

Montana 1948 Study Guide

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Plot Summary

David Hayden is twelve in the summer of 1948. He and his parents live in Montana where his father, Wesley, is the sheriff of Mercer County and his mother, Gail, works in the county courthouse. David lives in town, across the street from the courthouse, but loves spending time at the farm of his grandparents, Enid and Julian Hayden. Julian had been sheriff of Mercer County until his retirement and Wesley campaigns for the position at his father's urging and with his backing. Despite Wesley's obvious efforts to live up to his father's expectations, Julian favors his other son, Frank. Frank is a physician and served in the military, both facts that have earned him the devotion of the people of Mercer County.

David, because his parents both work, is often left in the care of an Indian woman called Marie Little Soldier who takes care of the house. She has David's devotion because of her constant good humor and the fact that she's less stringent than all the other adults in his life. When Marie falls ill, it's David who first alerts his mother. When Gail tells Marie that she needs a doctor, Marie objects. Gail and Wesley believe that Marie simply prefers traditional Indian doctoring, such as a medicine man, but they call Frank anyway. When Marie grows frantic, Gail remains with her. The diagnosis is pneumonia. After Frank leaves, Marie confides to Gail that Frank had sexually molested her and that she isn't Frank's only victim.

Confronted with obvious proof of guilt, Wesley tells Frank that he's going to be arrested. Frank, citing the scandal that will follow if he's taken to the county jail, pleads with Wesley to keep him out of the local jail. Wesley agrees to let Frank remain in his basement until other arrangements can be made. When Frank's wife learns of the situation, she calls Frank's parents and Julian tries to intimidate Wesley into releasing Frank and dropping the charges. Wesley refuses and four of Julian's hired hands try to break him out of the house. Wesley is on the verge of releasing Frank but cannot bring himself to do so because he is certain of Frank's guilt. The family spends a sleepless night with Frank breaking the jars of canned fruits and vegetables stored in the basement. When Wesley goes down the following morning he is resolved to take Frank to jail, regardless of his brother's objections. However, he finds that Frank has slit his own wrists.

As sheriff, Wesley calls in only those who must be involved and Julian manages to coerce the funeral director to keep quiet about the true cause of Frank's death. The story of an accident is circulated and Frank is buried as a tragic hero. David had hoped his uncle's death would put an end to the family problems but finds that to be untrue. David and his parents move from Montana and Wesley takes up law practice. They hear occasionally from Wesley's mother but the family ties are effectively severed.



Chapter One

Chapter One Summary

The narrator, David Hayden, is the son of Wesley and Gail Hayden. They live in Brentrock, Montana, the county seat of Mercer County where Wesley serves as sheriff. The county is largely rural and includes a section of the Fort Warren Indian Reservation. The war has passed and life is, according to David, "mundane." David describes his father as being different from most Montana men. The sheriff isn't often in dangerous situations and this seems to be somewhat disappointing to David. Wesley seldom carries his gun, even when he leaves the house on police business, and is usually called on to help settle minor disputes. David and his mother, Gail, both wish things were different. David is disappointed that his father's job isn't more exciting. Gail cites Wesley's law degree from North Dakota Law School and his membership to both North Dakota and Montana bar associations. Gail would prefer that the family live in North Dakota where the land is less wild and Wesley could practice law.

Wesley became sheriff partly as a result of following family tradition. Born in 1910, Wesley's father Julian held the office and Julian had basically called on Wesley to take over the office when Julian retired. Based on Julian's recommendation and the family history, Wesley was elected.

David notes that Gail worries about his soul and he says that his real problem is that he wants to "grow up wild." He greatly enjoys the time he spends at his grandparents' farm. There he has a horse named Nutty and the freedom to swim, fish, hunt, practice with his guns and participate in other activities typical of a boy of his age - twelve - in this time and this region. Gail works at the courthouse in the Register of Deeds office and David spends a great deal of time with their housekeeper, an Indian woman named Marie Little Soldier. Marie is outgoing and gregarious, traits that make David love her. She spends a great deal of time and energy caring for David as well as handling the household chores. She has a boyfriend, an Indian named Ronnie who had been in the military. Marie sleeps in a small room off the kitchen.

One day David hears Marie coughing and when she spends a great deal of time in her room, David fears she is ill. When his mother comes home for lunch, David alerts her of the problem and Gail goes in to check on Marie, questioning her about how long she's been feeling sick. By quizzing Marie about her symptoms, Gail learns that Marie hasn't been eating and has no been throwing up. She then asks Marie if she knows anyone who is ill that she might have caught the illness from. David tries to intervene, saying that Marie is too ill to answer a lot of questions, but Gail orders him out of the room. Gail heads back to work, telling Marie that David will be at home all afternoon if she should need anything.

David leaves Marie alone most of the afternoon, though he often walks by her room and hears her coughing a great deal. When David does talk to her, Marie is adamant that



she does not see a doctor. However, David assures her that his mother and father would only call Wesley's brother, David's uncle Frank, who is a well-known doctor in the community. When David's father comes home that evening, he already knows that Marie is ill. When Gail checks in on Marie, it's obvious that Marie is no better and Gail decides that they must ask Frank to check on her. Wesley calls Frank's house and talks with Gloria, Frank's wife, who says she'll tell Frank as soon as he's available.

Frank arrives a short time later and David halts the story to tell about his uncle. Frank had returned to Brentrock following a military stint to a town that had sent only a few men off to fight. Wesley hadn't been able to serve because of a limp. The town, apparently led by Julian Hayden, had held a picnic, ostensibly in honor of all those who had served though everyone knew it was really for Frank. Julian was already retired from the sheriff's office at the time and Wesley was serving in that position. During the event, Julian had gotten the attention of those gathered and called for a speech from "his son." David notes that Julian doesn't specify which son but everyone, including Wesley and Frank, had known that Julian was referring to Frank. Wesley had cheered for Frank like everyone else, then had gone around picking up small bits of trash from the area, leaving the spotlight to Frank and Julian.

Back in the present, Frank arrives at David's house to check on Marie. He has his black doctor's bag with him and Wesley offers Frank a beer, homebrew from "Ole Norgaard. Frank refuses, citing his preference for store bought beer but Wesley insists, saying that even Julian swears this is the best beer available. Frank says that he'll drink one after he sees Marie and goes to her room. David hears Marie screaming, "No." Frank calls to Gail, saying that Marie is insisting that she be in the room. Though Wesley obviously hears it as well, he doesn't react. Frank steps out of Marie's room and asks Gail to come in while he conducts the examination. Frank joins Wesley and David outside a short time later with a diagnosis of pneumonia. The attitudes of Wesley and Frank are that Marie is anxious about Frank's presence because of her Indian heritage and Wesley says that Marie would probably feel more comfortable with a more traditional Indian healer. Frank says that he isn't concerned about the social aspects of the Indian tribes, but does believe that the Indians are in danger from diseases such as measles because of their reluctance to accept medical help. Frank says that Marie should be in the hospital but Marie is adamant and David's mother says Marie will stay in their home.

