

Jim Bridger, Mountain Man; a Biography Study Guide

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Plot Summary

Jim Bridger's family moves west to Missouri. Jim is forced to go to work and becomes interested in exploring the frontier. Jim joins a fur trapping expedition and learns about surviving in the wilderness, trapping beaver and fighting Indians. He becomes a free trapper and is soon a partner in the Rocky Mountain Fur Company and part-owner of Ft. Laramie. By 1837, the beaver trade is dying out and Jim begins to look for a new occupation. Jim Bridger is fascinated by the wilderness and shows his love for it by remembering as much as he can about each spot he passes. Already, Jim has discovered sites such as the Great Salt Lake, the geysers and the hot springs of the Yellowstone Lake region.

Jim sets up Ft. Bridger in 1843, near his friends, the Snake Indians on a fork off the Green River and on the Oregon Trail. He works there for over 10 years, taking out time occasionally to go back to beaver trapping. Jim helps many families get through the rest of the Oregon Trail, repairing their wagons and buying their extra goods. When Brigham Young enters the area with his Mormons, they seem to be just another group of travelers, but soon Jim is in trouble with them. Brigham Young has the Mormons settle not far from Ft. Bridger and soon false rumors are spread that Jim is arming the Indians to attack the Mormon settlements. Jim is informed by his partner Louis Vasquez in Salt Lake City that the Mormon Sheriff is going to march on Ft. Bridger. Jim hides in the woods, but his fort is looted and ruined.

Jim Bridger travels to St. Louis, Missouri and Washington DC to file his claim to the territory around Ft. Bridger. He also speaks to government officials and even the President about the unlawful activities of the Mormons. In July 1857, Jim is hired as a scout for the U.S. Army force that is sent to occupy the Utah Territory. Bridger makes sure the Army men survive the bitter winter and the occasional guerrilla warfare attacks by the Mormon forces. In the Spring of 1858, the Army marches into the Utah Territory and the Mormons surrender, though Brigham Young is given a Presidential pardon.

Jim has earned a great reputation as a guide and scout in the U.S. Army. Jim Bridger first works as a guide for Captain Raynalds of the Army Corps of Engineers to map out the drainage area of the Yellowstone River. Captain Raynalds creates a new map of the area based on Jim's in-depth knowledge. Jim works as a guide helping engineers map several routes. Jim helps General Connor keep most of his troops alive in the Powder River expedition, though the results are mixed. There is a gold rush in the Black Hills and the roads have to be kept open. Jim, with the help of Pawnee Scouts, has some success before the force is pulled out. In the next year, Jim is a scout and adviser to Col. Carrington, whose orders are to open a road to Montana. Col. Carrington builds a fort and defends a road, and is in a defensible position. Then, his second in command, Fetterman violates orders and falls into a Sioux ambush, where 81 men are wiped out. Jim stays around for the commission of inquiry and the shutting down of forts that violate Indian treaties. Jim stays in the mountains a couple more years but is slowly going blind. He has to return to his farm in Missouri and spends his last years with his daughter, Virginia.



Part I: Trapper- Chapter 1,2 and 3

Part I: Trapper- Chapter 1,2 and 3 Summary and Analysis

Chapter 1- Jim Bridger's family moves out west to Missouri and establishes a farm near St. Louis and the Missouri River. When Jim is 14-years-old, his mother and then his father and brother die. He gets a job ferrying people and goods on a Mississippi flat boat. Later, Jim is apprenticed to a St. Louis blacksmith. Jim learns to shoe horses, make traps and other iron goods. St. Louis is then half-French, with Spaniards from Mexico, French-Canadians, and Indians coming in to trade. Jim hears of and sees the heroes of the frontier that are fur-trappers and Indian fighters. By 1819, when Jim is 15 years-old, a steamboat is making regular runs on the Mississippi. After a few years, Jim's apprenticeship with the blacksmith is nearly over. He is thinking over his future and how to support his sister who is now in school. Then, Jim hears of a notice by Major Andrew Henry, who is seeking 100 young men to go trapping with him.

Chapter 2, Set Poles for the Mountains- Jim goes down to the two large boats at the St. Louis Mississippi River docks. The Rocky Mountain Fur Company, under Major Andrew Henry is preparing to leave on an expedition. Men are loading the boats and another group of men are preparing an overland party to follow the boats. Filling up the boats is a public spectacle. Jim goes up to Major Henry and asks to join the expedition. Henry agrees to have Jim go on the boats at full pay.

There are the French-Canadian boatmen that stay separate from the young men from St. Louis and Jim looks down on them. The object of the expedition is to trap beaver and obtain furs. Jim finds out as the party reaches the Missouri River that the Missouri is a rough river to go upstream. The navigable channel is too narrow to use sails and the boats have to often be pulled by men walking on the banks or shore marshes. Since the Missouri is shallow and muddy, hidden obstructions in the river can damage or destroy a boat. Near Ft. Osage a boat suddenly sinks. The men are saved but not the valuable cargo. When the men pass the Platte River, Jim and the other greenhorns are "initiated" by being dunked into the water. The party is now in the upper Missouri River. By the Grand River, the men pass the villages of the Ree Indians. As the men march their horses past, the horses become targets of theft by the Indians. Some Indians seem friendly, and then when the boat is out of gun-range, they stampede the land portion of the party's horses.

Hivernan, Chapter 3- Major Henry decides to set up a fort where the men are located, at the mouth of the Yellowstone River. Jim gets to use his skills as a blacksmith in doing iron work in setting up the fort. Col. Ashley and some other men go in a canoe downriver to get another band of trappers to reinforce the group. Jim learns to make his own clothes from buckskin and buffalo sinews. Jim and the other men stay in the fort as real winter and snowstorms hit the area. Jim feels happiness in wintering in the mountains, at so-called Hivernan.



The river man Mike Fink and his partner Carpenter have an argument over an Indian woman. Like usual, Mike says as he pretends to be friends again, that he can shoot a cup harmlessly off Carpenter's head. This time, Mike kills Carpenter and then another man shoots Mike to death. Major Henry wants to get the men moving again and out trapping early in the spring. This is stopped by a Blackfeet Indian attack. News reaches the little fort that other trappers are hit by Indian attacks. Col. Ashley sends a message that he has lost 13 men. Major Henry leads an expedition of most of the men, including Jim Bridger, back down the Missouri River. The hostile Indians that they fight are the same Ree Indians that they met before.



Part I: Trapper- Chapter 4 and 5

Part I: Trapper- Chapter 4 and 5 Summary and Analysis

Chapter 4, the Missouri Legion- In 30 days, the men under Major Henry have linked up with Col. Ashley. Henry's new fur trapping plan is to advance into the mountains overland and have his own trappers gather beaver, instead of trading for it from the Indians. Six companies of U.S. Infantry under Col. Leavenworth come up the Missouri River to help fight the Ree Indians, and the friendly forces are joined by 500 Sioux Indian warriors. Col. Leavenworth commissioned Henry's men as members of the Missouri Legion. The force gets to the Ree villages, marching the last 20 miles overland to avoid attack. The Sioux Indians attack the Rees but are stopped in their advance. Col. Leavenworth refuses to attack and waits for the artillery to come up, but later the artillery shells are muffled in the thick grasslands. Col. Leavenworth agrees to a truce and by the next day the Ree Indians have slipped away.

Ch. 5, Hugh Glass and the Grizzly- An old trapper named Hugh Glass is leading a hunt. Glass is attacked by a Grizzly Bear and is only rescued by other men after being severely wounded. The bear ends up being killed, but Glass is thought to be sure to die of his wounds and is impossible to move. Major Henry has a meeting on what to do about Glass. The men vote to march ahead and leave Glass behind but also decide to have two men stay behind with him to take care of him. The desperate Glass sees Jim Bridger and another man named Fitzgerald agree to stay and watch him till he recovers or dies.

