

# **MASH Study Guide**

**MASH by Richard Hooker**

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# Contents

<a href="#">MASH Study Guide.....</a>	<a href="#">1</a>
<a href="#">Contents.....</a>	<a href="#">2</a>
<a href="#">Plot Summary.....</a>	<a href="#">3</a>
<a href="#">Chapter 1.....</a>	<a href="#">5</a>
<a href="#">Chapter 2.....</a>	<a href="#">7</a>
<a href="#">Chapter 3.....</a>	<a href="#">9</a>
<a href="#">Chapter 4.....</a>	<a href="#">10</a>
<a href="#">Chapter 5.....</a>	<a href="#">11</a>
<a href="#">Chapter 6.....</a>	<a href="#">12</a>
<a href="#">Chapter 7.....</a>	<a href="#">14</a>
<a href="#">Chapter 8.....</a>	<a href="#">15</a>
<a href="#">Chapter 9.....</a>	<a href="#">17</a>
<a href="#">Chapter 10.....</a>	<a href="#">18</a>
<a href="#">Chapter 11.....</a>	<a href="#">20</a>
<a href="#">Chapter 12.....</a>	<a href="#">22</a>
<a href="#">Chapter 13.....</a>	<a href="#">23</a>
<a href="#">Chapter 14.....</a>	<a href="#">25</a>
<a href="#">Chapter 15.....</a>	<a href="#">27</a>
<a href="#">Characters.....</a>	<a href="#">29</a>
<a href="#">Objects/Places.....</a>	<a href="#">32</a>
<a href="#">Themes.....</a>	<a href="#">35</a>
<a href="#">Style.....</a>	<a href="#">37</a>
<a href="#">Quotes.....</a>	<a href="#">40</a>
<a href="#">Topics for Discussion.....</a>	<a href="#">42</a>



# Plot Summary

MASH: A Novel about Three Army Doctors was published in 1968 and written by Richard Hooker. It was this novel that inspired both the movie MASH and the much-beloved television show M\*A\*S\*H. The book concerns the activities of the Mobile Army Surgical Hospital 4077th and its staff. The novel mostly concerns the three "Swampmen" doctors "Hawkeye" Pierce, "Duke" Forrest and "Trapper" John McIntyre.

Three excellent surgeons, they are also unusual characters who cope with the boredom and horror of the Korean War by playing pranks and engaging in other wild antics. The book is filled primarily with stories about these characters and their interactions with others, oscillating between humorous and dark stories, making it into one of the most famous contemporary "black comedies."

The book contains fifteen chapters, most of which focus on some event or the introduction of some important character. The book opens with Radar O'Reilly overhearing a conversation between Colonel Henry Blake and General Hammond, with Henry demanding two new surgeons. The army provides him with Duke Forrest and Hawkeye Pierce. Initially they share a tent with a religious surgeon named Major Jonathan Hobson whom they eventually push out of the tent. The two surgeons are excellent and immediately gain their colleagues' respect.

Hobson's replacement is Captain John McIntyre. Initially he is shy and evasive, until Hawkeye recalls that he is famous for having sex with a woman on a train, for which he was nicknamed "Trapper" John. When McIntyre opens up to them, they quickly become close and form an infamous camp location in their tent named "The Swamp" and are thereafter referred to as the Swampmen from time to time.

Various later chapters deal with particular characters. One chapter covers the character Father Mulcahy, also known as Dago Red. The Swampmen are uninterested in religion and very much resent having it pressured onto them. However, Dago Red earns their trust and respect. Captain Waldowski, the Painless Pole, and one of the best American dentists in Korea, decides he wants to commit suicide and the Swampmen talk him out of it.

In other chapters, the Swampmen, and Hawkeye in particular, start to have conflicts with Captain Frank Burns, a wealthy surgeon born with a silver-spoon in his mouth. Frank is not the ablest surgeon and eventually has to be removed from camp, but not until he conspires with Major Margaret "Hot Lips" Houlihan to try to bring down the Swampmen.

Other chapters discuss the Swampmen's attempts to get their Korean assistant, Ho-Jon, into college in the US, Trapper and Hawkeye's attempts to escape camp for various vacations, the deluge of casualties, the temporary replacement of Blake with Colonel Horace DeLong and a football game between the men of the 4077th and General Hammond's men in Seoul. The book starts to end as Duke and Hawkeye's

enlistment runs out. Before they leave, they train their replacements and then have a hilarious but somber trip home.



# Chapter 1

## Chapter 1 Summary

Radar O'Reilly has just graduated high school when he joins the United States Army to join the Signal Corps. He has the extraordinary ability to receive messages and monitor conversations far beyond the ordinary hearing abilities of humans. He seems natural for communications. In 1951, November, he is a corporal in the US Army Medical Corps, sitting in the Poker and Dental Clinic of the 4077th Mobile Army Surgical Hospital near the 38th Parallel in South Korea and playing poker while listening to a phone conversation between General Hammond and Lieutenant Colonel Henry Blake, the commanding officer of the 4077th. Blake is demanding that the general send him the two best surgeons he has. He is successful.

Ten days later, Captains Augustus Forrest and Benjamin Franklin Pierce arrive. Pierce is twenty-eight, Captain Forrest a year older. On the way to the 4077th, the two doctors hit it off. They call themselves Duke Forrest and Hawkeye Pierce. Hawkeye is married with two sons and Forrest is married and the father of two young girls. Neither consider themselves great surgeons. Hawkeye mentions that he thinks Colonel Blake might be insecure, since most army doctors would otherwise have tried to make it in the free world. He then suggests that the two work hard and outclass the other talent to get leverage in the unit.

When they arrive at the 4077th, Colonel Blake introduces himself. Blake expected them earlier but Duke tells him that they stopped for Gin. Blake comments that they look like weirdos but he will accept them. Hawkeye confirms quietly to Duke that his suspicions are correct. The two men are assigned to Major Hobson's tent. When Hawkeye and Duke set up, Hobson is not there and as they drop off to sleep, the major enters. He is thirty-five and has practiced general medicine but also preached in the Church of the Nazarene on Sundays in the Midwest. He is a bit out of his element, particularly when the two joke that they were stoned earlier.

In the morning, the surgeons have to report for duty and immediately begin surgery. Hawkeye and Duke handle the surgeries easily which win considerable comment. Afterwards, they retire to the Officers' Club. When they open the door, they see Major Hobson praying, and Duke suggests that he is a "Roller," the likes of which they have back home. When they wake up the next day, they have more casualties and this does not let up for the whole week. The young surgeons gain respect but it is mixed with doubt and wonder because they do not fit in.

## Chapter 1 Analysis

Chapter 1 introduces five of the major characters. It begins by introducing Radar O'Reilly, an Iowa corporal with the extraordinary ability to hear conversations and other



sounds at great distances. Colonel Henry Blake, who is indirectly accused of insecurity, heads the army hospital. When he calls for more surgeons, the army sends Captains Pierce and Forrest, Pierce from Maine and Forrest from Georgia. The two immediately hit it off and display a humor and wit that will help them get through the war. They bunk with Major Hobson, a part-time pastor and committed religious person made uncomfortable by Pierce and Forrest. The two young surgeons quickly win respect despite their unusual behavior.

The early interpersonal dynamics are introduced as well. Pierce and Forrest hit it off and do not really take others seriously, making jokes and acting wild when they have the chance, but taking surgery very seriously. They develop an awkward relationship with Major Hobson, with whom they share little. Further, Colonel Blake seems insecure and the fact that Radar calls him by his first name suggests that Blake does not command much authority.



