

# **Indian Captive: The Story of Mary Jemison Study Guide**

**Indian Captive: The Story of Mary Jemison by Lois Lenski**

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## Plot Summary

The novel, *Indian Captive*, begins when Mary Jemison is taken prisoner by attacking warriors from the Seneca tribe of the Iroquois Indians. She is forced to live with the Seneca people. The custom of their tribe says that in the event of the death of a tribe member at the hands of an enemy, the tribe shall capture a replacement from the enemy's community who will live with the Seneca people as one of their own.

Mary Jemison, called by her nickname Molly, is a young girl of 12 in this novel. She lives in Marsh Creek Hollow, Pennsylvania, with her parents, Thomas and Jane, as well as her older brothers, John and Tom, her older sister, Betsy, and two younger brothers, Matthew and Robert. Just before it is time to plant corn for the year, the Jemison family and some close neighbors are attacked by Indians. Although John and Tom escape, the neighbors and the rest of her family are taken captive by the Seneca warriors. Because there are too many people to keep as prisoners and to easily run from the attempted rescue by the pioneer community, only Molly and the neighbor boy, Davy Wheelock, are actually taken captive. Unbeknownst to her until later in her life, the remainder of her family is killed, and their home is burned down.

The story describes first the scary and difficult journey Molly takes with her captors. Due to treacherous weather and physical demands of fast travel, Molly may not have survived without the help of an old Indian named Shagbark who kept her safe and sometimes carried her on the trip. Along the way, they are joined by another group of warriors who also bring a captive, a young man named Nicholas Porter, who has been taken from Piney Mountain, not far from Molly's home in March Creek Hollow. Her first major stop on this journey is at Fort Duquesne where the French and natives are set up to fight the English for the land and where the captives are to be traded in a bargain. The two male captives, Davy and Nicholas, are given to the Frenchmen, while Molly is taken by two Indian women who led her to a canoe. They give her fresh clothes and take her to their home, Seneca Town. There, she is adopted into the tribe as a replacement for the dead son of one of the families.

In Seneca Town, Molly learns that the two women who brought her there are to be her new sisters, Squirrel Woman and Shining Star. Her new mother's name is Red Bird, and her father is Swift Water. She has a hard time adjusting to their way of life. She doesn't like their food which is boiled corn-pone cakes, not roasted. Their food is bland and without salt. She does not understand their language, and they do not speak English. As a matter of fact, the grumpy sister, Squirrel Woman, gets angry every time Molly speaks English at all. She is shown chores to do, but refuses to work as they wish. A young Indian boy, Little Turtle, takes pity on Molly and tries to watch out for her and show her the ropes. He tries to teach her their language. Between Little Turtle and just listening to orders with hand motions, Molly eventually learns to speak their language.

Little Turtle is so moved by Molly's grief over being away from her family that he asks the chief, Chief Standing Pine, if he would consider setting her free. He, of course, says no, but Molly is happy to learn that the old man who helped her on her journey,



Shagbark, is actually Little Turtle's grandfather and lives in the village. As he tried to comfort her physical difficulties on the journey, he tries to put her at ease and help her settle into her new community. Little Turtle also continues to be her friend and tries to cheer her up all the time.

Although Molly is given a variety of jobs throughout the story, her biggest duty is to take care of Shining Star's baby boy, Blue Jay. She carries him in a traditional way on her back. When she is at a place where she needs to work, she hangs him from a tree limb to swing and sway in the breeze. Several times when she messes up the work, Squirrel Woman gets angry and punishes her, and Molly runs off to cry. Raising corn is probably one of the most important tasks in the tribe. When Molly is chastised, spills the corn seed, and runs away for the afternoon, she is sent to bed with no supper. Eventually, she learns that to eat in this family, one must work for it.

When Molly makes a return trip with her sisters to Fort Duquesne to trade goods and to see Good Hunter and Gray Wolf, their visiting brothers, off to their home in Genesee Town by the Great Falling Waters, Molly sneaks away from where she is told to stand, so she can see if peaches are blooming on the tree. She is spotted by English speaking white people who take her into their building, begin to ask her questions, and feel sorry for her. When her sisters see this, they snatch her away from these people with Blue Jay still strapped to her back. Of course, Squirrel Woman is furious. The sisters know that the white people will try to take Molly away, so they all follow their brothers to their home where, eventually, all of the tribe ends up. This trip is very hard on Molly who arrives in the town deathly ill. She is taken care of by Earth Woman who is known among the Seneca Indians for her skills in dealing with all forms of sickness. Slowly, she is nursed back to health.

Earth Woman is good for Molly in many ways. She lives alone and has a lot of time to devote to Molly. She introduces Molly to Beaver Girl, a child of Molly's age whom Earth Woman has taught to make traditional clay pots and who wants to befriend Molly. She teaches her wise saying and much about the traditions of their culture. Molly is here when another white-faced person is brought to the town, a young man named Josiah Johnson. He is renamed Running Deer after he runs the gauntlet from the river to the building through two lines of the tribe's people throwing food, beating, and even cutting him with knives and tomahawks. He is given to Earth Woman to replace her dead son. Earth Woman and Molly are both happy with him, until he uses his canoe to escape, never to be seen again.

Throughout her stay in Genesee Town, Molly is treated well. She becomes very close to her sister, Shining Star, and her baby, Blue Jay, Little Turtle, Earth Woman, and Beaver Girl. She also becomes very friendly with all of the children in the town. Little Turtle earns his new manly name of Turkey Feather after proving himself to be a capable hunter. He remains a loyal and true friend to Molly.

Twice she sees Old Fallenash, the white trader who used to trade with her father. The first time, he is there to trade goods with the tribe, and the second time he is there to tell Molly that he found out what happened to her family, that he believes she's in the best



place she can be, and that she should decide to stay with the Seneca tribe and be happy.

When Englishmen in red coats come first to ask the chief of Genesee Town, Chief Burning Sky, for help fighting the French, Captain Morgan meets Molly and believes she should be with white people. Later, when he visits again, he asks to trade gold for Molly's release to live with him in the white community. The chief leaves the decision to Molly. He will allow her to go if she still wants to or will defend her right to stay if she'd prefer. Although Molly has longed to go home and then longed merely to be with white families, she has come to love her new family, her new way of life, and all that she has learned. Her decision is to stay with the Seneca people.



# Chapter 1

## Summary

The story begins with Mary, nicknamed Molly, Jemison's family in their home finishing dinner, and her father, Thomas, asking her to go to Neighbor Dixon's house to borrow his horse to pull their plow during the planting of corn the following day. At first, she is daydreaming and doesn't obey which makes her siblings, Tom, John, and Betsey, give each other the look that says, "She's in trouble now!" Her mom, Jane, doesn't want her to be sent out in the dark because it could be dangerous. They live on a frontier of widely spaced homes and undeveloped land. Her dad insists that she go tonight, sleep at the Dixon's house, and can get up at sun-up to come back with the horse. Jane does not argue with Thomas; she simply continues to take care of 3-year-old Matthew and her baby, Robert.

Before Molly makes the call about when to go, they hear horse's hoofs and a knock on the door. It is Neighbor Chet Wheelock giving them the news that "Injuns" have burned down Ned Haskins' home and taken his family captive and that they have murdered the entire Johnson family. He explains that in fear of them returning for more people, he plans to take his brother, Jonas', family with him to a safer place near Philadelphia. He asks Jane if she would mind allowing his sister-in-law and her three children to stay there and rest for the trip while he finds a better horse that can make the journey. She agrees and continues to beg Thomas to go with them rather than risk being attacked. He claims they have lived there for eight years, and he has no plans to go anywhere. He believes that the Indians will stay away once they hear that the troops are starting their operations.

Thomas tells the boys to begin their chores and Molly to go to the Dixon's for their horse. Before going Molly tells her dad that she's not scared. He replies that no one would ever hurt her anyway with her beautiful long yellow hair that looks like a corn silk tassel. Molly is glad to leave the tension of her home. She returns the following morning to find her father and brothers outside while her mother is inside with her other siblings and their company. When she brings the horse to the house, Neighbor Wheelock borrows it to return home for some grain he has left there. He takes the gun in case the Indians attack and in case he sees a turkey to kill for dinner.

The Indians begin their attack. The children cry and scream. Outside Neighbor Wheelock and the Dixon's horse lies dead in the yard. Molly reaches for her father's rifle on the wall, but it is grabbed from her hands as she and the others are captured. Her brothers are nowhere to be seen, but her father is tied up. He isn't struggling or talking. Even though the women and children are not tied up, they realize that they are now prisoners. Molly realizes that the Indians are with white men in blue clothes speaking French. Six Indians and four Frenchmen have captured them.



## Analysis

This chapter is told by a third person limited narrator, in present tense. The narrator describes the actions and words as they happen in the story and relays some of Molly's thoughts as well. The author takes the time to describe Molly's parents, Thomas and Jane, in detail when each speak in the story. The use of informal speech helps the reader to understand that the family and their neighbors are not upper class in society. They use slang terms that could be associated with people from the country, such as "go fetch," "Dark's a-coming," "Reckon," "Injuns," "a-plunderin'," "yaller," and "they'd git a hankering'." These are terms that would mean "go get it," "I guess," "Indians," "robbing," "yellow," and "they'd get a desire or yearning," respectively. The characters also use words like, "corn-pone," "wooden dye-tub," "a large earthen bowl," "Ma and Pa," and "ye" are indications of an earlier time period than today. Although today's society still addresses all of these things, they are known by a more modern language. The term "ye" for "you" is a dead give-away that this story is old.

The author's use of imagery and vivid descriptions helps the reader to visualize the people and places being described. Molly's father is described as, "...lean, lanky and raw-boned. Great knotty fists hung at the ends of his long, thin arms. His eyes looked kind though his face was stern" (1). This description prepares the reader for the personality and temperament of Thomas as being serious and strict. He is also seen as a hard-working man based on his "knotty fists" which suggest that he does manual labor. Molly's mother, Jane, is described as, "...a small, tired-looking woman, baffled by both work and worry. Eight years in a frontier settlement...had taken away her fresh youth and had aged her beyond her years" (2). This sketch of Jane shows that although the reader does not know her age, Jane seems older than her years, whatever they may be. She's a hard worker and has a lot to worry about. Frontier life is tough work to begin with, add the work necessary to care for six kids, and finally, a very strict, authoritative husband, and she must be worn out. Molly Jemison is described as, "...small for her age. She looked more like a girl often than the twelve she really was. Her blue eyes shone bright from her sun-tanned skin and her hair was yellow—the pale, silvery yellow of ripened corn" (8). This portrayal shows that a 12-year-old girl during that time would have been considered a woman and not a child and that she is smaller than other females her age. This could lead the reader to understand later in the story that Molly is small and may be frail. It also refers to her hair color being compared to corn which is a foreshadowing of what her name turns out to be in the Indian tribe.

Figurative language helps the author create a picture in the reader's mind.

Personification is used in phrases like, "...the warm sun kissed her cheeks" (1), "The morning air smelled clean and freshly washed" (10), "The trunks of many trees crowded close and seemed to press upon her" (11), and "Soon the light of the sun would mingle with the shooting gleams of fire" (14). These phrases assist the reader in visualizing the actual scene that is being described by comparing it to something else that may be more familiar to the reader. The same end is accomplished through the use of similes like, "The words popped out of his mouth like bullets from a loaded gun" (4) and "...





made their skins shine like flashing copper” (15) and metaphors like, “...there was always a fever of work” (8).

In addition to the comparison of the color of her hair with the color of a corn silk tassel being foreshadowed in this chapter, the song sung by Molly and the bird’s sweet song are also foreshadowing of how Molly becomes strong in the Indian towns. The reader is also exposed to the fact that Molly is very observant. Her stops the horse on the way back from the Dixon’s house because she senses someone is near or something is wrong. Although she moves forward, the Indians attack shortly after her return to her home. Although she is extremely scared, she is also exceptionally aware of the state of her parents during the capture. Her mother looked different because of grief and fear, and her father was visibly scared even though he bragged about not worrying about Indian attacks.

## **Discussion Question 1**

Why does Thomas refuse to worry about the Indian attacks and place his family in danger?

## **Discussion Question 2**

What could have happened to Molly’s brothers, Tom and John?

## **Discussion Question 3**

Discuss the relationship Molly’s parents, Thomas and Jane, have.

## **Vocabulary**

rough-hewn slabs, furrow, fodder, placid, nipped, gaunt, molested, tassel, grindstone, irksome, strident, unchinked, puncheon, trenchers, din, captors



## Chapter 2

### Summary

The captives shuffle away from their home. The Frenchmen and the Indians talk excitedly and keep looking over their shoulders. When Molly looks back, she realizes that their home has not been burned and wonders why. Molly tries to talk to her father, but he walks in a daze. Her mother tells her not to bother him, so Molly holds her mother's hand looking for comfort. The prisoners march along an uncertain trail with some of the Indians and Frenchmen ahead of them and some behind. When the children lag behind they are hit in the legs with a whip. Betsey drops Matthew because she is so worn out. Only Molly is left to carry him and/or hurry him along with the group. They travel with no food or water and very little rest. Her father only speaks once along the trail to identify the deserted fort in their path as a fort reported to have been overtaken by Indians a year or so ago.

When they do get small portions of food, Thomas refuses to eat or drink. While Molly rests by her father's knee, an old Indian man comes to her to remove her shoes and give her moccasins. Davy Wheelock gets some as well. At this point, Molly's mom explains that she and Davy are being taken away from the group, that their lives are being spared, and to never try to escape from the Indians, or they will kill her. As she leaves crying, her mother tells her to keep her courage, remember her family's names, say her prayers, and don't forget how to speak English. Her father wakes from his stupor and tells her to remember that the Indians won't hurt her because of her beautiful yellow hair. The old Indian man leads Molly and Davy further on the trail. When he must stop for the night, he tries to comfort them, so they are not scared. Davy wants to run away during the night, but Molly tells him to be brave. The next morning, the rest of the Indians and the Frenchmen catch up to them without their families. Molly and Davy are not told where their families are or what happened to them.

