News of the World Study Guide

News of the World by Paulette Jiles

BOOKRAGS

Contents

Plot Summary

The following version of this book was used to create this study guide: Jiles, Paulette. News of the World. William Morrow, 2016.

This novel, told in the past tense, opens on Captain Kidd who, since the end of the Civil War, has been wandering from city to city in north Texas and giving professional readings of news stories that he collects from national and international newspapers. In the town of Wichita Falls, Texas during the winter of 1870, Captain Kidd agrees to transport Johanna Leonberger back to her family in south Texas, outside Castroville. Four years earlier, a tribe of native Indians called the Kiowa kidnapped Johanna and raised her. Thus, the white ten-year-old with blonde hair and blue eyes does not speak English and believes that she is Kiowa. Before they leave Wichita Falls, Captain Kidd uses the fifty-dollar Spanish coin the Leonbergers have paid him to buy a dark green excursion wagon. As they leave, a pale-haired man and two of his henchmen watch them.

Captain Kidd and Johanna arrive first in Spanish Fort. The hectic pace of the town overwhelms Johanna, who the Captain leaves with two friends while he gives a reading. After discovering that Johanna has run away, Captain Kidd and his friend, Simon Boudlin, track her to the Red River, where Johanna is sobbing and watching a group of Kiowa across the river. Captain Kidd drags her away and they continue on to Dallas.

In Dallas, Captain Kidd and Johanna stay with Mrs. Gannett, who runs a livery stable. Again, Captain Kidd leaves Johanna in the care of Mrs. Gannett while he goes into town to arrange for his reading that evening. During dinner, he tries to teach Johanna how to use a fork. After his reading, the pale-haired man from Wichita Falls appears again. His name is Almay and he offers to buy Johanna from Captain Kidd in the hopes of selling her into child prostitution. Captain Kidd and Johanna leave early that morning, although Almay and his henchmen catch up to them and start a gunfight. Outnumbered and running out of ammunition, Captain Kidd and Johanna load their guns with ten-cent coins and kill Almay.

Having taken care of Almay, Captain Kidd and Johanna start towards Durand. On their way, they are intercepted by a man with a black beard who demands a half-dollar from them. Captain Kidd pays him and they successfully reach Durand. Durand is a troublesome place for the two of them. A young woman yells at Johanna for bathing naked in the river, while an argument over Texan politics disrupts and shuts down Captain Kidd's reading. This time, the black-bearded man from before introduces himself to Captain Kidd as John Calley and apologizes for taking the Captain's money.

When Captain Kidd and Johanna enter Lampasas, four Army officials warn them about possible trouble with the Horrell brothers, who want to be famous and reported in the newspapers. The Captain does not sleep that night, and they hurry on towards Castroville. In Castroville, Captain Kidd and Johanna meet Anna and Wilhelm, Johanna's aunt and uncle. The Leonbergers are only happy to welcome Johanna into

their home because they plan to work her to the bone. Reluctantly, the Captain leaves Johanna with them.

The next night, however, Captain Kidd rides back from San Antonio to Castroville. When he discovers that Johanna's aunt and uncle have whipped her, he takes Johanna with him. For three years, they travel together on the road, until the Captain's two daughters relocate to San Antonio. They join Captain Kidd's daughters there, and the Captain legally adopts Johanna.

Eventually, Johanna and Calley marry and move to Missouri, where she helps him on his cattle drives. The Comanche Indians kill Britt Johnson and his two friends in 1871. Simon and Doris have six children, while Horrells are eventually killed in “the Great Lampasas Square Shoot-Out” of 1877, for which they are finally get what they wanted: their names in the paper. The Captain, too, dies and is buried with his runner’s badge.

Chapter 1

Summary

The novel opens with a single line specifying the place and date of the action: “Wichita Falls, Texas, Winter 1870” (1). Its first paragraph introduces Captain Kidd, who is reading aloud from an article in The Boston Journal on the Fifteenth Amendment. Rather than identifying Captain Kidd’s audience, the novel adopts the third person perspective and gives a brief overview of his life from the time he was born in 1798. After participating in three wars and running a print shop, Captain Kidd now makes his living by traveling through towns in North Texas and reading “the news of the world” (1), which he gathers from newspapers and journals.

Back in the present, Captain Kidd is explaining the meaning of the Fifteenth Amendment. When he mentions “colored people” (2), the audience starts to mutter. Captain Kidd hushes them and begins reading an article from The New York Tribune about a polar exploration ship that sunk trying to reach the North Pole. Towards the end of his reading, Captain Kidd recognizes three freed black men in the crowd named Britt Johnson, Paint Crawford, and Dennis Cureton. Britt asks Captain Kidd to come with him to see a “problem” (4) he has in his wagon. The “problem” turns out to be a light-haired, blue-eyed girl around ten years old, dressed “in the horse Indians’ manner” (4) and wearing a “necklace of glass beads” (4) and a thick blanket over her shoulders. Britt identifies the girl as Johanna Leonberger, who was captured by the Kiowa four years earlier from the Leonberger home near Castroville, outside San Antonio, Texas. The little girl’s parents and younger sister were killed in the raid. The Indian Agent who found her with the Kiowa gave Britt a fifty-dollar gold piece (sent to the Agent by her aunt and uncle in Castroville) in exchange for returning her to her extended family.

Britt has rescued at least four captives, including his wife and two children. He mentions his son, who was captured by and lived with the Kiowa for less than a year. Now, however, he is asking Captain Kidd to make the three-week trek down to Castroville. He cannot leave his job as a freighter, and more importantly, transporting a white girl would be “bad trouble” (7) for a recently freed black man like him. Captain Kidd hesitates, telling Britt to find a family already heading to Castroville, to ask the army, or to simply get the Kiowa tribe to take her back. He also reflects that everything is “[a]ll in a flux” (8). The narrator cuts in to define “flux” as a “soldering aid that promotes the fusion of two surfaces, an unstable substance that catches fire” (8).

Britt explains that after being captured by the Kiowa, the little girl was cared for by a Kiowa family and came to think of herself as Kiowa. When the Indian Agent (an agent who brokers with Indians, but who is not necessarily Indian) tracked her down and threatened her Kiowa family, they traded her in for “fifteen Hudson’s Bay four-stripe blankets and a set of silver dinnerware” (9). Britt also mentions that the girl remembers nothing of the first six years of her life with her birth family and does not speak any English.

Eventually, Captain Kidd agrees to the job, and Britt hands over the fifty-dollar coin. Twice, he reminds Captain Kidd to be careful around the girl.

Analysis

In its first chapter, the novel foregrounds spatial and temporal markers that mimic the elements of the news reports that Captain Kidd reads to his audience. Like the headline of a newspaper, the novel's opening line and paragraph immediately anchor the reader in space and time, and suggest that details like dates, places, seasons, and ages, are useful measurements in understanding the world of the novel.

The author presents Texas in 1870 as a diverse and changing world in which Indian communities like the Kiowa, freed blacks like Britt, and aging veterans like Captain Kidd all vie for power. As the "mutterings" (2) of Captain Kidd's white audience suggest, there are tensions under the surface, especially when it comes to color. Although the novel does not dwell on it, Britt's passing remark that he cannot accompany a young white girl without stirring up "bad trouble" (7) for himself hints at the fact that people of color are vulnerable in Reconstruction-era Texas.

Also vulnerable in this society are children like Johanna who have been taken captive by Indians and later returned to white American society. Raised in one culture, but looking like the other, Johanna is an outsider to both. Despite her evident "strength" (8), Johanna is dependent upon other people willing to help her find safety and adjust to her new circumstances. The psychological costs of switching between cultures at such young ages, the novel suggests, are high. As Britt says to Captain Kidd, his son "came back different" (11), and can no longer tolerate being inside roofed buildings. The image of Britt's son haunts the reader's first introduction to Johanna, and suggests that she too has "come back different" and will face her own long, hard struggle to adjust to her new surroundings.

Overall, this chapter introduces individuals and an entire society that is not only diverse, but changing quickly. Captain Kidd's invocation of the term, "flux," and the novel's nuanced, somewhat ambiguous definition of "flux" mimic the tensions of the first chapter, and the novel as a whole. While the "fusion of two surfaces" may seem productive and positive, an "unstable substance that catches fire" suggests that this "flux" may also produce instability and destruction. Like Texas, Johanna and Britt's son are in exactly this state of "flux." On the one hand, Johanna's unusual childhood may ultimately be a gainful "fusion" of two cultures. On the other hand, to Britt who "watche[s] the girl with a dubious and mistrusting expression" (5) and possibly to Captain Kidd, Johanna is "unstable," burdensome and potentially dangerous. Thus, the first chapter poses the question: Can Captain Kidd and Johanna reach a state of equilibrium and harmony in this changing world?

Discussion Question 1

How do Captain Kidd and Britt view Johanna? Do you see similarities or differences in their responses to the girl?

Discussion Question 2

The novel introduces Captain Kidd with a brief overview of his life. How does the novel introduce Johanna? Why might there be differences?

Discussion Question 3

What does the audience's reaction, and Captain Kidd's reaction to the audience, suggest about the world and time period in which the novel is set?

Vocabulary

lyre, weathered, livery, taxonomy

Chapter 2

Summary

Johanna gets clothes from the women of Wichita Falls, who the narrator notes were scared to use force on the “small, thin girl with scars on her forearms and a stare like a china doll” (13). So Captain Kidd turns towards a rougher set of women, some of whom have been jailed before, to force Johanna into bathing and dressing. The women scrub Johanna’s lice-ridden hair, before “wrestl[ing] her” (14) into her new clothes—dress, stockings, shoes, and all. However, it is not long before Johanna’s dress hems are covered with dirt.

Meanwhile, Captain Kidd uses the fifty-dollar coin to buy a dark green excursion wagon, which he plans to sell in either Castroville or San Antonio “if he ever got there” (15). The wagon has two rows of seats and the words, “Curative Waters East Mineral Springs Texas” painted on the side in gold letters. Captain Kidd and Johanna prepare for their journey. Captain Kidd puts away his black reading suit and good black hat, dons his traveling clothes, and packs up his newspapers, razor, soap, brush, shot box and ammunition, small stove, and supplies like food, water bottles, and candles, followed by his map of Texas, riding boots, saddle and blankets. The last thing to go into the wagon is Johanna.