After three days, Bridger and Fitzgerald grow desperate, and Fitzgerald prevails on the younger Bridger to agree to claim that Glass is dead and abandon him. To prove he is dead, they take Glass' rifle and other goods. Bridger and Fitzgerald catch up to the party. They are attacked and four men are killed while many horses are stolen. The men meet some friendly Crow Indians and trade for new horses from them, trying to go back onto the beaver hunt in the fall season. Bridger and others set traps in the riverbank where beaver are seen. The cold weather ends the hunt and the men winter at another makeshift fort on the Big Horn River. They share their hunted game in groups of six. There is a careful system of sharing food to prevent fights breaking out over the choicest cuts of meat.

Bridger feels regret in abandoning Glass to his death. One night Bridger is walking back to the camp and thinks he sees the ghost of Glass. It is the real Glass, who threatens Bridger with death. The men come out after hearing noise. Major Henry talks to Glass and Bridger and Bridger admits his guilt. Glass tells how he survived crawling through the wilderness and eating prey killed by wolves. Glass is rescued and then barely escapes death in an Indian attack. Old Glass decides that the younger Bridger is not really guilty because the older man, Fitzgerald was at fault. Glass tracks down Fitzgerald, now a soldier but ends up accepting material compensation for the other

man's crime. Bridger learns from this incident to take responsibility for his actions and later gets the nickname "Old Gabe" for rescuing other trappers like the angel Gabriel.



Part 2: Booshway- Chapter 6 and 7

Part 2: Booshway- Chapter 6 and 7 Summary and Analysis

Chapter 6, Blanket Chief- Jim Bridger becomes a freelance trapper. He must find beaver and works with a small group of trappers, including camp keepers. Bridger finds out he is a natural explorer. Bridger remembers the mapping and conditions of the land for many years. He learns how to live off the land and make money from it, despite hostile Indians, cold winters and wild river obstacles. Bridger loves the land and keenly observes it. He is able to be self-reliant and becomes a student of the Indians. Jim fights Indians but also carefully studies them and the wildlife of the Rocky Mountains. Crow Indians show Bridger the South Pass, which later is a key part of the route called the Oregon Trail. Bridger argues with other trappers where the Bear River goes, ending up discovering the Great Salt Lake. Bridger also explores the geysers and other wonders around Yellowstone Lake, later Yellowstone National Park.

By 1827, Bridger and his partners are in competition with the British Hudson Bay Company, under Peter Ogden. Ogden withholds supplies from the Americans. Jim's associate, Tom Fitzpatrick, makes a deal to have Rockway Indians sell furs to him instead of Ogden and sells the Indians liquor. In one story, the Americans get Ogden's horses to stampede to them. Then, Ogden's Indian wife brings a horse back from the American stockade, along with her baby and another horse loaded with beaver, despite threats of rifle fire. The Americans suspect Ogden being behind Blackfeet Indians that kill Americans and steal furs and horses. At this time, Bridger is given the name Blanket Chief by the Indians. When Major Henry and his partners retire, Bridger, Fitzpatrick and others become the new owners, or the Booshways of the Rocky Mountain Fur Company

Chapter 7, Battle of Pierre's Hole- In 1832, the Rocky Mountain Fur Company lets known that its supply rendezvous with their trappers is to be at Pierre's Hole in July. This valley is on the Snake River, and in the middle of Blackfeet Indian country. Jim's rivals from the American Fur Company also come out to Pierre's Hole. Dripps and Vanderburgh, his rivals, refuse to make a deal with Jim's Rocky Mountain Fur Co. Tom Fitzpatrick goes off looking for William Sublette. A short time later in July, William Sublette brings the goods to trade for furs from the trappers. William Sublette trades his goods and liquor with the trappers and friendly Indians. Finally, an Iroquois named Antoine Godin brings in Tom Fitzpatrick, who is so exhausted and harried that now he is called White Head.

Milton Sublette goes off with about 30 trappers from Jim Bridger's company. This party is soon confronted with a band of Gros Ventres Indians, bent on horse thieving. The Gros Ventres Indian chief, Baihoh, is believed to be an ally of the rival American Fur Company. Baihoh seems to have peaceful intentions and comes out with a peace pipe. Baihoh is shot by Antoine Godin as revenge for a past incident and fighting breaks out. Several Mountain Men and friendly Indians are killed and William Sublette is wounded.



Jim Bridger and others attack the Gros Ventres position from all sides, finally preparing to light a brush fire to chase them out. The Gros Ventres start a rumor that Blackfeet are coming to avenge them. Jim rides 10 miles to the main camp and finds out that he has been fooled. According to the author Washington Irving, the pursuing friendly Indians kill any enemy women that are found. The Flathead Indians are in endless war with the Blackfeet Indians.



Part 2: Booshway- Chapter 8, 9 and 10

Part 2: Booshway- Chapter 8, 9 and 10 Summary and Analysis

Chapter 8, Shot in the Back- William Sublette brings \$170,000 of beaver pelts back to St. Louis, which is a record amount. Jim's group is being followed by Vanderburgh's party. Jim Bridger's party takes Vanderburgh on a wild goose chase out of frustration. Vanderburgh then goes off looking for beaver but is ambushed by Blackfeet and killed. Jim Bridger and Tom Fitzpatrick try to avoid fighting and are able to smoke the peace pipe with a war party of Blackfeet; however, more trouble comes. In Bridger's party, a Mexican man comes forward with his Blackfeet wife. Jim Bridger becomes suspicious of the movement of the allegedly peaceful Indians. He goes to shake the Blackfeet Chief's hand but clicks his rifle, ready to shoot. The Chief grabs the gun and it goes off, and fighting starts. Two arrows are fired into Jim's back and three mountain men are killed before the Indians slip away.

Chapter 9, Bridger's party approaches Yellowstone Lake and the famous geysers, gathering beaver pelts. Later, they go into winter quarters. The Rocky Mountain Fur Co. is not doing well. After expenses and wages the five partners make little. Bridger's horses are stolen and he has to try to get more. In the summer of 1833, there is another rendezvous of hundreds of trappers and friendly Indians. A wealthy Scot, Sir William Stuart shows up looking for adventure. Jim Bridger and Tom Fitzpatrick meet Nat Wyeth, who signs a contract with Tom to deliver supplies to the trappers, though Jim does not sign it.

Tom has a small group of trappers and tries to make a deal with the Crow Indians to trap. Instead, the Crows rob Tom and take his horses. Tom charges that McKenzie of the American Fur Co. is guilty of the crime, since he buys all the stolen beaver pelts. Jim Bridger links up with Tom and Sir William to try to help them re-equip their group. Jim comes up with a scheme to get the horses back from the Crow Indians. He sends his partner, Doc Newell to have a peace pipe with the Crow Chiefs. Newell promises the Crows that there will be no more attacks on the tribe from Jim "the Blanket Chief" Bridger. In return, the Crow Chiefs agree to sell the stolen horses back to Jim for some blankets and trinkets, and the trappers can go back to work.

Chapter 10, Nat Wyeth brings a large amount of trading goods to Ft. Union by the Yellowstone River and the Missouri River. There Wyeth and Cerre, an agent of Captain Bonneville find out that McKenzie is illegally trading whiskey with the Indians, with a booze "still" at Fort Union. McKenzie refuses to sell the two men liquor, and in retaliation, Wyeth and Cerre file a complaint about McKenzie at Fort Leavenworth. Wyeth rides out with his goods train to Harris Fork for the summer rendezvous with the trappers. Wyeth is beaten to the spot by William Sublette, who trades for pelts before Wyeth arrives. William Sublette and Col. Ashley make some profits, not Bridger and his friends, and by June 1834, the Rocky Mountain Fur Co. is dissolved.



