

Jubilee Study Guide

Jubilee by Margaret Walker

(c)2015 BookRags, Inc. All rights reserved.



Contents

Jubilee Study Guide.....	1
Contents.....	2
Plot Summary.....	3
Chapters 1 through 7.....	4
Chapters 8 through 18.....	8
Chapters 19 through 27.....	13
Chapters 28 through 40.....	15
Chapters 41 through 49.....	19
Chapters 50 through 58.....	22
Characters.....	25
Objects/Places.....	28
Themes.....	30
Style.....	32
Quotes.....	33
Topics for Discussion.....	35



Plot Summary

Vyrie is just a toddler when she's taken to the slave quarters at Shady Oaks where her mother, Hetta, lies dying in childbirth. Vyrie is the daughter of the plantation owner, John Dutton, but is a slave because her mother is a slave. Soon after Hetta's death, Aunt Sukey - the slave who tends many of the young slaves on the plantation - dies as well. Vyrie is taken into the house but the cruelty of the mistress, who is aware of Vyrie's parentage, prompts John to send Vyrie to the kitchen where she helps the cook, Aunt Sally. When the mistress of the house insists that Aunt Sally be sold away, Vyrie is eventually chosen as her successor. Stories of impending war circulate carefully among the slaves. One of those active in the Underground Railroad is Randall Ware, a free black man who owns a blacksmith shop near Shady Oaks. Randall is immediately taken with Vyrie and promises to buy her freedom if she'll marry him. John denies her permission to marry Randall Ware and refuses to sell her when Randall sends a white agent to an auction at Shady Oaks. But Vyrie and Randall marry in secret and have three children together, two of which survive infancy.

Vyrie remains at Shady Oaks throughout the Civil War and is there the day a Union commander informs the slaves that they are now free. By this time she hasn't seen Randall Ware for many years and when a man named Innis Brown remains at the plantation, helping Vyrie to raise food, Vyrie gives in to his request that they marry. When Randall Ware does return, he discovers that Vyrie has gone. Randall takes up his old life as a blacksmith but is attacked by the Ku Klux Klan because he doesn't want to sell his land. His assistant is murdered and Randall beaten brutally before he gives in.

Vyrie and Innis make a home for themselves but find their first choice of land is prone to flooding. The next is a sharecropper's farm with a crooked landowner and they are happy in their next home until the Ku Klux Klan burns them out. They have settled in again but Vyrie is fearful of the hatred she senses in her neighbors until she helps with the birth of a child and is lauded as the community's midwife. When Innis and Vyrie's teenaged son Jim clash, it seems Jim will leave home in anger but Randall Ware learns from a mutual friend where Vyrie has settled. Randall shows up with the intention of taking Jim to a school newly established to train teachers for black communities. Vyrie knows this will be the best solution for Jim though she dreads letting him go. Innis fears Vyrie will leave him in favor of Randall Ware but Vyrie is pregnant with their third child and knows that she'll remain in the home she's helped build.



Chapters 1 through 7

Chapters 1 through 7 Summary

As the story opens, several slaves are trying to comfort a slave woman named Hetta who is dying in childbirth. Hetta, at twenty-nine, has given birth to fifteen children and the woman who tends birthing mothers, Granny Ticey, knows that Hetta is not going to live. She tries to convey her fears to the plantation owner, John Dutton, who sends for a doctor. When the doctor arrives several days later, the opportunity to help Hetta has passed and the doctor tells John there's nothing to be done. John, the father of most Hetta's children though she also has a husband, visits her and assures her that she'll soon be recovered though he obviously believes she is going to die. When she says she wants to see her daughter, Vyrie, before she dies, John sends for the little girl who is in the care of an old woman named Mammy Sukey. A black preacher named Brother Ezekiel prays for swift relief from the pain while Hetta's slave husband, Jake, waits for her death with the rest, including their young child. When she dies, there's a wail from the slaves.

In chapter two, Vyrie is seven years old and has been cared for by Mammy Sukey until the day Salina summons Vyrie to "the big house" where she is to serve as Lillian's maid. Vyrie is excited at the change but Mammy Sukey knows it will be a difficult life for the little girl and tries to prepare her to be polite. Vyrie has been "to the big house" on other occasions and John is always nice to her, telling Lillian to share special foods with Vyrie. John is furious when he discovers Vyrie is in the house but Salina says that he brings all his illegitimate children into the house and that he's only angry that she took the initiative. She refuses to change the order and Vyrie stays. John leaves the Shady Oaks plantation, which is located in Terrell County, Georgia, shortly before Ed Grimes returns to the property with some new slaves he'd just purchased. He is worried because a boy in the group is sluggish and Grimes fears the boy is sick. When they reach the yard, it takes only a few minutes for Sukey to realize the boy has plague. Sukey and some others tend the sick newcomers but Sukey dies as well. Vyrie is hysterical at first but then determines that she won't cry again. Two weeks later, John returns and Lillian rushes to him, saying that Vyrie has been punished by Salina. Salina has hung the girl by her hands in the closet and John sends her to the kitchen where she's put under Aunt Sally's care. John tells Salina that Vyrie is only a child but that she'll be grown some day and worth a lot of money but Salina says John expects her to "put up with" too much.

In chapter three, Vyrie is ten and has been living in the kitchen since John moved her. One of her first jobs each day is to carry in water but she also does many other chores for Aunt Sally who is teaching Vyrie all about cooking for the plantation. Often, Aunt Sally steal food to take back to the cabin for Sally and Vyrie to share for supper and they know that Salina would "die an unnatural death" if she were aware. Vyrie loves Aunt Sally's stories and the times Aunt Sally takes her to Raising Glory Baptist Church, deep in the swamps where slaves who can manage go to worship together with Brother



Ezekiel bringing the messages. One day they go to a different meeting place and Vyrie sees slaves from both of John Dutton's plantations as well as some strangers and a white man. The message is that there are Northerners who are willing to help runaways but one old slave, Uncle Joe, says that talk is dangerous and pointless.

In chapter four, Brother Ezekiel is often involved in helping runaways and spreading information. He writes his own passes, signing John Dutton's name in case he's caught by patrollers. In chapter five, the slaves receive shoes each year, usually around Christmas time, but most years someone has already suffered frostbite serious enough to lose a toe prior to the shoes' arrival. Vyrie is fortunate because she is comfortably warm in the kitchen and has warm clothing but she knows that even while she and Aunt Sally are cooking good food for the Duttons, there are people in the slave quarters dying. Each spring, Grimes has to buy new slaves to replace those lost over the winter months. Each summer, additional workers are hired though Grimes avoids the use of any free black men, fearing they will spread discontent among the slaves.

There's unrest as stories of slave revolts spread. Grimes reports the theft of a great deal of meat from the Dutton's storage shed and one of his children dies a short time later, making Grimes meaner than usual so that the slaves try to stay out of his way as much as possible. Grimes tells Salina that it's "magic" and that if there's one more tragedy he'll quit. Grimes is working in the fields when one of the mules drops dead. Grimes goes to the house and demands the use of two of John's thoroughbred horses but the stable boy, Grandpa Tom, knows that John will be furious and he refuses. Grimes beats him brutally then shoots him, leaving Grandpa Tom barely alive. The slaves take the body, wash and clothe him for burial, and Brother Ezekiel performs the message the following evening.

In chapter six, Vyrie has aged seven years since being moved to the kitchen. There is talk among the slave owners of slaves murdering their masters and when Salina says that Aunt Sally should be sold, John agrees. In chapter seven, Lee County slaves execute a plot against slave owners and the success makes other slave owners nervous. Salina tells John that they have nothing to worry about unless their slaves are influenced by outside forces. Aunt Sally is sold and Vyrie doesn't cry but Aunt Sally, clinging to other members of her family, calls out for Jesus, asking how long the slaves have to continue to endure. Salina tries out several cooks but John realizes that he made a mistake because Aunt Sally knew how to cook the foods he likes. When there isn't anyone to cook on a particular day, Vyrie takes over and John is pleased, though he worries that she's too young to be in complete control of the kitchen. One day Vyrie is told to take a plate of food out to a blacksmith who is working on the property. He's a free black man and is there because there is no other option available to Grimes. His name is Randall Ware and he is immediately struck by Vyrie's appearance. He tells her that he'll buy her freedom if she'll marry him. She is haughty at first but the word "freedom" catches her attention and she tells him that she'll marry him only when he buys her freedom.