Britt gives Captain Kidd directions to take the Red east road and get as quick as they can to Spanish Fort, since the area is starting to flood. After that, Britt recommends they head towards Weatherford and Dallas, before taking the Meridian Road south towards San Antonio. Britt then trades his Smith and Wesson revolver for the Captain’s Slocum, which looks to Britt like “the kind of thing I got for Christmas when I was ten” (17). After watching Britt’s wagons pull away, the Captain sets off for Spanish Fort, as the townspeople watch with “looks of interest and of greed” (18). Especially curious about them is a man identified only by his “pale hair” (18) and two “Caddos,” or members of North American Indian tribes located in Arkansas, Louisiana and eastern Texas. The narrator makes the ominous observation that the migrating Caddos have gathered both “trouble” and a “great deal of peculiar knowledge about…what human beings would do or say under extreme duress” (18).

Analysis

Captain Kidd’s preparations for the journey highlight his tremendous faith in the importance of mapping, categorizing, and cataloging his possessions. As Captain Kidd assembles all the materials he needs for the journey, the narrator plays along and lists everything that the Captain owns and has bought, from his shot box and saddle to his candles and razor. On the one hand, this list reveals just how few possessions Captain Kidd has. On the other hand, the lists reveal that Captain Kidd nonetheless craves order

and process in his life. Thus, the one item not on this list is the one thing that most threatens his order and process: Johanna.

Johanna in this second chapter is also described in animalistic terms, akin to the Captain's uncooperative packhorse mare. Both the girl and the mare seem to sulk and to resist Captain Kidd. There is a close parallel between the horse that dislikes its new harness, and Johanna, who dislikes her new, much more constricting clothes. Eventually, however, the mare "lean[s] forward and pull[s]" (17), and Captain Kidd's wagon sets off for Spanish Fort. However, the reader is left to wonder if Johanna will respond similarly. Through these scenes, the novel suggests that part of re-integrating Johanna into white American society entails re-humanizing her; thus, the animal-like Johanna of Chapter Two is being disciplined and subdued.

However, the novel draws distinctions between the external appearance of things and their internal meaning or state of being. Thus, the clothing and the bath are only adjustments to Johanna's external appearance. Internally, she resists. Even after being scrubbed clean, Johanna is described as still "crouch[ing]" (14) on the floor, surveying the women with "flat and glassy eyes" (14). Her response to Captain Kidd is similarly indifferent, as though she is numbed to her new life. The narrator describes how Johanna's hands are "stiff" and "wooden," and how she does not pick up her skirt hems to prevent them from getting dirty. While Johanna's external appearance can be forced to change, Chapter Two suggests that it will take time for the rest of Johanna to soften towards her new life and towards the Captain.

Discussion Question 1

Does the novel invite us to view Johanna's transformation into a white American girl in a sympathetic light? Why or why not?

Discussion Question 2

Both Johanna and Captain Kidd change their clothes in this chapter. What effect does this have on your assumptions about each character?

Discussion Question 3

What details in the text make the appearance of the "man with the pale hair" (18) at the end of the chapter seem ominous and foreboding?

Vocabulary

vagabonds, jaunty, covert, alluvial

Chapter 3

Summary

Unlike the previous chapters, this chapter begins with a flashback to Captain Kidd's military career. When he was sixteen, Jefferson Kyle Kid was a private in the Georgia militia in the War of 1812, and fought under Andrew Jackson at the Battle of Horseshoe Bend in Alabama. On March 27, 1814, he and the "Georgia boys" (20) were fighting Muskogee Creek Indians, whom they referred to as the "Red Sticks." During the fight, a superior officer alerts "Jeff" Kidd to the fact that Captain Thompson is lying wounded on the battlefield. Kidd crawls out of his hiding place to retrieve the Captain. Just as he is reaching for Thompson's arm, the narrator describes how suddenly the "sand erupted around him" in "ting explosive charges" (21). Kidd manages to drag Thompson, over a "broken mirror and a calendar and some spoons" (21), back to the camp. However, the captain has been struck in the throat, and dies. Kidd, who is watching, see "life draining away, draining away" (21). At this moment, Kidd realizes that he too has been hit in the outside of his right hip. Unlike the captain, Kidd recovers well and becomes a sergeant in the Thirty-ninth U.S. Infantry and is eventually promoted to the Thirty-ninth Provost Marshall's Department, where he is expected to transport prisoners. Convinced that "written information was what mattered in this world" (22) and possessing good, strong "runner's muscles" (23), Kidd becomes a runner in the message corps.

Kidd later fights in President Tyler's war with Mexico, by which time he is nearly fifty and has a wife and printing press business in San Antonio. The narrative jumps back to 1870, when Kidd often thinks back on his wife, a woman from an old Spanish family named Maria Luisa. After he fell in love with her gray eyes, the "color of rain" (26), Kidd had two daughters with her, and in the Mexican War used his print expertise to organize communications for Taylor, and eventually promoted to captain. In a 1847 battle against "either Mexican Army sharpshooters or Apaches, it was a toss-up" (27), now-Captain Kidd tells the Texas Rangers what the War of 1812 was like, and gives them what wisdom he can, advising them to "Take care of one another" (29).

The narrator then tells of that from that night until he turned 65, Captain Kidd believed that he could make the world a "more peaceful place" (29) by giving people "true knowledge of the world" (29). After 65, Captain Kidd comes to believe that what people really need are "tales of the remote, the mysterious" that can become a "healing place like curative waters" (30).

Analysis

Above all, this chapter pairs the destruction and death of the body with the education and enlightenment of the mind. In the flashback to the War of 1812, Captain Kidd suffers a gory injury, and his captain, Thompson, suffers an even more painful and tragic death. As though suggesting the utter absurdity of the battlefield and the

senselessness of the bloodshed, the novel mentions how Kidd drags Captain Thompson over “a broken mirror and a calendar and some spoons” (21). Yet, the novel shows that amidst these scenes of death and bloodshed, there is, for the lucky ones, room for self-advancement and self-growth. Ironically, the heroism of Kidd’s ultimately unsuccessful rescue attempt leads to Kidd’s promotion to Sergeant, and eventually, Captain.

The chapter highlights the somewhat ironic, yet tangible, connections between Captain Kidd’s military background and his ambitious printmaking business. His activities in the war are what give Captain Kidd enough capital to invest in his own printing business. Later, during President Tyler’s Mexican War, the U.S. army specifically seeks him out because of his expertise in printmaking and communications. Thus, what seems like a deeply intellectual pursuit for the Captain—he is studying Spanish, and tracking down type pieces with “tildas and the aigu accent and the upside down exclamation and question marks” (25)—becomes a weapon against the Spanish-speaking Mexican army. The novel builds this irony gently into its structure, choosing to imply rather than to explicitly state this irony outright.

The deepest irony of this chapter is that, even as Captain Kidd finds employment in the military first as a runner and later as the communications operator for President Tyler, Captain Kidd continues to believe in the importance and beneficence of the printed word; print, for Captain Kidd, is not just a military stratagem. On this fundamental point, Captain Kidd’s thoughts never waver. However, they do change over time, from his belief that the printed word can actively do good in the world, that it can make the world a better place, towards believing that it can alleviate some of the bad in the world, and make the world seem like a better place. As a whole, this third chapter explains both why the Captain has become a professional reader of the news, and why he no longer seems to take the same amount of pride in his work—and find the same amount of cause for optimism in the world—as once he did.

Discussion Question 1

What new information and insight about Captain Kidd's life does this chapter's extensive flashback give on why Captain Kidd makes his living as a professional news reader?

Discussion Question 2

Why might the novel be slightly ambiguous on the question of which side, if any, Captain Kidd voluntarily supported in the Civil War?

Discussion Question 3

How does Captain Kidd's role in the three wars change, and are they connected to one another?

Vocabulary

smoothbore, truss, bandolier

Chapter 4

Summary

This chapter begins back in 1870, this time following Johanna as she walks alongside the wagon. From Johanna's perspective, the narrative traces her thoughts on the new, strange circumstances she has found herself in. Not least of all, Johanna takes a strong dislike to the corset she is wearing, which she believes is "meant to confine her heart and her breath in a sort of cage" (31).

The Captain teaches Johanna how to use the shotgun and the Smith and Wesson revolver, which Britt gave him. The chapter then shifts to Captain Kidd's thoughts about Johanna, who he notes has the "carriage" and "kinetic stillness" of every Indian he had ever seen" (33). Captain Kidd reflects that, from raising his daughters, he learned that it is the "duty of men" to "protect children and kill for them if necessary" (38), and therefore he will protect "this feral child" even if he wishes he "could find somebody else to do it" (38). As they drive, the Captain tries to teach Johanna her name and his name, though she can pronounce the words only as "Chohenna" and "Kep-dun" (35).

After they cross the Wichita River, the Captain teaches Johanna how to use the stove, and they discover that they can communicate a little using Plains Indian sign language. Not realizing that it is hot, Johanna touches the stove when it is on and burns herself. They eat their plates of corn dodger and bacon, with Johanna saying a blessing over her food.

Although she cannot understand, the Captain reads to her from the Chicago Tribune. From inside the thick serape called a jorongo, Johanna stares back at him with "open, flat blue eyes" (38). "This tells us of all the things we ought to know in the world," says Captain Kidd to the curious Johanna. "And also that we ought to want to know" (39). When Captain Kidd mentions England, Europe, and "In-di-a" (39), Johanna parrots back her third word, after "Cho-henna" and "Kep-dun": "In-di-a." Before the Captain falls asleep, he briefly prays for the safety of his family, himself, and Johanna.

Analysis

In many ways, this chapter is about one man's attempt to alleviate some of the harm, hurt, and suffering in the world. From the previous chapter, the reader now knows that Captain Kidd has seen tremendous suffering on the battlefield, and that seeing the continued suffering after the Civil War, Captain Kidd views the printed word as one way of alleviating suffering. Here, these thoughts are captured more succinctly in Captain Kidd's final, sleepy thought before he drifts off to sleep. The second to last paragraph in this chapter says, "So many people, so much harm" (39).

This is also the first chapter that Johanna and Captain Kidd are completely alone, and the reader is granted more of Johanna's perspective. On the whole, Johanna is more

accessible to the reader in this chapter, as though mimicking the fact that she has also become far more open and receptive with Captain Kidd than with anyone else in News of the World so far. It is clear that a friendship between them is beginning to develop. While the Captain still thinks that she could “lay hands on the revolver or the shotgun” and send him to “the next world” (38), it is clear that the Captain is starting to think more affectionately and protectively about Johanna. This is especially clear as he frequently makes comparisons between Johanna and his own daughters. The Captain’s statement about the “duty of men” reveals Captain Kidd’s deep sense of honor and his respectability; for the Captain, all children, however “feral,” deserve protection.