Wyeth sets up his own fort on the Snake River, called Fort Hall. Later, this is sold to the British Hudson Bay Co., while Jim and friends set up a new company. Jim saves a group of trappers including Joe Gale and Kit Carson who are with Wyeth, from a Blackfeet Indian attack. Jim is called "Old Gabe" for saving desperate trappers like the angel Gabriel would do. In the summer of 1835, Jim and Tom buy Fort Laramie. At the summer rendezvous, Jim meets Dr. Marcus Whitman, who is able to take out the arrowhead in Jim's back. Soon afterward, Jim follows his friend Kit Carson and marries a Flat Head Indian Chief's daughter.



Part 2: Booshway- Chapter 11,12 and 13

Part 2: Booshway- Chapter 11,12 and 13 Summary and Analysis

Chapter 11, "Old Gabe to Rescue" Jim's friend Joe Meek is caught and seized by Crow Indians. Meek lies that Bridger's party is only 40 men and tells the Crow Chief where to intercept the party. Meek sees Jim Bridger's camp of over 240 fighting men near the Yellowstone River on a beautiful site. Now the Crow Chief knows Meek lied. When an advance party comes from Jim Bridger's camp, Meek yells out that Jim must save him. Jim arranges to smoke the peace pipe with a little chief, Little Gun. As part of the peace ritual, Jim and Little Gun embrace, naked. Then a group of mountain men manage to cut off Little Gun, and Jim forces the Crows to trade Meek for Little Gun. That evening the Crow Chief comes to smoke with Jim and peace is made.

Chapter 12, "Injun Scrapes" Bridger is camping in the winter of late 1835. Friendly Delaware Indians attack the Blackfeet Indians are soon fighting erupts. Jim decides to move the camp to Crow Indian country. In the camp, Joe Meek, like many mountain men is married to a Snake Indian woman. A Crow brave hits Joe Meek's wife in the face and Meek shoots the Indian. Fighting breaks out in the camp until Jim Bridger is able to restore order. Again, Bridger is forced to move his camp, this time to the Green River.

By the summer of the 1836 rendezvous, the demand for beaver is declining, and Jim and partners merge with the American Fur Co. of Fontanelle and Dripps. On the Powder River in the winter, Jim's mountain men target Antonio Montero, the man in charge of Captain Bonneville's fort. Montero's horses are run off and stolen by the mountain men. Again, Bridger fights the Blackfeet Indians, and mountain men actually scalp Indians. The Blackfeet are scattered. Soon, Bridger is confronted by a Piegan Indian village. Jim is able to make peace, though he faces a lack of supplies. Jim stops his men from killing a small group of Blackfeet Indians and gets a bit of tobacco.

Chapter 13- At the rendezvous, Delaware Indians dance and missionaries preach, but there is little money to be made. Jim traps through 1838, staying near his friends the Crow Indians. In early 1839, Jim visits St. Louis, Missouri but soon is back on the plains by the Platte River. The last summer rendezvous of beaver trappers is held on the Green River. By now the price of beaver pelts is down almost by half, and beaver is also becoming scarce. The Sioux and the Cheyenne become the dominant tribes in the northern Rockies. In a Sioux and Cheyenne raid, Jim Bridger is fighting next to a former partner Fraeb, who is killed, but the Indians are repelled. Next spring Jim Bridger is reported to be at Fort Laramie and trying to determine his future occupation and course of life.



Part 3: Trader- Chapter 14 and 15

Part 3: Trader- Chapter 14 and 15 Summary and Analysis

Chapter 14, "Ft. Bridger" Jim Bridger shows up in Fort Laramie in the summer of 1842. Jim is 38 years old and has a nine-year-old daughter to support. Jim notes that many greenhorns are coming into the Plains and Rocky Mountains and need guides. The newcomers are curious but also afraid of the Indians and French trappers. The friendly Dakota Indians demand that the emigrants feed the Dakotas with coffee and biscuits, sometimes threatening the travelers. The newcomers end up selling their extra goods at normal United States prices. Jim's friend makes money as a guide for John C. Fremont. Jim gets the idea to build Ft. Bridger along the Oregon Trail. He can serve travelers by blacksmithing and as a riverboat operator. Jim chooses a place near his friends the Snake Indians. Within a few weeks, Jim builds a fort and gets Louis Vasquez to become his partner in the enterprise.

Chapter 15, "Milk River" Jim Bridger sends his daughter Mary Ann to the Whitman Mission School in the backwoods of Oregon. He decides to form a brigade of trappers, at least some of who are new to the game. Bridger is said to lead 30 men to Ft. Union in November 1844. His hunt for beaver along the Milk River is a failure. Bridger's clerk warns the fort of an attack and soon a friendly Indian is killed and another man's horse is shot. For whatever reason, Bridger's men refuse to counterattack, and the Sioux leave the area with the stolen horses. Bridger returns to Fort Bridger and goes back to advising emigrants. Bridger meets Brigham Young and his followers, the Mormons, on their way to the Great Basin and the Salt Lake. Bridger and Brigham Young discuss maps, routes and the possibilities of growing corn in the Great Basin region. Brigham Young later claims that he bet Bridger that Brigham could raise corn there.



Part 3: Trader- Chapter 16,17 and 18

Part 3: Trader- Chapter 16,17 and 18 Summary and Analysis

Chapter 16, "The Overland Trail" Dr. Whitman's school has been attacked by Indians, and Dr. Whitman and Joe Meek's daughter have been found dead. Bridger's daughter Mary Ann is missing and never seen again. Jim Bridger goes back to Missouri and purchases a farm for his family in Little Santa Fe but soon returns to Fort Bridger. Travelers see Mrs. Bridger keeping house in June of 1849, but only three weeks later she dies in childbirth. She gives birth to Virginia, Jim's daughter. Jim keeps the baby alive with milk from shot buffalo cows. Captain Stansbury of the U.S. Corps of Topographical Engineers hires Bridger to map out a new trail west.

Chapter 17, "The Treaty of Laramie" The Treaty of Laramie is signed in the summer of 1851. More whites are passing through the Oregon Trail to get to the California gold rush and better security is needed from the Indians. At the conference, Tom Fitzpatrick is there, now working for the Indian Agency. Eight tribes are invited, including the Sioux and the Cheyenne. Jim's old friends, the Snake Indians come uninvited. Chief Washakie of the Snake has a skirmish with the Cheyenne Indians. There are only 300 U.S. Troops there to protect the U.S. Indian Commissioner. As the Snake Indians approach, a Sioux warrior rides out to attack the Snakes but is stopped. Jim Bridger is there as a U.S. Government interpreter and he introduces the military personnel to his old Snake Indian friends.

There is a huge feast featuring tons of dog meat. At the peace feast between the Cheyennes and the Snakes, a corn mush is eaten. The scalps of the two Snake Indians that the Cheyennes killed earlier are returned. However, the Cheyennes also have suffered from the Snakes. A Cheyenne woman presents her son to the Snakes, whose father had been killed by the Snakes (or Shoshones) for adoption by their tribe. Formal discussions follow where places of importance are doled out in an arbitrary way. The various Indian tribes are forced to agree to be peaceful, though most protest that war for them is part of their way of life. The Indians agree that each tribe must have one chief, though this is regarded as suicidal for the man chosen for this position. The Indian Chiefs ride off wearing pants and U.S. medals for the first time.

Chapter 18, "The Saints Raid Ft. Bridger" Tensions escalate between Jim at Fort Bridger and Brigham Young and the Mormons, not far away in Salt Lake City. Brigham Young is said to believe that Jim Bridger is inciting Indians against the Mormons. Brigham Young is jealous of Bridger's ties to the Indians. Also, Bridger is viewed as competition to the Mormons in trading and servicing the travelers going west. The Mormons are generally paranoid since in 1848 Utah is ceded from Mexico to the United States after the Mexican War. Captain Stansbury helps make Brigham Young the Governor of the Utah Territory in 1851, and Young feels he has the power to strike. A traveler gives a last glance of Ft. Bridger as a primitive place where Jim Bridger is very



helpful. Bridger's partner Louis Vasquez has a store in Salt Lake City, so Jim is well informed of the Mormon attack. First, the Mormons threaten the Green River ferries that are run by mountain men. Then Mormons make an affidavit that Bridger is inciting the Indians. Soon 150 men are sent to seize Jim Bridger at his fort. This Mormon expedition loots and partially destroys Fort Bridger, though Jim is hiding in the hills. Another Mormon force comes later to settle Ft. Bridger but is driven out by mountain men.



