

Leaving Cheyenne Study Guide

Leaving Cheyenne by Larry McMurtry

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Plot Summary

"Leaving Cheyenne" by Larry McMurtry is the story of three life-long friends who lived in a rural farming and ranching community in northern Texas. The story begins in the 1920s and concludes some forty years later. Gid Fry is a young cowboy wannabe who begrudgingly works for his father, Adam Fry, on the family's large ranch. They raise cattle and other livestock and raise crops. Adam is a dominant figure in Gid's life. His mother passed away and Gid is the only child who must do all the chores and work in the crop fields. But, in his mind, he is a cowboy and doesn't want to mess with planting and harvesting. But Adam is a wise man and knows that his son must acquire all the skills that it will take the run the ranch once it is left to him and farming is part of it.

Gid admires his best friend, Johnny McCloud who lives with his family on a nearby ranch. He's a real cowpoke and doesn't mess with plowing and planting. The two young men have been friends forever but they are very different. Gid is fundamentally more like his father - disciplined, work driven and ambitious while Johnny is free, works when he feels like it and is always looking for a good time. The boys are competitive about their cowboy skills but there is another issue that they are most competitive about - Molly Taylor.

Molly is the beauty of the north Texas community. The boys are entranced by her beautiful features and long black hair. She likes both boys and shows her affection for each but she keeps her true feelings to herself, which keeps them guessing. They both pursue her each in their own way. The serious Gid wants to marry her while the fun-loving Johnny just wants to love her and have a good time. Molly doesn't want to marry and won't be interested in getting hitched until she wants to have a baby. Gid never gives up and constantly tries to talk her into a wedding but Molly stands pat. As they mature, Gid and Johnny both become her lovers. The love and affection she feels for both never ends. When Molly finally marries, she surprises everyone.

Molly has two sons and they each have a different father. One is Gid's and one is Johnny's. When Molly tells Gid's son, Jimmy, that Gid is his real father, he rejects his mother forever. When she tells Joe that Johnny is his father, he just smiles and accepts it. Each of her sons is like his father, which is never more apparent than when she tells them the truth about their true heritage.

As World War II is underway, both boys serve their country. One of the sons is missing in action and one is officially pronounced to have been killed on the battlefield. Molly has the support of her two best friends during her time of need and mourning. Although their adults lives go in different directions, at least for a time, in the end the three friends are closer than ever. During their lives they shared much joy and much tragedy which, in the end, made their bond of friendship unbreakable.



Part I, The Blood's Country: Chapters One through Eight

Part I, The Blood's Country: Chapters One through Eight Summary

Chapter One

Gid woke up as he usually did. His father, Adam, was shaking his foot. He hated that. He even asked that he throw a glass of water on him but the shaking continued. Adam was going down in the pasture to check on the cattle. It would be up to Gid to do the chores. His father always had an excuse. The last time his father did the chores was when Gid was 12 and was laid up with his foot that he nearly cut off with an ax. It was voting day and Gid was anxious to join Molly Taylor and Johnny McCloud who were going to watch the ballot box on the first shift. He didn't want Johnny to get any alone time with Molly.

Gid finished his chores and began polishing a saddle that he'd been hiding from his father. But the jig was up. Adam came in and caught him with the new saddle and wanted to know where he got it. He had got it for his friend Johnny but just hadn't given it to him yet. Johnny had done a huge favor for him. He felt he owed it to him. His father thought it was crazy but had another matter to discuss. He understood that Gid wanted to get to the schoolhouse to protect his interests with Miss Molly, but he'd just have to wait. He talked about leaving the ranch that he worked so hard to develop to Gid who hadn't always appeared to be the most sensible person. The way he went off with the McCloud boy and didn't tell him he would be gone. Gid assured him that he'd make the ranch bigger and better than ever.

Gid rushed to the schoolhouse and spotted Johnny and Molly sitting on the front steps, holding hands! Gid was scheduled to monitor the voting with Ikey, a black ranch hand who hadn't shown up yet. Molly helped Gid get a stack of ballots out and soon Ikey came riding up on his mule. Gid cautioned Ikey to give a lot of thought as to who to vote for. Johnny said the man with the most money won every time. Johnny's comment upset Molly who didn't like to hear anyone run politics down because her father had been a commissioner. Her father was one of the most corrupt politicians. He'd gave everyone whiskey to vote for him. After he won, he found out who didn't vote for him and he'd get his whiskey back from them.

While Molly helped Ikey read the ballot, Gid and Johnny had a few words. They both claimed Molly as their own. After Ikey voted, Johnny was supposed to leave but volunteered to stay after Gid remembered he was supposed to cut a patch of cuckleburr on the ranch. Gid didn't want to leave Molly with Johnny, so he offered Ikey \$2 to cut the brush for him which Ikey anxiously accepted since his normal salary was 25 cents a day.



After Johnny and Ikey both left, Gid and Molly walked to the cistern. He grabbed her hand as they walked. He took his saddle off his horse so they could sit on it and not get eaten up by chiggers. Gid stole a few kisses but Molly would never say whether she was his girl or not. Suddenly, they saw that Ikey was coming back which was probably Johnny's doing.

Chapter Two

Gid's dad showed up to vote but he really just was being nosy. He liked Molly but he didn't want Gid to marry her. He told him to work hard for the next thirty years, save lots of money and marry a rich widow.

Johnny got into trouble when he delivered some cattle in Henrietta. He got into a drunken fight and lost his job. He had to settle for a job with a harvesting crew which he thought he was too good for. Gid's dad made him work on the crew, too. Gid was in the wagon while Johnny was pitching hay. Johnny pitched a big pitchfork full up, hitting Gid in the face. There was a snake in the hay. Gid thought it was a rattlesnake and scrambled to get away from it. He fell off the wagon and hard onto the ground with everyone around laughing at him, including Johnny. They immediately got into a fight. Johnny told him it was what he deserved for messing with his girl. Of course, Gid countered that Molly wasn't his girl. They punched and scrapped with each other until they were almost ready to drop.

The boss made them stop and continue their work. Johnny told Gid he was going to quit the job and get a real cowboy job in the panhandle. Gid was tempted to go with him. Working for his father was the worst. In the end, mainly because of Molly, but also because of his dad, Gid decided not to leave. Even though he was still mad at Johnny, he gave him his saddle for having taken him to the hospital and taking care of him. Johnny was thrilled with the new saddle. A few days later, Johnny left. That would leave Gid to pursue Molly without Johnny's interference. But he'd miss Johnny. He was a good buddy.

Chapter Three

Gid's father was working him hard. He thought a lot about Johnny out in the panhandle cowboying. He told his father that he had a notion to go join him but his father told him he was going to stay right where he was. The two argued for a bit but his father was adamant. He didn't want to hire a farmhand when he had a son. That wasn't the way you got rich, he told him. Rich is better than poor. That's not what the Bible said, Gid told him. Anybody who had no shoes in the winter didn't think poverty was so great. Gid's father told him not to settle for being mediocre. Johnny McCloud is not anyone to look up to. Gid didn't want to be a farmer - he wanted to be a cowboy. His father told him that he and Johnny were two different people. There was a lot more to Gid. As much as Gid dreamed of joining Johnny and being a real cowboy, he couldn't leave his father with all that work. He wouldn't be able to stand the guilty conscience.



But there was an upside to Johnny being gone. He had Molly to himself except for Eddie White who was just a shiftless boy Gid's age. He wasn't good enough for Molly. The best day he had with Molly when Johnny was gone was when he took Molly fishing. Her father was less than thrilled to see him. Molly got a postcard from Johnny but Gid didn't want to hear what he had to say even though he apparently mentioned him. Molly made a lunch for the two of them and Gid saddled up her horse and they were on their way to the fishing hole.

They fished and little and kissed a little more. He thought it was the right time so he proposed marriage. She wasn't interested in marriage. She'd stay single as long as she could. The only thing that would make her get married was if she got pregnant. They argued about what would be the right thing to do. She told him she'd do whatever he wanted and right then. But he said it wasn't right. She pouted for a while but then got in a better mood. They went back to the house. He cleaned the fish they caught and Molly cooked them. He was mad at himself for not taking advantage of the afternoon. Johnny would have. His father put all kinds of work on him and he didn't get to see Molly until the next month and by that time, Johnny was back.

Chapter Four

Still upset at the way he acted around Molly, Sonny decided to call on another girl, Mabel Peters. She was a shy, pretty girl but her family was so poor and their property so remote that no one called on her. Unlike Molly, Mabel really wanted a sweetheart that she could marry. Gid didn't want to go inside their tiny, hot house so he suggested they take a walk in the moonlight. They walked for a while then climbed in the wagon and started kissing. She said they would do whatever he wanted. Then they could get married and start having babies. Gid let her know that he didn't have marriage on his mind. She got real cool then. When he left, she asked him to come back sometime.

Chapter Five

Gid's father hired Johnny on a day-to-day basis when he returned to the area. He asked Gid if he'd been taking care of his girl. He said he watched out for Mabel every chance he got. The two old friends were teasing each other and glad to be back together. The two boys got in trouble with Mr. Taylor. They had to retrieve two yearlings that went onto Taylor's land. They found the yearlings and led them back onto Gid's property. They spotted a coyote and chased him over to Taylor's land. They decided to rope him and bring him in for bounty.

Taylor caught them and accused them of taking one of his coyotes. Gid was shocked when his father rode up and got them out of the scrape. Adam told Taylor that it was his coyote. He could tell by the mark on his ear. Amazingly, he got old Mr. Taylor to pay three dollars for the coyote. The boys were going to go get it so it wouldn't bite Molly but then they heard the sound of a shotgun coming from the Taylor property and knew she was safe.

Chapter Six



While Jimmy had been in the Panhandle, Molly had agreed to go to the harvest-time square dance with Gid. Jimmy was mad and had to settle and take Mabel. But when Gid came to pick Molly up, the house was all dark. Molly called out from the darkened house and said she wasn't going to the dance because she was sick. Gid went inside and when he lit a lamp, he saw that she had a black eye, no doubt compliments of her father. She warned him not to say a word against her father. She deserved the black eye. Gid didn't believe it but didn't push the issue. Molly was upset about missing the dance. He told her they'd get to go to plenty of dances. In fact, they could dance right there. He took her in his arms and kissed her. Then they danced while she hummed a song. Her father wouldn't be back for three days.