While the Captain vows to protect Johanna, she is herself going through a number of transformations in this section. In fact, this chapter shows Johanna going through many of the stages considered part of “normal” human development. If she once behaved like a stubborn packhorse mule, and even if the Captain still thinks of her as “feral,” she is represented in this chapter as a child—as a toddler, really. She acquires speech, and learns to say both her name and that of her caregiver. Like a toddler, she touches the stovetop; it is an important moment that suggests that some things about this new world Johanna is in she will have to learn on her own, by experiencing them for herself. For now, however, Johanna has her protector, Captain Kidd, at her side.

Discussion Question 1

What are some of the ways Johanna and the Captain communicate in this chapter? And which seem to you most effective or meaningful?

Discussion Question 2

It is clear that Captain Kidd is teaching Johanna. Are there suggestions that teaching, for this pair, is a two-way street? Does Johanna have lessons and skills to teach Captain Kidd?

Discussion Question 3

From the chapter's opening paragraphs switch to Johanna's point of view, what new information do we get about her character, her motivations, her thoughts and opinions?

Vocabulary

perilous, feral, constitutional, kinetic, carriage

Chapter 5

Summary

Captain Kidd and Johanna continue on their journey towards their first destination, the Spanish Fort. As they wind along the river, the Captain notices how Johanna stares across the river, where she knows is Indian Territory, and realizes she is probably thinking of her family. They come across a U.S. Army company looking for signs of raiders, the lieutenant of which comes to speak to the Captain. Noticing Johanna, who is wrapped in her jorongo and clutching butt of the Captain's revolver, the lieutenant asks to "have a look at her" (42). When Johanna refuses to come out and the Captain explains her unusual story, the lieutenant stares at her "appraisingly" (43) and tells the Captain that he hopes he will "apprise her of the facts" (43). After interrogating the Captain about any possible involvement with the Confederacy, what arms he is carrying, what is in the flour keg ("Flour," the Captain says), and their destination, the Army lieutenant wishes them a safe trip and leaves.

When Johanna comes out of hiding, she smiles at the Captain for the first time. The Captain resets the safety on the revolver she was hiding, and Johanna grows happier and happier, and the Captain tells her that her relatives "are going to be so happy to get back their sweet precious lamb" (46).

In the late afternoon, Captain Kidd and Johanna arrive at Spanish Fort. The hectic bustle and "town noises" (48) annoy the Captain and terrify Johanna. That night, they park the wagon in a large barn, and heaves the box of .38 shells out from the flour keg where he had hidden them. Captain Kidd challenges Johanna to try to get the stove going.

Analysis

Johanna's interaction with the U.S. army gives the reader greater insights into how Joanna, as a "captive," is regarded in society. On the one hand, Johanna is cast as society's other, and regarded by the Lieutenant with both hostility and suspicion. As was the case with Britt in Chapter One, the Lieutenant finds something threatening in this unusual ten-year-old girl. On the other hand, she is treated as a mere object to be traded and discussed as the adults around her see fit. When Captain Kidd produces Johanna's "papers," which were drafted by the Indian Agent, the reader finally realizes just how much of an pawn Johanna is. Like a modern driver's license, the papers include details like description of Johanna and her approximate weight and height. In other words, they condense a human being into an easily digestible, easily forgettable fact sheet for the Lieutenant, or anyone else, to absorb. With only the fact sheet to introduce him to the girl hiding herself in the jorongo blanket, the Lieutenant comes to think of Johanna's life as having only a handful of salient "facts." As such, the Lieutenant fails to appreciate the enormity of what Johanna has been through, and reacts to

Johanna in a cavalier and unsympathetic manner. Through this exchange, the novel demonstrates the pitfalls of seeing people in just one, uncomplicated light; those already on the outskirts of society, like Johanna, are pushed even further to its margins.

The interaction with the U.S. Army lieutenant also captures some of the tensions of life in Texas during the Reconstruction Period. The Lieutenant's demand to see a copy of Captain Kidd's oath of loyalty to the Union reflects the simmering tensions and lack of trust between supporters of the Union and the Confederacy. Both Captain Kidd's and Johanna's interactions with the Lieutenant, who is skeptical of each of them for two different reasons, come back to issues of trust. However, as the chapter demonstrates, in this Reconstruction-era Texas, Johanna is the more vulnerable of the two. While Captain Kidd gains the Lieutenant's trust through words and a shared language, Johanna hides in her jorongo and must rely upon Captain Kidd to make her seem both respectable and non-threatening in the eyes of the Lieutenant.

Additionally, it should be noted that in this chapter is that Captain Kidd's answer to the Lieutenant's question about his involvement with the Confederate Army highlights one of the glaring absences in the third chapter, which explained Captain Kidd's involvement in two of the three wars he fought. In that chapter, there was no mention of whether Captain Kidd's involvement in the Confederacy was voluntary or not. By asking the question only in a context when it is possible that Captain Kidd has lied, the novel leaves this question open.

Discussion Question 1

What connections do you see between Johanna's fear at the sight of the Army lieutenant, and her fear at the sight of Spanish Town?

Discussion Question 2

How does the interaction with the Army lieutenant impact Johanna and Captain Kidd's relationship? Does it draw them closer together or push them apart?

Discussion Question 3

Spanish Fort is located at the border between Texas and Indian Territory. How is that reflected in this chapter?

Vocabulary

rescind, nuance, belabor

Chapter 6

Summary

Leaving Johanna feeding sticks into the stove, Captain Kidd heads into Spanish Town to rent the Masonic Lodge for a reading that night. As he wanders the town, he meets Simon Boudlin, a fiddler he knows. Simon is sitting in the widow of a storefront, “watching the world go by” (50). The Captain invites Simon to his reading that night, and asks Simon and his “particular friend” (53) Miss Dillon to watch Johanna while he reads so that she does not “go bolting off” (53). Simon realizes that this means Johanna wants to return to the Kiowa, and tells Captain Kidd about a “Kiowa Dutch” boy he once knew who could not remember the place and people from whom he was captured. As Captain Kidd is about to leave Simon tells him that, “for an old man” he has “taken on a heavy load here” (54).

That night, Johanna meets Doris Dillon, Simon’s fiancée. Doris has brought Johanna a doll, which Johanna believes is a “taina sacred figure” (55) and to which she speaks in Kiowa. After observing Johanna, Doris decides that the girl is an elf, “like a fairy person from the glamorie” who is “not one thing or another” (55). Doris notes the similarities between Johanna and the doll, who she says are both “not real and not not-real” and have been through “two creations” (56). When the Captain asks Doris where she got this belief, Doris says that in Ireland, during the Great Famine, she saw children who watched their parents die, lost their minds, and became “forever falling” (56). Doris continues to voice her opinions as she tells the Captain that she believes there are “great holes” (57) in his newspapers that only God can see.

Towards the end of dinner, Doris pleads with Captain Kidd to leave Johanna with them, as she reminds her of her little sister that passed away. Captain Kidd, to Simon’s relief, declines.

Analysis

Doris Dillon's suggestion in this chapter that Johanna has been through "two creations" reminds the reader, first of all, that Johanna has been through two traumatic losses of family and identity. Doris says to her Simon and Captain Kidd that "our first creation" (56) occurs when our soul is turned "toward the light" and expelled "out of the animal world" (56). In other words, Doris sees the moment of birth as an act of creation. However, Doris also understands that, for some people, there is a second "creation," in which the soul is either remade or "unfinished" (56) and falls apart. Because she is talking about Johanna, it seems clear that Doris is suggesting that Johanna has been through two creations: the first, when she was born into a German-American family, the second when she was taken from that family and forced to "create" herself anew, as a member of the Kiowa.

However, Doris and the novel as a whole resist the temptation perceive Johanna as exceptional. Johanna's "two creations" have a devastating toll on her, but they are not unique to Johanna. In the first chapter, Britt mentions his own son, who was taken by the Kiowa and "came back different." In this sixth chapter, Simon also mentions a "Kiowa Dutch" (53) person he once knew, who ran away from the Army unit returning him. Both of these background characters, like Johanna, have gone through "two creations." They exist in the novel as examples of what Doris is talking about, that children can "fall to pieces" (56) after being forced to re-create themselves.

Doris's mention of the Irish potato famine in this chapter is also a chilling reminder that tragedies around the world, not only around the Northern Texas boundary with the Indian Territory, result in "unfinished," twice-created people. Throughout this chapter, details like her "Irish black" (56) hair and her accent emphasize Doris's Irish identity; at the same time, the Irish Doris is the first stranger Captain Kidd and Johanna have met on their journey who deeply sympathizes with Johanna and gives full expression to the various traumas she has undergone. The chapter suggests that sympathy and understanding cut across geographical borders and national identity.

Discussion Question 1

Johanna meets many new people in this chapter. Who does she trust? Who does she distrust?

Discussion Question 2

So far, the novel has introduced Native Americans, freed blacks, white Confederate supporters and white Union supporters. What new social group does Doris Dillon represent, and why might that be important?

Discussion Question 3

What is unusual about the way Johanna addresses the taina doll, and what does that suggest about her personality and values?

Vocabulary

abscond, apparition, contention

Chapter 7

Summary

At the Masonic Lodge and dressed in his formal reading clothes, Captain Kidd greets the crowd and listens as their coins clink into the paint can. First, he reads the “hard news” (59) about the Franco-Prussian War. Then he reads his audience more mythical, whimsical stories about telegraph wires to India and the Hansa sinking in the North Pole, which is fast becoming his most popular story.

After the reading, he learns from a distraught Simon that Johanna has run off with the doll. Together, Simon and the Captain track her footprints along the road leading out of Spanish Fort towards the flooded river. Finally, they find Johanna at the waterfront, where she is staring across at a group of Indians on the move towards higher ground. Although she calls out to them that she has been “taken prisoner, rescue me, take me back” (64), they cannot hear her, and one man fires a warning shot towards them. The Captain grabs Johanna and drags her “back to her fate,” back to the “white man’s” (65) wagon.

They continue south. Johanna recognizes the German words for “aunt” (tante) and “uncle” (onkle), and suddenly remembers that her mother and father are “Todt” (66) —“dead,” in German. To quell her tears, Captain Kidd starts teaching Johanna English words like hand and horse.

