

The Glory Field Study Guide

The Glory Field by Walter Dean Myers

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Contents

The Glory Field Study Guide.....	1
Contents.....	2
Plot Summary.....	3
Part I: July 1753.....	4
Part II: March 1864.....	6
Part III: April 1900.....	11
Part IV: Chicago 1930.....	16
Part V: January 1964.....	20
Part VI: August 1994 and Epilogue.....	25
Characters.....	29
Objects/Places.....	38
Themes.....	40
Style.....	43
Quotes.....	46
Topics for Discussion.....	48

Plot Summary

The Glory Field by Walter Dean Myers is the story of an African-American family. Beginning with the capture and enslavement of young Muhammad Bilal in 1753, The Glory Field journeys from the shores of West Africa to Curry Island, South Carolina. The saga of the captive Lewis family begins on the Live Oaks plantation in 1864. Their tradition, their story as a part of America, begins with a pair of heavy iron shackles.

Each part of The Glory Field takes place at specific points in American history. The individual lives of the characters contribute to a tapestry that is rich in meaning and profound in its message of perseverance and dignity.

In 1864, fourteen year-old Lizzy must leave Live Oaks and the people she loves after she is beaten by a merciless overseer. Lizzy knows nothing of the world outside the paths and cabins of the great plantation and her adventure begins under the cover of night. The ones she leaves behind rely on their faith and the power of their love for Lizzy to see her through to safety and freedom.

Three decades after the American Civil War ends, it is Lizzy's son, Elijah Lewis, who must next flee Curry Island in fear for his life. Elijah, though, is certain that he will someday return to the Glory Field.

Elijah's proud and determined daughter Luvenia chooses to make a life for herself in Chicago in the 1930s. After she is fired from her job as a domestic, Luvenia must ask herself if the price of freedom is worth the risk of striking out on her own in the big city.

Luvenia's nephew Tommy is a star basketball player who dreams of a college career in an integrated school. Tommy is a teenager during one of the most volatile times in American history: the Civil Rights movement of the early 1960s. A small demonstration in downtown Johnson City, South Carolina irrevocably and permanently changes Tommy Lewis' view of the world. And young, talented Malcolm Lewis receives an unexpected surprise when he visits the Glory Field and helps young and old bring in the last sweet potato harvest.

Each character's journey is fraught with its own challenges and turmoil as the descendants of Muhammad Bilal find their way through life. After the Civil War ends, the family is given an eight-acre parcel of land that they call The Glory Field. The land is called The Glory Field in celebration of the family's triumph over slavery and the strength of their love for one another.

From generation to generation, the Lewises make their way in the world with unshakable determination, solid faith in God, and a collective commitment to seeing one another through no matter what life may bring.



Part I: July 1753

Part I: July 1753 Summary

The Glory Field is the story of one family's journey from Africa to the American South. Brought to this country as slaves, the Lewis family of Curry Island, South Carolina are tenacious, passionate people. After the Civil War, the family is given a parcel of land very close to the plantation where they are once owned by a white man. Through years of successes and trials, challenges and small triumphs, the Lewis family becomes a community unto itself. The branches of the family tree shelter and protect the Lewis family in prosperous times and in times of desperation. The story of the powerful Lewis family begins on the shores of Sierra Leone where an 11 year-old boy is shackled in the bowels of a dark slave ship. By 1994, the young African boy's ancestors have come full circle. Aunts, uncles, cousins and grandparents reunite for one last time at the Glory Field and the final harvest is triumphant and sweet.

Muhammad Bilal (11 years of age) is shackled at the ankles. He is the son of a farmer. Muhammad is being held in the prow of a ship with other Africans, some of whom he recognizes from his own village. He wonders where his parents are.

Muhammad and the others are held on the ship for nineteen days before they sail. Captured by Africans from other tribes, Muhammad and the others have been sold as slaves and will make the journey across the Atlantic Ocean, eventually arriving in the United States.

The slaves receive water from their white captors only twice a day. They are permitted to go out on deck for one hour a day. Muhammad sees people dying around him. Muhammad hears people screaming in the middle of the night and the young boy can only wonder what is to become of him. Muhammad is on the ship for at least a month. Muhammad promises himself that he will stay alive.

Part I: July 1753 Analysis

This section of the novel is only five pages long. What stands out most are the young boy's feeling of confusion and disorientation. He is afraid, alone and separated from those he loves. What is also significant about this brief passage is the character's vow to stay alive no matter what. The details of Muhammad's capture are not included. Muhammad and the other Africans refer to something called a boomstick (5). This is a word for rifle. It is obvious that the whites who are transporting Muhammad and the others are not especially concerned for their welfare. The slaves are provided with only minimal food and water and limited sunshine. Historically, slaves were picked up on the west coast of Africa by white Europeans following a trade route known as the Middle Passage. The route resembled a triangle. Ships would depart from European ports carrying goods for sale. These ships then sailed for Africa where the goods were sold or



traded. Slaves would then be put into the ships and brought to the U.S. to work on plantations in the American South.

The narrative is preceded by a family tree which diagrams the generations of the Lewis family from 1743 (Muhammad Bilal's arrival on American soil) through 1994. It is interesting to note that Muhammad's great-grandson, Moses Lewis, marries a young woman who shares Muhammad's mother's name, Saran.

Muhammad Bilal becomes a kind of touchstone for the generations of slaves coming after him. Moses, Saran, and the other members of the Lewis family view Bilal as extraordinary. This is understandable, since Bilal was enslaved at the age of eleven and manages to live to be nearly one hundred and ten years old. It goes without saying that Muhammad Bilal was an exceptionally strong-willed individual. Although the narrative does not give the details of Bilal's time of captivity at the Live Oaks plantation, one can only assume that there were significant challenges for the young boy to overcome. The shackles worn by Muhammad Bilal represent something other than pain and tribulation for the Lewis family. The shackles represent the ability of an individual to survive even under the worst of circumstances. Additionally, it is significant that the Lewis family is able to trace their ancestry all the way back to 1750; this is something many African Americans are unable to accomplish because of the nature of their enslavement. People were bought and sold like livestock, which makes it especially difficult to develop an accurate genealogical picture of one's family.



Part II: March 1864

Part II: March 1864 Summary

Lizzy and the other slaves are taken to the field to pick sweet potatoes on a Sunday. It is unusual for the slaves to be working on a Sunday and Lizzy and the others wonder if something is wrong. Mister Joe Haynes, the overseer at Live Oaks plantation, keeps a particularly close eye on Moses Lewis this day.

Lem, Moses' son, and Joshua, Moses' brother, have escaped.

Old Man Lewis owns the Live Oaks plantation. The patrollers eventually bring Lem Lewis back to Live Oaks. Joshua ran away because he is afraid that Mr. Foster (the owner of a neighboring plantation) plans to sell Neela, the woman Joshua wants to marry.

Moses Lewis lives in the largest of the five slave cabins on Live Oaks. His cabin is used as a gathering place in times of trouble. The slaves also gather in Moses' cabin for Sunday worship.

The slaves all speculate about what will happen to Lem now that he has been brought back to the plantation.

Moses' wife is named Saran, just like Muhammad Bilal's mother. The white people, however, call her Aunt Sara.

Saran and the others begin praying when they see Mister Joe Haynes and two other white men taking Lem toward the main house (called "the big house"). Moses tries to intervene, asking Haynes to wait until he talks to Old Master Lewis before doing anything to punish Lem. Haynes threatens to do harm to Moses and Moses returns to the cabin. Haynes and the others take Lem away.

Miss Julia (the daughter of Live Oaks' owner) comes to fetch Lizzy to do some cleaning at the big house.

Lizzy and Miss Julia have tea in the kitchen of the main house. Miss Julia tells Lizzy that her father is becoming apprehensive about the slaves becoming restless over the war.

Miss Julia asks Lizzy what the slaves talk about in their quarters. Lizzy tells Miss Julia that everyone is worried about what is going to be done to Lem. She also promises to inform Julia if the slaves plan anything dangerous to retaliate against Old Master Lewis.

Miss Julia then tells Lizzy that after the war ends, Miss Julia plans to buy Lizzy from her father and grant Lizzy her freedom.



The girls chat for a moment about leaving Live Oaks and moving to Johnson City. Miss Julia tells Lizzy that Joshua is still a boy because Josh is illiterate. Julia says the difference between blacks and whites is that whites have "mature" minds (27).

Outside, Lizzy overhears Old Master Lewis talking to Mister Joe Haynes, the overseer. Lewis tells Haynes to take Lem to the Foster plantation the next day. If Mr. Foster does not buy Lem, Haynes is to take Lem to Mr. Oakes, the slave trader. Lewis wants to teach Lem a lesson.

Moses and the others ask Lizzy what she and Miss Julia talked about. Lizzy does not mention everything she and Julia discussed. Moses thinks he knows what will become of Joshua. Saran says Joshua has "a freedom dream" (31).

Lizzy is not related to Moses and Saran. She came to live with them as a young girl shortly after the death of her mother.

Moses tells the story of two young black men and how they died. The young men attack a white man with a hoe. They are taken to a tree and hanged. The other slaves are made to watch the hanging as a reminder to them of what happens when slaves cause trouble.

Lizzy makes up her mind to look for Lem. She knows Mister Joe Haynes tied Lem to a tree somewhere on the plantation. Lizzy waits until Moses and Saran are asleep before she sneaks out of the cabin to say goodbye to Lem.

Lizzy considers taking Lem something to eat, but she knows she will be beaten if she does. Lizzy has been whipped several times, but her whippings were not severe.

Lizzy remembers the sound of Mister Joe Haynes' whip as it cut into the flesh on Bill's back.

Lizzy finds Lem tied to a tree. She can see that Lem has been badly beaten. Lizzy tears a piece of material from the hem of her dress and washes the blood from Lem's face. As Lizzy lifts the water jug to Lem's lips, she feels a whip across her legs, then her back. Mister Joe Haynes stands behind her.

Haynes accuses Lizzy of trying to free Lem and both she and Lem deny it. Haynes uses the whip on Lizzy once more before Joshua runs out of the woods and wrestles Haynes to the ground.

Lem yells for Lizzy to grab Haynes' rifle and shoot Haynes. Lizzy becomes afraid and begins to cry. She pleads with Joshua not to kill Mister Joe Haynes. Joshua holds the rifle on Haynes and Haynes unties Lem from the tree.

Joshua tells Lizzy that now, she too will have to leave Live Oaks: "You don't do nothing to a white man and get away with it. Don't matter if we kill him or not" (46). Lizzy tells Joshua that she wants to say goodbye to Moses, Saran and Grandma Dolly. Joshua informs Lizzy that if she does not return soon, Haynes will have to be killed. Lizzy



promises to hurry. She is afraid to leave Live Oaks and just as afraid to stay because of what Old Master Lewis will do to her.

Saran and the others listen intently as Lizzy tells them what happened. Saran makes Lizzy take off her shift which was ripped by Haynes' whip. Ginny places wet fennel leaves on Lizzy's wounds to ease the pain.