David says that Frank and Gloria have no children of their own and admits to a feeling of responsibility on this point, saying that since they don't have a son, he feels the need to try to please them. Frank played ball in school and David knows that Frank is disappointed that David hasn't done so as well, but David lacks the skills to play.

Frank cites a case of a pending birth and leaves, saying that he'll arrange for medicine for Marie. After he's gone, Gail tells David to go inside but he slips around the side of the house instead and returns to listen to the conversation. Gail tells Wesley that Marie has accused Frank of molesting her during medical examinations and says that Frank has other victims as well. Wesley objects, saying that the Indians have no real idea of modern medicine, including examinations, and that Marie must have been mistaken. Gail says that Frank puts "things inside these girls," including his instruments and his



penis. Gail then becomes explicit and says that Frank is raping these women. The discussion between Gail and Wesley is fairly brief and David says it's evident that his father believes the accusation, but then Wesley says that he wished Gail hadn't told this story to the sheriff. Wesley asks if Marie had been raped but Gail says Marie claims only to have been molested. Wesley asks if Marie will talk to him. David notes that his "charming, affable uncle Frank" has now forever changed in his life.

Wesley and Gail go into Marie's room where Wesley apparently questions Marie. Wesley says that he has to go talk to Len McAuley. Len and his wife, Daisy, live next door and he is the deputy, working under Wesley. Len had also been Julian's deputy. In those days, Len had taken over as sheriff each time Julian was term-limited out and had to sit out of the office for a term. While Wesley talks with Len, Daisy comes to visit with Gail. David wanders from one house to the other, listening in, and hears Daisy confirm that there are rumors about Frank's indiscretions, but says they are limited to only the Indian women. Before the end of the night, David realizes that Wesley knows Frank is guilty.

Chapter One Analysis

David's description of the Montana county in which he lives indicates that the lives of the people tend to be difficult because the land is hard. The weather tends toward extremes and there are no highly-industrialized towns in the region. The Knife River is among the water sources and there are few trees, only a few that were planted and those don't exactly thrive. David says that the difficult life led by most of the people means that there is little time or energy left over for making trouble, which means the sheriff's job is not overly difficult.

David seems to believe that he doesn't quite fit into life. This is probably because he is so thoroughly enmeshed in the adult world, surrounded as he is by adults and being the only child in his extended family. He says that he believes there is some secret to being comfortable in situations and that he hasn't quite learned the secret. David does have friends his own age and his parents, grandparents, and aunt and uncle seem to accept him. In fact, David's questions seem to be a part of the coming of age theme.

Prejudice is a recurring theme of the story and David introduces that theme with his description of Mary Little Soldier. David notes that his father would swear that he isn't prejudiced at all, but that he has attitudes about Indians that indicate that he is actually prejudiced. As an example of the attitudes on this front, David points out that many of the young men are "good enough" to serve in the military but would never be accepted into college. Also, David talks about the fact that Marie sleeps in a small room off the kitchen though the family has an empty bedroom upstairs near where David and his parents sleep.

David's father comes home after work on the first day of Marie's illness and has already heard that Marie is ill. Wesley says that he's heard David is "babysitting the babysitter." David notes that until that moment he'd never realized that Marie's job is more than



taking care of the house, but that she's charged with caring for him as well. It's a statement of David's personality that he is obviously willing to obey Marie without his parents every telling him that Marie is in charge of him.

David notes that he and his mother are each thinking about the situation, especially as it relates to the fact that Frank and Wesley are brothers. David says that his mother must have been thinking these things because he is. The family is about to become embroiled in a struggle that will tear them apart. An example of what's to come is seen when Wesley says that he doesn't want Julian to know about this though it seems likely that he already knows. The fact that Julian favors Frank over Wesley means that he won't stand beside what's right in this case, but will stand by his favorite son. It's also important to realize that the Hayden name is somewhat important in the area. David notes that the Haydens are as near as the region has to aristocracy. David will come to believe that his uncle Frank is the entire problem and he will have to realize that his grandfather's attitude about Frank is as much a problem.



Chapter Two

Chapter Two Summary

Wesley begins working on the investigation the following day. David knows this not because his father says so but because Wesley tells Gail that he'll buy her some honey from Birdwell's Honey Farm, which is on the way to the reservation. Wesley has no authority on the reservation and is looking for information that will substantiate Marie's accusations. Wesley returns later in the day and David sees him at the diner, though Wesley isn't seated at the table he usually takes with his friends. Instead, Wesley is talking with an Indian named Ollie Young Bear. Ollie is married to a white woman, is a graduate of college and a "war hero," and David says that many people see him as what Indians can become if they work hard enough to escape the alcohol addiction and poverty of the reservation. Despite the fact that Ollie seems to have the admiration of the adults, David says Ollie never smiles and takes nothing as an opportunity for fun. When David, Ollie and Wesley bowl together at Castle's Bowling Alley, David wants to fit in as "one of the guys" out for an evening, but says that Ollie is constantly correcting his bowling techniques, which makes the game more work than play for David. On the day David sees Wesley talking to Ollie at the café, he goes over to their table but the conversation immediately ceases and Wesley asks what he wants. He says he'd just wanted to greet his father and leaves.

Back at home, David checks in on Marie but she's asleep and he doesn't wake her. He notes the silence of the house without Marie's typical music playing. That night after supper, Wesley tells Gail and David to leave the house so that he can question Marie. Gail objects but Wesley insists. Outside, David wants to ask his mother about the situation but finds himself lacking the courage to ask. Gail seems introspective and tells David that the winds of Montana are not like the winds of her girlhood home of North Dakota.