Chapters 1 through 7 Analysis

John Dutton had been given Hetta when he was very young. John's father's attitude was that it was better for a young man to take his lust out on a slave than to defile a white woman and Hetta served that purpose for John, though he is obviously very fond of her. He admits to desiring her even after his marriage. John marries Salina, a young woman from Savannah, and is soon disappointed to find that she allows him into her bed only for the necessity of procreation. Once they have two children, a son named Johnny and a girl named Lillian, she never allows him back into her bedroom. She is furious when she finds out about Hetta and is especially cruel to the children that are obviously the result of John's time with Hetta. Salina, called "Big Missy" by the slaves, is disappointed at her life in the "backwoods" of Georgia as John's wife. She is overbearing and though they fight often, generally gets her way. John marries Hetta to another slave named Jake and though Hetta and Jake live together, John continues to father children by her. Jake says that Hetta has been a good wife and he seems to care about her. He notes that he'd always been concerned that Hetta might look down on him because of John's affection for her, but she'd never hinted at that.

Chapter one is titled "Death is a mystery only the squinch owl knows" and the reader is introduced to some of the superstitions and fears of the slaves, including that the sound of an owl is a sign of impending death though others believe it means only the death of a man. Hetta dies that night.

Many of the messages at the Raising Glory Baptist Church are filled with ideals of freedom. Sally takes Vyrie with her for these meetings but from an early age Vyrie is warned never to repeat any of the messages she hears. She doesn't but it's a long time before she realizes the reason she's sworn to secrecy.

Vyrie is aware of the poor relationships between blacks and whites from an early age. She knows that the slaves hate the masters and overseers and that the masters and overseers are contemptuous of the slaves. But she also learns that the poor white people hate the slaves as well as the masters. The poor whites are envious of the masters and believe that both masters and slaves keep the poor whites downtrodden so that many of them starve and die of diseases made worse by poor living conditions and nutrition. Grimes is almost in that same situation. He is poor and he and his wife have several children. If not for the fact that he works for the Duttons, he and his family would likely be facing off starvation and illnesses just like other poor white families. His wife is prejudiced, saying that they are poor but thanks God that they are white. When Grimes joins the Confederate Army, his wife returns to her people and she dies during the war. What's interesting is that there's a common misconception that the slaves are contemptuous of the poor whites as well. What the slaves find revolting is that many of the families are unwilling to face the backbreaking labor necessary to better provide for themselves.

When the slave owners begin to fear for their safety because of slave uprisings, it's Salina who apparently reassures John. She says that they take care of their slaves,



"love them like family," send for a doctor when there's a need and that the slaves are fully aware of the kindness of the Duttons. This is a typical argument in favor of slavery but it isn't the truth because the Duttons, though kinder than some owners, are still cruel and controlling. Hetta is an example of their willingness to send for a doctor. Though Grandma Ticey had asked for the doctor as soon as she knew Hetta was in trouble, it was days before he arrived and much too late to do anything constructive.



Chapters 8 through 18

Chapters 8 through 18 Summary

In Chapter Eight, Randall Ware returns to his blacksmith shop. Randall was born free and has the support of a wealthy white Quaker, Randall Wheelwright, and Wheelwright's friend Bob Qualls. Wheelwright and Qualls frequently help slaves escape and sometimes buy slaves to set them free. Randall owns some property and makes a good living so that he always pays his taxes on time but knows that his freedom depends on the support of Wheelwright and that his freedom is always in jeopardy. He and Vvry have a couple of options available, including that they could marry if John Dutton gives permission. Randall considers that he could help her run away but wants her to remain in Georgia as his wife. Vvry, now fifteen, wants John to give permission but knows that Salina will never agree and that John himself might refuse because he wants her in his kitchen. Vvry hears rumors that Randall is involved in plans for uprisings and aids escapees which makes her worry that he'll be killed before he can help her find her way to freedom.

In Chapter Nine, Vvry is in the cabin she had once shared with Aunt Sally but which is now hers alone when she hears the call of a whippoorwill. The call is too regimented to be real and when she goes to investigate she finds Randall. He asks that she trust him enough to marry now and she refuses. One day Vvry is out in the swamp, gathering greens and herbs, when she encounters the patrollers who question her about the various things she has in her basket. She assures them she has nothing that's poison.

In Chapter Ten, John's son, Johnny, is at home with a young teacher named Kevin McDougall. Kevin is courting Johnny's sister, Lillian, and teases Johnny about another young lady, Fanny, who is obviously taken with Johnny. Johnny says he isn't interested in a wife but plans to attend West Point in order to be ready for the opening of the war that seems inevitable. Vvry, at sixteen, knows that Lillian will be married the following summer. One of the new slaves who arrives that summer is "simple," unable to follow more than simple directions and spends a lot of time doing chores for Vvry. As the time draws near for the wedding, Salina's nerves are stretched thin and she's constantly angry at the slaves. Her demands get on the nerves of a slave named Lucy who makes a rude comment about Salina without realizing Salina has entered the kitchen and hears it. Salina slaps Lucy brutally and later reads a Bible passage to all the slaves, admonishing them to "obey in all things your masters." Lucy is to be whipped the following morning but runs away during the night. She's caught and returned to Shady Oaks and everyone expects that she'll be whipped but she's branded with the letter "R" on her face, indicating that she's a runaway. The day arrives for Lillian's wedding after much preparation. As she's preparing to leave the plantation, Lillian asks Vvry to wish her good luck and Vvry says that Lillian deserves nothing less.

In Chapter Eleven, the officials of Lee County plan to hang the two women accused of killing their masters. The event will be on the Fourth of July and slave owners from



around the area are planning to bring their slaves to show them what happens to slaves who commit murder. The first woman goes quietly but the second, having to watch her friend die, is hysterical by the time she's taken to the gallows. A preacher then addresses the crowd, telling the slaves that they were meant to have masters and that God intends them to be obedient. When the slaves from Shady Oaks return home that evening, Grimes discovers that Lucy isn't with them. Another slave, Caline, says that Lucy was sick and had not gone with them. Someone checks Lucy's room and finds what appears to be a body under a quilt. It's not until the following morning that Grimes discovers that it's a ruse and Lucy is gone.

In Chapter Twelve, Vvry is happy for Lucy but is careful not to let it show. Though the Northerners seldom return runaway slaves, the Duttons advertise their quest for Lucy, saying that she has an "R" branded onto her face. Several slaves look back over the days before Lucy's departure and realize that she'd been practicing hiding her scar. In Chapter Thirteen, Vvry spends many evenings with Randall though they have to sneak away to be together. There's a new slave in the kitchen and the girl is constantly grinning at Salina. Soon Salina is dosing her regularly with medicine to make her throw up so that she can be sure the girl isn't eating food from the kitchen. Vvry tells the girl that there's nothing to smile about and that Salina will stop harassing her if she stops smiling.

The slaves manage to harass Grimes so that he is angry because they aren't getting enough work done. None of them are outright disobeying, so he has no one in particular to blame. One day he goes to the slave quarters and demands that two old slaves, Uncle Plato and Uncle Esau, go to the fields despite John's orders that the two are to be allowed to live out their lives without doing field labor. Some of the young slaves offer to work extra if Grimes will let the two men leave the fields but Grimes refuses until the two men collapse. They make their way to an old slave house to escape the heat. Though Grimes declares it to be an accident, the house is burned to the ground by workers who are helping repair slave quarters on Grimes' orders. The screams of the men are heard until they die. The situation creates a further rift between Grimes and John who believes Grimes constantly ignores his orders.