Saran tells Lizzy that if she stays at Live Oaks, she risks severe punishment or even death.

Miss Julia returns to the cabin again, looking for Lizzy. Saran tells Lizzy to pretend to be sick. Lizzy tells Miss Julia that she has been out in the field because she felt nauseous. Lizzy asks Miss Julia if she could go to the main house in the morning. Miss Julia tells Lizzy that if she is sick, she should not work in the fields the next day.

Once Miss Julia is gone, Lizzy goes back inside the cabin. In the darkness, Moses and Saran tell Lizzy what she must do to survive in case she is captured. In the dark, the other slaves say goodbye to Lizzy while Moses prays. They do not say goodbye with words, but with touches and kisses and gestures of love. Before Lizzy leaves, Saran tells Lizzy not to look back.

Lizzy rejoins Joshua and Lem. Mister Joe Haynes is now tied to the tree. Lizzy, Joshua and Lem leave Live Oaks Plantation. Lizzy asks Joshua where they are going, but Joshua does not answer her.

Just before sunrise, Lizzy and Lem climb into trees to wait out the day. It is safer for them to travel at night. Joshua leaves them to scout out the area, hoping to find a route that will take them far from Live Oaks and Old Master Lewis. Lizzy is not sure that Joshua will return. She falls asleep in the tree. Sometime before dark, Lizzy hears a loud noise that she thinks is thunder. From where she is, she cannot see Lem and Joshua has not returned yet. Lizzy and Lem climb down out of the trees to have a look around.

Lizzy tells Lem that they have to continue on without Joshua. Lizzy can tell that Lem is afraid. Lem tells Lizzy that what she hears is cannon fire. There is fighting nearby.

Suddenly, they hear dogs in the distance. When they see campfires ahead, Lem and Lizzy run toward them, thinking that they might find shelter or some sort of protection. Lem and Lizzy arrive in an encampment of Union soldiers. There are white as well as black soldiers there and Lizzy and Lem are offered food and safety. After sleeping on a full stomach, the soldiers in the camp wake early the next day and prepare to move out.

Lem decides to join the Union army. Lizzy and Lem are then reunited with Joshua. Joshua tells Lizzy that he had gone to find Neela but was unable to locate her.

The soldiers, Joshua and Lem start marching down the road. Lizzy follows the Union soldiers and never looks back.



Part II: March 1864 Analysis

In this full first chapter of *The Glory Field*, the American Civil War is almost over. However, for Lizzy and the others at Live Oaks plantation, the end of the war will bring with it another set of challenges.

The chapter centers on Lizzy, for the most part. Moses, Saran, Joshua and Lem Lewis are also introduced in this portion of the narrative. Like many future members of Lizzy's family, she is forced to leave Live Oaks after being discovered giving Lem a drink of cool water by Mister Joe Haynes. What differentiates Lizzy's experience of slavery from many others of the time is the fact that until the episode involving Lem and Joe Haynes, Lizzy is never subjected to severe physical punishment, which was simply a fact of life for many black slaves. Lizzy lives a somewhat sheltered life on the Live Oaks plantation. Her world is small and easily navigable. The fact that Lizzy is still a girl mitigates the profundity of her time as a slave. She works in the fields with the others, but she also enjoys a place of some privilege (if that word can be used in such a situation) by virtue of her relationship with Miss Julia Lewis. Lizzy is kind of a pet for Miss Julia and while it is clear that the other slaves do not hold Julia Lewis in very high esteem, Lizzy is nonetheless entertained by the young white girl.

While Lizzy does enjoy a certain amount of liberty where Miss Julia is concerned, Miss Julia does not censor herself when talking to Lizzy about black people. This phenomenon brings home the reality that Lizzy and the other slaves are no more than chattel to Miss Julia and those belonging to the slave-owner class. It is abundantly clear to the older slaves on Live Oaks that they have no value as human beings. Blacks are routinely bought and sold without consideration of their family status. Joshua Lewis escapes from Live Oaks because he is afraid that the white man who owns Neela intends to sell Neela to another owner. Joshua's freedom dream goes beyond a desire not to be owned by anyone. Joshua's dream of freedom involves making a life with a woman he loves dearly.

Lizzy's introduction to the "real world" of being a slave comes as a shock to her but not to Moses and Saran. Lizzy knows that it is wrong for her to visit Lem when Lem is tied to the tree. However, Lizzy does not see her actions as a threat to the Lewis family as owners. The whip against the backs of her legs brings Lizzy to a rude awakening. She is forced to leave everyone she loves simply because she chose to offer a kindness to Lem. Lizzy is punished by Mister Joe Haynes for being human.

Since Lizzy is female, she is especially vulnerable both on and away from Live Oaks plantation. With Lem and Joshua to protect her, it is possible that Lizzy will survive to see the end of the Civil War. It is interesting that when Lem and Joshua join the Union army, they do not give Lizzy a second thought and leave her to fend for herself. In this instance, Lizzy would be justified to feel betrayed or even abandoned.

The narrative does not address the series of events leading up to Lizzy's marriage to Richard Lewis.



This section of the novel also provides valuable information on the brand of spirituality practiced by the Lewis family. They are obviously devout Christians. The phenomenon of African slaves and their descendants adopting Christianity has long been a subject of study. When black Africans are brought to the United States as slaves, many (if not most) of them also brought their native traditions to their experience as captives. The introduction of Christianity into slave communities is often viewed as forced assimilation. However, Moses and the other slaves on the Live Oaks plantation hold to their Christianity as their only real hope in terms of negotiating their lives as human property. The Lewises honor their African ancestor through the filter of their belief in God.

The relationship between Miss Julia Lewis and Lizzy foreshadows and compliments the relationship between Luvenia Lewis (Lizzy's granddaughter) and Florenz Deets.



Part III: April 1900

Part III: April 1900 Summary

Elijah Lewis is plowing a field. The mule, Sukey, is being uncooperative. Elijah is Saran and Moses' grandson.

After the Civil War, some southern blacks are given land to farm. The Lewis family is given eight acres bordering the Live Oaks Plantation where they once lived as slaves.

The family names their land the Glory Field. Being free was a difficult experience for many blacks. For the first time, former slaves are entirely responsible for themselves. They have to clothe, house, and feed themselves without the help of their masters.

The Ku Klux Klan often terrorize blacks and many other freed people who do own land are losing their land and homes to banks and taxes.

Moses and Saran's family is also coming on hard times. After a trip to Johnson City, Moses returns to the family dejected after not having success finding a bank loan.

Elijah's father, Richard, works in pulp mills in Georgia to help the family.

Elijah considers the possibility of becoming a fisherman. Abby, his younger cousin, finds an old boat which the two boys repair. Sometimes Elijah and Abby take the boat out and catch fish and crab to sell in Johnson City.

Moses Lewis and his family bless the ground and graves where their family members are buried. They offer prayers of gratitude to God for the blessings that have been bestowed on them. After the consecration, the family sets out a big picnic spread.

Saran tells Elijah that his uncle Lem fought and died in the Civil War. Saran says Old Master Lewis would not allow the family to bury Lem at Live Oaks so they buried him in the Glory Field.

Sister Clinton, a light-skinned woman, arrives at the picnic. Grandma Saran believes Sister Clinton was put in her life as a test of Saran's faith.

Saran works, taking care of a blind white child named David Turner.

David's father, Hamlin Turner, is a fairly wealthy man, comparatively speaking. When Saran is not working (usually Sunday is her day off), Hamlin Turner leaves David with a man named Foster. Foster works in the telegraph office in town and is known to be a heavy drinker.

Elijah can tell that Grandma Saran worries about David Turner being left with the Foster family.



While the family are just sitting down to eat, Hamlin Turner arrives. Turner asks Saran if she has seen Foster. Saran says she does not know where Foster is. Hamlin Turner is concerned about where Foster and his son David might be.

Elijah and Abby set out to look for Foster and Hamlin Turner's son. Before they leave, Richard Lewis tells Elijah not to forget who he is and where he comes from. Richard and Lizzy will have left for Savannah by the time Elijah returns to the Glory Field.

On the way into town, Abby tells Elijah that he is thinking about buying a guitar. Ragtime is popular during this time. Saran calls Ragtime the devil's music. Abby tells Elijah that the younger, post-slavery black people are a new breed and that, as such, it is up to them to advance their own cause.

Elijah decides to strike a bargain with Hamlin Turner. Elijah will offer to find David Turner if Hamlin Turner will lend Saran the money to pay the taxes on the Glory Field.

Elijah and Abby see Hamlin Turner talking to Sheriff Glover and a small group of men near the water's edge. David Turner and Foster have not been found. Glover tells the boys that Hamlin Turner is offering a \$25 reward to whoever finds David first. One of the men talking to Turner is Macon Smith, a black fisherman. Turner offers Smith and Elijah \$10 to find his son.

Elijah takes a risk and boldly offers to take the boat out to look for David Turner if Hamlin Turner will agree to pay him \$35. Sheriff Glover removes his gun from the holster and threatens Elijah, saying he is being disrespectful to Hamlin Turner. Elijah turns to walk away and Turner acquiesces. If Elijah finds David, Hamlin Turner says, Turner will give him the money to pay the taxes on the Glory Field. Sheriff Glover decides to go out in the boat with Elijah and Abby to look for David Turner.

Elijah, Abby, and Sheriff Glover go to the spot where black fishermen moor their boats. Elijah and Abby's boat is called the Pele Queen.

Abby and Elijah believe that Sheriff Glover is only helping them look for David Turner because Glover wants part of the reward money. Elijah tells Abby that if they find the boy, he is not going to split the money with Glover.

The three of them row the boat out in the direction of James Bank. The water becomes choppy after awhile and a storm blows in. The wind and waves toss the Pele Queen. Abby and Elijah row harder than they ever have. As they approach Gray Rock, the danger increases, as going too close to shore could mean ripping the bottom of the boat on sharp rocks.

Sheriff Glover becomes frightened and pulls his revolver on Elijah in an effort to convince Elijah to turn around and head for home. The sheriff's plan does not work and Elijah and Abby continue to row. Once past Gray Rock, they continue on toward Key Island.



When they reach Key Island, Elijah anchors the boat and climbs overboard. He walks over the jagged rocks toward the shore, instructing Abby to stay with the Pele Queen.

Sheriff Glover climbs overboard. Elijah then asks Glover why he has come along. Glover tells Elijah that Grandma Saran might need money, but so does he. Glover's admission foreshadows an eventual confrontation over the reward money.

For a moment, Elijah Lewis is certain that they have come to the wrong island. In the blinding rain and howling wind, Elijah hears a small, faint cry.

David Turner is alive and unhurt. Foster, on the other hand, has broken his leg and refuses to let go of David Turner's frail ankle.

Elijah calls to Sheriff Glover and proceeds to take David Turner back to the Pele Queen. Glover trains his revolver on Foster's forehead and threatens to kill Foster if Elijah leaves them on the island.

Eventually, Glover and Foster reach the boat and they all head for home.

