to complete the cycle of life once more by returning to New York to raise more babies.

In New York, Sam is dismayed to discover that, although Frightful has returned and visits him, she will not be nesting or raising young on Bitter Mountain. Instead, Frightful has decided to nest in the town of Delhi. Oski, however, as Sam is thrilled to discover, has decided to nest in the place she was brought up: Sam's mountain.

## Discussion Question 1

How does Sam handle Frightful and Oski before they head south? Does he care for them and feed them? Does he fix their nesting box? What does he do and refuse to do? Why?

## Discussion Question 2

Describe Frightful's transformation over the course of the novel, from the beginning to the end, especially regarding how she has adapted back to nature. Do you believe Frightful has become a successful bird? Why or why not?



## Discussion Question 3

Why do you believe Frightful chooses to nest in town rather than on Sam's mountain?  
Why do you believe Oski chooses to nest on Sam's mountain?

## Vocabulary

captivated, namesake, prematurely, exquisite, iota, paternalism, indelibly, prosperity



# Characters

## Frightful

Frightful is the main character and principle protagonist in the novel “Frightful’s Mountain” by Jean Craighead George. Frightful is a female peregrine falcon that Sam took from her nest when she was barely two weeks old to raise and train her as a hunting hawk in the art of falconry, during the novel “My Side of the Mountain”. Frightful is a gentle and loving bird, trusting of Sam and his little sister, Alice, and an excellent ground game hunter. She is kidnapped by poachers in the events of “On the Far Side of the Mountain”, and set free by Alice. But rather than call Frightful back to him, Sam lets Frightful go free into the wild, because she deserves better than a life where she is tethered, and because it is illegal for him to harbor an endangered species like Frightful.

Frightful’s goal throughout the novel is to return to Bitter Mountain and its surrounds as well as to find Sam. Frightful begins the novel near the Schoharie River, where her domesticated upbringing ill-prepares her for life in the wild. She becomes the mate of Chup, a male peregrine falcon, and tends to his children, whose mother has died previously. Frightful does her best to care for the three small babies, feeding them and helping them to fly when they are old enough.

When the winter comes around, though Frightful feels the urge to go south with the other birds, she decides to remain behind because the pull of home and Sam are stronger than her natural instincts. When she lands on a utility pole, she is electrocuted and nearly killed, but is saved by Jon Woods and his wife, Susan, who raise and heal birds before releasing them back into the wild. In March, Frightful returns to Sam, and decides to nest on the Delhi bridge, as her instincts tell her to do so. She meets and mates with 426, and lays three eggs just as construction crews arrive to do work on the bridge.

Frightful’s presence on the bridge rallies the children of the town to protect her, while Sam sneaks up to the bridge day after day to reassure her. Sam’s presence always calms Frightful. Eventually, Frightful’s chicks hatch, but the construction crew cannot stop work without an order to do so from the government. Bate and Skri arrive, disguised as U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service agents, steal two of the babies, and are later arrested, with the baby birds being sent to Perry Knowlton to be raised and hacked.

Frightful, meanwhile, raises her third baby, Oski, on Bitter Mountain under the protective eye of Sam. When the winter comes, Frightful and Oski head south. Frightful travels along the eastern seaboard, over Florida and Cuba, and comes to spend two months between Hispaniola Island and Gardner Island, before heading back north. There, she visits Sam and decides to mate and nest with Chup in the town of Delhi. Everything is once again right with her world, and she has completed the circle of always returning home.



## Chup

Chup is a male peregrine falcon, about nine years of age, who first meets Frightful while seeking a mate to serve as a surrogate mother to his three baby birds. Chup lives in the cliffs above the Schoharie River, and is puzzled by Frightful's seeming lack of natural instinct, though in time, she comes into her own. Chup flies south for the winter, and when he returns in the spring, tries to get Frightful to mate with him, but she will not do so. He then heads to find another mate and raise another nest of children, before heading south again for the winter. When he returns in the spring, he consents to living with Frightful in the town of Delhi, and there mating and nesting to raise another nest full of babies.