They made love that night and Gid was sure they'd marry after spending the night together. He was shocked to learn that he wasn't her first lover.

Chapter Seven

When Gid got home, his father sent him down to the field to help Johnny dig post holes. Gid decided that if Johnny was the first man to have sex with Molly, he ought to have first choice of marrying her. If he didn't want to, then Gid would get his chance. One thing was for sure, Molly needed to be married after giving herself away like that. Adam sent Gid and Johnny to Fort Worth to sell his calves. They herded them to Henrietta then put them on a train to Fort Worth. After they got the calves settled down on the train, they went to a bar for some drinks. Johnny soon got into a fist fight with another cowboy and duked it out outside.

Later, they checked the calves again and went to sleep in the caboose. Gid brought up the subject of Molly and confessed he laid with her and that one of them should marry her. Johnny reminded Gid how he had gotten him cured after his time in the whorehouse in Kansas. Johnny told Gid that he wasn't Molly's first. He thought maybe Gid was. They discussed whether it could be Eddie. Gid didn't think so. Johnny pointed out that neither one was first so neither one was obliged to marry her. Gid would not let that worthless Eddie marry her. He'd marry her even if he was third. They arrived in "cowtown" and stood out in the cold for an hour not knowing what to do. Then they learned that all the cows had been unloaded. They walked all around in the cattle yard trying to make sure their cows were there. If they were lost, Adam would kill them. It was late so they got a room to catch some sleep.

The next day Gid couldn't wake Johnny so he went to the stockyards alone. A hay hauler who knew Adam scolded Gid for being so late. He already missed two chances to sell the cattle. His father never operated like that. The man pointed out a buyer and, to Gid's great surprise, the man bought his calves right away for a dime a pound and gave him a check. Gid bought a cup of coffee in the Exchange building and watched it come alive. It was a beehive of activity.

Gid had over \$8,000 of his father's money. Adam had told him to buy some yearlings if they looked good. He was giddy with power and money. He started buying groups of cattle one hour and selling them for a profit the next. He got careless and made a bad



deal and lost \$1,200. When he finally got back to the hotel room, Johnny wasn't there. After searching a number of bars, he finally spotted him. Johnny was with Sam, a stockyards beggar who Adam had told him about. The three men drank all night. Sam was so drunk that he went to sleep in the middle of the floor. Johnny and Gid went to a whorehouse so Gid would stop brooding.

Adam wasn't a bit angry about Gid losing the money. He said the trading was good practice and he was pleased with the cattle that Gid bought. Gid never knew what to expect from his father.

Chapter Eight

It took Gid and Johnny a long time to recuperate from their trip. Johnny gave up drinking forever - but forever wasn't very long as it turned out. One morning, one of Mabel's little brothers rode over screaming. Grandma had burned their house down. Gid and Adam rode over and sure enough, all that was left was a little fire. The entire family was outside gathering up their pets. Skinny little Mabel was about ready to freeze, so Gid got her closer to the fire. She said she wished she was married so they could all stay with her and her husband. They all got in Adam's wagon and Gid drove them to Thalia so they could stay with Mrs. Peters' sister. Eventually some of the family members came back and lived in the barn. Mabel moved into town and got a job at a grocery store. But she was poor and it would be a while before she had any prosperous boyfriends.

Part I, The Blood's Country: Chapters One through Eight Analysis

Chapter One

Part of the plot is revealed in this first chapter. There is a serious conflict between Gid and his father. Adam thinks Gid is irresponsible. He is afraid to leave the ranch to his son because he feels that he will neglect everything he worked so hard for. He was upset that Gid, on one occasion, had left with Johnny and was gone for days without as much as a word. Perhaps that had something to do with Gid getting him a new saddle. Gid thinks he's responsible and a hard worker. But his father is perhaps just being a little harsh with him because that's his nature or he wants to motivate his son, or both. Gid shows that he is responsible because when he is unable to cut some brush on the ranch, he pays Ikey to do it.

Gid and Johnny are competitors for the pretty Molly who seems to be playing both of them. She will not confirm to Gid that she is his girl. She holds hands with both of the young men. She mentions another boy, Eddie, who could be another competitor for Molly. Gid refers to Johnny as sly and not trustworthy. However, Johnny apparently had done a huge favor for Gid the nature of which is not yet revealed in the story. He wants to pay Johnny back for the favor.

Chapter Two



Gid's father doesn't know that Johnny took care of Gid while he was in the hospital. The reader doesn't yet know why Gid was in the hospital. Gid shows his integrity by giving the saddle to Johnny who stood by him in his hour of need. Even though they fight and scrap and come to blows and are both competing for the same girl, deep-down they are good friends. When they part their ways, Gid realizes that he was losing a good friend. Johnny, too, is giving up a lot. He is giving up his good friend and the woman he claims to love. The story has not seen the last of Johnny McCloud.

Chapter Three

Gid and his father have philosophical differences about rich and poor. His father thinks wealth is more important than Gid does. Gid adheres to the Bible while his father tells him the Bible is wrong if it teaches that being poor is good. Gid's father is a wise but cynical man. His intelligence is obvious but he seems a little bitter as if he'd been very hurt. Gid's mother is not around. Perhaps she died or left him. In either case, Gid's father hasn't gotten over his loss.

Molly is a woman before her time. She is not interested in being married at all. She tells Gid that there's nothing that a married woman can do that she can't. Gid resists her offer to have sex. He thinks it's wrong before marriage. Later, he kicks himself for passing up the offer. He knows that Johnny wouldn't have. Maybe Johnny has already taken advantage of Molly's free spirit. With Johnny's return, the triangle between the two boys and Molly is poised to heat up.

Page Four

Mabel talks marriage but Gid is not interested in her. She was willing to have sex if there was a promise of marriage but since there wasn't, she was holding out. He's obsessed with girls but he can't seem to get what he wants out of either girl.

Chapter Five

As much as Gid and Johnny fight, they are glad to be reunited. Adam shows that he cares for his son and even Johnny when he gets them out of the scrape they get into with the coyote and Mr. Taylor. He supports Gid's claim that the coyote was his - it belonged on his land and was just chased over by the boys. Of course, he was just making it up but by doing so, he got the boys out of hot water and he got three dollars out of Taylor who wanted to take the coyote in for bounty.

Chapter Six

Even though Molly's father abuses her, she still defends him. It is common for an abused child to blame herself for the abuse and hold the parent blameless. In Molly's case, she blames her actions for the abuse and comments that she deserved what she got. Gid is naïve and learns that Molly is not a virgin. He is astonished although he probably shouldn't have been. It would not be surprising to learn that Molly's had sex with Johnny and perhaps others.



Chapter Seven

Although all signs are pointing to the fact that Molly isn't the sweet innocent girl he thought she was, Gid refuses to recognize it. Adam gives both Gid and Johnny a vote of confidence by letting them take the calves to the stockyard in Dallas. Although Gid lost a big wad of Adam's money, surprisingly Adam wasn't upset. He said it was good practice for Gid. Adam has hopes that his son will become the cattleman that he wants him to be. Once he becomes more experienced, Adam will feel more comfortable leaving the ranch to him. He has his son's best interest at heart but he is also worried about leaving his ranch in good hands because he had worked so hard for so many years to make it what it is. Of course, Adam would probably be outraged if he knew how the boys had drunk and caroused when they were in Dallas.

In a way, Johnny is a good influence on Gid because he encourages him to have fun and be carefree and not "brood." On the other hand, Johnny drinks too much and is somewhat cavalier about women and not an especially good role model for Gid in that sense.

Chapter Eight

Adam and Gid don't hesitate to help their neighbors, the Peters. Despite the trauma she is going through, Mabel still has marriage on her mind. She is the opposite of Molly. Mabel thinks everything will be cured by marriage while Molly thinks everything will be ruined by marriage. The story hints that Mabel gained some self-esteem by moving out from her family.



Part I, The Blood's Country: Chapters Nine through Sixteen

Part I, The Blood's Country: Chapters Nine through Sixteen Summary

Chapter Nine

Adam discussed marriage with Gid. If he married Molly, he told him, he'd lose a friend. If he married Mabel, it would be hell. Gid said if he married anyone it would be Molly. Adam said a man ought not to marry unless he wants kids. Gid pointed out that Adam married and survived it. But Gid's mother did not. Adam said that animals turn out better than people because they are bred to the right partner. The whole conversation made Gid think of going to the Panhandle.

Chapter Ten

It was early December before Gid got a chance to ride over to Molly's house and ask her to go to the Christmas dance. But she had already promised Eddie. In fact, she promised him she wouldn't go to any dances with anyone else. Gid was irate. Eddie wasn't good enough for her. She didn't want to talk about it. They ate dinner and were eating popcorn by the fire and getting very cozy when Old Mr. Taylor came home. He was drunk already and brought a glass and a bottle of whiskey in the room. He was argumentative with Gid and eventually told him to go home. Molly was hurt. She responded to her father in a timid way. Gid insisted to Molly that they'd be married by next spring but she was adamant that she didn't want to get married unless she was expecting a baby. Molly did hate to see Gid go and she wished she could go to the dance with him. He was her favorite, she told him. He hated to leave, too. He had been hoping he could stay the night again.

Chapter Eleven

Gid and Johnny decided they would go to the dance without dates. Johnny planned to tell Eddie to stay away from Molly. Neither one could figure out why Molly agreed to go to the dances exclusively with Eddie. As soon as they arrived at the dance, they spotted Molly dancing in a square dance with Eddie. It made Gid so jealous he could hardly stand it. Eddie wasn't dressed up and looked like he was already drunk. Gid got a slow dance with Molly. He could smell whiskey on her breath and she had circles under her eyes like she hadn't been sleeping well. Gid told Molly that he had a Christmas present for her. She said she'd come to his place to get it. Her father's been in a foul mood lately.