Abby and Elijah, Foster, Glover and David Turner all arrive safely on their home shore. Before they disembark, Glover tells Elijah that he will split the reward money so that they each get half. Elijah tells Sheriff Glover that Grandma Saran needs all the money.

The following day, there is an article in the local paper about David Turner being rescued by Sheriff Glover. The blacks in town, especially the Lewis family, know the truth.

Two days later, Elijah still has not heard anything about the reward money. He takes the Pele Queen into town to pick up washing and he runs into Frank Petty and Petty's son, J.D. Both men are known for their hatred of black people.

Frank Petty asks Elijah to lend him the Pele Queen for the weekend so that Petty can do some fishing. Elijah refuses. Petty continues to goad Elijah until Elijah becomes defensive and grabs an oar, preparing for a physical confrontation.

When a group of men gather, Petty plays it off as a joke. Elijah Lewis knows that someday he and Frank Petty will come to blows.

Foster the telegraph operator dies of a heart attack the next day.

Elijah hands the \$35 to Moses and Saran and they are overjoyed. Elijah tells his grandparents that he called on Hamlin Turner even though he was afraid. He says Turner did not balk at paying him the full amount. Nothing is as precious to Hamlin Turner as his own son. Turner also told Elijah that Sheriff Glover had spoken to Turner about the reward money. Turner gave Glover a small sum of money as well.

Elijah Lewis tells himself that this is what being a real man should feel like. The family can pay the taxes on the Glory Field and hold onto the land for awhile longer.



It is revealed that Joshua Lewis returns to Curry Island after fighting in the Civil War. The former Confederate soldiers, however, make life so difficult for him that Joshua chooses to leave the island and settle somewhere else. Elijah, however, knows that his great-uncle Joshua leaves Curry Island of his own accord, "standing like a man" (129).

While he is weeding the field, Elijah sees Sheriff Glover approaching on horseback. Elijah fears Glover has come to the Glory Field to bully him for half of the reward money. Glover does not stop to talk to Elijah. Rather, Sheriff Glover rides up to the house and has a short conversation with Grandma Saran. Glover then gets back on his horse and rides away.

Minutes later, Goldie comes to Elijah in the field and tells him that Sheriff Glover came to warn the family that a group of white men are planning on taking Elijah out and beating him. Grandma Saran and Grandpa Moses tell Elijah that he will have to leave the Glory Field. Frank Petty and a group of white men from town have been drinking and they plan to horsewhip Elijah. Petty promises Sheriff Glover that Elijah will not be killed.

Elijah packs his belongings and prepares to leave the Glory Field and his family. Before Elijah leaves, though, Grandpa Moses shows Elijah a set of iron shackles. Moses tells Elijah that the shackles were worn by their ancestor Muhammad Bilal when he was brought to Live Oaks. The shackles, Moses says, symbolize what the Lewis family has overcome. Moses encourages his grandson to stay strong and determine the future for himself.

Saran, Goldie and the others take Elijah to the train stop at Elksdale. Elijah will be on the next train heading north. Elijah is saddened by the fact that he must take the first train to anywhere, instead of the next train to where he wants to go.

Elijah Lewis leaves Curry Island and travels north with half of the reward money paid to him by Hamlin Turner.

Part III: April 1900 Analysis

The main protagonist in this portion of the novel is Elijah Lewis. He is the only child of Richard and Lizzy Lewis. Like the other men in his family, Elijah has a strong sense of himself in terms of family and the responsibility of contributing to the family's overall well-being and prosperity.

Elijah's younger cousin Abby Lewis is also introduced in this section as is Mary Harding, who eventually becomes Abby's wife.

The events which take place in this third section occur thirty-five years after the end of the American Civil War. Elijah, Abby and this younger generation of Lewises are beset with different challenges and obstacles than their parents and grandparents. It can also be said, however, that the problems Elijah faces are the same ones that Moses and his father Richard experienced. Racism is still rampant and whites still dominate the social



order. There are multiple instances in this chapter which prove that although slavery has ended, blacks are still oppressed by the existing social climate of mistrust and bigotry.

Elijah Lewis wants more than anything to be a man in his own right and it is with this in mind that the character agrees to go in search of David Turner. Elijah realizes that he will meet with opposition when he asserts himself by asking Hamlin Turner for \$35 in exchange for the safe return on the young boy. Sheriff Glover and Frank Petty represent that section of white Southern society which also dealt with poverty and low social standing. The sheriff and Frank Petty represent the rule more than the exception. Their aggression toward blacks is balanced by Hamlin Turner's even-handed treatment of Elijah and his family. In addition, Turner feels an emotional bond with the Lewis family as a result of Saran's role of caretaker.

By this time, Richard and Lizzy Lewis have moved away from Curry Island and the Glory Field because of limited work opportunities. Moving away from the family's ancestral land is commonplace in the years following the end of slavery. Many blacks no longer wish to be associated with their painful past as slaves and seek work and better lives in other areas of the country. While the narrative does not go into detail, it is clear to Elijah that Richard and Lizzy are simply doing what they must in order to help sustain the family and their dreams of being successful land-owning farmers.

Abby Lewis also realizes the need for change. However, Abby's thoughts of the new breed of blacks have more to do with social mobility and self-reconstruction than with family-centered concerns.

Like Lizzy, Joshua, and Lem, Elijah Lewis is forced to leave his home on Curry Island under the threat of violence. While Elijah might rather stay and fight, he understands that his life is valuable and that nothing could be gained from staying at the Glory Field and standing up to Frank Petty and his cohorts. Truthfully, the Lewis family is well aware that Frank Petty is not the only white man who poses a threat to their safety. In the American South at this time, some white men think it their right to harass and terrorize blacks. For the Lewis family, there will always be someone exactly like Frank Petty waiting to take his place.



Part IV: Chicago 1930

Part IV: Chicago 1930 Summary

By 1930, Elijah and Goldie are married. They have two children: Richard (b. 1911) and Luvenia (b. 1914).

Luvenia is sixteen years old. She is doing Miss Etta Pinckney's hair. Miss Etta is Luvenia's godmother. Luvenia is complaining because she does not want to go to Curry Island to live.

Luvenia has dreams of one day attending the University of Chicago. She works as a domestic for Mr. and Mrs. Deets.

Etta Pinckney is Goldie Lewis' best friend and now she is Luvenia's best friend. Luvenia wants Miss Etta to write Elijah a letter to convince Elijah to allow Luvenia to stay in Chicago and go to college. Elijah and Goldie want Luvenia to join them at the Glory Field.

Luvenia's brother, Richard, returns to Curry Island willingly. For the last several years, Elijah Lewis has been obsessed with keeping the Glory Field in the family.

Luvenia realizes that there are two types of black people in the world: those that come from the country and those who refer to themselves as "Negroes." Negroes are educated, employed, and cultured. Negroes are black people who are going somewhere in society.

Luvenia decides that she will ask her white employer, Mrs. Deets, to sign an affidavit attesting to Luvenia's steady income. Mr. Deets never speaks to Luvenia or even looks her in the eye.

Mrs. Deets refuses to guarantee Luvenia's job, telling Luvenia that she needs to remember her place in life. As far as Mrs. Deets is concerned, Luvenia already has a trade and going to college would just mean that Luvenia is reaching beyond herself. Luvenia fights back her tears and decides to talk to Florenz, the Deets' daughter, about guaranteeing her job.

That night, in her third floor room at the Deets house, Luvenia is plagued by nightmares. Twice she dreams that Precious, the Deets' dog, dies while in her care.

The following day, Luvenia has tea with Florenz Deets and Florenz's friend Katie. Florenz promises to speak to her father about guaranteeing Luvenia's job so that Luvenia can get a bank loan for college.

Florenz and Katie want Luvenia's help in convincing Mr. Deets to allow Florenz to drive the family's second car. Florenz and Katie have the plan all worked out. Florenz will call



her father and tell him that Luvenia is sick with "female trouble" and needs to be taken to a black hospital across town. Once Mr. Deets gives his permission, Florenz and Katie will take Luvenia for a ride to the park. Florenz agrees to pay Luvenia \$5.00 to play along.

Florenz calls her father on the telephone. She informs Mr. Deets that Luvenia might be pregnant and that Luvenia needs to see a doctor right away. Luvenia resents Florenz's suggestion that she could be pregnant. Mr. Deets allows Florenz to drive the car and the three girls leave for their brief adventure.

Luvenia feels nervous about riding in the car with Florenz and Katie. Florenz is not that good a driver.

The two white girls see some friends and they drop Luvenia off after paying her the \$5.00

Luvenia walks back to her apartment, tired and somewhat bewildered by the day's events. There is a knock on the door and Luvenia answers. Mr. Parish, one of her neighbors, hands her a telegram that arrived that afternoon. Luvenia has been fired.

Luvenia runs to Miss Etta's apartment and tells Miss Etta that she lost her job. Miss Etta is not that concerned about Luvenia's misfortune. Miss Etta assures Luvenia that Luvenia will find more work. Luvenia agrees to accompany Miss Etta to a neighbor's funeral.

After the funeral, Luvenia decides to telephone Mr. Deets and ask for her job back. Luvenia is convinced that all she has to do is to tell Mr. Deets the truth and he will re-hire her. Mr. Deets tells Luvenia that what she did was dishonest and that he has higher standards than that for his employees. He refuses to give Luvenia her job back but informs her that he will give her a good reference.

Luvenia then writes to Richard and Lizzy to tell them that she will not be moving to Curry Island with them.

Miss Etta throws a rent party for Luvenia.

Katie, Florenz Deets friend, offers Luvenia another position as a maid for a white family in Oak Park, near Chicago. Luvenia thanks Katie and politely declines the job.

Luvenia tells Miss Etta that Elijah is disappointed that Luvenia will not be joining the family on Curry Island. Luvenia says that Richard has told her things are not going well on the island and that Elijah is considering coming back to Chicago to work and raise money to send back to the Glory Field.



Part IV: Chicago 1930 Analysis

Part IV of *The Glory Field* revolves around the life of Luvenia Lewis, Elijah's only daughter. By this time, Elijah and his wife Goldie have moved to Chicago and subsequently relocated to Curry Island, South Carolina, to rejoin the family and try to save their land and legacy.

Larger northern cities such as Chicago, Detroit and even New York become havens for emancipated blacks and their families. The north symbolizes not only freedom but the opportunity to seek a more prosperous, socially mobile life. Richard Lewis has made something of a success of his life in Chicago. It is his desire to help his family that prompts him and Goldie to return to *The Glory Field*. Luvenia, however, has other ideas. At the age of sixteen, Luvenia rightly believes that her entire life is before her. Unlike her father, though, Luvenia feels little loyalty to the past and Curry Island.

Luvenia describes herself as "a city girl" and implies that farm life would be less than satisfactory for someone like her. Luvenia has big plans for a big life which does not include working in the fields alongside her parents from sunup to sundown harvesting and planting crops. City life, to Luvenia Lewis, offers excitement and expansion of her personal horizons. Luvenia is ambitious, even at this young age.