The following Sunday, David, Wesley and Gail go to his grandparents' farm where they'll have Sunday dinner as usual. Gail and Wesley are at odds because Gail had wanted to stay home rather than face Frank and his wife. Frank and Gail are already there when David's family arrives. David's thoughts are more personal and he wants only to get to his horse and spend the day riding. Julian is waiting on the porch and David's immediate thought is that Julian will never let anything happen to Frank, the favored son, though David questions Julian's reaction if the person prosecuting Frank is Wesley. Gail, Wesley and David go to the porch and greet Julian. Gail and David go on inside but Wesley remains to talk with Julian and David waits just inside to listen, believing that when Julian hears the story, he'll take care of Frank. However, the talk turns instead to Frank and Gloria with Julian asking what's wrong that Frank can't give them another grandchild. Wesley placates, saying that "they're trying." Julian then asks why Wesley and Gail haven't given them another grandchild and Wesley says that Gail had had a difficult labor, prompting their decision. Julian says that they want another grandchild, but that they want a white grandchild. At Wesley's question of the meaning of that



statement, Julian says that Frank has "always been partial to red meat." Julian then recounts the fact that Frank had been caught with an Indian girl when he was barely a teenager, and says that Frank has probably fathered some children on the reservation.

David realizes he'd heard his grandfather mention Frank in connection with Indians. David says that Frank and Gail met while Frank was attending medical school at the University of Minnesota. It was during the return train trip from Frank and Gail's wedding that Julian said Frank now has a pretty white wife who might keep his interest away from the reservation.

David sits between Gloria and his grandmother at the dinner table and listens to the talk. Gloria talks about the changes in her lifestyle after the conclusion of the war. David recalls a time when he's spent some time with Gloria and Frank. His parents were going out of town and David had come down with tonsillitis during his stay with Frank and Gloria. He remembers that Gloria tended him carefully and that Frank made the comment, "So this is what it's like to have kids," though David wasn't supposed to have heard. David says that he's always thought of Gloria as an attractive woman but on this particular Sunday, armed with the knowledge of Frank's crimes, David is sad. The family carefully guards Enid from shocks and David credits this with the polite talk around the table that never hints at the situation.

David asks for permission to go riding on his horse, Nutty, soon after dinner and his grandfather presents him with a pistol and some shells, telling him that there's been a problem with coyotes and that he should shoot at any he sees. He shoots up the box of shells though he sees no coyotes. As he is headed back to the house, he sees his father talking to Frank. David watches their conversation and notes that they are alternately shouting at each other, obviously arguing, and that Frank takes a menacing step toward Wesley. David sights his uncle along the pistol barrel and considers whether he could make the shot. Though the gun isn't loaded, he decides that he couldn't hit the target anyway because of the small, unfamiliar gun and the distance coupled with the fact that David is a poor shot. David notes that it's only after he comes to realize that he couldn't hit the target that he takes time to consider what would happen if he were to kill Frank. He wonders whether it would solve the problem and whether he could escape discovery. David then watches as Frank and Wesley shake hands and walk off together.

On the way home, Wesley tells Gail that Frank has promised to "cut it out." Gail is upset and asks if that's the end of the investigation. Frank says that Wesley will have to pay for his misdeeds when he meets God but says that he isn't going to do anything that will make Frank pay for it in life. At home, Marie asks David if he'd gone riding and if he'd looked for coyotes. She tells him that a coyote is difficult to find "if you are looking for him." On Monday, David arrives home after spending the day fishing with George Cahill and discovers the Undset's Funeral Parlor station wagon in the drive. Frank is there filling out a death certificate. David remains in the room only a moment and cites a secret, though he doesn't yet elaborate. When Wesley says that he'll drive out to the reservation to tell Marie's mother of Marie's death, David almost asks to go along,



believing that it would be easy to tell his father this secret during the drive, but doesn't ask because he believes his mother wants him to remain with her.

Daisy is with Gail and tells David that there's pie at her house, issuing an invitation that he do help himself. David is reluctant but finally gives in to the urging and finds Len there. Len had been known for his alcohol abuse in years past and David finds that Len has been drinking. Len hints to a situation that has prompted his drinking on this occasion, but doesn't elaborate. Len does tell David that Julian had taught him that there are times when being a police officer means looking directly at a problem and other times when looking away is the answer. Len says it had taken him a long time to learn that lesson and that Wesley hasn't yet figured it out. David asks Len if he knows something about Marie's death, but Len counters, asking David if he knows something. David fears Len's information isn't the same as his own and so doesn't say anything.

That night, David has trouble sleeping. He cites his grandmother's statement that the dead person remains in the area for a time and believes he can feel Marie. He finally goes to his parents' room and there tells his father this secret that's worried him all afternoon. David says that he'd seen Frank leaving the house on foot in the middle of the afternoon. Wesley questions David about the time and obviously tries to figure out some alternative explanation other than the fact that Frank might have killed Marie to keep her from talking. David is still acting as if he knows nothing of what's going on, having gained most of his information by eavesdropping. David then asks if Frank's presence is important and then reveals that he believes Len might also have seen it. Wesley says that he knows Len would agree not to tell, but says that he won't live that knowledge.

Chapter Two Analysis

David says that he wanted to ask his mother about the situation while his father was questioning Marie. His purpose is to hopefully be "included" in the situation and it seems that he's wishing his parents would treat him more as a grown-up than as the child he is. In many ways, David is wise and mature beyond his years but he's still holding to the hope that the entire issue will be resolved without changing his life. It also seems that David believes there to be some gaps in the knowledge he's gained from the overheard conversations and wishes that he knew the details that go into this gap. It doesn't seem likely that his parents would offer up that kind of sensitive information, even if they decided to bring the issues out into the open.

On the way to the farm, Wesley and Gail are obviously at odds though it doesn't seem to be an all-out fight. However, Wesley seems to feel that he has to make up to Gail for taking her to have dinner with his family. The situation is bound to be difficult for Wesley who is torn between the righteous anger of his wife and the fact that his brother is probably guilty of several rapes and sexual assaults. During the drive out to the farm, Wesley tells Gail and David that he's been thinking that they should go on a vacation and suggests some possible plans. David and Gail agree that it would be nice but David



says he knows it's his father's way of trying to make up for the current situation and that the vacation will never actually occur.

Gail's animosity toward Julian is obvious. She believes him to be pretentious and demanding, traits that to some degree she may have in common with him. There does seem to be some camaraderie between Julian and Gail though it seems to be mostly because Gail tries to like Julian and to be likable. When the family arrives for Sunday dinner at the farm, Julian tells Gail that she didn't have to bring anything to the dinner, and he seems to be grouchy about the fact that she did. When Gail says that she thought Julian likes chocolate cake, Julian says that there's no need for Gail to even take it inside, obviously joking that he could eat the entire cake himself. However, Julian tells Gail that he'd come outside in order to fart, a fact that he must know is going to anger Gail who believes that kind of talk to be crass and unnecessary.

