

Moccasin Trail Study Guide

Moccasin Trail by Eloise McGraw

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Plot Summary

As a child, Jim Keath listens to the stories of his uncle who is a mountain man. When he is still very young, he runs away from home, following his uncle with the intention of becoming a mountain man himself. But Jim is attacked by a grizzly bear and the other whites leave him behind. Jim manages to kill the grizzly but is seriously wounded. He is taken in by a group of Indians and nursed back to health. By the time he is well, he has been accepted into the tribe and he soon finds himself adapting to the lifestyle. Jim participates in all aspects of the Indian life, including joining raiding parties. But one day a party returns to camp with scalps, one the color of Jim's mother's hair. Stricken by memories of his white family, he suddenly feels torn loyalties toward his white and Indian families. This prompts Jim to leave the Indian tribe and go into the mountains. There he is befriended by a mountain man named Tom Rivers. Tom and Jim trap beaver together until the day Tom announces that he plans to leave the mountains. Jim decides the only option available to him is to return to the Indians. But on the night before they break camp, a traveler arrives with a letter for Jim. Jim is unable to read but from the few words Tom can understand, Jim realizes that the letter is from his brother, Jonnie.

Jim and Tom part ways with Jim going in search of someone who can read the letter. He finds a settlement and a man who knows Jonnie immediately sees the brothers' resemblance. Jim and Jonnie reconnect and Jim discovers that their parents are dead. Jonnie is taking his younger brother and sister to homestead but at seventeen, he is too young to claim land for himself. Jim agrees to go along with the family in order to claim land for them.

Sally, Jim's sister who is just younger than Jonnie, is immediately distrustful of Jim because of the way he dresses. Jim has little tolerance for the white way of life. The youngest of the family, Daniel, is enamored with Jim and seeks to emulate his ways.

When the family arrives and Jonnie has chosen the homestead spot, the family settles in to make a home. Jim chafes under the need to build a shelter and clear land for farming and doesn't understand Jonnie's pride of accomplishment with each completed task. Jonnie presses for the work to go more quickly and Daniel is soon torn between the demands of Jonnie and his desire to be like Jim. Daniel runs away and it's a concerted effort that locates the little boy and returns him to the fold. Jim realizes that Daniel could easily have died during his time away from the family and finally understands that he wants desperately to fit in with the white family. Jonnie and Sally realize that they have to accept Jim as he is if they want him to remain with the family.



Chapters 1 through 4

Chapters 1 through 4 Summary

Jim Keath is camped in the mountains above the Powder River as the story opens. Another mountain man named Tom Rivers is camped with him. Tom has made it clear that he plans to break camp that day and head for California. Jim doesn't plan to go with Tom but wishes he could convince the older man to stay. Jim knows that he'll be lonely without Tom. Jim thinks about all this as he works at setting traps. He has only one beaver in his traps and he thinks about the fact that the big companies have trapped out most of the beaver from the area.

As Jim is walking through the woods, he runs his fingers through his hair and feels four scars that run from his hairline down to his eyebrow. He suddenly remembers his encounter with a grizzly. Jim had been eleven at the time. He'd left home, following his uncle who was a mountain man. When Jim was attacked, the other trappers camped nearby had scattered. Jim managed to get off a single shot with his rifle and killed the bear, but not before the animal had inflicted serious damage on the youngster. Jim was hurt badly and the other whites simply left him. He was found later and taken in by Indians.

Jim returns to the camp he shares with Tom Rivers and finds his wolf-like dog, Moki, waiting. Jim talks to Moki, sharing some meat with the dog but saying that Moki will have to hunt for himself in coming days or do without. Jim realizes that when Tom is gone, he'll be very lonely. He decides that the only real option open to him is to return to his Indian family, the Crows, and to join their fight against the Sioux. Jim's thoughts return to the moments he'd first awakened after the bear attack. He remembers that an Indian woman had fastened a necklace around his neck and that he'd been horrified to realize it was the claw of the bear. He then realizes that he's fortunate to be alive and shouts for joy. Jim is taken in by the Indians and adopted by a woman whose own son had died. He lives there, accepting their lifestyle as his own, until he is sixteen years old. One day a raiding party arrives at the Indian camp after having attacked whites. One of the braves has a blond scalp hanging from his coupstick. Jim is suddenly filled with memories of his blond mother and he is angry at the Indians for having murdered the white people. His anger grows until the night he can take it no longer. He leaves the tribe, taking only Moki, a few treasures and a horse from the Indian who had taken the blond scalp. Two years have passed since that time.

Tom returns to the camp and invites Jim to accompany him to California. Jim declines the offer. They are talking when they suddenly realize there's a person near their camp. Jim and Tom slip into the woods and wait to find out who it is.

In Chapter Two, about five minutes pass before a man yells the word "friend" and Tom and Jim come out of hiding. It's an older Indian named Big Bull and a second Indian who walk into camp. Big Bull addresses Jim by his Indian name, Talks Alone, though



Jim doesn't know the Indian. Following the rules of hospitality, they feed the two Indians before either will tell Jim what they want. They give Jim a letter as they leave. Jim can't read and initially argues that the letter can't possibly be for him. Tom makes an attempt at reading the letter but can read only a few of the words, including "Jonnie." Jim believes the letter might be from his brother, Jonnie. Tom is amazed to learn that Jim has a brother and admits that he'd believed Jim to be half Crow. Jim says that he'd grown up in Missouri with his family but had run away from home. Jim plans to go to a settlement called The Dalles in search of someone who can read the letter to him.

Jim goes on, telling Tom the story of leaving home and following his uncle, Adam Russell. He says that from the moment he'd seen Adam Russell, he'd been unable to think of anything except living that life. When his uncle left Jim's house, Jim followed but didn't let his uncle see him until they were so far from Jim's home that his uncle couldn't send him back. Jim knows that the following day they'll break camp and part ways.

In Chapter Three, Jim runs his trap line on the final morning in camp with Tom and has a large beaver in the last of his six traps. Jim and Tom break camp and prepare to go their separate ways. Tom laughs as Jim has trouble with his mule, Bad Medicine. Jim has to stop along the way to hunt for meat to eat and the trip takes a week. Jim arrives at The Dalles and is overwhelmed by the number of people, having not seen any white people for the past nine years. Jim leaves Moki with his horse and steps inside the trading post. There, he plans to ask the owner to read the letter. Before he can make his request, he senses danger and rushes outside where he finds a man about to shoot Moki. Jim shoves the man's hand upward and he misses. The man says that he'd believed Moki to be a wolf and doesn't seem to believe Jim when he says Moki is his dog. Jim returns to the post and pays the owner a beaver skin to read the letter. The man begins with the words that Jim's parents are both dead and that his siblings need Jim's help. Jim hates that the trader is reading the letter aloud for everyone in the store to hear and takes the letter from him, saying the message is private. Outside, a man who identifies himself as Mr. Rutledge offers to read the letter. Rutledge reads, saying that Jim's two brothers and his sister are headed for the Willamette Valley and that they need Jim's help. Rutledge then tells Jim that Jonnie is camped nearby and offers to take Jim to them.