Miss Etta Pinckney and Mr. Harrison (Etta's boyfriend) are introduced in this section as well as Mr. and Mrs. Deets and their daughter Florenz.

Luvenia works as a part-time live-in housekeeper for Mr. and Mrs. Deets. Although she is only a domestic worker, Luvenia sees her job with the Deets family as a jumping off point. Luvenia feels certain that Mr. Deets will guarantee her job in order for her to secure a bank loan to finance her college education. Luvenia is quickly deflated when Mrs. Deets chastises her for reaching beyond her lowly social station. Mrs. Deets is a woman of wealth and privilege who cannot imagine why someone like Luvenia, or any black person for that matter, would want to strive to achieve anything more than what life hands them. Luvenia cannot find the words to explain her desires to Mrs. Deets. At this moment, Luvenia Lewis comes face-to-face with a brand of racism that it is difficult to argue against. Even if Luvenia was in a position to argue, Mrs. Deets would not understand the young girl's wish to make something of her life.

Luvenia's relationship with Florenz mirrors that of Lizzy and Miss Julia Lewis. Luvenia admits her admiration for Florenz Deets. Florenz represents the kind of external life Luvenia Lewis covets. Florenz is a college student and has friends and fine clothes. To Luvenia, Florenz is nearly perfect. The admiration is one-sided, however, as Luvenia soon finds out. When Florenz informs her father that Luvenia may be pregnant, she does not stop to consider the impact her words may have on Luvenia's future with the Deets family. To Florenz Deets, Luvenia is nothing more than a passing thought, a way to manipulate Mr. Deets into letting Florenz take the car. Florenz's short-sightedness eventually costs Luvenia her job.



Unlike Florenz, however, Katie is more a person of conscience. By the time Katie offers to secure Luvenia a position with another white family, Luvenia has recovered from the sting of being fired by Mr. Deets for something his daughter brought about. It is doubtful that Florenz Deets experiences any consequences for the trouble she causes the hired help.

Luvenia's discussion with Miss Etta on the day of Sister Stovall's funeral is a pivotal moment in this section. Miss Etta's comment that "a black woman losing a job ain't no big thing" brings Luvenia back to reality, forcing the young girl to rely on her inner resourcefulness to pull herself out of despair (191). Luvenia is forced to look beyond working for a white family to support herself. She realizes that a job as a domestic is just that—another job in another white person's home which ultimately leads nowhere. What motivates Luvenia even more to succeed, however, is the knowledge that life on Curry Island is not for her. Being fired by Mr. Deets is the catalyst that enables Luvenia Lewis to truly come into her own. What Luvenia does not realize is that others in her family have faced similar trials on their way to "becoming" as well.



Part V: January 1964

Part V: January 1964 Summary

This section of the narrative opens with Abby's grandson Tommy Lewis playing basketball. Tommy plays against Delaney High School, the largest predominantly black high school in Johnson City.

Tommy plays for the Curry Cougars, who go on to win the All-City Tournament for the first time.

After the game, Coach Smith introduces Tommy Lewis to Leonard Chase, a former college basketball player. Chase is a kind of informal basketball scout.

Leonard Chase asks Tommy if Tommy might like to play ball for Johnson City State College. Tommy says he would love to play for State but that State is a segregated school. Chase then asks Tommy if Tommy might be willing to skip his senior year at Curry and start college early. Integrating State will not be easy, Chase says, but if he can bring in Negroes like Tommy quietly, it could be historic.

Tommy promises to keep his grades up and stay out of trouble. Chase tells Tommy that he will probably be able to secure a full scholarship to pay for Tommy's education.

After returning home, Tommy tells Robert and Virginia about the meeting with Leonard Chase. Virginia is skeptical about Chase. She thinks Chase might be making promises to Tommy that he cannot keep. Robert thinks it would be good for Tommy to at least try. A short while later, Tommy's white friend Skeeter calls the Lewis home. Skeeter, whose parents who have gone to Greensboro, North Carolina, to attend a revival meeting, has been bitten by a snake and needs Robert and Tommy to take him to the hospital.

Robert tells Tommy that Reverend McKinnon has organized a march in Johnson City to boycott businesses that are not hiring blacks like they said they would. Robert says McKinnon has been in contact with associates of Reverend Martin Luther King, Jr.

Reverend McKinnon and his daughter Mandy arrive and they discuss the upcoming march on downtown Johnson City. McKinnon says the KKK will be having its own demonstration earlier that same day. McKinnon and the others wonder if there will be trouble. Virginia assures Reverend McKinnon that she and Robert will march with him and the others.

Tommy Lewis works at Clark's, a diner in downtown Johnson City. When Tommy arrives at work, Miss Robbins (the manager) tells him that they are having a plumbing problem. The drains are clogged. Miss Robbins says that things should be left the way they are. In other words, blacks should keep to themselves and whites should do the same. Miss Robbins tells Tommy that she would work for him if Tommy had his own business, but that she would not associate with him socially because they are from different races.



While sweeping the floor, Tommy Lewis wonders what it would be like to live in New York City or Chicago. He wonders what it must be like to go anywhere he might like to go at anytime without worrying about segregation.

Mr. Chase telephones Tommy to say that Tommy and three other black students will be applying for admission to Johnson City State College. Chase cautions Tommy, telling Tommy not to get involved in any of the upcoming demonstrations.

The next day, Jennie Epps visits Tommy Lewis. Jennie is infatuated with Tommy and constantly reminds Tommy that she is going to marry him one day. Tommy, however, has other ideas.

Jennie tells Tommy that she has been accepted to Meharry Medical College. Meharry, at the time, is known to be "the best black medical school in the country" (257).

Before she leaves, Jennie Epps tells Tommy that Reverend King will not be coming to Johnson City for the march. She goes on to say that Skeeter Jackson will be marching with them.

Tommy feels conflicted about the demonstration. He knows that if he participates, it could ruin his chances of going to State. On the other hand, Tommy agrees with Jennie's assertion that the march will prove that the blacks on Curry Island and in Johnson City are aware that it is time for a change.

Tommy heads out on his bicycle early the next morning. First, he stops at Cadet Park to see what the Klan members have planned. Their numbers are sparse, at best, and Sheriff Moser will not allow the Klansmen to carry signs with racial slurs printed on them. News cameras arrive on the scene, but the camera crews become bored and leave soon after they set up.

Tommy then continues on to the college where blacks have begun to gather for their march. Tommy watches from a distance. He sees stones and bottles fly through the air. Someone is throwing things at the marchers.

In his mind, Tommy imagines Jennie Epps and his grandmother Mary marching proudly toward freedom with the others. Tommy hears the people singing, "And before I'd be a slave / I'll be buried in my grave / And go home to my Lord and be free" (267).

Jennie Epps finds Tommy and they talk about the march. Jennie says that the march received good coverage on the news and that she was glad no one was seriously hurt.

Tommy says that blacks need education more than marching in the streets. Jennie Epps says that that is why she wants to become a doctor. She wants to save black lives and help the black community in real ways.

Jennie sits on the back of Tommy's bike and they ride back to the Lewis home. When they arrive, Jennie and Tommy see a white doctor entering the house.



Tommy finds out that Skeeter Jackson was beaten up badly by some white men who were unhappy about Skeeter marching with black people. Tommy is told that Skeeter may lose an eye as a result of the beating and that his friend's jaw is dislocated as well.

Tommy goes into the room and kneels by the side of the bed. Soon afterward, Skeeter's parents arrive.

After Skeeter and his parents go home, Reverend McKinnon arrives at the Lewis house. McKinnon tells the people gathered there that Sheriff Moser will hold a press conference downtown the following morning. McKinnon says that some of the downtown Johnson City business owners want to talk things over. Moser says that if the protesters refuse to meet the business owners, blacks who work downtown could lose their jobs.

That night, all the blacks on Curry Island are accounted for. Everyone waits to see whether the White Citizens Council (the Ku Klux Klan) will try to retaliate against them for demonstrating. Tommy Lewis lies awake, thinking about his friend Skeeter. Tommy does not sleep very soundly.

The next day, Tommy tells his parents that he wants to see the press conference. He says he may want to write an article for the school newspaper about it. Tommy leaves, taking a package with him.

At the press conference, Sheriff Moser tells the small gathering that no protests of any kind will be allowed in downtown Johnson City in the future.

A reporters wonders if this is Moser's way of putting an end to demonstrations by local black residents.

Mr. Caro of the White Citizens Council begins to rail on about Communism and how the Cuban government is probably behind the demonstration.

Suddenly, Tommy Lewis chains himself to Sheriff Moser using the same shackles that held Muhammad Bilal in captivity two hundred years earlier.

Tommy's parents come and retrieve him from the town jail when he is released. Neither Robert Lewis nor his wife says much to Tommy, but Tommy can feel how much his parents love him.

Tommy Lewis recalls the events of the past few hours. The man from the hardware store has to cut the shackles off of Sheriff Moser since there is no key.

Tommy is placed in a cell with a white man named Bobby Joe.

At one point, Bobby Joe is taken out of the cell. When he returns, Bobby Joe is armed with a pistol. Bobby Joe cocks the pistol and aims it at Tommy. Later, Sheriff Moser takes the pistol away from Bobby Joe and asks Tommy if he learned anything.



Tommy finds out soon after the shackling incident that Leonard Chase will not be able to help him go to State in the fall. Tommy knows that he will have to get to college some other way, but he realizes that he has done something significant.

Tommy Lewis knows that he is now a man.

Part V: January 1964 Analysis

Thomas (Tommy) Lewis is the main protagonist of this portion of the novel. The year is 1964 and the Civil Rights movement is uppermost on many African-American people's minds. It is four years before the assassination of Reverend Martin Luther King, Jr., and blacks are having a collective "freedom dream."

Tommy Lewis, however, is not as concerned with civil rights as he is with basketball. In more ways than one, Tommy is a star. He is not only a talented athlete, he receives consistent good grades. When Tommy meets Leonard Chase after winning the game against Delaney, Tommy sees his dreams of playing college basketball begin to take shape. Chase talks about integration, something Tommy has never thought about. More than likely, Tommy is aware of a famous incident which took place one year before the Curry Cougars won their first all-city tournament. On June 11, George Wallace, the governor of Alabama, attempts to prevent two black students from attending the University of Alabama in 1963. Leonard Chase's suggestion could place Tommy Lewis in the same position. Tommy is only mildly apprehensive about being one of the first black students to attend Johnson City State, though. He is buoyed by his father's assertion that it would be a very good thing.

During 1963, anti-civil rights violence spirals out of control. On June 12, Mississippi activist Medgar Evers is killed by Ku Klux Klan member Byron de la Beckwith.

That same year, the Sixteenth Street Baptist Church in Birmingham, Alabama is bombed by the Ku Klux Klan. Four young African-American girls die in the blast and twenty-two others are injured.