# Chapter 2

## Chapter 2 Summary

Nine days after Pierce and Forrest arrive, a lull in business comes and the two start to work during the day. They prefer these circumstances but have to walk around Major Hobson praying beside his cot. Pierce verbally pokes at Hobson for being overzealous and Hobson notes that he will keep praying, especially for Pierce and Forrest. Duke is annoyed and later tells Hawkeye he does not like Hobson, who is stunting their "social growth." So the doctors go to Blake and ask to be separated from Hobson. Blake admits that the two have ingratiated themselves but he does not want to roll over at their first request. Hawkeye reports that the two will do the best they can in surgery and will respect Blake and his job but that he may have to put up with some weird behavior. Blake reports that Hobson will be out of their tent that day.

The two surgeons mention that they need a professional chest surgeon but Henry suggests that there is no chance of getting one. Henry then asks them to serve more in the pre-op ward with casualties. When they return to their tent, Duke writes his wife, as he does regularly. Hobson then storms into the tent and orders the two doctors to the pre-op ward to talk with them. When he touches Duke to get his attention, Duke decks him. Colonel Blake quickly arrives and threatens them with a court-martial. He threatens them with a penalty but the next day Hobson relaxes his charges and starts to pray in the mess hall publicly before his meals. Blake knows that he has to do something about Hobson and has him shipped back to the United States early before his enlistment expires.

After returning from Seoul, the doctors come by to express their contrition and drink with Blake but then they pray in front of him to be sent home and he angrily sends them away.

## Chapter 2 Analysis

Chapter 2 concerns the conflict between Major Hobson and Hawkeye and Duke. Hobson is something of a religious zealot whose public prayer rituals in the tent make it difficult for them to have any fun. So they go to Blake and ask to have a different tent from Hobson's. They remind him that they have ingratiated themselves to him and that he owes them, and Blake obliges, and talks to Hobson about moving him.

Hobson is furious and storms off to confront Hawkeye and Duke. When he orders them out of the tent to talk to them and approaches Duke, Duke decks him, which leads Blake to threaten them with court-martial. However, Hobson eventually relaxes his charges, becoming ever more zealous. Blake sees that the conflict will continue unless he acts and so he sends Hobson home where his enlistment will soon expire.

The main elements of Chapter 2 are the removal of Hobson and exposure of the power that Hawkeye and Duke have over Blake.





# Chapter 3

## Chapter 3 Summary

Chapter 3 opens a few weeks after Major Hobson has left. Colonel Blake has found a chest surgeon from Boston. He is six feet tall and named John McIntyre. He is from Winchester and does not say much. The chief anesthesiologist, Captain Ugly John Black, decides to figure the man out but has trouble; in fact, he seems a bit crazy. Hawkeye and Duke introduce themselves officially when McIntyre moves into their tent.

That night, the three doctors are on night duty together and McIntyre shows them how to do chest surgery, repairing a pulmonary artery with ease. The three drink martinis afterward and it becomes clear that McIntyre is more than a social drinker. As the days wear on, McIntyre continues to remain mysterious. Duke is annoyed, but Hawkeye encourages him to wait and is sure he has seen McIntyre before. He eventually remembers that McIntyre has a reputation for having had sex with a woman in the women's bathroom on the Boston & Maine train; for this he became known as "Trapper John." McIntyre says he had been waiting for them to recognize him. He has been living on his reputation. Trapper becomes one of them at that moment.

## Chapter 3 Analysis

Chapter 3 is brief but introduces the third young doctor in the book, John McIntyre or "Trapper John" as he is known in the United States. Initially McIntyre is very quiet and remains something of an enigma. Duke and Hawkeye reach out to him but he resists opening up to them. Eventually, however, Hawkeye remembers that McIntyre is famous for having sex with a woman on a train. Once this becomes clear, the three become friends. The main point of the chapter is to introduce Trapper and unite him with the other two doctors, explaining the origin of their relationship.



# Chapter 4

## Chapter 4 Summary

The next few weeks after Trapper John is identified calm down. There are long periods of boredom interspersed with intense periods of casualties. The surgeons work as long and hard as they can until they have to sleep out of fatigue. Tent Number Six, the home of Duke, Hawkeye and Trapper is a center of social activity and is called The Swamp. Swamp parties are consistently held and sometimes frequented by the Catholic chaplain, Father John Patrick Mulcahy, one of a kind. Those in The Swamp have loose religious affiliations, which leads to Mulcahy being nicknamed Dago Red. He is often an interesting conversation partner, who has wisdom, understanding, compassion, and tolerance.

In surgery, Dago Red is often called in when someone is dying to perform last rites. Sometimes the patients recover and Dago thinks this is no mistake. Duke is somewhat bothered, however, since he has a strong Protestant upbringing, sometimes challenging Mulcahy as to whether a Protestant chaplain would not do as well. However, Dago Red proves himself over and over again.

One day, Hawkeye, Duke and Trapper are drunk and reward him by tying up the Protestant chaplain, Shaking Sammy, and hanging him on a cross in front of Dago Red's tent. When they sober up, they think they've gotten away with it, but the M.P.s come for them. Hawkeye tricks them into heading off, however. Dago Red later chastises them and demand they apologize to Sammy, but Hawkeye refuses. Then Canadian casualties come and four days pass with little let up.

## Chapter 4 Analysis

Chapter 4 introduces Father John Patrick Mulcahy, a Catholic chaplain from San Diego whom Duke nicknames "Dago Red." Dago Red is widely considered a good man, wise, kind, and tolerant of the antics of the three doctors. He is not regarded as a fake, like the Protestant chaplain, Shaking Sammy. Often Dago Red will give last rites to soldiers that are likely to die, but sometimes, perhaps through his intervention, they survive. Despite his tolerance, when the doctors get drunk and harass Shaking Sammy, he demands that they apologize. This in general shows that Dago Red is genuinely good and a respectable counterbalance to the irresponsible behavior of the doctors.



# Chapter 5

## Chapter 5 Summary

The 4077th has a good dentist, Captain Walter Koskusko Waldowski, from Michigan and he takes care of hundreds of troops. He is named The Painless Pole as a result and runs the only popular Dental Clinic in Korea. The clinic also has a poker table and beer. Waldowski becomes quite popular as a result. He also has an intense weakness for women and is unmarried but engaged to three young women at the same time. The Captain is well-known for his extremely large genitalia, which many men visit the 4077th to see while he showers (this was unknown to him, but known to his corporal, who sells rights to watch behind his back).

Periodically Waldowski becomes depressed and one day he announces to the doctors of the Swamp that he is going to commit suicide. The doctors joke a bit but when Blake gets wind and freaks out, they promise to fix Waldowski. They decide to give him a fake poison pill and enlist Dago Red's help, along with the cook, Mother Divine. The trick is a success and Waldowski recovers.

## Chapter 5 Analysis

Chapter 5 introduces yet another character, the good dentist and operator of the Dental Clinic and Bar, Waldowski. Waldowski is popular in no small part because his penis. "The Pride of Hamtramck," is legendarily large and men often take showers alongside him to get a look at it. However, Waldowski often becomes depressed and eventually wants to commit suicide. The doctors have to invent a scheme to snap him out of his depression, and it works.



# Chapter 6

## Chapter 6 Summary

Other doctors in the 4077th often discuss the men of the Swamp. Duke is friendly, and Trapper is the best doctor, but they are divided about Hawkeye. The man who hates him most is Captain Frank Burns, whom Hawkeye persecutes. They are the lead surgeons on opposing shifts; Frank is a rich son of a well-known doctor in a medium-sized Indiana town, who is himself well-paid; Hawkeye has had a much more difficult time. He finds Frank empty-headed and fake. However, Burns thinks Hawkeye is uncouth and disrespects his technical skill.

When Hawkeye and Frank interact, Hawkeye often insults him. In response, Frank tattles on him to Blake. The author notes that when a patient dies, he either says it is God's will or someone else's fault, never taking responsibility. When he blames Boone for a patient's death, Duke takes him outside and punches him in the face. Trapper also has a run-in with him.