In Chapter Four, Jim and Rutledge head for the camp and Rutledge points out the sound of a banjo, saying that it's Jonnie playing. Rutledge says that the banjo music has helped the group traveling together through many rough times. Rutledge introduces Jim to Jonnie and Jim asks Jonnie to recount how they came to be in The Dalles. Jonnie says that their father had died and the rest of the family had decided to move west when they lost the family farm. Their mother died on the way. Jonnie says that their mother had wanted to see Jim right up to the moment of her death. Jonnie tells Jim that he wants to claim land for the family but at seventeen, he's too young. Jim is old enough and Jonnie asks that Jim travel with them and claim the land. He promises that he won't ask anything else of Jim and Jim agrees.



Chapters 1 through 4 Analysis

The full story of how Jim came to follow his uncle will be told later in the book. It turns out that Jim is very enamored with his uncle's stories of living in the wilderness and, at only eleven years old, sets out to follow him. Jim says that his uncle and some other white traders were in the area when he was attacked by the bear and it's not clear why they didn't help the boy who was so badly injured. It could be that his uncle and the other men didn't want to take the responsibility or that they simply ran away without stopping to see if he'd survived. It's up to the reader to decide.

At one point, Tom tells Jim that his best bet might be to return to the Indians. Jim says that he's surprised to have Tom say that. Jim, referring to the fact that he has had little luck catching beavers, says that he believes his luck will change if he lives among the whites. Jim refers to his "medicine," which is an Indian concept that can be compared to personal powers. Tom seems to believe that Jim's "medicine" is tied up in the amulet he wears around his neck, which would be Indian-oriented. But Jim indicates that he doesn't believe that to be the case. This is an example of Jim's divided loyalties. He has begun to see himself as white more than Indian but doesn't realize that other people see him differently.

Jim talks about the "bourgeways," referring to the whites. He says that the Indians learn quickly that they have to adapt to their surroundings but that the bourgeways don't learn that lesson. He later talks about Jonnie's tendency to work all the time and says that he's following the white tradition to make everything in nature bend to his will rather than learning to live with nature. This is one example of Jim's struggle to reunite with his white family. He has learned the ways of Indians and sees that some of them are better than those of the whites. Later, when Jim is helping Jonnie clear land for farming, he says that they are ruining the land. Despite that, he continues to help Jonnie achieve his goals.

As Jim and Jonnie are headed for Jonnie's camp, Jim is leading his horse. Jonnie is frankly admiring of the animal and asks where Jim got it. Jim says that he stole it from the Crow Indians. Jonnie is immediately condemning and it's obvious that he thinks stealing is wrong. However, Jim misunderstands and believes that Jonnie simply doesn't realize what a dangerous and important action it was. He sets out to try to explain, obviously thinking that he'd earn Jonnie's admiration. As they continue to walk toward camp, Jim begins to realize that the nine years away from his family has created a bigger gap than he'd expected. Jonnie is also becoming more aware that they can't pick up where they'd left off when Jim disappeared. At one point he says that their little brother, Daniel, had mentioned seeing a wolf and an Indian, and Jonnie has realized that it must have been Jim. He is uncomfortable that Daniel mistook their brother for an Indian but then becomes angry. He says that Jim looks like an Indian and seems to condemn Jim for his appearance.



Chapters 5 through 8

Chapters 5 through 8 Summary

In Chapter Five, Jim arrives at the camp and begins to get reacquainted with his fifteen-year-old sister Sally and his eleven-year-old brother, Daniel. Daniel is the same youngster Jim had seen at the trading post when the man had almost shot Moki. Sally says that Jim should have come home to see their mother. When Sally asks what happened to their Uncle, Jim says that he'd been killed by an arrow to the head and scalped, then wishes that he hadn't been so blunt with the news.

Sally calls Jim "James," which keeps him nervous and on edge. Jonnie later explains that their mother had always referred to Jim in that way. Jonnie tells Sally that Jim is going to help them get the land. Jim notes that the family seems in bad physical shape and has obviously not been eating enough to keep their strength up. He provides meat for their first meal which Jonnie initially tries to refuse. Jim insists, pointing out that they have to be strong for the river crossing that will happen soon and Jonnie gives in. He then insists that Jonnie take off his boots which are ragged and causing Jonnie to limp. Jim throws the boots in the fire, binds Jonnie's feet with herbs to help them heal, and gives him a pair of moccasins. Daniel is full of questions and asks about Jim's life. Jim gives some information, including the fact that he'd fought a grizzly when he was about Daniel's age, a fact that amazes Daniel so that he's full of questions.

In Chapter Six, two mornings later the group is planning to travel down the Columbia River. The river at this point is rough but provides the only passage for wagons. The group has built rafts and the plan is to put the wagons onto the rafts and float down the river some fifty miles. Jim knows first-hand that the passage is rough and that it's a dangerous undertaking. Jim and Daniel are to take the animals that belong to both the Rutledge family and the Keath family around through a pass. The idea of letting Daniel go with Jim upsets Sally, but they can see no other way of accomplishing the crossing unless they hire Indians to drive the animals and they know that they probably won't get all their animals back if they do that. Jim and Jonnie help Bob Rutledge and his son, Ned, as they dismantle the wagons belonging to both families and load them on the raft. Jonnie reminds Daniel several times to be careful which Jim takes as a sign that Jonnie doesn't trust him to keep Daniel safe. The weather turns bad and they consider putting off the trip but Jim points out that the weather won't get noticeably better until spring and they set out. Sally changes her mind about letting Daniel go with Jim but the river current has already caught the raft by then and there's no turning back. Daniel expresses his worry to Jim, saying that he didn't even say good-bye to Sally, but Jim urges that they get started on their own journey. As they travel, Jim tells Daniel about his life in the wilderness and explains that he wears the eagle feather in his hair because he's earned the right by "counting coup."

On the river, the travel is rough and Sally continues to worry about Daniel. Sally says that Jim seems "so Injun." Jonnie doesn't disagree but says that the two still resemble



each other so much that Rutledge recognized Jim as Jonnie's brother. Sally says that they don't look alike but Jonnie disagrees. Sally and Jonnie had both been appalled that Jim couldn't read but Jonnie points out that "lots of people" haven't had the opportunity to learn. As they continue to face the rough river, Jonnie worries more and more about Daniel. At one point he voices his concern to Sally but this time she tells him to stop worrying.