They arrive at Dallas, where they head to Gannet’s livery stable yard, which is now run by the widowed and attractive Mrs. Gannet after raiders tore her husband into pieces. The Captain asks to leave Johanna with Mrs. Gannet. Before he heads into town, Captain Kidd stops and thinks briefly about giving Johanna his hunting watch before he remembers that Johanna has no concept of time. Instead he gives her the familiar command: “Sit. Stay.”

Analysis

Whereas the previous chapter established Johanna as a creature who has undergone the two, traumatic creations, this chapter shows Johanna's final, tragic attempt to resist her second creation, to return to her Kiowa family, and to restore her Kiowa identity. The chapter suggests that Johanna no longer belongs with the Kiowa, as nature in some sense intervenes and prevents Johanna from running away, back to the Kiowa. First, flooding makes the river impassable, thus physically placing the Kiowa at a greater physical remove than they would have been otherwise. Second, the river makes such a loud roaring noise that the Kiowa cannot hear Johanna shouting their shared language. With the barrier of the Red River before her, Johanna has no choice but to return to Simon and Captain Kidd.

Johanna's decision to leave the taina doll by the river symbolizes her acceptance of her new circumstances, and her forced admission that she must now become a member of white American society. When Doris gave Johanna the doll in the previous chapter, Doris suggested that there are similarities between the doll and the girl, who are both "real" and "not-real" (56). By leaving the doll to keep watch on the Red River, facing the Indian Territory, Johanna recognizes that a part of her will always sympathize and identify with the Kiowa. However, her decision to leave the doll there and to, as the novel puts it, "begin a new, long, hard road to somewhere else" (67) suggests that now, Johanna is ready to move forward with her second creation. In other words, her act of leaving the doll functions as her declaration that she will not "fall to pieces" (56), as other Kiowa captives brought back to white American society have done.

The scene in which Captain Kidd begins to teach Johanna English words captures her resolute determination to make the best of her circumstances and her acceptance of the fact that she must integrate into white American society. In order for Johanna's soul to remain intact through these two "creations," Johanna must acquire language, and in this chapter, she does so with youthful enthusiasm. She has a long way to go yet; as the end of the chapter makes clear, Johanna has no concept yet of time. However, Captain Kidd is willing to teach her how to tell time, suggesting that in order to avoid the fate of the "unfinished" (56) Irish children, Johanna will need the support and friendship of Captain Kidd.

Discussion Question 1

How does Johanna and Captain Kidd's relationship change after he and Simon bring her back from the Red River?

Discussion Question 2

What kind of relationship do Mrs. Gannett and Captain Kidd have?

Discussion Question 3

What do you think is the symbolism of the flooding Red River in this chapter?

Vocabulary

frock, rapt, parasitic, senile, apprehension, grizzle

Chapter 8

Summary

This short chapter follows Captain Kidd's wanderings in downtown Dallas. First, he pays for two rooms in a hotel for his reading, and a bath for himself. “Seduced” (71) by the smell of ink, Captain Kidd then stops in Thurber’s News and Printing Establishment, and reads a sign on the wall declaring that the printing office is the “CROSSROADS OF CIVILIZATION” (72). He buys the latest editions of newspapers like the Chicago Tribune, collects news from the most recent AP wire, and posts bulletins throughout the town announcing his reading that night.

On his way back to the livery stable, the Captain picks up barbecue and bread for dinner. When Johanna attempts to toss the hot barbecue directly into her mouth with her hands, the Captain stops her and shows her how to use a fork instead. Johanna tries to use it, but eventually grows frustrated and throws the fork across the livery. Taking pity on her, the Captain draws her to him, and holding her “greasy small hand” (77) in his, they head down the street.

Analysis

Broadly, this chapter juxtaposes Captain Kidd's thoughts in the Dallas print shop about how he wishes his life and career had turned out, and a scene of his life now, in which he finds himself raising yet another "daughter." The first half of the chapter, which is marked by technical terms like "hand-fed paten press" and references to "layout tables, type cases," and "bindery equipment," shows Captain Kidd's expertise regarding print technology. Details like the fact that he wanders into Thurber's News and Printing Establishment "seduced by the smell of ink" (71) suggest Captain Kidd's obsession with print; it is, for him, an irresistible attraction that he tries to satisfy by reading, rather than making, the news. The novel allows the reader to judge whether he is successfully able to "subdue the sudden bitter slash of envy" (72) he feels toward the print shop owner, and more generally, whether Captain Kidd is fulfilled in his current career.

The final scene of the chapter suggests that Captain Kidd may be able to find other ways of finding a purposeful life for himself in which he feels needed and wanted. He acts as the provider and the teacher in their relationship, as he both brings dinner and tries to teach Johanna how to use a fork. It is clear that he is comfortable in this role, as he refers to Johanna as "my dear" (76) and takes her "greasy small hand" (77) in his as they walk down the street. The final scene reinforces the Captain's earlier mental riposte to Thurber, that he is still physically agile and mentally capable to make a meaningful contribution to society.

This chapter also includes a transcript of a sign on the wall of the printing office, declaring that print is the "CROSSROADS OF CIVILIZATION," the "refuge of all the arts

against the ravages of time," the "armoury [sic] of fearless truth" and ultimately, "sacred ground" (72). While the author undoubtedly intends for the reader to notice the sign's overblown language, it is clear that, for Captain Kidd, the sign represents some truth about print. For Captain Kidd, the print shop does symbolize sacred truths, refined arts, and civilization. In fact, Captain Kidd's own advertisements for his reading that night, which he posts around Dallas, repeat the reference to "the civilized world" (73). Chapter 8 thus juxtaposes a cultivated, refined image of print and news as the "crossroads of civilization" (72) with the messy, unrefined image of Johanna, who is herself a very different product of the "crossroads of civilization."

Discussion Question 1

Why does Captain Kidd react with bitterness and envy when he sets foot in the Dallas printing office?

Discussion Question 2

What does Captain Kidd's moment of overwhelming pity for Johanna suggest about his evolving attitude towards the girl and the future of their relationship?

Discussion Question 3

What kind of a city is Dallas, and how does it compare to Spanish Fort, which they just left?

Vocabulary

perforating, invalid, handbill, magistrate, speculative, vitreous, satchel, tine

Chapter 9

Summary

The Captain leaves Johanna in a hotel room, and goes to prepare for his reading. The sound of Johanna's mournful Kiowa chant reverberates throughout the hotel, unnerving the young man at the hotel desk. Finally, they decide to fetch Mrs. Gannet to quiet Johanna. Mrs. Gannet arrives, and offers Johanna a piece of divinity candy, which Johanna first mistakes for poison. With Johanna entertained, the Captain takes some time to send a letter to his daughters, Elizabeth and Olympia.

The narrator tells us that Olympia's husband died at Adairsville, during Johnson's retreat towards Atlanta, and Olympia is now living with Elizabeth, her children and husband Emory, who has lost his hand in the war. The Captain edits his letter to eliminate any reference to the Georgia "Burning" and to contemporary politics because such "alarming" and "frightening" news might counteract his efforts to get his children to move back to Texas. Instead, Captain Kidd quickly puts an end to talk of "Gossip" in his letter and sets forth his real reason for writing: he wants his daughters to make a claim to the Spanish land that once belonged to their mother. The land has been under a number of different governments and bureaucracies, so their claim is a "shaky" (85) one, Captain Kidd writes. Nonetheless, he encourages his daughters to try, and looks forward to the day when the family could be together again—especially after the destruction and heavy casualties of the Civil War.

He signs off the letter as he hears Johanna shouting and throwing objects in protest of her bath. Mrs. Gannet's singing soothes Johanna, and the Captain reminds himself that he has not pursued Mrs. Gannet because his daughters would have a "galvanized tin hissy, one apiece" (87) if he did.

Analysis

This chapter provides another example of a female caretaker who, like Doris, seems able to connect with Johanna in a way that few of this novel's characters are. Whereas Johanna has baffled and even scared Britt, the Army lieutenant, and even Simon to some degree, Doris understood and related to Johanna like a little sister. In this chapter, Mrs. Gannet also sees to have some kind of charmed way with the girl. Interestingly, both Doris and Mrs. Gannet have gotten into Johanna's good graces through characteristically feminine behaviors and actions, by appealing to Johanna not just as a child but as specifically a little girl. Doris gives Johanna a doll; Mrs. Gannet sings her a lullaby. Even Captain Kidd, an outlier among the novel's male characters in his warm and affectionate demeanor towards Johanna, approaches the girl as he would his own daughter or granddaughter. In part the novel's increasing recognition of Johanna as a little girl reflects the fact that for Johanna, socialization in the "white man's world" will

mean her learning to behave as a young woman, which in the nineteenth-century is a stark contrast to the “wildness” others see in her.

This chapter also makes clear that Captain Kidd is on a journey not only to reunite Johanna with her biological family in Castroville, but also to reunite his own dispersed family. Through Captain Kidd's letter to his daughters, this chapter gives much greater insights into the destruction and the heavy toll of the Civil War. In the south, the Civil War has destroyed material objects and infrastructure; Captain Kidd specifically mentions the destruction of the railroads and rolling stock, as well as the "rutted and crated roads" (83). However, as his letter makes clear, the Civil War has claimed lives, including the life of Olympia's husband, and in the process, displaced and destroyed families. The Captain's act of deleting some details of the war suggests that, even among family members, memories are closely guarded for fear of what the pain they may cause; for the Captain, who craves order, decency, and civility, it is best not to bring those painful memories to the surface.

Discussion Question 1

What details does Captain Kidd exclude from his letter to his daughters, and why?

Discussion Question 2

On the basis of the letter he sends to them, what kind of relationship does Captain Kidd seem to have with his daughters?

Discussion Question 3

Although there have been numerous scenes from the Captain's own military career, why might the author have waited until almost the half-way point to detail the toll of the Civil War on Captain Kidd's entire family?

Vocabulary

avaricious, galvanized, unflappable

Chapter 10

Summary

It is eight o'clock, and time for Captain Kidd's Dallas reading. Laying his watch across the podium and setting up his trademark bull's eye lantern, Captain Kidd notes the two U.S. Arm men stationed at the front doors. The narrator explains that Texas is still under military rule, and has not yet been granted any seats in Washington. Since the North's victory in the Civil War squashed the Southern Democrat party in Texas, the current election for governor is between two Union-loyal Republicans, who the narrator identifies only as "Davis" and "Hamilton."