Peace is restored to the 4077th by a "femme fatale," Major Margaret Houlihan, the new Chief Nurse. She is tall, willowy, blonde and in her forties. She often discusses nursing problems with the heads of each shift. The Major is impressed by Burns because of his criticisms of the nurses, and she is less impressed with Hawkeye. When she confronts Hawkeye he insults Frank and tries to convince her that his shift does better work with less fuss. Houlihan regards their interview as unsatisfactory and complains to Blake, but Blake tells her he would rather get rid of Burns. By the end of the week, she is convinced that Hawkeye is an evil influence on Blake and the whole outfit but thinks Burns is a great technical surgeon and good military.

Burns's shift has troubles that Houlihan does not notice and often members of Hawkeye's shift have to step in to help. Eventually Blake has to choose a chief surgeon over all and ultimately Trapper John is chosen. However, Houlihan is furious and invites Frank to her tent to talk. Together they compose a letter to General Hammond in Seoul on the situation, but Hawkeye intercepts the letter. The same night before Frank leaves, he kisses Houlihan. Later at a party, Trapper and the other "Swampmen" make fun of Frank and Houlihan a bit, which leads them to plot until early hours.

The next day Trapper decides to call Houlihan Hot Lips and asks to interview her. Frank is incensed and Hawkeye provokes him some more until Frank loses it and hurls a coffee cup at Hawkeye, which Blake sees just as he walks in. Burns is ultimately reassigned to a stateside hospital. The Swampmen are happy but Blake is not and tells them so.



## Chapter 6 Analysis

Chapter 6 introduces two of the characters most well-known in the television series, Captain Frank Burns and Major "Hot Lips" Houlihan. Frank is an irritable and spoiled surgeon, the son of a rich surgeon from a medium-sized town in Indiana who has the world handed to him on a silver platter. Hawkeye resents him for this, having worked very hard to get himself through medical school. As a result, Hawkeye often torments him, pointing out very real complaints about him and insulting him when he can. Burns responds with resentment and tattling to Blake.

Major Houlihan arrives mid-chapter and is the new chief nurse; she is regular military and very "by-the-book," coming, for whatever reason, to admire Frank and dislike Hawkeye. Frank and Houlihan begin to spend time together complaining about the Swampmen and apparently (although this is not entirely clear), start a love affair. However, one day Hawkeye provokes Frank and Frank throws a coffee cup at his head; Blake only sees the latter part and decides to ship Frank home.



# Chapter 7

## Chapter 7 Summary

Each MASH tent has a young Korean attendant called a houseboy. The Swamp therefore has "Swampboy" or Ho-Jon, a tall, bright, Christian and relatively English-capable Korean. He thinks the world of Hawkeye, Duke and Trapper and spends a lot of his spare time in the tent learning. He even trains as a scrub nurse with them. However, at seventeen he is drafted into the South Korean army. The doctors are depressed; Hawkeye drives him to Seoul and thinks he will never see him again.

However, Ho-Jon returns to the 4077th with a mortal fragment in his chest. Hawkeye and McIntyre operate and remove a lot of the fragment but a shard is left in Ho-Jon's pulmonary artery. He recovers but will need further surgery. During the surgery, Trapper removes Ho-Jon's fifth rib and finds the shard, removes it and closes him up. Ho-Jon recovers and Hawkeye decides to write the Dean of his undergraduate college, Androskoggin College on Ho-Jon's behalf. The Dean accepts him but the doctors have to get quite a bit of money together to transport him and supply him with tuition money.

The doctors hatch the idea to get Trapper to grow a beard, pose as Jesus for several thousand photos and then sign them to sell to raise the money. Many in the army buy pictures for a dollar a piece and the Swampmen go to Seoul to sell more, 6800. They make \$3000 in a single day and during the night enlist the Air Rescue Squadron to take them to various camps of American soldiers. Back at the Swamp, they have made \$6500. The next day, Hawkeye sends \$5000 to his father and instructions to care for Ho-Jon. The Dean accepts him and Ho-Jon travels safely to the United States.

## Chapter 7 Analysis

Chapter 7 is the story of Ho-Jon, the Swampmen's Korean assistant. Ho-Jon displays great intelligence and interest in learning from the doctors, and they take to him and look after him. When he is drafted by the South Korean Army, the doctors are depressed and when he returns to the 4077th with a mortar fragment in his chest, they fix him and raise the money, in a characteristically absurd fashion, to send him to college. The chapter displays the deep humanity of the doctors and their ingenuity at combining it with their general lack of seriousness and penchant for the absurd.



# Chapter 8

## Chapter 8 Summary

In Chapter 8, Trapper and Hawkeye begin to play golf with clubs acquired from Japan and wood and iron facsimiles of golf balls. One day while they are golfing, they receive word from a helicopter pilot that a General wants them to fly to Kokura and operate on a Congressman's son. They travel there, making jokes along the way and accompanied by their golf clubs.

Hawkeye and Trapper hear that the Kokura Open will start the day after they arrive, so they hatch a plan to operate on the Congressman's son and then play in the Open. When they arrive at the hospital, they manipulate their way to see the Congressman's son early and are able to start the operation, which is routine.

It turns out the anesthesiologist is a friend of Hawkeye's at Androscoggin. They reconnect and "Me Lay" Marston tells them that the local pediatrician runs a whorehouse. Before Hawkeye and Trapper can proceed to the whorehouse or the golf club, the Colonel of the hospital tries to arrest them but Hawkeye talks him out of it. They then proceed to the Open and through further manipulation they qualify.

When they arrive, Hawkeye and Trapper end up making a bet with some British officers over who will win their 18 holes. Hawkeye and Trapper play their game and end up impressing their female caddies whom they also sell pictures of Trapper dressed as Jesus Christ. After the game, they invite the British contingent to go back to the whorehouse/hospital area. When they arrive, Trapper shaves his beard and cleans up.

however, afterwards, Me Lay asks them to look at a young Japanese-American baby who is having medical problems. Frustrated sexually, they nonetheless decide to operate. Through some further shenanigans, they are able to fend off hospital staff and successfully complete the operation, ending up at the hospital/whorehouse in the wee hours of the morning with the British contingent. To prevent the hospital Colonel, Colonel Merrill, from getting on to them, they send a whore up to his room and take pictures of him with her. With the pictures held over Merrill's head, Hawkeye and Pierce head to the Kokura Open.

Unfortunately, exhausted from all the events of the previous few days, they performed poor, ending the third day in the back of the pack. The British contingent cheers them on. When they are finished, they realize that the baby they operated on may well be Me Lay Marston's son so they decide to name him Ezekiel Bradbury Marston, VI. They call Me Lay's wife in the United States and ask if she assents to the name, telling her about the baby as a possible adoptee, not as Me Lay's child. When they tell Me Lay, he agrees to adopt the baby and they send the child home.

Afterwards, Hawkeye and Trapper board a plane for Seoul.



## Chapter 8 Analysis

In Chapter 8, Hawkeye and Trapper travel to Kokura to operate on a Congressman's son. Along the way they get involved in a wild series of antics. First, they decide to enter the Kokura Open to play golf; to do so, they have to operate on the Congressman's son early, which they are only able to do by tricking the hospital staff on several occasions. They also meet up with an old friend of Hawkeye's who asks them to operate on a baby that might be his. They follow through, but this leaves them too tired to play golf. They perform poorly but are able to arrange for the child to be adopted before returning to Seoul.

Chapter 8 is mostly a series of antics, displaying Trapper and Hawkeye's wit and willingness to use humor and mostly harmless gags to get what they want. However, Chapter 8 also displays the unique combination of wit and humanity that is characteristic of their behavior in the book as a whole. One can understand the rapid oscillation between deep humanitarian care and feeling and a general lack of seriousness as a double-edged coping strategy for the psychological stresses of war.





