

Gorillas in the Mist Study Guide

Gorillas in the Mist by Dian Fossey

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



Contents

Gorillas in the Mist Study Guide.....	1
Contents.....	2
Plot Summary.....	3
Chapters 1 through 3.....	4
Chapters 4 and 5.....	8
Chapters 6 through 8.....	11
Chapters 9 through 12.....	13
Characters.....	16
Objects/Places.....	19
Themes.....	21
Style.....	23
Quotes.....	25
Topics for Discussion.....	27



Plot Summary

Dian Fossey wants to travel to Africa so desperately that she takes out a personal loan in order to finance a seven-week trip. She carefully plans every step of the itinerary, which is much different from that of a typical tourist. As soon as she arrives at Dr. Leakey's excavation site, she falls, breaks her ankle and unceremoniously vomits on the fossil of a giraffe. She manages to continue her trip and spends a short period of time in the mountains observing gorillas. The trip is much too short to begin any serious study and Fossey returns to Kentucky where she continues working at a job to repay her loan. When Dr. Leakey arrives in the United States and tells Fossey that he believes there is funding available for a long-term study of gorillas, Fossey is eager to go. She sets out with only a limited idea of what she needs but is helped by photographers Alan and Joan Root. Alan travels with her to set up her first camp, but she's there only a short time before political unrest prompts a move. She sets up a new camp that becomes known as Karisoke and begins working to make the gorillas accept her presence.

Over the coming years, Fossey begins interacting with the gorillas, though she tries to limit the impact of her presence. She begins documenting the various members of several groups and comes to know many of the individual members by sight. When her work is well established, Fossey realizes that she is going to have to have help in order to expand her research and to conduct a comprehensive annual census. The first American student arrives, panting and with the immediate realization that he won't be able to withstand the rigors of the task ahead. Over the years, she has several others who don't work out but has some who prove invaluable.

Fossey deals with the poachers who create continued threats to the gorillas, though many of the gorillas caught in traps are caught unintentionally. Gorillas typically break lose from the traps but often develop complications and die later. Fossey connects with a number of the members of the various groups over the years, some who tend to look to Fossey and the other human observers as sources of entertainment. Some of them find Fossey's possessions interesting, and Fossey once hands a gorilla a National Geographic magazine in an effort to keep the youngster entertained without touching her camera or camera lenses. She is amazed that the youngster looks at the pictures but seems to hold a grudge for having been pacified with the magazine.

Fossey says that the key to the survival of the species is conservation and that it's up to humans to decide whether the gorillas will be among those species to disappear from the face of the earth.



Chapters 1 through 3

Chapters 1 through 3 Summary and Analysis

Dian Fossey wants desperately to take a trip to Africa, specifically to study gorillas but also to meet Louis and Mary Leakey, noted scientists who are interested in Fossey's determination to study gorillas. To achieve this goal, she takes out a loan to pay for a seven-week tour of Africa. She plans every aspect of her itinerary in order to make the most of her trip. Fossey notes that Leakey plants the idea of a long-term study of gorillas. During this initial visit to Africa, Fossey visits the Leakeys in Olduvai. Fossey is invited by the Leakeys to look over an excavation site where they have discovered a giraffe fossil. She runs into the dig and falls, breaking her ankle and unceremoniously vomiting on the excavation site. The Leakeys advise that she give up her plans to go on to Kabara to look for gorillas, but she refuses. Two weeks later, she is hobbling into the area known for gorilla population. She is accompanied by a new acquaintance, Alan Root, who is a photographer, and his wife, Joan. When Fossey sees her first gorilla group, Alan is with her and he immediately sets up his camera and begins filming. The gorillas are curious about his movements and the large silverback male, the leader of the group, remains close to investigate along with several of the young males of the group.

Fossey is back in Louisville, Kentucky, working to repay the loan for that first African trip, when Dr. Leakey encounters her again. He tells her that there's funding available for a long-term study of gorillas and she immediately begins making plans to go. He tells her that she must have her appendix removed prior to going to Africa and she makes arrangements immediately. When she's recovering from the surgery, he sends her a note saying that the appendectomy is not necessary but is used as a way of testing the resolve of applicants. Fossey learns that Leighton Wilkie, the man responsible for funding Jane Goodall's study, is willing to finance another study of gorillas, meaning that Fossey's funding is now assured.

Fossey heads again to Africa. In Nairobi, she's met by Joan Root, who helps her prepare for building a camp in the jungle. Among Fossey's purchases is an "antiquated, canvas-topped Land Rover" that she names "Lily." Alan Root helps her establish a camp at Kabara in the Parc des Virungas. A guide named Sanwekwe arrives and serves as tracker while teaching Fossey to track as well. She relates an incident in which she discovers what she believes to be a sleeping gorilla and then comes to realize that it was a forest hog.

Fossey talks about her daily work and the requirements to perform daily chores and paperwork. She says that the diet is sometimes monotonous. She says that she'd tried to grow a garden but the elephants destroy it. Members of the camp go to town monthly to get food but Fossey says the bread and fresh foods last only about two weeks. She has a hen named Lucy and a rooster named Dezi so she always has fresh eggs as well.



With Sanwekwe as the tracker, Fossey locates three groups of gorillas within the immediate area and begins tracking them. She tends to try to introduce herself so that her presence has as little impact on the daily habits of the gorillas. Another task she faces is learning to identify the various members of each group. This is done by logging 'nose prints,' which, like fingerprints, are individual to a single gorilla. Fossey seldom photographs during those early days, mostly because she is occupied with taking notes, gaining the trust of the groups and using the binoculars. One day she tries to climb a tree in order to gain a better vantage point for taking photos and has so much trouble getting up the tree that she expects the gorillas have left by the time she's perched. She says that once up there, she sees that the gorillas have gathered around to watch her comic endeavors, and that photo is a widely-publicized picture.