## 426

426 is a male peregrine falcon tagged and tracked by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service. He is a kind and friendly bird, who mates with Frightful while she stays on the Delhi bridge. 426 is terrified of the construction, however, and the frequent attempts by people to move the nest. Ultimately, he abandons Frightful because he is too scared to remain around.

## Oski

Oski is a young female peregrine falcon birthed and raised by Frightful. Oski is a tough little bird who defends her own territory well, and while she is raised as a wild bird, has familiarity with both Sam and Bitter Mountain. This ultimately leads her to want to return to Bitter Mountain to mate and nest.

## Mole

Mole is an old hunting dog who is abused and abandoned, and taken in by Hendrik and Hanni von Sandtford. Mole is the hunting companion of Frightful for much of the novel, and is later given to Alice temporarily, so that she may put the trust of people in Mole. Mole later accompanies Sam on his mission to track down Bate and Skri. He corners a skunk under the lodge in which Bate and Skri are staying, causing the skunk to spray, and the spray to drift up into the cabin, sending Bate and Skri into a panic.

## Leon Longbridge

Leon Longbridge is the local conservation officer who spends most of his time at his office in Delhi, New York. He is a patient, kind man, who deeply cares about the community and nature. He, like the children in town, become aware of Frightful nesting on the bridge as it is being worked on, and helps the children to appeal to the construction crew and state government on behalf of Frightful. Leon only belatedly



receives word that work will be halted until the birds are old enough to leave on their own, but discovers to his dismay and anger that two of the baby birds have been kidnapped by poachers. Leon helps to hunt them down. Toward the end of the novel, Leon launches the kids in town on a letter-writing campaign to have utility poles fixed so that birds and other animals are no longer electrocuted on them.

## Sam Gribley

Sam Gribley is a resident of Bitter Mountain with his younger sister, Alice. Now about the age of fifteen or so, Sam Gribley has lived on Bitter Mountain for years, first coming there at the age of twelve in the novel "My Side of the Mountain", in which he is determined to live on his own off ancestral family land. While there, he takes Frightful from her nest at two weeks old, and raises Frightful to be both a companion and a hunting hawk. They have a strong bond between them that causes an internal war with Frightful, between following her instincts or staying near Sam. Sam is thrilled whenever Frightful visits him, though he knows he cannot keep her.

When Frightful nests on the bridge, Sam climbs up daily during construction to keep her company and reassure her. He sets Frightful up on his mountain with a nesting box to raise her remaining baby, Oski, following the poaching of Frightful's other two birds. Sam is happy that Frightful is around, though he knows he must let her fend for herself so that her natural instincts will remain strong. He later helps to track down Bate and Skri, but is not allowed to return the poached baby birds to Frightful. The following spring, he is delighted that Frightful visits him, and is even more thrilled when Oski comes to nest on the mountain.

## Bate

Bate is a falcon poacher with one blue eye and one brown eye. He has impersonated Leon Longbridge in the past in order to steal Frightful, and currently impersonates a U.S. Fish and Wildlife Agent in order to steal Frightful's two babies from Delhi bridge. Bate is later arrested for the crimes of poaching and impersonating a federal agent while he is at the summer lodge of writer John Burroughs.

## Jon and Susan Wood

Jon and Susan Wood are a married couple who have spent their lives raising, hacking, and healing injured and orphaned birds. They are incredibly kind and gentle people, and care for Frightful after she is electrocuted. They are friends with Leon Longbridge and Perry Knowlton. They also spend much of their time visiting schools, showing them falcons - including Frightful, who becomes a cause celebre, as the Woods inspire the kids to write letters to the power companies, urging them to make utility poles animal-friendly.