While Gid was drinking some eggnog, Molly ran to him. She was crying and asked him to stop Eddie and Johnny who were fighting outside. Even though Johnny was drunk,



he got the best of Eddie. The sheriff didn't like the foul language Johnny used because there were ladies around. He arrested him and threw him in a cell for the night. Gid told Molly to come over when she could.

Chapter Twelve

Adam decided to butcher three large hogs right before Christmas. The buyers came over to help with the butchering although Johnny and Gid did the actual killing. Adam had asked Molly to come over and do the cooking for the crew. Everyone loved Molly's cooking. They worked so late, that Molly stayed and cooked dinner for Gid and Adam. Gid rode home with her and since her father was in Wichita, he stayed overnight and slept with her. He persisted in asking her to marry him. She told him that she didn't love him in that way but she understood that he did.

Chapter Thirteen

January was fairly bleak for Gid. He was missing Molly - she was all he could think of. Adam was having Johnny do most of the cattle work and had Gid doing the farming - which he hated. Adam wasn't feeling well and wasn't doing very much. Johnny was missing Molly, too. He'd dropped by to see her but Eddie's car was there so he didn't even go inside. The news made Gid feel worse. He suggested they forget everything for a while and go to the Panhandle. Johnny was all for it. Gid told his father that they were taking off for a while. Adam told him he'd do the farm work or hire someone. He told Gid to let him hear from him now and then.

They took the train to Amarillo where they could hire on as cowboys. Gid felt lonesome thinking about Molly and his father. They stayed in a hotel for the night but got too drunk to look for work. They decided they needed to go to Clarendon and find work there. They took the train to Clarendon where they stumbled onto a horse auction. A man there, Mr. Grinsom, needed help bringing the horses he brought home and then needed someone to break them once he got them there.

Turned out that Grinsom had a 38,000 acre ranch, a fat wife and seven grown sons. Since Jimmy had been thrown four times by the horse he rode to the ranch, Mr. Grinsom had him work in the pasture with his sons and two other ranch hands he'd hired. He agreed to pay Gid a dollar for every horse he broke. By the end of the first day, Gid had broken all eighteen of them. Mr. Grinsom gave Gid his pay at supertime, in front of everyone. Homesickness became a real problem for Gid and a point of contention between him and Johnny. They argued a lot - Gid wanted to go and Johnny wanted to stay. They were offered double of what they were getting to take the job of tending to a large ranch on the New Mexico line.

Gid was homesick and didn't want to spend the winter in New Mexico so he decided to go home. Johnny tried to talk him into staying but Gid was set on leaving. He hated to leave Johnny alone because he was a good pal but he missed his father and Molly. When he got home, the first person he ran into was Mabel. She lived in a boarding



house in town and brought him there for dinner. He borrowed a horse and got to the ranch late at night. He heard his father's snoring and knew he was all right.

Chapter Fourteen

Adam was obviously sick. He'd lost a lot of weight and didn't have good wind. Gid urged him to go to the doctor but he wouldn't even consider it. Adam really worked Gid after he got home. He didn't see Molly until he'd been home three weeks. Molly started coming over two or three times a week to cook for Adam and Gid and help as much as she could. Gid figured she saw that his dad wasn't in good shape. Molly scared Gid and told him he better get Adam to a doctor or he might get really sick or even die. Gid couldn't imagine life without him and his orders. Molly was happy her father was healthy. He'd probably live to be a hundred.

But life is unpredictable and it wasn't even a week later that Old Man Taylor, drunk and staggering, burst into his smokehouse looking for whiskey picked up a bottle of lye by mistake and chugged it down. It killed him. Eddie was there at the time but deserted her as soon as he could, apparently afraid of dead bodies. As soon as he got word, Gid rode over and comforted the distraught Molly as much as he could. She didn't know how she could do without her father. Eddie had just dumped Old Man Taylor's body in his bed and left him. Gid cleaned him up a bit and straightened him out as best he could. He saw to it that Molly went to bed and got some rest. The next morning, visitors started coming to pay their respects.

Chapter Fifteen

Adam finally went to the doctor, in fact he went to five. One put him in the hospital for two weeks. But none of them seem to help him. Gid wrote Johnny a letter. He addressed it to "Dear Jonathan" to gig him a bit because Johnny hated the name. He told him about Molly's father and that Molly was doing better. He was sure he'd be able to convince her to marry him eventually. Gid teased Johnny about having half-breed kids with the Indian woman who stayed on the farm to cook for him. He assured Johnny that when he came back, they'd put him to work on the ranch.

Johnny wrote back and said he refrained from using Gid's full name because he wasn't the type who had the need to get even. Johnny loved tending to the New Mexico ranch. And the Indian girl there who he called Jelly was a beautiful woman. He asked that Gid give Molly his best. He'd be back someday but didn't know when.

Chapter Sixteen

One day when Gid was tracking down some of his cattle, he ran into a pack of dogs and had to beat them back to get to his cows. Turned out, the dogs belonged to Eddie who he ran into. Eddie was angry that Gid beat his dogs and the two almost came to blows. Eddie told Gid to stay away from his wife. A chill went down Gid's body. Eddie said they'd been married for three weeks. The rest of the day, Gid was too sad and depressed to do anything.



Part I, The Blood's Country: Chapters Nine through Sixteen Analysis

Chapter Nine

Adam senses that Gid needs some advice about marriage. However, Adam is rather cynical and may not be the best person to give a young person such advice. Adam mentions his wife commenting that she didn't survive marriage. It's not clear at this point if Adam's wife left him or died. Either way, it has made him bitter about women and marriage.

Chapter Ten

There's something that doesn't fit about Molly. She is assertive and high-spirited and there doesn't seem to be a shy bone in her body. Yet, she is intimidated by her father and overly protective of him. It's already been established that she is the victim of his physical abuse but there's something deeper about their relationship—and not in a good way. Perhaps Eddie wasn't Molly's "first." Perhaps it was Old Mr. Taylor.

Chapter Eleven

Eddie seems to have some inexplicable spell over Molly which the boys can't account for. Something more is going on with Molly. She has dark circles under her eyes due to lack of sleep, she has started to drink alcohol and she tells Gid not to come by because her father's been in a bad mood. Something is seriously wrong in the Taylor household.

Chapter Twelve

There is a persistent mystery about Molly. She is promiscuous and doesn't want to marry. She tells Gid that he's her favorite but that she doesn't love him "in that way." But she doesn't love anyone in that way. The complete story of Molly has yet to emerge and will be key to the story's plot.

Chapter Thirteen

Gid is frustrated and confused about Molly. He thinks he's in love with her and it doesn't seem to be infatuation. But she confounds him with her apparent involvement with the classless Eddie. He is so distressed over his relationship with Molly that he decides to leave town. He's unhappy living under his dominant father's rule and being forced to "farm" while he wants to be a cowboy. Gid shows his prowess in taming wild horses which burnishes his credentials for being a cowboy. But the entire time he is homesick and haunted by the images of Molly and his father. He loves and adores Molly and he feels guilty for leaving his father whose health is fading. And that guilt and homesickness is what compels him to go home. Gid is an emotional and caring friend because he hates to think of Johnny being alone in New Mexico, but the pull from home is too great for him to resist.



Chapter Fourteen

Gid shows his humanity in tending to Old Man Taylor's body, even though he was never anything but rude and resentful to Gid when he was alive. Of course, anything he did for the old man he was really doing for Molly. She was distraught when her father first died but by the next morning, Gid notices that she seems much better. Perhaps she felt a sense of freedom with the passing of her father. But she will be living there alone and will be vulnerable to those who would bring her harm. Molly had to notice how much more caring Gid was than Eddie who ran out of the house as soon as he could.

Chapter Fifteen

Adam must have a serious condition. Five doctors and two weeks in the hospital didn't seem to help him. Gid writes to Johnny and tells him about Molly's father. Johnny likes New Mexico but part of the reason may be the beautiful Indian girl who was hired there to cook for him. He didn't indicate that he became involved with her but he said he didn't know how he could have made it through the winter without her. It's obvious that Gid would like his old friend to come home but Johnny is happy in New Mexico for now.

Chapter Sixteen

Eddie warns Gid to stay away from his wife. Gid is devastated. Why would Molly marry him and not Gid who she says is her favorite? She had always seemed to be intimidated by Eddie for some reason. The mystery of Molly is only deepened by her unexpected and inexplicable marriage to the least likeliest of men.



Part I, The Blood's Country: Chapters Seventeen through Twenty-Four

Part I, The Blood's Country: Chapters Seventeen through Twenty-Four Summary

Chapter Seventeen

Adam was getting worse. Gid heard from Johnny, who had a horrible accident when he fell off his horse and was dragged for a half-mile. He'd been laid up with a broken hip. He wished Gid was there so they could talk and play cards. Gid wrote back that Adam was very sick and that Molly married Eddie. He wished that Johnny was home. They sure could use the help.

Gid was enjoying talks with his father, which was something new for him. Adam told him to get over Molly but Gid was struggling with understanding why she married Eddie. Adam said Molly was a smart girl and would do well no matter what. Adam told Gid not to sulk. In the morning, there was a letter left on the table for Gid from his father. He said he was going to "go out on the hill and turn my horses free." (123)

Gid checked right away and saw that Adam's rifle was gone. He rushed out to the hill on the west side of the property and saw his father stretched out on the ground. Gid took his body back to the house. There was a big funeral for him and Molly came by with a cake. Gid felt awkward around her but she told him to come and see her. It took Gid three months to remember that his father wasn't there when he'd wake up in the morning. He wrote Johnny to let him know about his father. He eventually came back and the two honored Adam by letting his white saddle horse, Snowman, out in the pasture with a vow to never let anyone ride him again.

Chapter Eighteen

A couple of weeks after Adam died, Gid decided to look over the ranch. He knew every inch of it but it was his father's ranch then. Now it was his. A few days after his father died, he thought of selling the place but now that he was seeing it with new eyes, he changed his mind. Gid was lonely and figured he'd marry Mabel since she was the best girl left. Of course, Mabel was thrilled with his proposal and immediately made plans to get married. She packed her things up and had Gid go back and put some nice clothes on. They went to the Methodist preacher who married them for three dollars. Gid bought a car and drove them back to the ranch.