David is at the house when Wesley leaves to tell Marie's family that Marie has died. He admits that it's the first time he'd really thought about this part of his father's job, but that he'd forever after carried an image of his father carrying around a huge basket filled with grief while he searched for someone's porch to leave it on.

The relationships between the various family members and friends keeps the situation more complex than it might otherwise have been. For example, Wesley learns that Len has probably seen Frank as well and that Len will probably come to the same conclusion Wesley, Gail and David came to: that Frank killed Marie to keep her from testifying against him. Wesley says that he can ask Len to keep quiet and that Len will, or that Julian can request Len's silence and Len will agree. This all seems reasonable, but then Wesley says that he couldn't live with Len's knowledge. At that point, it seems that Wesley is more worried about the fact that Len would know that Wesley had turned his back on a crime because it was committed by his brother. The perception that Wesley would do this seems to be more important to Wesley than his own belief in his duty at this point.



Chapter 3

Chapter 3 Summary

In chapter three, David says that his family had planned to attend Marie's funeral but Marie's mother tells Wesley that they're taking Marie back to North Dakota for burial. Wesley says that he'd told her that Marie had friends in Montana and that this was also her home, but that Marie's mother "didn't want to hear." Gail asks Wesley to find out where they can send flowers. She adds that they have to "do something," and that sending flowers is the least they can do. Wesley counters, saying that he is working on the case. David says his father is putting in long hours on the case and that he sometimes comes home to make phone calls, apparently not wanting to be overheard.

On the Thursday after Marie's death, the rain forces David to remain inside and he's at home when Frank arrives, followed closely by Wesley. Frank stops to ask David about the model airplane he's working on, a B29, before Frank and Wesley go down to the basement. David says they are gone a long time and he can't overhear any of the conversation that is probably going on. He remains in the kitchen until his father returns, though he hasn't put a single piece of the model together during that time. Wesley comes from the basement alone and closes the door behind him, quickly drinking down a glass of whiskey. David seems ready to question Wesley but he says that he plans to tell them of the "new development" only once, and asks that he wait until Gail gets home.

When Gail arrives, Wesley says that he's arrested Frank and that Frank hadn't wanted to be paraded in front of the courthouse staff, so was being held in the basement until Wesley can make other arrangements. Wesley says that Frank has agreed to comply with Wesley's arrest on the condition that he not be arrested publicly, and Wesley tells Gail and David that he's agreed to that condition. Wesley says that he has talked the situation over with county prosecutor, Mel Paddock, but that he hasn't given Mel the name of the suspect. Wesley makes a point of saying that only Gail, David and Wesley know that Frank has been arrested. Frank says he's first going to tell Gloria and that he'll call to arrange for Frank to be moved to Helena the following day.

Wesley doesn't move for a moment and Gail urges him to go tell Gloria, citing the wife's right to know. Wesley blows his nose before he leaves, making David think that Wesley might have been crying. Outside, Wesley calls for David, points out that the paint is peeling from their house, and instructs David to run for Len's house if there is any trouble while Wesley is away. It's only then that Wesley says that Len knows about Frank's arrest.

About nine that night, Julian and Enid arrive at David's house. Julian immediately demands to see Frank but Wesley refuses. Enid is more placating, saying that they want to be certain Frank is okay to allay Gloria's concerns. Julian continues to demand to see Frank and Wesley says that it's no longer a family matter but is now a legal



matter. When Julian reaches into his pocket, David believes his grandfather is going for a gun and cries out but Julian brings out a cigar. Gail tells David to go upstairs and David is relieved to get away, though he goes to the spare bedroom where he can listen in through the grates.

Wesley manages to get Julian to sit down. Julian says that Gloria had told him Frank had been arrested for assault, and he says that hitting a man isn't a reason to be arrested. Wesley says that the charge is sexual assault and that there are "a lot" of victims. Enid proposes the same defense Wesley had initially suggested, that the girls hadn't understood the need for a doctor's touch, but Wesley discounts this, though he is obviously reluctant to say more in front of his mother. Enid and Gail go to the kitchen to make coffee and David is torn, wanting to hear both conversations. He decides to remain where he is and hears Julian accuse Wesley of being jealous of Frank. Wesley goes on to say that there's even more than the sexual assaults and under Julian's prodding, finally says that he believes Frank murdered Marie. Enid returns at Wesley's words and begins to cry. Wesley apologizes for upsetting her but says there's evidence that Frank killed Marie and that Frank didn't deny the charge. Julian orders Wesley to stop the investigation and threatens to stop it himself.

David says he remains still for a long time after his grandparents leave but finally gives in to the memory of chocolate cake in the kitchen and goes downstairs. In the kitchen, he finds that his father is seated on the floor, his head in Gail's lap, and that Wesley has been crying. Wesley says that if Julian were to come to the house when David is at home alone, he's not to let him in. David asks what he's to do if Enid arrives and Wesley says the same is true for his grandmother, and that the rules are in effect "until I tell you different. David says he cried that night, though not for members of his family but for his horse, Nutty. This is because he now knows that he won't see the horse again until this is resolved, and maybe not ever.

Gail stays home from work the following day. Wesley takes food down to Frank and returns about a half hour later, saying that he's going to find a place to hold Frank. Gail sends David to Nash's Grocery Store that morning and he feels that people are watching him though he continues to try to convince himself that people can't possibly know about the situation at this point. At home, David says he doesn't understand why his father is pursuing the case, and says that Julian will just arrange to get Frank out of the situation. Gail says that David could be right but points out that it's Wesley's job and that he's doing "the right thing." David says that may be true but that he and his parents are getting "the shitty end of the stick." David notes that his mother would normally have chastised him for this lapse in language, but on this occasion, she says only that David might be right.

Later in the day, David notes that there's a pickup repeatedly driving by the house. He says that Dale Paris, the foreman on Julian's ranch, is among the men inside and realizes that they've probably come to release Frank. His mother sees David's interest and learns the identity of the men. David continues to watch from the front and his mother from the rear of the house. Gail takes a gun from David and he quickly tells her how to fire. David telephones the courthouse but finds his father gone. He leaves



messages to ask Wesley to come home as soon as possible and goes back to his mother. David offers to take the gun, citing Gail's lack of experience shooting, but she tells him to run find his father. David goes to the courthouse and leaves word at the various offices before returning home.