# Chapter 9

## Chapter 9 Summary

Hawkeye and Trapper return to the 4077th to find it busy with wounded; they immediately change into pre-op garb and get to work. The camp is abuzz as Duke prepares for surgery, relying on Captain Bridget McCarthy, a thirty-five year old nurse captain they called "Knocko" for her no-nonsense, take-no-flack personality. Duke and Knocko have to do brain surgery and although they are successful, the soldier still has blood coming out of his neck. Hawkeye discovers the neck wound and has to do surgery with the anesthesiologist, Ugly.

Surgery continues on various patients uninterrupted. Even Dago Red has to be employed as a surgeon's assistant. The unit transforms into an efficient healing machine with a purpose, pulled out of their boredom and stupor. Eventually the choppers stop coming and the surgery marathon ends, but they are too tired to appreciate what they have done.

## Chapter 9 Analysis

Chapter 9 is simply a description of an extended, several day series of surgeries on casualties on the front lines. Few major events occur. Instead, the reader is presented with a series of scenes meant to convey how hard and long the doctors work and how they transform into an efficient fighting unit when they have a sense of their purpose. Perhaps the deepest point in the chapter is that although the carnage is horrible, the doctors acquire meaning from their experience in healing the sick.



# Chapter 10

## Chapter 10 Summary

Chapter 10 focuses first on Ugly, the 4077th's anesthesiologist. He is widely regarded as excellent and consequently serves to ease the burden of pain on soldiers and thereby the stress of doctors. Ugly works harder than anyone else in the camp, as he is constantly needed and morally bound to aid. He also despises a nearby British surgical unit that is extremely tight-fisted with morphine, often giving patients tea which leaks through their internal wounds and leaves them to be tied up by the 4077th.

Hawkeye is also under serious stress and decides to talk to Dago Red about his feeling relatively crazy. He then sleeps for a long period of time, and is woken up again for surgery on Captain William Logan of the Mississippi National Guard. Hawkeye messes up the surgery partially, however. Nine days later, Logan is desperately ill and Hawkeye has to do surgery again. Five days later he improves and is evacuated, but Hawkeye is disgusted with himself and becomes even more depressed. Logan's men thank him but Hawkeye refuses to acknowledge it.

Next Duke and Trapper operate on a Private Angelo who appears to have a heart problem, and dies before they can fix him. Duke cries into his beer. The Swampmen are all despondent, and Dago Red and Colonel Blake realize they have a serious problem. The men are so depressed they cannot engage in their regular antics.

While they are depressed they end up interacting with a new, Southern surgeon, Dr. R. C. Carroll whom they called Jeeter. Jeeter expresses his need for sex and the Swampmen advise him on various methods of getting women. Eventually they tell him to simply announce that he is available, but he takes this too far and exclaims loudly in the mess hall that he is going to have sex with every nurse in the camp. Blake chews him out.

Another of the men introduced in the chapter is a surgeon from the 6073rd MASH, Roger the Dodger Danforth, who trains with Ugly in the United States. The same day Jeeter embarrasses himself, Roger arrives. The men then get drunk and start to call out and insult the nurses. Blake and Dago Red overhear them and Blake is worried about how to fix their deteriorating psychological condition. Hot Lips is furious over the insults and complains to Blake. She immediately calls up General Hammond to tell him what is going on and then the General calls Blake and demands that he meet up with the General to explain himself.

Hawkeye realizes that Blake is in trouble and that Hot Lips is behind it. It seems to him that Hot Lips is constantly causing trouble. Trapper feels bad for goading Jeeter and Roger because this set Hot Lips off and so he goes to talk to the General. Hawkeye and Duke go with him. They drink before the meeting.



When the General arrives, the three doctors have drunk enough that they are making jokes. The General invites them in and starts to yell at them but Trapper stops him and tells him that Colonel Blake is the reason that the 4077th is the best MASH in Korea. He admits that he got Hot Lips angry and to do to them what he was going to do to Blake. The General assures them not to worry about Henry.

## Chapter 10 Analysis

Chapter 10 is about the stress of life at MASH units generally but it focuses on the difficulties facing the 4077th. The constant surgery, with men often dying in front of the doctors, takes a great toll on them psychologically. The chapter begins by discussing the stress placed on Ugly, the camp anesthesiologist, who works harder than probably anyone in the entire camp. It then transitions to discuss the great stresses on Hawkeye that send him spiraling into depression when a patient suffers because of a surgical error he made. Duke and McIntyre have a patient die on them.

The Swampmen are so depressed that they begin to engage in seriously foolish behavior, goading two other doctors into making lewd comments to the nurses. This infuriates Hot Lips, who speaks to Blake and then to his boss, General Hammond. Trapper realizes that the Swampmen caused the problem, so Trapper, Hawkeye and McIntyre volunteer to travel to speak with the General and successfully smooth things over. The general idea of the chapter is that while the men are stressed they simply cannot let themselves get out of control.



# Chapter 11

## Chapter 11 Summary

Chapter 11 starts with another deluge of casualties. However, Colonel Blake has been called away for three weeks to general duty at Tokyo General Hospital. His temporary replacement is Colonel DeLong. Due to various stressors, tempers are on edge. One night, after Hawkeye has finished part of a surgery and is waiting for the patient to recover for the next round of surgery, Colonel DeLong interrupts Hawkeye's poker game and asks him to continue surgery. Hawkeye does not explain the situation to DeLong but instead mouths off. Eventually the Colonel leaves.

Right before the patient is ready for surgery, Hawkeye shows the Colonel what is wrong. The Colonel is impressed but tells Hawkeye that he cannot tolerate insubordination. Hawkeye rebuffs him again and the Colonel goes to bed.

After a day or so of rest, the Swampmen find themselves down by the river and decide, for laughs, to build a "mermaid trap" to catch mermaids in the river. Basically, it is a large lobster trap. The Colonel joins them down at the water and finds their activity strange, so he leaves. Hawkeye then suggests that they try to convince DeLong that they are nuts when he returns so that he will ship them off for relaxation for a few weeks. They enlist the help of Rafael Rodriguez, a lieutenant in the Medical Service Corps.

Rodriguez tells the Colonel that he agrees that the three doctors need psychiatric care and the Colonel decides to take action. Rafe then reports back to the Swampmen. He arranges for them to go to the 325th Evac the next day for a few days rest. After the Colonel leaves, the Swampmen consider how long they can get away with pretending to be crazy. Hawkeye suggests that when they arrive, the two say that they are just accompanying him and that he will then drive his psychiatrist mad.

When they arrive, Hawkeye proceeds according to plan in front of Major Haskell, the resident Chief of Psychiatry. They talk for a time and then Haskell suggests that they will send him home for treatment. Haskell leaves and Hawkeye goes to speak to Trapper and Duke. They are briefly discussing visiting a whorehouse when Haskell appears with two MPs to take Hawkeye to an area of seclusion, but Hawkeye escapes before they notice him. Trapper and Duke then take Haskell to the whorehouse and business there is big.

Eventually Blake returns to the 4077th but stops first at the Evac and speaks to Haskell, who tells him about the Swampmen's condition. Blake wants to pick them up but Haskell objects to allowing Hawkeye to return to duty. When Hawkeye appears and acts normal, Blake tells Haskell that he has been had. Haskell is fine with it and tells Hawkeye he is still not normal. Hawkeye agrees.



## Chapter 11 Analysis

Chapter 11 is another partially revealing tale of the Swampmen's antics. It starts with a deluge of casualties in the Korean summers. Tempers among the 4077th run high and the temporary replacement for Blake, Colonel DeLong, does not know quite how to handle things. Hawkeye treats him poorly and DeLong takes it. Eventually Hawkeye hatches a plan for the Swampmen to act crazy and get shipped off to the Evac for psychiatric evaluation and rest. The three men have a great time and Hawkeye acts crazy with style to trick Major Haskell, the Chief of Psychiatry, into thinking he is crazy. In the end, a good time is had by all.