Fossey becomes very aware that her actions can affect how the gorillas act. She says that she has to remember that her actions on a particular day can impact the gorillas for days to come. On July 9, 1967, Fossey is forced from her mountain camp by soldiers who talk about political upheaval. Using the story that Fossey wanted to register her Range Rover in Zaire and that her money was being kept in Kisoro, Uganda, Fossey convinces soldiers to accompany her on the trip. She arrives at a check station where it seems she might be held, but at that moment her hen Lucy lays an egg and Fossey jumps around, excited about the egg, convincing the soldiers at the station that she's a harmless idiot. They allow her to leave and she arrives at the Travelers Rest Hotel, an "oasis" for scientists and tourists built by Walter Baumgartel, where she finds safety. Dr. Leakey becomes involved with the embassy and Fossey is allowed to travel to Nairobi where she moves to the Rwandan side of the mountain to continue her research. She meets a woman named Alyette DeMunck, a Belgian who knows a great deal about the country, the people and the traditions.

In chapter two, Fossey names her new camp "Karisoke Research Centre." She is soon battling cattle that graze illegally in the area and disturb both the patterns of the gorillas and her ability to study them. She also deals with poachers and uses various means to dissuade them, including holding the child of one of them in order to get an opportunity to talk to one of them. In some cases, the poachers respect her request that they remain away from her study area. In other cases, the poachers retaliate against those who interfere. Traps are another problem and she describes an array of types. Sometimes the traps accidentally catch gorillas. The animals usually break free but die later. She finds one adult female that she believes must have been caught in a trap because the gorilla is missing fingers. Fossey says that the gorilla later gives birth and manages to care for the infant despite the handicap.

In chapter three, Fossey learns aspects of the behavior of the gorillas and encounters other animals as she works. One day Fossey is worming her way through thick foliage when she sees daylight and grabs onto what she thinks is a large vine. It turns out to be a buffalo, and she so startles it that it leaves "odoriferous deposits" all over Fossey. She studies gorilla dung and learns a great deal about the animals from this. She puts the dung in controlled situations to see how long it takes particular changes to occur, adding more to her tracking abilities through these experiments. She notes that gorillas sometimes eat their own dung but only if they catch it prior to it hitting the ground.



Fossey puts this down to vitamin deficiencies. She watches as the gorillas build nests for themselves. She says that gorillas remain with their mothers until a new baby is born to that female, and that animals of thirty-four months are among the youngest to consistently build nests for themselves. The gorillas tend to nest differently based on where they are sleeping and Fossey finds she is unable to slip up to nesting areas without alerting the "sentries", sleeping some distance from the main group to serve as lookouts.

Fossey describes the various feeding zones, including saddle zone, Veronica zone, nettle zone, bamboo zone, brush zone, giant lobelia zone and Afro-alpine zone. She says that gorillas tend to travel more quickly when the food supplies are less. Groups sometimes venture into new areas, apparently trying to find sources of food. Ironically, the gorillas are sometimes wandering around, apparently aimless and either completely lost or at least disoriented. Fossey says that some foods are prized and that groups may clash when these foods are in limited supply. Bamboo in a particular area is one example of this, but Fossey says that the gorillas also go on occasional "soil-eating" binges and choose places high in minerals for these periods. The various groups being tracked by Fossey prefer different areas for feeding.

Fossey describes the various sounds of the gorillas, including a belching sound that indicates contentment. She says this noise is among the first things taught to students who join her to study but says not all mastered the sound. One student never managed to mimic the sound and sounded more like the beating of a goat, though the gorillas eventually come to accept the sound. Fossey says that she is traveling uphill one day in search of a group that she believes to be several miles away when a group of gorillas comes charging down the hill at her. Fossey stops without completely realizing which way the gorillas are coming from. The lead male recognizes her and stops with several other gorillas so close behind him that they crash into him. She says that it's some time before the gorillas allow her to get up. A group of herdsmen watching from a distance believe that the gorillas killed her and when she stands up, they come to believe that she must be protected by "a very special kind of sumu against the wrath of the gorillas, whom they feared greatly." She relates several other instances in which gorillas charged, saying that these are caused by the encroachment of humans without observing gorilla protocol.

Fossey says that many gorillas are slaughtered for "trophies," including hands that are sold for a relatively small amount. She says that there are a few people who have worked over the years in an effort to stop the poaching for this purpose. She says that a man named Paulin Nkubili was the Rwandan "Chef des Brigades" and that he put huge penalties against those who violated the poaching laws. The man diligently works at his job, and Fossey says that he virtually eliminates the trophy market.

Fossey leaves behind her family, and though she doesn't focus on this, she says that her family doesn't really understand her desire to embark on this trip. Fossey notes that Alan Root remains with her for the first days at her first camp, located in Kabara. Fossey comes to rely greatly on him as the only person she knows in the camp. The reader should keep in mind that there are several men camping with Fossey, all from the local



area, some serving initially as porters to carry in the supplies for the camp and some wishing to remain as her full-time employees after the camp is established. They don't speak English and Fossey has only recently begun studying Swahili. When Alan leaves the camp, Fossey is afraid and says that it takes a great deal of will power to remain in the camp rather than running after him. What's interesting here is that the men who will be serving as her camp staff are concerned about her and ask her a question. When she finally understands the question, she realizes that they're asking if she wants hot water. She says that she doesn't know whether it's hot water for tea or for a bath, but that they bring her a gallon of hot water and she accepts it for what it is - the white people's comfort for all occasions.

Much of Fossey's information is gained by trial and error. For example, she says that she learns that walking upright tends to agitate the gorillas and that hunching over, dragging her knuckles on the ground or crawling are better ways of approaching the creatures without alarming them. She also comes to learn that they are curious, and that remaining almost hidden will often gain their interest so that they remain out in the open rather than hiding, as is typical when she's in the open.