In Chapter Seven, Jim and Daniel come to a point where they have to cross the river. They've had little food. The cattle are hungry but Jim and Daniel are also hungry. Jim has been eating only every other day in an effort to conserve food for Daniel. On the night before they plan to cross the river, Jim plans to skip another meal but Daniel notes that Jim didn't eat the previous night either and insists that Jim eat. Jim tries to hide the fact that they are out of food but Daniel is aware. Just about that time, Moki walks into camp with a mink. Jim has to wrestle the mink away from Moki and at one point Moki bites Jim. Jim bites Moki on the ear and the dog gives up the mink. Jim skins the mink and divides it with Daniel. Jim begins to eat his raw and Daniel hesitates but eventually begins to eat as well, saying "meat's meat."

During the trip, Daniel confides that Jonnie doesn't believe Jim will remain with the family once they've settled in the Willamette Valley. Jim reassures Daniel that he's come back to the family with every intention of staying. They finish the trip but are very hungry when they finally arrive in camp to find that Sally and Jonnie are already there. Jim is pleased when Sally notices the dirty bandage he's wearing around his hand where Moki bit him and stumbles into camp to eat. Later, Jim brings up the subject of remaining with the family. He tells Jonnie that he has to stay somewhere and that he'd like to remain with the family, "If I'm wanted." Jonnie says that Jim is welcome to stay. Jim knows that Sally would rather he didn't but plans to anyway. There's yet another river crossing before the group arrives at their destination.

The final stage of the journey is spent with various members of the group falling off to settle spots. Jonnie finds a location that suits him facing a lake. Daniel is entranced by the jumping of the fish and wants to go fishing as soon as the wagon comes to a stop. Jim knows that they've chosen a good spot for their home and farming enterprise but he also knows that the building and plowing will change the land. He says that the work will "ruin" the land and frighten away the animals.

In Chapter Eight, Jim is working to cure meat for the winter. He's angry that the task is designated as women's work in the Indian camps but that he's stuck with the task. Jonnie is working to pile up logs for a cabin though Jonnie doesn't see a need to build out of wood. He knows that he'll soon have enough hides for a sturdy teepee and believes that would be sufficient for the family's need for shelter over the winter. Daniel is carrying up wood. At Jim's suggestion, Daniel has made a sled for Moki to pull. Moki is acting as if the sled is too heavy and Daniel is worried but Jim tosses down a piece of elk meat and Moki trots toward it, the load forgotten. Jim hates the chores he's doing but notes that Jonnie and Sally love it and work for hours on end without complaint.



One afternoon, Jim notes that the mule, Bad Medicine, is acting strangely. He tells Jonnie that someone's coming, that he believes it's a white man and predicts that there's a wagon as well. When Daniel says that Moki is "acting funny," Jonnie laughs, saying that the mule says there's a white man and a wagon on the way. A short time later, a man named Sam Mullins arrives with his family and some other guests. Jonnie and Sally know the families, having camped with them at The Dalles. Jonnie pulls out his banjo later and plays. Jim is struck by the "medicine" Jonnie has in the banjo because it has the ability to make people forget the hardships they are facing. Jim doesn't really understand the drive of the white people. He says that they could eat from the land but they insist on planting crops, and they could wander thousands of miles of wilderness but they insist on owning a small plot of their own. He doesn't understand, but he's very curious. At one point, Jonnie grows angry that Jim isn't helping chop trees for the cabin. Jim tells Jonnie that building a teepee would mean they were free to move on if they chose. Jonnie is angry at the idea, saying that he'll never move on. Jim, still not understanding but knowing that it's important to Jonnie, says that he'll start helping the following day.

Chapters 5 through 8 Analysis

On the night the family first reunites, Jim shows Daniel how accurately he can throw a knife. Daniel is amazed and Jim promises to teach him. Sally breaks in, saying that she doesn't want Daniel to learn that. Jim doesn't really understand until much later how much Sally is trying to do to protect Daniel. It seems that the entire family has paid a high price for Jim's decision to run away from home as a youngster. Sally probably realizes that the stories told by their uncle of how great things were in the wilderness were the reason Jim decided to run away. She is now afraid that Jim will convince Daniel of the same thing and will influence him to also run away.

Jim is upset with his siblings because they are obviously in need of help but aren't willing to accept it from him. He has meat and plans to share with the others, but Jonnie says they didn't call on him for help with anything other than signing for ownership of the land. Jonnie obviously resents the fact that Jim ran away and left him. What's interesting is that Jim seems to want to take over the role of head of the family but that isn't really the case. Jim simply sees a need he is capable of filling and wants to do so. Jonnie sees it as a threat to his ability to care for the family and his instinct is to defend his role as head of the family.

Jonnie and Sally talk honestly about Jim, and Sally is disappointed to find that Jim so closely resembles the Indians she's heard about. Jonnie is also disappointed but stands up for Jim each time Sally says something negative. Jonnie admits that it's partly because Sally only remembers their mother talking about Jim while Jonnie had been very close to his brother when they were very young.



Chapters 9 through 11

Chapters 9 through 11 Summary

In Chapter Nine, Jim expects to begin cutting trees for the cabin but the land surveyor arrives and Jonnie and Mr. Rutledge stop work to stake their claims. Jim won't be needed until the time comes to sign for the property and he uses the time as a reprieve from work. Something seems to be worrying Jonnie though he doesn't say what it is. Then Jim overhears Jonnie telling Mr. Rutledge that Jim can't write. Mr. Rutledge assures Jonnie that Jim can simply mark an "X" and that there are many people who are unable to write. Jim goes off by himself and tries to remember what he learned about writing his name as a young child. He is soon frustrated.

Later, Jim takes Daniel to set out traps and teaches the young boy the finer points of trapping, including how to be sure the animal doesn't detect the trap or manage to escape. After they've set the traps, Jim begins to question Daniel on his education. Daniel says their father taught him arithmetic and writing, but says that writing is easier. Jim challenges Daniel to write his name on a piece of bark and Daniel does so. Jim then challenges Daniel to write "Jim Keath" and Daniel does so. Jim applauds the boy's efforts and keeps the piece of bark in his pocket. Later, he uses it for a pattern and practices writing his own name. The next afternoon it's time for Jim to sign for the land. He is nervous, knowing that Jonnie is watching and berates himself for being nervous. Jonnie obviously approves, a fact that pleases Jim. Jim admits that he'd heard Jonnie's words the previous day and Jonnie admits that he was petty to care whether Jim could sign his name. Jonnie is excited to own the property and falls into the work of preparing logs for a cabin. Jim catches up with the excitement and, for several days, helps.

In Chapter Ten, the work continues and the sight of the wooden walls of the cabin makes Jim feel trapped and uneasy. One day, Jim challenges Daniel to follow him and jumps into the river. Daniel follows without a second thought though the water is very cold. Jim teases the boy, saying that he'll have to practice "dodging bullets." He throws pebbles at Daniel and Daniel dodges each. Just then, Jim finds himself dodging pebbles thrown by Jonnie who has joined them in the water. As they reach the bank, Jonnie takes note of Jim's scarred body, the result of the bear attack. He suddenly understands the seriousness of the attack and why Jim is so defensive of the Crows who nursed him back to health. It's a turning point for Jonnie and he tries to make time for the games Jim and Daniel enjoy, including learning to shoot a bow and arrow. Sally grows angry and refuses to listen when Jonnie suggests that she try seeing things from Jim's point of view. Jim grows less interested in the work and often slips away with Daniel, going alone if Jonnie refuses to let Daniel walk away from his chores. Jonnie asks Rutledge for advice and the older man says that Jim is struggling to find himself. He advises that Jonnie leave Jim to his own devices and Jonnie does so to a great degree, though he's angry at being left with all the responsibility.