Again, the Swampmen find an opportunity for rest and relaxation by using their wit and intelligence to allow them to get away with antics that would normally not be permitted. This seems to be one more manifestation of their use of creativity to deal with their normal anxiety and psychological stress.



# Chapter 12

## Chapter 12 Summary

The Swampmen decide that they want to play recreational sports and focus on football. They want to get a team together, but many of them are not very good. Hawkeye suggests that they get an excellent black football player named Oliver Wendell Jones, who also happens to be a medical doctor. He is a neurosurgeon and so the Swampmen go to Blake and tell them that they need a neurosurgeon. Eventually they fess up to their real intentions, but Blake does not mind. He simply wants to be coach.

They are successful in getting Dr. Oliver to come to camp. Duke, being from pre-1960s Georgia and from a city named for Nathan Bedford Forrest, the founder of the Klan, tells Oliver that he has no problem with his race, and that if Oliver had a problem with his, that he ought to speak up. Oliver tells him an interesting story. Apparently his family used to live in Forrest and his father was killed while they were tenant farmers. It turns out that Duke's father owned the farm and sold it to give Oliver's family the money to move to the North. Duke did not know the story and is embarrassed.

## Chapter 12 Analysis

The twelfth chapter concerns race relations in the 1950s and is one of the more subtly social chapters of the book. The Swampmen want to put together a football team and Hawkeye knows a black doctor named Dr. Oliver who used to play semi-pro football. They get Henry to bring Dr. Oliver to camp for awhile to play. When he arrives, Duke, a Georgian, decides to explicitly discuss race with Oliver, telling him that he has no problem with his race and wants to know if Oliver had a problem with his. Oliver then explains to him that Duke's father was a major help to his family, and Duke did not know the story. He is apparently embarrassed for his original attitude and his father's superior moral consciousness.

The brief chapter shows the attitudes of Northern and Southern white men concerning race in the pre-Civil Rights Era. It illustrates that there was some racial tolerance but that it was greater among Northerners. The reader will note that the Swampmen's attitudes are clearly pre-Civil Rights Era, reflecting an un-self-conscious racism.



# Chapter 13

## Chapter 13 Summary

Chapter 13 picks right up after Chapter 12, with the Swampmen, Oliver and the others preparing to play football. Blake has set up a game with General Hammond, who will bring some men down and coach them. Blake thinks things will go well since, though Hammond played football, he did so in an era with different strategies and rules. Oliver then teaches the men plays and apparently, without realizing it, they display a mild degree of skills.

A few days later, Hawkeye scouts out the other team and figures that with Oliver, nicknamed "Spearchucker," the other team does not have a chance. They then decide to hide Oliver until the second half and make money on bets. However, Oliver goes to scout out the other team and notes that they have three men that have played fully professional ball. However, it is too late to undo their bets. Oliver suggests that they are not out of luck if they can take down the other team's halfback through tackling him hard. He also suggests that the pros on the other team are over weight and that the Swampmen should aim to tire them out in the first half. Trapper also has a strategy but remained tight-lipped about it. For the game, the men travel up to see the General in Yong-Dong-Po.

Duke advises the team to always kick the ball away from the speed-burner, the halfback who played for the Rams. When the game begins, Duke does as he advised. The author then reports the details of the first half. They try to take out the halfback during this period, and Duke and Hawkeye hit him hard. They are successful and knock him hard enough to get him out of the game until the second half. However, then Duke springs his plan into effect. He has a friend who would already have been the doctor to attend to the halfback. The plan is to sedate him so that he cannot make it back. The doctor-friend has been cut in on the bet.

Near the end of the first half, the 4077th's team is down, 17-7. During a timeout, Blake reports that General Hammond has found the halfback under heavy sedation and is furious. He then asks if they want to place more bets at higher odds. Blake gets 4-to-1 odds.

The second half begins with Oliver in the game, and they immediately score, raising the score to 17-14. The game then becomes a battle between Oliver and the two tackles from the Browns. Eventually the score gets to 24-21, the 4077th only down by three. The 4077th then uses Radar O'Reilly to overhear the other team's game plan. The next play leads to the man with the ball getting hit so hard that he drops the ball; the 4077th intercepts and then Oliver devises a new game plan, which involves a fake pass and hiding the ball. The play is successful and the 4077th, or the "Red Raiders" scores.



Hammond accuses the team of an illegal move but the referee informs him that it is allowed. The score is now 24-28. The 4077th then play good defense for the remainder of the game. They win.

## Chapter 13 Analysis

Chapter 13 is lengthy but it is mostly the tale of the ingenuity of the 4077th's football strategy. Oliver decides to sit out the first half to increase the odds on the bets given by Hammond and the other team. In the meanwhile, he has Duke and Hawkeye take down the halfback and then Duke's doctor friend who attends to the halfback heavily sedated him after getting in on the bet. In the second half, Oliver comes in and they quickly score. After an excellent fake-out by the 4077th, they pull out a win and win all the money.

If anything, Chapter 13 illustrates how the 4077th pulls together not only in surgery but in their recreation, even with Oliver. The men's antics, their betting and their football playing all come together to show that they are not only a team in war but elsewhere as well. The chapter further represents the enduring relationships formed in wartime. One of the more impressive parts of the chapter is how well they play with Oliver despite his race; the issue of race never comes up in the chapter and represents one way in which racial barriers are broken down in the actual world—mutual participation in sports.





# Chapter 14

## Chapter 14 Summary

Chapter 14 begins with Blake distributing the winnings from the Red Raiders' victory. After he is finished, the next few days bring complaints from Duke and Hawkeye about the fact that they have been stuck in the Army far past others of similar rank and ability. Blake agrees that it is not fair. Then, for whatever reason, Duke and Hawkeye disappear for several days; when they return, they disappear again for several more days.

Blake becomes worried about keeping Duke and Hawkeye happy, particularly because they are up for termination in three months. The answer comes in two surgeon replacements, Captains Pinkham and Russell. The Captains are next to the MASH system and are familiar with new surgical techniques, which somewhat intimidates the other doctors, who have been overseas for so long. Blake's plan is to have Hawkeye and Duke teach them the ropes of the 4077th.

Hawkeye and Duke agree and Blake puts them on night duty with Pinkham and Russell. A chopper brings two soldiers, and Hawkeye and Duke let them handle the preparation for surgery. Despite their skill, the new surgeons do not know how to handle routine battlefield injuries. Hawkeye comes in to aid the doctors, showing them how to do a crude but quick and effective fix for the second soldier. Duke helps Captain Russell, who is having similar problems. The surgeries are.

The teaching process continues for several weeks. The new surgeons are frustrated to not employ their surgical skill in order to heal as many men as possible. "Par" for meatball surgery, is a "live patient." Blake is pleased with how well they are getting along and sees himself as having established a kind of teaching hospital. They have to cheer Pinkham up, however, because his wife is asking him to come home over issues that he can do nothing about; it turns out that she is going crazy without him and Pinkham gets emergency leave to tend to her needs.

## Chapter 14 Analysis

The book's penultimate challenge opens with an awareness that Duke and Hawkeye are nearly ready to be discharged from the Army and return to civilian life. They have three months left after the football game and are beginning to become less and less psychologically connected to their work. Blake realizes he needs to cheer them up and is able to find two new surgeons, Pinkham and Russell, who will replace them after they leave. He sets Hawkeye and Duke to training them which goes well and lasts for weeks.