Fossey talks some about the people who visit the jungle, including the students but also including tourists. She talks about the fact that some people are unwilling to take responsibility for their actions with regard to the gorillas. Fossey says that there is a young boy who tries to "cuddle" a baby gorilla, prompting the mother and dominant male to charge. The boy is mauled and nearly killed. She also tells about a man who repeatedly refuses to follow the rules of survival among the gorillas, moving jerkily and acting in ways that seem threatening. When he is eventually mauled for his actions, he doesn't change his ways but brags about the close call.



Chapters 4 and 5

Chapters 4 and 5 Summary and Analysis

Fossey begins to introduce and describe the various members of the groups she tracks from her second camp. She finds her first group there thanks to information from a group of poachers. She quickly finds another, Group 5, and meets with a young male who plays and swings in the trees during their initial meeting, almost as if showing off for her. She names this adolescent Icarus. The group has two silverback males and she names one Beethoven, the second Bartok, and a young silverback in the group Brahms. She regularly contacts this group and comes to learn the various members very quickly. She discovers that the various members identify each other by sound.

One day Brahms is running away and Fossey discovers that he's been shot by the arrow of a poacher but has survived. He later begins his own group. There comes a day when groups four and five have a brief interaction apparently prompted by the fact that one of the females had migrated from one group to another. The female traveled back to her former group briefly. The female, Bravado, soon gives birth to her first baby, and Fossey names him Curry. Bravado remains somewhat removed from the group over the coming months, and when Curry is about ten months old, the group is attacked by an unknown silverback. Fossey finds Curry dead the next morning. Bravado is a changed gorilla, becoming playful and indulgent. Fossey says that she'd been sad to find Curry dead and had expected to see that Bravado was also sad, though she comes to learn that almost all females who lose babies exhibit similar actions. She doesn't know whether it's just an effort to forget the baby or the relief of being no longer tied to the cares of motherhood. The group later has another interaction, this time with a "fringe group", and Bravado moves to that group along with an eight-year-old female named Piper. Fossey loses track of the two females and they are never again positively identified. Another female of the group dies about this same time and Fossey notes that the silverback of the group slows the pace to accommodate her when the illness makes her weak.

Over the coming years, Beethoven, forty-seven, depends more frequently on Icarus. They are both injured during an attack on the group by another group, though Icarus heals more quickly. One of the females gives birth, but the infant dies. Then the gorilla's daughter, Pansy, gives birth to a son named Banjo. One day Fossey discover that Banjo is missing. She searches for the baby but can't find it. Fossey notes that she's lived with the gorillas for nine years at this point and that she can identify the individuals by their nests and dung. She eventually finds slivers of bone and infant hair in the dung. Though not conclusive, Fossey believes Banjo might have been a victim of cannibalism.

One of the adult females, Effie, has yet another child, and Fossey notes that each develops its own personality. One of the youngsters, Puck, catches and tears up flies, examining each piece before throwing it away. Puck often examines Fossey's bag, and one day she gives him a National Geographic magazine, hoping to keep him out of her



bag. She says that he carefully examines each page but whacks Fossey before leaving, as if still angry that she'd refused to give him the camera he'd wanted. She notes the importance of this discovery, that he'd held to his anger for more than two hours.

Beethoven heals and Fossey says that he behaves roguishly. Pansy and an older female named Marchessa are expecting. One day Fossey sees that Pansy has been seriously wounded, apparently from an argument within the group. Marchessa gives birth to a boy named Shinda and Pansy gives birth to a girl named Muraha and the two mothers become a defensive force. Another female named Liza is mother to three-year-old Pablo, who is barely tolerated by the group because of his boisterous nature. He often plays with Fossey and she learns to pinch him in order to stop his biting. Another squabble occurs and several members of the group are injured, Effie seriously. Her offspring, Tuck, spends a great deal of time grooming Effie, who finally begins to heal. One day Muraha leaves the safety of her mother and wobbles over to Fossey. Pansy follows the youngster, seems apologetic to Fossey, and retrieves the infant. Fossey says it's one of her best memories.

Fossey notes that a female named Liza moves to Group 6. She leaves behind a daughter, Quince, who becomes despondent. Fossey finds tissue in Quince's nest. She dies later of malaria. A two-week pursuit of the group by a film team results in a miscarriage by Effie. In 1980, Effie gave birth again, this time to Maggie. Marchessa's clan remains superior in the group until her death. When her body is discovered by the other members of the group, they react. Icarus jumps up and down on her, beating her body with a frenzy. Other members either groom her or touch either her face or her anus. She says that Icarus's actions are not typical and that this is the only example of this kind of attack witnessed during her time studying the gorillas.

In chapter five, Fossey learns that two baby gorillas have been captured, their groups killed in order to get the babies away. Fossey insists she take one of the babies, Coco, and the second, Pucker, is brought to her later because the captors believe the animal will die. Fossey learns that the two babies, about two and three years old, are bound for the Cologne Zoo. When she tries to refuse to allow the captors to take them after nursing them back to health, she's told that they'll simply capture two more, an action that will necessarily result in more deaths of gorillas. She says that the two survive the trip to the zoo but both die within a month of each other, still in captivity, in 1978.

In chapter six, Fossey describes some animal visitors to the camp, including a new pair of chickens to replace Lucy and Dezi when they die. The new chickens, Walter and Wilma, are presented to her by her camp assistants. She has a dog named Cindy who is "dog-napped" several times, once rescued by Fossey and her camp workers. She has a monkey named "Kima" who dies later while Fossey is away conducting research at a college. Cindy is later taken to America to live away from the rigors of camp life. Eventually, she's asked to take care of another young gorilla, a male of about five years, who dies shortly after his arrival. A dog caught in a trap is treated for injuries and eventually adopted by a member of a television crew.



Fossey was tracking Group 1, Group 2 and Group 3 from her first camp and numbers the groups from her second camp as Group 4 through 9.

Fossey notes that Curry is her "introduction to infanticide" among the gorillas. She doesn't fully explain what happened to Curry, but says that it seems an unknown silverback had attacked the group and that Curry had been bitten and killed, though she doesn't say whether it was the silverback or some member of Curry's group that killed him. He is dropped some distance from the attack site, though the group continues to run farther.