## **Perry Knowlton**

Perry Knowlton is a local falconer who raises, hacks, and heals injured and orphaned birds. He is friends with Leon Longbridge, and Jon and Susan Wood. Perry is a very knowledgeable and gentle man, who tries to coax Frightful away from her perch on the Dlehi bridge, but is unable to do so. When Frightful's poached baby falcons are found, Perry is the man designated to raise them and hack them back into the wild.



# Symbols and Symbolism

## Falconry equipment

Falconry equipment is used by Sam, Perry Knowlton, Bate, Spud, Skri, and Jon and Susan Wood. Falconry equipment consists of tethers, hoods, and jesses, all designed to help people raise and train falcons for various purposes, or to subdue them as is in the case of Bate, Spud, and Skri. Sam comes to understand that Frightful and Oski can live on his mountain of their own free will, provided they are not kept there by falconry equipment, or against their will.

## Hacking stands

Hacking stands are platforms used to help falcons reorient themselves to the wild. They are kept stocked with food, enabling released falcons to return to feed if they cannot find food on their own in the wild. Jon and Susan Wood have such a hacking stand that is used by falcons as they readjust to life in the wild.

## Utility poles

Utility poles appear throughout all areas in the novel, especially in and around the town of Delhi. Utility poles carry electrical wires and phone wires to homes and towns throughout the nation. They are designed poorly in the novel, so that birds may land on the wire, touching the other wire, completing a circuit, and causing electrocution. This is the case with Frightful. Jon and Susan Wood use her electrocution as a way to inspire kids to write to utility companies to tell them to rework the utility poles to make electrocution impossible. By the novel's end, only three poles have been fixed, and the children of Delhi continue to write letters to press for greater change.

## Nesting box

A nesting box is constructed out of wood and a steel pole by Sam and Bando so that Frightful can raise Oski in a flat, safe environment elevated from the ground. Frightful takes fairly well to the box, and Oski recognizes it as home. When Oski returns the following spring, she calls for a mate from the box, intending to nest in it.

## Ground game

Ground game consists of small, four-legged animals such as rabbits, squirrels, rats, mice, frogs, and others, and are hunted by Frightful and Sam for food. Indeed, Frightful is raised specifically to go after small ground game, so her release into the wild means



she must adjust her taste in food to include other birds, such as ducks and pigeons, which are the main source of diet for falcons.

## Birds

Birds, such as ducks and pigeons, are the primary diet of peregrine falcons. They are a form of food that Frightful must eventually get used to, and must learn to catch and kill. As the novel ends, Frightful chooses to nest in the town of Delhi because there is a healthy supply of pigeons in the town.

## Delhi Bridge

The Delhi Bridge is a red iron truss bridge that crosses the West Branch of the Delaware River at the town of Delhi, and is the bridge on which Frightful mates and has babies. Bridges are intended for making journeys, transitions, and from getting to one place from another. In the novel, the bridge becomes symbolic of Frightful's journey back to nature, and her nesting on the bridge, rather than on one side or another, becomes symbolic of how she is caught between the world of man and the natural world.

## DDT

DDT is a highly poisonous insecticide used on crops in South America, and now outlawed for use in the United States. Small ground game and small birds who eat crops coated with DDT become sick and poisonous themselves, and are themselves eaten by larger birds, such as peregrine falcons, who later die as a result of DDT ingestion, such as Lady.

## Sand blasters

Sand blasters are machinery used by the repair crews to remove rust and clean the Delhi Bridge. The machines generate a tremendous amount of noise, and startle both Frightful and 426. 426, especially, cannot take the noise, and so he often leaves the bridge, alighting on nearby trees to wait out the workday's close.

## Truck

Skri and Bate drive a truck disguised to look like a state government agency vehicle. It is one of the ways in which they are able to fool the construction workers and bystanders on the bridge, and then abscond with Frightful's babies.