In Chapter Fourteen, many of the Dutton's relatives show up at Christmas and the slaves are given time off work. Vvry and the house slaves are the exception and Vvry works harder than ever, providing the myriad of food expected. On this particular Christmas, Vvry is expecting Randall Ware's child and she goes to John to ask permission to marry Randall. John cites the fact that a marriage would mean Vvry was free and refuses. Vvry doesn't want her child born into slavery and, crying, asks John if it's wrong that she wants to be free. He says that he's thought about setting her free and that she'll have her freedom upon his death as a provision of his will.

In Chapter Fifteen, Vvry gives birth to a boy and, as Aunt Sally had done, she prays for an end to slavery so that her son won't live his life as a slave. Randall is pleased with his son though he still has to sneak in to spend time with Vvry and the boy, who is named James but referred to on the plantation as "Vvry's Jim." He's curious about everything and though Vvry revels in her role as mother, she feels hopeless about her



life overall. Over the next few years she gives birth to two more children, one who dies. The other is a girl and they call her Minna. Vryy stops expecting that Randall can help her gain her freedom but she does know that he is knowledgeable about the events leading toward war. As the war nears, there's a changed atmosphere. One day Salina tells John that it's obvious Randall is regularly visiting Vryy and that his free status makes him dangerous. John argues that it's natural for a man to want to see his "wife and children," to which Salina responds that if they are truly married, Vryy should be free. As Vryy and Randall are talking one day, she learns that there are no slaves in the North.

In Chapter Sixteen, a stranger appears at Shady Oaks and the slaves soon learn that there's to be an auction. Salina is determined to sell Vryy but John is against it. Vryy has Brother Ezekiel write a note to Randall with word of the impending auction. He also writes a pass for the simple boy hanging around the kitchen and Vryy sends him to Randall's blacksmith shop. The boy becomes confused and when a man asks for his pass, he gives him the note, alerting the whites to the fact that there's a plan to help Vryy gain her freedom. Vryy is put on the auction block and a disheveled old man takes the bidding to an incredible amount but John refuses to sell. The simple boy is the only slave sold.

In Chapter Seventeen, Randall tells Vryy about the "Underground Railroad" and says he knows the way to freedom. He tells Vryy that she's to stay at the plantation until a particular night, then leave the children asleep in her cabin, put on a man's shirt and pants, and meet him at a particular place in the swamp. Vryy insists that she can't possibly leave the children behind but Randall says he has a plan for them as well. He asks that she trust him and she finally agrees that she will. But on the night in question, she can't bring herself to leave them and sets out with both children in tow. She's too tired from carrying Minna and their provisions and dragging Jim along to make it far and she leaves too late in the night. She's caught long before she reaches the meeting place. In Chapter Eighteen, Vryy is forced back to Shady Oaks and knows she'll be whipped though she briefly holds out the hope that John will intervene. When she gets there, the children are taken away and she's tied to a post where she faints after only a few lashes, then dropped onto the ground with salt ground into the wounds. After dark the other slaves slip out and get her, taking care of her as fever racks her body for several days. During those days, she knows that Jim and Minna are brought to see her and believes she remembers John standing at her bedside, but can't be sure.

Chapters 8 through 18 Analysis

The writer indicates that seven years pass between the time Vryy is sent to work in the kitchen and the time that she takes over the kitchen duties alone but the writer then indicates that Vryy is fifteen when she meets Randall Ware. This is not a significant discrepancy and it's left to the reader to decide which is correct or if it even matters.

The "simple" boy who is bought by Grimes the spring before Lillian is to be married is willing to do whatever he's asked but often becomes confused and doesn't know how to



follow directions. John is angry that Grimes made such a bad deal and there are varying opinions about what's wrong with the boy. Vvry says that she knows what's happened to him - that he's been beaten down and dragged from one master to the next until he just can't face life anymore. Vvry, who continues to go about her daily routines no matter what and who works hard regardless of the situation, understands this better than most because of her own longing for a better life.

Vvry is very much alone and it's obvious that she needs someone on whom she can depend. Randall fills that need, at least to some degree. Vvry admits to herself that when he's lying beside her she doesn't cry out in her sleep for Aunt Sally or Aunt Sukey but Randall can't know how much she depends on him. This lack of deep communication is a trademark of Vvry's personality. She has no need to say what she feels to others and, because of the slavery to which she's subjected, she is able to hide many of her needs. This will continue throughout her life even after slavery is abolished and she is living with a family of her own. Vvry's moods are evident but she seldom gives voice to her hopes or her fears with anyone.

John is very angry at the deaths of Plato and Esau. He realizes that Grimes tends to ignore John's orders in favor of Salina's and that makes John angrier. Salina tries to soothe John, saying that the two old men were no longer useful and that it might be better that they are dead. John responds that his father never refused to allow an old slave the right to grow old and die naturally on the plantation. John is absolutely holding onto the old ways of life and wants desperately for life to remain as it was when he was younger. John is a legislator and as such sees the political climate against slavery as an institution. John dies before slaves are freed but he is adamantly steeped in the life of a plantation owner and would have fought to the death to maintain that way of life.

While the lives of the slaves are difficult, they are ingenious in their abilities to make life better for themselves and their loved ones. They commonly steal from their white masters but it's rationalized as theft of necessity. The food necessary to keep them from death is often withheld by the owners. Slaves find ways to steal without being caught, such as Aunt Sally secreting biscuits in her pockets for dinner shared with Vvry. But the majority of what the slaves need to survive is accomplished by sheer sweat and will power. For example, Vvry goes into the swamp and picks various kinds of herbs to make medicines in an effort to help the sick slaves through common illnesses. Wild nuts and food grown in tiny garden plots around their slave quarters supplements the inadequate rations provided by the Duttons. Slaves at the Dutton farm gather nuts and store them for the long winter days. It's noted that John Dutton is more generous than most and provides cheap liquor at Christmas and usually gave them a hog to roast during the holidays. Children received an orange or some candy and adults were given tobacco and sometimes clothing.

John is fully aware that Vvry is his daughter and when she asks him for permission to marry, he's initially happy and set to agree. However, when he realizes that she wants to marry a free man, John is angry. He says that she's asking too much of him. The relationship between father and daughter is interesting in that John is uncomfortable around Vvry. It could be because Vvry and Lillian are almost the same age and are so



alike in appearance that John can't help but be aware in this instance of the different lives his two daughters lead. Whatever the reason, he is unable to take command of conversations with Vry as he might do with other slaves. When Vry asks John if it's wrong that she wants to be free, John is doubly uncomfortable. He is unable to be truthful with her or to address her directly and so brings an abrupt end to the conversation. He does promise Vry that she will be free upon his death but she doesn't place a great deal of stock in that promise. John actually dies early in life and Vry knows then that Salina will block any provisions for Vry's freedom, even if it were in John's will. She never knows if it is part of his will or if he's only taunting her.

Randall's situation as a free man is tenuous and becomes more so after the death of his white protector, the Quaker named Randall Wheelwright. Randall knows that the Southern states are creating more stringent rules to keep the free blacks from planting ideas of freedom in the slaves and that he might at any time be imprisoned or killed. At one point, Randall is slipping over to Shady Oaks when he encounters a patrol and is shot. The wound is superficial but Randall understands that he can no longer remain in Georgia and he leaves.



Chapters 19 through 27

Chapters 19 through 27 Summary

In Chapter Nineteen, John Dutton, age fifty-seven, is a member of the Georgia Legislature. He's returning to Shady Oaks from an extended trip in February when the buggy being driven by Sam overturns. The horses run away, Sam is killed and John is pinned in the buggy. When the horses arrive at Shady Oaks, there's a search party sent out and the old doctor arrives with the diagnosis that John's leg is broken in two places. Vry takes John his supper after the doctor leaves and John points out paintings of his ancestors, saying that he has "inherited" the responsibility for "the honor of this house."