Fossey says that the actions of Group 5 remains an important aspect of her studies. She says that from this group she learned about the importance of family and kinship, largely by watching the birth and growth of several of the youngsters who themselves learn to become mothers.

Fossey's time with the two babies, Pucker and Coco, is a bittersweet time. She believes she'll getting them well to reintroduce them to the wild, but eventually realizes she has no option but to turn them over. Coco takes to her quickly but Pucker is less ready to accept Fossey. It's competition over food and attention that makes both animals more determined to survive. Fossey describes their actions and says she learns a great deal from them, including the fact that gorillas love a tree fungus that is very rare.



Chapters 6 through 8

Chapters 6 through 8 Summary and Analysis

Fossey works closely with Group 8, and it's there that she encounters a young male named Peanut. He is the group's youngest male, and one day Peanut comes forward to watch Fossey as she pretends to eat foliage. When he seems to grow bored with watching, she stops eating and begins to scratch her head. He mimics her. She then lays down in the foliage and stretches out her hand. Peanut touches her, then postures, beating his chest, obviously pleased with himself. She often makes the trip between Groups 4 and 8 during a single day.

A new group, Group 9, is soon discovered. The death of a female brings problems to the cohesiveness of both groups. Groups 8 and 9 share an area with fruit trees. Group 8 is now without a female at all. More than three years after the death of that female, Group 8's leader, Rafiki, obtains two females from Group 4. Another male leaves the group, leaving only Rafiki, the two females and Peanut. The male, Samson, returns and lures one of the females away. Rafiki soon has a daughter, Thor, but it's obvious that he's aging and is less able to defend his family. After seven months of missing Group 9, Fossey leads a search for them and finds only five of the original thirteen members. She never again sees the mature male but sees several of the females in other groups over coming years.

Rafiki continues to travel with his tiny family, including a youngster named Thor, until his death. Fossey is returning to Rwanda from Cambridge when a student arrives with Rafiki's skin, requesting permission to take it as a trophy. Fossey refuses. Thor is killed a short time later and Peanut is forced to wander alone, briefly taking a female but losing her to another silverback. Peanut continues to show the signs of an injury.

In chapter eight, Fossey notes that there are visitors to the park but that most are unwelcome. Fossey eventually comes to realize that the only way to expand the work at the camp is to bring in students, though the first American student arrives panting and gasping and says that he isn't cut out for the work. One of those who arrives willing and able to help is National Geographic photographer Bob Campbell. He photographs Coco and Pucker shortly before they are taken to the Cologne Zoo, and returns to Karisoke several times over the coming years. He works at maintaining the camp and helps the workers learn to keep the lamps functional - a feat because there are no spare parts to be had.

In 1969, Bob and the Belgian woman named Alyette DeMunck help Fossey start a comprehensive census. The task begins in the area around Karisoke, but with those students who are willing to work, the project is eventually expanded and was completed annually. One part of the census-taking process is to count nights. Though tedious, it's sometimes the only way to discover infants because their mothers carry them so close to their bellies.



Fossey describes visitors who are invaluable to her research and her work. Tim White is not a student, but is traveling around the world on his own. He stops in expecting to stay only a day but remains ten months. Tim pitches in to help stop poachers. Ric Elliot is English and Fossey chooses him as a student worker because his application has the word "I" only a few times. Her hunch is right and he spends a great deal of time working at autopsies and conducting parasite studies. Ian Redmond is the next to appear and takes up Ric's work of more than a year earlier. Fossey says she doesn't often venture into Ian's cabin because there's no way to know what smelly specimen he'll have brought in. Ian always wears shorts, saying it makes him better aware of his surroundings and works often to help find and chase away poachers.

Fossey talks about her need for students to help with the work and begins the search for suitable candidates. The problem is that most of the students are there to finish doctorate work or have some personal reason for choosing to work there. This means that they aren't overly interested in the needs of the animals but focus more on their own personal goals. She talks about one man who defecates in the midst of the gorillas. When she berates him, saying that this could introduce disease and create other problems, he says that nothing can interrupt the hours he spends in observation. Others can't stand the solitude, the rigorous exercise required for the hiking and observation, or can't stay on track when working without Fossey's direct supervision. There are apparently few exceptions to this rule. An interesting aspect of Fossey's nature is seen when she says that she can't understand that students who want to study gorillas would object to any of the hardships in order to do so, and that she can't understand those who would put their own goals and comforts above those of the gorillas. Further, there are those who are absolutely stupid, several causing fires that demolish cabins and equipment.

Fossey talks about her efforts to gain funding and her pay for the work. She doesn't draw a salary and says that she doesn't believe any of the other researchers working in the field should either. She has funding available for her own work and there are usually either grants available to pay for equipment of those who come with specific study topics. Despite the fact that she remains busy with observation, she also takes time out to travel to either American or England to complete work that can't be done in the field and to write grants for additional funding.



Chapters 9 through 12

Chapters 9 through 12 Summary and Analysis

Fossey goes back to her initial meeting with Group 4. The dominant silverback has a congested sound, distinctive from the roar of most males, and Fossey names him Whinny. There's a tiny "ball of fluff" with a twisted finger that had obviously been broken at some point that Fossey believes to be Whinny's son and that she names Digit. There's also an older female who serves as "rear guard" for the group. Because she looks at Fossey "as though she had just swallowed a mouthful of vinegar," Fossey names her Old Goat. There are two additional silverbacks in the group, Uncle Bert and Amok, the latter named for his unstable temperament. The group has a total of fourteen members in 1967, including a female Fossey names Flossie and another juvenile named Papoose. Old Goat and Flossie soon have babies, named Tiger and Simba. Whinny is obviously ailing, and in 1968, his body is found in his night nest. Interestingly, it's Old Goat who takes over the leadership of the group despite being a female. Fossey watches one day as Digit flops into the lap of Uncle Bert, who tickles him with flowers. The youngsters of the group often "giggle" or "chuckle" when tickled, much as a human child would. One day she watches at Uncle Bert takes the five youngsters of the group on a complicated "dance" which seems to Fossey almost like a square dance with the gorillas using small trees as partners. It's around this time that Amok is ostracized from the group.