The group traveled forward so far that Molly lost count of the days. They were to remain silent, only hunt with bows and arrows, cover their trail, and do nothing to draw attention to their location. Davy grows strong, but Molly struggles, especially when they reached the snowy mountains. Many times Molly is too weak or too tired to keep going; the old Indian is always there to help her, even when one of the other Indians try to hit her with his tomahawk, the old man knocks it from his hand and kicks the owner. He finally orders the group to make a temporary shelter where they rest for three days. On the last day, a deer is killed and consumed. They are joined by another group of six raiding Indians returning from the frontier with one white captive, a man of twenty.

### Analysis

The reader is given very descriptive images to explain the scene and the atmosphere in the story. In describing Thomas, Molly's father, the narrator says, "He wore the same



deerskin hunting shirt and leggings, the same coon-skin cap upon his head. But his forceful, fiery, boastful spirit—that was gone” (21). Thomas' doubtful attitude about the Indians attacking has, of course, been dashed, and apparently, his spirit went with it. He began as such a strong, determined, forceful character who would not take advice from anyone else. It was his way or the highway (or trail way in this case). Now, he is so quickly defeated and doesn't even give verbal encouragement to his family. It's not until the moment that Molly is being taken away by the old man that her father comes out of his trance long enough to ensure her that they Indians will not hurt her because of her beautiful hair. Jane, Molly's mother, rallies support, strength, and courage all along. Before the attack, when her husband was so bossy, she seemed to back down and submissively follow his orders. Now, she is the strong one, keeping the family moving and giving instructions and words of encouragement. At the time when they realize that Molly and Davy are being taken away, it is Jane who calmly gives instructions, courage, and encouragement to Molly. Her words at that moment are revisited throughout the entire story.

When it is Molly's turn to have someone, Davy in this case, depend on her, she acts as her mother has. She is full of courage, kindness, and reassurance.

Similes are used to help the reader better understand many situations. “Huddled together, tramping on each other's heels, like a flock of uncertain sheep, the frightened people walked” (20). This comparison brings to mind the look of a group of mindless sheep, just following a leader, not knowing where they are going, and bumping into each other. It helps convey how dazed, scared, and tired these people are. Similes are also used in the descriptions of people. “A tall, gaunt Indian, straight as an arrow...” (22) gives a visual of how the Indian held himself high and confident. Had he been bent over or staggering, the reader would have a different perception of him. When describing the kind old man, the narrator explains, “...she thought of him as trusty and dependable like a strong, straight tree—a shagbark hickory, the straightest in the forest” (35). Not only does this simile give the reader a frame of reference by using the comparison of a specific tree, but it also is the first time the reader is exposed to the connection between the Indians' character or actions and their names. For instance, she compares the old man's character to the shagbark hickory, strong, straight, dependable, and his name turns out to be Shagbark. This trend of naming will be repeated over and over again throughout the story. It also gives insight to one of the traditions of this Indian tribe.

The major theme of Courage begins in this chapter. In the first chapter, Molly's dad didn't show courage by staying in his home. He was boastful and unrealistic. Molly's mom just obeyed his commands. Neither showed courage or strength. In the second chapter, Thomas not only doesn't show courage, but doesn't show any emotion at all when captured. It is Jane who rallies and shows courage in her words and in her determined actions of keeping her family going. It is her words, “No matter where you are, Mary, my child, have courage, be brave! It don't matter what happens, if you're strong and have great courage” (29). These words do not only send Molly off to the unknown a bit less fearful, but these are the words that she returns to over and over again throughout the story. These words lay the foundation on which Molly begins to build her character and are the traits she looks for in everyone she meets in life.



Shagbark is also the first Indian to show Molly Kindness, a recurring theme throughout the novel. White children were taught that Indians were cruel, savages, but he is the first Indian to help break that negative stereotype. By keeping her mother's words of courage and through the breaking down of the savage stereotype by Shagbark, Molly begins to see that a person's character is important, particularly courage and kindness.

## **Discussion Question 1**

How does Shagbark show kindness to Molly?

## **Discussion Question 2**

How does Jane's words help both Molly and Davy along the remainder of the trip?

## **Discussion Question 3**

Discuss the theme of Kindness as it is evidenced in this chapter.

## **Vocabulary**

torrents, guttural, shod, corncrib, foreboding, gaunt, lagged, blot, thicket, famished, taunt, benumbed, parched, hummocks, exertion, tomahawk



## Chapter 3

### Summary

Davy complains about the walking and how tough it is. Molly supports and encourages him to continue. Molly has figured out that the reason they had to move so fast was to keep any potential rescuers from catching up to them. They also find out that the young man brought to join them by the other raiding Indians is named Nicholas Porter and that he was captured from a town close to theirs. Now that they are over the mountain tops, they slow their pace and are not as worried about being tracked.

Finally, they see a fort built between the Allegheny and the Monongahela Rivers. Molly waits to hear its name from the Frenchmen. It is Fort Duquesne, the fort built by the French when they claimed territory by the River Ohio. She tells Davy that if they are going to get any help, it will be from this place. What she doesn't tell him is she's really scared of what is ahead of them.

Before they are able to enter the fort, the Indians perform a ceremony with smoke signals to ensure the people of the fort that they come in peace. Once that is settled, the old man shaves Nicholas and Davy's hair in the Seneca tribal way and gives Molly a comb for her hair which he has her leave down and loose around her shoulders. He then paints red stripes on each of their white faces. Molly is very upset by this, so upset that she forgets her mother's words momentarily and runs for an escape before reaching the fort gates. She is recaptured and hit with the whip. When they enter the fort, the captives are placed in a room and sit all night on a wooden bench while they await their fate.

The wait begins with hope of freedom, but they quickly realize that even if that happens, they have nowhere to go. As the night proceeds, the males become weary with worry, and Molly finds her strength again. She holds both of their hands and tries to comfort them. As morning comes, the males are turned over to the Frenchmen and led out of the fort. Only Molly remains in the room where she prays to God for strength and guidance.

After a while, two Indian women come in to check her out as if she is livestock for sale at an auction. They seem pleased by her. They are joined by the men who captured Molly, and as a group they walk out of the fort. Molly is left with a memory of the peach tree by the fort blooming in spring as was the one by her own house. She is led to the river where she is told to get into the canoe with the ladies. She then realizes that she has been traded to different masters. As she sails down the river to an unknown destination, she remembers her mother's last words to her.



## Analysis

Molly's strength of character is showing through. She tries to stay upbeat and encourage Davy. She tries to find out as much as she can from the only other English speaking person with them, Nicholas Porter. When they finally see a destination in sight, Molly tries to give Davy hope of some kind of help coming to them.

Molly learns that although Nicholas is older than she is, he is not strong of mind. After explaining his capture story of going to get squirrel meat for his mom's pot pie and being taken instead, he thinks of nothing else. He retells the story over and over when Molly wants him to help her think of an escape plan. She finds that she cannot depend on him and that she needs to be dependable for Davy's and her own sake. At the end of this chapter, Molly grips his hand tightly. She does the same thing in Chapter 2, but her hand is gripping her mom's for strength and encouragement. In this chapter, she grips Davy's hand to be the one to give reassurance and support. She is developing strength of character.

Descriptive imagery continues to set the picturesque scene. Metaphor and vibrant imagery paint the picture as they transition from their journey into the fort. "Molly's hair he left hanging loose and free about her shoulders, a shower of shining gold" (42). The metaphor doesn't merely compare her hair to the gold; it claims that it is a shower of shining gold which creates a distinct mental image. Later, a simile is helpful as the female Indians checked her out, "they let it rest like corn-silk upon their palms" (49). Anyone who has ever seen ripe corn stalks understands the color and feel of the silky tassel at the end of the green husks. Colorful words are also used to create a feeling as well as a picture. "Silhouetted against the deep blue of the sky, the beauty of the pink blossoms overwhelmed her" (45).

The narrator describes a scene where they pray to find help as, "...the uninviting, harsh, gray walls. At the corners, the garrison-houses loomed up, emblems of strength and terror, making bold, stark patterns against the blue April sky" (40). This portrayal of the fort does not match the hope in Molly's heart. This is the first of many binary opposites. The captives hope for help, a savior, a place of refuge and safety in this fort, but that is the exact opposite of what they actually see there. Words such as, "uninviting, harsh gray," "strength and terror," and "stark patterns" leave the reader to understand that there will be no hope for them in this place. This phrase is also a twist on the concept of strength that is a theme throughout this story. In all places thus far, strength has been a good positive concept. Here the idea of "strength and terror" gives the concept a new meaning. The strength found in this place is a negative force, not a redeeming quality. It is used for evil instead of good—once again binary forces.

Personification is also used freely to set a tone and atmosphere in a scene. "The walls grew taller as Molly approached. They grew taller and more unfriendly until she felt they would fall and crush her" (44). By personifying the walls and making them "unfriendly" and so intimidating that "they would fall and crush her" leaves the reader with a heavy feeling of despair.



Molly's strength and faith are tested as she tries and fails to escape before entering the fort gates. She sadly enters the gates with the group. Once inside the waiting room, though, she returns to her old self trying to remain optimistic, taking the hands of both of the guys held captive with her. Although she is sad when they leave her, she keeps her chin up when she is traded to new masters, and as she sails away, her mother's words of courage keep her tough. Those words of encouragement from her mother are symbols of her remaining strong throughout the story. Just as her description of and feelings toward the actual blossoming peach tree and the one in her memory are also symbols of joy from the past and hope for the future. As some things change, many stay the same.

## Discussion Question 1

What measures did the captors take to ensure that they would get away without resistance?

## Discussion Question 2

What clues indicate that Molly may be treated more kindly by the women in the Seneca tribe?

## Discussion Question 3

Why did Molly change her mind about trying to escape?

## Vocabulary

rouse, precipitous, freshets, stockade, garrison, emblems, stark, prospect, disheveled, mortar, dauber, parley, prostrate, regalia, admonitions, gait



## Chapter 4

### Summary

The Indian women are very driven and keep the boat steady even in turbulent spots. The two girls are both strong, but they are very different in many other ways. One is plain and agitated in nature. The other is beautiful and kind in nature. Molly observes them as they continue along the river. When the plain girl refuses to give food to Molly, she is chastised by the beautiful girl, and Molly is fed. They eventually beach the canoes and put water on to boil on the shore. The women take off Molly's tattered clothing, use the water to bathe her, and put her in deerskin clothing. Molly swears that she will never be the Indian girl they are trying to make her become. They lead her through a path in the woods to an Indian village, Seneca Town.

Molly is led into a lodge with hard dirt floors where she sits while many women of the village chant and sing, then cry and grieve around her. She thinks that at any moment something horrible will happen to her. Later, she finds out that one of the young Indian boys had been killed on the Pennsylvania frontier, and the two women who brought her there had gone to the fort to retrieve either the scalp of an enemy or a live prisoner to take his place in the community. This is their custom. Molly is the replacement. After the grieving is complete, the women change the ceremony to one of celebration as "they adopt this new sister into the Seneca tribe of the Iroquois" (59). By the end of the ceremony the ladies who had cried at the start are smiling and happy. They seem to be fascinated by her blue eyes and her yellow corn-silk hair. It is because of her hair that they give her the Indian name, Corn Tassel. At the time that this is all taking place, Molly does not understand what is happening. She doesn't know that they are trying to be kind and welcoming.

Molly realizes that she is to follow the two women, sisters, who brought her there. They lead her to their lodge inside the village. There she is captivated by the differences she sees in this town from that of white families. She is curious about the lodges that have fire in the center of the floor instead of in a chimney. A smiling older woman hands Molly a bowl of broth. Molly does not like the food and puts it aside. When the mean woman from the trip gets angry and snatches at and spills the bowl of food, the kind old woman offers Molly more, but she shakes her head to say she is not hungry. The entire lodge is full of many people, all of whom are staring at Molly. She doesn't understand the sounds they make and wonders if it's a language at all. She stares around the lodge and notices all of its features. Then, she drifts off to sleep as the people continue to stare and touch her hair. Later, she is placed in a bunk bed by the kind, beautiful woman from the trip.





## Analysis

Rich pictures are created through personification, simile, and imagery. Personification of the trees bring the image to life when the narrator describes, "From the heavily wooded banks great sycamore trees, ghostly white, stretched giant arms across the water. Beneath, dimmed by flickering shadows, the tall, straight trunks of hickory, oak and walnut rose to touch the sky..."(52). Images grow with "Long, thin branches of pale yellow willows drooped to the waters along the shore" (52). The simile describing the village sitting up on the banks relates that, "It sprawled at the edge of the forest, for, like soldiers guarding, tall trees of maple, ash, poplar and beech loomed up behind"(61). All three quotes help paint a picture in the reader's mind of what the village and surrounding trees look like.

When recounting the differences between the two sisters, they can be seen as opposites as well. "One was plain, the other beautiful to look upon. One was cross, the other kind" (52)... "the kind sister had a smooth, soft face. Her cheeks glowed like blushing apples, with a redness that obviously came from a smooth stain of red paint. The plain sister's face had more lines in it, lines either of age or ill nature" (53). Throughout the story, the two sisters are consistently binary opposites of each other. This trend of describing opposites continues when describing the Indian women present at the grief, then adoption ceremony, "...young and old, fat and thin, sour-looking and pleasant..." (58).