Chapter Nineteen

Mabel proved to be a good housekeeper and not a bit lazy. But, Gid wasn't happy. He knew it was a mistake and marrying her didn't change how he felt. It seemed that Mabel



didn't think Gid was such a prize while she considered herself the belle of the county. Mabel wasn't a very generous-natured person. Of course, the big problem was that he was still crazy about Molly. He started to stay out in the pastures well into the night rather than come back to the house.

Chapter Twenty

Unhappy in his marriage, Gid got up the nerve to visit Molly. He didn't see Eddie's car and spotted Molly hanging clothes out to dry. The two reunited and it was the same as always. Molly was flirty, held his hand and kissed him. Gid began feeling very uncomfortable, but Molly was glad he came and was hoping he'd come over and fall in love with her whole hog. He'd been in love with her whole hog for at least ten years, he told her. Molly said he didn't really love her. He was always thinking about himself or Eddie or Johnny or what people thought. All she wanted was for him to let go and really love her. Eddie was gone for a few days so the two went inside and made love. He told her that he would do anything to have her and make her happy. She was the only person in the world who was worthy of his love. Molly said she was ready to have a baby and she wanted Gid to be the father. She would pretend it was Eddie's but it would be his. Gid didn't understand Molly but was willing to agree to anything she wanted.

Chapter Twenty-One

Gid was becoming a little more accustomed to Mabel and was worried that she'd learn about him and Molly. His relationship with Molly continued and made him generally more happy which seemed to help his relationship with Mabel. She was prideful and wrapped up in herself and didn't allow much time to think about Gid.

Chapter Twenty-Two

Mabel had her problems. Gid was returning with the mail when a dangerous hail storm struck. His horse ran off and he had to walk home. A Montgomery Ward catalog was the only mail he got and he had to leave it behind in the storm. Mabel was so angry that he left the catalog behind that she threw a fit, threw glass preserve jars full of jam at him and slept in the cellar because he wouldn't go back and get the catalog. The next morning, he cleaned up the glass and preserves, and Mabel came back up from the cellar and acted like nothing happened.

Chapter Twenty-Three

One summer morning while Gid was fixing a hole in a water trough, he looked up and saw a rider coming down his road. It was Johnny! He helped Gid fix the trough and told him a million funny stories while they worked. He was the same old Johnny. That evening, Johnny wanted to try his father's new coon dog out so Gid, Molly and Johnny all went coon hunting together. They trapped a mamma coon but it got away. Molly wanted one of her babies for a pet so Gid grabbed one but it eventually bit him and got away. Molly bandaged his hand and made dinner for Gid and Johnny. Eddie was away again. They slept on her floor for a while then went back to Gid's ranch. Gid hired Johnny to work the ranch and told him he could board in the bunkhouse.



Chapter Twenty-Four

Gid decided he wanted to buy three adjoining pieces of land on the northern part of his ranch. He rode to Wichita and took out a loan to buy them. On the way back, he stopped by Molly's house. Eddie was gone. He wanted to show her the deed to the new land but she had something else to show him. She pulled up her top and showed him the beginning of her baby bump. She told him the baby was his. She wanted him to be the father of her first child. He was a little less thrilled than she was but as long as Molly was happy it was all that mattered. After they made love, they went to the barn. Gid watched Molly while she milked her cow. He mounted his horse to go home and told her he already missed her even though he was just leaving.

Part I, The Blood's Country: Chapters Seventeen through Twenty-Four Analysis

Chapter Seventeen

Gid is struggling with life without his father and without Molly. His father died and Molly married someone else. At least he has his best friend back. When Johnny eventually returns he is gratified to have someone he feels close to since he had lost the two people he cared about the most in life.

Chapter Eighteen

Loneliness drives Gid to marry Mabel. He has settled for second-best. His father warned him not to marry Mabel who Adam said would cause him hell. Marrying someone just because one is lonely is not the best reason to marry. The chances of it working out for Gid and Mabel are not very good.

Chapter Nineteen

Gid realizes that he made a big mistake. He doesn't love Mabel and she isn't thrilled with Gid. The biggest problem was that he was still crazy about Molly. He got married because he was lonesome. After he married Mabel, he was more lonesome than ever.

Chapter Twenty

The character of Molly is, at this point, impossible to understand. She loves Gid as much as she can love any man and wants him to be the father of her baby yet she married someone else. Although he is confounded by Molly's behavior, he is willing to do anything to have her at least at some level. If Molly is to have a child he wants it to be his. However, Gid is not thinking about how difficult that eventuality would be to deal with. He could never tell anyone that Molly's baby was his. She doesn't seem inclined to leave Eddie to be with Gid.

Chapter Twenty-One



Gid is becoming more accustomed to Mabel and is somewhat fond of her. But she's not the one. His relationship with Molly is making him happy and able to deal with Mabel more easily.

Chapter Twenty-Two

Mabel reacts strangely to Gid when he had to leave her Montgomery Ward catalog behind. But Mabel probably doesn't have much to look forward to, and being able to lose herself in a big thick catalog was a form of escapism that she was probably looking forward to.

Chapter Twenty-Three

Gid is thrilled to have Johnny back. He hired Johnny to work the ranch with him. He'll probably enjoy being home more now that he'll be working with Johnny. He and Johnny enjoy Molly's company when Eddie is once again away. She remains a mystery.

Chapter Twenty-Four

Maggie is thrilled to be pregnant with Gid's baby. She mentions that she is glad he will be the father of her first baby which infers that she may want subsequent babies to have other fathers. She never mentions a word about Eddie and it's still inexplicable why she married him. She never offers an explanation to Gid and tells him she wants him to love her - she doesn't want to answer a lot of questions.



Part II, Ruin Hath Taught Me: Chapters One through Five

Part II, Ruin Hath Taught Me: Chapters One through Five Summary

Chapter One

Johnny caught Molly crying. He told her that he was his son, too. But he'd been gone for a year now and they had to face the fact that he was probably dead. Johnny mentioned that Gid was out trying to buy another ranch for Johnny to take care of. There was always the boy in Johnny unlike Gid who was never a boy. That's why Jimmy was harder to raise than Joe. Molly would never marry again - Eddie was enough. Johnny was a bachelor and she would have never married him. But Gid was a different story.

They went inside and Molly rubbed a big bruise on Johnny's leg with liniment. Once they got in bed she knew it would take a lot to get him out. That was another way Johnny and Gid were different. Johnny would stay in bed all day. For twenty years, she'd been trying to get Gid to relax and stay with her in bed longer. Watching Johnny sleep, she saw how much Joe looked like him. She recalled when they first got the news that Joe's bomber crew was missing, Johnny said he'd rather have a dead hero for a son than a live coward. Gid said something similar when Jimmy was sent to the Pacific. Joe enjoyed living in England and flying the bomber. He probably had a million girl friends. Molly always feared that he'd marry one of them, bring her home to Texas and not know what to do with her.

Joe had a big smile when, at sixteen, Molly told him that Johnny was his father. The reaction when she told Jimmy that Gid was his father was quite different. It really bothered him. Joe was like Johnny in that neither of them liked to do chores. Johnny made an exception was after Eddie died and Molly and both boys had the flu. Johnny and Gid took turns doing all the chores until Molly recovered.

Molly told Johnny to have Gid come and see her. She didn't see him much since they moved to town. Johnny told her that Gid and Mabel aren't doing that well but at least they got a big new house now so at least they can hide from each other. Molly responded that Gid deserved better.

Chapter Two

Strong winds and dark clouds sent Molly to the storm cellar one night. There was a lamp and a cot with blankets already set up. It began to pour and the rain was pelting the metal door. Molly was overcome with emotion and began to sob. Being lonesome was only a part of it. Molly didn't like having no one around to do for. And men were the needy ones. She never felt close to a woman not even her mother.



Molly never had any problem handling Joe because he was just like Johnny. But Jimmy was Gid times two. He was over in the Pacific somewhere now wishing he had anyone but Molly for a mother. He had been so hurt when he found out that Gid was his father. He never let Molly touch him again, not even his arm. Had she married Gid, Jimmy might have been a happy boy. But Eddie would have killed Gid if she had and it would have ruined Gid and Johnny's friendship. If she had married Johnny, it would have killed Gid. Besides Johnny wouldn't have done that to Gid. At one point she told Gid she'd marry him if he quit Mabel. But he couldn't do that because he didn't believe in divorce. If Mabel left him, it would be different.

Gid came and checked on Molly after the storm passed. Gid was relieved to see that Molly was okay. He couldn't stay, he told her but she convinced him to stay with her because she just loved having him around. He ate breakfast and dinner with her and then Molly sent him on his way. She didn't encourage any lovemaking because he would have felt bad. He wouldn't want her to think that was why he came over. Besides, she knew that if she held out, he'd be back soon. Just two days later while she was working in the hen-house, Gid appeared and she took him inside immediately.

Chapter Three

Molly ordered a ton of alfalfa. She decided to clean out the hay loft before it was delivered. The loft hadn't been cleaned out since her father died and she found everything up there - rats' nests, possum nests, owls' nests and rotting hay. She also found an old whiskey bottle that belonged to her father. It brought back memories of her drunken father and how he had forced her to drink whiskey when she was a little girl and again one time when she wasn't home when he returned from a trip. Eddie drank a lot, too. She remembered when Eddie wanted her to drink until she lost her baby—Gid's son. If she didn't, he warned her, he'd take her to an abortionist. She was scared to death but Eddie changed his mind and told her she could have the baby. Three years later, she got pregnant with Johnny's baby. By then Eddie was drunk so often that it didn't bother him.

In her teen years, she and her brothers hardly ever saw other young kids and she never thought of having a boyfriend and her brother and Johnny and Gid never had girlfriends. She recalled when her father told her and her brother, Richard, about the facts of life when they were young teens. He made them both strip and made Richard examine his sister to understand where babies came from. He beat Molly with a strap when she refused to touch Richard to make him have an erection. Despite the beating, she refused to agree to do it. Her father and Eddie were a lot alike. He told her she should marry Eddie because he didn't have much ambition and knew how to treat a woman, not pussyfoot around her. There were so many times she wanted to marry Gid but she thought Eddie needed a wife more. Sometimes she felt crazy about Eddie.