Part 4: Guide- Chapter 19, 20, and 21

Part 4: Guide- Chapter 19, 20, and 21 Summary and Analysis

Chapter 19, "Sir George Gore" In late 1854, Jim Bridger meets Sir George Gore, a sportsman from Ireland. Bridger stays at Ft. Laramie with Sir George and his entourage. After the winter, the group sets out for the Yellowstone River. Sir George is too lazy to get up early but still assembles a huge collection of trophies from his hunting. Sir George reads Shakespeare plays to Jim, which is a new experience for Jim. In the spring of 1856, Jim leads Sir George to a big camp of the Crow Indians, including the squawmen, who are white men who marry squaws and live with the Indians. Next, the party floats down the Yellowstone to Fort Union. Sir George is angry when Major Culbertson of Ft. Union, refuses to buy his extra goods at a decent price. Instead, Sir George destroys the goods in a large bonfire. Jim goes to Washington DC and reports to the Administration and the President on the situation with the Mormons before returning to Fort Laramie.

Chapter 20, "The March South" President Buchanan orders U.S. Troops into the Utah Territory in 1857. In July 1857, Jim Bridger is employed as a U.S. Army guide at \$5-a-day and also re-establishes his ferry on the Green River in preparation for a march into Mormon country. The Mormons mount a guerrilla war and burn Ft. Bridger as well. Bridger makes sure the U.S. Army survives the winter and also collects rent for the burnt site of the fort from the Government. In the spring of 1858, the U.S. troops march into Utah and the Mormons surrender. Jim Bridger has the pleasure of marching with the army into Salt Lake City. Finally, the Mormons come back to their settlements and Jim Bridger returns to his farm in Missouri. Jim has a new son born, but his wife dies.

Captain Reynolds of the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers hires Jim Bridger as a guide. Jim wants to show the Captain the Yellowstone geysers but is stopped by heavy winter snows. Captain Reynolds with Jim's help produces an excellent U.S. Army map of the region of the Northern Rocky Mountains, which is used in the subsequent Indian wars. Chapter 21, "Tall Tales," Jim Bridger knows the Indian's ways and habits, plus almost a dozen Indian languages. Jim can understand Indian and animal trails, telling how many and when people and animals have gone by. In the summer of 1861, Jim Bridger becomes the guide to an engineer, Captain Berthoud, and maps a shorter route going west through Provo, Utah. Jim has friends watch his children in Missouri, and soon he is guiding two judges into the Utah Territory. The wonders of the Yellowstone geysers are still unknown to the public and Jim's descriptions are not believed. In the summer of 1862, there are Indian attacks while Jim Bridger guides U.S. Judges to Utah. After an attack, Jim can tell by a trail that about 20 Indians attacked and that some were wounded before fleeing. When the party reaches the Utah Territory, Mormon troops help escort the judges to Salt Lake City. Jim soon returns to his hang-out at Fort Laramie. Jim goes out on an expedition where Captain Humfreville is with Jim Bridger, and they



are under attack by Indians. Bridger is said to go on the attack along with a friendly Indian and to take a scalp, literally. Humfreville reads Shakespeare's *Richard II* to Bridger, but ironically, it's too much drama for Jim. Jim continues as a guide for the military until April 1864. He maps and travels on a new route he lays out through the Big Horn Mountains to Virginia City, in the future state of Montana.



Part 5: Chief of Scouts- Chapter 22,23, and 24

Part 5: Chief of Scouts- Chapter 22,23, and 24 Summary and Analysis

Chapter 22, "Powder River" As civilization disturbs game and Indian life, war breaks out again between settlers and Indian tribes. In Jan. 1865, Jim is summoned by General Dodge and put directly under Gen. Connor at Fort Laramie. Jim is paid well and has a group of scouts under him, and Gen. Conner brings Pawnee Scouts under Captain North as well. The Civil War is over and some of General Connor's troops have to be threatened with death to get them to march. Conner sets up Ft. Reno on the Powder River. Jim's scouts find an Indian trail and the Pawnee scouts make chase after the hostile forces. The Sioux Indians are doubly surprised that Pawnee Indians are overtaking them. They flee and the Pawnee scalp and kill 24 Sioux. The Pawnees celebrate with a victory dance and later the force moves out into the foothills of the Little Big Horn Mountains.

Jim Bridger becomes friends with Captain Palmer and is riding with him ahead, towards the Tongue River. There is a faint smoke trail from a large enemy camp 50 miles away. Jim is mad when Captain Palmer and Gen. Connor doubt him and cannot see the smoke. Then the Pawnee Scouts find an Arapaho Indian village there. A large group of men is led by Connor towards the village. There is hard hand-to-hand fighting until the Indians flee. The village is destroyed and with Jim's help, the Indian horses are tamed after a spontaneous rodeo struggle with the horses. After more skirmishes with the Arapahos, the army men return to their starting point.

Gen. Connor still has to rendezvous with another army group at the Tongue River. On a September night, Jim hears the wail of a "medicine wolf" and warns the General of some kind of trouble. The General does not listen to him, and Jim and his group of scouts leave the camp a short distance away. The weather turns cold. The Pawnee scouts finally find the other army group starving, beaten by Indians and without horses. Gen. Connor rescues them and the outfit returns to Fort Laramie. Though the army force is not successful, at least with Jim's help, most of the men come back alive.

Chap 23, "Red Cloud" Jim Bridger decides to go traveling again late in 1865. The Civil War is over and Jim hitches a wagon ride with some veterans heading towards Missouri. On the road, Jim passes many places where he has friends willing to give him and his companions free meals and lodging.

At Ft. Kearney, Jim is interviewed by a journalist who reports on Jim's dissatisfaction with the present methods of Indian fighting. Jim wants a small band of "Dodgers" that can move Sioux Indian villages and set up temporary forts. Jim Bridger heads to Washington DC sometime between January and May 1866. When he comes back, Jim



is a salaried guide at Ft. Kearney. Jim visits St. Louis, Missouri and realizes how much he wants to be in the wilderness. Col. Carrington leads a new army expedition into Indian country and Jim Bridger accompanies him as a paid scout and advisor. Carrington is trying to open a new road to Montana in direct violation of a treaty. Under Bridger's close watch, the expedition of 265 army men and ladies and servants makes it to Ft. Laramie.



Part 5: Chief of Scouts- Chapter 25 and 26

Part 5: Chief of Scouts- Chapter 25 and 26 Summary and Analysis

Chapter 25, "The Cheyenne's Warning" There is a peace treaty council with the Indians, but there are more signs of impending war. At Bridger's Ferry, a man there reports that Indians have raided the ranch. The troops continue to Ft. Reno, where suddenly the alarm is raised of an attack. Some horses are stolen, and soon there are widespread Indian attacks. In July, Col. Carrington starts to build a fort on the Little Piney River. A bunch of still friendly Indians come by to warn of an impending attack if Carrington and the troops do not leave the area. An Indian chief gets up and complains about the encroachment of the whites on the Cheyenne and Sioux hunting grounds.

The next day, the Sioux run off a bunch of mules. An army group goes in pursuit and is ambushed. Enforcements are sent from the fort and the troops get back with casualties and dead. On the way back, the trader French Pete is found scalped, along with four of his men. French Pete's wife hides with her children and later tells the troops that Pete was warned to leave his post, but listened too late. Jim Bridger is sent with Captain Burrows to get provisions from Ft. Reno. Jim sees an Indian sign on a buffalo skull of an impending attack. The troops hurry off and rescue a wagon train at Crazy Woman's Fork. Bridger returns to Ft. Kearny with supplies.