# Settings

## Delhi

Delhi is a small valley town in upstate New York in the Catskill Mountains. It is a small friendly community that rests at the foot of Bitter Mountain, where Sam Gribley lives. Delhi is part of the territory that Frightful takes in, and considers to be part of her home. Delhi is the location of what seems to be the main office of Leon Longbridge, the local conservation officer, and is the location of the bridge where Frightful makes her nest. The town itself is full of charming old Victorian houses, and it is in Delhi that Frightful decides to make her new nest the year after nesting on the bridge.

## Delhi bridge

Delhi's bridge is a relatively new, red truss bridge that spans the West Branch of the Delaware River as it flows through the town of Delhi. Delhi bridge, though new, is in need of serious repairs, and in May, construction crews arrive to tackle the project in unseasonably cold weather. It is also on the bridge at Delhi that Frightful has decided to make her nest and raise her first brood of young. The construction noise terrifies Frightful, so every day, Sam sneaks up on the bridge to watch over Frightful and reassure her. Leon Longbridge, other falconers, and the children of the town protest the work on behalf of Frightful, but the construction workers are not allowed to stop work on the bridge. Only after the baby birds are poached does word come to stop construction, courtesy of the governor himself. The children are saddened by this, believing the bridge is lifeless without Frightful and her babies.

## Bitter Mountain

Bitter Mountain rises above the town of Delhi, New York, and is part of the Catskill Mountain range. Bitter Mountain is the home of ancestral Gribley land, upon which Sam and his sister, Alice, live and make their lives. Bitter Mountain is where Frightful is raised and trained, and she considers Sam's mountain and its surrounding environs her home. It is to this home that she always returns, following her kidnapping and following her migration south for the season. Bitter Mountain also comes to be the home of Oski, one of Frightful's children, and Oski decides that Bitter Mountain is where she will raise her own babies.

## Schoharie River

Schoharie River is a major river miles north of Bitter Mountain. It is where Frightful spends her first seasons in the wild with Chup, raising his young after his mate died before the events of the novel. Chup and his young live in the cliffs above the Schoharie River, and is home to Chup. The following year, Chup attempts to get Frightful to return



with him to the Schoharie, but she refuses. The year after that, Chup agrees to leave the Schoharie behind to mate and live with Frightful in the town of Delhi.

## Hispaniola Island

Hispaniola Island is an island in the Caribbean, south of the United States, and north of South America, and is the island to which Frightful travels when she migrates south for the winter. Hispaniola is a tropical paradise for Frightful, who spends some two months there eating and flying around for the pure pleasure of it. Frightful is amazed at the abundant wildlife, and how trusting the local wildlife is of people, for they have thrived on the island without human interference, and have no reason to fear humans.



# Themes and Motifs

## Nature

Nature is a major, dominant, and overarching theme in the novel “Frightful’s Mountain” by Jean Craighead George. Nature, thematically, is the natural world and the wild without man’s presence, influence, or interference. Much of the novel’s take on nature revolves primarily around the character of Frightful, a peregrine falcon who seems to straddle both the world of nature and the world of man. Indeed, her domesticated upbringing and nurturing by Sam are often in conflict with her natural instincts and inclinations. At the same time, the world of man consistently borders on the world of nature, and vice versa.

Frightful’s entry in to the wild is a rough one. Having been raised by Sam, and feeling a pull towards Sam as family, Frightful has much to get used to in the wild. Trained by Sam to come when called, and hunt when signaled, Frightful is unused to seeking out food on her own when she is hungry. Additionally, Frightful is used to small game, such as rabbits, whereas Chup and his baby falcons tend to eat ducks and pigeons, among other kinds of small birds. Indeed, the role of motherhood is entirely new to Frightful, for never before has she mated or had children of her own. Nevertheless, she manages to successfully navigate the role, and learns to appreciate the taste of birds eventually.

