

# **Jason's Gold Study Guide**

## **Jason's Gold by Will Hobbs**

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# Plot Summary

Jason's Gold by Will Hobbs begins with fifteen-year-old Jason Hawthorn standing on the street in front of Grand Central Depot hawking newspapers. On that morning, July 17, 1897, the headline of the New York Herald was "Gold in Alaska". Hawthorn, like thousands of others, is immediately bitten by "Klondicitis" and the need to make the trek cross country and into the rugged wilds of Canada to reach Dawson City. The trek is a long and dangerous one, particularly when people begin to trek into Alaska and over the border into Canada, where they are faced with intolerable weather conditions, starvation, and mountains that are nearly impossible to pass.

It takes Jason Hawthorn nearly a year to make it from Seattle to Dawson City. Jason faces the loss of his inheritance, which is used to stake his brothers' claim, a trip aboard the Yakima as a stowaway, the meeting with the unscrupulous Frank Barker. The real journey begins after Jason meets a young Jack London. Many months are spent getting to Skagway and then traversing the Chilkoot Pass into Dawson City.

Jason learns a lot about himself along the way, and the reader gets to go along on the journey as Jason learns about responsibility, faith in his own abilities, and perhaps most importantly, that not everyone in the world sees things the way he does, particularly when it comes to strength of character and doing the right things for the right reasons.

The final destination for the prospectors is Dawson City, also known as The Golden City. Dawson City is located in the upper part of western Canada near the Alaska border. Dawson City is the site of the latest gold rush and was formed by the prospectors that traveled cross country to make their fortunes. In the beginning there was nothing in the region. That all changed after George Washington Carmack staked his first claim.

Hobbs describes the terrain and the difficulties of the journey well enough to make the reader think that he is there alongside Jason Hawthorn and the others that have traveled thousands of miles to live their dreams of becoming rich from panning gold. One can almost feel the cold as Jason treks out into the snow to find food, the sleet and rain on Laberge, and the numbness and pain of carrying many hundreds of pounds over the Golden Stairs.

There is a lot to be learned about Jason Hawthorn, including his sterling character, sense of right and wrong and astounding amount of drive and determination. Every time Hawthorn feels his determination waning or something happens to beat him down, someone or something comes to his aid, as if his deceased father is watching over him and prodding him to keep moving forward.

The relationships Jason makes along the way will certainly be memorable and lasting ones. They include meetings with Frank Barker, Jack London, Jamie Dunavant and Charlie Maguire.



In the end, approximately one hundred thousand people attempted to get to the Klondike to make their fortunes. About forty thousand actually made it, many died, and in the end only a few hundred people struck it rich. In the case of the Hawthorns, they benefitted from the Gold Rush, but as entrepreneurs.

The main facts in the book are true. Hobbs simply added to them to create an adventure one will never forget.



# Part 1, Chapters 1-7

## Part 1, Chapters 1-7 Summary

Chapter one begins with fifteen-year-old Jason Hawthorn standing on the street in front of Grand Central Depot hawking newspapers. On that morning, July 17, 1897, the headline of the New York Herald was "Gold in Alaska". People rush to Hawthorn to buy one of the papers to learn about the next great gold rush. Hawthorn has not had the opportunity to read the story yet and is anxious to sell his papers so he can steal away and read about the latest discovery. Hawthorn has only been in New York for five days, after taking ten months to cross the country from Seattle. Now Hawthorn discovers that the first shipment of gold has arrived in his hometown.

Hawthorn immediately slips into a fantasy about discovering his own fortune. He thinks about his brothers, Abraham and Ethan, who are probably curious about the gold rush but are also devoted to their jobs at the saw mill. Hawthorn recalls his father's goal of never becoming a wage slave. The brothers may have fallen into that trap, but Hawthorn insists that he will not.

Going back to Seattle now would be breaking his promise to stay away for a year before returning home. Hawthorn reasons that ten months is nearly a year and that is close enough. Hawthorn decides it is time to go home.

In chapter two, the gold rush becomes the topic of every conversation across the country. Tens of thousands of people set out for Alaska, even though many are unsure where the Klondike is located or how to get there. Misinformation abounds. Eventually it is learned that the place to be is Dawson City, a town at the confluence of the Klondike and Yukon Rivers.

Hawthorn is desperate to get in on the action and hops a real car to Minot, North Dakota. Along the way, Hawthorn meets two men in the real car. One is a younger man who has a fondness for whiskey and relentlessly reciting the Gelett Burgess verse about the "Purple Cow": "I never saw a purple cow; I never hope to see one; but I can tell you anyhow; I'd rather see than be one!" (p. 9). The other person in real car was an old grizzled man returning to the Klondike. The old man tells Hawthorn about his adventures in the '49 gold rush and how he would give up everything just to see the elephant. The old man explains the idiom which involves a farmer who loses everything in order to see an elephant at a local circus.

In chapter three, Hawthorn is less interested in hearing the story about the elephant that he is learning about what it would take to get to the Klondike and make his fortune. The old man gives the details, and Hawthorn learns that he has just enough money to make the trip if he spends his entire inheritance.



Hawthorn talks about the death of his parents and his work at the cannery. Hawthorne explains his father's notion of wage slavery and how he is not to going to be a wage slave. Hawthorn decides that he will be better off if he can get his brothers to lend him \$250 for the trip. Convincing the brothers will not be easy, but Klondike fever prompts Hawthorn to try.

Hawthorn and the old-timer go their separate ways in Helena Montana. As the trip goes on, Hawthorn becomes more and more excited and cannot wait to see his brothers and to get underway to finding his fortune.

It takes Hawthorn eight days to get from New York to Seattle. When Hawthorn arrives at Mrs. Beal's Boarding House, he is stunned to find out that his brothers are gone. Mrs. Beal explains that the brothers have been struck by Klondicitis and left Seattle shortly after the arrival of the Portland. Abraham has left a letter for Jason explaining their plans. The brothers have taken every cent they own, including their inheritance, to try and make their fortune. Abraham says he was unable to contact Jason to secure his approval regarding their decision. Abraham tells Jason that the enterprise is for the entire family, and even though Jason will be with them only in spirit, the treasure they find will be split three ways. Jason also learns that in order to make the trip to Skagway, Abraham and Ethan have used his inheritance. Jason is now broke and stranded.

In chapter four, Hawthorn is aboard the Yakima as a stowaway. Hawthorn is hidden beneath a tarp inside a canoe. Outside, Hawthorn hears the sounds of many horses. The horses are frightened and the sounds become much worse as the ship sets sail. Hawthorn thinks that it sounds as if the horses are being butchered alive. With all of the noise coming from the horses and the ship itself, Hawthorn cannot tell if there is anyone else present in the cargo hold. Hawthorn takes a chance and slips out of his hiding place. He spots a kid no more than seventeen years old. The kid, who turns out to be a legitimate passenger, also spots Hawthorn. Hawthorn learns that the passenger, Frank "the Kid" Barker, could be a potential friend. Barker offers to show Hawthorn around the ship. Up on the deck passengers are crammed together, many of which are complaining due to the lack of space and a broken promise of having his own berth. The crew is not in the least sympathetic.