Col. Carrington has to protect passing wagon trains and the weekly mail to Ft. Laramie while being short on guns, ammunition and horses. In August, Col. Carrington establishes a new fort, named Fort Smith to the North West. The Sioux continue to stampede and steal horses and mules. A trail is planned to be laid out all the way to Virginia City. Jim visits some Crow Indians that are keeping the peace, but the Sioux are on the warpath and camped on the Tongue River. In September there is another Indian attempt to steal horses. There are attacks on the wood pile, the Pinery and the haymakers. A correspondent at the fort goes for a little walk outside and is butchered and scalped. Captain Brown is able to intercept an early morning raid on cattle, where 13 Sioux are killed and others mortally wounded. At the end of October, Ft. Kearney (formerly Ft. Carrington) is completed and there is a celebration.

Chapter 26, "Ft. Phil Kearney" Carrington is being told to mount a short winter campaign against the Sioux. Captain Brown and other hotheads are itching for action. Other newcomers like Lt. Col. Fetterman think it is easy to defeat the Sioux. In reality, the men are not ready to ride, shoot and fight in the rough country. Still, most of the men think Jim Bridger's warnings are unnecessary. Jim teaches the men to signal Indian-style an oncoming attack by circling on the horses. Captain Brown fantasizes about making a quick raid against the enemy camps on the Tongue River.



The ability of the Sioux Indian fighter is about to be demonstrated. Col. Fetterman mounts an attack on Long Piney Ridge but is barely saved by the quick action of one man's repeating rifle. Soon after Lt. Bingham, Lt. Grummond and Captain Bowers go off chasing an Indian during a skirmish. Only Grummond of the three, survives this foolishness. This small ambush is a foreshadowing of the events soon to come. Captain Brown looks for a chance to counterattack as he is due to leave the fort soon.



Part 5: Chief of Scouts- Chapter 27, 28 and 29

Part 5: Chief of Scouts- Chapter 27, 28 and 29 Summary and Analysis

Chapter 27, "Ambush" On December 21st, Bridger feels the cold weather in his bones. A small party of Cheyenne Indians approach to talk. Jim suspects the Indians are scouting out the fort to see if their gathering forces can storm it. Jim shows the Indians the large repeating howitzers and the strong fortifications and that it cannot be taken. The visitors report to the enemy the advice of Jim "Big Throat" Bridger and the enemy decides to lure the men out of the fort. The wood train bringing in wood to the fort is attacked only three miles away. Captain Fetterman requests to lead a relief mission to the circled wagons. A party of 78 soldiers and cavalry and 2 civilian men go out, and Captain Brown joins them at the last minute. Col. Carrington orders the men to not go beyond Lodge Trail Ridge, but Fetterman disobeys orders and tries to sneak up on the Indians from behind. At this time the Indians break off their attack on the wood train and Fetterman and his force are surrounded on all sides. Captain Ten Eyck is sent out with a relief column to head up the road past Lodge Trail Ridge. A messenger from Ten Eyck is sent to the fort saying that they valley is full of Indians. At darkness, Captain Ten Eyck and his force come into the fort with the naked and butchered bodies of 49 men from Fetterman's force.

The fort has only about 400 men left and ammunition is running low. After a tense debate, Bridger and 80 others march out of the fort to recover the other bodies. It is bitterly cold and Jim finds no sign of fresh Indian trails and the other 32 bodies are recovered. The bodies are taken back to the fort. It is difficult to bury them in the extreme weather, but by December 26th coffins are made and the men buried in a couple of pits. A soldier is sent to ride the 236 miles to Ft. Laramie to get a relief force. After many days a relief force arrives and the fort is saved. Stupid orders have men march in the frigid cold where some freeze to death. Commissioners are sent out to investigate this military disaster. In 1867, Jim Bridger is seen by a soldier in a fort in the West. Jim's eyesight is going bad, and he tells stories and keeps in touch with Chief Washakie of the Snakes (the Shoshones). U.S. Army men avoid annihilation due to their new repeating rifles. From the fall until April 1868, Jim goes to Ft. Laramie where he spends most of his time except for a few trips. The U.S. Commissioners investigating the massacre conclude that the building of Ft. Reno, Ft. Kearny and Ft. Smith were in violation of the Indian Treaty, and the forts are abandoned. Bridger gets to help evacuate Ft. Kearney.

Chapter 29, "The End of the Trail" Jim returns to his farm in Missouri. He hears about General Sheridan's plan for a new winter campaign against the Indians and wants to advise the General. Sheridan sees first hand how devastating a blizzard can be in late



November, 1868. General Custer has a fairly successful campaign against some hostile Indian villages that winter. Jim tries to enforce his claims to the area of Fort Bridger but never sees the money for this land in his lifetime. Jim is becoming old and growing blind. He stays on his farm in Missouri, where he is cared for by his daughter Virginia. Sometimes he goes up on an old gentle horse, with his faithful dog, Sultan coming along. After 1875, Jim is totally blind. Jim dies in 1881 and his old comrade General Dodge writes a short biography of him.



Characters

Jim Bridger, Old Gabe, Big Throat

Jim Bridger is presented to the reader as the ultimate mountain man. Jim is illiterate and yet is a man who understands and communicates in about a dozen languages. Jim has a strong love of the land and wilderness, especially of the Northern Rocky Mountains region. Jim begins to trap beaver during the period of great demand for beaver pelts, which comes to a close about 1840 when he is 36 years old.

The next 28 years, Jim is often in doubt of having a continued occupation in the mountains. First, Jim builds Ft. Bridger along the Oregon Trail which stretches to Oregon and California. He helps emigrants to the West survive the rigors of the trail, gives them advice and repairs their wagons. Jim buys excess goods and gives pointers on how to deal with the Indians and protect traveling wagon trains. Jim is a tough man, but he is vulnerable in that he is by himself except for his wife and the help of his business partner, Louis Vasquez. Brigham Young of the Mormons targets Jim, and a sheriff leading a group tries to imprison or kill Jim. He evades this force, but his fort is looted and partly destroyed. A few years later, Jim gets a chance at revenge. He guides an army expedition from late 1857, through the winter of 1858, into the Utah territory. This expedition aims to discipline the Mormons and put them under U.S. law. Jim is a great help to the army to survive the winter in the mountains. His renown spreads in the U.S. Army and for the next ten years, Jim is an army scout and often the actual leader of large bodies of U.S. troops fighting hostile Indians.

Jim is married to a series of Indian women that die young, often in childbirth. He is a staunch friend of Chief Washakie of the Snake Indians. Jim also serves as an adviser to General Connor, a hot-blooded fighter bent on exterminating all adult male hostile Indians. Jim must have mixed feelings, but his paramount loyalty is to the mission of the U.S. Government to pacify Indian tribes on its territory.

Thomas Fitzpatrick, Tom, White Head

Tom Fitzpatrick is a long-time comrade of Jim Bridger from when both men first go up the Missouri River on a trapping expedition. Tom joins with Jim Bridger and others in a free trapper brigade after this first trip into the wilderness. Tom is called "White Head" after he is nearly killed going off alone to look for William Sublette and the supply wagon train. Apparently, this experience scared Tom so much that his hair suddenly turned white. This is when Tom returns to the summer rendezvous at Pierre's Hole. Tom is a partner with Jim in the buying up of the Rocky Mountain Fur Company. Tom is less than successful in his next venture with the intention of trapping beaver. Tom is robbed by Crow Indians in the trapping trip, and Jim rescues Tom and helps him get his horses back. Jim Bridger meets Tom again at the Treaty Council at Fort Laramie in 1851, nearly



30 years later. Then, Tom is an Indian agent of the U.S. Government and participates in the large Indian council to pass the new Indian treaty with the U.S. Government.