In Chapter Twenty, Lincoln is inaugurated and John is told he'll have to be off his feet at least six weeks. John's pain increases rather than decreases and it's soon evident that gangrene has set up. The doctor suggests amputation but John adamantly refuses. He reads the newspapers all the time and is angry at the political situation, saying that if war is inevitable he won't back down from it. John's temper gets worse as the pain gets worse and two slaves, Caline and a houseboy named Jim, take over his care. In Chapter Twenty-one, John gets worse and the odor of gangrene permeates the sick room. Salina asks if the doctor could remove John's leg now but the doctor refuses without John's consent, which he refuses to give. One day Vry goes into the room to take a tray of food and he rouses himself. He begins yelling at her that she won't be free until he's dead and that, "I ain't dead yet." He dies that night and Salina has already made "elaborate plans" for the funeral.

In Chapter Twenty-two, John's son Johnny comes home from West Point. He fears that Salina will want him to give up on a military career in favor of running the plantation but she assures him that she and Grimes have done all the work without John's help in the past and can continue in that manner. On the afternoon of the burial, Johnny learns that war has broken out. Vry holds to the idea that John promised to free her but knows that Salina would never allow it. She is more worried than ever knowing that John, who has at least provided some small measure of protection against Salina's anger, is gone. One night Vry hears the whippoorwill and is given a note. When she finally has the chance to let Brother Ezekiel read it for her, she learns that it's from Randall and that he's gone north. He promises that they will be freed and says that he'll return for her after the war is over.

In Chapter Twenty-three, Johnny joins the calvary and his mother begins making preparations though Johnny fears the war will end before he can get there. Kevin writes to Lillian who returned to Shady Oaks for her father's funeral, saying that he doesn't plan to join the war effort. Salina is horrified at the attitude and insists that he join. Johnny reminds his mother that there's going to be an incredible need for food and supplies and she promises that she'll do her part by keeping the plantation operating. Johnny goes out to address the slaves as he prepares to leave. He tells them that they



must be "faithful and obedient" and promises that they'll all be set free at the end of the war. Salina doesn't react and Johnny leaves with Jim, the houseboy.

In Chapter Twenty-four, Confederate Army officials arrive and ask Salina for the use of some slaves to work in the munitions plants. He promises payment for the labor and assures her that the slaves will be housed and fed. Salina summons Grimes who arranges for slaves to go to Macon. Over six months, Grimes makes the trip several times. Many of the slaves doing the work are injured or killed and five from Shady Oaks escape prompting the munitions factory owner to issue a reward of ten dollars each. In Chapter Twenty-five, Johnny is shot on the battlefield. The doctor says there's a bullet in his lung, that he might live but could hemorrhage and die at any time. Jim arranges a wagon and prepares to take Johnny home.

In Chapter Twenty-six, Randall Ware discovers that he isn't welcome in the north, regardless of his talents with a forge, but finds work with the Union Army under General Dodge. In Chapter Twenty-seven, Randall thinks back to Vvry but knows she's at least part of the reason his situation in Georgia had become so difficult he had to run away. Now, in 1863, he turns his mind back to the work at hand.

Chapters 19 through 27 Analysis

John's statement to Vvry about the "honor of this house" is evidently his way of saying that he will fight for the rights of the Southern states to hold slaves. John is just returning from a trip related to his job as a legislator and it's apparent that he knows the South will soon be taking steps to stand up for their rights. An interesting aspect of this is that John doesn't believe the North will actually fight.

The houseboy named Jim who takes over the majority of the care for John Dutton after his accident is not Vvry's son.

Johnny Dutton and Kevin McDougall argue about the correct attitude with war facing them. Kevin tells Johnny that he's romanticizing it and that he expects nothing but a "great adventure." This is typical of the young plantation owners of the day and Kevin's assessment seems accurate. However, Johnny also attacks Kevin's attitude, saying that Kevin is acting as if he's afraid to fight. Kevin says that isn't the case, that he's not afraid, but that war is a senseless reaction to a conflict.

The real reason for Johnny's address to the slaves as he prepared to leave is an opportunity for Grimes and Salina to take an accurate count of the slaves on the property. There's no explanation for Johnny's statement that the slaves will be set free at the end of the war. Salina doesn't react to the statement and it's not clear whether she expected that comment.



Chapters 28 through 40

Chapters 28 through 40 Summary

In Chapter Twenty-eight, Lillian is reading from the newspaper and tells her mother that Lincoln has freed all slaves. Salina says she doesn't recognize Lincoln's authority. Jim is meanwhile traveling toward Shady Oaks with Johnny. The trip should have taken just more than a week but the road is rough and Johnny drools blood, prompting Jim to be overly cautious. By the end of ten days, they are still a long way from the plantation and Jim worries what will happen if he shows up with Johnny's corpse. Johnny lives to make it home and his mother puts him right to bed. Fanny Cranshaw, a young girl from the region who had been attracted to Johnny prior to the war, visits and Johnny is obviously cheered by her company. Vvry is in the kitchen soon after his return and Jim stops in to talk. He says that the army doctor believed Johnny would die. Jim believes that Johnny was making a concerted effort to live long enough to make it home. However, over the next few days Johnny seems to recover some of his strength. Fanny visits often and they sometimes play board games. Johnny spends one evening on the verandah and his mother hopes he is on his way to recovery. But then he begins to hemorrhage and though the doctor is called, there's nothing to do but wait for the inevitable death. Johnny is buried in the family plot and Fanny is among the mourners.

In Chapter Twenty-nine, Jim the houseboy arrives at the army camp where Randall Ware is working. Jim says that after the taste of freedom he'd had during his time with Johnny at the Confederate Army camp, he couldn't stand the thought of remaining at the plantation and had run away. Randall tells Jim that Brother Ezekiel is also in the camp though he's very ill. Just before his death, Ezekiel sings praises that he'd lived to see the time of "jubilee," referring to the abolition of slavery. In Chapter Thirty, many slaves run away during 1863 because they sense that slavery is at the heart of the war. Christmas arrives and it's only Vvry and Lillian who work at creating festivities for the children remaining on the plantation. Lillian receives word in 1864 from Kevin that he's served his years and will be returning home. He's injured in February but Lillian isn't aware of this. In Chapter Thirty-one, Lillian and the others are preparing for Kevin's return but when he arrives it's obvious that he's near death from his wound. He is in terrible pain for the days until his death. Lillian goes every day to the grave and seems to lose all interest in life.

In Chapter Thirty-two, Salina learns that the Confederate government is calling for all Southerners to buy Confederate stocks and donate heavily to the war effort. She goes immediately to the bank to do that though both the banker and Lillian try to dissuade her. In Chapter Thirty-three, Randall and Jim are still with the Union Army and note the alarming number of slaves who have run away from plantations and are camping near the army. In Chapter Thirty-three, Grimes tells Salina that there are no slaves left on the plantation and that he is joining the Confederate Army. He's remained behind all these years because of a law that required slave owners to retain white overseers. He says that his wife has taken their children and gone to live with her family. Salina goes to



Andersonville hoping to find prisoners there who could be hired or purchased to work the farm. She is turned away because the policy is to return slaves to their owners or shoot them if they're wounded or sick. As soon as they return from Andersonville, Salina falls ill and the doctor says she has suffered a stroke. She dies and Lillian clings to Vvry, saying that she's alone and afraid.

In Chapter Thirty-five, it's evident that the Union Army will soon be coming to Shady Oaks and the women hide all the possessions they feel to be of value. In Chapter Thirty-six, Vvry insists that the women plant something in order to try to feed the families still on the plantation. She sets out with a plow on her own and the others lend a hand, though they aren't happy about it. One day a Union officer arrives and has Lillian assemble the slaves. Counting Vvry's children, there are only five left. He reads the Emancipation Proclamation declaring that the slaves are free. Then the soldiers and all the blacks straggling behind descend on the plantation and steal or destroy almost everything. They burn the cotton barn and pour molasses all over the house. Vvry spends the entire day in the kitchen, cooking chickens the soldiers are killing as fast as they can. Jim the houseboy arrives and the other two adult slaves say they are leaving with him. Vvry says she'll remain and wait for Randall Ware. Vvry's son Jim makes friends with a black man who will later be identified as Innis Brown.