It is interesting that Tommy keeps his distance from the talk of equality for blacks. His reticence to get involved in the civil rights debate is much like Luvenia's reluctance to commit herself to living on Curry Island with her father and mother. Tommy is preoccupied with his own future rather than the future of the black community as a whole. This changes, however, when the violence of hatred hits a little too close to home. Skeeter Jackson's injuries reinforce for Tommy the importance of ending the tyranny of segregation. It is Skeeter's courage that gives Tommy courage of his own.

It also occurs to Tommy that Skeeter's decision to march is not necessarily based on the color of those demonstrating but on the fact that it is the right thing to do. Skeeter sees the Lewis family as his friends and Skeeter is willing to jeopardize his own personal safety in order to support those he cares about.



When Tommy shackles himself to Sheriff Moser, he fully enters manhood and becomes a proud participant in the Lewis tradition. Also important to this section of the narrative is Jennie Epps, Tommy's future wife. Jennie makes no secret of her views on the civil rights matter. Jennie is a pragmatist also. When Tommy tells Jennie that black people need "education more than demonstrations" Jennie's response is clear and straightforward. Her decision to become a doctor reflects her desire to improve her own life through education and professional mobility. At the same time, Jennie points out that she wants to be of service to the larger black community as well. Becoming a doctor, to Jennie, means having the best of both worlds.

For the first time, the shackles worn by Muhammad Bilal are used by another member of his family.



Part VI: August 1994 and Epilogue

Part VI: August 1994 and Epilogue Summary

Malcolm Lewis (b. 1979) is the grandson of Richard and Harriet Lewis. Luvenia Lewis is Malcolm's great-aunt. Malcolm is a musician. He plays the alto flute and the saxophone.

Malcolm works at mahogany Beauty Products, his great-aunt Luvenia's cosmetics factory.

Luvenia telephones Malcolm and tells him that she will stop by at 11:15 that morning. Luvenia is on her way to Curry Island for the Lewis family reunion. Malcolm's parents, Charles and Celia, have already gone to the island. Luvenia is coming to Harlem to talk to Malcolm.

Malcolm is in high school. He and a few friends have a band, String Theory. While Malcolm prepares for his great-aunt's visit, he remembers that a young woman by the name of Jenn Che Po is scheduled to come by and audition for String Theory. Jenn plays the amplified cello.

Luvenia Lewis never marries. Instead, she devotes herself entirely to her hair care and cosmetics business. When white cosmetic companies begin to manufacture and market products to black women, Luvenia's business begins to suffer. It is then that Luvenia Lewis branches out into real estate and travel.

Jenn Po turns out to be quite talented. Malcolm invites her to sit in with the band after he returns from Curry Island.

Luvenia gives Malcolm the money to buy tickets to Curry Island for himself and his cousin Shep. Shep Lewis is a crack addict and Malcolm is not entirely sure where he might find his cousin.

After Luvenia leaves for the airport, Malcolm goes looking for Shep.

Malcolm finally finds Shep selling gospel cassettes in front of the Apollo Theater. Shep is dirty and unkempt. Malcolm can see that Shep is down on his luck.

Malcolm tells Shep about the reunion on Curry Island. Shep tries to convince Malcolm to give him the money so that Shep can buy his own ticket but Malcolm refuses. Malcolm believes Shep will spend the money on something other than a ticket to the reunion.

After some discussion, Shep finally agrees to show Malcolm where he is living in case Malcolm should ever need to find him again. Shep takes Malcolm to the East Harlem Restoration Center, a homeless shelter for men.



Malcolm asks Shep why Shep lives at the shelter. Shep says that the pressure of being part of the Great Lewis family finally got to him. Malcolm hears Shep's so called explanation as Shep blames the family for his crack habit.

Malcolm eventually gives in and hands Shep the ticket money. The cousins agree to talk the next day. Malcolm leaves Shep at the Restoration Center.

Jenn Che Po telephones Malcolm the next morning and the two agree that Jenn is to be the newest member of String Theory.

Malcolm dresses and leaves the apartment. He stops at the shelter to pick up his cousin Shep. Shep tells Malcolm that he was robbed. Malcolm does not believe Shep but figures that they can take a Greyhound bus to Johnson. They reach the bus station and begin their journey to Curry Island.

Shep is going through withdrawals and he vomits on the bus. The driver and the other passengers become extremely upset. A few hours later, the bus stops at a diner. While Malcolm and Shep are still eating, the bus leaves without them.

Shortly thereafter, a trucker comes into the diner. He tells Shep and Malcolm that he can get them to within a mile of Johnson City. Malcolm and Shep agree and accept a ride from the trucker.

They ride to Johnson City in the trailer. The trailer is filled with animal hides. The smell is overwhelming and it is difficult for them to breath in the back of a truck. Between gasps of air and feeling angry and frustrated about the way things turned out, Malcolm can tell that Shep is having an especially difficult time. Shep is still having withdrawal symptoms from the crack and Malcolm's heart begins to break for Shep.

At one point, Shep goes completely wild. He screams and beats against the walls of the truck. Finally, Malcolm is able to help Shep calm down and Shep manages to sleep for a short while.

When the truck finally stops just outside Johnson City, Malcolm and Shep have to walk quite a way. The cousins make it to a bus stop which takes them all the way to Curry Island.

When they arrive at the Glory Field, they are greeted by Dr. Jennie Lewis, Tommy's wife. Jennie tells Malcolm and Shep that Tommy was killed in Vietnam. Jennie also tells them that soon, the rest of the family will be waking up and that everyone is expected to help bring in the last crop of sweet potatoes from the Glory Field.

The Lewis family has decided to sell the Glory Field to developers. Soon there will be a luxury resort on the land that has belonged to their family for over two hundred years. Malcolm meets Robert (Planter) Smalls Lewis, who is Tommy Lewis' father.

Working in pairs, everyone pitches in and helps with the final harvest. At first, Malcolm is disappointed to learn that he is to spend his brief vacation working in the field but after



awhile, he comes to enjoy hearing the stories Planter tells and he begins to appreciate the rich history that is his legacy.

Planter tells Malcolm about the day he went into Johnson City to attend an auction. The shackles that Muhammad Bilal wore were being auctioned off as black memorabilia. Planter tells Malcolm that he bought the shackles for a large sum of money because the shackles are a reminder of where the family started and how much they had overcome.

EPILOGUE:

Malcolm returns to Harlem and begins visiting colleges. His band, String Theory, plays to an audience of two hundred people at Brown and Malcolm feels that he is finally on his way. When Malcolm receives word that Planter has died, he is deeply affected by the older man's passing. Upon his return from the funeral on Curry Island, Malcolm receives a package in the mail.

Planter's granddaughter has sent Malcolm the shackles once worn by Muhammad Bilal.

When Malcolm Lewis receives the shackles, he knows that his family has come full circle. Malcolm also knows that the Lewis family's strength will carry them through the next two hundred years.

Part VI: August 1994 and Epilogue Analysis

Malcolm Lewis is the primary protagonist in both the final section of the novel and the Epilogue which follows the narrative proper. Like some of the main characters in the previous five sections, Malcolm has, to a certain extent, lost sight of exactly what it means to be a part of the Lewis family.

Malcolm is the only son of Charles and Celia Lewis. Luvenia Lewis is his great-aunt. Malcolm is fifteen years old and a talented musician and composer. Malcolm does not think very deeply about what life means or what being a Lewis family member means. He is grateful to his great-aunt for giving him a job in her cosmetics factory, but beyond that, Malcolm is asleep to his inheritance. It is not until Malcolm has to retrieve his cousin Shep that Malcolm begins to change.

Shep Lewis is the same age as Malcolm. The cousins are complete opposites, however. Rather than seeing his family as a strong unit and a source of love and unlimited support, Shep is burdened by the high standards and lofty ideals of the Lewises. During his conversation with Shep outside the Apollo Theater in Harlem, Malcolm only hears Shep's excuses and not his cousin's lack of self-confidence and self-awareness. Malcolm thinks Shep is a lost cause. Malcolm is not surprised when Shep tells him that someone robbed him of his reunion ticket money. It is clear that Shep considers himself something of a lost cause as well. Shep has given up on himself and he uses bravado to mask his self-hatred. The truth is, Shep Lewis simply wants to be loved and accepted by his family and he is unsure of how to go about it.



It is no accident that Luvenia entrusts Malcolm with the task of seeing to it that Shep gets to the reunion on Curry Island. However, what Malcolm learns about himself and his family is equally as important as what Shep experiences on the way to Curry Island. For what may be the first time in his life, Malcolm is given the responsibility of caring for another human being and placing himself second. Malcolm, in his own way, is beginning his life over. For a time, he views Shep's situation as a major inconvenience. As time passes, though, Malcolm manages to put his wants and wishes aside in order to compassionately tend to Shep and see to it that they arrive at the Glory Field together. Malcolm Lewis takes his easy life for granted before he and Shep board the bus in New York City.

When Malcolm meets Planter, his view changes once again. At first, Malcolm does not take Planter seriously. Planter is lighthearted and jovial and after working in the fields with Planter, Malcolm begins to tire of Planter's seemingly innocuous jokes and remembrances. Somewhere along the line, however, Malcolm begins to truly understand that Planter is not only wise but extremely perceptive. By helping his family bring in the last harvest of sweet potatoes from the Glory Field, Malcolm enters the family fully for the first time. Working alongside young and old, something ancient and unmistakable is awakened in Malcolm Lewis and the profundity of the experience dawns on him. Malcolm knows that he has brought Shep back to the family. Malcolm also knows that the family has come back to him as well.

The Epilogue to The Glory Field brings the narrative full circle. By passing Muhammad Bilal's shackles on to Malcolm, Planter sees to it that the later generations of the Lewis family will always have their remembrance to sustain them. The Glory Field undergoes a transformation of its own by being turned into a resort.

Characters

Muhammad Bilal

Muhammad Bilal is the first character introduced in *The Glory Field*. Muhammad is also the first documented member of the Lewis family. Muhammad Bilal is the son of a farmer. His family is probably part of a large village who all contribute to the well-being of one particular tribe. At the opening of the narrative he is shackled at the ankles in the belly of a slave ship on the coast of Sierra Leone. The narrative does not reveal the particulars of the character's life, but it would be reasonable to assume that Muhammad Bilal's pre-slavery existence is simple and happy. The novel does not indicate whether or not Muhammad Bilal has siblings.

For all that is missing about Bilal's life in Africa, it is nevertheless clear that the boy possesses an inner strength uncommon in one so young. Muhammad Bilal's feelings and thoughts provide the basis for understanding what the early African slaves experienced. The confusion, isolation and feeling of powerlessness must have been overwhelming for Bilal and the hundreds of thousands like him. It is also clear that Muhammad Bilal keeps a promise to himself to stay alive because he eventually reaches the Live Oaks plantation in South Carolina. The family tree which precedes the opening chapter of the narrative does not indicate whether Bilal ever had a wife in the conventional sense, although he does father two children named Abdul and Yero. Bilal is remembered in subsequent chapters via the shackles that he wore and that are passed down from generation to generation of his African American progeny.