The group soon encounters Group 8 and the difference between the actions of the inexperienced Uncle Bert is brought into sharp contrast against the actions of Beethoven. Uncle Bert sires a baby by Flossie and a juvenile of the group, named Maisie, often "contrives" to gain Flossie's favor in order to spend time with the new baby. Flossie is tolerant but Uncle Bert sometimes intervenes, returning the baby to its mother. Fossey says that the future of the group seems more secure under the leadership of the maturing Uncle Bert and with the youngster Digit taking over some responsibility for the safety of the group.

In chapter ten, several of the gorillas of the group emigrate to another group and Digit is suddenly without playmates and seems to look forward to the human contact as a source on entertainment. Uncle Bert, with Digit as backup, sometimes clashes with Group 5. During one of these clashes, Digit is seriously injured and is unable to lick and clean his wound because of its location on his neck. Two of the youngsters of the group are left without mothers and Uncle Bert takes on different roles with them - spoiling one excessively and merely protecting the other. When Old Goat goes missing, it takes days of searching to find her body. She leaves behind Tiger, who is then about seven, and Digit who is twelve, and spends a great deal of time ensuring that a lone silverback doesn't harm any members of the group. Digit continues to battle the effects of his wound. One cold, wet day, Fossey seats herself some distance from the group and Digit walks up, puts his arm over her shoulder, and sits down beside her. She instinctively puts her head in his lap and is in a position to get a better look at the neck injury, now



four years old. She takes out her camera and is snapping photos when Digit yawns, a photo that appears to be a ferocious threatening pose because of the exposed teeth. She also notes that the wound is finally healing but that Digit is suffering the long-term effects and seems somewhat deformed.

Fossey talks about the particular behaviors exhibited by members of the group. Augustus, the baby of a female named Petula, tends to play alone and will often climb trees to search for signs of her mother. She also learns to clap her hands, a behavior seen in no other wild gorilla during Fossey's study, and for a period of time can be seen and heard doing this at various times. A youngster named Titus discovers the sound made by "whacking both hands rapidly under his relaxed chin" and causing his teeth to clack together sharply. When he begins doing this, Augustus resumes the handclapping.

In chapter eleven, Fossey is studying the group, which now includes an infant named Kweli. Kweli crawls over to Fossey before rolling around, chuckling and returning to her mother, Macho. The idyll is interrupted by the sounds of poachers in the distance and the gorillas move off. Fossey and others search for traps, and it's Ian Redmond who finds Digit's body. The poachers were apparently interrupted before they could complete the mutilation, though Digit's head has been removed. Ian and Fossey discuss whether to release the news of Digit's slaughter in the hopes of creating a public outcry that might force officials to further their efforts to stop poaching but Fossey fears that the plan could backfire. Eventually she decides to release the information, hoping that by doing so Digit won't have died in vain. The leading poachers of the region, Munyarukiko, Sebahutu and Gashabizi, manage to escape by hiding in the mountains. Fossey and others in her camp chase the gorillas back to a safer area. When they come to the place Digit was killed, they are confused, having been in full retreat when Digit faced off the poachers and therefore not having seen his death. Three months later, Simba gives birth to Digit's one and only offspring, Mwelu. Later, a student alerts Fossey to the fact that Uncle Bert was shot through the heart and killed, his body decapitated as well. Fossey calls on Paulin Nkubili, the "chef des brigades" of the park and he begins a search for the poachers. Over the coming days, poachers, weapons, and items still bloody from killing gorillas and drugs are found. As Fossey plans to head back to camp, she learns that another gorilla, Macho, has been killed. Nkubili continues to lead raids. Fossey learns that Macho was likely killed in retaliation for having shot her baby, Kweli.

The group's unity is threatened by a male who has been part of the group for some time. His arrival was a surprise and because she couldn't identify him, Fossey had named him Beetsme. Several members of the group leave, leaving the group with fewer members but with a more cohesive group. One day a porter arrives with a young female who'd been taken by poachers trying to sell the animal to a Frenchman. The youngster is retrieved and the poachers jailed. Fossey names the youngster Bonne Annee. When she's strong enough, Fossey introduces her to Group 5, but two members of the group, Tuck and Effie, fight over the infant, biting her and tearing at her. Fossey interrupts, taking the baby back but she again climbs down to endure the abuse. Icarus joins the abuse and Fossey, with the help of a worker named Jon, eventually rescues her again, taking her back home. There, she recovers and is introduced to Group 4, who accepts her presence with all the adults protecting her and cuddling with her. She dies later of



pneumonia. Tiger continues to have a lack of breeding opportunities and leaves his group but spends his time alone.

In chapter twelve, Fossey describes the appearance of a new silverback that Fossey names Nunkie. Nunkie is alone at first but soon attracts some females. There are give and take interactions, some violent, as Nunkie settles in and tries to find a range that isn't encroaching on the ranges of the others. In 1982, Nunkie's group has sixteen, several obtained from other groups, including Group 4 and the fringe group, Group 6. Fossey says that there is no way for groups to live without the unifying force of a strong silverback leader. Fossey says there are continued threats because of poachers, encroaching human population and less land available, all combining to result in a lessening of gorilla population at a rate of three percent annually. Fossey says that her period of research - from 1967 through 1983 - is "a tiny segment of time." She says that it's estimated that twenty species will disappear from the face of the earth over the coming twenty years and says that it's up to humans to decide whether gorillas will be one of those.

Fossey is asked by the Rwandan government to provide a photo of a gorilla for tourism posters, and she chooses a shot of Digit. Fossey is torn by the publicity, fearing that tourists will flock to the area and create problems for the gorillas. She has a special fondness for Digit, who'd been a baby when she'd first contacted the group. This is why Digit's death had hit her so hard.