The new doctors are eased into their lives at the 4077th and Hawkeye and Duke are occupied with something important to do. The chapter contains little in the way of analysis but shows that Hawkeye and Pierce do not care only to get out of the Army;

they still have their humanity fully intact and are able to make life easier on Pinkham and Russell.



# Chapter 15

## Chapter 15 Summary

Chapter 15, the final chapter, opens near Christmastime. Dago Red and other members of the 4077th prepare to make Christmas bearable for the men and women there, but Hawkeye and Duke are ready to leave. Blake tells them that they only have a week left. McIntyre is not happy to lose them, as he has six months left, and the Swamp is quiet with the gravity of its dissolution. A few days later, Hawkeye and Duke thank Henry for tolerating them and hold a farewell party at the Swamp a few hours before they leave.

Saying goodbye, Hawkeye and Duke leave and are silent. Hawkeye says that they are both pretty lucky to find the people they love but will probably never be that close to anyone again, save their families. Much of the chapter reviews their largely dialogue-free journey home. At the Evac hospital, before they leave, Hawkeye and Duke decide to make a bit of trouble, but General Hammond catches on and tells everyone to leave them alone.

Hawkeye and Duke give up and go to sleep for three hours. They then wake up and take a train to Pusan. On the way, they decide that they should clean up and stop acting odd in order to not get in any trouble with the regular Army personnel they interact with on the way. When they reach Pusan, they try to sleep on mattresses. Duke has trouble and barges into another officer's compartment to try to sleep. The officers speak to Hawkeye in the morning, finding it uncomfortable to talk to Duke. Hawkeye lets them believe that he and Duke are hardened combat veterans and acts crazy with Duke so as to be left alone.

In the afternoon, they take a ferry to Sasebo, Japan. When they arrive, Hawkeye and Duke put on their regular uniforms with proper insignia. This is a mistake, because they have heard that sometimes medical officers get redrafted. When asked for their names, they provide fake ones. The next day when the fake names are called, and a new officer asks Hawkeye and Duke where they are, Duke tells them that the two fake men are homosexuals, and when the officer asks about "Pierce" and "Forrest," Duke tells him that they shipped out the day before.

Two days later they are to board a Marine transport for Seattle; Hawkeye and Duke share a cabin with four other returning officers. They check in under their real names but then change their insignias to Army Chaplains. One of their roommates figures it out because they fixed his brothers. Hawkeye and Duke offers to pay them to pretend to be them so that they can avoid being redrafted. They are to perform a general inspection of soldiers' genitals for STDs, so they have to teach the imitating officers how to fake the inspections.

Hawkeye and Duke successfully pass the time. Nineteen days later, they arrive in Seattle. Their return seems unreal. Duke observes that they are not acting like



Swampmen and they agree that this is just as well. The next morning, Duke's flight for Atlanta boards and the two say goodbye. Duke and Hawkeye both arrive in their respective destinations and greet their families.

## Chapter 15 Analysis

Chapter 15 ends the book. It begins with Hawkeye and Duke getting ready to leave the 4077th. They are excited and sad to go. On the way to Seoul, Hawkeye claims that they will probably never be as close to anyone again as they were to some of those at the 4077th, save their families and Duke agrees. They are glad to have had the experience but are also glad it is over. The rest of the chapter shows them using their antics to avoid war one more time, but this time to avoid being redrafted. On the travel home, they both pretend to be other officers, or Army Chaplains or whatever, in order to avoid being identified.

Once they are in the United States, however, their Swampman demeanor passes away and both agree that it is appropriate. After all, the Swampman personality is a method of coping, of delighting in the absurd in order to avoid the truly absurd carnage of the Korean War. The book ends as Hawkeye and Duke return to their respective homes and greet their families. The author even calls them by their full, real names; it becomes clear that they are ready to return to normal life and their ordinary personalities.



# Characters

## Captain Benjamin Franklin

Famously portrayed in the television series by Alan Alda, the Hawkeye of *MASH* the Novel is considerably different, but does possess some similarities to the television character. Hawkeye is born and raised in Crabapple Cove, Maine and the son of Dr. Daniel "Big Benjy" Pierce. He goes to Androscroggin College and plays football, where, it turns out, he intercepts a pass from the man he will later come to know as Trapper John McIntyre. Once he leaves his Boston residency, he is drafted by the U.S. Army Medical Corps and brought to the 4077th.

Hawkeye does his best to make it through the war by drinking heavily, mouthing off to superior officers, engaging in outrageous antics and being an excellent surgeon. The name "Hawkeye" is given to him by his father and comes from *The Last of the Mohicans*, "the only book my old man ever read." Unlike the TV character, Hawkeye is somewhat conservative, expressing no hostility to the Korean War in general and appearing far less political than portrayed on the small screen. He also remains (apparently) faithful to his wife and family during his entire time in Korea. In the book, he also has a much shorter tenure in Korea than he does in the television show.

Hawkeye has a sharp wit, particularly when he is angry or drunk. He often makes lewd jokes and pulls pranks on others but most of his major conflicts are resolved with other characters. He does seem to be the most profound of the three Swampmen and occasionally appears to be—to some degree—the leader of the three. In the book he is 28, over six feet tall, with sandy blonde hair, glasses and is married with two sons.

## Captain Augustus Bedford

Augustus Bedford "Duke" Forrest, born in Forrest City, Georgia, is aged 29, just under 6 feet tall with red hair, blue eyes and a wife and two daughters. Forrest City, it is not explicitly claimed, is named for Nathan Bedford Forrest, the Confederate General and founder of the Ku Klux Klan. Duke has a strong Southern accent and is a good man and in fact gets along well with Spearchucker, a black man whose family his father helped, unbeknownst to Duke himself. Duke is a doctor trained in medicine in Atlanta and is among the most excellent doctors in the Army. Eventually he is made chief of surgery of the 4077th.

Unlike the television show, Hawkeye's character does not dominate Duke's. Duke is often a center of focus in the book and is Hawkeye's constant companion. He never appears in *MASH* the television show, but plays a deeply important role in the book. Duke is quieter than Hawkeye and has a—somewhat feigned—hostility to "Yankees" although he gets along well with Hawkeye and McIntyre, both from New England.



There is a certain kindness and humanity about Duke despite his carousing, antics and constant drinking. He too appears to have been loyal to his family throughout his time in South Korea. Much of the book is filled with his and Hawkeye's plots and trouble-making. In many cases, Hawkeye is the instigator of the trouble, but Duke has his own initiative.

## **Captain**

"Trapper" John was named Trapper after being caught in the middle of intercourse with a woman in the ladies' bathroom on a New England train. She announces that he trapped her, but there is no suggestion that he raped her. He plays football in college and is somewhat known for this in New England, but his fame as "Trapper" far outstrips his football reputation.

When Trapper comes to the 4077th, he is initially quiet and evasive, that is, until Hawkeye recognizes him as "Trapper" John, whom he had also played football against in college. Trapper then opens up and joins Hawkeye and Duke as one of the Swampmen. He is an excellent thoracic surgeon and teaches Hawkeye and Duke how to complete a wide range of new surgical techniques.

## **The Swampmen**

The Swampmen is the term used to refer to Hawkeye, Duke and Trapper as a group.

## **Lieutenant Colonel Henry Braymore Blake**

The commanding officer of the 4077th, Blake is a gentle man who puts up with the Swampmen's antics.

## **Corporal Walter**

A young corporal from Iowa and assistant to Colonel Blake, Radar has a legendary ability to hear conversations and approaching helicopters at long distances.

## **Father John Patrick**

The Catholic Chaplain assigned to the 4077th, who gains the respect of the Swampmen despite their allergy to religion.

## **Captain**

The anesthesiologist of the 4077th, Ugly is the most handsome man in camp (thus his ironic nickname) and one of the hardest working officers there.