In chapter five, the chaos aboard the ship worsens as dinnertime arrives and there are only twenty-six seats available. Hawthorn is hungry and begins to look for the food stashed in his pack. Barker invites Hawthorn to dinner with his boss, Captain Smith. Hawthorn reluctantly agrees. Hawthorn enters a luxurious stateroom where he meets Smith, the Reverend Charles Bowers, Old Man Tripp, and Jim Foster. Hawthorn is amazed by their lack of want for anything. The meal is good and Hawthorn does not know what to think. Smith invites Hawthorn to come back the next day.

As the meetings with Smith and Barker continue, Hawthorn becomes more and more confused. Barker keeps talking about the grand opportunities for wealth in Skagway, not from a miner's hard work, but from business opportunities that arrive with each passenger. Eventually Hawthorn learns that Barker is a thief. Barker tries to get Hawthorn involved, saying that he has a perfectly innocent face and will never be



suspected. Hawthorn is offended and tells Barker that he has honor and will not commit the crime. Barker tells Hawthorn he will regret the decision.

In chapter six, three crew members pull Hawthorn aside and ask for a ticket. Immediately, Hawthorn knows that Barker has turned him in to the crew. The crew members steal Hawthorn's money, hit him on the head and toss him out onto a beach in Juneau. When Hawthorn awakes, he is cold and his head is bloody. Hawthorn finds his pack and goes back to sleep. In the morning, Hawthorn meets Jack, a twenty-year-old sitting by a fire. Hawthorn uses the premise of a book Jack is reading to introduce himself. The men talk. Jack offers Hawthorn breakfast in exchange for his story. Hawthorn eagerly obliges and fills up on bacon and flapjacks. Hawthorn also learns about Jack's story and how he and his group are headed to Skagway in canoes. When the group boards the canoes and prepares to leave, Jack calls out to Hawthorn and tells him to get in, that he has to catch up to his brothers.

In chapter seven, Hawthorn describes things he sees along the way to Skagway and also discusses the presence of the fjords and Chilkoot and White Passes. White Pass was used almost solely by the Raven clan of the Tlingit tribe. Prospectors began to arrive in the 1870s and soon other tribes and horse packers began to flood the area, knowing that there was money to be made.

Hawthorn arrives in Skagway and describes the scene. Thousands of people have arrived in the town, and everywhere Hawthorn looks, there are makeshift businesses from restaurants to pharmacies, making money off of those traveling north. Naturally the prices are exorbitant.

The author introduces William Moore, a retired steamboat captain. Ten years before, Moore had the foresight to erect a house on the shore in Skagway, knowing that sooner or later a gold rush would hit the area. When that happened, Moore would own all of the land and could make a fortune by selling it to blossoming entrepreneurs. What Moore did not count on was the sheer number of people that would arrive, those that paid little to no attention to Moore's deed or presence.

Hawthorn surveys the town and spots the Yakima. Hawthorn makes sure he is not seen by Barker or the others. Hawthorn compares the activity as an anthill that has just been kicked over by a boot.

It is at Skagway that Hawthorn learns the Chilkoot Pass cannot be conquered on horseback. The cliffs are simply too steep. It is at this point that Hawthorn and London part ways once more. London plans to take the Chilkoot Pass; Hawthorn opts for the longer but easier White Pass.

## **Part 1, Chapters 1-7 Analysis**

In chapter one, the reader is introduced to young Jason Hawthorn. Hawthorn is a fifteen-year-old boy who has just arrived in New York after taking ten months to cross the country from Seattle. Hawthorn feels he has something to prove and is determined



to make it on his own. As a result, Hawthorn is growing up fast. Hawthorn has conviction above everything else. Whenever the conviction starts to fail, Hawthorn thinks of his deceased father. The father had always warned his three sons about becoming wage slaves as he had. This warning always stays with Hawthorn and helps him to justify why he left his job at the cannery in Seattle. Hawthorn's brothers stayed behind, opting to keep their jobs at a local sawmill. It is clear that Hawthorn respects his brothers but in some way he also pities them.

In chapter two, Hawthorn meets up with the old man and the young drunk. Hawthorn immediately puts himself above the drunk, not in a conceited way, but rather realizing that his goals were far more important than the bottle of whiskey. The old man raises Hawthorn's interest and gives Hawthorn a shot in the arm by giving the boy valuable information about his upcoming trek from Seattle to the Yukon.

Chapter three finds Hawthorn back in Seattle. Hawthorn receives a great shock when he learns that Abe and Ethan have given into Klondicitis. The brothers, particularly Abe, is much too responsible to go on such an adventure. Hawthorn is upset to learn that Abe and Ethan have taken his inheritance but cannot stay mad at his brothers. Despite this major setback, Hawthorn makes plans to move onward. Hawthorn has no idea about the adventure that awaits him.

In chapter four, Hawthorn meets Frank "the Kid" Barker. Barker is a polished English lad, one that immediately raises some suspicion in Hawthorn. Barker gives Hawthorn the notion that he may not turn him in to the officials for being a stowaway. Hawthorn is already somewhat scared but takes Barker's words that no one will suspect he is aboard illegally.

In chapter five, Hawthorn's initial gut feeling proves to be correct. After being wowed by the luxury of Smith's stateroom and everything that wealth has to offer, Hawthorn learns that the group is nothing more than a ring of thieves. No matter how much Barker insists that Hawthorn join them, Hawthorn will not budge. Hawthorn's father fought in the Civil War and was an honorable man. To take part in Smith's operation would tarnish his honor and, in turn, his father's honor. Hawthorn is ready to be rid of Barker and ignores his threat.

In chapter six, Barker makes good on his threat and has Hawthorn forcibly removed from the ship. Hawthorn is beaten and his money is stolen. The incident turns out to be fortuitous, because it puts Hawthorn in the path of a young Jack London.

Chapter seven finds Hawthorn in Skagway. The amount of activity is staggering to Hawthorn as is the lack of civility and honor. Hawthorn cannot stand to see the immoral acts of others, showing his tender heart and solid sense of right and wrong.





# Part 1, Chapters 8-11

## Part 1, Chapters 8-11 Summary

In chapter eight, Hawthorn struggles with the massive number of people that have the same dream he has and are better equipped to realize that dream. The crowds in Skagway are immense. Most of the people there are greenhorns, like Hawthorn. Hawthorn is still struggling to figure out how to keep going with no food, money, or proper gear. Hawthorn watches as people attempt to load up pack horses. Many do not know one end of the horse from another. Others do not use saddle blankets, put saddles on backward and do not understand how to properly care for a horse. Hawthorn decides to approach two men and makes a deal with them. For \$10 a day and food, Hawthorn will pack and care for their horses. The men know a good deal when they see it and take the offer.

Along the way, Hawthorn comes across many people that are headed back the other way. Some are horse packers, some have simply given up on their dreams. Hawthorn finds the horse packers that helped Abe and Ethan and learns that they are not very far ahead. It is possible for Hawthorn to catch them. The scene along the way is a shocking one. Many animals, mostly horses, are near starvation. Others are shot and left behind when they can no longer pull the heavy loads. Hawthorn cannot bear to see all of the death and cruelty.

Hawthorn eventually parts ways with Robinson and Bailey. Nearby Hawthorn sees a man in the river, bellowing and screaming at his dogs. Hawthorn stands by helpless as the big man drowns his dogs. As the man reaches for his fifth and final dog, Hawthorn steps in and asks to take the dog. The man has clearly lost his mind but allows Hawthorn to take the dog. Shortly after Hawthorn and the dog walk away, the man shoots and kills himself.