Brigham Young, Leader of the Mormons

Brigham Young is a villain in Jim Bridger's life story. In 1847, Young brings his Mormon followers to the Great Basin region in the Utah Territory, which is not far from Fort Bridger. The Mormons have already been driven out of Missouri and are afraid of being driven out again. Young is jealous of Jim's good relations with the Indians and accuses Jim of inciting attacks against the Mormons. Young sends a Sheriff and a large force to arrest or kill Jim, which ends up looting Fort Bridger, though missing Jim. Later, the Mormons are declared to be in a state of sedition against the U.S. Government and the Utah Territory is occupied by the U.S. Army with the help of Jim Bridger. Jim helps direct the U.S. Army into the Utah Territory and gets a sort of revenge, though Brigham Young is ultimately pardoned by the U.S. President.

Joe Meek

Joe Meek is a trapper and mountain man who Jim Bridger saves when he is captured by the Crow Indians. Meek is very cool under dangerous conditions and creates the possibility for Jim to rescue him. He lies to the Crow Chief that Jim only has 40 men, so the Crows approach Jim's camp with the intention of destroying it. Actually, it is much larger than Meek says. Later, Joe Meek starts a big fight inside a trapper's camp when he kills an Indian who insults Meek's Indian wife, of whom Meek is very fond. Later in another battle, Meek's wife is shot to death by bow and arrow. Meek's daughter goes to school with Jim's daughter at Dr. Whitman's school, and both girls are killed or kidnapped when the school is attacked by hostile Indians.

Milton Sublette

Milton Sublette follows his brother William into the fur trade. Milton becomes one of the joint owners of the Rocky Mountain Fur Company. Milton's party is caught in a battle with Indians while leaving the Pierre's Hole rendezvous of 1832, though he survives. Milton becomes a partner with Jim Bridger in a new fur trapping company in 1834, which does not do well.

Major Andrew Henry

Major Henry leads the first trapping expedition that Jim goes on up the Missouri River. Henry has difficulties including losing a boat and having his horses stolen by Indians. Henry is one of the founders of the Rocky Mountain Fur Company. Later, he sells his interests to Jim Bridger and his partners and retires from the fur trade.



Col. William Ashley

Ashley is Major Henry's colleague. Ashley sends a messenger up the Missouri River to call Maj. Henry back downriver due to an Indian attack. Ashley establishes the Rocky Mountain Fur Company and later sells his interest and retires.

Hugh Glass

Hugh Glass is an old trapper who is attacked by a bear and wounded. Jim Bridger and another man agree to stay to watch him, but abandon him. Glass is able to survive under horrendous circumstances and wants revenge for being abandoned to his fate. After a long struggle, Glass catches up with Jim and the other man involved, but ends up being satisfied with apologies and monetary compensation.

Captain William Sublette

William Sublette meets Jim on Jim's first trip up the Missouri River to trap beaver pelts. William Sublette brings supplies to the Pierre's Hole rendezvous in 1832 and becomes a partner of the Rocky Mountain Fur Company, along with Jim. William's brother Milton is also a trapper. William is wounded at the battle of Pierre's Hole but recovers. He becomes a successful businessman and retires from the fur trade.

Doc Newell

Doc Newell is a long-time collaborator of Jim Bridger. He helps Jim negotiate the return of stolen horses from the Crow Indians. In a battle, he scalps an Indian. Newell typifies the trapper that adopts many of the ways of the Indians.

General Connor

General Connor is the leader of the U.S. Army's Powder River expedition in 1865. The Sioux Indians are fighting the United States to defend their hunting grounds. Connor is very tough and bloody, but he lacks experience in Indian fighting and needs all the help that Jim Bridger can give him. Connor destroys an Arapaho Indian camp but suffers setbacks and is forced to withdraw.

Colonel Carrington

In 1866-67, Colonel Carrington is assigned by the U.S. Army to open a wagon trail to Montana in violation of Indian treaties. Carrington closely listens to Jim Bridger and successfully sets up a fort. Due to insubordination, a force of 81 men under Lt. Col. Fetterman defies orders and is surrounded and destroyed.



Henry Vanderburgh

Henry Vanderburgh is a leader of the rival American Fur Company. He and his partner Drips follow Jim Bridger's trail in hopes of finding Jim's favorite places to trap beaver. Later, Vanderburgh rashly goes out nearly alone into a hostile Indian ambush and is scalped to death.

Peter Ogden

Peter Ogden is the leader of the rival Hudson Bay Company, which is British. He is married to an Indian woman, who has to rescue her horse and child from the Rocky Mountain Fur Company.

Joshua Pilcher

Joshua Pilcher is the head of the Missouri Fur Company when Jim Bridger starts out on his first expedition. Pilcher leads his mountain men who want to fight the Ree Indians but is stopped by Col. Leavenworth of the U.S. Army.

Louis Vasquez

Louis Vasquez is a friend of Jim Bridger and a fellow trapper. He is Mexican and married to a white woman from the settlements. Vasquez becomes a partner in Jim's enterprise, Fort Bridger. Vasquez sets up a store in Salt Lake City and warns Jim of the oncoming attack by the Mormons on Ft. Bridger.

Chief Washakie, of the Snake (Shoshone) Indians

Chief Washakie is a Chief of the Snake (Shoshone) Indians and becomes a friend of Jim Bridger, and later is Jim's father-in-law. Chief Washakie leads his band to the Treaty Council of Ft. Laramie, though his tribe is not invited there. The Crows by then are already considered friends and allies of the white men and are converted to a form of practical Christianity.



Objects/Places

Rocky Mountain Fur Company

The Rocky Mountain Fur Company is the first fur company for which Jim Bridger works. It is under Major Andrew Henry and Col. Ashley. Later, Jim and his partners buy the Rocky Mountain Fur Company which merges with the American Fur Company. After a few years, the beaver trade is winding down and soon this company is dissolved.

American Fur Company

The American Fur Company is the leading rival of the Rocky Mountain Fur Company. Later, as the beaver trade declines, the American Fur Company merges with the Rocky Mountain Fur Company of Jim Bridger and Tom Fitzpatrick.

Hudson Bay Company

The Hudson Bay Company is the British Company in the beaver trade. It operates in the Oregon Territory and in Canada. The Hudson Bay Company buys beaver pelts from Indian trappers. Jim Bridger and others claim that the Hudson Bay Company incites Indians to attack and loot white trappers.

Missouri Fur Company

The Missouri Fur Company is another company involved in the heyday of the beaver trade, under Joshua Pilcher.

The Rendezvous, Yearly Rendezvous

The yearly Rendezvous takes place in the summer around the beginning of July. Companies bring goods and whiskey out in a wagon train to the trappers at a predesignated rendezvous and trade for beaver pelts from the trappers and Indians. By the end of the 1830s, with the decline of the beaver trade, this institution goes out of existence.

Oregon Trail

The Oregon Trail is the trail from the east, passes Ft. Laramie and then winds through the South Pass, and goes on to Oregon and California. It is the main route for emigrant wagon trains from the east. Ft. Bridger is built by Jim Bridger along this route to service the travelers.



Great Basin

The Great Basin is a large valley in the Utah Territory, centered around the Great Salt Lake, including the mouth of the Bear River that empties into the lake. Jim Bridger discovers this area, and later Brigham Young and the Mormons come here to settle.

Fort Bridger

Fort Bridger is a fort that Jim Bridger builds on the Black Fork of the Green River and on the Oregon Trail. Here Jim earns a living buying goods from travelers and doing repairs for those on the Oregon Trail. Later the fort is destroyed by the Mormons, and the site is taken over after that by the U.S. Government.

Fort Laramie

Fort Laramie is along the Laramie River and on the eastern part of the Oregon Trail. In 1835, Jim Bridger and his partners buy the fort. In 1851, Ft. Laramie becomes the vicinity of a great Indian Treaty Council meetings of many tribes.