The theme of Kindness runs through this chapter also. The one sister is very kind and tries to counter or prevent any meanness set forth by the cross sister. Although the ladies at the ceremony were scary to her at first, while they were grieving, Molly can see from their friendly smiles and happy faces that they intend to be kind to her. Then, when Molly sees the sisters' mother for the first time, she smiles broadly at her as she offers food, even when Molly refuses the food the second time. Although everyone in the lodge is looking at and touching Molly, she does not feel threatened and is comfortable enough to fall asleep in the room. She knows they mean her no harm. Finally, the pretty sister carries her to bed and lovingly tucks her in. Things could have been so much worse. From the stories throughout her childhood, Molly has been told that Indians are cruel, evil, savages who only want to cause fear and harm to white people. Luckily, Molly has not seen this in these people. As in any culture, there are good and bad people, but as a whole, the people of Seneca Town are kind to Molly.

## Discussion Question 1

Why do the sisters bathe Molly and change her clothes before taking her into the village, and what does this indicate to Molly?



## Discussion Question 2

Why were all of the women of the village at the ceremony grieving and crying, but the mother of the sisters was not?

## Discussion Question 3

Compare the beautiful woman from the trip to the mean woman from the trip.

## Vocabulary

erilous, tributaries, receded, tunic, stout, brambly, wring, queer, lot, grimaces, unbidden, draught, pewter, puncheon, gabled, hanks



# Chapter 5

## Summary

Molly wakes from a dream by a loud sound that seems unpleasant and scary to her. She is scared to get out of bed. A little white dog climbs in bed and snuggles next to her. She peeks out from behind the bed curtain to get a better look at what is going on in the lodge. Only the father is still in bed asleep. Soon, the mother comes to her and motions for her to get up and head outside. She does as she is told. Outside she finds that the noise that seemed annoying and scary moments ago is now music to her ears. She realizes that the noise is from the women using a mortar to pound corn into meal. She is excited thinking that corn-pone cakes are about to be made.

The mean sister motions for Molly to collect more firewood. Not really understanding, Molly waits around until the cross sister kicks her in the shin. As she searches the woods for a stack of chopped wood, she becomes exhausted and upset. She sits down to cry. After a while, she is found by the sweet sister who shows Molly that the wood is not stacked in logs but is sticks, branches, and twigs to be broken, piled, and carried back to the village. The nice sister shows her what to do and shares the load. The mean sister is upset when Molly tells her in English that she found wood. The mean sister kicks Molly again. Molly is excited to go find the corn-pone cakes the old lady was making when Molly left to find wood. Unfortunately, none are roasting by the fire. Instead, the old woman hands her a soggy corn cake that has been boiling in a pot of water.

The cake is bland and tasteless. Molly throws it into the fire. This is a terrible mistake, and she realizes it immediately. Everyone near her who saw what happened is appalled by her actions. The old woman then tries to give her a bowl of the broth in which the corn cakes had been cooked. Molly refuses. The father is staring at her across the fire. He says nothing, but the disapproving look on his face makes her feel guilty. She takes her bowl to the old woman and drinks it to the last drop; then, she grabs a corn cake, and although it is not seasoned and tastes bland, she eats it all and realizes that she was truly hungry.

Her next assigned task is to carry water from the river to the village. She wanders to the site, but the load is heavy; she is tired and doesn't want to carry it back. She decides to sit on a stump and cry about missing her family and her current situation. When she hears a noise, she assumes it is one of the sisters coming to take her back, but it is actually a little Indian boy whose arrow flew past her. After she helps him find his arrow and he tries to communicate with her, he gives her his hand to help her stand and motions for her to follow him. He takes her back to the abandoned water barrels, motions for her to fill them, and walks back to camp with her without offering to help with her load. When they arrive at the village and she sets the barrels down, she watches as the boy turns back to smile at her before entering his home.



## Analysis

In this chapter, Molly seems to be losing faith and is somewhat rude to people who are trying to be nice to her. The first literary technique of onomatopoeia that is apparent in the story begins here. “Ka-doom” is a form of onomatopoeia which recreates the sound of something Molly hears outside of the lodge. At first, the noise is unpleasant and scary to her. She wonders what they are doing and how it will affect whatever happens to her. Upon seeing what is making the noise, Molly’s whole perspective changes. She sees that they are grinding corn the old-fashioned way, the way her family used to do it before the mill close to their home began grinding it which was much easier. The sound now has changed from scary and unpleasant to familiar and comforting. It is a sound from home.

Molly discovers in this chapter that the cross sister gets really angry when she speaks English. She also kicks her when there is work to be done, and Molly doesn’t do as the woman says. At this point, the Indian women are doing two main things—teaching Molly that everyone must work and showing her that speaking English is not acceptable. Although the mean sister, kicks her and always seems mad at her, she is trying to teach her the ways of their tribe and the language.

Molly becomes disheartened and actually shows a lack of strength by first not completing her assigned tasks, by crying in the forest and trying to think of ways to escape, and by being disrespectful and rude when the old woman tries to give her food. Not everyone can be strong and brave all of the time. This is Molly’s time to feel her despair.

Molly realizes one night that she is truly stuck where she is. She writes that the forest was a cruel enemy just as surely as the Indians. She realizes that she can never escape because she cannot manage the travel through the wilderness. When explaining the feel of the arrow being shot near Molly, the simile, “a strange noise came singing like a flash” (82) helps the reader to understand the speed and unexpected disturbance of the arrow in her crying solitude. Onomatopoeia is used several times to enhance the description of the scene. The description of the arrow’s flight explains the “whizzing sound” heard as it passes Molly in the forest.

Kindness as a theme is demonstrated again as Molly is befriended by a young Indian boy who takes pity on the crying girl and tries to cheer her up. He also guides her back to her duties to ensure that she will not be punished for unfinished tasks. Although the things he says sound like meaningless babble to Molly, she understands that he is trying to be kind to her. After leading her back to the village, he even turns to smile at her before disappearing into his own home. He wants to make sure that she knows he is friendly and means to be kind to her.

Although at this point in the story, the custom is not yet explained, the first mention of “a gift of the Three Sisters” is here when the women become angry that Molly wastes her food. This topic becomes a theme that will be discussed and revisited throughout the story.



## **Discussion Question 1**

What is Molly beginning to figure out about life in the camp?

## **Discussion Question 2**

How does the Indian boy indicate that he wants to be her friend?

## **Discussion Question 3**

How did Molly figure out that the 'father' was displeased with her?

## **Vocabulary**

flax, sassafras, quilled, arid, roundabout, mortars, pestle, sapling, pounders, sieve, gesticulated, hatchet, blood-root, beckoned, cuffed, ladle, hateful, aimlessly, dejected, forlorn, disconsolately



# Chapter 6

## Summary

Little Turtle knows that each time Molly is sent to get water, she goes into the woods to cry. Today, he hears her singing a song. He is hopeful that she is feeling happy. However, when he approaches, she is crying, again. He tries to give her a silver brooch, but she won't even look at it. He wishes he could help her. Because of this, when they arrive back in the village, Little Turtle approaches Chief Standing Pine on Molly's behalf. He is very careful not to offend the chief, but asks if they could send Molly back home because she is so sad. The chief tell him no. He says that with the white man invading their lands, it is fair for them to keep Molly. The white man does bad things to the Indians as well. He tells Little Turtle that he will understand when he grows up. Although Molly is sad the chief said no, she is very touched that Little Turtle did that for her. She likes to be with him.

Squirrel Woman is looking for Molly when she returns. She puts a burden strap on Molly and attaches the baby to her back for Molly to carry. It is corn planting time, and all of the women have work to do. Red Bird and Shining Star had left earlier with baskets of corn to plant. The baby is heavy and hard to carry in this unfamiliar way. Molly realizes that she is bent over and walking with her toes pointing in, just as she's seen Indian women do. Now, she understands why they walk that way. Bear Woman, the matron and overseer, watches as Squirrel Woman gives Molly the proper tools to make holes to plant the corn seed. Molly starts thinking of the corn field by her house that never got planted. She gets upset, throws down the tool, and runs away to the woods knocking over a basket of seed, accidentally, as she goes.

Little Turtle finds her in the woods. He knows something bad happened. He tries to cheer her up. He shows her how he shoots sleeping turtles off of the log which makes her laugh. He uses a grapevine to make her a swing, but most importantly, he brings her to see his grandfather who turns out to be Shagbark. Little Turtle asks Shagbark to let him have a grown man's arrow. He tells the boy he's not good enough yet. Shagbark whittles a wooden ladle with the carving of a singing bird. He gives it to Molly. She thanks him in their language. Suddenly, she realizes that after listening to them all this time, she understands them and can communicate in their language.

When she returns to the lodge, Red Bird has made a yummy smelling dinner of succotash. Molly has forgotten about the morning drama and is excited to show them the ladle. Even though she talks to them in Seneca, they don't seem to notice and remain mad. Spilling the corn seed was a bad move, so Red Bird sends Molly to bed without supper as punishment.



## Analysis

Through the use of simile, personification, and metaphor, a clear and powerful scene is set. As Little Turtle asks Chief Standing Pine to have mercy on Molly, the chief replies with a metaphor. "War is a cruel master. War is never kind to the enemy" (90). Here he is trying to get Little Turtle to understand that bad things happen on both sides of a war. The war itself is harsh for both sides and is not kind in any way. The chief further explains that, "Time, the destroyer of every affection, will dry the tears in the white captives eyes" (90). Time is personified in this statement explaining that time is the only thing that will help someone get over their grief. In time, Molly will become less and less upset and will accept her new life. The simile, "...she ran as fleet as the wind" (95), helps the reader identify that she is moving quickly and steady, like the wind through the air. Both personification and simile are used when the narrator describes Molly laughing on the swing that Little Turtle makes her. "Like the happy sound of falling waters, her rippling laughter rang through the forest and fell pleasantly on the boy's ears" (97). In this simile, Molly's laugh is compared to the soothing sound of water falling. The same quote also uses personification when her laugh takes on characteristics of ringing through the forest.

Once again, the reader is shown the connection between an Indian and his/her given name. When Little Turtle shoots under the sleeping turtles to make them fly in the air, Molly laughs, but also realizes that this is the reason for his name. Chief Standing Pine is described as being, "...strong and handsome, wise and thoughtful" (88). Being the wisest and most important person in the tribe, Chief Standing Pine's character mirrors that of a tall pine tree standing in the forest. It takes a long time for pine trees to grow tall and once they do they are strong and beautiful.

Great detail is given in describing the people, the tools, and their customs. The author takes time to thoroughly explain everything that is introduced so that the reader can not only picture it, but understand its meaning. For instance, when Molly is made to carry the baby on her back using the burden-strap, she must stand a certain way to alleviate pain and to ensure that the strap doesn't cut into her forehead. Because of this action, Molly is able to understand clearly why Indian women walk with their toes turned in and their backs bent over. If all Indian women must carry a burden-strap, it makes sense that they all will eventually walk this way.

The symbol of a singing bird is important in this chapter. The chapter begins with Molly singing a song that her mother had taught to her. The song of a bird can be happy or sad. In Molly's song, sadness drives her to sing. Later in the chapter, Shagbark makes Molly a ladle with the carving of a singing bird on the handle. This song bird is meant to bring about happiness. When she receives it, Molly is able to respond in the Seneca language.

Kindness is an important theme in this chapter. Little Turtle is kind to - and worried about - Molly. He tries to cheer her, bring her gift, and even speaks to the chief on her behalf. The chief is kind when he takes the time to explain to Little Turtle why he will not



allow Molly to leave and how war effects all involved. Being the most important person in the tribe, he could have dismissed Little Turtle. However, he shows kindness in his treatment of the boy. He also takes the time to explain to Little Turtle why he is not yet ready for a grown man's bow and arrow set. He tries to cheer Molly and show compassion and acceptance by carving a special ladle of her very own. She does not totally forget her sadness, but is touched by the gestures of Little Turtle and Shagbark.

Although Molly is sent to bed with no supper, she is taught very valuable lessons. Everyone must work for what they get, even food. Nothing is given for free. Being wasteful by tipping over the basket of seed and by refusing to work is not acceptable. Molly understands this lesson.

## Discussion Question 1

Why is it such a pivotal moment when Molly responds to Shagbark in their own language?

## Discussion Question 2

Discuss the symbolism of the singing bird in this chapter.

## Discussion Question 3

Why is Molly okay with being sent to bed without supper?

## Vocabulary

coaxed, wrung, brooch, laden, heed, marten skin, contrivance, wantonly, noble, interceding, trifle, hummocks, hoe, basking, ladle, expedition, placid, succotash





# Chapter 7

## Summary

Shining Star weaves a basket for Molly. While weaving, she answers Molly's questions about why the baby is wrapped so tightly and can only move his mouth. Shining Star explains the Indian custom of wrapping the baby to teach it patience. She explains how a wrapped baby learns to deal with nature, becomes observant of its surroundings, and understanding of the creatures. She explains that it helps the child become patient and gives him courage. Molly gets the hint that Shining Star was not only talking about the baby, but about Molly and her actions and feelings as well.

Molly and Shining Star bring containers of water to each corn stalk to keep it from dying in the drought. Shining Star sings and dances in honor of Grandfather He-no, the Thunder God. She says he is not pleased that they planted so late in the season. She hopes her offering will bring rain. That very evening a thunder storm rolls in and breaks the drought. The corn becomes healthy and grows. Molly is taken back to Bear Woman to work in the corn fields. Bear Woman is worried that Molly will just run away again, but Shining Star tells her that Molly now works like an Indian woman. Bear Woman explains to Molly their belief about the Three Sisters—corn, beans, and squash. Bear Woman instructs Molly about how to care for the growing crops. She tells her that “Kah-Kah” the crow is very important to them, but is also a thief of crops. Molly's job is to frighten the birds away from the corn.