In Chapter Thirty-seven, Vvry is attacked. Innis Brown intervenes, then sleeps at her front door to prevent additional attacks. The next morning Lillian's son calls to her and she discovers that Lillian has also been attacked and hit in the head with a pistol. The doctor is called and he says there's nothing to do but see if Lillian recovers. In Chapter Thirty-eight, Innis formally introduces himself to Vvry. When the army moves on, he remains. He sleeps in the slave quarters and Vvry sleeps in the house to be near in case Lillian needs her. Lillian begins to recover physically but it's evident that her mind is gone. Innis works hard and Vvry knows that she couldn't have held everything together without his help.

In Chapter Thirty-nine, Innis asks that Vvry marry him but she says that she's waiting for Randall. He says he wants to farm and will be happy if he can work land that's his own. In Chapter Forty, Vvry prepares for a trip, making candles and soap. She agrees that Randall should be at Shady Oaks by now if he's able to return and agrees to marry Innis at Christmas, providing the doctor is able to locate Lillian's family to take over her care. Lillian's aunt and uncle, Mister and Mrs. Porter, arrive with plans to take Lillian and the children to their home in Georgiana. Innis has plans to go to Alabama and Vvry and the children pack to go with him.

Chapters 28 through 40 Analysis

Chapter Thirty-three is very brief, only two pages in length, but introduces an important topic. The blacks who have escaped plantations and their slave masters are at loose ends. They have no idea what to do and so merely run to the Union Army which has become a symbol of rescue to them. The blacks are unprepared for the sudden responsibilities of freedom and look to the Union Army to feed them. The army, naturally,



is unable to meet that demand, let alone meet the need for clothes, medical care and shelter. What's more, the author notes that there are many blacks who believe that being free means they don't have to work at all. This is not surprising and a similar attitude is seen in Vyry's son, Jim, later.

Vyry continues to work as hard as necessary in order to keep the family fed but it seems that Jim has already decided that he shouldn't have to work in the fields or tax himself overly much. It's an attitude that will grow in him over the coming years until it creates an incredible conflict in the family.

It seems that Salina is suddenly incapable of taking care of the plantation and has no control over her life and that may have prompted her stroke. Lillian has now lost her husband, brother, father and mother in the course of only a few years. She naturally feels vulnerable and she turns to Vyry, one of only about three slaves left on the plantation other than Vyry's children. Lillian's comment that she's alone prompts a reply from Vyry that they are in the situation together. Vyry is the stronger of the two women because she's had to be but it's important to note that Vyry isn't willing to turn her back on Lillian, even when the opportunity to escape the plantation arises. This loyalty is an important part of Vyry's personality and is seen in other characters as well. For example, Jim is traveling with the Confederate Army but is able to come and go with relative freedom prior to Johnny being wounded. He could easily have escaped and could have ignored the need to take Johnny home, but he felt that same kind of loyalty.

Vyry asks the other slaves where they plan to go when they announce they are leaving with the houseboy, Jim. She doesn't ask why because she understands the desire to leave the plantation, but she seems to need to know where. They admit that they don't have a plan. As one puts it, she has the freedom to go and intends to go. Vyry is torn because she feels a responsibility to Lillian but knows that she can't stay indefinitely at the plantation. To further complicate matters, the houseboy named Jim tells her that he'd seen Randall Ware weeks earlier and that Randall was very sick. Jim believes that Randall died but doesn't know that for sure. Vyry says that she would have felt it if he'd died but she doesn't understand why he would take so long to return to her. He later admits that he'd spent some time involved in politics. Randall seems not to have considered that Vyry's position at the plantation would be precarious.

The attraction between Vyry and Innis is mutual but there's a deep mutual respect between them as well. They are both hard workers and they recognize this in each other. There's no doubt that Innis would have encountered many single black women by this point in his travels and could easily have found one willing to go with him, but he doesn't even hesitate in asking Vyry to join him.

There's an interesting scene in which Vyry is talking with Mrs. Porter and remembers that there are many items hidden at various points around the plantation. She recovers it all and hands it over to Mrs. Porter. There is gold and silver as well as family heirlooms. Mrs. Porter is amazed and insists that Vyry take some of them for herself. When Innis asks why Vyry turned it all over to Lillian's relatives, she points out that Lillian's son helped hide it and that he might someday have remembered it. She doesn't



want to give anyone reason to believe she's less than honest. It seems impossible that Innis might have wanted to keep the items for themselves, but that seems to be the case. Vyry and Innis set out without a specific destination in mind though they have plans to settle in Alabama. They are one small family among many traveling the country during this time but they have definite advantages over most because they are well equipped. They have a rickety wagon and a mule from the plantation as well as a huge array of pots and household items. They also have the word of Mrs. Porter that they are welcome to visit anytime and that they will help Vyry and Innis if they need them.



Chapters 41 through 49

Chapters 41 through 49 Summary

In Chapter Forty-one, nine months have passed since the war ended when Innis and Vvry set out. There is heavy reconstruction in the South and many thousands of blacks looking to make a new life, just like Innis and Vvry. Minna and Jim are soon bored with the traveling and Vvry and Innis entertain them by singing so that the children soon know choruses and join in. They learn that the Freedman's Bureau in Montgomery is helping families get settled but know that their rickety wagon won't make it that far. They find some rich bottom land in Henry County. Innis marks off the boundaries for a house, then begins felling logs. Vvry and the children help and make mud to chink the logs. The first time they build a fire inside, there's smoke but they are filled with happiness at their freedom and believe they can accomplish anything.

In Chapter Forty-two, Randall Ware arrives at Shady Oaks to find the house boarded up and a for sale sign in the yard. He goes on to his blacksmith shop in Dawson, fires up the forge and gets his business back in operation. There are laws defining the movements blacks can make despite the fact that slavery is abolished. Blacks cannot be out after nine at night and must have a job or risk being locked up for vagrancy. One day the doctor arrives and informs Randall that Vvry has married someone else and left for Alabama. He goes to the courthouse to check for the records, finds that Vvry has a legal marriage license on file, and vows to forget her.

In Chapter Forty-three, Innis and Vvry finish the cabin, then set out to build a farm. Innis buys pigs and a cow and they have chickens. Jim begins to complain that his work is never done prompting Vvry to fuss at him. Innis sets some traps and the family has fresh meat. They go into town with the results of their crop and encounter no trouble. Then Innis realizes it's because people think Vvry is white and that he's her worker. It "tickles" Innis but angers Vvry. The weather over the spring is not good for the crops and then heavy rains hit. It's obvious that the nearby river is going to flood them out. Innis fights to save the livestock but there's no ground high enough for the cow and she dies. The house floods as well and they spend a day in the loft waiting for the water to recede. When the flood is passed, both Jim and Minna fall ill and Vvry diagnoses malaria.

In Chapter Forty-four, they decide that they can't spend another year in the river bottoms and Innis sets out to find a new place to farm. In July he learns of a farm and goes there but finds the family hasn't yet left. The man says they'll be gone in a matter of weeks and the Brown's pack up to take over the farm. Vvry notes that the entire family is hungry looking and there seems to be nothing in the house to eat. Vvry sets up a cooking pot outside and prepares to fix their dinner then invites the entire family to eat with them. The woman tells Vvry they've been there three years and have yet to make a crop at all. Innis and Vvry move in but then the owner of the house, Mr. Pippins, arrives



and informs them that they'll have to live there as sharecroppers. Innis agrees and signs his mark to the contract that neither he nor Vvry can read.