Chapter Four

Molly didn't get a car until 1941. Gid and Johnny helped her pick out a car in Wichita. It was a new black Ford. Gid drove Molly home in her new car. Both her sons had



volunteered and they were still in boot camp. Gid got down in the dumps thinking about his son and wondered if they could ever do anything to make it up to him. His daughter, Sarah, was six at the time but his mind was on Jimmy who he'd known a lot longer. Gid hoped the army would change him and that he'd be more tolerant when he came back.

Gid wouldn't stay but Johnny came over. Unusual for her, Molly was in a foul mood thinking about Gid and Jimmy and all. She was so cranky that Johnny got up in the middle of the night and left. The next day she found him and apologized to him. Out of guilt over his son, Gid stayed away for two months, which were long and lonely for Molly. Finally, he came back and then came almost every day for the next six months.

Of all the boys and men she knew, the only one she lost was Jimmy. Until he was eight years old, she couldn't walk a step without him right behind her. He loved his mother so. But his teachers got him involved in church and he started to change. When he was thirteen and she told him that Gid was his father, it was the end any closeness between them. One day when he was about eighteen he asked if Molly had ever been to church. She had but didn't really like it but didn't tell him that. His minister had told him he needed to bring his mother in so he could try to save her but Jimmy figured she didn't want to be saved. He railed at her for committing adultery and fornication. She was so hurt that she couldn't speak.

Chapter Five

Eddie was the first boy to have sex with Molly. He was forceful and it hurt for the first few months they did it. She didn't like it then but after a while she began to really like it. That was when Eddie started to resent her. He liked it better when it hurt her. After she had Joe, he lost complete interest in her. She couldn't believe it when he was killed - that she'd never feel his hands on her again. Johnny took care of the boys when she took the train up to Oklahoma where Eddie was buried. When she returned, the boys followed her around for weeks to make sure she didn't leave them again. She mourned Eddie's death in spite of the way he treated her.

When Eddie had his way with her, she didn't know that she was supposed to resist. She remembered when Gid was hurt to find out he wasn't her first. Sex embarrassed him and shamed him. There was hardly a time when he left her that he didn't feel guilty. She loved him and all she wanted was for him to feel good and not hate himself for feeling good. She knew she would have to show him the letter Jimmy wrote some day but she was putting it off. She always wished she'd know Adam better. He probably had the highest standards of anyone she ever knew. Maybe some of it would have rubbed off on her had she known him better. He told her once that if he was ten years younger, he'd starve all the other boys out.

Part II, Ruin Hath Taught Me: Chapters One through Five Analysis

Chapter One



The story is now told from Molly's perspective and the time has flashed forward about twenty years, plus or minus a few. Just as Molly hinted at when she was pregnant with her first child, she wanted a child with both Gid and Johnny and apparently planned it to happen that way. Her motivations are still not clear. But it's war time and Joe, Johnny's son, is missing in action. It's small comfort to a mother for Jimmy to say he'd rather his son be a dead hero than a live coward. It's a good guess she'd take him either way to have him alive. Joe could still be alive and be a prisoner of war. Gid has proven to be a loyal husband and has stayed with Mabel although it appears he is no happier many years later than he was at the beginning of his marriage. How Eddie died has not been made clear. He must have been a relatively young man when he died, and since he was a trouble-maker might have been killed.

Chapter Two

Molly had a need to do for other people and since she saw men as more needy, it somewhat explains her need for them, her fascination with them and her eagerness to make them happy. Johnny's son Joe was like him, carefree and open. She said that Jimmy was like Gid times two. What she meant that Jimmy worried and second-guessed himself more than Gid who had always been constrained and introspective. There was a schism between mother and son when she told Jimmy that Gid was his father. When he realized that Joe was Johnny's son and that his mother was still sleeping with both of them, it was too much for him to accept. Several reasons why Molly didn't marry Gid emerge. She was afraid Eddie would kill Gid, and she was afraid that she'd destroy Gid and Johnny's friendship.

Chapter Three

Molly and her brother were both physically abused by their father. And he chose a strange and humiliating way to tell them about the facts of life. As mean as her father was to her, she thought he was great and that deep down he was proud of her. That's probably why she gravitated to Eddie who was a lot like her father. Often abused people adore their abusers and believe that they deserve the abuse they get. If only they could be good enough, they wouldn't upset the abuser and they wouldn't be mistreated. Molly probably had some of these inner conflicts growing up with such an alcoholic, abusive and bitter parent. Her father even told her to marry Eddie because he didn't pussyfoot around women. He probably saw himself in Eddie. Her father had no woman around since his wife died many years before. Her father drank and may have fostered a secret desire for his daughter.

Chapter Four

Gid suffers from guilt over his son's pain after learning that Gid was his father and that his mother had multiple lovers. Part of Gid's guilt comes from a basic shame that he has about sex. During the many years of their relationship, Molly loved Gid and wanted him to be free of guilt and shame and enjoy her. She wanted to please him but it was his nature to fret and worry and internalize his guilt and shame. Jimmy had idolized his mother but after he learned who his father was and the kind of life she led, he came to



resent her. He had also become religious and looked at his mother as sinful and not worth salvation.

Chapter Five

Eddie raped Molly her "first time." But she was so naïve that she didn't know that when a man forces himself on a woman that she doesn't have to take it and that it's a crime. Part of the reason she married Eddie is that she had been crazy about him and loved him in her own way. He was the most like her father who she had a strange relationship with. She learned to take abuse from her father and defended and took care of him despite his treatment of her. Eddie was abusive and an alcoholic just as her father was. Jimmy sent a letter to Molly which she is hiding from Gid. She is obviously protecting his feelings over something that is contained in the letter.



Part II, Ruin Hath Taught Me: Chapters Six through Nine

Part II, Ruin Hath Taught Me: Chapters Six through Nine Summary

Chapter Six

Molly went to town to get her mail and buy a war bond. She pulled her mail out of the box and a letter fell to the floor. It was an official notice that Jimmy had been killed in action. She ran down to where Gid was building his house. He took her home and stayed with her. Gid told her that the two of them should have gotten married. He told her about his problems with Mabel. Gid asked to see the one letter that Jimmy had written. Molly lied and said she misplaced it. Gid drove her back to town the next morning so she could get her car. As soon as she got back home, she took Jimmy's letter out of the shoebox where she kept it. Jimmy addressed it to "Dear Molly." Jimmy told her that after the war he'd never come back. He told her not to try to find him. He said not to worry about him marrying a Filipino girl. He liked men. And he found a rich man who would take care of him the rest of his life. They planned to live in Los Angeles if they lived through the war. After she read the letter, she burned it.

Chapter Seven

Johnny came to see Molly and he began to lift her spirits. He was trying to distract her from all the sadness and suggested they go fishing. With Jimmy dead, Molly pretended to herself that their relationship was better than it was. Molly caught some fish while Johnny took a nap in the shade. When he woke, he swam for a while then they used Johnny's .22 to do some target practicing. Molly cooked the fish she caught for dinner and served it with other food she had brought along with her. They had a great time but Johnny didn't stay all night. Molly was exhausted and fell right to sleep.

Chapter Eight

One day when Molly was cleaning out her cellar she ran up to get some tea and Gid was standing there. She knew him well enough to know he came because he needed her. After they made love, he told her that it would be the last time. It was wrong what they had done all those years. And it had become impossible for him to continue because of what happened to Jimmy. He had loved her all his life and she should have married him. She ruined his life. Molly tried to convince him not to end it but she knew he meant what he said because he'd never said anything like that before.

Chapter Nine



Gid kept his word. He did come by about two months later with a coyote pup. He had killed the mother and thought she might raise the pup. She could tell he was needy and vulnerable but she didn't want him to go through any more guilt or pain and stayed away from him. She and Johnny when through a few problems as she adjusted to life without Gid. But Johnny understood and was there for her. One night after Johnny left, she thought about everyone she lost. She knew that Gid still wanted her but that they could never be again.

Part II, Ruin Hath Taught Me: Chapters Six through Nine Analysis

Chapter Six

Molly has lost both sons to the war. She has no one to call her own now. She lost her father, husband and sons. The letter that she is hiding from Gid contains Jimmy's admission that he is gay. He also bitterly tells her that he is severing all relationships with his family. Molly burns the letter so that Gid will never know Jimmy's last hurtful words to Molly.

Chapter Seven

Although Molly never took Johnny seriously, he is the best fit for her. He just wants to have a good time and enjoy himself. Molly is much like him. Perhaps she needed the tension of having a man who was the opposite of her. Gid worried about everything and Eddie never really enjoyed himself.

Chapter Eight

Gid blames himself for Jimmy's death. He feels that he and Molly had been sinning all those years and that Jimmy's death is punishment for their sins. As for Molly, now that Gid has broken off his relationship with her she has lost all the men in her life except for Johnny.

Chapter Nine

Molly respects Gid enough to resist luring him to her although she can see he is vulnerable and needs her. She loves him enough to know that if they resume their relationship, he will once again feel the guilt and pain that he was trying to recover from.



Part III, Go Turn My Horses Free: Chapters One through Five

Part III, Go Turn My Horses Free: Chapters One through Five Summary

Chapter One

Johnny was digging post holes when he saw Gid driving down in his new truck. Gid had never talked much until he turned sixty, and then he never stopped. He was drinking beer and talking about the hail storm he was in thirty some years before. Just like his father, Gid could never rest and had to be working all the time even though he didn't have to. Gid was getting hard of hearing but when Johnny suggested a hearing aid, he was insulted.

Gid lit a stogie and continued the story that Johnny had heard a hundred times. Gid told Johnny that they wouldn't be working the next day because he promised to take his granddaughter, Susie, to the movies. The conversation led to women and soon to Molly. Johnny reminded him how Molly looked in 1924. It made Gid sad and he stood up to go. Johnny was sorry he mentioned her. Gid said he hoped his kidney operation would make him feel better.