When the corn is ready, they celebrate the Feast of the Green Corn. Corn is turned into many different meals, and this four-day celebration is a thanksgiving to the Great Spirit. Molly curiously watches the ceremony and returns to the corn field to pick more corn. While there, she remembers her mother's words and begins to recite her family's names, her prayers, and where she came from. Squirrel Woman finds her doing this and is very angry. She shakes Molly in anger. Molly maturely and calmly explains to Squirrel Woman that she is acting like a white woman Molly knew who shook her children. She recites what she has learned about patience and anger. Squirrel Woman is surprised. Red Bird hears and sees what happens and explains that children should only be punished by holding them under water until they promise to do better. After this incident, Molly becomes upset because she realizes that she is beginning to think and reason like an Indian woman.

## Analysis

Each scene in the chapter is described in great detail using metaphor and similes. When Shining Star is trying to teach Molly a life lesson indirectly, she uses the metaphor of slowly weaving a basket; “Better to weave more slowly...but more surely...Then there will be no need to unravel what has been woven before” (109). She is telling Molly that not only is she explaining how the Indians slowly train their children so that they have



patience and courage, but that this is the best method to help Molly as well—to slowly teach her to think and act as the people of her culture. The narrator makes use of simile when describing the look of the tassels of corn over the crop. “It was like looking over an ocean that ebbed and flowed with soft, gentle movements” (116). Another simile explains how Molly feels when Squirrel Woman finds her speaking English in the corn field. “Then, like a thunder-storm breaking the still beauty of a summer day, disaster fell” (121). The disaster is the fury that Squirrel Woman releases on Molly during this scene. Molly answers the woman’s rage by using a simile as well. “Like a rushing tornado, like the wind through the trees in winter, you come running up behind me” (122). She tries to explain that Squirrel Woman is quick to anger unlike the rest of her people. This leads Molly to believe, “A dreadful truth like a burning fire consumed her” (124). That dreadful truth is that she is seeing life from an Indian’s point of view now.

Each story or legend is told in detail, not only to explain what is actually happening at the time, but also how it relates to whatever situation is at hand. Most often, these stories teach Molly to understand why the Indians act and speak as they do. Shining Star relays many lessons to Molly through her explanation of why her baby is wrapped tightly to the carrying board. “‘The Indian child grows strong and straight,’ Shining Star went on, ‘with his back to the hickory board. The Indian child, with his hands tied close, learns patience. Before he can walk alone he has learned a hard lesson’” (107). She continues her explanation by touching on the very topic of Molly’s mother’s last words to her. Shining Star explains, “He will learn to be as brave, as uncomplaining as his brothers of the forest. The hurt dog, the wounded wolf or bear, the dying deer never cries out in pain. The beasts bear their pain in silence, giving no outward sign. They go forward bravely to meet danger” (107) and “Loud sounds of grief might attract a wolf or panther or some enemy of the Senecas. Like his brother in the forest, the child must learn to bear his pain and give no sign. He must have courage to suffer bravely” (109). In these words, she is telling Molly to have courage and to suck it up, basically. Stop complaining, crying, and whining because courage is what will carry her through life. She needs to depend on and take care of herself. By feeling sorry for herself and always crying in the woods, Molly could put the tribe in danger by attracting enemies. Molly listens to the story and actually hears the message Shining Star is sending. This story also helps Molly to understand “...that the cold look on the face of an Indian was not indifference. She knew now that he suffered as much as others, but he bore his pain without sign, because he had great courage” (110). Although the Indians and the white people have many differences, this lesson about courage is universal.

Bear Woman’s story of how the Indians originally were given corn by the crow also helps Molly develop respect for the crops and the creatures. She sees that everything in nature has its purpose. Although the crow, Kah-Kah, is the worst enemy of their growing corn crop, she now knows that the Indians believe that the Crow brought the first grain of corn for a gift. So to Kah-Kah they must be grateful.

The connection between a person and their given Indian name is recognized again. Molly finally understands that because her hair looks like the tassel of corn silk, they named her “Corn Tassel.” When Shining Star discusses the baby, she talks about the



fact that because he can only move his mouth, he mimics the sound of birds, particularly blue jays, which earned him the name “Blue Jay.”

## Discussion Question 1

How is Molly's growing understanding of the Seneca culture helping her?

## Discussion Question 2

Why do the Seneca use stories to educate Molly and other young people in the village?

## Discussion Question 3

After the incident with Squirrel Woman in the cornfield, Molly realizes a 'dreadful truth'. What does she mean by this?

## Vocabulary

calico, deft, lashed, quench, peals, fury, torrents, apace, abreast, bristled, tendrils, marauders, bounteous, contrive, scold, accusation



## Chapter 8

### Summary

In this chapter, Molly is taught a bit of Seneca history. She is told that the real home of the Seneca is in Genishau or Genesee Town by the Great Falling Waters. She learned that Red Birds sons, Good Hunter and Gray Wolf, live there with their families. They try to convince their parents and sisters to move with them, but they refuse. The sisters travel to Fort Duquesne to see their brothers off and to get supplies. They ask Molly to go with them and to carry the baby on her back. While the Indians are in the trading house doing business, Molly is told to go outside and show Blue Jay the birds.

She looks around and remembers many of the sites from her first visit. When she remembers the blooming peach tree, she goes to see it. There she is approached by a white man who takes her into a building full of other white people. The people are shocked that a white girl is living with savage Indians. They ask her about her life there. She told them her name and that she lives in Seneca Town. The white woman wants to keep her. When Blue Jay starts to cry, Squirrel Woman grabs Molly's arm and tells her to follow. Shining Star and Squirrel Woman are both extremely frightened. They get into the canoe, and instead of going home, they begin frantically paddling on the river in the opposite direction.

Molly is scared about what is happening. The women are extremely upset. When their brothers catch up to them, the women are told that it was good that they left when they did. The white people had followed them to get Molly. They decided she must be taken to Genesee Town near the Great Falling Waters. They are not prepared for the trip, but in order to keep Molly with them, they set out with their brothers. The sisters are stressed and extremely upset with Molly. They are all in for a hard journey through rough waters, uncleared woods, no place for shelter, and all with no supplies for such a trip. Molly is distraught and afraid. She feels that the second place of captivity will be worse than Seneca Town, and now she has no hope.

### Analysis

Through detailed stories, Molly and the reader learn the history and customs of the Seneca people. She learns that, "The Five Nations are the Senecas, the Cayugas, the Onondagas, the Oneidas and the Mohawks. These tribes look upon each other as brothers and in time of war fight side-by-side. A detailed explanation of which tribe does what is given. The true history behind these tribes is explained and woven into the fictional acts in the story.

Similes are used to explain the way Molly feels about the peach tree that she saw on her first visit there. "The tree, like a magnet, drew her on" (131). Although she knows she isn't supposed to go there, the symbol of the peach tree and the hope that it



represents for her, causes her to break the rules of her sisters. She recognizes the Frenchmen because of the color of the uniform and because of the lace ruffles.

Worried that Molly and Blue Jay will be taken from them while Molly is speaking to the white people, the women are trying to protect the children from harm, though Molly doesn't understand what that might be. This is an action that Molly lives to regret.

The peach tree as a symbol of hope is changed in this chapter. Although Molly sees the tree and feels happy near it, she learns that her careless visit to the tree causes much more pain for her in the end than any happiness she ever felt at being near it.

The white people want to save Molly from what they believe are savages, and the sisters want to save her from being removed from the family. Both sides see the other as the mean and cruel party because each side has done horrific acts to the other. Neither could imagine that the other could have good qualities.

The theme of Courage appears in this chapter, but in a negative way. Molly loses hope and becomes fearful of the unknown journey that lies ahead. She loses all courage in the face of her sisters' anger and the worry of what happens to her next. She dreads the trip fearing that once again she is unprepared for the hardships ahead.

## Discussion Question 1

What misconceptions do both sides (French and Seneca) have of one another?

## Discussion Question 2

Why was Molly's visit to the peach tree an act of betrayal?

## Discussion Question 3

Why are the sisters so angry with Molly?

## Vocabulary

gay, idle, hewn, baubles, obliged, laden, trinkets



## Chapter 9

### Summary

Finally, their journey from the fort comes to an end. They first see the amazing Falling Waters. Molly is surprised to see not one, but two rainbows arching through the water. Molly begins to become ill. When they reach Genesee Town, they turn Molly over to Earth Woman who knows how to care for the wounded and the ill. During her illness, Molly has horrible dreams, high fevers, and hallucinations. When she is awake, Earth Woman makes her a doll out of corn husks. She takes Molly to her lodge and nurses her back to health. It is a very long process. Earth Woman tries many different remedies. Molly learns that her Indian family has all followed them to Genesee Town. She is saddened because she thinks they are not her friends because this is a way to permanently keep her from going to her natural home. Finally, Molly is well enough to walk a bit and to sit in the sun. While outside she sees a young Indian girl, Beaver Girl, rolling clay in her hands. Molly discovers that Beaver Girl is making a cooking pot, the traditional work of art and necessity for their culture. Earth Woman tells her that Beaver Girl wants to be her friend, but is shy. Molly wants to learn to make the pots, but Earth Woman explains that she's not strong enough.

When Molly is well, she moves to Red Bird's home, but still spends most of her time with Earth Woman preparing for Ho-tho, Cold Weather. Molly and Beaver Girl go with Earth Woman and other children to the forest to collect nuts for the winter. Molly becomes familiar with the different personalities of the children. She is upset by the fact that the children want to capture a bear cub and keep it with them. The cocky children explain that they can kill the mother bear for meat and oil. They are singing a different tune when the mother bear actually returns to her cubs. They are very lucky that the she-bear only gathers her cubs and leaves.

### Analysis

Many literary features are used in this chapter, such as, similes, personification, imagery, and symbolism. Upon entering her new home, Molly sees the beautiful falling water and is very impressed by the pretty rainbows she sees through the waters. Here the rainbow is a symbol of hope, just the sight of it instills hope and positive feelings in Molly. The corn husk doll that Earth Woman gives to Molly is also symbolic. It is a doll without a face that allows its owner to reflect any feelings she wishes upon the doll. It can be angry when she is angry, happy when she's happy, and so forth. Earth Woman explains, "She will smile to make you strong and well again" (150). Molly comes to a realization; "She knew in that moment that there are two kinds of sickness—sickness of the heart as well as of the body" (150).

During her time with Earth Woman, Molly hears stories of the rattlesnake and learns to beware of its attack. Later in the story, she will remember this warning. This is an act of



foreshadowing something that has to do with a rattlesnake later in the tale. The clay cooking pot that Molly hopes to learn to make is personified as the reader is shown that it can do more than merely cook. “A cooking-pot could make a white girl forget to be homesick. A cooking-pot could make a girl want to be well and strong again” (155). In these instances, the corn husk doll and the cooking-pot are symbolic of Molly regaining not only her health, but her strength as well. When she is strong, she regains her courage. Molly grows to understand Earth Woman’s lessons and says, “Her wisdom reached out through the endless forest, up to the changing skies and deep, deep down into the earth” (157). In this case, it is wisdom that takes on human characteristics and is shown to help many people. Finally, the simile, “Like falling leaves blown by a gust of wind, the children slipped noiselessly into the underbrush and disappeared” (163), helps the reader better understand that even at such a young age, the Indian children are taught to blend in and become one with the nature around them.

The Rebuilding of Strength and Courage are themes that rise and fall throughout the novel. In this chapter, Molly is given many different ways to regain her strength and courage through stories with lessons, through the corn-husk doll, and through the making of the cooking pots. The excursion into the forest with the children leads to the metaphor that shows the parallels between Molly’s life as a captive and what the bear cub’s life as a captive would mean for it.

## Discussion Question 1

Why does Molly identify with the bear cub?

## Discussion Question 2

In what ways does Earth Woman help strengthen Molly physically and emotionally?

## Discussion Question 3

Discuss the themes of Courage and Strength in this chapter.

## Vocabulary

gorge, faltering, solace, fording, rebuked, decoctions, grotesque, goblins, sprites, purification, rite, effigy, broadcloth, knead, gourd, fledgling, pout, coaxes, arum, blotted, dense, scowling



# Chapter 10

## Summary

In this chapter, Molly and Little Turtle go hunting for turkey. Little Turtle wants to prove to his grandfather that he is a good hunter and deserves a man's bow and arrow. Molly watches in sadness as Little Turtle kills the turkey. She is happy for him because he's so happy, but heartbroken to see the animal die. When they take it to Shagbark, he is impressed. He gives Little Turtle the man's bow and arrow set and gives him a new name "Turkey Feather" because when asked what bird feather he wants on his arrows, he replied a turkey's feather in honor of his first kill. When he tries out the new bow, he kills a duck and offers it to Shagbark as a thanks. Shagbark explains to Molly that it does not mean one lacks courage if they hate to see an animal suffer. He also explains their tradition of only killing animals for food and hide or in the event that one is attacking.

Shagbark proudly takes Turkey Feather to the chief of Genesee Town, Chief Burning Sky. When they arrive, the tent is full of people who are unfamiliar to Molly. While waiting for the chief to come into the room, Molly notices a white man standing in front of the fire dressed in the clothes of the white man and talking to the Indians. She rushes up to greet him and realizes that it isn't her father, but it is the white trader, Old Fallenash, who used to visit her family. Although she wants information about her family, he is there to do business and can't keep the Indians waiting for her. He does tell her that he hasn't been to her town since she was taken and doesn't know anything about her family before Squirrel Woman rushes to take Molly away.