Squaw Man

A Squaw Man is a white man who marries an Indian woman and moves in with an Indian tribe.

The Yellowstone River

The mouth of the Yellowstone River, where it meets the Missouri River, is the location of the fort that Major Henry builds during Jim Bridger's first winter in the wilderness. On the length of the Yellowstone River and its drainage area are found the geysers and other wonders now in Yellowstone National Park. This area is later mapped by Captain Reynolds with the help of Jim Bridger.

Geysers and Hot Springs, Yellowstone area

Jim Bridger is one of the first white men to explore the Geysers and Hot Springs in the Yellowstone River drainage area. Other sights in the region are the Fire Hole and Yellowstone Lake.

Mountain Men, Trappers

American men, both white and colored or mulatto, go west starting in the early 1800s to explore the west and trap beaver and other furs. Some of them spend most of their lives



there and these are known as the Mountain Men, who adopt many of the ways of the Indians. Jim Bridger is a near lifelong mountain man, along with Tom Fitzpatrick, Joe Meek and others, while some retire from this life after a few years.

Indian Chiefs

Indian Chiefs are men of valor who have won battles and killed enemies. A Chief such as Washakie of the Snakes, or Red Cloud of the Sioux only control a small band of warriors, not the whole tribe.

Wagh!, Indian oaths, cursing

Wagh! and other similar expressions are used by the Indians instead of the profanity and cursing that white men and European cultures use. These expressions are used to show intense feelings or rage and are taken from animal growls, such as the blood-curdling growl of the grizzly bear.

Mormons, the Saints

The Mormons are at this time a new religious community that are driven out of Missouri and in 1847 settle in the Great Basin of the Great Salt Lake in the Utah Territory. Initially this area is part of Mexico but in 1848 after the Mexican War is ceded to the United States. The Mormons are very suspicious of outsiders and in 1857, the U.S. Army marches into the Utah Territory to put the Mormons under U.S. law.

American Indian Tribes, Tribes of the West

Western American Indian tribes include the Snakes (Shoshones), Crows, Bannocks, Blackfeet, Cheyenes and the Sioux. Early, the Snakes and the Crows become generally friendly Indian tribes while the most hostile to the white men are the Blackfeet, and later the Sioux.

Scalp

Taking a scalp is the Indian tradition of cutting off the top of the flesh on the head from a defeated enemy. This usually involves splitting a person's skull and killing them, though some people survive being scalped.

Booshway

A Booshway is a leader of a trapping company. Jim Bridger becomes a Booshway when he becomes a partner in the Rocky Mountain Fur Company. The word Booshway is derived from the French word, Bourgeois, in the sense of a businessman.

Themes

Jim Bridger and the Development of the Nation

Jim Bridger seeks adventure and profit in the wilderness, but he is also an important part of the development of the United States. The beaver trapping business opens up the frontier area of the sources of the Missouri River to American settlement. Indians live there but at a very low level of population density. By and large, the white trappers try to get along with the Indians. Squaw men marry Indian women and join Indian tribes. Many other white men and some black or mulattos also intermarry with Indian women but live on the frontier in their own forts. As the beaver trade declines, Jim's activity shifts to helping ordinary settlers cross the United States to move to Oregon and California. Even the Mormons, though hostile, settle in the Utah Territory. Many people receive advice from Jim Bridger, and most that do not listen to him regret it.

The last part of Bridger's career may be somewhat controversial, in that he is a scout for the U.S. Armed Forces aiming to subjugate the Sioux and Cheyenne Indians. By the 1860s, the great buffalo herds are dying out and the major trails like the Oregon Trail are dividing animal habitats. The ability of the Indians to hunt is being constrained and they are gradually being pushed onto Indian reservations. Jim points out that the U.S. Government often violates the Indian treaties that it has just signed. Jim is an agent of the United States Government, while also wanting to help protect the Indians.

Jim Bridger and Exploration

For Jim Bridger and mountain men to develop the wilderness and work there, they need to explore it. They are able to make a living by trapping beaver and trading for other animal skins from the Indians. The Rocky Mountain Fur Company develops a system where the trappers meet the company supply wagons once a year at a summer rendezvous. With the decline of the beaver trade, the main way to develop the interior is the building of many forts along wagon trails. Jim Bridger is living and exploring in the Rocky Mountains region from the age of 18 to the age of 64, in 1868. Jim never really has long-time friends, only business partners. He is married several times but is separated from his Indian wives for long periods of time.

Jim's near total independence lets him make a series of discoveries, including the Great Salt Lake and the mouth of the Bear River that flows into the Salt Lake, and the geysers and hot springs near Yellow Stone Lake. Bridger finds out from the Indians the location of South Pass, which becomes a key passage through the mountains on the Oregon Trail. Aside from such outstanding discoveries, Jim learns an astounding amount of information about the Indians and the land. He learns about a dozen languages such as French, Spanish and many American Indian languages. Jim has such a vast memory of the land conditions and topography that he can map out a trail between two places



pretty much from memory. His account is nearly perfectly accurate when he proceeds to guide someone on the new trail on the ground to confirm it.

The Life of a Mountain Man

The author looks at Jim Bridger in part as an ideal mountain man. Jim begins as a young man who through fear and inexperience abandons the wounded Hugh Glass to his fate. After this incident, Jim always tries to help his fellow mountain men when they are in trouble. At the height of his powers as a "Booshway" of the Rocky Mountain Fur Company, Jim manages to rescue Joe Meek, who is a prisoner of the Crow Indians. Jim Bridger saves mountain men so many times that he is given the nickname "Old Gabe," after the angel Gabriel.

Jim typifies a mountain man of his era in other ways. He marries Indian women and has half-Indian or "half-breed" children. Jim fully respects his series of wives and regrets that he outlives them all, with at least one dying in childbirth. Jim forms friendships with his Indian relatives, such as his father-in-law Chief Washakie of the Snake Indians. The mountain man does not necessarily intend to eliminate the Indians with whom he fights and trades. Jim learns many things from the Indians, including their languages, customs, and hunting lore. The decline of the Indians and also the mountain men is more due to a way of life based on hunting and huge herds of buffalo at a low population density. Soon the mountain man is replaced by the settler. Many mountain men are forced to return to the settlements of the United States, as Jim does in his old age. The mountain man can be viewed as a type of man who temporarily bridges the gap between the wild Indians and civilized society.

Style

Perspective

The perspective of the book is a view of the American frontier through the eyes of Jim Bridger and told in the third person point of view. At the beginning of the book, the reader feels the energy of an 18-year-old young man who is desperately trying to be recruited to Major Henry's expedition. As Jim ages and becomes more experienced, this perspective also changes, as when Jim becomes an independent trapper and takes on added responsibilities. Jim Bridger considers what abilities he has as compared to the other independent trappers in his brigade. He decides that what sets him apart is his memory and concentration on the land and his ability to explore the land.

The next shift in perspective is when Jim becomes a "Booshway" or leader of the Rocky Mountain Fur Company and has a large operation under his command. Jim is a partner of men such as Tom Fitzpatrick and William Sublette. It is difficult to write a biography of a man and his companions who are illiterate and leave no writings or letters. Instead the author describes mostly the larger scene of Jim's environment, such as the Battle of Pierre's Hole, and later through Jim's fur trapping period. Later, during the Fort Bridger period of Jim's life, there are travelers who write accounts of Fort Bridger, which the author is able to use. When, Jim is a U.S. Army scout, there are records of the military campaigns on the Powder River and later on the Black Hills. Most controversial is the author's account of Jim Bridger's confrontation with Brigham Young and the Mormons. The footnotes of the book make it clear that the author uses both Mormon and non-Mormon sources for this period, though the author favors Jim Bridger, not the Mormons.