The two went to another area and started digging more fence posts. It was near an area where they used to have picnics with Molly when they were all young. Johnny suggested they go see Molly soon.

Chapter Two

Johnny ran into Gid on the road the next day. Gid had passed him up, stopped and then backed up. But his car was coming too fast and rammed through the fence and down into the ditch. It hit some soft dirt and rolled over. Johnny rushed over to him. Gid's nose was badly skinned and blood was dripping on his shirt. Johnny told Gid to sit still and relax a minute. But Gid was determined to get out of the car. He started walking up the hill. Johnny told him that he might have internal injuries and shouldn't be moving. Gid wanted Johnny to help him dig the truck out. Just then a herd of a goats belonging to his neighbor, William Jamison, came running up. The fence was down because they'd just been working on it. If they didn't stop the goats, they'd be all over the countryside.

The men couldn't do much except yell at the goats. One big billy goat ran through the opening and stood on the road bleating for the others to follow him. Gid insisted on wrestling the goats down to keep them from escaping through the torn down fence but he was only able to stop one. He sat on the ground exhausted. He winced and looked at his arm. It was obvious that he was badly injured. Molly was coming back from town and spotted them. She and Johnny secured a chain from her car to Gid's truck and pulled it



out. Molly took the guys to her house. Johnny reflected on how she had spent her whole life there. Her parents were both dead, her siblings had all spread and Eddie had died when he fell off the oil rig. There was no other place she wanted to be or even visit. Her whole world was on top of that hill. She tended to Gid's arm and relieved some of his discomfort. Molly wanted the guys to stay for supper but Gid said he couldn't. As they drove back, they talked about Molly. They both wished she wasn't so lonely.

Chapter Three

A few weeks later, Gid and Johnny ran into Molly at the feed store. Gid made some remark about lazy people and when they had a cup of coffee together outside, Molly started crying. She was angry about Gid's remark, thinking he was talking about her father. Molly always cried hard but not long and she soon recovered. She said she'd been thinking about when she and her siblings were all home. Their father and her older brother were unloading sorghum molasses from the wagon and they dropped the wooden barrel on the ground and smashed it. She remembered how all the kids were so upset that their whole supply of sweets for the winter was sliding down the hill. Her father and Shep blamed each other. Shep was so upset about it that he finally left home.

Molly asked Gid and Johnny to help her get her milk cow back from the big pasture. Gid and Johnny saddled up on two of Molly's horses to retrieve the cow while Molly made dinner for them. They found the milk cow who was calm at first but when she realized they were after her, starting running off at a quick gait. Gid chased the cow and his horse became excited and leaped at the cow. It was obvious that the cow's leg was broken. Gid felt horrible and told Johnny he would get Molly a new milk cow. Johnny said Molly wouldn't let him. He was just trying to help her. Gid felt terrible lamenting about how he couldn't do anything right any more.

One of the Williams kids came running down the road as the guys headed home. He was crying and told Gid and Johnny that his brother, Nelson, just drowned in the water trough. They went to the Williams farm immediately to find Judith Williams sitting on the porch, rocking and crying and holding her son as tight as she could. Gid jerked the kid away, and he and Johnny turned him upside down and water gushed out. Nelson came to and Gid and gave him to Judith who was still hysterical.

Gid was scheduled for a kidney operation. While he was gone, Johnny promised to tend to the ranch. Gid left a big pile of orders and chores for Johnny to do while he was gone. Johnny told Gid that the last time he was away, Mabel sent her nosy brother, Willy, to check on him. Gid told him not to put up with that.

Chapter Four

Willy showed up at the farm to check on things, which Johnny immediately resented. He told Willy to go away on no uncertain terms. He ran into Willy in town the next day. Willy chided him for not being on the ranch and that Gid was not in good shape and wouldn't ever be able to return to work. That worried Johnny.



Johnny went to Molly's and had dinner. She had seen Gid for a few minutes. They found a tumor but didn't know if it was malignant or not yet. Molly confessed that she and Gid had been talking a lot about his leaving Mabel and living with her. She hoped he would leave Mabel so he could have a little peace in his life for once. The only thing that would stop him was his feelings for his granddaughter, Susie. Mabel might not let him see her.

Chapter Five

Johnny thought Gid seemed like his old self when he visited him. Gid checked up on issues at the ranch and how Johnny's chores were coming along. Gid said he'd never stop working. If it got to that point, he'd shoot himself like his father did. After a doctor tried to chase Johnny out, Gid had had it. He arranged for Johnny to pick him up at a side door of the hospital and escaped from the hospital, a feat which he had successfully accomplished several times before. Gid told Johnny to take him to Molly's. Johnny figured he'd stay right there the rest of his life.

Part III, Go Turn My Horses Free: Chapters One through Five Analysis

Chapter One

The two old friends, now in the sixties, are working the same land that they've been working for over forty years. Adam proved to be quite an influence on Gid because Gid wound up having the same work ethic and drive that his father had. Gid has never gotten over Molly. Just the mention of her name makes him blue. Gid has a health problem and is scheduled to have an operation.

Chapter Two

Gid is pushing his luck. He's not as young as he used to be - but he doesn't know it or at least doesn't want to admit it. When he runs off the road, he is badly injured but still wants to wrestle some goats down that were trying to get through the broken down fence. Molly comes to the rescue once again and pulls his truck out and nurses his badly injured arm. Johnny thinks of how the beautiful Molly that he used to adore and still does had spent her entire life on the same farm. What would the world have thought of the lovely Molly Taylor if they had only been allowed to see her? But it was too late to think of that. Besides Molly had never been anywhere and was happy on the farm. But Johnny couldn't help but think of what could have been. They guys both recognize that Molly is lonely. But it was Molly who remained isolated from everyone in more than just a physical way.

Chapter Three

Molly reacts badly to a comment Gid made. But it wasn't the comment that upset her. It was the fact that she knew that the time for them to be together was running out. She thought of a time back in her life when a barrel of molasses was broken on the ground



and the family lost all their syrup for winter. Molly is thinking how her relationships were broken and lost as well.

Gid thinks he's useless but his frame of reference is very narrow. Although he's not the ranch hand he used to be, he saves the little boy's life. The incident demonstrates what Gid thought was the most important thing in life - besides Molly - his ranch. It didn't occur to him that saving the boy's life was more important than probably anything he'd ever done.

Gid is scheduled for a kidney operation. He is a man well into his sixties by now. How will he fare after such a serious operation?

Chapter Four

Gid has a tumor on his kidney but it is not clear whether it is malignant or not. Molly confesses what Johnny already knew - that Gid was still thinking about leaving Mabel and living with Molly. Will Gid's health stop Molly and Gid from spending the rest of their days together?

Chapter Five

Gid now understands why Adam killed himself. If he can't work his beloved land like he used to, he would just as soon follow in his father's footsteps and end his life. The person he looks to for help in recovering from his operation is Molly. She is the only one who is able to bring peace to him.



Part III, Go Turn My Horses Free: Chapters Six through Nine

Part III, Go Turn My Horses Free: Chapters Six through Nine Summary

Chapter Six

Molly ran out and helped Gid into the house. His side was hurting from the bumpy ride home. At his request, Molly made him a plate of fresh tomatoes. Later that evening, the town doctor came out and tried to get Gid to go back to the hospital but he refused. Molly tended to Gid and he started a slow recovery. Willy confronted Johnny in town, blaming him for taking Gid out of the hospital. Johnny told him that the doctor said he was getting better and that Gid planned on working on the fences the next week. Johnny worked the ranch everyday and had supper with Molly and Gid every evening. Molly was doing everything in her power to keep Gid in his sick bed.

One day, Gid got dressed and came walking out with his suitcase. He had to get back to work. Molly was so upset she was trembling. She tried to talk him into staying but he was determined to leave. It wasn't the right time to stay, he told her. She said it would never be the right time. It was obvious that she felt he was leaving her for the last time. On the way back home, Gid was obviously upset, too. He said he may wind up staying with Molly but he had to make arrangements.

Chapter Seven

Johnny met Gid in the meadow to work on the fences. Johnny steepled forty fences before he looked back to where Gid was working. He was nowhere in sight. It scared Johnny. Gid was sitting on a tree and was soaking wet from sweat. Johnny wanted him to hire a couple of ranch hands to finish the job but Gid wouldn't hear of it. It continued the same way for the rest of the week.

One day Gid insisted on fixing the windmill on the Fry property where Johnny was living. It was hot and it was a difficult job. Johnny tried to talk Gid out of doing it but couldn't convince him. Gid climbed up a ways on the windmill while Johnny stayed on the ground handing the parts up to Gid. It was an all-day job but they got it fixed and tested it to make sure water was streaming out. It was working but water was coming out of pipe they forgot to reconnect. While trying to connect the pipe, Gid fell off the ladder and hit the ground. When Johnny rushed to him, Gid was talking out of his head - saying that he just got thrown from a horse. He kept talking nonsense and looked really weak. Johnny laid him out in the back of his car and started for Thalia. Gid came back to his senses on the way to the doctor's office for a minute and said something like he was talking to Molly. Then he was silent. Johnny turned and looked and saw that Gideon Fry was dead.



Chapter Eight

Gid died of a blood clot. The hardest thing for Johnny to do was to leave his old friend at the hospital that night. He called Mabel, who was out of town on a visit. Apparently, she got hysterical after his call. Johnny drove out to Molly's and told her. Molly was devastated. Johnny stayed the night with her. Before he fell asleep, she told him that Gid had always been her favorite.

Chapter Nine

Johnny came to see Molly about a week after the funeral. Mabel and Willy fired him and he was returning to the McCloud ranch a few miles up the road. Gid had left Johnny his pick-up and a thousand acres of land. He left Molly his old pocket watch. If he would have left her more, Mabel would have come after her with a lawyer. Johnny proposed to Molly but she said they weren't the kind to marry but thanked him any way. But he could come for dinner every night and stay with her whenever he wanted to.