In chapter nine, Skagway continues to boom. Hawthorn passes back through on his way to White Pass, now referred to as Dead Horse Trail. People talk about thieves and how they are taking advantage of the situation. It is one thing to lose one's money through bad schemes or gambling, it is another to have the money stolen by crooks. Hawthorn is not surprised to learn that Captain Jefferson Randolph Smith is now what passes for law enforcement in the town. Smith robs people blind and there is nothing that can be done about it. Once again, Hawthorn spots Barker, who seems to be enjoying his role on Smith's team.

Hawthorn sees an incident involving a man that has received a fake telegram from home and is outraged at the deception. Hawthorn wishes that there was some way to turn the tables on the thieves.

Hawthorn uses the money he made with Robinson and Bailey to buy food for himself and the dog, plus warm clothes and blankets. Hawthorn decides to splurge on a meal in



a restaurant. The steak Hawthorn eats is rancid, and soon Hawthorn is stricken by food poisoning. Hawthorn becomes so sick that he collapses on the trail. When he awakes he sees the face of a young girl.

In chapter ten, Hawthorn wakes up to find Jamie Dunavant looking over him. Jamie's father, Homer, saved Hawthorn after he passed out. The couple exchanges stories. Jamie and her father are also on their way to the Yukon. Homer sold the family farm, and they have sold everything they own to make the trip. Jamie is full of confidence and ambition. The girl's demeanor is catching and Hawthorn finds himself feeling renewed. Aside from a dwindling cash flow, the only concern Jamie has now is time. Although it is August, winter will be arriving very soon and will surely prevent many from reaching the Yukon before the waters freeze.

In chapter eleven, Hawthorn heads toward Chilkoot. Along the way, Hawthorn encounters many people in the camps who are friendly and are willing to feed him and King. Hawthorn likes the camps but wishes there were not so many people because it makes travel difficult.

The Golden Stairs are a daunting sight. Hawthorn begins to wonder if he can make it. With King by his side pulling weight, Hawthorn convinces himself that they can make it. It is a long, slow, laborious climb, but the pair makes it to the top and into Canada.

If the predictions are correct, Hawthorn only has to go to two more places before he can catch up with his brothers. The first place is Lake Lindeman. This lake is extremely hard to navigate, particularly since the weather has started to turn bad. It takes several days to get across and on toward Lake Bennett. It is at Lake Bennett that Hawthorn hopes to meet up with his brothers. When Hawthorn arrives, he learns that Abe and Ethan are already gone. Hawthorn is devastated, and after failing to find work, wonders if he should turn around and go home.

## **Part 1, Chapters 8-11 Analysis**

Chapter eight shows a great deal about Hawthorn's character. Hawthorn cannot stand to see suffering, particularly when it comes about through cruelty. The horses and other animals that are killed or are left to die hurt Hawthorn's heart to the point that he can no longer look, although averting his eyes from the tragic scene is nearly impossible.

Like the opportunists at Skagway, Hawthorn needs to find money. Unlike the thieves, Hawthorn refuses to steal. Throughout the story, Hawthorn thinks of ways in which he can work his way north by packing horses, carpentering, or anything else that will help him to earn an honest wage. Hawthorn does not have it in him to be dishonest.

Something in Hawthorn breaks when he sees the man drowning his dogs. Hawthorn feels that by standing by silent he is in some way responsible for the dogs' deaths. It is clear to Hawthorn that something has happened to the man, that Klondicitis has caused him to lose his senses just like many others. Hawthorn begins to wonder if he has lost his mind.



In chapter nine, Hawthorn learns more about Captain Smith's story and how he is a ruthless man. The stories reinforce Hawthorn's gut feelings. After seeing what Smith is doing, Hawthorn feels a genuine sense of loathing toward him and his people, including Barker. Hawthorn also realizes that he should trust the instincts of his dog. If he had, he would not have eaten the spoiled steak.

In chapter ten, Hawthorn meets Jamie and Homer Dunavant. Hawthorn is attracted to Jamie, not only because of her looks, but because she is full of ambition, confidence, and determination. At this point, Hawthorn had really begun to lose hope and the drive to go on. After talking with Jamie and Homer, Hawthorn's resolve is renewed. Hawthorn also faces the pain of losing his dog and finds it appropriate that his new companion carries the name King.

Chapter eleven finds Hawthorn on his way to Chilkoot. The trek tests Hawthorn's new found resolve. He visits various camps and finds the people to be friendly. People seem to like King, which gives Hawthorn the opportunity to get several free meals.

Facing the Golden Stairs is almost too much for Hawthorn to bear. Seeing Jamie and Homer is another shot in the arm and Hawthorn is both impressed and revived.

Arriving at Lake Bennett is a dream come true. Surely Hawthorn will be able to catch up with Abe and Ethan. It is heartbreaking for Hawthorn to learn that his brothers did not have to wait for a boat to be built and that they are gone again. Despair begins to set in.



# Part 1, Chapters 12-13

## Part 1, Chapters 12-13 Summary

In chapter twelve, Hawthorn crosses paths with London again. Although the two barely know each other, it is as if they are long lost friends. Hawthorn and London share stories of their adventures so far. London says he wishes he would have known he would see Hawthorn again because Shepard dropped out and another partner was taken on. There is no room for Hawthorn and King. London offers Hawthorn Shepard's outfit and tells him where to find it. Hawthorn is shocked at the kind offer. London says it is a fair trade for some of Hawthorn's stories.

If Hawthorn is going to accept the pack, he will have to brave the Chilkoot many more times. Somehow Hawthorn finds the resolve to take on the challenge.

In chapter thirteen, Hawthorn goes to the spot where Shepard's outfit was dropped off. Hawthorn picks up the outfit and tries to figure out how to get it to his next stop. London had suggested that he take part of the load, drop it off, and keep making trips back and forth until the whole rig was moved. The 1,200 pound outfit would require nine more trips up the Chilkoot.

While Hawthorn is walking, he thinks that he is probably stronger than London, who is smaller in stature. In order to keep himself going, Hawthorn thinks of himself as an ant marching in line, one foot in front of the other. Hawthorn meets many people along the way, some that want to know if King is for sale. He is not.

Winter is rapidly setting in and Hawthorn begins to feel even more pressure to push on toward Dawson City. Some of the people have resigned themselves to waiting out the winter and going to Dawson City in the spring. Hawthorn cannot imagine waiting eight months and wants to figure out a way to make it before the ice comes.

Hawthorn continues to look for a ride. With sixty boats leaving the shore each day, Hawthorn thinks it can be done. However, no one seems to have room aboard their heavily laden boats. Many are worried about passing through customs, where each member of the party must carry a minimum of seven hundred pounds of food across the border or be sent back to Alaska.

Hawthorn sees the Yukon Belle once more. Jamie and Homer are going to brave a very dangerous set of rapids. Hawthorn recalls Jamie's comments about novices failing to make their way over water at this point. The crowd is amazed and thrilled when Jamie and Homer expertly maneuver over the rapids and come out the other side. No one else would dare to make such a move.

Hawthorn continues to be frustrated by the lack of good fortune. Finally, he meets a young man who wants to hire him as a rescuer if his canoe should capsize. The canoe



capsizes almost immediately and Hawthorn fishes him out of the cold river. Hawthorn makes a deal with the man to buy his canoe.