## **Captain Oliver Wendell**

A black neurosurgeon, Spearchucker plays semi-pro football for the Philadelphia Eagles and helps the 4077th win a football game against General Hammond's men. His family is by Duke's father to escape from Georgia after his father is murdered.

## **Major Margaret**

Major Houlihan is the uptight chief nurse of the 4077th who becomes somewhat interested in Frank Burns and who plots with him to make the Swampmen behave.

## **Brigadier General Hamilton Hartington Hammond**

Colonel Blake's commanding officer in Seoul, Hammond sometimes becomes aware of the Swampmen's antics and has to be calmed down. The 4077th's men also beat his men in a football game.

## **Captain Frank Burns**

A rich, arrogant and pampered doctor from Ft. Wayne, Indiana who butts heads with Hawkeye on numerous occasions and is a bit of a bumbling surgeon. Eventually conflicts force Blake to remove Burns from camp.

## **Captain Walter Koskiusko**

The 4077th's dentist, and among the best dentists in South Korea, The Painless Pole is well-known for relatively painless dental work and running poker in his clinics. However, his greatest claim to fame is his enormous penis, known at the Pride of Hamtramck. At one point earlier in the book, The Painless Pole decides he wants to commit suicide until he is tricked out of it by the Swampmen.

## **Major Haskell**

The Chief of Psychiatry at the 325th Evac Hospital in South Korea whom Hawkeye fools into thinking he is schizophrenic.

## **Ho-Jon**

The young, Christian, kind, intelligent Korean assistant to the Swampmen. When he is drafted into the South Korea army, he is wounded and sent back to the 4077th for treatment. In the meantime, the Swampmen raise money to send Ho-Jon to college in the United States.



## **Objects/Places**

### **The 4077th**

The Mobile Army Surgical Hospital where most of the book's events take place.

### **The Swamp**

The tent that houses Hawkeye, Duke and Trapper.

### **South Korea**

The location of American forces during the Korean War and the country where most of the book's events take place.

### **The United States**

The country of origin of all of the major MASH characters.

### **Crabapple Cove, Maine**

Hawkeye's fictional hometown.

### **Forrest, Georgia**

Duke's fictional hometown.

### **Seoul, South Korea**

The major city closest to the 4077th and the capital of South Korea. General Hammond is based there along with a variety of other US military facilities.

### **Tokyo, Japan**

The capital of Japan and a place where the medical officers often take R&R.

### **The Mess Hall**

The cafeteria in the 4077th.





## **Surgery**

MASH's main characters often spent marathon sessions in surgery when casualties come through.

## **Meatball Surgery**

Surgery done on the fly to keep men alive in the Korean War. The Swampmen become excellent meatball surgeons during their stay in Korea.

## **Radar's Ears**

Radar's legendary ears can hear conversations and noises far in the distance.

## **Antics**

The Swampmen often pull various pranks which sometimes gets them into trouble.

## **Alcohol**

The Swampmen drink heavily to make it through the war.

## **Anesthesia**

Anesthesia is crucial for relieving the pain of the casualties that come through the 4077th. Ugly is an excellent anesthesiologist.

## **The Korean War**

The war between North Korea and South Korea between 1950 and 1953 is a proxy battle early in the Cold War largely of the United States and United Nations against Communist China.

## **The Pride of Hamtramck**

The Painless Pole's legendarily large penis.

## **Golf/Football**

Two of the sports the Swampmen most enjoy.

## **Poker**

Poker is a regular pastime for the Swampmen and other doctors.

## **The Army**

All the regular characters in the novel are in the Army.



# Themes

## Medical Practice in War

Richard Hooker, the author of MASH, was himself a US Army surgeon in the 8055th MASH during the real Korean War. He used his experiences there as a template for MASH the novel. Thus, the book is heavily influenced by Hooker's solid medical knowledge. Surgeries are often described in some detail, particularly when there is a focus on chest surgeries to repair chest wounds, among the most common serious injuries in the war.

Hawkeye and Duke are general surgeons but Trapper specializes in thoracic surgery and is brought into the 4077th to attend to these wounds and teach the other surgeons his techniques.

One of the main parts of medical practice in the Korean War is a shortage of supplies, skill, time and energy. Supplies of blood in particular are often stretched thin, along with routine antibiotics. Often it is difficult to do regular medical tests. Also, there is not enough skill to go around in many cases, since doctors with the appropriate specialties are not always available.

Time is also an important problem because casualties do not come to the 4077th in a steady stream, but usually in "deluges" that keep the doctors and staff up for days at a time, with only staggered breaks to take naps. Finally, energy runs low during these times and afterwards morale suffers from the stress of healing the sick for hours on end and the pain of losing patients.

## Antics

When the Swampmen, Hawkeye, Duke and Trapper, are not in surgery, they are typically up to no good. Sometimes they harass the nurses for fun and other camp members that they do not like. For instance, Hawkeye and Duke go out of their way to try to get Major Hobson removed from their tent and the 4077th generally. Hawkeye, Duke and Trapper play a major prank of The Painless Pole in order to get him out of a depression and a general desire to commit suicide by playing another prank on the Protestant chaplain in camp, Shaking Sammy. They also ran Frank Burns out of the camp when they need to.

Antics often come up in the form of wit and deception. For instance, Hawkeye and Duke sometimes arranged R&R for themselves through misleading and deceptive actions. For instance, they deliberately act psychologically unstable in order to get the temporary commanding officer of the 4077th to send them to the Evac hospital for psychiatric treatment. While there, Hawkeye pretends to have schizophrenia so that the men have time to hang around and enjoy themselves.



In perhaps their most outrageous prank, the doctors get Trapper to grow a beard and pose for a photograph presenting himself as Jesus Christ. They then make several thousand copies which Trapper spends a few days autographing, so that they can sell the pictures for a dollar a piece. They do this in order to raise enough money to send their Korean assistant, Ho-Jon, to the United States in order to go to Hawkeye's Alma Mater, Androscoggin College.

## Coping

MASH the television show and MASH the movie go into detailed psychological analysis of the characters' coping styles and abilities during their time in Korea. In contrast, the novel leaves the psychological effects of the war as an important subtext rarely bringing it into dialogue. It is quite clear from the beginning that the antics of the Swampmen are only a coping mechanism, a way they deal with the insanity of the war. From time to time Hawkeye will make comments to the effect that they act crazy because they are in a crazy place and a crazy war. The men also take to heavy drinking, presumably in order to drown out whatever they might be feeling.

The "deluges" are the most difficult stressors faced by the doctors, where they have to engage in marathon surgery sessions for days at a time. Afterwards, they often collapse from exhaustion. In between "deluges" the surgeons play poker, drink constantly, pull pranks and mouth off to superior officers, along with making advances at the nurses. In some cases, they are outrageous enough to pull off unapproved R&R vacations.

However, the author makes it clear that the men are not nearly so crazy when they are in the United States. They sometimes comment that they feel different in Korea, that it is a different time and that handling their lives requires unusual behavior. This is most clearly revealed when Hawkeye and Duke go home. Before they fly to the United States, they comment that they do not feel like Swampmen anymore. Both are happy about it. They are glad that their experience in Korea is over but they miss the connections they made. However, the Swampman personality-type and coping mechanism seem to be something they have no regrets shedding before they return to ordinary life.

# Style

## Point of View

The point of view of MASH the Novel is that of its author, Richard Hooker, who was himself a surgeon in a MASH unit during the Korean War. Hooker was born in 1924 and died in 1997 and wrote a variety of novels after MASH with W.C. Heinz. The book would later become a well-known movie and even more well-known television series. Hooker's experiences in the 8055th MASH laid the background for his work.