Fossey talks about "habitation" of the gorillas. This term means that the gorillas tolerate her presence and go on about their activities without regard to the fact that there's a human in their midst. While this may seem a problem in and of itself, it's the only way Fossey is able to conduct the depth of study she's undertaking. Fossey says that she tries not to interact with the gorillas overly often but admits that when youngsters play with her it's impossible to remain an uninvolved scientist. An interesting aspect of this habitation is that the gorillas come to recognize Fossey and learn to recognize other members of her team, but that doesn't mean that they come to trust all humans. In fact, Fossey relates a case of a male gorilla charging until she steps into view. For this reason, the interaction between the gorillas and Fossey doesn't at all make them less fearful of other humans.

Fossey describes a situation in which Uncle Bert is dive-bombed by ravens. The birds continue to harass him for some time, prompting him to resort to slapping his head and cringing while the birds harass only him. Fossey says that she's "embarrassed for my noble friend." She continues to make the leap from the gorilla's actions to believing that there are emotions attached and says that she tends to want the gorillas to feel what she feels. Based on their actions, this is sometimes the case.



Characters

Dian Fossey

Fossey is a determined woman and proves her dedication to a study of gorillas in Africa by taking out a personal loan to fund her first trip to Africa. There, she meets Dr. Leakey, and it's this meeting that prompts her belief that she could participate in a long-term study of gorillas. Fossey is dedicated to the project from the start and hates every setback. She pushes forward when there are people telling her that specific actions are too dangerous to undertake, but is also completely willing to take the advice of those who have lived in jungle camps. She gives credit to several people who have worked in the field and shared their information to help Fossey get started.

Fossey eventually decides that she has to bring in some students to help her research expand and says that she can't understand that some aren't cut out for the rigors of camp life and that others don't have the ability to put the needs of the animals ahead of her own. She is daring to a degree and describes many encounters with danger, including her decision once to hold the son of a poacher captive at her camp until the poacher came to retrieve the boy, giving her a chance to talk with him and to negotiate an area that would be free from the poacher's trapping and hunting. Fossey's interactions with the gorillas are clear examples of her dedication to the work. While she takes the work seriously, she admits that she sometimes gets caught up in the playtime of the youngsters. She also mourns the deaths, especially those she's known for a long time, such as a young male named Digit.

Dr. Leakey

A researcher working in Africa when Fossey makes her first trip there, Dr. Leakey inadvertently plants the idea that Fossey might be able to return to African for a long-term study of gorilla's. Fossey says that Leakey is working on a dig and has discovered a giraffe fossil when she first meets him and she's delighted when he offers to let her go to the excavation site. There, she is running and falls, stumbling in a hole in the dig site. Leakey is fully aware that Fossey falls right onto the fossil and that the pain is so severe that she vomits into the site. Fossey says that Leakey and his wife tell her that she should give up her plans for the rest of her trip and go home, but she doesn't, choosing instead to continue her journey.

Fossey is back home in Kentucky when Leakey approaches her about an opportunity for a long-term study project in Africa, cataloguing gorillas and studying their behavior. He puts her in touch with the man who funded Jane Goodall's research and helps support her himself as she begins the process of working in Africa. Leakey is apparently a dedicated researcher himself and it could be that he recognizes a kindred spirit in Fossey. Fossey says that she might have made a lasting impression on him by throwing up on his excavation site. Fossey seems to credit Leakey with her study of gorillas and



seems to greatly respect his work. An interesting aspect of Leakey's personality is seen when he meets Fossey in Kentucky. He tells her that she should immediately have an appendectomy because it's required before she goes to live in the jungle. She wastes no time and is already home recovering from the surgery when she receives a note from Leakey saying it's not really a requirement but is his way of testing the resolve of anyone who says they want to go to Africa for a long-term study program.

Alan Root

A researcher and photographer in his own right, Alan remains with Fossey during the first days of establishing her first camp. It's Alan who takes over direction of most of the routine camp chores, and Fossey notes that she's suddenly afraid when Alan leaves her alone with only her camp staff.

Joan Root

Alan's wife, Joan, is with Fossey as she begins preparing to set up camp. It's Joan who helps Fossey purchase the things she needs most and helps direct her in her preparation for her first camp.

Bob Campbell

A National Geographic photographer who spends some time at Karisoke. Fossey notes that Bob "thoroughly" documents the end days of Coco and Pucker's time at Karisoke. Fossey says that many of her guests are unwelcome, but that Bob takes time to teach the staff how to work on the lanterns - a task that's particularly important and that few people know how to figure out, especially with the fact that there are no parts available.

Alyette DeMunck

A Belgian woman who becomes a tremendous help to Fossey. Fossey notes that Alyette is well versed in the traditions of the people, and it's with the help of Alyette that Fossey undertakes the project of conducting a comprehensive census on the gorillas in the area.

Ian Redmond

Ian comes to work with Fossey as a researcher focusing on autopsies, parasites and other similar aspects of Fossey's work. He works diligently against the poachers and always wears shorts, saying that it makes him more fully aware of his surroundings.



Ric Elliot

A student from England, Ric is chosen by Fossey because his application uses the word "I" sparingly. Ric turns out to be a tremendous asset. He works on the medical side of the project, conducting autopsies, parasite studies and similar aspects of the project. Ric is also handy around the camp, pitching in to work on maintenance of the buildings and equipment.

Tim White

An American, Tim is traveling around the world on his own and stops in at Karisoke for a one-day layover. He ends up staying ten months. While there, he helps a great deal by working on repairs and maintenance of the buildings in the camp but also conducts field research.

Paulin Nkubili

Nkubili is the Rwandan "Chef des Brigades" and one man Fossey says is responsible for stopping many of the poachers. He takes an active role in rounding up poachers after the deaths of Digit and others of that group.



Objects/Places

Lily

The name Fossey gives the Land Rover she purchases in Africa.