Molly continues to sneak a peek at the trading process. She sees how it works. After trading, she hears Old Fallenash tell the Indians that Fort Duquesne was overtaken by the English who burned the fort and are now headed to Fort Niagara and then on to Quebec. Molly wonders if her peach tree was burned also. Old Fallenash tells the Indians that they will have a choice to make soon, whether they want to support the English or the French in this battle. The chief explains that the decision is up to "The League of the Iroquois." Molly waits for Old Fallenash and begs him to take her with him. He explains that he cannot. He tells her if he does, the Seneca will kill him. He tells her that she will have a good life there and that he has an Indian wife himself. As he leaves town, Molly hangs her head in sorrow.

## Analysis

Vivid descriptions, onomatopoeia, and detailed stories flood this chapter. They are used to help the reader understand the situation that is happening in the story. First, onomatopoeia is used frequently when describing Turkey Feather killing his first turkey. The sounds of the arrows flying by add excitement to the emotions the character is feeling. Shagbark gives very detailed descriptions of the reasons for killing animals. He





explains that there is no killing for sport, only for necessity. He tells Molly that a hunter must ask the animal spirit's permission before killing and offer thanks after. Although Turkey Feather basically tells Molly to get over it when she is upset about the dead turkey and that she is not showing courage, Shagbark explains that it's OK to feel sympathy for living creatures.

The meaning of Indian names comes into play again. Although not all are explained, the reader now knows enough to understand how each Indian must have obtained his name. At the chief's home, they see, "Log-in-the-Water, the laziest Indian in the village...Big Kettle, known for his greediness...Gray Wolf, sullen and leering". Originally, the Indian boy is known as Little Turtle because he shot at turtles on the rocks. Now that he has killed his first turkey and asks for its feather to be used in his new arrows, his grandfather changes his name to Turkey Feather.

When Molly hears that the fort has burned down, she immediately thinks of her peach tree, the tree that gave her hope and caused her trouble. Now that the fort is gone, she wonders if the tree is gone too, one more symbol of her losing hope, and of leaving behind her old life. Hope is also lost to her when Old Fallenash refuses to take her with him.

The themes of Courage and Strength are addressed when Turkey Feather tells Molly she needs to toughen up, and again when Shagbark treats the situation with kindness and concern. Kindness is also shown again when Shagbark, as always, is comforting and kind to Molly's distress. Although Old Fallenash will not take Molly with him, he is truly being kind and tries to explain why she is better off there. He also shows his kindness by giving Molly a string of glass beads, so she can always remember him and that she should try to be happy.

## Discussion Question 1

Discuss Fallenash's decision not to take Molly.

## Discussion Question 2

Discuss how the themes of Courage and Kindness are demonstrated in this chapter.

## Discussion Question 3

Why is the peach tree one of the first things that Molly thinks about when she learns about the fire at the fort?

## Vocabulary

flaked, shaft, sinew, bade, hemlock, togs, hearthstone, gizzard, quills, wheedling, fortifications, weather-beaten, irksome



# Chapter 11

## Summary

Earth Woman tells Molly that she is making her a special burden-strap of moose-hair embroidery. Molly doesn't think she needs one anymore because Blue Jay is now walking. It won't be long until she doesn't have to carry him. Earth Woman explains that Indian women always need the strap to carry all kinds of things. Earth Woman tells Molly that it is a man's duty to provide meat and protection and the woman's duty to make the home and carry the burdens. Earth Woman explains to Molly that The Great Spirit is the one who has made everything good and that his brother Evil Spirit creates the bad.

When the warriors return with a white young man, Molly learns that like her, the man is a replacement for a killed child, in this case, Earth Woman's son. Unlike her, a young man must run the gauntlet to be worthy of adopting into the tribe. He must run through the townspeople as they throw things at him, hit him, and even cut him. Molly is mortified. Red Bird does not want Molly to watch, even after Squirrel Woman insists that she must, but Molly runs into the woods and hides to watch. Although she is horrified by what is happening to the young man, she is also impressed by his skill, strength, and courage.

After he is given to Earth Woman and heals, Molly finds out that his name is Josiah Johnson from Virginia. She tells him that he impressed the Indians and that they gave him the name Running Deer. She tells him that now that he's been adopted into the tribe, he cannot leave. He believes otherwise. She explains that the Indians are truly kind, but he won't believe it. Molly insists that it is true.

## Analysis

As in earlier chapters after being captured, Molly is taught again that everyone must work to earn her keep. Earth Woman tries to explain that although Blue Jay is walking and will soon not need her to carry him, her sisters will keep her working. Earth Woman talks about Molly's sisters and says, "They will give you a burden frame instead of a baby frame...they will never let you run idle" (191). Earth Woman tries to kindly ease her into this reality by making her a pretty and comfortable burden-strap. This same point is driven home a few pages later when Shagbark brings loads of bark into the room and says that a woman should never be idle.

The theme of Kindness is demonstrated heavily throughout this chapter. As Shagbark is watching Earth Woman make Molly a new burden-strap, he asks her to weave the strap with kindness so that Corn Tassel's burdens will be easier. Even though Josiah Johnson is sent through the gauntlet, Molly tries to explain to him how kind the tribe really is being to him. He doesn't believe it because of the stereotypes he's always been taught



and because they made him run the gauntlet. Josiah tells her that she is insane if she believes that the Indians have an ounce of kindness in them. Molly hotly replies that she never knew kindness until she started living with the Seneca.

Once again, Kindness is discussed when the tribal council decides that Josiah is worthy of adoption, and they give the young man as a son to Earth Woman. Molly is able to tell Josiah what has happened and tries to let him know what an honor it is to be adopted by Earth Woman. Earth Woman is very pleased to welcome Josiah into her home.

Again, stories and legends, similes, and detailed descriptions help the reader see the full picture. Earth Woman goes into great detail explaining the duties of men and women in the Indian world. She also tells Molly about The Great Spirit, telling her that the Great Spirit made the world and all that is good. She also tells Molly about the Great Spirit's brother, the Evil Spirit, who made the snakes, mosquitoes, the flies and all poisonous plants. She tells Molly that the Evil Spirit brings sickness to the world.

## **Discussion Question 1**

What seems to indicate that Molly has acclimated to the ways of the tribe?

## **Discussion Question 2**

What does seeing Josiah seem to make apparent to Molly about how much she has changed?

## **Discussion Question 3**

Discuss the similes in this chapter.

## **Vocabulary**

skeins, basswood, shrilly, unendurable, gauntlet, zeal, pelted, frolicking, secreted, fortitude, balsam, juniper, witch hazel



# Chapter 12

## Summary

In this chapter, Josiah has settled in, healed, and learned the kindness of Earth Woman, but still insists he will never be one of them. Molly compliments his new clothes, and he complains that the chief won't let him go on the hunting trips or have a gun. Molly says that they know he will run. She asks Josiah that if he ever decides to run, please take her with him if he can. She explains that she is going to get new clothes after she makes her moccasins. She will not have cloth clothes, but deerskin. She admits to Josiah that she would like cloth. Then when Turkey Feather is so excited about the porcupine quills he brought for her to decorate her deerskin shoes and clothes, she changes her mind and says that she prefers that. He is so excited to help her always.

Molly is excited about the story teller who is coming to the town. He only comes once a year. Because they are lacking food, Josiah says he'd rather have food than stories. The storyteller draws a stone from his pouch and speaks about a boy who tried to find food for his foster mother by offering food to the telling stone. Next, he draws out a feather and tells a story about a singing bird. Molly enjoyed the stories and forgot about her own worries. Josiah tells Molly that he doesn't like her telling Indian stories. She says that once he understands them he will like them.

Molly is distressed when Shagbark tells her that Turkey Feather and Josiah have gone and a gun has gone missing as well. She is very worried, but Shagbark believes it will be okay. Eventually, they young men return to the village with a deer over their shoulders. They had found food for the village. Turkey Feather is so excited because he's the one who actually killed it. Two days later, the hunting party returns, and there is much food and activity for all. Molly tells Josiah that she knew he hadn't run away. He told her that he thinks the Indians are wasteful going from no meals to twenty per day.

## Analysis

The Indians will not allow Josiah to leave the village even though the town is starving. He is not allowed to hunt for food or to carry a gun. When Josiah and a gun go missing, everyone is concerned. Everyone is also surprised when he returns with the gun and with food. Later, Josiah explains to Molly that he couldn't bear to see her hungry and that is why he went for food and disobeyed the Indians' wishes. Here again, kindness prevails.

A lot of information is given through the stories told by the storyteller. Each of the two stories mentioned in the chapter reflect the stories of Josiah and of Molly. The first story speaks of an orphan boy who is trying to get food for his foster mother. That is a direct reflection of Josiah's situation. The second story is about a boy who learned the songs of the birds. In the story, the boy says that he has learned to sing their songs and would



teach them to the people. This story is a direct reflection of Molly's situation. She has passively listened to so many stories that they have begun to become part of her, so much so, that she actually retells them to Josiah when trying to comfort him. This is her way of showing kindness, too. She is trying to help him settle in there as best as she can. After the story, Molly was happy thinking that she will be helping Josiah, but he still does not believe in the goodness of the Indians.

With Josiah in town, Molly is more content and thinks less of running away or going home. She still loves home, but he is a good companion for her. Josiah asks curiously why she has adopted their ways and why she doesn't mention going home any more. He doesn't realize that he makes Molly feel like home. Frankly, their stories are starting to sink into her mind and consciousness. Molly's answer is that once she began to understand them, she couldn't help but like them. She quickly tells him that she would never love them more than white people, however. But, she adds, that since Josiah came into the village she's felt more content to live there.

The theme of Stereotypes is demonstrated in this chapter when Molly tries to explain to Josiah that because she has grieved and missed home so much that just being near him makes her feel a bit of home. Also, although she misses home, she cannot deny that the Indians have been very kind to her. They have calmly explained everything that has been curious to her since she's been there and have tried to straighten out any misunderstandings of stereotypes she has been raised to believe.

## Discussion Question 1

What stereotypes has Molly had to overcome?

## Discussion Question 2

Discuss the significance of the bird story.

## Discussion Question 3

Given what Molly has learned, if she had the chance to run would she take it?

## Vocabulary

trough, hominy, awl, infectious, celestial, wampum, boisterously, abated, trussed, famine



# Chapter 13

## Summary

In this chapter, spring is about to come. Molly and Josiah discuss the changes about to happen in town. The men of the village are going spring-fur hunting, the boys are making traps to trap small animals. The women are going to the sugar camp where maple syrup will be drained from trees and cooked into sugar. Josiah has been helping Shagbark build a canoe. He has enjoyed learning the skill and is always happy to keep busy.

When Josiah and Molly arrive at Shagbark's house, he is just finishing the canoe. He puts it in the water and tells Josiah to get in. Shagbark gives the canoe to him. At first he is shocked and asks where he's allowed to go. Shagbark tells him he can go where the water takes him. He raises his paddle to say goodbye to Shagbark and Molly. She is very upset, but must leave to head for the sugar camp. Molly is sad during the trip. Beaver Girl keeps her distance to give Molly time to grieve for her white family. Once they are working, she is kept busy.

The vessels of syrup are very heavy. When it gets too heavy for Molly and she accidentally drops it, Panther Woman runs to her to tell her that she is as blind as a bat. Molly gets very upset and goes into the woods. When she hears a rustling in the woods, she's sure it will be Panther Woman or Squirrel Woman, but luckily it was only Beaver Girl following her and asking her to stay because she would miss her so much. She decides to turn back and finish her time at the sugar camp. While there, they are able to make enough sugar to last for the year.

When they return to Genesee Camp, she looks everywhere for Josiah to see if he has returned. Before she left, Shagbark assured her that he would return on his own. Because the hunting party has returned also, the camp is busy. She doesn't see Earth Woman, Josiah, or Shagbark. Soon after their return to camp, Earth Woman runs into Red Bird's home saying that Josiah has run away. She claims that Shagbark saw the canoe missing about three days ago, but it could have gone missing before that. The men of the camp are looking for him. Once again, she plans to run away using the route that she and Josiah had discussed, but she trips and twists her ankle. She realizes that she can't make it on her own. When she hears someone in the woods, she is worried this time that the drunken Gray Wolf may be coming for her. Thankfully, it is just the little white dog. Molly uses a stick to lean on and walks back toward the camp. Later in Earth Woman's lodge, Molly finds Earth Woman sitting on Josiah's bed holding his bow. While Molly consoles Earth Woman, Shagbark comes into the lodge and confirms that Josiah got away safely. It turns out that Earth Woman and Shagbark planned the whole thing allowing him to run away. They all miss him, but are all glad that he was be able to go home safely.



## Analysis

Kindness, as a theme, is demonstrated heavily in this chapter. Earth Woman tells the tribe that if her son were returned to her, she would let him go free, again. When Molly finds out that Earth Woman and Shagbark are in on the escape to ensure that Josiah goes free, she is relieved. Shagbark tells her that he thought they could all give him up if they knew he was safe and happy. Molly replies with gratefulness on Josiah's part. She goes on to tell them that they all knew how miserable and unhappy he was. She tells them that they are very good people because of it.

Molly may still miss her white family, but she truly has grown to understand and appreciate the kindness of the Indian people. Because she remembers what Josiah said before, that he didn't like her talking like an Indian and that they may be nice, but he'll never be one of them. When she worries if Josiah fully understood the kindness extended to him, Shagbark reassures her that he did know. Molly can be happy for Josiah and content with his absence because she knows he's safe, and she knows that he understands the kindness done for him by his Indian family.