As David arrives at the house, Gail shoots high into the backyard through the window screen. David knows from the trajectory that she shot above the men's heads, but she calls out a warning for them to leave. Before there's the need for her to fire again, Len comes running through the hedge, barefoot with his shirt untucked, but carrying a gun. Len moves the men away from the house and back to their truck. Wesley arrives minutes later and says he'd been talking with Ollie Young Bear when David was searching for him. Len warns Wesley to get Frank moved to a real jail because a lawyer will make a big deal out of the fact that he's being held in Wesley's basement. Back inside, Wesley says he or Len will be at the house all the time, that he's calling his father to insist that this stop, and that he's going to get Frank moved. Gail cites the danger to her family and tells Wesley to just release Frank. Len reminds Wesley of the upcoming election and says that Julian will rip the county's loyalties apart before he allows Frank's conviction. Len also reveals that Julian had approached him but Len refuses to say what Julian had requested, saying only that Wesley is the sheriff and that Len, as deputy, answers to Wesley. Len then asks Wesley how Frank murdered Marie and Wesley says he doesn't know for sure, but that Marie's weakened state would have made it easy.

Wesley goes to the basement, apparently set on releasing Frank. David says he wants to leave the room so he doesn't have to face Frank, but feels he can't leave his mother alone. When Wesley returns to the kitchen minutes later, he says that he knows Frank is guilty and can't release him. Gail sends David to Butler's Butcher Shop to buy frankfurters for dinner, apparently hoping to give David a treat. That night, they hear breaking glass and know Frank is breaking the jars of canned food stored in the basement. The following morning, David goes to the kitchen to find his father there, apparently having not slept all night. Wesley says he's going to move Frank to the county jail, despite Frank's insistence that the scandal be avoided. Wesley makes coffee and takes two cups to the basement. David hears Wesley's cry and goes down to find Frank dead in a pool of blood, having killed himself. Wesley sends David to get Gail, but warns that David is not to allow her into the basement. David takes his time going up the stairs, but says it's because he doesn't want Gail to see the satisfaction on his face at what David sees as the end of the situation. David says that he feels grateful to Frank for saving the family the ordeal of a trial but that he also feels something very near love for the action.

Chapter 3 Analysis

David has carefully observed his father over the years which is amazing for a boy of this age. He notes that his father works cases the same way he works at elections: He spends a great deal of time with people unrelated or barely related to the case, asking about their families and offering help. David says that through this method, Wesley has



the support of the community behind him when it comes time to make an arrest. The people hear about the arrest and, because they fully support Wesley, they immediately believe the person is guilty. David seems to think that most men in that position would become focused only on the case and would portray that focus. Instead, Wesley becomes "more like his brother," according to David. David uses the word "gregarious," indicating this is what he thinks of his uncle Frank. David doesn't say that he wishes his father were more like this all the time, though it seems possible.

David says that he hears a noise from the basement during the time he and Wesley are waiting for Gail to come home, and this seems out of place to him. He admits that it must be Frank moving around, but says that if his father had killed Frank, Frank wouldn't be able to make any noise. David then says that he "almost" believes that his father could have killed Frank. David continues to believe that if Frank were out of the picture, the entire situation would be resolved. At this point, David could be correct though Frank's death at Wesley's hands would certainly tear the family apart.

As Wesley is leaving to tell Gloria about Frank's arrest, he calls to David and points out the fact that the paint is peeling on the side of their house. He tells David that they'll have to scrape it soon and asks if David feels up to the job, warning that it will be time-consuming and labor-intensive. David says he is, but wonders if this is similar to his father planning a vacation that the family will never take. Wesley then says that if he were in control of the actions of people, he'd say that no one should paint their houses but that all the paint on every house should be allowed to simply peel off. This seems to be symbolism and could be Frank's way of saying society should be free of the "paint" that covers the bare facts, or that events should not be "whitewashed." This is likely because Wesley knows the storm of public opinion that will overwhelm him when it's discovered that he's arrested Frank who is very popular.

It's while David is headed to Nash's Grocery that he comes to the realization of what this is really going to do to his family. He notes that the Hayden name is as near to "aristocracy" as there is in Mercer County and that he's always had the power of the name behind him though not because of anything he's done. He suddenly realizes that the shame of what Frank has done is also going to taint the name and that he'll be carrying that as well. It seems to be this knowledge that makes David suddenly realize the impact this situation is going to have on his family though it may also be the fact that he's been instructed not to let his grandfather into the house that makes the situation more real. In any case, David now comes to believe that Julian's power will win out in the end, that Frank will not face any punishment for his crimes, and that only Wesley and his family will suffer. When David poses this to his mother, she says that he might be correct, indicating that she and Wesley have also talked over this possibility.

David mentions an incident that seems to carry some hidden meaning though he describes it only briefly and never returns to the possibility that there's more there than originally revealed. He says that his mother runs to Len's arms after he intervenes and chases Julian's men away from the house. David says it makes him uncomfortable and that it seems she is very comfortable there. Len doesn't seem to return the embrace but frees his arm so that he can keep his gun pointed toward the men. When Gail motions



for David to come to her, he doesn't move and it seems that he believes that there might be something between his mother and Len. When Wesley arrives, Gail rushes to him, but David seems disturbed by the incident. It's never again mentioned and it's left to the reader to determine the significance.

Before Wesley goes to the basement and discovers Frank's body, he tells David the story of having been chased by a bully as a child. Wesley says that he and a friend had been running from this bully and his friends when they happened upon Frank surrounded by his friends. Wesley describes the feeling of intense satisfaction, pride and relief at the knowledge that Frank was going to set this right and that he had no more need to run. This story is balanced against David's understanding of what Wesley's childhood must have been. Wesley's father is obviously a domineering man who has little tolerance. Though Enid obviously loves Wesley, she is ineffective against Julian's personality. Julian's words to Wesley as Wesley tries to explain the charges against Frank make it obvious that Julian has no regard for Wesley, doesn't believe in his ability to perform the duties of sheriff and that he favors Frank over Wesley.



Epilogue

Epilogue Summary

David says that the family leaves Brentrock that winter. He says that the decision to move had actually been made soon after Frank's suicide, at least partly because of the two deaths in the house but also because of the overall situation and the rift it had caused with the family. David says that the overriding reason for the move is that his mother has no way to deal with the web of lies created to cover up Frank's suicide. The story circulates that Frank had been helping Wesley build new shelves in the basement and that Frank had fallen from a ladder, bumping his head and causing his death. The funeral director, Clarence Undset, was bound to know the truth but David says everyone seems confident that Clarence will never reveal his knowledge.