Readers of the guide are mostly likely to be familiar with MASH the television series, but it is important for you to know that the general left-wing politics of the show are reflections of the political views of the writers and directors and especially the actor who played Hawkeye, Alan Alda. Hooker is widely known to have opposed the direction Alan Alda took Hawkeye. In the book, Hooker modeled Hawkeye after himself and expresses no particularly left-wing points of view. In fact, in later novels, Hawkeye is revealed to be a conservative Republican, reflecting Hooker's political views, which were far removed from Alda's.

Thus, the point of view of the book bears somewhat to the American political right but expresses no overt anti-communist points of view and even expresses a mild critique of American racism. The anti-war sentiments of the show are largely absent. The horrors of war are certainly there but the idea that these horrors showed the war to be unnecessary or unjust cannot be found within the book.

## Setting

The setting of the book has four major parts. First, it takes place in South Korea and second, it takes place within the US Army during the Korean War. The Korean War took place, ostensibly, between North Korea and South Korea, from 1950 to 1953. The war has never been officially ended by treaty. The small Korean peninsula was divided as a result of the defeat of Japan at the end of World War II. Soviet forces captured the North and American forces captured the South.

During the war, the two powers (with the United Nations siding with the United States) used the war as a proxy for the Cold War between American-style liberal democracy and Soviet communism. When it looked as if the United States' and UN forces would take over Korea, China intervened, pushing the US and UN forces back to the 38th parallel where the fighting began. Thus, most of the war was a stalemate.

The United States employed Mobile Army Surgical Hospitals (MASHs) close to the front lines in order to quickly heal their soldiers and to move some back into battle. These MASH units could pack up and move within a matter of hours depending on the movement of the front. It was largely agreed that they not be bombed, but on occasion this was ignored. MASH: the novel takes place largely within the 4077th MASH, which is



connected loosely to an evacuation hospital located miles away, and General Hammond's command in Seoul. The United States and UN also have troops and bases in Tokyo, Japan.

The 4077th is a mythical MASH unit run by Colonel Henry Blake. It is comprised of regular army and civilian draftees. Most of the doctors and nurses are drafted from the civilian medical industry and has to quickly learn the practice of "meatball surgery," surgery that would quickly move men from the operating table to make room for others. One of the major locations within the 4077th is The Swamp, the tent of Hawkeye, Duke and Trapper.

## Language and Meaning

The language and meaning of the text varies with respect to dialogue and narrative. The author rarely gives his own opinion about the characters and mostly lets their thoughts and actions speak for themselves. The sentence and paragraph structure of the book is neither very long nor very short. In fact, the characters are interesting enough that one pays little attention to the text. The author, Richard Hooker, builds the novel on his own experiences as a doctor in the US Army during the Korean War and writes a largely character driven novel with mostly self-contained chapters.

The dialogue has a different feel. Much of it is quick, and primarily features Hawkeye, Duke and Trapper engaging in witty repartee with members of the camp and those outside of it. It is clear from the text that the Swampmen have well-developed, if immature, senses of humor and are quick with a quip. This is truest with Hawkeye, whose wit is not only used to make light of situations, but to make others serious and to insult those who upset him.

However, the dialogue, somewhat less regularly, displays another side. The experience of the three doctors has a dark side because they are in the midst of the Korean War and see many casualties and sometimes have their patients die on them. Here and there the language of the text expresses this sense of meaningless loss of life.

## Structure

MASH the novel is comprised of fifteen relatively brief chapters. Each chapter is largely self-contained, meaning that the story within the chapter carries its own introduction, plot formation, climax and denouement. In this way, each chapter is a kind of sketch of some important event at the 4077th or a related location. The book is meant to cover a particular place in a particular time and particular characters and how they handled their circumstances without telling a single story with a single plot.

MASH contains relatively little commentary from the author and is mostly made up of dialogue and descriptions of the characters and their activities. Some of the characters' thoughts are described, but primarily Duke's and Hawkeye's. McIntyre is left largely opaque.



The first chapter explains how Colonel Henry Blake gets Hawkeye and Duke assigned to the 4077th and their arrival. The second chapter explains how they get Major Hobson booted from the camp. These two chapters also explain how Duke and Hawkeye's surgical skill immediately gain the respect of their fellow soldiers. Chapter three introduces Trapper McIntyre; he is initially shy and invasive but opens up. From there, the three men find "The Swamp," or their tent and are sometimes calls the Swampmen.

Further chapters introduce new characters and paint a picture of their personalities. Father Mulcahy/Dago Red is introduced in one chapter, Captain Waldowski/The Painless Pole in another. Captain Frank Burns is introduced in still another chapter and is quickly removed from camp; Margaret "Hot Lips" Houlihan is introduced in this time as well. Ho-Jon, the Swampmen's Korean assistant is introduced in a later chapter, as is Captain Oliver/Spearhucker in another. The last chapters show Duke and Hawkeye's enlistment running out and the two returning home.



## Quotes

"Henry has just got us two new cutters." (Chapter 1, 11)

"This naturally aroused a growing respect among their colleagues, but it was respect mixed with doubt and wonder, for they fitted no recognizable pattern." (Chapter 1, 20)

"Colonel Henry Blake was endowed with more human understanding than is required of a Regular Army Medical Officer, but after three days of this he left his lunch uneaten, went to his tent, called 8th Army Headquarters, arranged orders for Major Hobson, drove him to Seoul and put him on a plane for Tokyo and home where, a few weeks later, the Major's enlistment would expire." (Chapter 2, 26)

"And so Trapper was one of them." (Chapter 3, 34)

"From then on Dago Red put in many a fix. With the Swampmen it was mostly a gag, but one they could not quite bring themselves to forgo when things were rough." (Chapter 4, 37)

"I don't know where I've been, but wherever it was I sure as hell won first prize. How about a game of poker?" (Chapter 5, 54)

"The man who hated Hawkeye the most was Captain Frank Burns." (Chapter 6, 55)

"This five thousand dollars is for my friend, Ho-Jon, to go to Androscoggin College. Look after him and the money until I get home." (Chapter 7, 75)

"Gentlemen, meet my son, Ezekiel Bradbury Marston, VI, of Spruce Harbor, Maine." (Chapter 8, 101)

"Because although you are a leader of men, there are no men left." (Chapter 9, 115)

"The business of doing major surgery on poor-risk patients can be trying and heartbreaking at any time, and when it is done regularly it can have an increasingly deleterious effect upon those who are doing it." (Chapter 10, 116)

"I ain't. Normal people go crazy in this place." (Chapter 11, 152)

"The doctor sold the farm, paid the family's debt and gave my mother a thousand dollars. They called him The Big Duke. Now how do you like that, Little Duke?" (Chapter 12, 162)

"That Hammond. He doesn't know anything about football." (Chapter 13, 183)

"Now I'll offer you some thoughts. This is certainly meatball surgery we do around here, but I think you can see now that meatball surgery is a specialty in itself." (Chapter 14, 195)





"Well, when you live in this sort of situation long enough, you either get to love a few people or to hate them, and we've been pretty lucky. I don't know. I do know that nothing like this will ever happen to us again. Never again, except in our families, will we ever be as close with anyone as we were in that goddamned tent for the past year, and with Ugly here and Dago and a few others. I'm glad it happened, and I'm jeezely glad it's over." (Chapter 15, 204)

"We don't seem to be acting like Swampmen,' observed Duke. 'I guess not, but I don't feel like it. It's just as well.'" (Chapter 15, 218)



## Topics for Discussion

What are the circumstances of the book—which war are the main characters a part of, what is the time period, and what is a MASH?

Who are the three main characters of the book? How do they meet?

Why the three main characters called the Swampmen?

What explains the episodic structure of the book? Why does the author not tell a single story, with an overarching plot?

Are the Swampmen's antics simply a reflection of their personalities or something deeper? If it is something deeper, what is the deeper issue involved?

How do the three main characters deal with the horrors of war?

Why does the Swampman personality-type disappear at the end of the book?