Lizzy

Lizzy is a slave on the Live Oaks plantation in South Carolina. When she is first introduced into the narrative, Lizzy is approximately fourteen years old and the Civil War is almost at an end. Lizzy is related to the Lewis family by marriage. When Lizzy is a much younger child, Old Master Lewis purchases Lizzy's mother from the owner of a rice plantation. There is some speculation as to exactly what Lizzy's mother dies of. Some believe it is a result of working in the rice fields in inordinately wet weather. Lizzy remembers that her mother was a "small woman" (35).

Lizzy lives in the largest of the slave cabins at Live Oaks with Moses and his wife Saran. Lizzy is as much a daughter to Moses and Saran as their own children. Lizzy is very attached to Lem Lewis, Moses and Saran's middle son. She denies, however, being infatuated with the charming and handsome Lem. Lizzy enjoys spending time with Miss Julia Lewis, the daughter of the plantation owner. Lizzy likes dressing up in the young white woman's clothes, drinking tea in the kitchen and fantasizing about living in Johnson City or another big town someday. Lizzy claims, "If I had something good to wear I know I could look like a regular lady" (26).



Lizzy knows nothing of the outside world. Before escaping from Live Oaks with Lem and Joshua, the only world Lizzy knows is the plantation. Lizzy receives her first severe whipping from Mister Joe Haynes, the overseer. Rather than face even worse punishment for visiting Lem when he is tied to a tree, Lizzy is forced to flee the safe and familiar world she has known her whole life. Lizzy, unlike many other slaves, never has a freedom dream. She is forced into freedom in order to save her own life. Eventually, Lizzy marries Moses and Saran's youngest son Richard and the two of them settle in Savannah, Georgia, where Richard works in the pulp mills. Lizzy Lewis is the mother of Elijah Lewis and the grandmother of Richard and Luvenia Lewis.

Elijah Lewis

Elijah Lewis is first introduced into the narrative in the year 1900 when he is approximately fourteen years old. Elijah's parents are Richard and Lizzy Lewis. Both of Elijah's parents are slaves on the Live Oaks plantation. It is unclear whether or not Richard Lewis is also an escaped slave. Elijah lives on Curry Island with his grandparents Moses and Saran. Elijah is Saran's favorite grandchild (86). Elijah has a close relationship with his cousin Abby, who is a six months younger than Elijah.

Elijah is intelligent and forward-thinking. He dreams of making enough money to help his family hold onto the Glory Field. Although Elijah is not born into slavery, he is nonetheless aware of his family's history of slavery and the importance of the Glory Field. Unlike Abby, Elijah does not necessarily dream of leaving Curry Island. His concerns are more immediate. Elijah Lewis does have one thing in common with his male ancestors, though, and that is his sense of dignity. Elijah sees himself as a man equal to any other man and he will not stand to be treated with disrespect. His sense of justice and propriety are Elijah's main strengths. When he finds David Turner and returns him to his father, Elijah is uncompromising in his belief that he deserves the full amount of reward money, rather than half the sum as proposed by Sheriff Glover. When, like so many others in his family, it becomes imperative for Elijah to leave Curry Island or risk death and humiliation, he leaves the Glory Field with his manhood and his sense of self intact.

Elijah eventually settles in Chicago, Illinois. As promised, he marries Goldie Paige. Elijah and Goldie have two children, Richard Lewis and Luvenia Lewis. After more than fifteen years in Chicago, Elijah and Goldie return to the Glory Field and Curry Island. This does not go as well as Elijah plans, however, and he considers moving back to Chicago. It is unclear whether this return to the city ever occurs.

Luvenia Lewis

Luvenia Lewis is the oldest child of Elijah Lewis and Goldie (Paige) Lewis. Luvenia's younger brother is Richard Lewis. Luvenia is Lizzy's granddaughter and Moses and Saran's great-granddaughter. Luvenia is also the great-aunt of Malcolm Lewis. Luvenia enters the narrative in 1930, when she is sixteen years old. Luvenia is tall and dark-



skinned and she has ideas of her own. When Luvenia is first introduced, she is in turmoil because she does not wish to move to Curry Island with her parents. Luvenia has dreams of going to college and living the life of a big city girl. Luvenia is intelligent as well as resourceful and she believes that she can make a success of her life as long as her parents will permit her to live in Chicago on her own. When the chapter opens, Luvenia has a job as a live-in maid for a white family. Luvenia admits that she adores Florenz Deets (her employers' college-age daughter) because Florenz seems to have everything Luvenia wants: school, friends and a life of privilege. Luvenia does not view her color as a barrier.

Luvenia sings in the choir at Bethel Tabernacle with her friend Miss Etta Pinckney, who is also Luvenia's godmother. When Luvenia loses her job cleaning for Mr. and Mrs. Deets because of Florenz, Luvenia decides that she will work for herself as a hairdresser. Luvenia never goes to college, but she does succeed in life. First, Luvenia Lewis opens beauty parlors in Chicago. Subsequently, she founds her own black hair care and cosmetic company, Mahogany Beauty Products, "a nationwide beauty supply company" serving black and Latina women (296). When the hair care and cosmetics business slows down, Luvenia tries her hand at real estate and the travel services industry. It is Luvenia who brokers a lucrative deal with real estate developers who plan to build a resort on the site of the Glory Field.

Luvenia Lewis never marries, preferring instead to devote herself to her businesses. She is shrewd and proud of her personal history and her distinguished place in the Lewis family.

Thomas (Tommy) Lewis

Tommy Lewis enters the narrative at the age of seventeen. Tommy is an excellent student and a star player for the Curry Cougars. Tommy dreams of playing college basketball for Johnson City State College. Tommy is the son of Robert Smalls (Planter) Lewis and Virginia (Bates) Lewis. Tommy is an only child. Tommy's grandparents are Abby Lewis and Mary (Hardin) Lewis. Moses and Saran are Tommy's great-great-grandparents.

When the chapter opens, Tommy Lewis lives on Curry Island with his parents. Tommy Lewis is born eight years before the start of the African American Civil Rights movement. By 1964, blacks across the United States are marching and protesting in an effort to be treated equally to whites under the law. Although Tommy is aware of the movement, Reverend Martin Luther King, Jr. and Medgar Evers, Tommy is far more concerned with his future as a basketball star. Tommy wants to go to college but he has no definitive plans beyond that. Although the American South is still segregated in 1964, Tommy's best friend, Skeeter Jackson, is white. Tommy is offered an opportunity to be one of the first black students to attend Johnson City State; a prospect which is both exciting and somewhat terrifying for Tommy. He understands the concept of equal rights under the law, but there is nothing to suggest that Tommy has suffered any ill effects of segregation as such. The portion of the narrative which features Tommy and his co-



workers is telling, as Miss Robbins expounds on the virtues of people staying with their own kind.

Tommy, like Muhammad Bilal, Joshua, Lem and his grandfather Abby, learns a valuable lesson about what it means to be a man. Tommy's view of the black struggle for equal rights under the law changes significantly when he sees the price Skeeter Jackson pays for marching in support of blacks during a demonstration in downtown Johnson City. Something in Tommy is awakened and by the time he shackles himself to Sheriff Moser, it is clear that Tommy Lewis has taken up the mantle of his resilient, passionate family. Tommy Lewis marries Jennie Epps and later dies during the conflict in Vietnam. Jennie (Epps) Lewis becomes a doctor. Tommy and Jennie have one daughter named Linda.

Malcolm Lewis

Malcolm Lewis is the main protagonist of the narrative's final chapter. Malcolm is introduced in 1994, when he is fifteen years old. Malcolm is the son and only child of Richard Lewis and Celia (Owens) Lewis and the grandson of Richard Lewis and Harriet (Shepphard) Lewis. Luvenia Lewis is Malcolm's great-aunt. Elijah and Goldie (Paige) Lewis are Malcolm's great-grandparents. Lizzy Lewis is Malcolm's great-great grandmother. Malcolm is a talented musician and a high school student who lives with his parents in Harlem, New York City.

Malcolm plays the alto flute and the saxophone. Malcolm and some of his friends formed a band, String Theory. When the chapter opens, Malcolm is about to audition cellist Jenn Che Po for the band.

Malcolm is fairly easygoing and has a level head on his shoulders. Malcolm is uncertain of the fate of String Theory once he and his band-mates all start college but he is pleased that the group has played successful shows at Brown and Oberlin. Malcolm plans to study history in college, even though his mother insists that he "[looks] like a doctor" (373).

Malcolm is aware of his family history but he is less concerned with where he came from than where he wants to or plans to go in the future. This changes when Malcolm and his cousin Shep attend the Lewis family reunion on Curry Island where Malcolm meets Planter.

Planter, with his easy smile and lighthearted ways, impresses upon Malcolm the importance of the Glory Field and the work that goes into tending the land for generations. When Planter dies, Malcolm receives Muhammad Bilal's shackles and the traditions of the Lewis family finally come alive in Malcolm. When he returns to Harlem and String Theory, Malcolm realizes that his family is special for a variety of reasons; not the least of which is a commitment to living free and thriving in whatever environment one might choose.



Moses Lewis

Moses Lewis is a slave on the Live Oaks plantation on Curry Island, South Carolina. He is born in 1825. Moses Lewis' mother is Dolly. He is the great-grandson of Muhammad Bilal. Moses has one brother named Joshua. Moses is the patriarch of the slaves on Live Oaks. He is also their spiritual leader of sorts. Moses is a prayerful, faithful man who believes that a man's inherent dignity is more important than his station in life. Most importantly, Moses Lewis is the keeper of the family's story. He passes the story of Muhammad Bilal on to his children and grandchildren and impresses upon them the importance of remembering where they came from.

Moses is tender and protective of his family. He is also a realist who understands that the life of a slave is not his own. Moses, it is understood, has seen family members come and go for many different reasons. The Lewis family recognizes that Moses is also a keeper of tradition.

The narrator describes Moses Lewis as a tall man "with a square, black face." Moses also has "thick, flat lips" that give the character the appearance of having been "carved [...] out of a banyan tree" (29).

Saran Lewis

Saran is the wife of Moses Lewis and a slave on the Live Oaks plantation. Saran is born in 1827. Saran and Moses have three sons: Lem, Richard, and Yero Lewis. Saran is the matriarch of the Lewis family and she possesses the same inner strength as her husband. Saran is her husband's helpmate and partner in all things. Saran is less sentimental than Moses but just as fiercely loyal to her family and those she cares for. After they are freed, Saran works as a caretaker for a young blind boy named David Turner. Saran is also a keeper of the oral tradition and makes a point of sharing the story of Muhammad Bilal with the younger members of the family, even when they express disinterest. Saran is referred to as Sarah by Old Master Lewis and his family.