Figurative language is used to enhance the understanding of the chapter. Personification describes the actions of a waterfall that has human characteristics. "The Falling Waters spoke to her in welcome, and again the tender beauty of the place brought solace to her aching heart" (246). When describing the head of a young deer, a simile says it's a "buck with antlers like a growing tree upon its head" (248). The use of binary opposites is a continued literary device throughout novel. One such opposite in this chapter comes with the drastic contrast between the goodness of Earth Woman and Shagbark and the meanness and anger of Squirrel Woman and Gray Wolf.

## Discussion Question 1

Compare Earth Woman and Shagbark to Squirrel Woman and Gray Wolf.

## Discussion Question 2

Why is Molly glad for Josiah instead of jealous that he escaped?

## Discussion Question 3

What is the reason that Molly runs away twice in this chapter, but then returns?

## Vocabulary

prows, debase, suspicious, apt, felled, hollowed, sap, notched, yokes, sweetfern, frantic, keen, lame, obliged, scampered, solace, gratitude





# Chapter 14

## Summary

This chapter begins with Molly in the corn field getting ready for the new green corn. She heads toward Earth Woman's lodge where she is burning the clay pots made by Beaver Girl and the one, the first, pot made by Molly. She is so proud of her accomplishment that she rushes the pot to Red Bird who makes a big deal over it and says they will cook corn in it as a celebration. While there, Shining Star calls Molly over to give her the new outfit she made for her. Her outfit is not made of deerskin, but of cloth. She feels like a real Seneca woman.

Squirrel Woman alerts the room to the arrival of pale-faces who are meeting with their chief. Gray Wolf whispers in Red Bird's ear who then talks to Squirrel Woman in hushed tones. When Molly comes out to show everyone her new clothes, Squirrel Woman takes her by the arm and insists that she change back into her old clothes. She takes Molly with a blanket out to the platform in the cornfield, tells her to sleep there tonight, and not to leave until she comes back for her. Molly is suspicious and figures that they are hiding her to keep her from being rescued, so she heads back to town to hide and peek through the chief's window. The white men are English and are explaining that they have defeated the French and want the Indians to back them. The chief sends a messenger to ask the orders from the League of the Iroquois.

The Englishman, Captain Morgan, sees Molly as he walks out the door and is surprised to see a white girl there. Molly, too, is surprised because Captain Morgan is wearing a red coat while the Frenchmen had blue coats. Captain Morgan grabs Molly's arm, but she is scared of him and can't find the words to say in English. The captain asks the chief if he would send her back to her native land. The chief explains that she is now Seneca. The captain starts saying a prayer, and Molly says that her mother used to say that. He offers the chief any amount of money to take Molly with him. The chief says that she has been adopted, and they will not trade her for ransom or for anything. Molly is frightened by the captain. She pulls away just as Squirrel Woman sees that Molly is where she isn't supposed to be. She takes Molly angrily. The captain asks Molly if they will hurt her. Although she couldn't find the words to answer, she was happy to accept the punishment that Squirrel Woman may hand out.

## Analysis

The theme of Acceptance is demonstrated in this chapter. One such example is when Molly is accepted as one of their own as she presents her first cooking pot and as she models the Seneca clothing Shining Star has made for her. Although she seems angry as usual, Squirrel Woman hides Molly in the corn to protect her from the white man, not to keep her from escaping. Molly doesn't see that until she is faced with the horror of having to leave her home and go with Captain Morgan. When the chief refuses to sell or



trade Molly, he is showing that she has been accepted as one of his own. Molly has become a true Seneca Indian and the tribe accepts her as such.

Acceptance is also exemplified in the pride that Molly has when she accomplishes the tradition of making cooking pots. Molly also takes great pride in the beautiful authentic Seneca outfit that Shining Star has made for her. She was expecting new clothes, but of deerskin, not broad cloth. Molly is very proud and very grateful to Shining Star for giving her clothes.

This chapter also includes much of the history of the actual war involving the French, the English, and the Indians. The author discusses which tribes were involved with their League of Iroquois. The chief explains that before deciding which side his tribe will support, he must get word from the higher council. He describes all of the harmful things that have happened to Indians since becoming “friends” with the white man. He states that the Indians were happy until the pale-faces began to change their way of life. Now, the Indian wants cloth to wear in place of deerskin garments, blankets take the place of fur robes, brass kettles in place of earthen pots and fire-arms for bows and arrows. Worst of all, the pale-face brings fire-water. The chief worries that the persons that can provide water that burns like fire might not be able to be called friends.

## **Discussion Question 1**

If Molly is so proud of her pot and her new clothes, why does she run to see if the white men are there to rescue her?

## **Discussion Question 2**

What shows the reader how Squirrel Woman really feels about Molly?

## **Discussion Question 3**

Why didn't Molly go with Captain Morgan?

## **Vocabulary**

bulges, sachems, modesty, pell-mell



# Chapter 15

## Summary

This chapter begins with Molly and Turkey Feather watching Blue Jay, or Blue Trout as he is now known, swim and play in the water. Canoes holding Shining Star and Squirrel Woman float up, and they are told to get in. These women, the little children, Molly, and Blue Trout all set out to pick huckleberries on a different shore. The little ones decide to make it a competition. As always, Blue Trout, stays with Molly, but because he can toddle around, he goes to pick his own berries and bring them back to Molly. Meanwhile, she gets wrapped up in the memory of picking berries with her sister, Betsey, and doesn't notice that Blue Trout is not by her. Storm Cloud runs to Molly calling for help. Blue Trout sees a pretty snake and wants to pick it up. Molly sees that it's a rattlesnake, rushes to the baby, throws a big rock at the snake, and grabs the boy to her chest. She saves him from the snakebite. As usual, grumpy Squirrel Woman says that the baby is two and should be able to know that a rattle from a snake means danger. Shining Star, however, is thankful beyond words. When they return to their shore, Molly's story is told to everyone. Her friends remind her that she also was in danger with the snake, but Shagbark explains that when a loved one is in danger, a person gains greater courage.

Molly sees that Old Fallenash, the white trader, is in town. He explains that he actually came to see Molly. When Molly asks him of news from home, he has to tell her that her family is dead. He learned from the Neighbor Dixon that her brothers gathered a group of townspeople to follow the captors, but the group got too close for the comfort of Indians with so many captives. They chose Molly and Davy to move forward with them, then they killed the rest. Afterward, her brothers ran off, and he doesn't know about them. Molly is sad. Fallenash tries to cheer her up by telling her how lucky she is to be so accepted into the tribe. They love and respect her. He can see that and knows it from their stories. He tells Molly that he and his Indian wife are having a baby, but that because of the war, they are going to be on the run. She tells him that she knows her home is there now. This time when he leaves, she waves to him and speaks of what a good man he is. Then, she falls to the ground in sadness.

## Analysis

Because Molly has basically been in charge of Blue Jay, or Blue Trout, since he was six months old, she has become very attached to him and takes pride in his accomplishments, like swimming. She believes that it won't be long before he is hunting fish instead of swimming like one. When Molly saves the baby from the rattlesnake, she is showing true courage as well as true love for the child.

She can't bear the thought of him being hurt or killed. She risks her own life with only the thought of keeping him safe. Shining Star is happy that her child is safe and so



thankful for Molly. Appreciation and love flow equally between Molly and her Indian family and friends. This entire section demonstrates the theme of Courage.

The theme of Acceptance is shown by her new sisters when they let her paddle the full canoe home after berry picking. She realizes that her sisters love and trust her. They are grateful to her for saving the baby. She is proud of herself for facing her fear of the danger and for saving the baby. She does have a new path of love, confidence, strength, courage, and hope ahead.

This chapter is full of vivid imagery that allows the reader to see into the picture being described. The snake is depicted in a vibrant way, "...a deadly snake, its tail held erect in the circle of its coiled body. Its sharp eye gleamed with wicked ugliness in the head held low in front of the S-curved neck, as the angry reptile prepared to strike. The rattles vibrated again" (271). Another clear picture is shown as Molly sees Fallenash, "...she saw a raccoon skin cap, with its striped tail waving in the air. Above the fringed deerskin hunting-shirt, she saw a man's weather-beaten face all wreathed in smiles" (276). The author uses a simile to describe Molly's grief, not over Fallenash leaving her, but over the sure news of the death of her family, "...like a young thin sapling, broken by cruel winds, she sank to the ground" (280).

Molly has finally accepted and feels good about the tribe being her home. She is thankful for all they have given her, like the decorative burden-strap from Earth Woman, all that they have taught her, like the wise words from Shagbark, and all of the love and acceptance she feels from her Indian friends and family.

## Discussion Question 1

How does knowing what happened to her original family affect Molly?

## Discussion Question 2

What is the likelihood of Squirrel Woman treating Molly better now that she saved the baby's life?

## Discussion Question 3

What evidence is there to show that the Iroquois tribe has accepted her fully into their group?

## Vocabulary

cat-tails, rushes, boggy, barberry, hardhack, erect, weather-beaten, wreathed, fleetness, hankerin'



# Chapter 16

## Summary

This chapter begins with Molly wearing her new clothes that were given to her by Shining Star. She is walking to the water to carry some back to her village. Gray Wolf waits for her. He tells her that the Indians have agreed to fight with the English against the French. She tells him that has nothing to do with her. He says that he knows she wants to go back to the pale-face, so he is selling her for gold to the English Captain Morgan. She struggles and yells that she doesn't want to go. She escapes into the corn field where she loses him in the corn stalks. When she returns to Red Bird's lodge, Shining Star is angry because she's heard what Gray Wolf is doing. She said that the chief has said that Molly will not be sold without her own consent. Because Gray Wolf is so determined to take her, Shining Star tells her to hide by the river bank. After dark, if there is a corn cake on the porch that means Gray Wolf is near and go back to hiding. That's exactly what happens. She sleeps fearfully and uncomfortably that night. The next morning Beaver Girl comes to get her, telling her that the chief has sent for her.

Turkey Feather tells Beaver Girl that Molly is unhappy and would be better off going to the pale-faced people. He even spoke to the chief about it. Beaver Girl and the children ask her not to go. Shining Star tells her that Gray Wolf is angry, and they need to settle this with the chief before he gets back. Molly reflects on a time when Josiah was offered the chance to leave and took it without thinking. When Molly enters the chief's room, it seems as if the entire town is there, even mean Gray Wolf. The chief speaks kindly to her and explains her options. He talks about all that she has learned from his people and the fact that because a treaty will soon be signed releasing all white prisoners from Indian tribes, he is giving her a chance to go now if she wishes.

Captain Morgan then speaks to her about how she has been wronged by these people. They may seem nice now, but she will grow to hate them and want revenge for all that they have done to her and her family. He tells her that he'll get her fine clothes and a proper education. After considering her options, Molly decides to stay with the Seneca tribe. Since she has shown that she is willing to give up the life of a white woman happily, the chief renames her from Corn Tassel to Little-Woman-of-Great Courage. She is filled with love, pride, strength, acceptance, and courage. She thinks back to her mother's last words to her about having courage and knows that she would be proud of her.

## Analysis

At this point in the story, Molly is no longer thinking of escaping, going back to white people, or leaving her new home at all. She is content and happy to be accepted into such a kind understanding community. Although previously, she has taken every opportunity to speak to the white people whenever she had the opportunity, she has



changed. She's on a new path as she proclaimed in the last chapter. Because Turkey Feather loves her so much, he once again intercedes on her behalf to the chief and explains that she has been sad for so long. When the chief decides to give Molly the option of staying or leaving, Turkey Feather is sure she'll go, and Beaver Girl and the children all beg her to stay. In the end, she realizes that this is her home, and these are her people now.

When Captain Morgan tries to convince her that she should leave with him and that she'll eventually hate them for what they've done, Molly feels that she is secure and at home with the Indians. Captain Morgan offers her a life of uncertainty. She is not equipped now to be a refined, educated lady among white faces. She has so much to be grateful for in her Indian home.

The need to have Courage to forge through life is a very prominent theme in this story. It begins with the boastful words of her father not fearing the Indians, which is a false courage. Her mother shows true courage when faced with danger and leaves Molly with words of wisdom that she returns to time and again. The chief tells Molly that she has learned what it is to give without thought of gain, has learned to live bravely, and to embrace life. Because of this he believes that her name can no longer continue to reflect the small girl she was when she joined them. Her name is changed to reflect her inner personality, which is courage and bravery.

## **Discussion Question 1**

Why did Molly decide to stay with the Iroquois?

## **Discussion Question 2**

What misconceptions did Captain Morgan have about Molly's life with the Indians?

## **Discussion Question 3**

What has finally changed Molly's mind about wanting to eventually go 'home'?

## **Vocabulary**

tottery, heretofore, calloused, conviction, deprived, hubbub, perseverance, tarnish



# Characters

## Molly/Corn Tassel/Little-Woman-of-Great-Courage

Molly is a young girl of 12 who is taken from her home and her family when she is captured by Indians. She goes through many hardships getting to the Indian towns where she ends up living. She flip-flops back and forth between being extremely scared, homesick, grief-stricken, and wanting to escape and finding wisdom, understanding, truth, strength, and courage in her new home. She is stronger than she thinks or gives herself credit for.

In the beginning, she tries to escape whenever she gets the chance. Then, she acts defiantly and finds out quickly that is not the way to win favor in a new place. She goes through a period of going into the woods to cry during each task she is given by the tribal women. Although she makes friends, such as Little Turtle, Beaver Girl, Earth Woman, Shagbark, and her sister Shining Star, she cannot see the good in today's life because she is wallowing in her past and how unfair life has treated her. It takes her a great while to come to terms with the fact that the Indians are nice people. They teach her many things, practical material things, emotional things, and spiritual things. She grows away from the prejudice she has been taught about the Indian people and learns to listen to them and understand their reasons for everything they do.