The day comes when the cabin is finished and Jim grows angrier as the family moves in. When he finds several possessions that remind him of his childhood, he fights against the memories. Sally points out a picture of Jim and Jonnie, saying that if he were to cut his hair, the two would still look very much alike. Jonnie defends Jim's right to wear the eagle feather, saying that it's similar to their father's medal, won fighting a war. Sally argues the point but Jim says that the eagle feather means that he's brave. Sally says that Jonnie is also brave but that he doesn't see the need to dress like a savage to prove it. Sally says that it's time Jim stopped dressing "like a heathen," which prompts Jim to leave the house. Jonnie tells Sally that she can't push Jim to change and Sally first says she doesn't care, then tells Jonnie to go bring Jim back inside. Jonnie asks Jim to sleep inside the house with them but Jim says he "can't." Jonnie says that Jim is simply looking for another opportunity to run away, just as he had when he was younger.

Jim goes into the forest, stripping his mountain clothing so that he is dressed only in moccasins and a breechcloth. A short time later, rumors begin to spread of an Indian uprising. Though no one gets a good look, they describe a lone Indian, riding wildly through the country scaring people and livestock. Soon the rumors have grown so that the horse's mane was replaced by "white flames" and bullets couldn't harm either horse or rider. Jim returns to the Keath property and tells himself that it's because he left Moki and the mule behind. Jim stops to wash off the war paint he'd donned before his wild ride but tells himself that it's not because he cares if Sally sees it. He says that it's because dried paint isn't comfortable on his skin.

In Chapter Eleven, Jonnie and Sally act as if nothing happened and don't bring up the previous evening's argument. Jonnie is starting to feel the strain of all the work and wants only to get started clearing land for the next season's crops. One day Daniel tells Jonnie something Jim said and Jonnie explodes, accusing Daniel of having no thoughts of his own. Daniel says the only thought he has of his own is that he wants to be like Jim and that Jonnie isn't going to stop him. One day Jonnie talks to Mr. Rutledge, saying that he doesn't understand Jim. Mr. Rutledge again says that he believes Jim is torn. He then predicts that Jim will come around, saying that everyone needs a home. Jonnie holds onto that thought, hoping that it could be true of Jim, but he really believes that Jim has been away from whites for too long and that Jim won't ever be able to fit in.

Jonnie challenges Daniel to take things from the cabin without being seen and then to put them back, also without being seen. Daniel is often away from home when he's needed for chores. Meanwhile, Jim is wrestling with a plan for his life. He feels that he should simply return to the mountains or the Indians but is honest enough to admit that he'd left the Indians of his own free will and that there was no game to attract him to the mountains to resume his trapping. One day Jim goes for a hard ride on his horse in an effort to forget his troubles for awhile. He realizes that Jonnie is watching and Jonnie says that Jim makes an incredible sight. Jonnie takes Jim's invitation to ride though he's thrown soon after mounting. Jim says that Jonnie needs a horse and Jonnie says that he does, but that needing it doesn't make it appear. Jim begins to think of a way to get Jonnie a horse.



Chapters 9 through 11 Analysis

Jim swam the river that flowed between the Keath property and the Rutledge's claim, arriving back at the Keath side of the river before the rest of the family. When they found him, Sally and Jonnie said they'd searched for Jim, calling out and looking for him. Sally then says that Jim should have told them where he'd gone. Jim doesn't understand the concept of accounting for his whereabouts and tells Sally that he'll never do that. Daniel is amazed that Jim went "swimming" in the winter. Jim then explains to Daniel that when he was living with the Indian tribe, he and the other boys were often "called out." This was something of a game in which an older person would tell the youngsters to "follow," and the youngsters dropped whatever they were doing to go with the older Indian. Jim says that sometimes these games included swimming, regardless of the weather. This becomes an important concept to Jim and Daniel later.

There's a conversation about whether a person is more accurate with a bow and arrow or a gun and Jim makes an incredibly accurate shot with his bow. Daniel is amazed and shouts about the shot, touting the remarkable abilities of the Indians. Jonnie counters, saying that they aren't Indians. He then says that the Indians who attacked their wagon train were heathens. Jim is angry, saying that Jonnie is talking about Jim's family, but Jonnie counters, saying that Jim is white and that his family consists of Sally, Jonnie and Daniel. Jim continues to defend the Indians but even as he does, he recalls instances of cruel behavior among the tribesmen, including the fact that a "proud and patient chieftain" had gotten his name from a necklace made of scalps and that he'd seen Indians indifferently crush the skull of a wounded pet dog. Jim is obviously torn. His loyalties are divided because he remembers many good things about the Indians who raised him. In many ways, Jim is facing an identity crisis but Jonnie is suffering along with him as Jim tries to find a middle ground.



Chapters 12 through 19

Chapters 12 through 19 Summary

In Chapter Twelve, Jim and Jonnie return home to discover that there are several men at the house. They are Sam, Ab Selaway, Ben Mills, Mr. Burke and Rutledge. The men say that animals have been taken from several homesteads. Rutledge says Jim will be able to help track the thieves. They believe white men took the animals and say they've sent for the sheriff but that he's out of the area. The victims of the thefts say they found only a couple of boot prints, indicating that the thieves were white rather than Indian. Daniel says that he believes Jim can track the thieves and Rutledge agrees. Sam Mullins asks Jim if he can and Jim assures the men that he'll be able to follow the signs left behind. They arrive at the scene with Jonnie riding Bad Medicine. Jim begins to look for signs and soon discovers that the thieves headed to the nearby creek. He's a little surprised, saying that it would be natural for a mountain man or Indian to do that but that whites seldom think of it. As Jim studies the boot prints, he discovers that the men don't put their weight down as white men would and deduces that the thieves are Indians trying to make the settlers believe they are white by wearing boots. With that information, Jim realizes the direction in which the thieves will be headed and plans to take a shortcut but the others object, insisting that they follow the trail. Jim finally gives in to that demand.

As they close in, Jim becomes excited about the idea of a fight to retrieve the cattle but Jonnie says that none of the men had counted on a battle. Others want to simply find the thieves and wait for the sheriff's arrival. About this time, they find the clothes and boots that were discarded by the Indians and the others are finally convinced of Jim's analysis that the thieves are Indians. That makes the men more determined that they can't fight, saying that if they kill Indians the tribes will retaliate on the settlers. Jim finally agrees not to fight but says that he'll help the men steal back the cattle. They agree to that plan and Jim sets out to decide how to get the cattle away from the camp. Jim slips into the camp while the others wait and they get away with the cattle. Jim also steals a pony from the Indians, intending to give it to Jonnie as a gift. Jonnie is appalled that Jim would steal the horse and Jim is embarrassed at the reaction. When the entire group insists that stealing the horse isn't right, Jim says that he'll take it back. Jonnie says that returning the horse is too dangerous but Jim insists, yelling at Jonnie and the others to go back to the settlement.