Louisville, Kentucky

Where Fossey is working when she is granted funding to study the gorillas of Africa.

Kabara

The location of Fossey's first long-term camp, Kabara is located in the Parc des Virungas.

Karisoke Research Centre

The second camp Fossey establishes.

Digit

A young male when Fossey first encounters him, Digit has a twisted finger, apparently the result of having been broken. Digit is playful and often takes Fossey's camera and other equipment. Digit is eventually killed and decapitated.

Coco

A young gorilla taken captive by poachers, Fossey insists that she take the youngster in an effort to help Coco recover. Coco is eventually taken to the Cologne Zoo where she dies in captivity.

Pucker

The second young orphan to be taken by poachers, Pucker is destined for the Cologne Zoo but is so ill that Fossey is asked to keep the youngster until it is fit to travel. Fossey initially believes Pucker will die but Pucker is so determined that Coco not have any food unless she has a share that she begins to get well.



Lucy

A chicken that is given to Fossey, Lucy lays an egg while Fossey is being detained at a check point during a political upheaval and Fossey makes an incredible fuss over the egg, convincing the authorities that she's a harmless idiot and prompting them to let her go.

Old Goat

An older female who Fossey says looks as if she has a mouthful of vinegar. She has several youngsters before her death.

Beethoven

The dominant male of Group 8. Beethoven is already a mature adult when Fossey first makes contact and Fossey uses him to measure other adult males' maturity and leadership ability.

Uncle Bert

Named because of an uncanny resemblance to a relative of Fossey, he becomes the leader of a group upon the death of the leader, a silverback named Whinny. Uncle Bert is left with several motherless youngsters over the years and treats each of them differently, spoiling one to the point that Fossey compares the youngster to a spoiled human.



Themes

The Unique Actions of Gorillas

Fossey's purpose in studying the gorillas is to log actions and interactions of the species. Fossey soon comes to realize that there are a number of unique actions and interactions of the gorillas she comes to know and recognize. One of those is Digit, a young male who is always interested in the contents of Fossey's bag. Digit isn't the first to show this interest. In fact, Fossey had interacted with another youngster named Puck. One day Puck is insisting that Fossey give him her camera and she hands him a National Geographic Magazine, then is amazed to find that Puck turns the pages, looking with interest at the pictures. When Puck is ready to leave the area, he makes it apparent that he wasn't happy to have been given the magazine instead of the camera he'd wanted by slapping Fossey. The majority of youngsters live within the confines of close family with other youngsters to play with. When deprived of this interaction, they often create new ways to entertain themselves. Fossey believes this is the reason Digit becomes so totally involved in the lives of the human observers, and though she misses him when he takes on more adult roles in the group, she's relieved that he doesn't remain too completely involved in the humans. This is seen with other youngsters who invent various ways to entertain themselves. One learns to clap, unique among the gorillas in that this youngster uses both hands whereas most use a hand and a foot to make noise. A couple of others learn that hitting their relaxed chins makes an interesting noise when their teeth clack together.

Kinship

Fossey notes that kinship plays an important role in the lives of the gorillas and the actions and interactions of the various groups and the individual members. This is seen repeatedly among the various groups. For example, the members of Group 4 lose their leader, Whinny, to natural causes. The loss of a leader might have been a problem, but Whinny's relative, Uncle Bert, takes over with the help of a female who is also related. Fossey says that it's because of the kinship of the group that they survive the trials of this loss. Another example of this theme is seen when Uncle Bert is left to care for three motherless youngsters over a period of time. As the first youngster strives to overcome her grief at the loss, Uncle Bert takes care of the youngster, tickling, cuddling and sleeping with it. Fossey says that Uncle Bert is so diligent in what he sees as the duty to his offspring who have no mother that he intervenes when the other youngsters play too roughly. She says that his actions result in a youngster who resembles a spoiled human. He doesn't react as totally to the other youngsters left without a mother in his group but does take seriously his responsibilities toward his mates and his offspring.



Protectiveness

The protection of the group is the responsibility taken on usually by a dominant male silverback who is sometimes backed up by subordinate, younger males of the same group. In one case, after the death of Whinny, a mature female named Old Goat takes over the leadership role until the next male in line is more mature and ready to handle the responsibilities. When Uncle Bert takes on the role of leader after Whinny's death, Digit, though still immature himself, takes on the role of backup. Digit is serving in this role when poachers pursue the group and Digit remains behind as his group flees. He kills one of the dogs before being killed himself. Fossey says that it's not unusual for members of a group to be killed in their efforts to protect others, especially their young. An example of this is seen when Fossey takes over the care of two youngsters, Coco and Pucker. Both were little more than babies when poachers captured them in order to sell them to the Cologne Zoo. Fossey is torn, wanting desperately to return the two to their forest habitat, but is told that two gorilla babies are going to be sent to the Cologne Zoo, and that if Fossey refuses to give up these two, poachers will simply capture two more. Fossey knows that the entire family groups of Coco and Pucker are killed when the two youngsters are captured and that poachers will have to kill more family groups in order to obtain two more.

Style

Perspective

The story is written in first person from Fossey's point of view. The story relates Fossey's actions and interaction with the gorillas and the goal of the story is only to relate her observations. Because of this, the use of a first-person perspective is the only real option available. The reader should remember that Fossey has a deep love for the gorillas and believes that their habitat should be saved at all costs. She loves the work and says that she doesn't understand anyone who might come to Africa with anything other than the best interests of the animals at heart. Fossey's lack of tolerance on this part means she mentions only a few people as being truly interested in the gorillas and truly helpful to her work with the gorillas. Fossey wants desperately to travel to Africa, so much so that she is willing to pay for her first trip on her own and she spends years working as a researcher without being paid a salary. Fossey's intolerance for those who have anything but the best interests of the gorillas in mind is countered by her love for the gorillas. Fossey relates a number of the antics and actions of the gorillas. She admits that in these situations, the unbiased scientist simply disappears.