It seems that the only things that could stand in his way at this point, aside from the weather, are the Mounties, or "Yellow Legs". The Mounties are not likely to be sympathetic to Hawthorn if his outfit is under weight. Once again Hawthorn wonders if he is half crazy.

## **Part 1, Chapters 12-13 Analysis**

Chapter twelve shows that once again, Hawthorn is the recipient of London's kindness. There is a fast friendship and London seems genuinely interested in helping Hawthorn, not for gain but because he can. The present given to Hawthorn saves his dream of getting to the Yukon after all. Now he only has to worry about time and transportation.

Just when Hawthorn is at his lowest, something happens or someone arrives to give him a boost or some kind of assistance. In chapter twelve, it was London who came to the rescue. In chapter thirteen, Hawthorn is buoyed by the sight of Jamie and Homer and then again when he is able to buy the canoe. Hawthorn's hope is restored.



## Part 2, Chapters 14-19

### Part 2, Chapters 14-19 Summary

In chapter fourteen, Hawthorn finally makes it to Lake Bennett, which has been the biggest goal to date. Hawthorn spends three days on the overly crowded lake. At one point, the lake seems to be filled with hundreds of caribou. Many of the Klondikers are shooting the caribou for the meat. Hawthorn follows suit, excited by the prospect of having meat for the first time in a very long time. Hawthorn shoots the caribou and then struggles with getting it to the shore. A man steps forward to help and dresses the caribou. Hawthorn takes only the hindquarters because the entire caribou would be too heavy for the canoe and there is no way to preserve the meat at this point.

Hawthorn continues to worry about the Mounties. The man at the shore says that the Mounties were somewhat lenient in August, but not now. Hawthorn must develop a plan.

The nights are clear and Hawthorn thinks that there are millions more stars in the sky than he has ever seen. Having King for company makes the trip much more pleasant. Hawthorn decides that it would be wise to keep rowing throughout the night. He should be safe once the boat passes Fort Sifton.

Hawthorn sees the northern lights for the first time and marvels at their beauty. Paddling throughout the night turns out to be an excellent idea, and Hawthorn makes good time, actually beating many of the other boats that had been quite a distance ahead. Another milestone is reached when Hawthorn approaches the mouth of the Yukon River. It is now September 23. By Hawthorn's estimation it should only take two to three weeks to get to Dawson City, and hopefully, to his brothers.

In chapter fifteen, the weather begins to change drastically and suddenly Hawthorn truly understands the urgency to move forward. There are rapids ahead. The rapids are considered to be quite dangerous and last for five miles. There are box canyons, whirlpools and eddies to be traversed, and no one in his right mind would do it. No one, that is, except Jack London. The crowd is in awe as London and his crew make it over the rapids.

Hawthorn knows that he will have to carry the outfit and the canoe to the next passable spot in the river. Hawthorn devises a plan, but it would require the help of King, who is supposedly averse to pulling anything heavy. Hawthorn asks King if he will pull for him. In response, King licks Hawthorn's face and jumps around, much to the crowd's delight. However, when it comes time to go, King pulls more than Hawthorn ever expected.

In chapter sixteen, Hawthorn heads toward Laberge. On the shore, Hawthorn sees his first bull moose. It is rutting season and Hawthorn is astounded by the power and force of the animals while they clash horns. Wind and ice are becoming a problem at this



point. It seems to be the eleventh hour to get across the lake with the oncoming ice and squalls battering against Hawthorn and his canoe.

At last Hawthorn makes it onto the Yukon. Hawthorn knows he has been lucky to make it this far. Hawthorn makes it to 5 Fingers, a part of the Yukon that splits into five channels. This is the last rapid before calmer water. Hawthorn is so close he can taste it.

Hawthorn spots rose hips along the shore and stops to pick them and other fruit, remembering what Jamie had told him about scurvy.

Hawthorn sees blood from another bull moose and decides to track it. This moose is much bigger than the last. However, it has been badly injured and Hawthorn feels confident he can kill it. Hawthorn is sadly mistaken and is trampled by the moose. Hawthorn blacks out.

In chapter seventeen, Hawthorn wakes up in the most pain he has ever felt in his entire life. King makes his presence known and Hawthorn is relieved. There is a man in the cabin with Hawthorn, and it is obvious that the man is what saved Hawthorn and King from certain death. The man, a prospector, admonishes Hawthorn for his foolish behavior.

The man is Robert Henderson. Hawthorn has never heard the name, but apparently Henderson is or was someone important. There is a long conversation between Hawthorn and Henderson about moving forward. Henderson plans to sell his boat to buy a sled and is going in the opposite direction of Hawthorn. Hawthorn tries to reason that he can simply float down the river from this point, but Henderson makes it clear that it is not possible. Hawthorn will have to stay at the cabin to heal.

Hawthorn is alone, incapacitated and filled with self-pity. He tries to place blame for his dilemma but knows that it is his own fault. Still, the thought of waiting seven months to move forward is intolerable to him.

In chapter eighteen, Hawthorn is alarmed when he hears a gunshot. He goes outside to investigate, but there is no one around and the snow has not been disturbed. The next day he hears two more gunshots. After a while Hawthorn realizes that the noises are not gunshots, but the trees splitting and breaking from the cold. At one point, Hawthorn checks the thermometer. It registers at -28 degrees.

Just when Hawthorn thinks he will go completely stir crazy, he hears shouts. Seven or eight men burst into the cabin carrying a twelve-year-old boy. The boy is seriously injured. It is decided that the boy's leg must be amputated. Hawthorn cannot stand the thought of it and leaves the cabin before it is done. Hawthorn hears the boy's screams and imagines that it is much like the sounds one hears during a war.

Hawthorn returns shortly after the amputation to find the group preparing to leave. The men, including the boy's uncle, have decided to leave him there because he will probably die anyway. Hawthorn objects, but his words fall on deaf ears. Hawthorn does



not have enough food to feed them both. One of the men tells Hawthorn to put the boy outside to die.

In chapter nineteen, the boy wakes just long enough to introduce himself and to find out what happened to his party. Hawthorn chooses his words carefully, trying not to alarm the boy. Charlie falls unconscious again. Hawthorn plays the role of caretaker, cleaning the boy's wound, getting him to drink water and eat when he can. After six days, Charlie's fever breaks. Charlie remembers the amputation and is devastated to think that his own flesh and blood would leave him to die. Hawthorn makes it sound as if he asked for Charlie to stay and offered to take care of him until he healed.

Charlie tells Hawthorn that they had already been in Dawson City and were returning home to Chicago. Charlie says that Dawson City has dried up and that people are being warned to get out before winter sets in and they all starve to death. Many have set out for Fort Yukon, but there is no more help available there, either. People were beginning to panic. Hawthorn cannot help but wonder about Abe and Ethan.

Charlie also tells the story of his frozen foot. He had stepped into the water and his boot filled up. Charlie never took the boot off, but rather let the water drain out and tried to stay close to the fire. One night Charlie fell asleep and rolled away from the fire. The next morning his foot was frozen solid.

## Part 2, Chapters 14-19 Analysis

In chapter fourteen, Hawthorn begins to see with his own eyes that the conditions are changing rapidly. The people he meets along the way confirm his suspicions and do little to ease his concerns about the Mounties. Hawthorn has an idea to paddle through the night, which works out in his favor as he is able to pass by the check point undetected.