In Chapter Thirteen, Jim says that he wishes he could "plunge headlong into the worst danger he could find." He rushes back to the Indian camp, determined to put the horse back exactly where he found it even though the Indians were now on the move. Jim argues with himself about the reason Jonnie refused to accept the horse. While he knows that it's because the horse would have been stolen, he says that the Indians stole it from someone else. He believes that the gift, which was the best thing he could think to give Jonnie, simply wasn't good enough. Jim takes off his clothing and dons war paint before heading into the camp. Before Jim can get the horse back to its spot, he



encounters an Indian and kills the man. Later, when he's safely away from the camp, he fears that he might have sparked an Indian rebellion. He was seen by a young Indian woman and holds to the hope that she'll believe Jim is an Indian so that there's no retaliation on the settlers. Later, Jim suddenly realizes that he has no pride in his accomplishments and that he cares more about what others think of him. He says that, as Jonnie's brother, it's time to begin acting as a responsible white man should.

In Chapter Fourteen, Jim arrives at the cabin to find Daniel excited to see him, having been afraid that Jim wouldn't return at all. Sally tells Jim that she realizes she had been "nagging" about things that don't really matter, such as his braided hair. Jim has a bullet wound in his side and Jonnie removes the bullet; then Sally tends the wound. Jim is still sleeping in a lodge he's built for himself out of skins. Jim wakes later to discover that the sheriff, Joe Meek, is waiting to see him. Joe is an old mountain man himself and he and Jim talk briefly about the beaver situation and Jim's recent decision to leave the mountains. Joe and Jim talk at length and he stays for a meal, complimenting Sally on her cooking. Joe later tells Jim that he's heard of some "trouble" at an Indian camp and that he's heard some other stories that are disturbing. Joe says that he'd sought out the men who'd been with Jim when he stole back the cattle and that all were tight-lipped about Jim's role, other than to say they wouldn't have gotten the cattle back without Jim's help. Joe leaves Jim with a warning that he doesn't want to hear of any additional trouble. Jim returns to his lodge and picks up his personal belongings, then goes into the house and tells Jonnie and Sally that he's decided he wants to start sleeping inside with the family.

In Chapter Fifteen, Jim is working to clear land with Jonnie. Daniel becomes unhappy that Jim is spending so much time working in the fields with Jonnie. Jim continues to sleep inside each night though he feels closed in and is panicky at the thought of being inside the cabin. One night as he listens to the sounds of rain and Jonnie's breathing as he slept, Jim wonders why he still doesn't feel as if he'd come home, and wonders if he ever will. One day Daniel asks Jim to teach him to shoot a bow and arrow. Jim knows that he can't teach that skill to Daniel and says that they'll find something to do as soon as he can take a break from the work. One day Jim and Jonnie share a moment of conversation and Jonnie asks Jim if he's "homesick." Jim denies it to Jonnie but admits to himself that he misses his old way of life.

In Chapter Sixteen, Tom Rivers stops by for a visit. Jim tells Tom about the changes he's made and says that he's had to learn to adapt. He says that Sally doesn't like Indians but has come to understand and tolerate Jim's lifestyle. He says that Jonnie will sometimes tell Jim that he's not needed around the homestead on a particular day and urges him to go hunting. Jonnie and Sally like Tom but Daniel is jealous of Jim's time spent with Tom. One day Tom is talking to Rutledge and Jim realizes that Tom is incredibly lonely. When Tom leaves the valley, Jim is packed to go with him.

In Chapter Seventeen, the two men begin their trip out of the valley. They soon encounter a group of wagons headed down an incredibly steep hill. Jim believes it to be an impossible task but watches as the men tie large trees to the back of the wagons in an effort to slow the descent. Jim and Tom watch as a wagon makes it safely down and



the next wagon prepares to make the trip. Suddenly, Jim has a vision of the future of the region. He knows that there will be houses and farmland all over the area with towns springing to life as more people followed. Later, Jim talks to one of the men driving the wagon. The man asks how far it is to the Willamette Valley and Jim says that they'll be there in only a few days. Jim tells him that the valley is everything he's expecting and that others have already settled there. The man is excited as he shares the news with his family and Jim realizes that he's leaving what this man has worked so hard to reach. He tells Tom that he's going back and Tom says that he'd wondered how long it would take Jim to realize that his home is in the Willamette Valley now. The two men part ways again and Jim heads back to the cabin.

There, he discovers that Daniel has run away from home. Sally tells Jim that Daniel ran away because of Jim's abrupt departure. Sally reads a note Daniel left, indicating his intention to join an Indian tribe as Jim had done. Jim sends Sally to tell the neighbors that Jim has gone after Daniel and that they can follow. Jim recalls that he'd seen a group of Umpquas during his time out with Tom. He knows that the tribe keeps slaves and believes that he'll find Daniel with them. In Chapter Eighteen, Jim has caught up to the group. He is faced with the problem of silencing two guards and orders Moki to attack one while he shoots the other with an arrow. Meanwhile, Jonnie is traveling with Meek who is following the trail Jim left. They are traveling at night and Jonnie hopes Meek is able to follow the trail in the dark. Jim slips into a hut and finds Daniel there. He wakes the boy with a hand over his mouth to keep him quiet and they slip away. They reach an embankment and Jim hoists Daniel up. He is just about to pull himself up when he's struck on the side of the head.

Jim regains consciousness later to find himself bound. He sees Daniel, similarly bound, nearby. Jim knows that the Indians plan to take him back to their camp for a slow painful death, treatment reserved for an "arrogant enemy." He pledges to himself that Daniel will see him die a noble death. Jim and Daniel are loaded into canoes and then Jim hears Meek's voice, demanding that the Indians give up their prisoners. Meek compliments Jim for having thought of the Indian party and Jim apologizes for having failed in his attempt to rescue Daniel alone, a fact that Meek waves away. Meek then offers Jim a job as deputy. Jim thanks Meek for the offer but says that he's going to head east as soon as he has seen Daniel safely home.