Shaking the pages of the London Times, Captain Kidd reads about British colonial census efforts in India, new meat packing plants in Chicago, a volcano eruption near Mexico City, and the boatloads of Irish pouring into New York City—basically, as the narrator puts it, "[a]nything but Texas politics" (89). However, Captain Kidd is interrupted by a man asking him to read from Governor Davis's state journal. The Captain answers that debate over Texan politics too often devolves into fistfights, shootings, and more generally "force" (90). As he is leaving the stage, he spots the same pale-haired man and two Caddos he saw in Wichita Falls. After the Captain shakes hands with some of the crowd, the pale-haired man introduces himself as "Almay." Almay offers to buy "the girl," noting that Johanna will "get paid for it" and that "Blond girls are premium, premium" (92). The Captain stalls for time, and asks to meet Almay tomorrow morning. Almay agrees, and Captain Kidd rushes back to Mrs. Gannet's to get Johanna.

After he kisses Mrs. Gannet's cheek goodbye, Captain Kidd and Johanna ride through the night so that they can reach the Brazos River by daylight and watch for any pursuers. The Captain regrets that there had been no money or time to buy more ammunition before they left Dallas. They turn west onto the Meridian Road, where Indian raids are common, and spot a great horned owl that, the narrator points out, bring "news of a death; soon, here" (98). Captain Kidd tells Johanna to "pretend it was a night hawk" (98) instead.

Analysis

In Chapter 10, as Johanna and Captain Kidd close in on Brazos, many of the foreshadowed elements from the previous chapters become more menacing. For instance, Captain Kidd's tense exchange with the audience members here in Dallas hearkens back to the first chapter when the Captain admonished his "muttering" audience. In Dallas, however, the audience is not only more vocal with their objections, but they also threaten the fragile peace in the room. While the Captain's immediate response to the heckler shuts down any possibility of a fistfight, the interaction between Captain Kidd and his audience suggests that the political situation, as he travels further south, is growing more and more precarious.

As certain details about the scene make clear, the audience member's question and Captain Kidd's response highlight not only the precariousness of the peace within the room, but within the entire state of Texas in 1870. For the first time at one of Captain Kidd's readings in the novel so far, there are U.S. Army troops stationed in the doorway. At this observation, the novel gives the curt explanation that, "Texas was still under military rule" (88), reminding the reader that Texas has not yet officially been welcomed back into the Union. It remains subject to the Union, under its "military rule." The interaction between the audience and Captain Kidd also reveals the Captain's ability to manipulate his standing as an older person and the image he therefore projects of "elderly wisdom and reason" (90) to control and contain a group of people.

However, the Captain’s victorious feeling is undercut by the reappearance of the pale-haired man, who he has seen both in Wichita Falls and who he thought he saw in Spanish Fort. Despite the color of his hair, Almay is clearly shady, and follows the Captain like a kind of ominous shadow. In contrast to Mrs. Gannet’s “bright eyes,” Doris’s intensely black hair, or Johanna’s burnt-red skin, Almay has “thick and colorless skin” (93). The Captain also notes that he seems “half asleep” or as if “he was dreaming of some other world that was not this world, a place fragmented and without illumination” (93). In this sense, Almay represents the stark opposite to the vivid, detailed images the Captain provides of mysterious, faraway places. The contrasts are dramatized in the biggest, and most important way, in the both men's relationship to children. Whereas Almay wants to recruit Johanna for child prostitution, the Captain is increasingly becoming her staunchest, most reliable defender and protector.

Discussion Question 1

How and why does the author suggest, without stating outright, Almay's reason for wanting to kidnap Johanna?

Discussion Question 2

As Johanna and Captain Kidd set off towards the Brazos River, what elements of foreshadowing, like the great horned owl, can you find?

Discussion Question 3

How does the novel signal to the reader that Almay is untrustworthy and dangerous?

Vocabulary

faction, entrance, oafish, flyspeck, gelding, copse

Chapter 11

Summary

The Captain and Johanna are only one mile from the Brazos River when they the Captain decides to turn off the road and head uphill until they get to a clearing. Captain Kidd is exhausted from the entire night of driving, and as he rests, Johanna starts gathering wood for the stove. Though he wishes he could go down to the road to see how much of the wagon is visible, the Captain decides to settle on the stomach and watch the road from there.

Just as Captain Kidd notices a “thick billowing of smoke” (102) rising in the air about three or four miles from their wagon, gunshots assail the wagon. Both he and Johanna scramble to get under the wagon. As he pulls out the Smith and Wesson revolver, Captain Kidd tries to track where the shots are coming from. At the least he knows they are coming from rifles that are out of range of his shotgun, for which he has only light, essentially harmless shells called “bird shots.” Though the extent of “human aggression and depravity” continues to “astonish” (104) the Captain, Johanna seems unsurprised and fetches the box of .38 ammunition from the flour keg.

Johanna speaks in Kiowa, with the author providing a translation: “Caddos. The Ring-in-the-nose people. They will die” (107). The narrator further mentions that, whether the Captain understands her or not (he does not), it is “important” to Johanna that she say aloud, “They will die” (107). Meanwhile, the Captain decides the three shooters are all the right side, and manages to disarm and wound one of the two Caddos. Using the stove lid lifter as a level, Johanna loosens and send a heavy rock boulder crashing down on the other Caddo. Thrilled, the Captain complements Johanna by calling her a “Demon child!” (108).

Analysis

Chapter 11 portrays a classic "shoot-em-up" sequence, as Captain Kidd and his unlikely Butch Cassidy (the young "demon child," Johanna) try to fend off three archetypal "bad guys" closing in on the wagon. Partly, what makes this scene seem so familiar to the reader, like a classic black-and-white western film, is the one dimensionality of its representation. Almay and the two Caddos, who are never named, remain inaccessible to the reader; they are given no thoughts, no opinions, and no interiority beyond what they voice to Captain Kidd. As such, they exist primarily as inhuman objects, as targets that Captain Kidd must eliminate.

Meanwhile, the author enlists the reader's sympathy for Captain Kidd by portraying him as the underdog. Most obviously, he is disadvantaged both in terms of assailants and ammunition. Moreover, the Captain is being forced to exert his physical strength and stamina, which as a 72-year-old man he has presumably ha less of. While the

altercation with the audience member in Chapter 10 shows how the Captain confidently wields his wits and intellectual authority to defend himself and to escape tight situations, here the Captain is engaged in a more physical battle.

However, in the gunfight Captain Kidd has a resource he did not have in Dallas: Johanna. In fact, Chapter 11 reveals more of Johanna's background and character, especially in terms of her ruthlessness. While the Captain seems prone to romanticizing their situation, and blames himself for foolishly believing that Almay and his men would only "bluster, threat, offer a certain amount in silver" if they caught up to them, Johanna is prepared and ready. She understands the stakes in this fight, and clearly articulates them, even if it is only in Kiowa. Once Johanna's survival instincts have kicked in, and there is no more room for artful responses or for compromise: they will die because they must die, or else she will die.

Discussion Question 1

How do Captain Kidd's and Johanna's styles of fighting differ?

Discussion Question 2

Why might a chapter about a gunfight also give elaborate descriptions of the natural setting, its rocks and hills and ridges?

Discussion Question 3

Between Captain Kidd and Johanna, who protects whom? And who is most in need of protection?

Vocabulary

ravine, tabular, pantaloons

Chapter 12

Summary

As Captain Kidd is congratulating Johanna, he feels a “strange electrical pain all over his skull” (109). He has been struck in the head by a piece of splintering stone. Wiping away the blood, Captain Kidd takes a swig of water from the canteen and tries to think how many of the shooters are left. He is grateful that it is his right eye that has been hurt, and not the eye he aims with.

However, the Captain is running out of ammunition. The revolver is empty, and he has only fourteen rounds left and the box of Number Seven bird shot, which is harmless from this distance. Almay and his men are moving closer and the Captain, who suddenly feels very tired, tells Johanna to leave him and to go, but Johanna refuses. She fetches the shotgun, the shot box, and the bag of coins earned from Captain Kidd’s readings. The Captain sinks into despair, telling Johanna that their attackers cannot be bought off. However, Johanna holds up a shotgun shell loaded with dimes, which “fit perfectly into the paper tube of a twenty-gauge hull” (113). The weight of the dimes and the powder in the shotgun make it seem to the Captain like a “small cannon” (114), promising to give him sufficient range to hit his targets. Suddenly, the Captain is no longer tired. He fires a few loads of the weak bird shot in Almay’s direction, making him believe that the bird shot—“cake decorations or something,” Almay says—is all they have left. Confident in his victory and hoping to have a clearer shot at him, Almay draws closer to the Captain. When Almay starts talking about a deal, the Captain realizes that he is delaying and trying to distract him because the Caddos are planning a surprise attack. Once Almay is in range, the Captain aims the rifle and strikes Almay “in the forehead with a load of U.S. mint ten-cent pieces” (117). Next, the Captain shoots the remaining Caddo. “I did it. We did it” (117), thinks the Captain. While the Captain recovers his breath, Johanna sings a Kiowa “triumph chant” (118). However, the Captain stops Johanna on her way to scalp the victims. He forbids her to scalp anyone because “[i]t is considered very impolite” (118).

Analysis

This chapter clearly shows how Johanna and Captain Kidd complement and draw strength from one another. Their approaches to fighting are different and balance one another. Whereas Johanna's philosophy is simple, succinct, and unqualified ("they will die"), Captain Kidd must rationalize to himself why they must die: “Some people were born unsupplied with a human conscience and those people needed killing” (110). For Captain Kidd, who believes in the value of “human conscience,” he must reconcile himself with his own conscience.

However, there are advantages to Captain Kidd's way of thinking. Whereas Johanna's simple, clear philosophy on right and wrong gives her the right to wreak unqualified

revenge on her vanquished opponent, Captain Kidd is beholden to the abstract concept of civilization and its values. The clash between their two philosophies is most clear in Johanna's plans to scalp Almay and the Caddos, to which the Captain responses with the tongue-in-cheek, lighthearted observation that it is “considered very impolite” (118). Whereas someone like Britt may have responded with horror to Johanna’s plans to scalp them, the Captain's response exemplifies why these two make such a complementary pair. The Captain does not make a point of his own views on scalping; instead, he explains for her benefit how white American society, to which she will one day belong, works. The Captain's response also highlights his ability to think reflectively and empathetically.

Johanna's decision to shoot and kill Almay with the ten-cent coins is symbolic of her ability to think about money in ways apart from white American society; money is useful to her, but only in so far as it allows her to secure her survival and her body's safety. For Johanna, the coins are not money, but a potential weapon. The scene raises the question of whether only Johanna, who does not understand U.S. mint coins in the same way as Captain Kidd, could have come up with this plan, since he can only see the money in terms of a potential bribe. Moreover, the images of "bright flying money" (117) and “silver like tearing sequins” (117) are beautiful, and invite the reader to see coins not for their commercial value but as a beautiful objects in themselves.