In chapter fifteen, making it to the Yukon is a huge relief for Hawthorn. However, it is late September and time is running out. The excitement tells Hawthorn to keep going and there is no way he can or will turn back now. Chapter sixteen shows that there are parts of the trip that Hawthorn cannot make on the water. The relationship between Hawthorn and King seems to solidify when King agrees to pull the canoe and outfit to the next part of the river. Although many doubt Hawthorn's abilities, his father's faith pulls him through each time. Making it through the rapids at Five Fingers indicates that Hawthorn has conquered the worst of what Mother Nature has to offer in the way of water. As before, seeing London also helps his mood and pushes him onward.

Hawthorn makes a crucial mistake when he follows the tracks of the moose into the woods. Hawthorn's status as a greenhorn becomes painfully clear as he is attacked by the moose. In chapter seventeen, Hawthorn wakes up, lucky to be alive. It seems as if there is a guardian angel on Hawthorn's shoulder, as this is only one of many times he has been saved by another. The man, Henderson, must have been someone important at one time but is now cynical and jaded. Hawthorn's youth and misplaced optimism





work against him as he tries to convince Henderson and himself that he can carry on. Both men know that this is not true.

In chapter eighteen, Hawthorn was swamped with loneliness but could have done without the arrival of Charlie's group. The callousness of the men shocks Hawthorn, particularly when it comes to the amputation. Hawthorn shows once again that he is soft hearted and cannot stand the injustice or cruelty that seems to crop up so often. Hawthorn does not know what to do when the men leave Charlie. After all, he can barely take care of himself. However, Hawthorn steps up and automatically protects Charlie from the harsh realities of his situation.

In chapter nineteen, Charlie tells the story of how his foot became frozen, which upsets Hawthorn. Hawthorn cannot fathom leaving one of your own behind to die.

Hawthorn is devastated to learn about the conditions in Dawson City and worries about Abe and Ethan.



## Part 2, Chapters 20-23

### Part 2, Chapters 20-23 Summary

In chapter twenty, winter wears on, and Hawthorn becomes increasingly frustrated with Charlie. The boy will not talk or do anything around the cabin. One day Charlie let the fire go out. Hawthorn returns to the cabin and an argument ensues. Hawthorn learns that Charlie feels useless because Hawthorn does everything. From that moment on, Charlie starts helping with everything around the cabin and the relationship improves dramatically.

To pass the time, the boys read Scientific American. A conversation about the cabin's owner turns into a story about Henderson and Carmack, the one who found the first gold in the region. Carmack and Henderson had been partners. Carmack took the gold for himself and left Henderson high and dry.

In chapter twenty-one, Hawthorn tries to hide the fact that the food supply is frighteningly scarce. Charlie discovers it however and also realizes that Hawthorn had taken him in against his will. Hawthorn assures Charlie that he needs him there at the cabin. Hawthorn decides that their only option for survival is if he makes the twenty miles trek up river to the Indian village. There he could secure meat and fish for the right price.

The weather is growing more brutal by the day and the trek is long and hard. At last, Hawthorn arrives at the village to find it empty. The same thing happens with the next village. Hawthorn finally sees a moose track and begins to follow it. He comes upon a cabin, but no one is there. Later he sees a tent and finds two men inside, frozen solid. Hawthorn has lost sight of the moose and knows he must return to the cabin or else both he and Charlie will die.

In chapter twenty-two, the New Year was on the horizon. People are stranded in various mountain passes and become lost. Most did not know anything about the Canadian wilderness or the mountains. Many would be doomed to die in the winter cold.

Despite the bleak circumstances, Charlie and Hawthorn prepare to celebrate New Year's. Hawthorn has an idea that should have occurred to him before. He decides that it is time to hunt down Henderson's bear.

In chapter twenty-three, Hawthorn searches for the bear for hours before realizing that it may have swum to the other side of the river. Hawthorn and King traverse the river and begin to search for the bear. At last the bear's den is found and Hawthorn begins to figure out how to get the bear out of the cave. The plan works, but the situation goes terribly awry when Hawthorn loses his gun as the bear comes out of the den. The bear is followed by two others. A battle ensues. At the end, the three bears are killed, but so is King.



## Part 2, Chapters 20-23 Analysis

In chapter twenty, Hawthorn and Charlie have a breakthrough after the fire goes out. While Hawthorn thought he was taking care of Charlie, Charlie felt as if Hawthorn was telling him that he was useless. Working out the issue brought them much closer and turned their relationship into a productive one with both doing the chores.

Things begin to make sense when Hawthorn learns about Henderson's role in the initial gold rush. It is no surprise that Henderson is bitter. Once again, Hawthorn is stunned by the level of selfishness that can be found in some people.

Hawthorn must make a decision in chapter twenty-one. Choosing to go to the Indian village seems to be the only choice if he and Charlie are going to survive through the winter. The trek is long, difficult and dangerous. Hawthorn's hopes are dashed when he finds the village empty. Hawthorn thinks well on his feet, but all efforts fail. Finding the frozen men only solidifies Hawthorn's fears.

In chapter twenty-two, Hawthorn knows that something must be done. The time has come to hunt down Henderson's bear. Hawthorn realizes that necessity makes people do crazy things.

The reader can guess what will happen in chapter twenty-three. Still a greenhorn, Hawthorn has no idea how to track or kill a bear. Bears can weigh up to eight hundred pounds or more, Hawthorn thinks. Still, he has no choice.

The efforts to wake the bear seem at the same time clever and incredibly foolish. Hawthorn never takes into account that there could be more than one bear. It is a miracle that the boy survives at all. However, with every victory comes a price. In this case, that price was King's life.



## Part 3, Chapters 24-27

### Part 3, Chapters 24-27 Summary

In chapter twenty-four, May arrives, and with it comes the spring thaw. In this part of the world, spring comes in late May and eventually makes the river passable once more. Charlie and Hawthorn watch as the ice begins to rise and then recede along with melting water. The dam breaks twice, and before long, the cabin they had shared is completely underwater. Fortunately, the boys have the foresight to get out.

It isn't long before Charlie and Hawthorn take to the river. Soon thousands of boats seemed to be everywhere, and it is obvious that the boys are not the only ones that knew the time had come to move ahead. There is a major bottleneck in the water, and one of the Mounties must step in to make sure people can get through without a great catastrophe occurring in the meantime. There are many Klondikers, but there are also merchants ready to sell everything from milk to livestock to fruit.

Finally Charlie and Hawthorn make it to the Golden City. Hawthorn wants nothing more than to see his brothers. Charlie points to a warehouse that bears the name "Hawthorn Brothers Sawmill."

In chapter twenty-five, Jason decides to have some fun and goes into the sawmill on the premise of applying for a job. After convincing the clerk to sell his pitch to the owners, Abe and Ethan come out to meet the eager young man. The reunion is joyous, to say the least. Abe and Ethan are stunned by how much Jason has grown and the dangers and hardships he and Charlie endured on their way to Dawson City. Jason learns that the brothers own fifty-one percent of the sawmill and while they are not rich, running a sawmill in Dawson City is profitable. Jason goes to work alongside his brothers and Charlie becomes the assistant to the bookkeeper.

Over the next few weeks, Abe and Ethan show the boys around. Dawson City is like one huge carnival, with unbelievable sights and sounds. One night Abe and Ethan take Jason and Charlie to a variety show at the Palace Grand Theater. The star of the show is Jamie, who stands on stage and performs her father's poetry. The effect Jamie has on the crowd is astonishing. Among all of the people Jason has run into once again, he is most pleased to see Jack in the crowd.