In Chapter Nineteen, the group arrives at the cabin where Daniel is engulfed in hugs from Sally and Mrs. Rutledge. Jim pulls Jonnie away from the homecoming celebration and says that he plans to leave. Jim asks Jonnie to tell Sally that he realizes he's been a bad influence on Daniel but Jonnie insists that Jim tell her personally. Jonnie challenges Jim, saying that he'd left with Tom but had chosen to return. Jim refuses to say why and Jonnie says that Jim doesn't want to leave, but is running away rather than facing a problem. Jim talks to Daniel, telling him that the valley will be the site of many great events. Daniel says that he's going to be like Jim, no matter what. Jim suddenly realizes that he can't run away and leave Daniel to face his unsettled feelings alone. He says that Daniel should watch carefully to see what Jim is like, and without taking time to consider the action, Jim slashes both his braids off and pulls the feather from his hair. Sally rushes over and grabs the braids and the feather. When Jim asks what she's



doing with them, she says that she's putting the braids in the leather box with other family keepsakes, to remind them of Jim's life before he returned to them. She says the feather will be put under the family clock with their father's medal. Jim later talks to Jonnie, telling him of his "medicine song" that had taken him through some tough times. He begins to recite and Jonnie realizes that Jim is reciting the Twenty-third Psalm. With this realization, Jonnie says that Jim has been "white" all along and Jim comes to believe it.

Chapters 12 through 19 Analysis

Jim is not prepared for opposition to fighting the Indians in order to get back the cattle that were stolen. His Indian training comes immediately to his mind and he doesn't understand why there's opposition. He does, however, realize the wisdom when one of the men points out that the Indians will retaliate for any deaths by killing settlers. Jim knows this to be true and agrees to find another way. When he suggests stealing the cattle back without a fight, the others are in agreement but Jim is really interested in what Jonnie thinks. He looks for Jonnie's face to gauge the reaction and is really pleased to find that Jonnie is proud of him. Despite Jim's insistence that he doesn't care what Jonnie does and what he thinks, Jim cares very much.

One day Jim is clearing land and he's frantically chopping, trying to clear as much as possible as quickly as possible. He's not accomplishing more than Jonnie who is working at a more reasonable pace, but he's working himself much harder. During a break, Jonnie asks Jim how he would catch up with someone who had a head start. Jonnie suggests that Jim would have to run all the time to make up the distance. Jim is appalled at the idea, saying that he'd have to make up a little time in different places, such as rising a little earlier and taking shorter breaks during the day. He says that running would only wear him out so that he could never catch up. Jonnie just smiles until Jim catches on that Jonnie is really talking about Jim's work with the ax. Jim laughs at Jonnie's way of making a point and agrees to set himself a steadier, more reasonable pace.

The idea of "medicine" in Jim's way of thinking is not a reference to medicine needed to treat an ailment. Jim mentions medicine as anything that can positively impact something else. In some cases, these "medicines" are almost mystical. For example, Jim believes his braids and an amulet that he carries are "medicine." He also refers to the stories Jonnie reads from the Bible as "medicine." In another instance, Jonnie sends Daniel to chase butterflies. When Daniel catches one, Jim shows the little boy how to run the dust from the butterfly wings onto his chest while chanting, "Oh, butterfly, give me your strength and swiftness." Daniel then runs off to catch another butterfly. Later, Jim and Jonnie talk about the chase, saying that Daniel is bound to become a fast runner if he continues to chase the butterflies. Jonnie says that it has nothing to do with the fact that Daniel is rubbing the butterfly on his chest. Jim doesn't say anything to Jonnie but he believes that "medicine is medicine." In a way, both men are right. Jonnie is correct because Daniel will become a fast runner by chasing the butterflies whether he rubs the dust on his chest or not. However, Jim is right because the rubbing of dust

on the chest is the culmination of the chase. This is another example of the cultural differences the two men are trying to bridge.



Characters

Jim Keath

Jim is very young when he leaves home, following an uncle into the wilderness. There, he encounters a bear and is badly injured. He survives because Indians take him in and nurse him back to health. Jim is soon adopted into their tribe and spends six years with them. It's the sight of a scalp that reminds him of his white heritage and sends him running away from his Indian family. Jim spends the next years torn between his white heritage and his adoptive Indian heritage. When Jim receives word that his brothers and sister need his help, he's certain that he needs to go to them. Jim is proud and hates that Jonnie and Sally don't immediately accept him. Jim isn't lazy but hates the confines created by the work Jonnie expects him to do. Jim is torn over his loyalty to the white people and his loyalty to the Indians. This conflict makes him act in ways contrary to his nature as he battles to discover his own identity. Jim realizes that he's a huge influence on his youngest brother, Daniel, and initially seeks to teach Daniel the things he believes the youngster needs to know about the wilderness and survival. He comes to realize that these aren't the things Daniel really needs to know and accepts that, as the oldest brother, he should be more accepting of the way of life the others choose.

Jonnie Keath

Jim's younger brother. Jonnie is determined to take his younger brother and sister on to Oregon and to claim land there, but he is only seventeen and cannot claim land on his own. He sends a letter to Jim with no real hope that it will reach him. Jonnie has a great deal of pride and has a strong work ethic. He is more than willing to work all day, every day, to accomplish his goals. He wants to instill this ethic in Daniel and doesn't understand why Jim feels no sense of pride when they complete the cabin. Jonnie is hard working but sometimes allows this to take over his life so that he has no time to enjoy anything. He does feel pride in accomplishing work but seems to feel little joy. Jonnie is ashamed of Jim, especially when Jim steals a pony from the Indians. It takes time but Jonnie eventually comes to accept Jim for who he is. Jonnie doesn't understand Jim's conflict and can't imagine that there is any choice to be made. He also doesn't seem to realize that Jim would have changed as he grew, even if he had grown up at home among the family. Jonnie's lack of tolerance becomes a major point of contention between the family members but it's Jonnie who is the first to realize that he must learn to accept Jim as he is. At least some of Jonnie's initial distrust of Jim could be based on the fact that Jim, as the oldest of the family, should have been cast in the role of leader and provider. Jonnie, though accepting of that role, probably resents that he has to be the one to fill it. He may also be fearful that Jim will try to take over as head of the family, a position that Jonnie has filled for some time.



Daniel Keath

Referred to as "Dan'l" throughout the story, he is Jim's younger brother. Daniel is very young when Jim leaves home and is eleven when the family is reunited. He is the first of the family to accept Jim as he is and to welcome him fully into the family. Daniel is excitable and loves to play.

Sally Keath

Jim's younger sister, she is fifteen at the time Jim rejoins the family. Sally is distrustful of Jim for several reasons, including his appearance. Sally is a strong character and believes it to be her responsibility to care for the family. She hates the idea of allowing Dan'l to go with Jim when they're driving the cattle through the gorge and wants to protect Dan'l from becoming like Jim. Sally takes her role as the caregiver for the family seriously.

Tom Rivers

A mountain man who befriends Jim, he is older and wise in the ways of wilderness survival. Tom and Jim are together when the letter arrives for Jim and Tom understands Jim's need to find his family. Tom later travels a great distance in order to visit with Jim again, a sign of his devotion to Jim.

Mr. Rutledge

Mr. Rutledge is one of the men in the group traveling with Jonnie. He is older than Jonnie and Tom with a wife and children of his own. He's wise in the ability to understand people and he urges that Jonnie be tolerant of Jim. Mr. Rutledge is one of the few to really see that Jim is torn between his loyalties to his white family and the Indians who saved him from certain death.