Discussion Question 1

How is the Captain's injury described, and how does it affect the way readers view him in this scene?

Discussion Question 2

What details give the gunfight scene the qualities of a classic western movie?

Discussion Question 3

What does Johanna's refusal to leave Captain Kidd suggest about their evolving relationship?

Vocabulary

incapacitated, ricochet, barbican

Chapter 13

Summary

The Captain starts the wagon down the hill and searches for a place to cross the Brazos River, hoping that the cracked iron tire will stay together. Eventually they reach Brazos, and the Captain tries to calm himself down for Johanna's sake. That night, he sleeps "like a dead man" (120), uninterrupted by his usual war nightmares. In the morning, the Captain and Johanna eat breakfast and the Captain checks their two horses for injuries. As the Captain lets the horses rest, and gets some rest himself, his mind wanders and he thinks about his time as a runner.

The next day, they arrive at the Brazos ferry. They see the ferry landing but no ferry. They cross the road themselves, and get on the Lampasas Road. As they travel, Captain Kidd teaches Johanna the names for different trees. Johanna calls Captain Kidd "kontah" and "opa," the words for grandfather in Kiowa and German, respectively. She cannot pronounce the "r" sound in either English or German, but to Captain Kidd's delight, she strings together multiple sentences. Although Johanna is "content and happy" (124) on the road with him, Captain Kidd wonders what will become of her when she rejoins her relatives. Though it is a "painful thought" (124) to him, Captain Kidd decides that he must return the girl to her relatives because they were "her blood kin" (124) and he had promised.

Captain Kidd decides to do another reading once they reach Durand. The narrator explains that Captain Kidd lost his deposits and bank stocks due to the Civil War and some minor debts. When his wife passed, the narrator explains, Captain Kidd took to the road and "sailed away on the winds of chance" (125).

Captain Kidd asks Johanna, who is chattering away in her broken English, for silence. As they approach the town of Durand, a group of men rides towards them. A man with a trim black beard, dark sin and black eyes asks Captain Kidd where they are headed. Captain Kidd explains that he is returning Johanna to her relatives in Castroville. The man offers Johanna a piece of taffy, which she strikes from his hand. When the man asks Captain Kidd who he voted for (Davis or Hamilton?), Captain Kidd protests that the vote is "secret." Finally, Captain Kidd pays the men a half-dollar so that they let them pass.

Analysis

This chapter, which shows both Johanna and Captain Kidd at their happiest, when they are traveling alone and uninterrupted on the road, highlights both the pleasures of being "on the road," as well as the dangers. On the one hand, both Johanna and the Captain feel free when they are traveling. The Captain in particular prides himself on "sail[ing] away on the winds of chance" (125). However, in reality, "chance" cuts both ways,

especially in anarchical Reconstruction-era Texas. Out of touch with the current political state, Captain Kidd continues to ask the black-haired man if he is acting in an “official capacity” (129) and if the men's actions are part of “an official decision by the local administration” (130). When the man disabuses Captain Kidd of any notion of an "official" anything, the novel is suggesting that Captain Kidd's discourse of freedom and the "winds of chance" romanticizes a dangerous, unstable reality.

The confrontation with the men on the road also reveals the limits of Captain Kidd's power. At one of his readings, Captain Kidd is able to tamp down any dissent or disagreement with the audience through his skillful command of words. The Captain is able to plead passionately and persuasively for using "debate, not force" to resolve arguments. However, in this chapter, debate with the black-bearded man cannot secure Captain Kidd or Johanna's safety. Faced with the threat of violence and force, Captain Kidd must ultimately use money in the form of a half-dollar bribe to escape.

The chapter also builds on the previous chapter by suggesting the possibility of forming emotional attachments on the battlefield that are as meaningful as the ones formed in birth. While Captain Kidd continues to believe that he must return Johanna to her rightful place among her "blood kin," this chapter reveals the growing tension that the Captain feels between his protective, affectionate feelings for Johanna and his duty to return the girl to her family. Yet, Johanna's reference to the Captain as "kontah, opa" (123) shows how the two forms of attachment--familial and non-familial--are beginning to blend. Of all the terms of respect, Johanna chooses one that metaphorically assigns the Captain to the role of "grandfather."

Discussion Question 1

What is the significance of the fact that Johanna first calls Captain Kidd the Kiowa word for grandfather ("kontah") rather than the German ("opa")?

Discussion Question 2

What arguments does the black-bearded man offer to justify his actions, and which of them seem more persuasive to you?

Discussion Question 3

What new perspective does the black-bearded man offer on the state of Texas in 1870?

Vocabulary

vertebrae, courier, unperturbed, accountable

Chapter 14

Summary

For a costly fifty cents, the Captain rents a space for the wagon in the loading year of a big broom and stave mill near Bosque River. That afternoon, Captain Kidd tries to teach Johanna how to read a clock and explains that he will be back when the “little hand is at three” (132). Before he heads into town, Captain Kidd leaves his watch with Johanna. In town, Captain Kidd books a room for his reading, and hangs his advertisements around the town. A man with a gold-headed cane reads the bill, and asks Captain Kidd if he will be reading from the Daily State Journal, an Austin-based news source. Captain Kidd says he will not as he “refuse[s] to be an unpaid mouthpiece” for propaganda.

When Captain Kidd returns to Johanna, a man making brooms points out that there is “something wrong” (135) with Johanna because she does not speak English but “looks English” (136) all the same. Bluntly, he asks: "Well, what is she, then?" (136). Captain Kidd is busy trying to pick out appropriate articles that will placate his audience rather than rile them up, and so tells man to “shut the hell up” (136). Meanwhile, a young woman, upset that Johanna was bathing naked in the river, is chasing Johanna. When Captain Kidd explains Johanna’s upbringing, the young woman apologizes. The Captain reprimands the woman, telling her that if she were really a Christian she would have found shoes and clothing for Johanna instead.

Back at the wagon, Captain Kidd puts Johanna to bed, and jokes that after the Durand citizens pay for his readings, they will have a full breakfast with bacon and eggs tomorrow morning. As he turns to leave, Captain Kidd considers kissing her on the cheek but does not know if Kiowa families kiss one another like that. As he realizes, "Cultures were mine fields" (140). So instead, he motions to Johanna to “Sit. Stay” (140).

Analysis

This chapter reminds the reader that, although Johanna and Captain Kidd are working hard to teach her and integrate her within white American society, Johanna's hopes of assimilating into that society are far in the future. The broom man's blunt statements on Johanna reduce Johanna into a defective, strange being. Despite Captain Kidd's efforts to teach Johanna English words, the broom man in one simple sentence ("she don't speak English") reminds Captain Kidd of how much work there is yet to go. The broom man's comments also demonstrate society's urgent need to identify and to classify. The problem for the broom man is not simply that Johanna "don't speak English"; after all, the broom man himself does not speak proper English. Rather, his problem lies with the disconnect between the language Johanna speaks (Kiowa) and her appearance as someone who "looks English" (136). That disconnect subverts his attempt to identify "what" she is, which matters more to the broom man than "who" she is.

While the broom man confronts Captain Kidd, Johanna faces the repercussions of her inability to conform with her society. In past chapters, Johanna's breaches of social etiquette, from eating with her hands to attempting to scalp Almay, have always been in the presence of Captain Kidd. However, when Johanna attempts to bathe in the river naked, Captain Kidd is not around to explain and defend her behavior to the white Americans. It is only when Captain Kidd arrives on the scene that the young woman ceases her attack on Johanna and apologizes. Through this scene, the novel raises the terrifying specter of what may happen to Johanna if left alone in an American city, without Captain Kidd.

The final exchange between Captain Kidd and Johanna suggests that this cultural exchange goes both ways, and that any cross-cultural encounter is rife with misunderstanding, confusion, and possible hurt. When Captain Kidd refrains from kissing Johanna, the narrative switches into the second person, as though addressing the reader. "You knew," he thinks. Here, the second person reinforces the fact that these misunderstandings and negotiations around culture are always happening, to anyone and everyone. Meanwhile, the metaphor associating cultures and mine fields literalizes the danger that these interactions can present, especially for a young, already odd girl like Johanna.

Discussion Question 1

How does the young woman's reaction to Johanna bathing naked relate to the early scene in chapter two of the women dressing Johanna?

Discussion Question 2

Where do Captain Kidd and Dr. Anthony Beavis's positions on the news differ?

Discussion Question 3

What does the broom man's reaction to Johanna reveal about his beliefs about cultural identity?

Vocabulary

mouthpiece, grime, dubious, contentious, vermilion, astute

Chapter 15

Summary

When Captain Kidd arrives for his reading at the mercantile, there is again a U.S. Army soldier stationed at the door. The audience, Captain Kidd notices, has divided itself into two groups, and are giving each other “looks like warning flares” (141). Before the Captain is able to begin reading the news, a man stands up and shouts about Davis’s crooked legislation. Captain Kidd immediately should for silence; however, he is unable to contain the crowd. He reads quickly, but shouting voices interrupt him and two men—one, the owner of the hotel, and the other a schoolteacher—get to their feet “shouting about the turncoat Hamilton and the corrupt Davis” (144). Although some men try to separate them, their disagreement comes to blows. The women in the room grab “their husbands’ or fathers’ or brothers’ handguns” (144) on their way out.

While everyone is outside watching the fight, Captain Kidd starts the slow, “humiliating” (145) process of picking up all the silver coins from the ground. The same black-haired, dark-skinned man that stopped Johanna and the Captain on their way into Durand comes to his aid. He introduces himself as John Calley, and apologizes for taking Captain Kidd’s half-dollar earlier that morning. The man, Captain Kidd notices, is wearing his best clothes in an effort to demonstrate that he is not a “filthy ignorant brigand but a man gently reared” (147). When Calley insists that there is “no telling what’s illegal these days” (146), Captain Kidd quotes the Code of Hammurabi through which he points out that the law should be applied clearly and evenly to all citizens.

After the reading, Captain Kidd and Johanna leave Durand. The bad water lady, as Johanna calls her, has given Johanna a dress, underthings, and stockings. Johanna shows Captain Kidd the two chickens she stole and killed from the broom maker, which they have for breakfast. Captain Kidd feels a pang of conscience first for the broom man, then for Johanna, who has “not the slightest notion of animals as private property” (151).