In Chapter Forty-five, Innis realizes that the ground is very poor and decides that if he fertilizes from the dirt in the barn they might be able to make a crop. Mr. Pippins says they can charge seed and supplies at the store but Vvry says it will be too expensive and they have to get by without it. Vvry gives birth to a boy they name Harry. When the crops are harvested, Mr. Pippin returns and says that they'll have to sell their crops before he can tell how much they owe him. They make their sales and have two hundred, fifty dollars for him but he says they're a hundred short. He also tells them that they've charged items at the store. They realize why the previous tenants were starving and why they ran away, and Innis and Vvry do the same.

In Chapter Forty-six, the family travels to Troy where the wagon breaks down. Vvry is given a job working as a cook for the Jacobson family but she is miserably unhappy living in the rough little town where fights are common. One night they watch as the Ku Klux Klan rides off with a woman who returns tarred and feathered and mortally wounded. Both Vvry and Innis work hard and save and soon have enough money to build a house on public land. Mrs. Jacobson is furious when Vvry announces her intention to quit her job and help Innis make a farm for themselves. One day Minna is in the house with Harry while the others are working the nearby fields when some white boys enter and harass her. They run away when Vvry returns. Soon after, a cross is burned in their yard and the house catches fire. They are able to save little.

In Chapter Forty-seven, Vvry knows she should be thankful no one was hurt but she's frightened and depressed. She's again pregnant and wonders what they're going to do. Innis isn't certain they need to leave because there's already a crop in the ground but Vvry won't consider staying. Soldiers arrive and say that it's the law that acts of this kind be reported and they promise to return that day to accompany Vvry and Innis to a new house. Mr. Jacobson arrives as does a preacher, both with donations of cash, clothes and bedding. The soldiers say they have orders to take the Browns to Crenshaw County and to remain with them until they're safely in another house.

In Chapter Forty-eight, the body of Randall Ware's hired helper is dropped on the property with a note that says, "Dead, damned and delivered." Later Randall is brutally beaten and the doctor stops by to deliver the message that Randall is expected to agree to "sell" a section of his land and to refrain from all political activity. He agrees. In Chapter Forty-nine, Randall stands by his decision, saying that the government may be investigating Ku Klux Klan activities but that they can't protect him.

Chapters 41 through 49 Analysis

From the beginning, Innis and Vvry have several strikes against them. Neither can read and they are naïve in the ways of landlords and official records.



Innis tries to instill in Jim a love for work that accomplishes something for the family but Jim isn't interested. Jim frequently says that he'd thought freedom would bring an end to the drudgery of work and it seems that it is inherent in him to hate heavy labor because he does so from an early age. Vvry may also have been easy on him, trying to spare him the heavy work because she wanted so desperately for her children to be free.

When Innis is searching for a place to go after the disastrous spring in the river bottoms, he soon finds that the whites are angry when blacks are able to build successful farms and lives for themselves. When Innis finds the family about to move away from the farm, he asks who he needs ask about moving in but the man says there's no one to ask. The reader should understand that homesteading was a common practice at this time and there is a great deal of land available to squatters. Innis believes this is what he's found and he doesn't think to question the man's honesty.

Minna and Jim are young when Harry is born and don't realize that their mother went through labor to have the child. When they get up the morning after Harry's birth, Minna is amazed and immediately asks Vvry if they can keep the baby. Vvry pretends to consider it and says that they should ask Innis. She does and he says that the baby is too little to run away and that probably no one else would want him as badly as they. By this time, Minna and Jim have begun calling Innis "Paw," a habit that Vvry apparently approves.



Chapters 50 through 58

Chapters 50 through 58 Summary

In Chapter Fifty, Innis and Vry are taken to a house in Luverne, Alabama, by the soldiers. They discover that many of the people are hungry because of a recent famine in the area. The soldiers say that many whites died of starvation during the war, a fact that Vry and Innis say they'd never heard before. Three weeks later, Vry loses the baby she's carrying. Innis tries desperately to restore Vry to her former sense of happiness but to no avail. They learn that there's a farm near Greenville that is available for homesteading and Innis is excited but Vry is apprehensive. She says that she doesn't want to go there if they aren't wanted. One day he brings home a puppy that the children name Tricks. Vry isn't happy with it until Innis points out that he will be a good watch dog which will be a necessity once they move out of town onto another farm. Jim desperately wants a rifle and Innis agrees but says they'll have to share it. They go to the property in Greenville and decide they'll live there but Vry insists that they wait awhile before building a house, saying they'll "camp out" at first. Vry goes to Georgiana and finds the Porter's store. She soon sees Lillian on the porch of the Porter's house and discovers that there's been no change in her condition. Mr. Porter, after learning about the troubles the Browns have faced, says that he'll stop by their new farm in Greenville soon to look over the paperwork on the property to ensure that the claim is done correctly.

In Chapter Fifty-one, Jim's discontent grows and though Vry hopes for a school, there aren't enough teachers. In Chapter Fifty-two, Vry sells eggs and vegetables in town until several people, mistaking her for white, reveal their racist natures. In Chapter Fifty-three, Vry decides to sell her eggs and vegetables again and is walking down a street when a young man yells for help. His wife is in labor and Vry helps deliver the child. She returns to help the young mother the following day and the girl begins telling Vry what she's heard about blacks, including that they have tails. Vry reveals that she's black and the woman is dumbstruck. Her mother arrives just then and says that black women make the best midwives, and that the girl is fortunate Vry had been available. Vry and Innis are back on their farm later when the girl's father and some other men from town arrive. They offer to build a house for the Browns if Vry will offer her services as a midwife. Vry and Innis agree.

In Chapter Fifty-four, the house goes up quickly. In Chapter Fifty-five, Jim's discontent continues to grow. Vry saves everything she makes with the intention of sending Jim and Minna to school, though Innis says he can't do without Jim's help on the farm. One day Jim rushes in through the back door with his shirt in shreds and his back bleeding from a beating at Innis's hands because a sow had died. The family is in an uproar for days. Mr. Porter arrives and assures them that the paperwork for the farm is all in order. He says he's headed to Shady Oaks.



In Chapter Fifty-six, Minna sees a man coming up the drive and Vryy recognizes Randall Ware. He says that Mr. Porter had told him where Vryy and the children were living. He'd come to take Jim to Selma where a school has been established to train black teachers. The situation is tense but Randall and Innis eventually seem to get along. In Chapter Fifty-seven, Randall asks Vryy if she'll go back with him but she refuses, saying that she's made another life now and that it's too late. She already knows that she's pregnant again. Randall says that he plans to find a woman and marry. In Chapter Fifty-eight, Jim says he's sad to leave his mother but promises to work hard at school. They travel together to the station where Jim and Randall catch a train. Back at home, Minna hides and cries but as the storm passes she hears her mother calling to the chickens as she scatters feed for them.

Chapters 50 through 58 Analysis

Vryy doesn't want to build on their new farm for some time and it's obvious that it's because she's afraid of putting down roots. She fears that she'll come to love a home and be forced out of it again. Vryy obviously wants to live in a place where she'll feel safe. Innis waits for her, noting that she has always been decisive until this point. He's obviously anxious to build but loves her enough that he's willing to wait until she's ready to put down roots in the form of a new house. This is obviously difficult for him because he takes great pride in his ability to provide a home for his family. It's noted that when he and Vryy move after their house burns that he's upset because there's so little furniture in the new house.

The fight between Innis and Jim is brewing for a long time before it erupts. Jim believes his life has become nothing but manual labor and he hates that he never has time or opportunity for any fun. Innis, meanwhile, tries to find a way to get a little more work crammed into each day. He can't stand the thought of a wasted moment that could be spent productively and hates it whenever he senses that Jim isn't working as hard as he can. The differences here are that Innis is a grown man providing for a family and that he's working land that is his own. Though he's been a father to Jim for years at this point, he seems to have lost sight of the fact that Jim might have dreams of his own just as Innis had dreamed of having his own farm. What's interesting is that Vryy stands between Innis and Jim when it seems that Innis's temper hasn't spent itself. She refuses to let Jim be hurt physically. But when Randall arrives and threatens Innis for beating Jim, Vryy stands up for Innis, saying that Jim wasn't blameless. Ironically, Jim agrees with his mother.