When the winter comes, and the migration south begins, Frightful feels a pull to head south, she also feels an even stronger urge to stay. This is because she longs to seek out her mountain home, and Sam, her family. So while the rest of the birds in the area are heading south, Frightful stays on and on, seeking out Sam and his mountain. She eventually spots a person she believes to be Sam, but it is Jon Wood, who watches as Frightful is electrocuted on a utility pole. Frightful survives, and is nursed back to health by Jon and his wife, Susan.

The incident is telling of the boundary between the wild and human worlds. The utility poles are not designed to be animal friendly, and are only belatedly adjusted for the problem. Here, man has an unintended interference in the natural world, for numerous animals are electrocuted to death every year in the novel in a very unnatural way. Yet, at the same time, there are people like Jon and Susan Wood, who raise, heal, and release falcons and other birds into the wild, so that they may return to a natural state. In so doing, they are protecting the natural world.

In many ways, the natural world enters into the human world, such as when Frightful roosts on the Delhi bridge. The construction crews, fully in the human world, cannot stop construction for the natural world without orders. These orders also come belatedly in the novel, after the human world has interfered with the natural world by way of poaching. Nevertheless, justice is served, and the poached eyases are taken to be raised and hacked by Perry Knowlton. Here, the human world serves as a check on itself in support of the natural world.



Additionally, readers should recall that where justice is finally served is also quite fitting of the natural world, and the balance the human world strikes with it. Bate and Skri are brought to justice for interfering with nature (and impersonating the people whose lives revolve around protecting it) in the summer home of nature writer and conservationist, John Burroughs, a man who spent his own life trying to protect the environment.

## Independence

Independence is an important theme in the novel “Frightful’s Mountain” by Jean Craighead George. Independence has to do not only with freedom, but the ability to survive on one’s own. Independence in the novel focuses primarily around Frightful, though some reference is given to past novels in the case of Sam Gribley and his home on Bitter Mountain. Indeed, Frightful’s independence and abilities to be independent owe heavily to Sam’s own independence.

In the novel “My Side of the Mountain”, Sam comes to live on Bitter Mountain to live off the land on old family property that has remained in the family long after the family has left. There, Sam becomes wholly independent of the outside world, building his own house in a hollowed-out tree, and hunting and gathering food to survive. He takes Frightful out of her nest when she is barely two weeks old, and raises her. As such, she becomes a domesticated, trusting falcon who considers Sam her own family. Sam trains her to hunt and be a companion, and she does this to great success. Sam becomes dependent on Frightful for food for both himself, and his sister. She is a huge part of the reason why they have been able to remain independent. When Frightful is kidnapped and Sam refuses to call her back in, Frightful’s freedom is granted.

However, freedom presents serious problems for Frightful when it comes to independence, proper. She might be free, now, but she is by no means independent. She must learn to survive on her own in order to live. She gets off to a rocky start, but is taken in by Chup as a mate to be a surrogate mother to his motherless offspring. It is through Chup and his babies that Frightful is able to diversify her food tastes for bird and to find acceptance in a new home, though she still longs for original home. Following electrocution and rehabilitation by Jon and Susan Wood, Frightful takes to the wild once more, and begins to survive on her own in and around Bitter Mountain, hunting pigeons and ground game, and ultimately coming to mate with 426. Though two of her babies are poached and later hacked to freedom, Frightful successfully raises a third baby, Oski, and later travels south for the winter, where she is able to live completely on her own on Hispaniola Island, free as well as independent.

## Home

Home is an important theme in the novel “Frightful’s Mountain” by Jean Craighead George. Home, thematically, involves the place where one is born and/or raised, or has come to accept as such a place. Home also involves the idea that things come full circle. For example, people often return home after leaving to visit loved ones, and/or



stake out a new place that they can call home. In other words, they leave home only to once more seek out home. In the novel, the theme of home revolves wholly around Frightful.