Adam Russell

Jim's uncle, he is a mountain man who tells stories of his adventures when Jim is very young. Jim runs away from home to follow his uncle.

Sam Mullins

Sam Mullins is the settler who arrives one afternoon for a visit after the Keaths have settled onto their property in the Willamette Valley. Sam is somewhat self-conscious around Jim but the two men obviously like each other from their first meeting.

Joe Meeks

The sheriff of the territory, he's a former mountain man. While Jim doesn't have an ingrained respect for the office of sheriff, he does respect Joe. Joe warns Jim against creating problems in the valley after learning of Joe's run-in with the Indians who stole the cattle. He later offers Jim a job as deputy and admires that Jim had been able to find Daniel so quickly.

Mrs. Keath

Mrs. Keath is Jim's mother. Jim learns that his mother never stopped wishing that he would return home. After Jim's father's death, the family loses the farm and Mrs. Keath sets out for the Willamette Valley with Jonnie, Sally and Daniel, but she dies on the trip.



Objects/Places

Moki

Jim's dog, he is well-trained and has been with Jim since his time at the Indian camp.

Powder River

Powder River is below the camp where Jim and Tom are camped as the story opens.

Missouri

Where Jim grew up with his white family in Missouri.

Bourgeways

The term Jim uses for the white people is bourgeways .

Talks Alone

Jim's Indian name is Talks Alone.

The Dalles

Jim goes to get his letter read and meets up with Jonnie and Sally in The Dalles.

The Crow

The Crow Indian tribe takes Jim in after he's attacked by a grizzly bear.

Bad Medicine

Bad Medicine is the name of Jim's mule.

Willamette Valley

Jonnie plans to settle with his brother and sister in the Willamette Valley.

Columbia River

Columbia River near The Dalles is a rough stretch of water and the group rafts their wagons down it for some fifty miles.



Themes

Tolerance

Tolerance for the way of life of others is a lesson learned by several of the characters throughout the story. Jim runs away from home because he hates the lifestyle of his family. When he returns to his white family after living for years with the Indians and in the mountains, he has little tolerance for the members of his white family. This is seen in Jim's reaction to Jonnie's work ethic. When Jonnie spends long hours in the fields and in building a cabin for the family, Jim doesn't understand. He has no sense of accomplishment when tasks are completed and hates that he is forced to play a role in it. Jim wants to teach Daniel about the wilderness and it takes some time before he realizes that he has to help Daniel learn the lessons Jonnie is trying to teach as well. Jim comes to realize that he has to tolerate the desires and goals of his white family in order to learn to live with them. In return, Sally and Jonnie have to learn to tolerate Jim's way of looking at life. Sally's immediate reaction to Jim is one of distaste and distrust simply because of his way of dressing. Sally really doesn't want to learn about Jim and it takes Jim's leaving to make Sally realize that she has to be tolerant. Jonnie learns the art of tolerance sooner and begins to bond with Jim because of it. One day when Jim teases Daniel into going swimming, Jonnie joins in. Jonnie also tries to take time out occasionally to play with Jim and Daniel. Jonnie's efforts to accept Jim shows a higher degree of tolerance than is exhibited by either Jim or Sally.

Divided Loyalties

Jim spends a great deal of his life with the Indians but has complete memories of his white family, causing him to struggle with the issue of his divided loyalties. Jim runs away from home when he is very young. He doesn't like the life he lives there and idolizes his uncle's lifestyle. But in the wilderness, he soon discovers that life is difficult and there are many dangers. When he's attacked by a grizzly bear, he would have died if not for the kindness and caring of a tribe of Indians. Jim begins his life with the Indians and soon believes himself completely adapted to their way of life. However, when a group of braves return from a raiding party with scalps of white people, Jim recalls his mother. With those memories plaguing him, he realizes that he doesn't like all aspects of the Indian way of life. Later, Jim returns to his white family but discovers that he doesn't immediately fit in. He struggles to find a way to fit in with his white family while remaining true to the Indian way of life he'd come to respect. Jim can't decide what he wants and feels torn between the way of the Indians and the demands placed on him to return to his white family. Jim isn't the only example of this theme. Jonnie is torn to a lesser degree because he remembers his love for Jim when they were children but feels the need to be responsible.



Coming of Age

Jim, Jonnie, Sally and Daniel are very young to be on their own. The older three siblings face serious repercussions if they don't face up to the responsibilities of their roles in the family. Each realizes this and each faces the responsibilities with varying degrees of maturity. Jim's immaturity is wrapped up in his divided loyalty and his lack of tolerance, and the resolutions of each come as a package. When Jim comes to reconcile his loyalties, he also realizes that he has to learn to tolerate views other than his own. With this understanding comes a maturity that he'd been lacking on his own. As he comes to realize these things, he comes to accept his role in life and that others have a right to their own choices as well. He senses that Tom is very lonely and wants to do something about that but comes to understand that Tom has made a decision to live his life as he sees fit. Jim knows that some people don't have that opportunity and respects Tom's decision. This is a sign of an emerging maturity that was lacking when Jim was living in the mountains. Sally is another example of the coming of age theme. As is true in Jim's case, Sally's maturity comes as she learns tolerance for Jim's way of life. The first real sign of this is seen when Jim cuts off his braids. Sally suddenly has compassion for what the lifestyle has meant to Jim and realizes that she has to preserve it. This reaction is very mature and is a sign of Sally's coming of age.



Style

Point of View

The story is presented in third person from a limited perspective, almost always being presented from Jim's point of view. Action as a rule follows Jim and the reader is given details mainly about his activities. Details such as the grizzly bear attack on Jim are presented to the reader when Jim remembers the attack and recounts it in his mind. Other important aspects of the story, such as the death of Jim's parents, are presented through conversations. For example, Jonnie and Sally tell Jim about the deaths of their parents and the loss of the family farm. The reader only learns these things when Jim learns them. There is one major exception to this rule seen when Jim and Daniel take the livestock over a pass while Jonnie and Sally float the wagon down the river. For that scene, the reader leaves Jim's point of view and is presented an omniscient view of Jonnie and Sally. Jonnie and Sally are each worried about Daniel though each tries to reassure the other that Jim will take good care of him. They are battling the ferocious river and are in danger of their raft crashing on the rocks. There are other situations in which the reader sees specific details from Jonnie's point of view. For example, when Jim and Jonnie are trying to work out their differences, it's noted that Jonnie tries to understand. The limited view does not create a problem with regard to understanding. The perspective is appropriate for the story.