When she decides to give an effort to understanding and fitting into her new life, she begins to understand the culture and customs, learns to create beautiful pot and moccasins, learns to care for children, learns work ethic, learns that everyone must do his/her fair share, finds that one must work to eat, discovers that there is a story behind and a reason for all that the Indian people do and say, and most importantly develops a strength and courage of character. She understands what it means to be a good person.

## Little Turtle/Turkey Feather

Little Turtle is a young boy who is the first person to really befriend Molly. He finds her crying over her family all the time and tries to cheer her up. He tries to make her laugh. He helps to teach her the Seneca language and tries to help her stay out of trouble with her new family and with the tribe. He even speaks to the both of the chiefs they live under on her behalf asking if he would allow her to go back home. Although the first one says no, Molly appreciates his efforts and the courage it takes for a young boy to confront a chief. He is always concerned for her welfare and is willing to give her up if that is what will make her happy.

## Shagbark

Shagbark is Little Turtle's grandfather. He is actually one of the Indians who came to capture Molly in the first place. He is also the only one on the original journey to their



village who is kind to her and concerned for her welfare. He has a tender heart and many words of wisdom. When Josiah is captured and is desperate to escape, Shagbark risks his own standing in the tribe by building a boat, giving it to Josiah to leave, waiting several days to give him a head start before reporting that Josiah left, and then, acting appalled that Josiah has the nerve to run away back to his own home. He is a wise and patient teacher for both Little Turtle and Molly, as well as many others. He is Molly's safe person, the one she knows she can depend on for strength and understanding.

## **Earth Woman**

Earth Woman is the first person Molly meets when she arrives ill in Genesee Town. Earth Woman not only nurses Molly back to health, but becomes her friend and mother figure. She is like the town doctor or medicine woman. She lives alone because her son was killed. She teaches Beaver Girl - and eventually Molly - the old craft of making earthen clay cooking pots. She is given Josiah as a replacement for her dead son, but is so kind that she would rather allow him to escape and go home than stay where he is unhappy. She is in on Shagbark's escape for Josiah. Molly learns many things from her —skills and wisdom.

## **Shining Star**

Shining Star is Molly's new Indian sister who went to the fort to bargain for her. She is married with one baby boy, Blue Jay. She is extremely kind, gentle, and patient when it comes to everything, but especially to Molly. She understands that Molly must first grieve her loss, learn their ways, and slowly grow into acceptance of her new home. She is the opposite of her sister, Squirrel Woman.

## **Squirrel Woman**

Squirrel Woman is Shining Star's sister. She is the opposite of Shining Star. She is full of anger and has a quick temper. She is not loving or understanding, especially where Molly is concerned. Even when the reader can see that her harsh treatment is sometimes out of concern for Molly, she is still always harsh and gruff.

## **Beaver Girl**

Beaver Girl is Molly's age. She is shy, but wants to be friends with Molly. Once they are buddies, she begs Molly not to run away, unlike Little Turtle. She tells Molly that she loves her and can't stand the thought of Molly leaving her. When Molly tries to run away, Beaver Girl finds her in the woods and leads her back to the village before she gets into trouble.





## Red Bird

Red Bird is the mother of Shining Star, Squirrel Woman, Gray Wolf, and Good Hunter. Molly is given to her to replace her dead son. Molly becomes her adopted daughter. Although Red Bird is kind, she is also firm and strict about following rules. She welcomes Molly and teaches her that work must be done by all. Everyone contributes to the tribe, or she doesn't eat. She defends Molly against her angry daughter Squirrel Woman.

## Chief Burning Sky

He is the chief of Genesee Town. He must interact with the white men who trade and do business, as well as the ones who are all about war, such as the English and the French. He defends Molly and does not allow her to be sold the Captain Morgan. He expresses his desire for Molly to stay in the tribe, but also her understanding if she chooses to leave. He gives her the name Little-Woman-of-Great-Courage.

## Old Fallenash

Fallenash is a white trader, married to an Indian woman, who trades with both the white man and the Indians. On his first visit to Molly's village, he recognizes her, but doesn't know anything about what happened to her or her family. On his second visit, he comes specifically to explain to Molly that her family died the day the Indians took her prisoner, except for her two older brothers. He doesn't know where they are. He gives her words of encouragement to stay with the Seneca tribe because they are good to her and have accepted her as their own.

## Captain Morgan

He is the Englishman who comes to the village to ask the chief to fight with the English instead of the French. When he sees Molly, he wants to take her back to white people. On his second visit, he offers to buy her with gold, take her to live with him, and send her to a proper school. He is offended and leaves in a huff when Molly chooses to stay with the Indians.

## Josiah Johnson

He is a young man who is captured by the Seneca tribe and given to Earth Woman to replace her dead son. He is strong, fast, smart, and courageous. He is forced to run the gauntlet in order to be adopted into the tribe. He must run through the townspeople while they throw things, hit him, and stab him. He not only does it, but does it with his head held high. Although he does grow to like Earth Woman, Molly, and Shagbark, he



has no intention of staying there. When offered the opportunity to escape from Shagbark, he takes it and leaves.

## **Gray Wolf**

He is Red Bird's son. He is evil and mean. He's a drunk and only cares about getting money to buy alcohol. He makes a deal with Captain Morgan to sell Molly to the captain for gold. When that falls through, he is extremely angry, but thankfully, leaves town with Captain Morgan.

## **Chief Standing Pine**

He is the chief in Seneca Town who was confronted by Little Turtle about releasing Molly. He wouldn't do it and told Little Turtle she has to stay, but will get used to it.

## **Davy Wheelock**

He is one of Molly's neighbor's sons from back home. He was the only other person from their captured party that the Indians kept and didn't kill. He was traded to the French.

## **Nicholas Porter**

He is a young man taken prisoner from a town near Molly's. He joins Molly and Davy along the journey to the first fort. He is traded to the French.

## **Jane Jemison/Ma**

At first, Jane is a woman who cares for her children and is obedient to her overbearing husband. After being captured, she shows courage and leaves Molly with the final words urging her to find strength and courage.

## **Thomas Jemison/Pa**

He is a hard headed man who refuses to worry about Indians attacking. He is boastful about saying that he's not worried about it. After being captured, he walks in a daze and refuses to eat or drink.

## **Betsey Jemison**

Molly's older sister. They used to do chores together and shared a bed.



# Symbols and Symbolism

## Corn

Corn is symbolic in all of the places Molly lives. In her hometown, she helps her father raise corn. In both Indian villages, she does the same. The corn is the substance that keeps them all alive, fed, and well. It is also several times throughout the story a place of refuge for Molly, to hide, cry, or explore memories. The corn silk tassel is also very important because it is the color of Molly's hair and is used in the Indian name she is given—Corn Tassel.

## The Peach Tree

The blossoming peach tree at the first fort is a sign of hope for Molly. She has one like it at her home and sees it as the bright and beautiful thing that is growing by the evil looking, scary walls of the fort. When she returns for a second visit, her hope is renewed upon seeing the tree, but is quickly dashed as that is the place she is discovered by the white Frenchmen who wants to save her, but ends up causing her and her family to run away and move to Genesee Town. Finally, when she hears that the fort was overtaken by the English, her hopes are burned with the thought of the tree burning in the destroying of the fort.

## Singing Bird

The symbol of a singing bird is important. Molly sings a song that her mother had taught to her. The song of a bird can be happy or sad. In Molly's song, sadness drives her to sing. Later, Shagbark makes Molly a ladle with the carving of a singing bird on the handle. This song bird is meant to bring about happiness. When she receives it, Molly says, "A singing bird—to keep Corn Tassel—always—happy!" (101). Shining Star explains to Molly that the Indian babies wrapped tightly in the blankets listen to and mimic the sounds of the birds. This is a happy thing. Even Shining Star's baby is named Blue Jay because as an infant he can imitate the sound of this bird.

## Molly's Hair

In the beginning her father tells her that no one would ever hurt her because of her "yallar" hair. He says this again as she's being taken by the Indians. Along the journey, everyone they meet, especially her new family, is fascinated by her long yellow hair. Corn is such an important part of the Indians' lives, and her hair looks like corn silk. They even name her Corn Tassel. When she is spotted by white people, even though she's dressed as an Indian, they can see immediately that she is a white girl in captivity.



## Rainbow

Molly sees the beautiful falling water and is very impressed by the pretty rainbows she sees through the waters. Here the rainbow is a symbol of hope, just the sight of it instills hope and positive feelings in Molly.

## Corn Husk Doll

The corn husk doll that Earth Woman gives to Molly is also symbolic. It is a doll without a face that allows its owner to reflect any feelings she wishes upon the doll. It can be angry when she is angry, happy when she's happy, and so forth. Earth Woman explains, "She will smile to make you strong and well again" (150). Molly comes to a realization; "She knew in that moment that there are two kinds of sickness—sickness of the heart as well as of the body" (150).

## The Stories of the Storyteller

Just as Molly and Josiah are both captives in Genesee Town, a story teller comes to entertain the village. Before telling a story, he pulls an object from a bag and uses that as the bases of the story. First, he pulled out a stone and told a story about an orphan boy who is trying to find food for his foster mother. This is at a time when Josiah is worried about where the next meal for he and Earth Woman will come. The second object he pulls out is a feather, and he tells a story about a little boy who learns lessons from the song birds and then shares what he has learned with everyone around him. This is a time when Molly is trying to tell Josiah stories and customs of the Indians so that he can see that they are kind and gentle people.

## The River as a Path

After saving Blue Jay from the rattlesnake, Molly is allowed to row the full canoe for the first time. She feels that she is traveling a new path in life, not just the path of the river.

## Corn Cakes

These are some of the first types of food that Molly is offered at the Seneca village. At first she rejects it, but later comes to view it as comfort food. This food symbolizes her mindset and philosophy towards the Seneca and shows her shift of perspective when she begins to embrace their way of life.

## The Canoe

Until Molly has been living with them for many years, she is never allowed to go for walks by herself, or to ever row a canoe. When she is offered the opportunity to do so it is significant and indicates that they have come to love and trust her.



# Settings

## The Jemison Family Home

This is Molly's only known home with her true family. She lived here with them and was taken from here. This is the place that she longs to return to throughout the entire novel.

## Fort Duquesne

This place has significance because Molly visits it twice and something life changing happens each time. The first time she's there, she is given to the Indian sisters to take to their village. She is also separated from Davy Wheelock and Nicholas Porter. The second time she's there, she is questioned by white people who want to save her from the savages forcing her sisters to flee to another town with Molly to keep them from taking her. The symbolic peach tree is also found by the wall of the fort.

## Seneca Town

This is Molly's first Indian home. Here, she meets her new family, learns the value and importance of hard work, and is given various tasks to take care of. She also becomes friends with Little Turtle here.

## Genesee Town

This is Molly's second Indian home. This is the town she and her sisters escape to after the white French people try to "save" Molly. This is also the main town of the Seneca people. She meets Earth Woman, Beaver Girl, and Josiah Johnson here. She is also joined in this town by her Indian family, Shagbark, and Little Turtle. This is the place she lives when she decides to stay with the Seneca people.

## The Forest

Many times Molly finds herself in the forest, either alone, or with friends. The forest comes to represent an intermediary place, a type of limbo, where she can take a breath, consider what has happened, or is about to happen, and come to some understanding of herself or her life.



# Themes and Motifs

## Strength and Courage

In the beginning of the story, Molly's dad tries to act like he is not scared of an Indian attack. He is not showing true courage, but taking unnecessary risks that actually lead to Molly's capture and the deaths of most of his family, including himself. Before her parents are killed, Molly's mom is the one who shows true courage. She guides her kids as far on the trail as the Indians take them all. She encourages them to eat and drink. She tells them to be brave. As Molly is being taken from her, she tells her to have courage and show bravery. It is her words, "No matter where you are, Mary, my child, have courage, be brave! It don't matter what happens, if you're strong and have great courage" (29). These words do not only send Molly off to the unknown a bit less fearful, but these are the words that she returns to over and over again throughout the story. These words lay the foundation on which Molly begins to build her character and are the traits she looks for in everyone she meets in life.

Molly's strength of character is showing through. She tries to stay upbeat and encourage Davy. She tries to find out as much as she can from the only other English speaking person with them, Nicholas Porter. When they finally see a destination in sight, Molly tries to give Davy hope of some kind of help coming to them.

Molly becomes disheartened and actually shows a lack of strength by first not completing her assigned tasks, by crying in the forest and trying to think of ways to escape, and by being disrespectful and rude when the old woman tries to give her food. Not everyone can be strong and brave all of the time. This is Molly's time to feel her despair.

Shagbark speaks a lot about courage and strength. When Molly saves the baby from the rattlesnake, she is showing true courage as well as true love for the child. She can't bear the thought of him being hurt or killed. She risks her own life with only the thought of keeping him safe. Shining Star is happy that her child is safe and so thankful for Molly. "You went straight into danger...you thought not once of yourself...and you saved my son's life. No member of Blue Jay's family can ever forget. As long as you live, you will have our gratitude and his!"(275). Appreciation and love flow equally between Molly and her Indian family and friends. When her friends point out that she, too, was in danger with the snake, Shagbark says, "When someone we love is in danger...the Great Spirit makes us strong and gives us courage" (275). The themes of courage and strength are addressed when Turkey Feather tells Molly she needs to toughen up and again when Shagbark treats the situation with kindness and concern.

The theme of courage appears in a negative way when Molly loses hope and becomes fearful of the unknown journey that lay ahead. She loses all courage in the face of her sisters' anger and the worry of what happens to her next. She dreads the trip knowing that once again she is unprepared for the hardships ahead.