Frightful is raised by Sam on Bitter Mountain, which has come to serve as his own home after leaving New York in “My Side of the Mountain”. Frightful also comes to view Bitter Mountain as home, and Sam as her family. In so doing, Sam has indelibly impressed himself onto Frightful, and her longing for the place she considers home will become a driving force for her through much of the novel. The first winter that Frightful is wild, while all the other birds travel south for the winter, Frightful only travels to seek out Sam and her home mountain. The following spring, rather than travel to the Schoharie River with Chup, Frightful decides to stay behind and nest on the Delhi bridge, for Delhi and the area surrounding Bitter Mountain is considered home by Frightful, and she will not leave it. Having been kidnapped from home, Frightful has returned home, coming full circle.

When Frightful gives birth, and later travels south for the winter, her instincts naturally take over, propelling her to warmer climes. Yet, as the seasons change once more, her mind and heart are full of images of home, and she heads once again to the area she considers home, in order to mate and give birth once more. However, Frightful isn't the only one who closes the circle in the return to home: Oski also returns to Bitter Mountain. But unlike Frightful, who nests in town, Oski actually nests in her old nesting box on Bitter Mountain itself, near Sam's house tree. Everything familiar, trusted, and good that Oski knows is on Bitter Mountain, from the local wildlife to Sam, and so it is there that she decides to close the circle – right where she began.

## Justice

Justice is an important theme in the novel “Frightful's Mountain” by Jean Craighead George. Justice, thematically, appears in two ways in the novel: the application of justice by way of punishment for those who have violated laws; and the application of justice by way of doing what is morally and ethically right. The application of justice legally involves the poaching operation perpetrated by Bate and Skri. The application of justice morally and ethically involves man's relationship with animals, and how he treats the natural world.

Legal justice is served against Bate and Skri toward the end of the novel. Just as in “On the Far Side of the Mountain”, Bate and Skri have committed to the poaching of endangered wildlife, principally falcons, to the tune of tens of thousands of dollars. They also impersonate federal agents from the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service in order to steal Frightful's babies, a crime deserving of imprisonment in and of itself. Bate and Skri are arrested at the summer lodge of deceased nature writer John Burroughs, and the justice delivered here is not only fitting, but important as well. Burroughs devoted himself to conserving and protecting nature, and it is in his own home that two people trying to destroy nature for their own expense are apprehended and brought to justice.





Moral and ethical justice is also brought about in the novel for animals by way of people. All species, including men, are determined to survive. Man is the greatest predator on earth, and has both the power to destroy as well as to preserve. It is through the exercise of morals and ethics that man makes right decisions in how he handles his actions on earth and metes out justice. Whereas the animals of the novel are powerless against the poachers, the poachers are susceptible to moral and legal justice against them, and susceptible to others providing of justice for the animals, such as the police. Additionally, moral and ethical considerations are studied when the governor decides to halt construction on the Delhi bridge for the sake of Frightful and her young, and later, by the power company when they decide to fix a few utility poles to provide greater safety for the animals who climb and light on them. While some justice for the animals is served against the poachers, much justice still remains to be had on the part of the animals and the innumerable other utility poles that must be made animal-safe.

## Family

Family is a strong theme in the novel "Frightful's Mountain" by Jean Craighead George. Family, thematically, includes mutual love, compassion, support, and loyalty towards individuals who may or may not be blood-related, but still behave in accord with the traditional family unit. In the novel, family appears in various ways, and even between different species, but the theme of family is no less relevant or important.

Family is most clearly seen between Sam and Alice, as Sam and Alice are blood-related siblings, and watch out for one another as they live on the mountain. Sam hunts and gathers in order to feed himself, and Alice, and makes sure Alice has everything she needs - including electricity. Alice, in turn, cares deeply for Sam, and feels badly when he must let Frightful go back to the wild.