At home alone, Johnny never realized how much he's miss Gid. He had a "discussion" with him. He told him he should have been the one fixing the windmill. He "talked" with Gid for a while arguing about who had a better life. Gid "said" neither one did because neither had married her. He recalled that election day so many years ago when he had convinced Ikey to return to the schoolhouse so Gid wouldn't be alone with Molly. Gid would have done the same.

Johnny had two regrets about that day. One, that he hadn't been there to see the look on Gid's face when Ikey came riding back on his old mule. And second, that he didn't have a camera with him that day to take a picture of Molly sitting on the school steps in her blue and white dress.

Part III, Go Turn My Horses Free: Chapters Six through Nine Analysis

Chapter Six

It seems that hard work helps Gid recover. Although the work is difficult, it seems to give Gid new life. He wants to feel like he did when he was young but that is never to be again. He knows that deep down but yet he's not ready to give up. Molly is left behind again when Gid leaves for home. Gid has a propriety about him. If he is to live with Molly, he has to do it in the right way. By that, he means that he has to tell Mabel that he's leaving. It wouldn't be right to sneak out on her.

Chapter Seven

Gid died with his boots on both figuratively and literally. He got his way on most everything. He never stopped working. He died with the best friend he ever had. The only thing he didn't get in life was Molly, the thing he wanted most. Johnny was truly



Gid's best friend and was with him at the end. His last words were probably to Molly but sadly Johnny didn't know what they were.

Chapter Eight

Molly is distraught over Gid's death. But from the time she was a young girl until the day he died, Gid was always her favorite.

Chapter Nine

Johnny feels sorry for Molly because she's really alone now. He proposes to her but she has enough sense to know that it's not the right thing. But he's always welcome and they will always be friends. Just like the three of them always were. Johnny feels guilty that he let Gid try to fix the windmill. But deep down he knows that Gid was too stubborn to let Johnny fix it for him. He thinks back to when Molly, Gid and he were all young and how they vied for Molly's attention. He regrets that those years are gone. He would have liked to recapture his youth - when his best friend was alive and when Molly was their dream girl.



Characters

Gid Fry

Gid Fry is a young man who lives on a large ranch in northern Texas in the 1920s. His mother had died some time before and he was his father's only child. His father is a domineering figure who requires his son do all the chores and tasks on the ranch including working with the livestock which he loves and doing the farming which he hates. But his father was wise and knew that his son would be the owner of the property one day and had to be able to handle and oversee every aspect of the ranch.

Gid admires his best friend, Johnny McCloud, who is a true cowboy and doesn't mess with any farming or other mundane chores. But Gid keeps his nose to the grindstone and learns the ins and outs of his father's vast operation and it turns out to benefit him when he inherits the property. He learned a lot from his father and wound up having the same drives and ambition as his father had.

Gid and Johnny both vie for the attention of the ranching community's beauty, Molly Taylor. She is a flirty, winsome young woman who is affectionate and loving to the two boys but locks her true feelings in her heart and keeps the boys guessing. Although Gid never falls out of love with Molly, a marriage with her is not in the cards. He marries the long-suffering Mabel who is anxious to be Mrs. Somebody. He is never happy with her but he is a man of propriety and stays with her.

Molly has a son by Gid who represents the most strife either parent had ever known. The son has a tragic ending and the two parents - who could never declare to the world that they had a child together - support each other in their grief. Although they each married others, they loved each other until their final days together.

Molly Taylor

Molly Taylor was the belle of the north Texas ranching and farming region where "Leaving Cheyenne" takes place. She is a bubbly, flirty and winsome young woman who has all the boys chasing after her. She likes all the boys but has special feelings for Gid and Johnny. They are two best friends but they are in serious competition for Molly.

Molly is a mystery in that she takes the boys on as lovers but doesn't want to marry either one of them. She tells Gid, the more serious of the two friends, that she only wants to get married when she decides it's time she has a baby. Molly maintains a close and intimate relationship with both men over the years and has a son by each. However, she marries a man named Eddie White who is abusive and is an alcoholic very much like her own father. It's somewhat inexplicable that she chose to marry a loser like Eddie when she had Gid and Johnny after her but Eddie's appeal may have been his neediness, a trait that reminded her of her father who she had a distorted relationship with.



Molly adores her sons but when she tells them the truth about who their fathers are she runs into some trouble. Johnny's son, Joe, readily accepts the news but Jimmy, Gid's son, is so upset that he winds up permanently rejecting both Gid and Molly. Unfortunately, Joe is missing in action during his service during World War II and Jimmy is killed on the battlefield.

Although Molly lost both her sons, she maintained her close and unusual friendship with the two men who proved to be her closest and dearest friends during her entire lifetime.

Johnny McCloud

Johnny McCloud is Gid Fry's best friend and his fiercest competition for the attentions of Molly Taylor. Johnny is a laid-back cowboy who doesn't take life or anyone, including himself, too seriously.

Eddie White

Eddie White is an abusive alcoholic who winds up winning the hand of the Molly Taylor. But even marrying the lovely Molly doesn't make Eddie happy. He works as an oil rigger and falls to his death one day while on the job.

Adam Fry

Adam Fry was Gid's father. He was a wise and domineering man who drove his son hard. He forced him to learn how to tend to the cattle and other livestock as well as work the crops so that Gid would be a successful farmer and rancher when he inherited the property. When Adam became sick and could no longer work, he decided to "let his horses go free" and committed suicide.

Mabel Peters

Mabel is a young woman who lives on the poorest farm in the area. She eventually moves to town and gets a job. She is anxious to get married and when Gid proposes to her she accepts and makes immediate plans for the wedding.

Jimmy

Jimmy is Molly's older son. When she tells him that Gid is his real father, he develops a deep and unyielding resentment for both of them and rejects them. He is killed during World War II while serving his country.



Joe

Joe is Molly's younger son. When she tells him that Johnny is his real father, he smiles and accepts the news. He was a bomber in World War II and was missing in action.

Old Man Taylor

Mr. Taylor, Molly's father, was a politician who had a terrible drinking problem. He was so drunk one day that he picked up a bottle of lye thinking it was whiskey and drank it down. He immediately died from ingesting the lye.

Nelson Williams

Nelson was a little neighbor boy who "drowned" in a water trough. Gid and Johnny rushed over when they heard the news, held him upside down and shook him. Water came gushing out of him and he returned to life.

Ikey

Ikey was the black man who helped Gid at the schoolhouse during an election. Gid sent him off so he could be alone with Molly. But Johnny knew what Gid was up to so he sent Ikey back so Gid wouldn't be alone with Molly.



Objects/Places

Texas

"Leaving Cheyenne" takes place in the northwestern part of Texas, just south of the Panhandle.

Thalia

Thalia is the small Texas town that is located near the Fry ranch and Taylor farm. It was the town where all the local farmer and ranchers bought their supplies and socialized.

Gid's Ranch

Gid inherited his large ranch from his father. Gid tended to the cattle and other livestock and to the planting and harvesting of the crops. He made the ranch a success.

Molly's Farm

Molly Taylor lived on the same farm her entire life. She was born and raised on the farm and lived there after she was married and after she was a widow.

Panhandle

Gid and Johnny would take off for the the Texas Panhandle whenever they got a wild hair and wanted to leave home. They would find work as cowpokes there.

Wichita

After Gid inherited the ranch from his father, he traveled to Wichita to get loans in order to by acreage that adjoined his property.

Clarendon

Gid and Johnny was hired by a horse rancher they met in Clarendon. The horse ranch was 38,000 acres and the two friends worked there together for a short time.



New Mexico

Gid and Johnny were offered a job watching over a New Mexico ranch for the winter. Gid was homesick and wanted to go home so Johnny went on to New Mexico and took the job by himself.

Forth Worth

Gid and Johnny took a herd of Adam's calves to sell in Fort Worth. Gid was able to get a good price for them but lost \$1,200 of his father's money on another trade that was a bad deal.

Kansas

Once when Gid and Johnny were in Kansas, Gid got sick and wound up in the hospital. Johnny stayed with him the entire time to see him through it.



Themes

Tradition and Propriety

Gid Fry in "Leaving Cheyenne" represents a man of traditional principles. His domineering father, Adam, taught him what it meant to work hard and the importance of knowing every aspect of the farming and ranching required to run a successful operation. Although he rebelled against his father at times, Gid was very much like Adam. He was a hard worker, careful with his money and ambitious in that he wanted to expand the size of his property and increase his income.

Gid also had traditional values when it came to societal issues. He was deeply in love with Molly Taylor his entire life. But she was like a butterfly flitting from one man to another and didn't land on him when she decided it was time to marry. Following in his father's footsteps, Gid felt he should marry and have children. Children are needed when there is property that needs heirs. Since he couldn't have the woman of his dreams, he settled for Mabel Peters who was a kind of a pathetic, sad-sack who was desperate to get married. Neither Gid nor Mabel loved each other. They both needed someone to marry.

Gid continued on with his love affair with Molly. In fact, they had a child together. As the years passed and Molly's husband died, she began to encourage him to leave Mabel. He wasn't happy with her. But Gid was a traditional man and cared what people thought. And propriety dictated that he not leave his wife for another woman no matter what his feelings were. He also struggled with guilt and shame over having continued a relationship with Molly. She commented at one point that there was hardly a time he left her bed without feeling guilty.

When his son, Jimmy, was told that Gid was his real father, he became resentful and bitter and rejected both Gid and Molly. It was a heartbreak that Gid never got over. Having an affair and an illegitimate child was out of the realm of normalcy for a traditionalist like Gid.

Loving

The main characters of Larry's McMurtry's "Leaving Cheyenne" represent different traits and characteristics that translate into main themes throughout the saga of three friends who love each other but only possess the capacity to love in a singular and unique way. Molly loves her friends and her love is focused on the other person and what he needs. Molly never had a close relationship with any female even her mother who died years before the story begins. Although Gid was always Molly's "favorite," she married Eddie White because it was her judgment that he needed a wife more than Gid did.