David had believed that Frank's suicide would mean that the family endured a period of mourning and that things would then return to normal with the exception of Frank's absence from their lives. He realizes that will never be the case at the funeral when Julian, Enid and Gloria purposely stand on the opposite side of the grave from David, Gail and Wesley. David says the symbolism of the open grave between the two sides of the family is not lost on him and that he then fully understands this is how life will be. Wesley withdraws from the electing, citing an offer to practice law in North Dakota. Len runs unopposed and takes over the office.

David's family spends the winter with Gail's parents in North Dakota and David says the life they lead then is not a bad one. Gloria leaves Montana soon after David's family and remarries. David becomes a history teacher in Rochester, Minnesota. Len has a stroke and is unable to complete his term as sheriff. Julian also has a stroke and dies. David puts the strokes down to the pressure of keeping the secret. He says that Wesley feels bitterness over the situation and that turns into cancer that eventually leads to his death. David then says that he's blaming an incident for what was probably "Len McAuley's whiskey, my grandfather's cigars and my father's diet."

David recounts an incident while the family still lived in Brentrock. He wanted to excel at some sport and focused on drop-kicking a football. He was practicing this skill one day when Ronnie Tall Bear and Marie burst into the backyard, obviously chasing each other and playing, but the two had taken on David with his football, chasing at random and running without any true purpose until they were all too tired to play any longer. David says they'd then shared apple cider straight from the jug. He says that he clings to that memory because he'd loved Ronnie and Marie and because they'd accepted David for himself, not because of his place as a member of the Hayden family.

David then says that he and his wife, Betsy, had once been on a trip to all her childhood homes and she'd wanted to go to his childhood home in Brentrock. He'd declined and had eventually told her the story as he remembered. David says that Betsy is caught up in the story and wants to ask his parents about it, and she does the next time they meet.



They are at the dinner table when Betsy brings it up, saying that the events seem part of the "wild west." Wesley is immediately angry, slapping the table and leaving the room as he says, "never blame Montana."

Epilogue Analysis

David notes that "it was decided" that Frank's suicide would be covered up and that a series of lies are created in order to do this. It's important for the reader to understand David's use of the passive voice in this case. David says he doesn't really know who made that decision and that it was likely a group effort with Julian and his parents at the core though Len and Gloria may also have played a role. David says that Gail and Wesley are hurt by the fact that Gloria, Julian and Enid "snub" them at the funeral, but David says that he is angry. David seems to take the stand that his father's actions were right and that his grandparents are willing to overlook Frank's crimes but not to forgive Wesley for doing what he believes to be right. Enid does stay in touch with the family though she is, as always, ineffective against Julian's overbearing refusal to have anything to do with Wesley after Frank's death.

David says that he wants to refuse to go with his parents when they leave Montana for North Dakota. He says it has nothing to do with wanting to remain in Montana but that it's because he doesn't want to be with his parents at that time. He says that they seem "hapless" and lost following the events and the breakup of the family.

The final scene of the book indicates that Wesley has given up much more than had been evident to David at the time the family moves from Montana. When David's wife Betsy mentions the "wild west" in connection with the incident in Montana, Wesley is immediately angry and says, "Never blame Montana." That seems to indicate that he had loved his home and hated to leave it, though David doesn't at all focus on that at the time.



Characters

David Hayden

David is twelve as the events of the summer of 1948 unfold. He tells the story from a first-person perspective. David, sometimes called Davey by his uncle, is the son of Wesley Hayden who serves as sheriff of Mercer County, Montana, at the time of the story. His father's role as sheriff drives a great deal of the story. David's mother is Gail, a woman who plays an important role in David's life and works at the county courthouse.

David is an astute student of human behavior and catches on to the subtleties of the situation much more quickly than most youngsters of his age would have. He augments his understanding by listening in on conversations whenever possible. When David's Uncle Frank becomes embroiled in trouble with the law, David wants only to have his life back to its normal level of family interaction. He so desperately wants this that at one point he seems to seriously consider shooting his uncle himself. David becomes aware during these events of the weight his family name carries but also learns of the negative aspects of this fact. He realizes that he's ashamed of his uncle's actions and that his family is going to be torn apart because of it. While many of his thoughts and actions are very adult, David does cling to the childish notion that his uncle's suicide is going to put the family back to an even keel. He is very disappointed when he discovers this is not the case.

Wesley Hayden

David's father, Wesley, is serving his second term as sheriff of Mercer County, Montana, when he discovers that his brother has been molesting and raping young Indian women. While Wesley is determined to do the right thing in stopping his brother's actions, he desperately seeks a way to avoid having Frank's actions revealed to the public. Wesley is forced into action by the fact that Frank stoops to murder in order to retaliate against one of his victims who told.

While Wesley will go to great lengths to avoid a public scandal of the situation for as long as he can, he can't quite bring himself to let his brother's misdeeds go unpunished. There's some important insight into Wesley's character in how his father treats him. Frank is obviously the son favored by their father and Wesley never overtly objects to this. It's noted that when Wesley is working to gather evidence on a case, he becomes charming and outgoing, realizing that having public opinion on his side is an important way to garner people to his side as he makes arrests. Wesley has a law degree and his wife wants him to be an attorney, but he takes over as sheriff when his father retires because it's what his father wants. Even this job in common isn't enough to unite the two men and Wesley's role as outcast in his father's eyes is heightened when he comes to feel he has no choice but to arrest Frank.



Frank Hayden

A physician in Mercer County, Montana, Frank is David's uncle. He is married to a beautiful young woman named Gloria. Frank's father obviously favors Frank over his brother, Wesley, though Wesley follows their father's footsteps by becoming sheriff. Frank served in the war and is honored as a hero. Frank sexually molests and rapes several Indian women. When he's being taken to jail for his crimes, he commits suicide to avoid the prosecution.

Gail Hayden

David's mother and Wesley's wife, Gail, is a quiet woman who truly seems to try to please her in-laws though it's obvious that they don't like her. She runs a strict household and worries about David. Gail is proper in public but doesn't hesitate to pick up a shotgun when she believes her family and her home to be in danger.

Gloria Hayden

Wife of Frank, Gloria is David's only aunt and he admits to being attracted to her. David says that Gloria is the most beautiful woman he knows and can't understand why his uncle would cheat on her because of her good looks. When Gloria learns of Frank's arrest, she seems in denial of the charges though Wesley has talked to her about it. She calls on Frank's father, obviously believing that he can force Wesley to release Frank. Gloria leaves town and remarries after Frank's suicide.