Innis feels that Vryy has always looked down on him because he was a "field slave" while she was raised as a house slave. The two were miles apart in the hierarchy of plantation life and Innis believes that Vryy has taken that prejudice with her into their lives after slavery. What's interesting is that Randall Ware accuses her of loving whites. Faced with the accusations of both men, Vryy grows incredibly angry. She tells them that people have to stop seeing race and status as a means to justify actions. She says that she has every reason to hate whites and when the men seem to disagree, she bares her back and shows them the scars from her beating at Shady Oaks. Both men

are moved to tears but Vryy says that if the man who beat her were to come to her door hungry, she'd feed him.



Characters

Vyry

The daughter of a slave named Hetta and a slave owner named John Dutton, she is a toddler when her mother dies in childbirth at Shady Oaks. Vyry's skin is white and many people mistake her for a white woman. She bears a remarkable resemblance to John Dutton's daughter, Lillian, and the two are almost the same age which prompts one guest to remark that the girls might be twins. Vyry's life as a slave is difficult though she lives and works in the kitchen which gives her advantages many of the slaves don't have. She takes over the cooking for the plantation while just a teenager and it's while she's working in this capacity that she first meets the free black man, Randall Ware. Vyry grows up with no concept of what it would mean to be free but she is tantalized by the idea as soon as she hears it. She holds to the hope of freedom but when it comes, she does what she considers to be her duty by her former owners, especially Lillian. This is an important part of Vyry's nature and this loyalty and honor prompt many of her decisions in life. Vyry comes to realize that the attitudes of whites are a problem for her and she worries a great deal about the security of her family. Vyry is a hard worker and never complains about the work though she hates the fact that there is hatred and intolerance around her.

Innis Brown

A slave prior to the Civil War, he is traveling with the Union soldiers who descend on the Shady Oaks plantation immediately after the war. Innis connects with Vyry's son Jim and spends the first night by Vyry's door in an effort to ward off would-be attackers. When the Union Army moves on, he remains and helps Vyry and the children recover, working in the fields and performing many tasks around the plantation that makes life possible for the remaining inhabitants. He pleads with Vyry to marry him and agrees to wait until she can be certain her husband, Randall Ware, isn't going to return. Innis believes anything can be accomplished by hard work. Once the family is settled on land of their own, Innis drives himself, trying to get as much work as he can into each day. He tries to convey that drive to Jim and accuses Jim of being lazy because the teenager can't keep up. Innis is insecure in many aspects of life but his work ethic makes up for a great deal. He adores Vyry and takes it as a matter of pride to be able to provide for her. When she is desperately depressed following a Ku Klux Klan attack that leaves them homeless and results in the death of their unborn child, Innis seeks to console her by buying her trinkets, though they have little money and Innis would never have spent their precious money on himself. Innis struggles to understand Vyry and knows only that his love for her is deep and abiding. He is worried when Randall Ware shows up, fearing that Vyry will decide to go away with Randall .



Randall Ware

A free black man, Randall is able to read and he owns a blacksmith business in Georgia prior to the Civil War. Randall is a hard-working man and dedicates himself to making money with the belief that he can accomplish just about anything if he has money. He feels an immediate attraction to Vvry and promises to buy her freedom if she'll marry him. He isn't able to follow through on that promise, though it's through no fault of his own. Randall travels with the Union Army during much of the Civil War and does not return to the plantation to claim Vvry until months after the end of the war, after she's already gone. When he learns where the family has gone, he visits and arranges for Jim to attend college.

Jim

The son of Vvry and Randall Ware, Jim is born into slavery at Shady Oaks and believes that an end to slavery will be an end to the back-breaking work expected of slaves. He desperately desires to attend school and is on the verge of leaving his home with Vvry and his stepfather, Innis Brown, when Randall Ware shows up with a plan to send Jim to school.

Lillian Dutton

Daughter of the owner of the Shady Oaks plantation, Lillian is about the same age as Vvry and the two girls share a marked resemblance. Lillian is somewhat delicate as a young woman and never develops any significant strengths. She marries and has two children but her husband dies during a battle at the end of the war. She is unable to recover when an assailant hits her over the head with a pistol. Lillian spends the rest of her life with an aunt and is never again able to care for herself or her children.

Ed Grimes

A cruel overseer at the plantation Shady Oaks, Ed Grimes is ruthless with the slaves and generally agrees with the mistress of the house regarding punishment that should be meted out. His methods are brutal and his temper is out of control so that several slaves die under his control, a fact that angers John Dutton.

John Dutton

The owner of Shady Oaks, John Dutton is a legislator and believes in the ideals of the South as the country seems inevitably headed to war. John has an on-going relationship with a slave named Hetta and fathers many children by her, including Vvry. He has two legitimate children by his wife as well. John tantalizes Vvry with a promise that she's to be free upon his death but when that death occurs, Vvry knows that the mistress of the



house will ensure that none of the slaves are actually freed. John dies of gangrene after suffering a broken leg during a buggy accident.

Salina Dutton

Wife of John and mother of Lillian, Salina Dutton is the mistress of Shady Oaks when Vvry is a child. Salina is furious that her husband has kept Hetta as his black mistress for so many years and that he has fathered children by her. She knows that Vvry is the result of that union and is cruel to Vvry because of it. Salina is a strong-willed woman and believes fully in the South. She is proud of her son for serving in the Confederate Army though it costs him his life. She puts a great deal of money into the cause though she's warned that it might be a bad decision.

Johnny Dutton

Son of Salina and John Dutton, Johnny Dutton is determined to go to West Point and joins the Confederate Army as soon as war is declared. Johnny is injured in a battle and the surgeon says the bullet in his lung cannot be removed. Johnny is taken home by a slave who accompanied him to the war and seems to rally slightly before bleeding to death.

Aunt Sally

Aunt Sally is the woman who helps take care of Vvry when she is a child. She is the cook on the plantation and has a great deal of freedom compared to many of the other slaves. She takes food back to her cabin regularly though she knows she would be in trouble if caught. Salina Dutton manages to convince John Dutton that Aunt Sally should be sold.



Objects/Places

Terrell County

Terrell County is the county where Vvry grows up and where Shady Oaks plantation is located.

Raising Glory Baptist Church

Raising Glory Baptist Church is where Vvry goes as a child with Aunt Sally though she's sworn to secrecy about the messages she hears there.

West Point

Where Johnny attends West Point with the plan to prepare for the war that seems inevitable.

Georgia Legislature

John Dutton is a member of the Georgia Legislature until his death.

Macon

The slaves from shady Oaks are sent to work in the munitions plant in Macon.

Dawson

Randall Ware has a blacksmith shop in Dawson.

Henry County, Alabama

Innis and Vvry settle on some bottom land that floods in Henry County, Alabama.

Brownsville

Innis and Vvry finally settle in Brownsville.



Georgiana

Georgiana is where Mr. and Mrs. Porter live and where Lillian and her children go when they leave Shady Oaks.

Selma

Randall plans to send Jim to school in Selma.



Themes

Intolerance for the black race

Vyrie is, from a young age, very conscious of the fact that she's considered black and is a slave, despite the fact that her skin is white and she's the daughter of a wealthy plantation owner. She knows how to survive in her situation but hates the prejudice that is part of her everyday life. After she is granted her freedom, she sets out to make a life of her own and it's soon evident that her family, as blacks, will face continued discrimination. She hates the intolerance, especially on the part of whites who are angry at the blacks. Because of her white skin, many whites talk to her freely about their prejudice without realizing that she considers herself black. When Vyrie is called on one day to help a young woman in labor, she pitches in and successfully delivers the baby. Later, talking to the young mother, Vyrie discovers that the woman has been told by her bigoted husband that black men all want to rape white women and that black people have tails. This obvious prejudice angers Vyrie but the young girl's mother steps in with the information that "black grannies" are the most talented in the world when it comes to midwifery. With that respect between them, Vyrie is welcomed into the community with her family. She accepts the offer of friendship though she knows it is only one part of a larger picture and that the overall problem remains.