The rebuilding of strength and courage are themes that rise and fall throughout the novel. At one point, Molly is given many different ways to regain her strength and courage through stories with lessons, through the corn husk doll, and through the making of the cooking-pots.

## Kindness and Acceptance

The first kindness shown in this novel is when Shagbark takes care of Molly along the trail to the first fort. He picks her up when she falls, ties her shoes, carries her when necessary, and stops another Indian from hitting her with a tomahawk. White children were taught that Indians were cruel, savages, but he is the first Indian to help break that negative stereotype. By keeping her mother's words of courage and through the breaking down of the savage stereotype by Shagbark, Molly begins to see that a person's character is important, particularly courage and kindness.

Shining Star, one of Molly's new Indian sisters, is very kind and tries to counter or prevent any meanness set forth by the cross sister. Although the ladies at the ceremony were scary to her at first, while they were grieving, Molly can see from their friendly smiles and happy faces that they intend to be kind to her. Then, when Molly sees the sisters' mother for the first time, she smiles broadly at her as she offers food, even when Molly refuses the food the second time. Although everyone in the lodge is looking at and touching Molly, she does not feel threatened and is comfortable enough to fall asleep in the room. She knows they mean her no harm. Finally, the pretty sister carries her to bed and lovingly tucks her in. Things could have been so much worse. From the stories throughout her childhood, Molly has been told that Indians are cruel, evil, savages who only want to cause fear and harm to white people. Luckily, Molly has not seen this in these people. As in any culture, there are good and bad people, but as a whole, the people of Seneca Town are kind to Molly.

Kindness becomes a topic again as Molly is befriended by a young Indian boy who takes pity on the crying gal and tries to cheer her up. He also guides her back to her duties to ensure that she will not be punished for unfinished tasks. Although the things he says sound, "harsh, strange and meaningless" (83) to Molly, she understands that he is trying to be kind to her. After leading her back to the village, he even turns to smile at her before disappearing into his own home. He wants to make sure that she knows he is friendly and means to be kind to her.

Little Turtle is kind to and worried about Molly. He tries to cheer her, bring her gifts, and even speaks to the chief on her behalf. The chief is kind when he takes the time to explain to Little Turtle why he will not allow Molly to leave and how war effects all involved. Being the most important person in the tribe, he could have dismissed the child saying something like, "She can't go because I said so!" However, he shows kindness in his treatment of the boy. As always, Shagbark is kind to Little Turtle and Molly. He also takes the time to explain to Little Turtle why he is not yet ready for a grown man's bow and arrow set. He tries to cheer Molly and show compassion and





acceptance by carving a special ladle of her very own. She does not totally forget her sadness, but is touched by the gestures of Little Turtle and Shagbark.

Kindness is also shown again when Shagbark, as always, is comforting and kind to Molly's distress. Although Old Fallenash will not take Molly with him, he is truly being kind and tries to explain why she is better off there. He says, "It's a fine, free, open life and you can be happy if you'll just make up your mind to like it. The Indians don't work half so hard as the whites and they get lots more joy out of life" (187). He also shows his kindness by giving Molly a string of glass beads, so she can always remember him and that she should try to be happy.

As Shagbark is watching Earth Woman make Molly a new burden-strap, he says, "Weave them together with kindness...then the burden on her back will never cut her forehead or give Corn Tassel pain" (192). Even though Josiah Johnson is sent through the gauntlet, Molly tries to explain to him how kind the tribe really is. He doesn't believe it because of the stereotypes he's always been taught and because they made him run the gauntlet. Josiah says, "Don't tell me you believe that the cruel, revengeful Indians who can half kill a poor captive in the gauntlet, know what kindness is!" (205). Molly answers, "I believe every word they say...I never knew what kindness meant until I came here—perhaps because I never needed it so much till now" (205). Once again, kindness is discussed when the tribal council decides that Josiah is worthy of adoption, and they give the young man as a son to Earth Woman. "The Great Spirit has given you a son...in place of the one you lost," Molly says (202). Earth Woman replies, "The Great Spirit's kindness is so great, it cannot be measured" (202).

Earth Woman tells the tribe that if her son were returned to her, she would let him go free "...rather than see him suffer...Let him go. Do not bring him back to me!" (242). When Molly finds out that Earth Woman and Shagbark are in on the escape to ensure that Josiah goes free, she is relieved. Shagbark tells her that he thought they could all give him up if they knew he was safe and happy. Molly replies, "My heart overflows with gratitude. You knew how miserable and unhappy he was. You helped him to get away. You are all kindness and goodness" (249). Molly may still miss her white family, but she truly has grown to understand and appreciate the kindness of the Indian people. Because she remembers what Josiah said before, that he didn't like her talking like an Indian and that they may be nice, but he'll never be one of them, she asks Shagbark, "'Do you think he knew, too?' 'He knew!' said Shagbark" (249). Molly can be happy for Josiah and content with his absence because she knows he's safe, and she knows that he understands the kindness done for him by his Indian family.

## Loss

The first obvious loss is when Molly and Davy are taken from their families. They are left to grieve and take care of themselves for the most part. Molly cries a lot and sometimes becomes defiant in the beginning when she thinks about home and all that she has lost. Each of the captive children given to Indian families are given to them because one of their children died, and this is an act to alleviate the pain of the family's loss.



When Josiah comes to the village, Molly becomes attached to him. He brings joy to her world, not only because he is also white as she is, but because they shared common backgrounds. However, unlike Josiah, Molly has assimilated to the life in the camp, and Josiah is determined never to do so. Molly tries to convince him that they are, in many ways, better off in the Indian camp, but as a male living in that era, he disagreed. When he uses the canoe and escapes, he leaves Molly to grieve his loss.

Later, Molly finds herself mourning the loss of her family after Fallenash comes to the village to tell her that they were killed after she was captured. The reader learns, later, that this might not be entirely true since everyone lost track of her brothers once they fled into the woods. It was assumed that they were killed, or that they died of exposure in the wilderness. Nonetheless, as far as Molly is concerned, they are gone forever. This loss means that she no longer has any ties, whatsoever, to her former life. There is no one from her family left living.

Loss is shown to be both a blessing and a disaster in this novel. The loss of her family, while devastating, actually moved her into a situation where she was valued more because of her femaleness than she would otherwise have been accorded while living in the white settlements. Secondly, the loss of her culture and earlier way of living was also shown to have benefited her as the Native Americans were more aptly fit to live healthily in the environment in which they found themselves. While the loss of her family, her former way of life, and her culture were at times trying and devastating for Molly, it is also shown that the loss also benefited her. She realizes this in the end and opts to stay with the Iroquois.

## Stereotyping

The Indians and the white people have been told similar horrible traits about the other group. They teach their children to hate and fear each other based on these stereotypes. The most prevalent stereotype in this novel is that all Indians are savage, cruel, beasts who will only kill and steal from the white man. However, the Indians are also taught similar ideas about whites. These stereotypes are reinforced in war when each side does kill, steal, capture and frighten families. It is only by keeping an open mind and really looking at the people, their customs, their values, and their morals that these stereotypes are ever lifted or disproved.

This is evident when Molly is first taken by the Indians and she keeps waiting for them to roast her and eat her. When this doesn't happen, she begins to watch for an opportunity to run away. When she observes the women interacting with the men as if they are equals, she takes this, initially, as proof of their uncivilized ways. She is particularly upset when the women force her into the water to take a bath. This was also something that she found completely repugnant, since washing in a lake and not a tub was uncivilized.

She also doesn't want to eat the food that they offer her. This is in large part to her believing that they wanted to poison her, or that they were feeding her something that



would make her ill. Later, when she understands enough of their language, she realizes that they were actually offering her the best of what they had in an attempt to help her gain her strength back. She later feels ashamed at her actions at that time.

## Escape

In many instances throughout the novel various characters contemplate escape. First, of course, there is Molly. The first instance that she thinks of escape is when she is first brought to Fort Duquesne. She panics and runs into the woods, only to be brought back. Later, she considers escaping after she's been taken to Seneca Village. However, she quickly realizes that there is no way that she can run as she doesn't even really know where she is or how far she would have to go in order to find help.

Later, when Josiah comes to the village, he discusses escape. He never assimilates like Molly does, however, and never stops longing to escape. Molly understands where he is mentally and emotionally and tries to help him see the Iroquois the way she does, but it doesn't work. Molly, when around Josiah, still longs for her family that she later learns are almost certainly all dead. She wants to escape mentally from the grief this knowledge brings her.

Escape is also viewed in a different perspective, especially once Molly begins to see the Iroquois as her family. When she is offered a chance to leave, she refuses. Escape is possible for her, but she no longer needs or wants it. Escape, for so many years, had been a constant litany inside her head, despite how involved she became in the day to day living in the village.

There are many types of escape illustrated in the novel. First, there is the escape of the physical body, where one runs away from something or someone. Then, there is the more subtle escape. This is the type of escape that one does with one's mind. Molly shows this type of escape when she slips into memories of her family, or when she sings songs from when she was living with the whites. When she is discovered singing, often she is beaten by Gray Squirrel.

# Styles

## Point of View

This entire story is told from a third person limited point of view. The reader is told what is happening and what is said by an unknown third party who is not a character in the story. All of the settings and scenery are also described by this narrator. It is considered a limited point of view because the reader is only shown the thoughts of Molly and only at certain times in the story's plot.

## Language and Meaning

The language throughout this novel is extremely descriptive. All scenes are told in such vivid detail that the reader cannot help but visualize what is actually happening in the story. Since the story is set in the 1700s and most of the characters are either rural farmers or Indians, the use of slang on the rural characters' parts and foreign words on the Indian characters' parts is often used throughout the entire story. This helps to authenticate the time period and region in which the story is set.

## Structure

This historical fiction is set up in chronological order. The plot follows a timeline through history when the French and the English were not only fighting over land, but were also trying to convince the Indians to join their side to fight. The book consists of 16 chapters, long in length, but separated according to significant events in history and in the life of the characters.



## Quotes

There's the stock wants tendin'—they need fodder to chomp on through the night. And the milkin' not even started. Sun's got nigh two hours 'fore dark. Reckon that's time enough for a gal to go a mile and back."—

-- Thomas Jemison (Chapter 1 paragraph Page 2)

**Importance:** This quote shows the dialect of the rural farmer. He uses many slang and/or altered words to describe what he's talking about.

Huddled together, tramping on each other's heels, like a flock of uncertain sheep, the frightened people walked.

-- Narrator (Chapter 2 paragraph Page 20)

**Importance:** The use of this simile helps to create a vision and a feeling or atmosphere of how the people looked and felt based on the comparison to scared sheep blindly following each other to an uncertain destination.

Courage was better than fear, Molly said to herself. Courage helped not only yourself but others. She must have courage, not only for herself but for Davy.

-- Molly (Chapter 2 paragraph Page 31)

**Importance:** After seeing her mother's courage during their capture and remembering her words of advice about courage, this is one of the first times that Molly acknowledges that she needs courage and should help others as well.

Have courage, Molly, my child, be brave! It don't matter what happens if you're only strong and have great courage.

-- Jane Jemison (Chapter 3 paragraph Page 50)

**Importance:** These are the last words that Molly's mom says to her, and she remembers them over and over throughout the story.

War is a cruel master. War is never kind to the enemy.

-- Chief Standing Pine (Chapter 6 paragraph Page 90)

**Importance:** This is part of a conversation between Little Turtle and Chief Standing Pine where the chief is explaining that war with the white man is basically an eye for an eye. They only do to the enemy what has been done to them.

She had learned that from now on she must work if she would eat.

-- Molly (Chapter 6 paragraph Page 104)

**Importance:** This is after Molly is sent to bed without supper because she threw a tantrum in the corn field and knocked over valuable corn seed. Then she spent the day having fun with Little Turtle.



Now she had learned on thing more—that the cold look on the face of an Indian was not indifference. She knew now that he suffered as much as others, but he bore his pain without a sign, because he had great courage.

-- Molly (Chapter 7 paragraph Page 110)

**Importance:** This is when Molly starts to understand that the stereotypes she had been taught about the Indians were not really true. They are noble people.

A dreadful truth like a burning fire consumed her. Molly Jemison had begun to think like an Indian, to see white people from the Indian point of view.

-- Narrator (Chapter 7 paragraph Page 124)

**Importance:** Molly is not only rethinking the stereotypes about how whites see Indians, but also now how Indians see whites.

The tree, like a magnet, drew her on.

-- Narrator (Chapter 8 paragraph Page 131)

**Importance:** This discusses the effect that the peach tree at Fort Duquesne had on her. She felt drawn to it as a symbol of hope and of home.

She knew in that moment that there are two kinds of sickness—sickness of the heart as well as of the body.

-- Narrator (Chapter 9 paragraph Page 150)

**Importance:** Molly thinks this after she is healed by Earth Woman. It is the first time that she begins to observe that the Iroquois are truly treating her kindly and that they actually cared about her well being. She also knows that while she was physically ill, she was also emotionally ill. This Earth Woman fixed too.

You went straight into danger...you thought not once of yourself...and you saved my son's life. No member of Blue Jay's family can ever forget. As long as you live, you will have our gratitude and his!

-- Shining Star (Chapter 15 paragraph Page 275)

**Importance:** This is what Shining Star says to Molly after she risks her own life to save Blue Jay from a rattle snake. It is at this point that both Molly and her adoptive Iroquois family understand where her heart lies.

I wish to stay. The Senecas are my people. I will live and die with the Senecas.

-- Molly (Chapter 16 paragraph 296)

**Importance:** This quote signals the end to Molly's transformation. She has made her decision to embrace, fully, the Seneca lifestyle and culture.