In chapter twenty-six, Jason goes to see Jack. Jack is a little worse for wear and has contracted scurvy. The men joke about their travels. Jason is sad to learn that Jack is leaving the next day, hoping to return to California. Jason goes to see Jamie but is barred at the door. Jason is told that Jamie will not see him. Jason is crushed. For the next several weeks, Jason avoids every place Jamie might be. His feelings are crushed and he is bitter.



At that same performance, Charlie meets Big Alex McDonald, one of the Klondike Kings. McDonald is taken by Charlie's story and gives him all the gold he can carry so that Charlie can book passage back to Chicago.

Jason sees Jack off and laments that his friend is leaving once again. Jason will stay up north while Jack makes his way south. Jack tells Jason that he wants to be a writer. They wish each other farewell. Jamie comes to see Jason at the sawmill. The misunderstanding at the theater is cleared up. Jason is glad to have his friend back. Unfortunately, Jamie and Homer are scheduled to leave in a week's time to go on a cross country tour.

In chapter twenty-seven, Homer writes a new poem to bid farewell to his fellow Klondikers. The last stanza is directed at Jason. Jamie tells Jason that the last line was written by her and that they plan to return in the spring. Maybe then, they would stay.

Jason feels sad as the people he had spent so much time with went their separate ways, from Charlie to Jack to Jamie and Homer. Still, Dawson City is Jason's new home and he is needed there.

### **Part 3, Chapters 24-27 Analysis**

In chapter twenty-four, spring arrives at long last and almost seems like a dream to Jason and Charlie. The exit of King's body and the demolition of the cabin are symbolic. This part of the journey seems easy compared to what the boys have been through so far. Seeing his family name on the sawmill raises Jason's spirits like nothing else ever could. It is at that moment that Jason feels as if he has reached his new home.

Chapter twenty-five shows how the effects of all of the trials and tribulations seem to fall away the minute Jason sees Abe and Ethan. Charlie is automatically accepted into the fold as well and it seems that the entire trip was worth it. Charlie and Jason are amazed at the craziness in Dawson City. There are thousands of people always flitting about, animals and merchants on every corner, with everyone intent on becoming rich in one way or another. Seeing Jamie nearly stops Jason's heart. He has dreamed of her for so long that to see her was almost like one of the mirages he'd seen in the snow.

Jason is crushed in chapter twenty-six when Jamie refuses to see him. He becomes bitter, thinking that the girl had changed and was suddenly too good for him. Charlie's future is solidified when McDonald gives him enough money to return to Chicago. Jason is sad that Jack is leaving but it fits Jack's character to go from one adventure to the next, gathering stories along the way. Jamie visits Jason and clears up the issue at the theater. Jason's heart soars at the opportunity to have Jamie in his life again but is almost immediately crushed when he learns that she and Homer are leaving Dawson City.

In chapter twenty-seven, saying goodbye to Jamie and the others is a sad experience for Jason, but his maturity shows through when he realizes that he is needed and that he may see them again someday.



# Characters

## Jason Hawthorn

Jason Hawthorn is the protagonist in *Jason's Gold* by Will Hobbs.

Jason Hawthorn is a fifteen-year-old boy who is stricken with gold rush fever. Hawthorn is originally from Seattle but is in New York when the news of the gold rush strikes. Hawthorn left Seattle ten months before to make it on his own for a year. Hawthorn's brothers are back in Seattle, but his parents are dead. Hawthorn carries a large amount of grief over the death of his parents, particularly his father. Hawthorn also struggles with trying to find his place in a world where many people have settled into their lives as a "wage slave", but the boy wants more for himself and those he loves.

Hawthorn's trek across the US is momentous but bears no indication of what he will face when he reaches Alaska and Canada. Hawthorn faces many adversities and near death experiences along the way, but his inner strength and desire to succeed keep pushing him forward.

There are many times when Hawthorn is ready to give up believing that what he is trying to do is impossible. Every time that happens, someone or something comes along to give him a much needed boost. The tables turn when Hawthorn begins to take care of Charlie.

After a grueling winter and the devastating loss of his dog and best friend, Hawthorn and Charlie make it to Dawson City, where they hope to find gold at the end of the rainbow.

## Charlie Maguire

Charlie Maguire comes into the story in the middle when Hawthorn is attempting to recover from the serious injuries inflicted by the wounded moose. Charlie arrives at Carmack's cabin with a party of approximately eight men, one of which is Charlie's uncle. The group was on its way from Dawson City back to the US after discovering that they were not going to make their fortunes in the Golden City. They arrived in a flurry of activity, carrying young Charlie. Hawthorn did not know what was wrong with Charlie, just that there was an issue with his leg and that it needed to be amputated immediately.

Charlie's uncle and the group leave Charlie behind, sure he was going to die either from the gangrene or blood loss. Hawthorn tends to Charlie until he was well, and does everything possible to see that the young boy survives.

During the time in the cabin, Charlie becomes more self sufficient and responsible than ever before turning from Hawthorn's ward into a valuable member of a team.



In the spring, the friends made their way to Dawson City. In the end, Charlie went back to Chicago aboard a steamship courtesy of Alex McDonald, the Klondike King.

## **Jack London**

Jack London is a twenty-one-year-old writer in the making who travels from California to Canada to be part of the Gold Rush. Oddly enough, London is much more interested in hearing the stories told by those who braved the journey. London and Hawthorn become good friends. The portrayal of London's journey is historically accurate, although fiction has been added to it by the author.

## **Jamie Dunavant**

Jamie Dunavant is the girl who helps to nurse Hawthorn back to health after a bout of food poisoning. Jamie becomes Hawthorn's dream girl. While they are apart, Jamie becomes famous reading her father's poetry.

## **Homer Dunavant**

Homer Dunavant is a poet who travels from the family farm to the Golden City. Along the way, Dunavant comes out of his shell and begins to share his poetry. The character is based on the famous poet Robert W. Service. The portrayal of Dunavant/Service's journey is historically accurate, although fiction has been added to it by the author.

## **Abraham Hawthorn**

Abraham Hawthorn is the eldest and most practical of the Hawthorn brothers. Abraham takes care of the family after the death of their parents and works at a local sawmill until he and Ethan leave to strike it rich.

## **Ethan Hawthorn**

Ethan Hawthorn is the middle Hawthorn son. Ethan tends to be a bit mischievous but still solid. Ethan works at a local sawmill until he and Abe leave to strike it rich.

## **George Washington Carmack**

George Washington Carmack was the man to first strike gold in the Klondike. Carmack's story is historically accurate.



## **Robert Henderson**

Robert Henderson is the man that told Carmack where to find the gold and then was cut out of the fortune made by his discovery. Henderson's story is also historically accurate.

## **Captain Jefferson Randolph Smith**

Captain Jefferson Randolph Smith is a wealthy thief with grand aspirations to make a fortune by swindling the people at Skagway. Smith is based on a real life character.

## **Frank**

Frank "The Kid" Barker is the boy who found Hawthorn aboard the Yakima. Barker seems to be a wealthy upstanding young man at first but turns out to be working for Smith, a renowned thief. Barker is also based on a real character.

## **Alex McDonald**

Alex McDonald is also referred to as one of the Klondike Kings. McDonald is a wealthy and generous man who sends Charlie back to Chicago free of charge.