Family can also be seen in other ways as well, beginning with Zella and Bando. Zella and Bando have just had a new baby, but having lived with Sam for months on the mountain, they make sure Sam knows they have always considered him their family, and their son. It is a touching moment, and one which Sam appreciates deeply, because Sam has long considered Frightful family - and now Frightful has mostly returned to the wild. Frightful has also looked upon Sam as family, but her natural instincts have pushed out much of her inclinations toward Sam to the side. She still remembers who Sam is, and still has Sam imprinted upon her, but her pull toward Sam is no longer as strong.

Family also occurs among Frightful and her mates - Chup, his children, and 426, and his children with Frightful. Frightful becomes a stepmother to Chup's children, as his own mate has been killed not long before Frightful's appearance. Frightful feeds and cares for Chup's children, helping them to take to the wild. Frightful later mates with 426, and has children with him. She is just as devoted a mother to her own children as she was to Chup's, feeding for them, caring for them, and finally, helping them take wing in the wild.

# Styles

## Point of View

Jean Craighead George tells her novel “Frightful’s Mountain” from the third-person limited-omniscient point of view, primarily following the actions and activities of her main character and principal protagonist, Frightful. Because Frightful is the main character of the novel, it is only fitting that most of the novel be about her trials, tribulations, and successes. But, because she is a falcon, and cannot understand all the actions of human beings (and human beings cannot necessarily understand her thought processes either), the third-person narrative mode is used. It is also used because, while Frightful may be the main character, many situations in the novel require other people to be present or engage in discussions and activities when Frightful is not around to see them. Such is the case, for example, when Leon Longbridge speaks to the children of Delhi about the governor’s letter. The limited-omniscient perspective lends both an air of suspense and reality to the novel as well. Neither the reader, nor the construction workers are aware that the agents from the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service are actually the poachers Bate and Skir, and only later does the reader learn this as Leon and Sam do. This lends an air of reality to the novel, for no person is one-hundred percent aware of everything going on one-hundred percent of the time.

## Language and Meaning

Jean Craighead George tells her novel “Frightful’s Mountain” in language that is simple and straightforward for two primary reasons. First, her target audience of youth and young adults necessitates simple and straightforward language so that they may understand it and more easily follow along the plot and understand themes at work in the novel. Secondly, much of the novel follows the actions and activities of Frightful, a peregrine falcon, who neither writes nor speaks in English. The natural world often requires only simple explanations, and so simple and straightforward language is highly appropriate for the narration, especially given to describe Frightful and the situations in her life.

## Structure

Jean Craighead George divides her novel “Frightful’s Mountain” into nineteen unnumbered, named, chronological, chapters, beginning with “Frightful Takes Off” and culminating in “Destiny Is on Wing”. The novel spans the timeframe of about two years, beginning where the events of the novel “On the Far Side of the Mountain” end. Each chapter’s title is based on the events that occur directly in that chapter, and often relate to the events in previous and succeeding chapters. For example, the chapter “Frightful Finds Sam” involves Frightful returning to Bitter Mountain and reconnecting with Sam. The chapter before, “Hunger is Frightful’s Teacher” has to do with Frightful needing to

learn to survive on her own while looking for Sam; and the successive chapter “There Are Eggs and Trouble” has to do with Frightful deciding to nest on the Delhi bridge after finding Sam. The novel begins with Sam letting Frightful go, and finishes with Frightful returning home to have more babies, and Oski, one of Frightful’s babies from her first time as a mother, returning to Bitter Mountain as well, completing the cycle of home.



## Quotes

Frightful was an excellent hunter who rarely missed. The food was shared. Their lives depended on each other. She must find Sam again now.

-- Narrator (Frightful Takes Off paragraph 5)

**Importance:** At the beginning of the novel, Frightful has been kidnapped and freed, and later allowed to remain free by Sam. Frightful's sole focus at the beginning of the novel is to return home, to Sam. She and Sam have a symbiotic relationship where they depend on each other, and Frightful first believes that they need each other to survive. This demonstrates just how desperately Frightful wants to return to Sam.

Drum was a survivor.