Setting

The story is set in the west in the year 1884. The author details the year in the opening paragraph, so there's no doubt as to the time setting. The people travel by wagons, there are Indians still on the Plains and settlers are still moving to settle many areas - all events that happened during that time. The larger events of the time, including the movement of settlers and the lack of beavers because of excessive trapping, are true. The details, such as Jim Keath's role as a trapper and the wagon train that made its way down the precarious mountainside, are not, though they fit into the overall setting. The author accurately and adequately describes the various settings. The reader can get a mental picture of the Powder River area where Jim and Tom Rivers are camped as the story opens and of the Willamette Valley where the Keath siblings decide to settle. There are many specific settings described to a lesser degree. These include the cabin Jonnie builds for the family and the river bank where Jim tries to rescue Daniel. The reader is given enough detail to imagine what these settings looked like though the author doesn't offer minute descriptions of each.

Language and Meaning

The story is written in a straight-forward style and is divided between dialogue and narrative. Generally, the narrative is used to keep the story moving. In some cases, the



narratives describe memories. This is seen with Jim as he remembers the attack of the grizzly bear and his life with the Indians. Some readers may find the dialogue difficult to understand. The author seems to attempt to mimic the speech patterns believed to exist during the time setting. Many words that end with "g" are shortened, such as "farmin" instead of "farming." Other words are changed more dramatically, such as "figger" for "figure" and "tuck" instead of "took." As a rule, the words' sounds provide a clue as to their meaning and the reader will likely become familiar with the method after reading a portion of the book. There are also words specific to the time such as "bourgeyway," which Jim uses to describe white people. These are generally described in sufficient detail so that the reader can understand. The overall tone is one of hope though the action is filled with conflict early on. The reader is led to believe there will be no peaceful conclusion, but is also led to hope that it can be accomplished.

Structure

The book is divided into nineteen chapters. Chapters range from about eight to fourteen pages in length with most being ten to twelve pages. The chapters are each numbered with Roman numerals. There are no titles other than the numerals to offer a clue as to the contents of that chapter. The story is presented in chronological order with information about the past being presented as memories or in conversations. For example, Jim Keath is living in the mountains as the book opens. The reader learns that Jim was attacked by a grizzly bear when he was very young because Jim remembers the scene. Later, Jim tells a friend about running away from home and it's from this that the reader learns about that aspect of Jim's life. When Jim encounters Sally and Jonnie, they tell him about the deaths of their parents and their trip west. The reader learns these facts from that telling. The beginning of the story details Jim's life during his time in the mountain and outlines his friendship with Tom Rivers. During this section, the reader learns about Jim's beliefs and personality. In Chapter Four, Jim meets his siblings. He learns about their trip west and their need for his help. In Chapter Six, the group resumes their travels and they arrive at the Willamette Valley in Chapter Seven. Chapters Eight through Seventeen outline the family's attempts to understand each other. Chapters Eighteen and Nineteen are the climax, with Daniel running away and Jim mounting a rescue. The story ends with the family reconciling and coming to realize that their love for each other is more important than their differences of opinion.



Quotes

"He counted coup - won honors in war, earning the right to wear the eagle feather - and dreamed his own medicine dream. After that no memories ever plagued him; he talked only Crow and thought only Crow and was only Crow." Chapter 1, Page 13

"Jim was suddenly and desperately homesick for Tom, and for the old, drifting, uncomplicated life, and the smell of beavertail bubbling over the fire." Chapter 4, Page 49

"After all, they were bone tired and hungry and half sick with worry, and they didn't trust him - yet. Why should they? Nine years and two thousand miles couldn't be wiped out in an hour." Chapter 5, Page 63

"Since the first day, all of them had ceased to think of the river as a mere body of water, rushing through natural causes to the sea. It was a monster, intent on their destruction, roaring with fury at their presence in his black-walled gorge, calling the rain to drench them and the snow to blind them and the wind to madden them and the rapids to drown them." Chapter 6, Page 77

"Jim had forgotten all about watching for danger; his rifle trailed useless from his hand and his ears were full of the banjo. Jonnie's medicine was powerful indeed, for it could make folds forget the miles ahead and the miles behind, forget trouble and a strange land and loneliness at least for awhile." Chapter 8, Page 102

"He was more Crow than Keath, and he knew it. Maybe he always would be." Chapter 9, Page 122

"You ain't a Injun, you're a Keath, like us. All these things, the clock and all, they're yours as much as ours." Chapter 10, Page 134

"He padded restlessly through the wet woods, feeling as though he'd give almost anything for the sight of a war bonnet and a painted face emerging from the bushes in front of him, for the sudden spring and the yell splitting the silence, and the wild ferocity blazing up inside himself, with something right there to vent it on. The only enemies he had now were things you couldn't fight - a clock, a cabin, a bleakness in Jonnie's eyes." Chapter 11, Page 145

"For the life of him he couldn't see why they wanted to drag in the sheriff. The whole thing was a simple, clear-cut problem of stealing back what had been stolen." Chapter 12, Page 156

"There was always this moment, just after he stepped into the cabin, when he wanted to turn right around and go out again. He wondered why." Chapter 15, Page 192

"It ain't the dust or the words that turns the trick, it's the chasin'. But a-course, you know that." - Jonnie talking about chasing butterflies, Chapter 15, Page 199



"Farmin' jest ain't in me, Tom. I done the best I could fer four, five months now. Livin' in the cabin, workin' from sunup to evenin', holdin' in when I wanted to bust loose."
Chapter 16, Page 205

"He saw the vast sweep of the Plains, with wagons like this everywhere - crawling in little clouds of dust over every corner of the continent, turning off south and north to halt on plateaus, to seek our valleys, to swarm among mountains - to penetrate even the wild fastness of Absaroka." Chapter 17, Page 219

"There were no ghosts remaining in that cabin now, no memories he could not face. All was settled and at peace." Chapter 19, Page 247



Topics for Discussion

Describe Jim Keath's life. Compare his life with the Indians to his life with his white family. How are the two lifestyles similar? How are they different? What does Jim see as the positive aspects of each? Do you agree with his assessment?

Compare Jim and Jonnie Keath. Though the two are brothers, they are very different in some ways. Describe at least three major differences. Does the fact that Jim spent so many years with the Indians explain why the two boys are different? Why or why not?

Describe how Jim comes to meet up with his siblings after so many years apart. What are their first reactions to each other? What does each expect of the others? Are these expectations fulfilled? Support your answers with examples from the text.

Describe the life lived by the Keath family after their arrival in the Willamette Valley. What aspects of this life does Daniel like and dislike? Which aspects does Jim like and dislike? Jim says that Sally and Jonnie thrive on the lifestyle. What does he mean? Why does he say this?

Jim doesn't understand why there's a problem with stealing a horse for Jonnie. This is one example of the different outlooks the two have on their lives. Describe the conflict of this example and list at least one more, explaining how it affects the two and their relationship.

Who is Joe Meeks? Tom Rivers? Mr. Rutledge? How does each meet Jim? What are their relationships like? What impact does each have on Jim's decisions?

One of the most important themes of the book is Jim's divided loyalty. Describe this conflict. How is it resolved? Compare this to the conflict Sally has between her love for Jim and her hatred of Indians.