Joshua (Josh) Lewis

Like his brother Moses and sister-in-law Saran, Joshua is also one of Old Master Lewis' slaves on Live Oaks. Joshua is born in 1821. He is four years older than Moses. Unlike Moses, however, Joshua has what Saran refers to as a "freedom dream" (31). According to Saran, a freedom dream is more of a waking realization which occurs to slaves out of the blue. Suddenly, a slave will be overcome by the desire to be as free as the birds. Joshua is married to Neela Foster. Neela is a slave on a nearby plantation. When Joshua becomes afraid that Master Foster plans to sell Neela, Joshua leaves Live Oaks, hoping to bring Neela back to Live Oaks to live with him. Joshua Lewis joins the Union army and fights for the North in the Civil War. Joshua is wounded in battle but survives. Once Joshua escapes from Live Oaks, he never returns to Curry Island. Joshua and Neela have no children.



Lem Lewis

Lem Lewis is born in 1847. Lem is the oldest son of Moses and Saran Lewis. He is the nephew of Joshua Lewis. When Lem is seventeen, he runs away from Live Oaks plantation with his uncle Joshua. After he is brought back to Live Oaks and tied to a tree, Joshua comes back in search of him and Lem, Josh, and Lizzy all escape. Lem Lewis joins the Union army and fights for the North in the Civil War. When Lem is killed in the fighting, his body is returned to Live Oaks and buried in an unmarked grave somewhere in the Glory Field. Old Master Lewis will not permit Lem's body to be buried on Live Oaks because Lem ran away.

Richard Lewis

The first Richard Lewis is born in 1852. He is the second child of Moses and Saran Lewis. Richard enters the narrative in the third chapter. Richard is married to Lizzy. It can be assumed that Richard Lewis is also a slave on the Live Oaks plantation. After the Lewis family is freed, Richard and Lizzy leave Curry Island in order to make money to send home so the family will be able to keep the Glory Field. The narrative states that Richard Lewis works for a time in pulp mills in Savannah and Valdosta, Georgia. Richard's son Elijah notices that his father is a very quiet man, not given to great shows of emotion. Richard never talks to Elijah about moving away from the family. Richard Lewis is, however, very softhearted.

Neela (Foster) Lewis

Neela is Joshua Lewis' wife. Neela (Foster) Lewis is born in 1818.

Goldie (Paige) Lewis

Goldie is Elijah Lewis' wife. Goldie and Elijah are the parents of Richard Lewis and Luvenia Lewis. Goldie (Paige) Lewis is born in 1885.

Abby Lewis

Abby Lewis is born in 1885 and is six months younger than his cousin Elijah Lewis. Abby is the only child of Yero Lewis and Lois (Quincy) Lewis. He is the grandson of Moses and Saran Lewis and the nephew of Lem and Richard Lewis. As a teenager, Abby is much more free-wheeling than Elijah and he loves to listen to Ragtime music. One day, Abby tells Elijah that they and other young blacks are part of a new breed and are free to determine their own futures. According to Abby Lewis, the new breed of blacks must "make new moves and new music" (96). Abby marries his teenage sweetheart Mary (Hardin) Lewis. Abby Lewis is the father of Robert Smalls Lewis, whom everyone calls Planter.



Yero Lewis

Yero Lewis is the youngest of Moses and Saran Lewis' sons. Yero Lewis is born in 1857. The only mention of Yero in the narrative is made on page 87. Yero Lewis is named after his maternal great-grandfather. The narrator describes Yero as "a little touched in the head." Yero Lewis has a crippled left leg. Yero Lewis is Abby Lewis' father and Planter's grandfather.

Richard Lewis

Richard Lewis is named after his paternal grandfather. Richard Lewis is born in 1911. He is the son of Elijah Lewis and Goldie (Paige) Lewis. Richard is the younger brother of Luvenia Lewis. Richard Lewis marries Harriet Sheppard. Richard and Harriet (Sheppard) Lewis have two sons named Fletcher and Charles. Neither Fletcher nor Charles is mentioned in the narrative. Richard is also the paternal grandfather of Shep and Malcolm Lewis.

Jennifer (Jennie Epps) Lewis

Jennie Epps marries Tommy Lewis. Jennie Epps is born in 1946. Jennie Epps is a doctor. Jennie and Tommy Lewis have a daughter named Linda.

Robert Smalls (Planter) Lewis

Planter Lewis is born in 1917. He is the only child of Abby and Mary (Hardin) Lewis. His family nickname him Planter after a boat someone discovers after the Civil War. Planter Lewis is the father of Tommy Lewis. He is also Malcolm Lewis' third cousin on his father's side. It is Planter who purchases Muhammad Bilal's shackles and returns them to the family. Upon Planter's death, Malcolm receives the shackles from Planter's granddaughter Linda.

Sheppard (Shep) Lewis

Shep Lewis is Malcolm Lewis' cousin. Shep is born in 1978. Shep enters the narrative in the final chapter of *The Glory Field*. Shep is a crack addict who lives in a men's shelter in Harlem. Shep is the only member of the Lewis family who would not be considered a success. For Shep, the pressure of being "a Lewis boy" is a bit too much for him to stand. Shep overcomes his crack addiction when he attends the Lewis family reunion on Curry Island and receives love and support from the family he so deeply resents. Shep Lewis is the grandson of Richard and Harriet (Sheppard) Lewis. His parents are Fletcher and Gloria (Smith) Lewis. Shep's grandfather is Richard Lewis and his great-aunt is the formidable Luvenia Lewis.



Dolly

Dolly is the mother of Moses Lewis and Joshua Lewis. Dolly is the granddaughter of Muhammad Bilal. "Grandma Dolly," as she is called, is dearly loved by her family. She, like her son Moses, keeps alive the oral tradition in the Lewis family by telling the story of her grandfather and his journey into slavery. Dolly is the daughter of the first Yero and a woman by the name of Sarah.

Florenz Deets

Florenz is the only daughter of Mr. and Mrs. Deets, Luvenia Lewis' white employers. Florenz is a privileged, spoiled college student who enjoys the advantages of being a wealthy man's child. Florenz attends the University of Chicago. When Florenz lies to her father in order to get his permission to take the family car out for a drive, Luvenia suffers the consequences of playing along with the ruse.

Old Master Lewis

Old Master Lewis is the owner of the Live Oaks plantation Curry Island, South Carolina. Moses and the other slaves on Live Oaks assume their owner's last name. Old Master Lewis has one son and one daughter, Julia. Lewis employs the ruthless Mister Joe Haynes as his overseer. Old Master Lewis forbids Moses and Saran to bury their son Lem on Live Oaks plantation because Lem escaped from slavery.

Miss Julia Lewis

Julia Lewis is the only daughter of Old Master Lewis. Julia is an arrogant young white girl who is oblivious to the plight of the slaves owned by her father. Julia fantasizes about moving to Johnson City and living a grand life. Julia parrots her father's sentiments that whites are superior to blacks because blacks are illiterate.

Mister Joe Haynes

Joe Haynes is the cruel overseer on the Live Oaks plantation. His employer is Old Master Lewis.

Skeeter Johnson

Skeeter Jackson is Tommy Lewis' best friend. Skeeter is white and comes from a lower-middle class family. Skeeter is badly beaten by a group of white men after he participates in a Civil Rights demonstration in support of the blacks in Johnson City.

Jenn Che Po

Jenn Che Po is a high school student and a talented, deep-thinking musician. Jenn plays amplified cello in Malcolm Lewis' band String Theory. Jenn is Chinese-American, petite and very quiet. Her musical talent, however, renders her as a complex character. It is unclear whether or not Jenn Che Po has feelings for Malcolm, but the narrative alludes to Malcolm being attracted to and challenged by Jenn.



Objects/Places

Sierra Leone

Sierra Leone is a country on the western coast of Africa. Beginning the seventeenth century, African natives are enslaved and transported to the United States on ships which depart from Sierra Leone.

Harlem, New York

Harlem is a predominantly African American neighborhood located in the borough of Manhattan in New York City.

Chicago

Chicago is the largest city in the state of Illinois.

Sitar

A sitar is a stringed instrument used primarily in southeast Asian and Middle Eastern music.

The Apollo Theater

Located in Harlem, the Apollo Theater is a famous performance hall. The Apollo is most often associated with African American performers.

Princeton University

A prestigious private university located in New Jersey. Princeton is one of the eight Ivy League Colleges.

Oberlin College

Oberlin College is a well-known American college located in Oberlin, Ohio. Oberlin is one of the first American colleges to admit African Americans.



Rent Party

A rent party is a party that one neighbor hosts in order to help someone raise enough money to pay rent. Most often, the host will provide food, drinks and music and those attending the party will give a donation.

Communism

Communism is a social system which is based on the concept of a classless society. In other words, in a Communist society, all men and women are equal and everyone is entitled to share in a society's wealth, goods, and services.

The Ku Klux Klan

The Ku Klux Klan is an American organization whose members believe that non-white, non-Christian people are inferior to white Christians.

Jim Crow Laws

The Jim Crow Laws are state and local laws that are in effect between 1860 and 1965. Jim Crow laws keep black and white Americans separate. Under Jim Crow, blacks and whites go to segregated schools, live in segregated areas and are not allowed to share public spaces (such as movie theaters and restaurants).



Themes

Freedom

Freedom (mental, emotional, spiritual and physical) is a theme woven through each character's life. Beginning in the eighteenth century with Muhammad Bilal's capture in Africa and subsequent enslavement, those belonging to the Lewis family are concerned with being free. For Bilal, freedom is a complicated matter. Although the young boy is aware of his enslavement even before reaching the U.S., his determination to stay alive represents an unusual kind of freedom. Muhammad's vow to survive no matter what represents the character's commitment to remaining free in his mind and in his spirit.

With the introduction of the slaves at Live Oaks plantation, freedom takes on another meaning altogether. Lizzy, Moses and the others are the human property of Old Master Lewis. As such, they could only dream of freedom in the physical sense. Captivity aside, however, the characters still maintain a kind of freedom that is beyond the reach of Old Master Lewis and others like him. Moses, Saran, and the other blacks on the plantation realize a sense of freedom through prayer and worship. To these slaves, a belief in the goodness and constancy of God keep them from despair and hopelessness. For these people, being the property of another human being is confusing and oppressive, to say the least. However, by freeing themselves emotionally and spiritually, they develop an inner strength which keeps their minds free even though their bodies are nothing more than possessions to be bought, sold, traded or otherwise abused.

Joshua Lewis and others have a "freedom dream" which makes being a slave more intolerable than usual (31). A freedom dream is more a waking realization than something that happens when someone is asleep. For Joshua, the freedom dream includes marriage to Neela and having a family of his own, on his own terms. The freedom dream is a powerful awakening.

Shep Lewis, on the other hand, is not a slave in the classic sense of the word. Shep is addicted to crack. In this way, he is a slave to his desire for the drug. Shep is physically dependent on crack and this need takes precedence over everything else in his life. Shep does not have a freedom dream because his addiction is in full swing. In his own way, Shep is a slave to his drug habit. Freedom, for Shep Lewis, comes only after a great deal of physical distress. With the help of his family, though, Shep finally achieves a kind of freedom he did not actively seek.

Family

The Glory Field is really the story of the Lewis family as a whole. Each member featured in the main sections of the novel plays a specific role within the family history. From the outset, the concept of family and the power of that family is the over-arching theme of the narrative.