Enid Hayden

Enid, David's grandmother and the mother of Frank and Wesley, is an unimposing woman who is noted for having a "nervous" disposition. She is protected by the family and David says that it seems she might always be on the verge of falling victim to attacks of nerves and dying, though she outlives David's grandfather.

Julian Hayden

A former sheriff, Julian is David's grandfather and father of Wesley and Frank. Julian is an imposing man who seeks to bend everyone and everything to his will. He is angry when Wesley arrests Frank and apparently sends a group of hired hands to break into Wesley's home to free Frank. Julian is unaccustomed to having anyone refuse his orders and David notes that Frank's suicide is covered up so that Frank can be given a burial suitable for the war hero and beloved physician some had thought him to be.



Marie Little Soldier

The woman hired to keep house for the Haydens and to keep an eye on David when he isn't in school, Marie is an Indian who lives at the Hayden house and sleeps in the little room just off the kitchen. She is a cheerful woman and David says that he loves her. It's David who first notices when she becomes ill. Marie is afraid of Frank which is the first clue Wesley has of Frank's illegal actions. It's Marie's testimony that prompts the case against Frank and Marie's death which prompts his arrest.

Len McAuley

The man who worked as deputy for both Julian and Wesley Hayden during their terms as sheriff, Len lives next door to Wesley and it's he who comes running when Gail fires the shotgun at the men attempting to break Frank out of the Hayden basement. Len is known for his poor disposition when he's drinking though he drinks seldom in those later years. The fact that he's drinking on the day David sees Frank slipping from the house after murdering Marie clues David to the fact that Len had also seen Frank. Len probably loves Gail and is closer to her in some ways than he is to Wesley.

Ollie Young Bear

The young Indian who has married a white woman and is, by David's estimation, the most "beloved" of the Indians in the area. Wesley holds Ollie up as what an Indian can become if he works hard. David says he has trouble liking Ollie because Ollie seems to have a perpetual frown.



Objects/Places

Mercer County, Montana

Where David and his family live during the events of the summer of 1948 and where Wesley serves as sheriff.

Brentrock, Montana

The county seat of Mercer County and where David and his family live.

Fort Warren Indian Reservation

Where the Indians of the region live and where David's father goes as he is looking to build a case against Frank.

University of North Dakota Law School

Where Wesley graduated with a law degree.

Nutty

David's horse.

Birdwell's Bee Farm

Located near the reservation, this is where Gail believes the best honey in the country is produced.

Castle's Bowling Alley

Where David sometimes bowls with his father and Ollie Young Bear.

Undset's Funeral Parlor

Where both Marie Little Soldier and Frank Hayden are taken after dying in Wesley Hayden's house.

Fargo, North Dakota

Where Frank, Gail and David Hayden move in December of 1948.

The Farm

Where Julian and Enid Hayden live and where David's horse is kept, this is in the country near Brentrock and a favorite place of David's.



Themes

Coming of Age

David is the epitome of the coming of age theme in that he learns vital lessons through the events of the summer of 1948 and his new knowledge helps him mature dramatically. The first of these lessons is the realization of the importance of the family name and how it impacts him even when he doesn't seek to use it. Because his grandfather was a sheriff and now his father is the sheriff, the family name is connected with power. In addition, the Haydens are - at least by the standards of the region and the people of the time - wealthy. David comes to realize that this combination means that he has a level of respect and awe from the people of the town though he's done nothing personally to earn or command it. The maturing part of this realization comes when David suddenly becomes aware that the scandal of his uncle's arrest will likely carry a very different kind of notoriety and that he will be the recipient of that as well, though he had nothing to do with his uncle's deeds.

Another important lesson that helps David mature is the fact that the family is broken apart from the moment Wesley confronts Frank's crimes. David initially believes that if Frank were gone, the problem would also be gone. He seems to consider shooting Frank as a way of accomplishing this, but doesn't go through with it. However, when Frank commits suicide, David fully believes that the family will grieve for his death and then the relationships will return to normal. At the funeral, it's obvious that this isn't to be the case and David matures as he looks more deeply into the people and personalities involved.

Justice

Justice is at the heart of this story though various characters have different ideas of what it is and different ways of trying to achieve it. For Wesley Hayden, justice is fairly straightforward. Wesley believes that if a person commits a crime, he or she should be punished for that crime. Even when Gail urges that he drop the prosecution and let Frank go, Wesley - believing in Frank's guilt - cannot bring himself to do so. His idea of punishment is obviously focused around the United States legal system. David, however, cannot believe in that system after his experience with the arrest of his uncle, Frank Hayden. David suddenly learns that summer that justice carries a price and he expresses his dislike for the system by avoiding a career related to law. For Julian Hayden, the ideal of justice is that his way is always right. Julian is a hard man who is anxious to keep everything and everyone under his control. This is evident when he refuses to believe that Frank should have been jailed for assault. The lack of justice for the Indians of the area is obviously a common situation as none of them were willing to come forward of their own accord with their accusations against Frank.

Prejudice

David notes that most people in Montana are prejudiced against the Indians of the region. This prejudice seems to be accepted without any real consideration and it takes a great deal to break through it to any reasonable level. A major example of this theme can be seen in the fact that there were many victims Frank has sexually assaulted but none of them came forward until Wesley begins working on the case. The victims, all Indians, are likely reluctant to make an accusation because the natural prejudice of the region means they probably won't be believed. Another example is seen in the fact that David recounts statements from his grandfather that indicate the adults of the family were aware that Frank had engaged in sex with several Indian girls, and that the objection seemed to be the fact that the young women were Indian.

To a lesser degree, David points out prejudice seen in the young man who could easily have been recruited by a college sports program but was looked over because of his Indian heritage. He also talks of Ollie Young Bear who had gone to college, married a white woman and worked hard. This man is touted as what Indians could become if they worked hard enough. While it may be true that Ollie had gained a better life than many of his counterparts, David says that he's constantly frowning, seems to treat everything as work and never remembers Ollie laughing at anything.



Style

Point of View

The story is written in first person from the perspective of David Hayden, a twelve-year-old boy at the time of the event who is an adult at the time of the writing. The perspective is more typical of non-fiction, which lends a level of believability to this fictional story. The perspective is greatly limited, though the fact that it's written from years after the event means the author has more insight than he likely had at the time of the events. The point of view is somewhat skewed because most twelve-year-old boys would not have the insight exhibited by the main character of this story, David.

Despite this, David's account of the events appears reliable and acceptable. He points out that he overhears a great deal of his information, often by eavesdropping. These conversations provide a great many of the details presented by David through the course of the story. The story is divided between narrative and dialogue. The dialogue is reasonable and believable. The narrative is used to drive the story and is adequate in this role. The division is acceptable. The use of the dialogue does not change the limited perspective though David is not in the room for some of the related conversations. He is, however, listening in on all the conversations he relates.