Tone

The author tries to maintain a familiar tone for the reader, with enough footnotes and sources to satisfy a more academic reader. The book is first published in 1946, and seems to be aimed at literate high school students as well as a general readership. There is a general hostile tone towards the Indians, which is gradually altered by Jim's developing friendship and respect for Indians. Otherwise, many times when Indians are mentioned, they are referred to as the "Cussed Injuns." There is a slightly irritating use of Midwestern and "Mountain Man" dialect in the writing of the book. The author's apparent reason in doing this is to give the book an authentic flavor. Much of this dialectic forms of English are used in quotation from Jim and various characters, but some is used in the general descriptive language of the book.

The author probably faced the general stereotypes of a book about a hero of the American frontier. The hero is supposed to be totally brave, lest he be branded a coward. The author plays to reader expectations in this regard, but there are some exceptions to this. Jim Bridger is not always described as totally brave and reckless, and often is shown to be cautious and careful. The rashness of other historical

characters is shown to lead to massacres of American forces. The starkest example in the book is the poor leadership of Col. Fetterman at Fort Phil Kearney in late 1866, when the Colonel refuses to listen to Jim Bridger's advice.

Structure

The book is divided into 29 chapters that are grouped under 5 broad parts. The five parts are pretty organic to Jim Bridger's Life: Trapper, Booshway, Trader, Guide, and Chief of Scouts. The names of the chapters are usually more arbitrary and emphasize single events which often actually take up only a small part of the chapter. The main body of the book is 300 pages, plus it has a short preface, and at the end there are a bibliography, a footnotes section and an index. The book starts with a short introduction to Jim's family background and youth, but soon Jim is already joining his first trapping expedition. There is a great deal of emphasis on the business and Indian fights of Jim Bridger's days as a leader or Booshway of trappers. This period of Jim's life, from age 18 to 36, takes up about half of the book. The middle section of the book "Trader" goes from page 142 to page 191 and takes up Bridger's 14 years at Fort Bridger. There is a second transitional period in the book entitled "Guide," where Jim is largely a guide to the rich British gentleman Sir Gore. There is a special emphasis on Jim Bridger's last 10 active years that takes up most of the last 80 pages of the book. Jim is an official advisor to U.S. Military formations and there are more public records for this period of Jim's life. The dramatic tales of these times in Jim's life include successes and near disasters, as well as a massacre of U.S. troops who did not listen to Jim Bridger.



Quotes

"Hunters and boatmen took the weather as it came, believing that men who never slept under a roof were in little danger of sickness."

Chapter 2, p. 12

"Hundreds of miles below the Colonel had run into trouble at the Ree villages. Eight hundred Injuns had caught him napping, had killed thirteen men, wounded a dozen others, got all his horses."

Chapter 3, p. 27

"It was Henry's plan- an idea adopted from Manuel Lisa- not to engage Indian trappers, but to hire white men and keep them on the job the year round."

Chapter 4, p. 29

"And so the Major decided that two men must remain behind and care for Glass until he died- or was able to travel. That meant, to everyone present, until he died. Nobody really expected him to recover."

Chapter 5, p. 44

"And suddenly, to his intense satisfaction, he also realized that exploration was the principal part of the fur business."

Chapter 6, p. 59

"The camps were full of carousing trappers, who spent their days gambling, pony-racing, quarreling, chasing Indian women, and so made the most of their annual holiday, their one release from the strict vigilance and unrelenting hardship of their dangerous lives."

Chapter 7, p. 72

"With lightning quickness the chief grabbed the barrel of Jim's rifle, pushed the muzzle down. In that tense moment, Jim's finger automatically pressed the trigger; the charge exploded into the ground between the chief's feet."

Chapter 8, p. 91

"It seemed to Jim that he would have to hug that lousy Injun all day before he caught sight of his five armed trappers, who suddenly showed themselves at the end of the gully within easy rifle-shot."

Chapter 11, p. 118

"He saw that his only chance lay in running, dragging the Indian after him by the hair. In this way he finally got the best of the Blackfoot, stabbed him, and took his scalp."

Chapter 12, p. 128



Of course he would have to live with the cussed emigrants, men who had never sot a beaver-trap, never seen Injuns sculped.

Chapter 14, p. 152

There he stayed- except for a jaunt in the following spring with Kit Carson and others to Jackson's Hole and Yellowstone Lake, the Falls of the Yellowstone, Madison River, the Fire Hole River, and the Fire Holes of the Lower Geyser Basin. The tales of these trappers about the wonders they had seen only made people in the settlements laugh. 'Old Jim Bridger's lies,' they said.

Chapter 16, p. 166

But Chief Washakie, as a true friend of the whites, had reason to feel slighted when not invited to come down to smoke at Laramie.

Chapter 17, p. 171

"I was robbed and threatened with death by the Mormons, by the direction of Brigham Young, of all my merchandise, livestock, in fact everything I possessed, amounting to more than \$100,000 worth, the buildings in the fort partially destroyed by fire, and I barely escaped with my life."

Chapter 18, p. 191

"A cussed medicine man of the Crows had once thrown a curse on a mountain thar, and ever since you could see grass, sage brush, prairie hens, elk, bear, and antelope all turned to stone just as they war that minute."

Chapter 21, p. 210

"Jim, of course, did not care a hoot what the Pawnees thought. But when he realized that all the officers from the General down still believed that he had seen no columns of smoke and thought that he had guessed the location of the camp correctly just because he understood about where the Indians would be camping in that country, Jim Bridger was fit to be tied."

Chapter 22, p. 236

"They also stated that the Sioux were having a sun-dance, insisting that the Cheyennes must make common cause with them and drive the white man back to the Powder River."

Chapter 24, 257

"Later Jim visited a camp of 600 Crows not far from Clark's Fork, where Chiefs White Mouth, Black Foot, and Rotten Tail declared they were for peace, but that some of their young men wished to join the Sioux so as to gain their favor and re-establish title to Crow lands which the Sioux and Cheyennes had recently overrun."

Chapter 25, p. 264

"Bridger found the officers no longer indifferent to his opinions; all now seemed to feel, as Carrington did, that the old scout was a very useful man."

Chapter 28, p. 286



Topics for Discussion

Discuss Jim Bridger and the Indians. Does Jim Bridger develop a reasonable point of view on relations between the United States and the Indians? Is there a conflict between Jim's marital and family relations with the Indians and his relations with the Indians in general?

Discuss whether Jim Bridger fulfills his life ambitions. As a young man, Jim Bridger wants to become a great explorer and entrepreneur on the American frontier. His life has periods of success and failure. Does he succeed in fulfilling his dreams?

Discuss the role of the Mountain Man. The Mountain Man fights the Indian but in many ways becomes like them. Many mountain men marry Indian women and adopt battlefield practices such as taking scalps. Does the Mountain Man Jim Bridger act as an explorer, or someone who has abandoned civilized society? How about other mountain men?

Discuss Jim Bridger and exploration. Jim Bridger discovers the South Pass, the Yellowstone basin geysers and hot springs and other prominent physical features of the Western United States and the Rocky Mountains. Yet these features and others have been known to the Indians for hundreds of years. What makes this truly exploration and discovery?

Discuss the conflict between Jim Bridger and Brigham Young. The author portrays the Mormon leader Young as in the wrong and Jim Bridger as the injured party. Is this necessarily the case? Are Brigham Young's accusations against Jim totally baseless? Does Brigham Young receive legal treatment when the Utah territory is occupied by the U.S. Army?

Discuss the Powder River Campaign. Are the U.S. Army forces involved sufficient and properly trained? Is the campaign in any way a success? Is it a success for Jim Bridger?

Discuss the Ft. Kearny Campaign. Is this campaign necessary for the security and settlement of the United States? If Jim Bridger had been listened to, could the campaign have been successful? Could the entire campaign have been avoided?

Discuss the Beaver Pelt trade. Is this trade important in the development of the West? What makes it collapse?

Discuss the Hugh Glass incident. Is it justified to ask Jim Bridger and another trapper to stay with Bridger in an isolated place? Is Jim's explanation for his actions adequate? How does this incident change Jim's character?