Analysis

The eruption of the audience during Captain Kidd's reading, and his inability to contain them, signals rising political tensions in Texas. From the Captain's response to the arguing men, the reader immediately knows that this argument is a serious and dangerous one. Whereas in the past Captain Kidd has imparted his "elderly wisdom" and responded with calm, measured sentences, here the Captain shouts "Silence!!" (142) with two exclamation points. When the men continue to yell, Captain Kidd again raises his voice. As the Captain loses control of the room, so too does he lose control of his own temper. And in fact, the anger and turbulence in the room changes Captain Kidd's presentation style as he rushes to get through the news. In the face of these

belligerent, divisive politics, even the Captain's tales of remote, mysterious lands cannot hold the audience's attention.

There is also deep symbolism in the fact that, when the men run out of the room to fight, they overturn the Captain's coin can. As the narrator describes, the "men trod on the money" (144), suggesting that their political allegiances have become more important to them even than money. Notably, Captain Kidd retains his pragmatic sense for the importance of money and literally stoops to collect it from the ground. While the Captain admits that this behavior is "humiliating" (145), he does it on Johanna's behalf, thereby suggesting that Captain Kidd continues to believe that his personal relationships and his duty as a caretaker remain more important than any political affiliations. If politics were most important to Captain Kidd, he would be out on the street fighting, too.

The reappearance of the black-bearded man, whose name is now given as John Calley, from the previous chapter also offers an opportunity for narrative redemption and resolution. In their previous conversation, it was unclear whether Captain Kidd or the black-bearded man had the correct approach to handling Reconstruction-era lawlessness. While Calley embraced it, Captain Kidd fought it. While Captain Kidd seemed the most honorable of the two, their past interaction showed Calley getting rewarded for his outlaw behavior. In their second meeting, however, the narrative re-calibrates. Calley recognizes that he was wrong, and Captain Kidd emerges the victor. In fact, this chapter is marked by moments of redemption, as the "bad water lady" (148) also returns to give Johanna clothes.

Discussion Question 1

What connections do you see between the Hammurabi passage that Captain Kidd paraphrases and the state of Texas in 1870?

Discussion Question 2

In what ways can we see Chapter 15 as a turning point in society's attitude towards Johanna?

Discussion Question 3

How do Johanna's two stolen chickens compare to the half-dollar that John Calley takes from Captain Kidd?

Vocabulary

clime, modernity, commemorative

Chapter 16

Summary

They stop along the Leon River, and eat their roasted chicken. The Captain has one of his nightmares about himself on the battlefield, and sleep for most of the next day as well. The next day, they drive twenty-miles before a company of cavalry stop their wagon. The major warns the Captain of raiders in the hill country. After the cavalrymen leave them, the Captain drifts off into thoughts of San Antonio, where he once lived with his wife. He thinks about the city's Spanish inhabitants who found themselves "increasingly hemmed in" (155) by the city's new German and Irish Catholic inhabitants. He then thinks about the print shop he had on Plaza de Armas, and misses his wife. He thinks about death, which makes him "mad" (155) because the dead leave and "never [say] another word to you again" (155).

Eventually, Johanna and the Captain come to an elderly lady in a small "gig" (156). When the Captain learns that she is headed towards Durand, he sends her with two fifty-cent pieces to give to the broom man as an apology for stealing his chickens. She hesitates at first, but tells Captain Kidd that he has a "tender conscience" (157) and wishes him a safe journey.

As they enter Lampasas, the Captain is on guard. Four cowboys pull up alongside their wagon. The tallest cowboy recognizes the Captain from a reading he gave in Meridian, and warns them not to go into Wiley and Toland's Saloon when they make it to Castroville. The egomaniacal Horrell Brothers, says the cowboy, are "going to raise Old Jack" (161) with the Captain when they learn that they are not mentioned in "the Eastern newspapers" (161) and that he will not read about them. After the Captain bids them goodbye, he remembers that he turned 72 yesterday, and marvels that he is "still in one piece, alive and unaccountably happy" (163).

Analysis

This short chapter again emphasizes the richness and diversity of Texan society. On the one hand, Captain Kidd and Johanna meet an elderly lady in a fancy carriage, the detailed description of whom highlights her comparable wealth and high status. For instance, she wears "brown driving gloves" and a "new-fashioned pancake hat" which is "tipped rakishly to the side" (156). The lady represents a degree of wealth and refinement that has not yet been present in this novel, which is populated primarily by working-class people. Like so many of this novel's other characters, the lady's advice to Captain Kidd that he simply take the chickens without repaying the broom man reveals her to be slightly unscrupulous and dishonorable. Wealth or outward refinement is not this novel's measure of honor and worth.

On the other hand, the chapter ends with Johanna and Captain Kidd's encounter with another new set of Texan society: cowboys. The cowboys are described in a uniform, almost identical, way. They all are right-handed; they all ride "Mother Hubbard saddles with big flat horns" (159); they all wear the same hats with large brims. Their description emphasizes the fact that the cowboys are, first and foremost, dressed according to the needs of their occupation.

The details here also provide a kind of historical account of a cowboy, a snapshot of them as they were first coming into existence. The novel's description of them as "people now being called 'cowboys'" (159) reminds the reader, somewhat ironically, of the novel's setting and time period. Although contemporary readers are obviously familiar with cowboys, the characters in this novel are actually less acquainted with the concept as they are only a recent phenomenon.

Discussion Question 1

Why does the Captain ask the woman to repay the broom man for the chickens?

Discussion Question 2

What is the significance of Captain Kidd's memories of his life in San Antonio with his wife and daughters?

Discussion Question 3

Why does the chapter end with Captain Kidd's realization that he has just turned 72?

Vocabulary

dun-colored, bounty, arid, plumes, occupational, gig, amphibious

Chapter 17

Summary

In this very short chapter, the Horrell Brothers—Merritt, Tom, Mart, Benjamin, and Sam—find Captain Kidd, and inform him that they should be in the news because they have “killed a right smart of Mexicans” (165). Captain Kidd uses the same phrase as he asks them if anybody “objects” to their killing “a right smart of Mexicans” (166). The Horrell Brothers ask Captain Kidd to read the news at The Gem, a saloon in town. Captain Kidd tells them that he might be late, and then never turns up. The brothers watch—“guard”—Captain Kidd and Johanna all night long. Captain Kidd does not sleep at all, and they leave before dawn breaks.

Analysis

The incident with the Horrell Brothers is a relatively brief one in the context of the book, but it is important for what it says about the good and the bad reasons people read the news. While Captain Kidd reads the news, both to himself and to audiences, in order to inspire thoughts about fantastical other peoples and places, the Horrell Brothers think about the news only in terms of how it can glorify them and their behavior. In other words, Captain Kidd represents a cosmopolitan approach to the news, believing that the news can help successfully anchor himself in relation to the broader, important world around him. In contrast, the Horrell Brothers represent a violent, narrow-minded provincialism, in which the only world that exists is the one five feet around them. The author adds irony to her representation of the Horrell Brothers by pointing out that their only newsworthy feat is "kill[ing] a right smart of Mexicans" (165). The author uses the Horrell Brothers, who know nothing of newspapers outside Texas, to point towards the danger and latent violence of taking Texas as one's entire world. Meanwhile, the Captain's inability and unwillingness to sleep at night symbolizes his unrelentingly watchful, protective attitude towards Johanna.

Discussion Question 1

Why do the Horrell Brothers ask about a "wood engraving" (166) of themselves?

Discussion Question 2

What are the goals and ambitions of the Horrell Brothers?

Discussion Question 3

What kind of tone does the Captain take in response to the Horrell brothers?

Vocabulary

unvarying, oriole, bunting

Chapter 18

Summary

Captain Kidd and Johanna travel into “the hill country” (168), an area attractive to raiders because there is ample “concealment and water and isolated farms” (168). They pass through the red and pink granite country north of Llano, where they come to an abandoned cabin. Captain Kidd grows sentimental as they rifle through the cabin, which reminds him of his childhood home in George. They continue on, and pass through large “curving bluffs” (170) of limestone.

When Johanna and Captain Kidd stop by a springhouse, they watch, breathless and amazed, as “a slim young man with long blond hair” (172) with his hair cut in the style of the Kiowa dropped from a great live oak into the water and waded across. Captain Kidd wonders if Johanna will “betray him” (173) and try to return with this man. She looks Captain Kidd in the eyes, shakes her head, and stays by his side. Three other Kiowa drop into the water, and quietly slip away. The narrator comments that Captain Kidd and Johanna have just "narrowly escaped death--death by arrow, death by beauty, death by night" (173).

Next, they pass through the mostly German town of Fredericksville, and the Captain gives a reading at the People’s Church. He posts Johanna by the door, so that she can make sure the audience pays the requisite dime each. Watching Johanna’s face light up during the reader, the Captain realizes that he found “joy” and “liveliness” (176) in his readings again. After he puts Johanna to bed, the Captain cleans the .38 and makes a list: “feed, flour, ammunition, soap, beef, candles, faith, hope, charity” (177).

Analysis

This section questions the definition of a raider. While the obvious image of a "raider" would seem to be the Kiowa who raided the Leonberger house, killed Johanna's parents and her younger sister, and kidnapped Johanna, the novel now presents a different image of the Kiowa raider. Here, the image of three Kiowa men dropping to the ground seems peaceful and almost beautiful, despite the imminent danger in which Captain Kidd and Johanna find themselves. The narrative acknowledges this beauty explicitly, in the description of how Captain Kidd and Johanna have only "narrowly escaped death--death by arrow, death by beauty, death by night" (173). The repetition of the word, death, and the association with "arrow," "beauty" and "night" give a new representation of what it might mean to die at the hands of the Kiowa.

The moment when the Kiowa appear is also a poignant one in Captain Kidd and Johanna's relationship. Not only does Captain Kidd recognize how closely they came to being killed, but it is clear now that Johanna has chosen to remain with the Captain than to attempt to reunite with the Kiowa. The Kiowa are—or used to be—Johanna’s “people”

who shared not only her dress style but her “gods” (173), suggesting that identity is often tied to a shared internal worldview and spirituality. Captain Kidd recognizes that he and Johanna have been raised according to different worldviews, and for that reason Captain Kidd wonders if Johanna will "betray him" (173). However, when in this scene she does not, it becomes clear that, again, the trust and affection that Captain Kidd and Johanna have built between them over the course of the journey have become more important than their cultural identities.