# Objects/Places

## Dawson City

Dawson City, also known as The Golden City, is located in the upper part of western Canada near the Alaska border. Dawson City is the site of the latest gold rush and was formed by the prospectors that traveled cross country to make their fortunes. In the beginning there was nothing in the region. That all changed after George Washington Carmack staked his first claim.

The legends of Dawson City are true, as are many of the facts included in the book. Hobbs paints Dawson City as a roughly hewn town that is growing faster than it knows how. Merchants arrive as quickly as the prospectors, setting up their shops to sell products and services at exorbitant prices. The prospectors, generally in need, are happy to pay the price. There are fortunes to be made everywhere in the Golden City.

Dawson City is also the place where dreams are made and lost. In Jason Hawthorn's case, it is the gold at the end of the rainbow, not only because of the stake he hopes to claim but because his brothers are there waiting for him.

Dawson City is the place where Jason meets up with many of the people he met on his trek to Canada and it is also the place that Jason will call home.

## The Gold Rush

The main object in the story is the gold rush that exploded in the late 1870s in Canada. The Gold Rush is the name given to the mass exodus of people that crossed the United States in order to stake their claims at various locations to take advantage of the new found cache of gold. There were millions to be made, but there were also millions to be lost, as well as many lives.

The first major Gold Rush in the US took place in 1849 in California. This Gold Rush set the precedent for the one that exploded in Canada nearly fifty years later. The US was coming out of a depression and people saw the chance to escape the bondage of their jobs and their debts and to make a fortune through the simple task of sticking a pan into a stream.

Jason Hawthorn learned about the Klondike Gold Rush while selling papers in newspapers on the street in New York. Hawthorn, like thousands of others, was immediately bitten by "Klondicitis" and the need to make the trek cross country and into the rugged wilds of Canada to reach Dawson City. The trek was a long and dangerous one, particularly when people began to trek into Alaska and over the border into Canada, where they were faced with intolerable weather conditions, starvation, and mountains that were nearly impossible to pass.



The main facts in the book are true. Hobbs simply added to them to create an adventure one will never forget.

## **Chilkoot Pass**

Chilkoot Pass is one of the two passes that lead to Dawson City. Chilkoot Pass is the shorter of the two passes but is much more dangerous. Still, many people try to traverse the pass because time is growing short and there is a need to get to the Yukon before winter sets in. The Chilkoot Pass is also the site of the Golden Stairs.

## **Alaska**

Alaska is the setting for a large part of the story. The Klondikers must pass through Alaska into Canada to reach Dawson City and their potential fortunes. The terrain and weather are rugged, often preventing people from going the distance.

## **New York City**

New York City is where Jason is living when he learns about the gold rush. Jason has only been in New York for five days but decides to abandon his plans for the big city to head to the Yukon to make his millions.

## **Seattle**

Seattle is the home of Jason, Abraham and Ethan Hawthorn. The boys lived at Mrs. Beal's boarding house after their parents died. Abe and Ethan work in the sawmill. Jason worked in the cannery until he quit his job to see the country.

## **The Yukon River**

The Yukon River is the final destination for prospectors. Located in Canada, the Yukon River leads to Dawson City.

## **Skagway**

Skagway is one of the main stopping points along the route to Dawson City. It is a rapidly developing town filled with thieves, opportunists and prospectors.



## **White Pass**

White Pass is one of the two main passes that lead to Dawson City. Dubbed "Dead Horse Trail" because of the equine casualties, White Pass is chosen by many prospectors because it is supposedly the easier of the two trails.

## **The Portland**

The Portland is the name of the first ship carrying prospectors from the gold rush that landed in Seattle.

## **King**

King is Jason's husky and best friend. King is rescued from a man crazed from his failures at making it to the Yukon.



# Themes

## The Gold Rush

The first major Gold Rush in the US took place in 1849 in California. This Gold Rush set the precedent for the one that exploded in Canada nearly fifty years later. The US was coming out of a depression and people saw the chance to escape the bondage of their jobs and their debts and to make a fortune through the simple task of sticking a pan into a stream.

Jason Hawthorn learned about the Klondike Gold Rush while selling papers in newspapers on the street in New York. Hawthorn, like thousands of others, was immediately bitten by "Klondicitis" and the need to make the trek cross country and into the rugged wilds of Canada to reach Dawson City. The trek was a long and dangerous one, particularly when people began to trek into Alaska and over the border into Canada where they were faced with intolerable weather conditions, starvation, and mountains that were nearly impossible to pass.

In the end, approximately one hundred thousand people attempted to get to the Klondike to make their fortunes. About forty thousand actually made it, many died, and in the end only a few hundred people struck it rich. In the case of the Hawthorns, they benefitted from the Gold Rush, but as entrepreneurs.

The main facts in the book are true. Hobbs simply added to them to create an adventure one will never forget.

## Determination

Determination is one of the main themes in "Jason's Gold" by Will Hobbs.

Jason Hawthorn is one of the most determined people in the story, facing extreme adversity and many hardships as he makes his way from New York to the Klondike to secure his fortune.

Hawthorn is a young boy with many large dreams but little worldly experience and no money. The trek from New York to Seattle takes determination but is nothing compared to the trip from Seattle into Alaska after Hawthorn realizes that he is penniless except for the \$10 given to him by Mrs. Beal.

Every time Hawthorn feels his determination waning or something happens to beat him down, someone or something comes to his aid, as if his deceased father is watching over him and prodding him to keep moving forward.

The most extreme examples include Hawthorn's exit from the Yakima and having his money stolen, finding out that his brothers were much farther ahead than he thought,



almost dying from food poisoning and a moose attack, and braving the elements that seemed determined to win and force him to stay away from the Golden City.

## The Golden Rule

The Golden Rule is prevalent among the travelers headed up to the Yukon. In order to survive the trip, people find it is often necessary to lean on others for food, shelter, manpower and companionship. The trek is harder than anyone could have imagined, and a lack of support would have meant that even more of the would-be prospectors would have turned back or died on the trail.

Hawthorn is a recipient of the Golden Rule many times over. Countless times Hawthorn is taken in, fed, outfitted, and cared for by others, most of which are total strangers. One of the first people to take care of Hawthorn without an ulterior motive is Jack London. Jack's kindness allows Hawthorn to eat, learn about the unique friendships made along the way to the Klondike, and results in Hawthorn being completely outfitted with the gear necessary to make the rest of the journey.

The Dunavants and Henderson are also fine examples of the Golden Rule. Each stops the journey in order to take care of a seriously ill Hawthorn. The people do it because they are supposed to do it, not because they expect anything in return. This is the way Hawthorn was always taught to behave, and it is a relief to be treated well particularly after the poor treatment from people like Smith.

Hawthorn also returns the kindness when he is left with Charlie, who is on the brink of death. Hawthorn is in no position to care for or feed Charlie but does it anyway because of the Golden Rule and because he knows that it is the right thing to do.



# Style

## Point of View

The point of view used in *Jason's Gold* by Will Hobbs is third person omniscient. This is particularly accurate when setting is of great importance to the story. Third person allows Hobbs to give the reader great insight into the sights and sounds encountered on the journey and to develop a sense of personality and vision regarding each character.

Since many of the facts in the book are historically accurate, it is even more important to impart them as such even if they are woven into the story. This creates a true to life feel about Jason Hawthorn's journey and the overall feel of what it was like to experience the Klondike Gold Rush.