-- Narrator (The Eyases Get on Wing paragraph 7)

**Importance:** As Frightful tends to the motherless eyases of Chup, she comes to discover that, for Drum being small and loving of his parents, he is tougher than he lets on. His ability to survive serves as an unintended motivator for Frightful. If tiny Drum can survive, so can she.

Like all winter birds, Frightful's life was threatened.

-- Narrator (Frightful Finds the Enemy paragraph 10)

**Importance:** As the seasons change and birds head south, food becomes scarce, and the lives of remaining birds are heavily endangered. This is also true of Frightful. She has little to eat in the wild, in a place to which she is not used to being – in addition to the fact that she has been raised as a domesticated bird with food provided to her.

Another utility-pole disaster." He said to himself. Then went on, "I get so angry about this. It doesn't have to happen.

-- Jon Wood (Disaster Leads to Survival paragraph 9)

**Importance:** Dealing with the theme of moral and ethical justice, Jon is saddened to see the apparent unnecessary death of yet another beautiful form of wildlife. All it would take is a little tweaking, and the deaths would not occur. It angers Jon because the solution is so simple, but people are uncaring enough not to do anything about it.

Susan hugged her arms to her body and watched wistfully. She loved and hated the moment when they set birds free.

-- Narrator (Frightful Finds Sam paragraph 5)

**Importance:** Susan experiences the bittersweet moment of letting go birds that have been nursed back to health or raised. Susan is both happy and sad to see the bird go, for she and her husband put their hearts and souls into caring for the creatures, and this demonstrates just how deeply they care about the natural world and the work that they do.



They stole them. Those men were not from the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service.  
-- Leon Longbridge (Sam Takes Charge paragraph 11)

**Importance:** Here, Leon delivers the bad news to the crew and kids on the Delhi bridge. The two agents who came to take Frightful's babies were not actually from the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, but were actually the poachers Bate and Skri. An injustice has been done, and Leon and the law enforcement agencies of the area intend to make things right.

Everyone wants to save the peregrines, but no one will do what it takes to save them – from stopping work on a bridge to returning chicks to their parents.  
-- Sam Gribley (A Pal Finds a Pal paragraph 184)

**Importance:** Sam sadly reflects on the truth of the situation in the relationship between man and animal. Like Jon, who knows minor fixes in utility poles will help save animal lives, Sam knows that people are often hypocrites: they will talk up a storm about saving animals, but will actually do little to do the work required to save them. In the animal world, speaking is not enough - action is what is actually required to get by.

The bond between us is breaking down. That's good. Good for you, sad for me.  
-- Sam Gribley (Frightful and Oski Run the Show paragraph 49)

**Importance:** As Sam watches Frightful raise Oski, he begins to realize that Frightful is no longer dependent on him, and has her own agenda to attend to. Like Susan's letting Frightful go, Sam experiences a bittersweet moment – almost of a parent seeing a child leave him to live her own life. It is very good for Frightful that she can depend on herself, but it is also very sad for Sam, who will miss having Frightful around all the time.

Now we have a son and a daughter.  
-- Bando (Frightful Feels the Call to the Sky paragraph 12)

**Importance:** Toward the end of the novel, Sam's good friend Bando announces that his wife, Zella, has given birth to their first child, a baby girl. He explains that the girl will be named Samantha, after and in honor of Sam. He also goes on to explain something deeply touching to Sam: they have long considered Sam a son, and having a daughter now means they have two children. Just as Sam loses the family of Frightful, he gains another family by way of Bando, Zella, and Samantha.

Oski bulletted down from the sky and alighted on the wooden box. She called for a mate.  
-- Narrator (Destiny is On Wing paragraph 73)

**Importance:** At the end of the novel, Frightful returns home, and decides to nest not on Sam's mountain, but in the town of Delhi. Sam is a little saddened by this, but understands. Nevertheless, he is thrilled when Oski returns to the mountain where she was raised, in order begin a family all of her own.