Loyalty

Vyry's loyalty cannot be questioned as seen in her refusal to leave Lillian and her children alone after being set free. Vyry is Lillian's half-sister but that relationship has never really made any difference to the two women. Instead, it's something less tangible that's drawn them together. They are almost the same age and have grown up together. Vyry recalls her father telling Lillian to share treats with her, though there was never any doubt that she was a slave. When almost all the slaves had gone from the plantation, leaving behind Vyry, her children, two other women, Lillian and Lillian's children, Vyry sets out to raise a garden in order to feed them. She does so out of self-preservation but includes the entire group in her plans. When the Union Army marches through and almost kills Lillian, Vyry learns that the other slaves are going to leave but she refuses, saying that she can't leave Lillian alone. This same kind of loyalty is seen in a house slave named Jim who travels to the Confederate Army with Johnny Dutton. When Johnny is wounded and it's obvious that he's going to die, Jim knows that he could easily run away and no one could do anything about it. But he finds a wagon and takes Johnny home. Soon after they arrive at the plantation, Jim leaves again but his loyalty to Johnny is such that he couldn't leave Johnny when he was needed. This loyalty is seen again when Randall Ware finds Vyry living with Innis Brown. Innis fully expects that Vyry will leave him to go away with Randall but Vyry feels a loyalty to Innis that means she will remain with him.

The impact of freedom

Many of the slaves were not prepared for the responsibilities of freedom. Vvry's son Jim is an example of the attitude that's seen among some of the slaves who believe that an end to slavery means an end to hard work. Many of these slaves have no education at all, are unable to support themselves except by manual labor, but expect that there's going to be some magical change in their lives that ends their need for hard work. There are exceptions such as Innis Brown who wants a farm of his own so that his hard work will benefit himself. Vvry is also an enterprising person and is willing to work hard in order to create a better life but Vvry also sees the need to better race relations and to create a better life for the next generation. There are those, such as Randall Ware, who are willing to become involved in politics but they soon discover that there is white opposition to that involvement. When Randall Ware is brutally beaten, he says that he'll do whatever they want. There are many whites who hate the fact that the blacks are free and they find ways to express their anger and hatred. The Ku Klux Klan is formed which forces the government to decide how to intervene in order to enforce the laws of freedom.



Style

Point of View

Description

Setting

Description

Language and Meaning

Description

Structure

The story is divided into three sections. Each section is identified by Roman numeral and title. Section one is titled "Sis Hetta's Child - The Antebellum Years." This section contains the first eighteen chapters of the book and opens with the death of Hetta, Vyrrie's mother. The chapters of this section include Vyrrie's formative years and her first meeting with the free man, Randall Ware, as well as their marriage and the births of their three children. The section ends with Vyrrie's failed attempt at escape and the beating she endures because of it. Section two is chapters nineteen through forty and is titled, "Mine Eyes Have Seen the Glory - The Civil War Years." These chapters include the reaction to the country at war and the deaths of the Dutton family members who fought. The majority of the slaves are taken away during this chapter and those who remain struggle to keep the family fed. The third section is titled "Forty Years in the Wilderness - Reconstruction and Reaction." The section includes chapters forty-one through fifty-eight. These chapters are focused on the lives of Vyrrie, Innis and Randall Ware after the end of the Civil War. The reader learns about the difficulties of the blacks who seek only to build new lives for themselves as the country tries to recover from the devastation of the Civil War. Each chapter is also numbered and titled. Chapter titles offer clues as to what the reader can expect from each chapter. Examples of this are "Seventy-five lashes on her naked back," which indicates that a slave is beaten; "My name is Innis Brown," in which Innis is introduced; and "Bound for Alabama," in which Vyrrie and her family leave Georgia. Chapters range greatly in length. For example, chapter four is only three pages in length and chapter twelve is only two pages. However, chapter two is twenty pages.



Quotes

"Lord, God-a-mighty, you done told us in your Word to seek and we shall find; knock and the door be open; ask and it shall be given when your love come twinklin down. And Lord, tonight we is a-seekin." Brother Ezekiel, Chapter 1, Page 12

"As a Quaker, his religious views were regarded as far too independent for the southern community but his abolitionist views were hated even more. He and old Bob Qualls had frequently been suspected of helping slaves escape to freedom or even daring to buy slaves on the auction block and, after purchasing them, giving them their freedom." Chapter 8, Page 91

"But to Vvry there was no mystery. This child was just another slave who had been kicked around like a dog all his life, from one plantation to another, from pillar to post, until now he acted more like a dumb, driven animal than a human being." Chapter 10, Page 108

"You must not stop because you can't go on, but you must go on because you can't stop. And at the end of the day she could not tell whether her head ached because she was tired, or her heart ached from unhappiness, or it was her feet that felt so bad." Chapter 10, Page 116

"Before she was twenty she had two more children and one of them was dead, dead before it was born and there was no grief within her nor tears to shed. That was one who would never be a slave." Chapter 15, Page 151

"But I will answer this, and mind you, he will go and go of his own free will. We will not have the disgrace of a coward in this family." Salina, Chapter 23, Page 203

"If Jim had been a field hand, such a delicate conflict would not have disturbed him; he would have felt not tied to the Dutton household, but he had nursed the old man and he had watched the children grow. Contemptuous as he was of Big Missy he was nevertheless tied to a strange code of honor, duty, and noblesse oblige which he could not have explained." Chapter 25, Page 220

"Well, ma'am, I am ordered to have all your slaves appear in the yard, and in the presence of you and the witnessing soldiers, hear me read the proclamation freeing them from slavery." Chapter 36, Page 278

"When we come away to freedom, everything turn wrong-side-outwards. I just took what was mine cause I buyed it with myself." Chapter 36, Page 282

"Right now I'd rather made a good run than a bad stand. I feel like it's better to have folks looking at my back saying 'yonder runs that stinking yellow-bellied coward' than looking at my corpse saying 'don't he look natchal?'" Chapter 49, Page 397



"Betty-Alice, the best grannies in the world is colored grannies, they doesn't never lose they babies and they hardly lose they mothers. They is worth more'n money and you is real lucky to had a colored granny." Chapter 53, Page 432

"And worstest of all they kept me ignorant so's I can't read and write my name, but I closed her eyes in death, and God is my witness, I bears her no ill will. Old Marster was my own daddy and he never did own me for his child." Chapter 57, Page 483



Topics for Discussion

Describe Vryy. What kind of person is she? What are her strengths? Her weaknesses? What are her hopes and dreams? How does she come to have those? Do any of them come true? How?

How is Vryy related to Hetta? To John Dutton? To Lillian? To Randall Ware? To Jim Ware? To Minna? To Innis Brown? What is her impact on the lives of each of these?

Describe Shady Oaks. Compare that to the small farm where Vryy and Innis settle at the end of the story. How are the two similar? How are they different? Where is Vryy happiest? Why?

Describe Innis Brown and Randall Ware. How are the two men similar? How are they different? What are their strengths and weaknesses? Who is the best husband to Vryy? Why?

Randall Ware wants Vryy to run away from Shady Oaks. How does he tell her to go about it? What happens to the plan? What is the result of the change? How might her life have been different if she'd followed Randall's plan? Support your answers with historical fact.

What was Vryy's job at Shady Oaks? What was Randall's job at that time? How do they meet? What was Innis's job as a slave? Innis believes that Vryy has always been somewhat prejudiced against him because of her position and his position. Explain what he meant.

Describe the moves Vryy and Innis make after leaving Shady Oaks. Compare each of the four places they live. How do they come to move each time? Which is better? What do they learn with each move?