Setting

The story is set in Mercer County, Montana, with the majority of the action occurring in the summer of 1948. Mercer County does not exist which means there is no county seat is named Brentrock. David's references to Montana include insight into the low population and the landscape, both which seem reasonable. Details about the land are revealed through David's descriptions, his conversations with other characters and through his explorations. For example, David offers up some descriptions during his horseback ride on his grandparents' farm. It's during this ride that he talks about taking aim on his uncle and that from his position he'd be shooting downhill. His mother talks about the constant wind and the fact that the wind doesn't "taste" like the wind in North Dakota. The country of this period is just coming out of World War II and this is referenced during the course of the story when David's aunt mentions that she has trouble remembers that they are no longer required to recycle tin cans as had been the situation during the war. The technology and lifestyles seem reasonable to the place and time as well. For example, there are telephones freely used but local phone calls require only four numbers.

Language and Meaning

The story is written in a straight-forward manner with action that moves quickly. The fact that the author ends the story after only one hundred, sixty-seven pages means that the story cannot lag. The language is typical of modern language though there is a slight



tendency to use mannerisms and terms of the time of the story. When the author uses these terms, he often takes time to explain. For example, he says that his mother "fears" for David's soul. He says that the words, written down on a page, look "comically overblown," but says those are exactly her words. The descriptions of the people are not woven into the story as is sometimes the case. Instead, David sets out to describe each of the characters and does so with almost precision.

The tone of the story is one of hope as David seems to continue to believe that there is some possible resolution to the situation. This can be attributed partly to David's youth but can also be slated to the fact that David writes from a time well past the time in question and knows that his family survives though the split is never repaired. There are only a few instances of curse words used because David's parents are strict with regard to the use of foul language in front of David. Readers with an average vocabulary will be able to follow the story line without difficulty. There are few words that are difficult and most readers will be able to discern meanings of the few unfamiliar words from the context.

Structure

Description



Quotes

"The harshness of the land and the flattening effect of wind and endless sky probably accounted for the relative tranquility of Mercer County. Life was simply too hard, and so much of you attention and energy went into keeping not only yourself but also your family, your crops, and your cattle alive, that nothing was left over for raising hell or making trouble." Chapter 1, Page 4

"And I loved her. Because she talked to me, cared for me ... Because she was older but not too old ... Because she was not as quiet and conventional as every other adult I knew... Because she was sexy, though my love for her was, as a twelve-year-old's love often is, chaste." Chapter 1, Page 14

"I wasn't sure which prospect was more unsettling: that she wouldn't tell me anything and would scold me for prying, or that she would reveal everything and I would have to hear that story coming from my mother's lips." Chapter 2, Page 54

"Any my first question wasn't could I pull the trigger; it was, could I, from that distance, with that weapon, under those conditions - the wind, the slope of the hill - hit my target. Only after I decided, probably not - an unfamiliar gun, its small caliber, my poor marksmanship - did I wonder what might happen if I killed my uncle." Chapter 2, Page 75

"To this day I cannot hear that phrase - 'pending notification of next of kin' - without thinking that someone out there, someone like my father, is toting around a basket of grief, looking for a doorstep to deposit it on. To think I once believed the hardest part of his job would be the dangerous criminals he might face." Chapter 2, Page 81

"A murderer may have been locked up a floor below and the molecules of his victim's dying breath still floating in the air, yet these were not strong enough finally to stand up to my boy's hunger for chocolate cake." Chapter 3, Page 115

"They may not have liked her - perhaps Grandfather bought someone's foreclosed ranch cheap or let his cattle graze someone else's range, or perhaps he or my father sent someone's brother or cousin to the state penitentiary, or perhaps we were simply too prosperous for that luckless hardscrabble region - but our name was no joke. We were as close as Mercer County came to aristocracy." Chapter 3, Page 119

"Just as I couldn't get my mind to wrap itself around the knowledge that he was in our



basement, and when I tried to think of that the floor beneath my feet suddenly seemed less solid, like those sewer grates you daringly walked over that gave a momentary glimpse of the dark, flowing depths always waiting below." Chapter 3, Page 138

"Was he waiting for me to express an opinion - I was the only one in the room who hadn't. Didn't he know - I was a child and ineligible to vote?" Chapter 3, Page 139

"Young people are supposed to be the impatient ones, but in most circumstances they can outwait their elders. The young are more practiced; time passes slower for them and they are constantly filling their hours, days, months, and years with waiting - for birthdays, for Christmas, for Father to return, for summer to arrive, for graduation, for the rain to stop, for the minister to stop talking, for girls to stop saying, 'Not now, not yet; wait.'" Chapter 3, Page 140

"Certainly there would be sadness - Aunt Gloria was a widow, my father was suddenly, like me, an only child, Grandma's tears would fill a rain barrel - but this grief would pass. Once the mourning period passed, we would have our lives back, and if they would not be exactly what they had been earlier, they would be close enough for my satisfaction." Chapter 3, Page 156

"If there was any sense, any purpose at all in Uncle Franks suicide, if he killed himself for any reason, it was so these people - his wife, his parents, his brother, his sister-in-law - could be reunited after his death. But there was the open grave, and not one of us would dream of leaping across it." Epilogue, Page 161

Topics for Discussion

Describe David's family and his life. How do these people impact his life? What are the things about his life that he likes? What does he dislike? Support your answers.

Describe the relationship between Wesley and Frank Hayden. How does it evolve over the course of the story? What is the story Wesley tells about Frank coming to his aid when they were youngsters? What impact does Julian have on the relationship between Frank and Wesley?

Who is Gail Hayden? What is her role in David's life? What does Gail do when she feels her home is threatened? What are Gail's motivations for wanting to move from Montana?

Who is Marie Little Soldier? How does she die? Why does Marie ask that Gail not call a doctor? What are the events that Marie puts into motion?

Who is Len McAuley? What is his role in the lives of David's father and Grandfather? How is his loyalty tested? What is the outcome of this test?

What are the reactions of the members of Frank's family when Frank is arrested? How does each member handle the stress of the situation? What is the outcome of each of their reactions?

Who is Frank Hayden? What kind of person is he? What indications are there that members of the family had been aware of Frank's sexual encounters with Indian women prior to his marriage? What is Frank's attitude after his arrest? What seems to be most important to him? What prompts his decision to end his life? Support your answers.