Moses and Saran make a point of reminding their relatives that there is something special about belonging to the Lewis clan. There is an acknowledged difference between the Lewises and other families. Theirs is a strong unit that withstands separation, death, slavery and addiction. At the same time, the Lewis family is aware that life can often be challenging and extremely painful, not to mention unfair. Nonetheless, there is acceptance in this family that overrides all of the individual members' faults and failings. The Lewis family understands that family is more than just biological association. There is something in the power of the shared bloodline which enables all of them to put their family first even when it does not appear that way.

Also, the inclusion of the Lewis family tree before each section of the novel is a signal that the Lewis family is not static in its history. That is to say, as the family grows and changes, the nature of the bond between the individual members of the Lewis family also changes. People grow older, marry, have children and die, but these things do not affect the profound connection that one generation feels for those who come before or after. Family, in the context of the Lewises, is fluid and ever-changing. Moses and the others consecrate (bless) the ground in which their ancestors are buried. This sense of reverence for their ancestors gives a clear picture of the character of the Lewis family. Taking the time to honor and remember the dead proves that the Lewises understand their family in terms of a time line. Each life is, in and of itself, an episode in the overall narrative of the family as a single unit.

Hope

Hope underlies the lives of the main protagonists in the narrative. Muhammad Bilal sustains a sense of hope by promising to keep himself alive. Muhammad's experience on the ship and his subsequent life as a slave at Live Oaks plantation establishes hope as a prevalent theme in the Lewis family.

Saran, Moses and the others on the plantation also have a sense of hope in the midst of an untenable existence. For the slaves, the most they can reasonably hope for is to be able to remain with their loved ones. Being sold according to the whim of a master is a fear all slaves experience at one time or another. However, for Moses and his companions, hoping that those who escape will remain alive long enough to reach the north is just as significant. In such circumstances, the spiritual foundation that slaves "inherit" from their masters proves to be something that sustains them in times of trouble. Saran and Moses and the others pray because their faith teaches them that hope exists as long as the human heart beats and the voice can be used to express gratitude for being alive. For the Lewis family, hope is something unyielding. No matter what their circumstances, each man and woman in the family remains hopeful: for eventual freedom from slavery (of one kind or another); for the success of the Glory Field; for the healing of those things that seem to stand in their way.

Similarly, Skeeter Jackson is a symbol of hope. Skeeter marches with Richard, Virginia and the others because he believes in rights for those black men and women who are his friends, neighbors and fellow human beings. Supportive white men and women like



Skeeter march alongside blacks during the Civil Rights movement because they hold onto the hope that people's better natures will prevail and dignity under the law will be granted to everyone, not just a select few.

The Glory Field itself is a place of hope. The land borders the site of enslavement of generations of one family. This signifies that hope exists alongside oppression, that the two are not mutually exclusive. Hope cannot exist without hopelessness of some kind. The hope of the Lewis family begins when the first crops are planted and harvested in the Glory Field. The more successful the Glory Field becomes, the more prosperous the Lewis family becomes. Like the Glory Field, the family experiences good years and challenging times as Luvenia, Elijah, and those who come after them struggle with being free. In each episode of the narrative, the main characters hold onto hope. Hope is part of their history as individuals and as a family unit.

Style

Point of View

The Glory Field is written from an objective, omniscient narrator's point of view. This gives the novel a sweeping view of the Lewis family over the course of more than two hundred years. The narrator tells the entire story from beginning to end, allowing the reader to take in years and years of history without the direct influence of one character or another. Since the author uses an omniscient narrator, the reader has a better opportunity to examine the events that happen from a broader perspective. Furthermore, the omniscient narrator becomes the storyteller. In the novel, the members of the Lewis family pass their history and traditions down from generation to generation by way of the oral tradition. Very little of the Lewis family history is written down before 1930 or so and the family must tell one another stories in order for everyone to learn about where the family comes from and what makes the Lewis family unique.

Unlike the characters in the narrative, the omniscient narrator does not speak in the vernacular. The narrator's voice is neither black nor white, rich nor poor. This neutral narrator allows the characters to speak for themselves. The Glory Field would have been a very different novel if the narrator were also a character in the story.

Setting

The action in the novel takes place in several different settings. The novel begins with Muhammad Bilal's journey to the United States aboard a slave ship from Sierra Leone in West Africa. The second section of the narrative concerns the Lewis plantation, Live Oaks, which is on Curry Island. Curry Island is a fictional location.

A significant portion of the novel takes place in the city of Chicago, Illinois. After the Civil War, blacks from the southern United States migrate northward to the larger industrial cities in the American Midwest like Chicago and Detroit. It is not uncommon for blacks to move back and forth between the South and the northern cities. One example of this in The Glory Field is the character Elijah Lewis, who leaves Curry Island and settles in Chicago only to return to Curry later in life.

The Harlem section of Manhattan in New York City is another location featured in The Glory Field. Within Harlem, there are also prominent locations that are familiar to African American history. The Apollo Theater is once the site of performances by some of the greatest African American entertainers of the twentieth century. Marcus Garvey Park is named after the man who promotes African American separatism at the beginning of the twentieth century through the Back to Africa Movement.

Johnson City, South Carolina is another setting used in the novel. Johnson City is also a fictional place.



Language and Meaning

The novel is written in English. The reader may notice that the characters' speech is primarily in the vernacular. Vernacular, in this instance, refers to the way in which the characters speak to one another. The vernacular is more conversational than language found in books or printed materials. In several instances, the reader may notice that the characters' language is not always grammatically correct. As a result of who the characters are and their life circumstance (especially in the case of those characters who are slaves), their English is slightly different than those characters from later periods in history.

Those members of the Lewis family who live and work on the Live Oaks plantation are most likely illiterate. In other words, Lizzy, Lem, Moses, Joshua and the other characters who are owned by Old Master Lewis do not know how to read or write. Thus, the language they use does not come from school learning. Rather, the English spoken by the slaves in this narrative is language they learn from their masters. It also bears noting that the slave owners do not educate the slaves because the owners are afraid that if slaves are educated, they will begin to question the system that keeps them enslaved.

The narrative features language in different forms. Aside from conversational speech, Negro spiritual lyrics are also included (61). A Negro spiritual is a song or hymn sung by slaves and early African American groups. Often, the lyrics center around freedom and the trials and tribulations of slavery. On page 61, the lyric refers to "the young lambs." The young lambs are young black men and women who are slaves but who are closer to being free than their predecessors. Negro spiritual lyrics are written in order to give slaves hope and most often do not refer directly to slavery but instead used analogies to convey their message.

The section "January 1964" includes basketball terminology such as rebound and hook shot, quick break and "the lane" (212). In addition, the final section of the narrative which tells the story of Malcolm Lewis includes musical terms such as counterpoint, counter rhythm and sitar.

Structure

The Glory Field is comprised of 376 pages. The narrative is divided into six parts which progress chronologically beginning sometime in the eighteenth century and ending in 1994. There is also an epilogue following the final historical section. The epilogue serves as an afterword and serves to close the narrative circle. The epilogue does not serve as an ending, as such. Rather, it functions as a kind of overview and provides the reader with information concerning the continuity of the Lewis family's story. Each section features a different protagonist and follows his/her journey. In addition, the sections all feature a diagram of the Lewis family's genealogy. The opening portion of the novel is only five pages long; the Epilogue is equally brief.

With the exception of the first section and the Epilogue, each separate portion of the novel includes relevant historical events as a backdrop. For example, the section "January 1864" has the American Civil War as its backdrop. Other sections refer to significant historical events as well. The Civil Rights movement figures prominently in the section which covers 1964. In addition, Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., Marcus Garvey, Madame CJ Walker and Medgar Evans are also mentioned in the narrative, although they do not interact with the fictional Lewis family characters.



Quotes

"Their faces, like ebony masks edged in gold, were lit by the sun. Their arms, their bodies, their dreams, lay in the darkness below" (Part I, p. 4).

"[Muhammad Bilal] gathered what moisture he could from his parched throat, licked his lips, and whispered a vow to himself that he would live" (Part I, p. 6).

"In the soft glow of the fire Lizzy could see Saran's eyes, shining from the tears that brimmed them, wide with the strain of wondering what the white folks were going to do to Lem for running away" (Part II, p. 18).

"The way between the big house and the quarters, and then from the quarters to the fields, was all [Lizzy] had traveled during her thirteen years" (Part II, p. 27).

"Every black person who ain't dead sooner or later gets them a freedom dream" (Part II, p. 31).

"'Just be strong child,' Grandma Dolly said, 'If they can't turn your head, they can't turn you at all'" (Part II, p. 37).

"When folks take your freedom, and the only way for you to get it is to risk dying for it, then dying comes when it wants to" (Part II, p. 50).

"Somewhere between the sun's being high and it moving across the sky and losing its strength, Lizzy decided that from that day, she was going to be on her own" (Part II, p. 58).

"Maybe, Elijah thought, that was the way it was with black men. The weight of it all just held you down so that you didn't do a whole lot of smiling" (Part III, p. 85).

"[Elijah] knew you didn't raise your hand against a white man in Montgomery County. Not if you wanted to live to talk about it" (Part III, p. 104).

"The only way some people can see their own manhood is by pushing somebody else down" (Part III, p. 133).

"[...] Luvenia wanted to go to college, to be a teacher, or perhaps a lawyer, anything but someone else's expectations of her" (Part IV, p. 184).

"But the music came to him. Drifting through the streets of Johnson City, lifting itself like an anthem of everything that Tommy had ever heard about being black" (Part V, p. 266).

"[It] was about an everyday violence that made being beaten up or killed a constant threat, that made the violence to the soul a constant threat as mothers had to take young children past 'white only' parks and 'white only' lunch counters or explain why [black] men were called 'uncle' instead of 'mister'" (Part V, p. 278).



"Somehow [Planter] had known that [Malcolm] would bridge the gap between them, even as [Planter] had somehow known that the shackles would be safe with the sweet potato picker he had met briefly in the Glory Field" (Part VI, p. 375).



Topics for Discussion

Explain the significance of the shackles that Planter sends to Malcolm.

Why does Luvenia Lewis remain unmarried?

What causes Lizzy to leave Live Oaks Plantation?

Why does Tommy Lewis shackle himself to Sheriff Moser?

How does Robert Smalls Lewis come to be known as "Planter"?

What is the "oral tradition" and why is it important to the Lewis family?

What does Sheriff Moser do to frighten Tommy Lewis?

What, exactly, is the Glory Field and how did it get its name?

Why does Mr. Deets fire Luvenia?

Explain Elijah Lewis' decision to leave Curry Island, South Carolina.

What do you think happens to Shep Lewis after the family reunion?

What does Mister Joe Haynes do to Lizzy when he discovers her visiting Lem?

What does Leonard Chase say about integrating Johnson City State?

Explain why owning land means so much to the Lewis family.

Why does Tommy Lewis marry Jennie Epps instead of Mandy McKinnon?