Additionally, it allows the reader to get insight into things that may not have been seen and heard by Jason Hawthorn, to learn about the story through a more mature set of eyes and to experience the journeys of the characters like Jason, Charlie, Jamie and the others.

## Setting

There are several settings used throughout the story, although the majority of them are based in Alaska and the Yukon.

The story speaks about Seattle, the home to the Hawthorns. Little is mentioned about the location, but it is clear that the region is still somewhat rough hewn and unsettled. The majority of the work is in industry including the sawmill and cannery. Mrs. Beal's boarding house is also a prominent landmark in the town, as it is the place where the Hawthorns live.

Alaska is the setting for a large part of the story. The Klondikers must pass through Alaska into Canada to reach Dawson City and their potential fortunes. The terrain and weather are rugged, often preventing people from going the distance. The last point where people stop in Alaska is Skagway. Skagway is one of the main stopping points along the route to Dawson City. It is located on the border in Alaska along the Canadian border. It is a rapidly developing town filled with thieves, opportunists and prospectors.

Chilkoot Pass is one of the two passes that lead to Dawson City. Chilkoot Pass is the shorter of the two passes but is much more dangerous. The other pass, White Pass is dubbed "Dead Horse Trail" because of the equine casualties. White Pass is chosen by many prospectors because it is supposedly the easier of the two trails.

The final destination for the prospectors is Dawson City, also known as The Golden City. Dawson City is located in the upper part of western Canada near the Alaska border. Dawson City is the site of the latest gold rush and was formed by the prospectors who



traveled cross country to make their fortunes. In the beginning, there was nothing in the region. That all changed after George Washington Carmack staked his first claim.

## Language and Meaning

The language and meaning used throughout *Jason's Gold* by Will Hobbs reflects on the times in a minimal way. It is clear that the people in the story live in the 1890s as they speak of particular events that were occurring at the time.

In general, the language used in the story is casual. There is some use of slang in the dialogue, but very little. Most of the references to the time period are seen in the topics of conversation including the state of the economy, methods of travel, events surrounding the Gold Rush, available work and wages and the fortunes that can be made by panning for gold.

One of the most amusing references to the time period is the recitation of the Gelett Burgess verse about the "Purple Cow": "I never saw a purple cow; I never hope to see one; but I can tell you anyhow; I'd rather see than be one!" (p. 9). The verse became popular in 1895 and was on the tip of every tongue.

Overall, the story has little regional flavor in its language. This is due to the fact that the people in the story are from all over the United States and Canada.

## Structure

*Jason's Gold* by Will Hobbs is a book of fiction written for young adult audiences. The book is 221 pages, five of which are an author's note. The book is separated into three sections. There are three illustrations included: There are two maps in Part One. The first is a map of the Pacific Northwest in 1897; the second is the Chilkoot and White Passes. The third map is located in Part Three and shows the Upper Yukon.

Part one is titled "Klondike or Bust." This section is comprised of 102 pages and thirteen chapters. The shortest chapter is five pages in length; the longest chapter is ten pages in length. The average length of the chapters is eight pages.

Part Two is titled "Down the Yukon." This section is comprised of eighty-three pages and ten chapters. The shortest chapter is six pages in length; the longest chapter is ten pages in length. The average length of the chapters is eight pages.

Part Three is titled, "The Golden City." This section is comprised of twenty-nine pages and three chapters. The shortest chapter is three pages in length; the longest chapter is eleven pages in length. The average length of the chapters is nine pages.

The average length of the three sections is seventy-one pages.



## Quotes

"Jason broke into a wide smile remembering his father, who had dreamed of breaking the bonds of 'wage slavery' and becoming his own boss."

Chap. 1, p. 5

"In California, mines were shutting down because their workers were rushing off to the Klondike to make their own fortunes."

Chap. 2, p. 8

"In the morning Jason rejoined the river of humanity streaming along the wagon road."

Chap. 8, p. 51

"Jason felt his earlier optimism fading away."

Chap. 8, p. 53

"At first light Jason was moving again, anxious to catch a glimpse of the infamous Chilkoot Pass."

Chap. 11, p. 77

"London's eyes were lit with a peculiar fire."

Chap. 12, p. 88

"'Lots of miners gonna need picks and shovels, and axes sharpened,' the weary old man explained, panting."

Chap. 13, p. 93

"Two, three weeks at most, he'd rendezvous with his brothers in the Golden City, then stake his claim."

Chap. 14, p. 108

"It made no sense that a prospector would be going away from Dawson City instead than toward it but Jason wasn't going to point that out."

Chap. 17, p. 129

"Thousands simply milled around Dawson gawking at the sights. It was a marvel simply to be here; they knew they'd never see the like of this again."

Chap. 25, p. 201

"Jason scrutinized the bottom of the vial. There was gold dust there, all right, a few flakes - not much."

Chap. 26, p. 206





"These few days were the happiest in his life, but more fleeting than a northern wildflower."

Chap. 27, p. 214

"Jason lifted his eyes to the mountains towering above the Golden City. He'd come so far, and he'd made it."

Chap. 27, p. 216



## Topics for Discussion

Who is Jason Hawthorn? Why and how does Jason become involved in the quest to make his fortune by panning gold in the Yukon? What difficulties must Jason overcome on his trip from New York to Seattle? What does Jason find when he reaches Seattle? Why is it impossible for Jason to stay mad at Abe and Ethan? Explain.

Compare and contrast the three Hawthorn brothers: Abe, twenty-three; Ethan, twenty; and Jason, sixteen. Who is the most level-headed? The most practical? Has the most common sense? What are the relationships between the brothers? Why is it surprising to Abe and Ethan when Jason cries at their reunion? Are the brothers loyal to each other?

Jason carries a great deal of grief over the death of his parents. Discuss this grief. Does Jason mourn one of the parents more than the other? When did they die? What does Jason remember about his parents? In what ways did they influence Jason? Who has parented Jason since their deaths? Do you think Jason is any worse off because his parents died when he was young? Explain.

Examine the friendship between Jason and Jack London. How did they become such fast friends? Is it the type of friendship that is fleeting or one that will last? Is their friendship stronger because of the experiences they shared while making their way to Dawson City? What is unusual about Jack's journey? What does Jack like most about Jason? Why does Jason find Jack so fascinating? What becomes of Jack London?

Describe the relationship between Jason and Jamie Dunavant. When does Jason realize he has romantic feelings toward Jamie? Does Jamie know about Jason's feelings? How long does it take for Jason to find Jamie after she and Homer leave him at the camp? What about Jamie impresses Jason? What is the relationship between Homer and Jamie; Homer and Jason? Why do you think Jason was upset when he couldn't see Jamie at the theater? Do you think Jamie will ever return?

Examine the concept of Klondicitis. What is Klondicitis? What causes it? Who is afflicted by it? What types of unusual things do people do once they have contracted it? How does it affect Jason, Abe, and Ethan? Explain what drastic actions people take to journey north to stake their claims. How many people actually make it? What causes all of the death and despair? What does Jason find when he arrives in the Golden City? Was the trip worth it? Explain.

The old man on the train tells Jason the story about the farmer and the elephant. What does it mean to have seen the elephant? Why does the old man tell the story? How does it apply to Jason? Does Jason understand? Why is the old man so excited about seeing the elephant? What do you think it means? Explain.