Gid is broken-hearted when Molly marries someone else and eventually settles for less by marrying the less interesting but eager to marry Mabel. Despite their having different



spouses, Molly continues to love Gid and gives him what he needs. Gid never fell out of love with Molly but to him love meant marriage. To Molly there were no boundaries to love. She loved her friends and was there for them no matter what the need. Molly knew that Gid wasn't happy in his marriage and deserved more. In the autumn of their lives, Molly realized that Gid needed her to take care of him but his proprieties did not allow him to leave the wife he didn't love.

Perhaps it was Molly's domineering father who taught her that she had to give and serve and do for people that she translated over to love and relationships. Molly loved Johnny, too, but she knew that all he needed was her warm body on some nights and having fun fishing and picnicking. Molly and Johnny understood each other and neither one placed any demands on the other. It was a loving relationship but a love that was not all-encompassing.

Molly's sin was that she did not allow herself to be in love with the man who loved her the most and would have been good for her. Because Molly focused on the other person and his needs, she tragically put her own needs and desires aside. Molly truly lived for those she loved.

Freedom

Freedom is one of the themes that is weaved throughout "Leaving Cheyenne." The character that most represents this element is Johnny McCloud. Johnny is a cowboy and doesn't want to do anything else, and he only wants to cowboy when he wants to. He loves the freedom and independence that the job gives him. He works with his hands and animals and wants as little to do with other people or bosses as possible.

More important to Johnny than his work is having fun. He loves to drink and party. He's often seen at the domino hall and saloon when he could be working. But to Johnny, what's most important is a good time and feeling liberated and unencumbered. He doesn't take anything too seriously, especially himself.

Johnny is crazy about the beautiful Molly Taylor as is his best friend, Gid. Johnny and Gid are life-long friends but there are very stark differences between the two of them. Gid wants to marry and make Molly his own but Johnny just wants to love her a little and then leave. He wants no deep, long-term commitment, no distractions from his simple and leisurely lifestyle.

Molly is something like Johnny in that she is fun-loving and keeps Gid at arm length's when he gets too serious. She doesn't want to be saddled down with a man until she decides she wants a baby. Molly changes over the years and although she doesn't lose her independent streak, some of the rough blows she endured during her life made her realize the importance of having someone close. But Johnny maintains his free-wheeling ways throughout all his years. When they are both in their sixties, he feels sorry for Molly and proposes to her. But she knows it wouldn't be good and that Johnny

really doesn't want to be married. She turned him down and they both knew it was for the best.



Style

Point of View

"Leaving Cheyenne" by Larry McMurtry is written in the first person narrative. There are three main sections in the book and each of the sections is written from the perspective of a different character. The first section, "The Blood's Country" is written from the perspective of Gid Fry. This section focus on the younger years of the three main characters. The second main part is entitled, "Ruin Hath Taught Me," is written from the point of view of the character Molly Taylor. It mainly focuses on the three characters in their middle years. The third section, "Go Turn My Horses Free," is written from the perspective of Johnny McCloud and it covers the declining years of the three friends.

The author, Larry McMurtry, is best known for his novel, "Lonesome Dove," which became a popular TV mini-series. "Lonesome Dove" was, like "Leaving Cheyenne" a tale of the west. McMurtry is a Pulitzer Prize winning author. His body of work includes twenty-five novels along with essays, memoirs and thirty screenplays. He is very familiar with the western having been the editor of a collection of short stories about the modern west. As a resident of Texas, which enables to write with familiarity about that state and its terrain.

Setting

"Leaving Cheyenne" by Larry McMurtry is set in northern Texas in the 1920s. During that time most of the area consisted of farms and ranches. The small town where Gid, Molly and Johnny visit for supplies is called Thalia. As a young man, Gid worked on his father's large ranch where they raised cattle and other livestock and planted and harvested crops. Molly lived on her family farm where they grew crops and raised animals and chickens. The three young friends spent a lot of time outdoors at fishing and swimming holes and on picnics.

When Gid and Johnny decide they want to be real cowboys, they take off for the Texas Panhandle and hire on as wranglers with some large cattle and horse ranches. On one occasion, Gid and Johnny take the train to Amarillo, Texas, to look for work. Not finding work there, they went on to Clarendon and were hired by a horse rancher who had a 38,000 acre ranch. After working there a while, Sonny took a job over the winter overseeing a ranch in New Mexico but Gid was homesick so he went back home.

On another occasion, Gid and Johnny went to Fort Worth to sell Adam's calves. They herded them to Henrietta and then took the train to Forth Worth. Gid sold the cattle at the stockyards there and did some livestock trading at the Exchange and was doing well until he got taken and lost \$1,200 on a bad deal.

After Gid inherited the ranch with his father's passing, he traveled to Wichita, Kansas, where he secured a loan to buy some of the acreage that adjoined his property. Gid was



also in the hospital in Wichita where he had kidney surgery. Gid eventually moved off the ranch and built a big house in Thalia.

Language and Meaning

"Leaving Cheyenne" by Larry McMurtry is a story that takes place in northwestern Texas and spans a time period of some forty years beginning in the 1920s. Much of the dialog is folksy and written in such a way that the reader can "hear" the southwestern or Texas accent spoken by the people. The featured characters in this story range from farmers to ranchers to small town residents. Therefore, quite naturally much of the subject matter and many of the conversations between characters focus on rural issues.

Throughout the story there is an emphasis on two elements that were important to farmers and ranchers of that era. The first is their connection with the outdoors. A large part of the story takes place in the in the fields and pastures. Gid and Johnny are often digging post holes and repairing and steeping the fences in the meadow. There is a lot of upkeep on a large farm or ranch. On one occasion, Gid and Johnny have to repair a malfunctioning windmill that is used to pump water from a well. It is during this incident that Gid falls from a latter and dies a short while later.

A second element that is given a lot of attention in this story is food. After a long, hard and hot day working the land, "supper time" is an important part of the day. The food was not only nourishing and sated hunger, sitting around the table was a social opportunity and a chance to share ideas and thoughts for the people who lived in very remote and isolated places.

When Gid and Johnny are young, they often travel to other regions to find work and sell their livestock. They travel to Amarillo and to the Panhandle to find cowboy work. They go by train to Fort Worth to sell calves. When the story begins, the three young friends have picnics and go to the fishing hole for recreation.

When the characters are young, they ride saddle horses and drive horse and buggies for their main means of transportation. Around the time when the story begins, automobiles were becoming more common and a few began to pop up in the story. By the conclusion of the story, some forty years later, most of the characters drove cars.

Structure

"Leaving Cheyenne" by Larry McMurtry has an unusual structure. It is separated into three main parts, and each are written from the perspective of one of the three main characters. "Part I: The Blood's Country" is written from the point of view of Gid Fry who begins the story in the early 1920s when he is a young man who lives with his father on the family ranch. This part is the largest section of the three and has twenty-four chapters. This first section tells the story of three friends, Gid, Johnny and Molly in their youth. The two young men were life-long friends but were in love with the same woman, the beautiful Molly.



"Part II: Ruin Hath Taught Me" is comprised of nine chapters and is written from the voice of Molly Taylor and flashes forward to sometime during the World War II. The first chapter of this section begins with Molly fretting over her young son who is missing in action. The sections fills some of the issues that were left unresolved in section one. Who did Molly love and who did she marry? What impact did her marriage and children have on her friendship with Gid and Johnny?

"Part III: Go Turn My Horses Free" has nine chapters and is written from the perspective of Johnny McCloud and covers the declining years of the three friends, Gid, Molly and Johnny. More gaps are filled in from the other parts in this last section. The story of life-long friends witnessed many happy and tragic times. The last section ties up some loose ends and is a testament to the strong bond of true friendship.



Quotes

"You're giving a hundred-and-fifty-dollar saddle to a thirty-dollar-a-month cowboy. That wouldn't make sense to a crazy man. And it sure don't to me." (Part I, Chapter One, page 4)

"You'll just stay right where you are. And if I tell you to plow, by god, you plow." (Part I, Chapter Three, page 22)

"I know there's food in the world who say poverty is holy, but you let them go without shoes some cold winter, like I did when I was a kid, and then see how holy they think it is. Being poor just makes people little and mean." (Part I, Chapter Three, page 23)

"It made me pretty down in the mouth, finding out that I wasn't the first feller ever to spend a night with Molly." (Part I, Chapter Seven, page 53)

"The best way in the world to get poor is to start living rich." (Part I, Chapter Fourteen, page 110)

"It seemed to me, looking at her with her face so close to mine, that it was impossible to love a person more than I loved her, and the way she sent that cool look up at me made me mad." (Part I, Chapter Twenty, page 133)

"One day after Joe had already been reported missing, Johnny told me he'd rather have a dead hero for a son than a live coward." (Part II, Chapter One, page 160)

"Gid was always my favorite; sometimes when I seen him the delight would shoot right through me, as sharp sometimes as a sting." (Part II, Chapter Two, page 170)

"I was looking at my comb. There were some hairs stuck in it, and the sun through the windshield was turning them golden. I was wondering how I would have been if I had been a blond; even worse, I guess." (Part II, Chapter Four, page 191)

"Since Jimmy was dead, I could imagine that we had been closer than we were, and I let myself makeup a lot of little scenes that never happened, where we were having fun together." (Part II, Chapter Seven, page 210)

"I drove out of the pastures and onto the highway. 'Pretty sunset,' Gid said. 'Looking how the sky's lit up. Looks like somebody set the world on fire.'" (Part III, Chapter One, page 236)

"Molly takes her age pretty well. I'm half a notion to quit Mabel and go live with her yet. I might have a few years' peace. If I live over this operation, I might just do it." (Part III, Chapter Three, page 271)

Topics for Discussion

What caused Molly Taylor to behave as she did?

What feelings did Molly have for Eddie? What drew her to Eddie?

Did Molly love any of the men she was involved with? Who was her "favorite" and why?

What was Molly's relationship with her father like? How did it impact her life?

What relationship did Gid have with his father and how did it impact his life?

Why did Gid marry Mabel? Why was it difficult to leave Mabel even though he didn't love her?

Why did Adam commit suicide? At what point did Gid understand why his father shot himself and even consider it himself?