Tone

The overall tone of the story is one of hope, though it is balanced by facts of poachers, death and other threats to the gorilla population of the region. The story is presented initially in chronological order but then changes with Fossey describing several groups, their members and her interactions with that group before going on to another group. For example, she tells about an interaction between Beethoven and a younger leader named Uncle Bert from the viewpoint of that interaction's impact on Beethoven. Fossey later comes back to introduce Uncle Bert's group, describe his rise to leadership of his group and to explain the impact of that interaction of Uncle Bert and his group. This lack of chronological order seems somewhat difficult to follow, but a reader who pays close attention and is aware of this prior to reading the book should be able to track the events. Fossey spends a great deal of time describing her interactions with the gorillas as well as the funny happenings. She talks at length about the positive aspects of her research but seems to downplay the downsides such as the loneliness and hardships of the work.

Structure

The book is divided into twelve chapters of widely varying lengths. For example, chapter four is more than forty pages while chapter twelve is only eleven pages. An average seems to be around fourteen pages. The chapters are titled In the Mountain Meadow of cark Akeley and George Schaller; Second Beginning: Karisoke Research Centre, Rwanda; Karisoke Field Impressions; Three Generations of One Gorilla Family: Group

5; Wild Orphans Bound for Captivity: Coco and Pucker; Animal visitors to the Karisoke Research Centre; The Natural Demise of Two Gorilla Families, Groups 8 and 9; Human Visitors to the Karisoke Research Centre; Adjustment to a New Silverback Leader: Group 4; Growing Family Stability: Group 4; Decimation by Poachers: Group 4; and Formation of a New Family Lends Hope: Nunkie's Group. The book also includes several pages of photos. The photos were taken by a 35 millimeter camera and the quality is not excellent but is acceptable. The book is followed by a group of appendixes outlining food vegetation, graphs detailing topics such as frequency of births and rainfall in the area, and information on vocalizations as well as findings from autopsies and parasite studies. A series of maps give visual aspects of the entire region as well as ranging areas. There is also an appendix dedicated to family lines.



Quotes

"Dr. Leakey spoke to me most enthusiastically about Jane Goodall's excellent field work with the chimpanzees at the Gombe Stream Research Centre in Tanzania, then only in its third year, and he stressed the importance of long-term field studies with the great apes. I believe it was at this time the seed was planted in my head, even if unconsciously, that I would someday return to Africa to study the gorillas of the mountains." Chap. 1, p. 1

"Like a bored housewife, I relegated these and many more tasks to the evening hours. Daylight belonged to the gorillas." Chap. 1, p. 7

"Any observer is an intruder in the domain of a wild animal and must remember that the rights of that animal supersede human interests. An observer must also keep in mind that an animal's memories of one day's contact might well be reflected in the follow day's behavior." Chap. 1, p. 14

"I later learned the men were certain I had been torn to shreds, and upon seeing me stand upright were convinced that I was protected by a very special kind of sumu against the wrath of the gorillas, whom they feared deeply." Chap. 3, p. 55

"Nyiramachabeli! They cried, meaning, 'The old lady who lives in the forest without a man.' Although my new name was pleasantly lyrical, I would have to admit that I did not like its implications." Chap. 4, p. 91

"Pucker's first approaches toward me were made under the guise of 'protecting' Coco, who had to be increasingly distracted by a mean of rough and tumble play from tearing up the wall and ceiling matting in her favorite game, 'house demolition.'" Chap. 5, p. 115

"Besides Whinny, there were two other silverbacks in Group 4. The younger was named Uncle Bert, owing to a remarkable resemblance to a relative of mine (I considered the epithet a compliment, but my uncle never quite forgave me)." Chap. 9, p. 168

"If I was alone, he often often invited play by flopping over on to his back, waving stumpy legs in the air, and looking at me smilingly as if to say, 'How can you resist me?' At some times, I fear, my scientific detachment dissolved." Chap. 10, p. 182

"Perhaps some gorillas, lacking opportunities for normal social interactions, are prone to develop atypical behavior patterns as a substitute for social stimulation." Chap. 10, p. 197



"At that moment, I could not think of any place in the world where I would rather be than sitting in the midst of Group 4, as satisfied with the sun and the seclusion as the gorillas were." Chap. 11, p. 203

"Indeed, one of the greatest drawbacks of the Virungas is that it is shared by three countries, each of which has problems far more urgent than the protection of wild animals." Chap. 11, p. 207

"The frenzied gorillas had no way of knowing that they would not be harmed by their unseen pursuers, that their flee route had been cleared of traps, and that they purposely were being driven toward their favored section of Visoke currently unoccupied by Nunkie's Group. Only this knowledge made it possible for the staff and me to endure Group 4's screams of terror as they fled toward the mountain, led by Uncle Bert, flanked by Tiger and Beetsme." Chap. 12, p. 210

Topics for Discussion

How does Dian Fossey come to spend time in Africa for the first time? Describe that visit. How does that compare with her next trip to Africa? How does it come about?

What is Fossey's reaction to her first encounter with gorillas? Describe at least three of Fossey's encounters, her reactions to them and the reactions of the gorillas.

List two of the people who arrive at the second camp and how these people fit in positively with Fossey's work. List at least one who doesn't fit in and explain why. What is Fossey's attitudes when tourists arrive at her camp?

Describe the problems created by Fossey and how Fossey reacts to these. List at least two animals that fall victim to poachers.

Who are Coco and Pucker? Describe Fossey's time with them. How does this compare with Fossey's time later with Bonne Annee? What are the fates of the three? How does Fossey come to be involved with each?

How does Digit come to be on a tourist poster? How is he killed? What action does Fossey take after his death? What is the result of Fossey's actions after Digit's death?

Describe Fossey's method of interacting with the gorillas? How does this interaction come to lead some of the gorillas to want to handle Fossey's possessions? What is the object she hands Puck in an effort to keep him away from her camera? What is his reaction to the magazine?