The chapter's final line, which mixes both mundane, day-to-day essentials with abstract concepts like “faith,” “hope,” and “charity” further raises the question of what we consider essential and inessential. Are our cultures essential, or are our friendships? Can concepts like "faith" and "hope" be as essential to a person as beef and flour (177)? Johanna and Captain Kidd's final run-in with the Kiowa triggers these important questions.

Discussion Question 1

What new insights does Captain Kidd's encounter with the abandoned cabin reveal about Captain Kidd's childhood and memories?

Discussion Question 2

Why does Captain Kidd include faith, hope and charity on his list?

Discussion Question 3

Why is it significant that one of the Kiowa has blond hair?

Vocabulary

flax, nicety, foliage, springhouse, dredge

Chapter 19

Summary

Johanna and Captain Kidd arrive in the mostly Polish town of Bandera. The Captain rends the Davenport Mercantile for another reading, and again Johanna collects dimes from the audience. With enough funds now to make it to Castroville, they continue and Captain Kidd explains to Johanna that she is going back to her aunt and uncle. She begins to cry, and demands that “Konta laff!” (180). Johanna continues to weep, wondering where “Kontah” will go after he delivers her to her relatives.

After turning west off the road to San Antonio, Johanna and the Captain arrive in Castroville. From a local, Captain Kidd learns where Wilhelm and Anna Leonberger—Johanna’s uncle and aunt—live, and they go to visit the graves of Johanna’s parents and younger sister are at St. Dominic’s Church. Johanna does not understand, and merely gazes at the headstones with “some curiosity, mostly indifference” (183). En route to the Leonberger residence, Captain Kidd recruits a man on horseback to ride ahead of them and let the Leonberger couple know that their long-lost niece is being returned. Shouting “God be praised!” (184), the man takes off down the road.

Johanna and the Captain pull up to Leonberger residence, and Captain Kidd shows Anna and Wilhelm the Indian Agent’s papers. Wilhelm asks the Captain if he has a receipt for the wagon he bought using their fifty-dollar coin. He does not. The messenger is at the residence when they arrive. In response to the Leonbergers' cool reception, the messenger shrugs, which the narrator says is intended to communicate the fact that “We are not all like this” (186). Without much enthusiasm, Wilhelm invites the Captain into their home, and the messenger rides away.

Analysis

Death is heavily present in this chapter, though it is not regarded in the typically somber and tragic way. In fact, Johanna’s confrontation with the evidence of her family's brutal, violent deaths does not garner much reaction from her. Instead, the sense of tragic loss and despair that typically follows death here rests in Johanna's goodbye to Captain Kidd. She “braid[s] her hair as if for battle,” becomes “quiet and stilled” (183) and a “woodenness” (183) comes over her. The mention of Johanna's "woodenness" in this scene ties all the way back to her “wooden hand” when Captain Kidd first took her. It suddenly seems clear that the cycle is beginning again, and this time it is her attachment with Captain Kidd that is being severed, not with the Kiowa. Johanna, who is described as "blank again, blank as bone" (184), is being erased, undergoing what Doris would call her "third creation." Johanna's response to her arrival in D'Hanis as a kind of death is starkly at odds with the villagers' reactions. To them, it is as though Johanna has come back from the dead herself. This chapter suggests that the tragedy of death is not the fact of death itself, but the fact of separation that death entails.

The messenger's reaction to the news of Johanna's reemergence is important, as it is a description of the messenger that ends this chapter. Then Captain Kidd and the Leonbergers meet, their conversations are terse and strained. Frequently, Captain Kidd responds to Wilhelm’s already brief questions with an even briefer one-word answer. On the whole, the narrative leaves their conversation to itself, and does not divulge much of what either Captain Kidd or the Leonbergers are thinking.

Since the narrative does not give the reader much access to either Captain Kidd or the Leonbergers' internal thoughts and feelings, the novel includes the messenger to pass judgment on the scene. His shrug also communicates to the reader that there is something particularly off about Anna and Wilhelm. The difference in opinion and character between the Leonbergers and the messenger also point out that a community is never homogenous or uniform; members of any given community can be differently warm or cool, self-serving or generous, and that it would be a mistake to malign an entire community on the basis of the behavior of one or two of its members.

Discussion Question 1

What details foreshadow the fact that Anna and Wilhelm Leonberger may not be the best guardians for Johanna?

Discussion Question 2

In what ways does Chapter 20 recycle some of the themes, motifs, and descriptions in the first chapter?

Discussion Question 3

By the time Johanna and Captain Kidd arrive in D'Hanis, what is Johanna's community and who are her people?

Vocabulary

gallop, gristmill, seminary, ponderous, vaudeville, mesquite, indifference, serrated

Chapter 20

Summary

The Captain is sitting on the Leonbergers' sofa, holding a coffee and seed cake, while Johanna is crouching in the corner of the room "staring at all the things the white people collected and put inside their immovable houses" (187). Anna demands that the girl stand up, but she does not move. Wilhelm and Anna tell Captain Kidd how they found Johanna's parents with their brains spilled out and "stuff[ed] in the grass" (188) and her sister hanging by one of her legs off a big tree. Wilhelm says that they will take the child in, and Anna notes that "the child must be corrected strong" (189) so that she can do work around the house. Again, Wilhelm asks the Captain if he has a receipt for the wagon. Again, the Captain says no.

The next day, the Captain intervenes when the villagers' celebrations of the captive's return overwhelm Johanna. She hides in the barn, and when they try to speak to her in German, she hurls a sickle down in order to scare them away. The messenger from the day before, named Adolph, tells Captain Kidd that the Leonbergers' nephew ran off because they overworked him and that no one in the community will come to check on Johanna and see that she is treated well. Adolph also mentions that the Leonbergers will not adopt Johanna because they would therefore be "legally obligated to support her" and to "provide her with a dowry" (192). The Captain, in despair, leaves quickly before Adolph can see the "tears…running down his face" (192).

Analysis

This chapter shows how typical communities, like family and neighborhoods, are artificial constructs. The community of D'Hanis, where Anna and Wilhelm Leonberger live, seems like a welcoming and enthusiastic community in these chapters. However, for Johanna, their enthusiasm and celebration are overwhelming and even frightening, as she hides inside her jorongo and eventually the barn. In fact, in this chapter, Johanna plays only a minor role, as she scurries like a rat from one hiding place to another. The overall effect suggests that even as Johanna is welcomed into the community where she was born, she retreats, frightened. The implication is that nothing inherent connects an individual to a particular community; rather, those bonds are cultivated slowly, over time, through particular relationships.

Johanna has a similar reaction to her own blood relatives, Anna and Wilhelm. In fact, her own blood relatives seem even less affectionate and less enthusiastic about Johanna's return than the community at large. Though they are related by blood, Anna and Wilhelm, as the messenger explains to Captain Kidd, approach family as a contractual employer/employee relationship. They do not care how they treat their employees, only that they get productive work out of him or her. In this sense, Chapter 20 sets up a stark contrast between the Captain's approach to children, and the

Wilhelms approach to children. Whereas Captain Kidd clearly sees himself as Johanna's protector, and protecting all children as his own duty, the Wilhelms do not see themselves as protectors of children. In fact, they do not see duty towards others as particularly important. Rather, their only duty is towards themselves and the continued success of their farm.

The messenger's observation that the Leonbergers will not try to adopt Johanna, and the Captain's response to that news, reflects two different philosophies about family. Because of his own ethical belief that family should provide for and protect children, Captain Kidd believes in the importance of legal adoption. However, the Leonbergers do not, since they seek the benefits of having children around the farm (less work for them) without also bearing the responsibilities of them. The fact that both the Leonbergers want only to "correct" Johanna and to mold her into the model employee also indicates that they prioritize themselves over Johanna's wellbeing.

Discussion Question 1

How does Anna and Wilhelm's approach to child-rearing differ from the Captain's approach to raising his two daughters (and now, Johanna)?

Discussion Question 2

Before the messenger explains what they did to their nephew, what signs are there that Anna and Wilhelm will not be good parents to Johanna?

Discussion Question 3

What ethics and values do the Leonbergers have, and do they differ from Captain Kidd's?

Vocabulary

electrifying, galleria, inevitable, defiantly, haunches, dowry

Chapter 21

Summary

The Captain turns back along the road towards Castroville, and stays at an inn on the Medina. The next morning, Captain Kidd heads into San Antonio. There, he responds in Spanish to the Mexican women who call out “saucy things” (193) to him, and wanders past several markets with chili stands and wagons selling “grains and vegetables and hay” (194). After a fitful night of sleep at the Vance House, Captain Kidd walks around the Plaza de Armas and sees that his old print shop has now become a repair shop for wagon wheels and machines. The Captain visits a young lawyer named Branholme at his office next door to the print shop, and asks him about “adoption, and the legal status of returned captives” (195). Branholme mentions that captives belong “to their parents or guardians” (195). Finally, he buys a set of newspapers on his way back to the Vance House. He cannot sleep, and reads all night instead.

The next morning, Captain Kidd heads back towards the Leonberger residence, hoping to give them just the “right kind of information” (197) about Johanna so that they will agree to adopt her. When he arrives at the farm, it is late at night. He sees Johanna alone, trying clumsily to feed the horses with a bucket of food that she must hold in two hands. The narrator cuts in to give Captain Kidd’s point of view of Johanna at this moment, who is “only ten” and yet has been sent out into the dark, into “a landscape she did not know” (197).

Captain Kidd calls out to Johanna, who draws closer to the wagon. When Captain Kidd sees the marks of a dog whip on Johanna’s forearms and hands, he is enraged and tells Johanna to come with him. Sobbing, she comes running and volunteers to feed Pasha, Captain Kidd's horse. It was, as the narrator says, "the only ploy she could think of to make Kontah stop, to make herself welcome, wanted" (198). Captain Kidd pulls her into his arms. They head north, and Captain Kidd proposes that “if anybody objects we will shoot them full of ten-cent pieces” (198).

Analysis

The Captain's decision to leave San Antonio and to return to Johanna reflects not only how much he cares about Johanna, but also how much he has changed over the course of the journey (aka the novel). For Captain Kidd, San Antonio is the place where he met his wife and raised his children; it is the city where he supposedly feels at home and at ease with himself and the world. However, here, Captain Kidd's wanderings throughout the city are routinely interrupted by his thoughts of Johanna. There is a restlessness to his time in San Antonio, from which it seems clear that Captain Kidd no longer belongs in San Antonio. In fact, he no longer belongs in any particular place. He belongs, instead, with Johanna.

Although the majority of the novel is written from the perspective of Captain Kidd, this chapter gives both Johanna and Captain Kidd's perspective. When Captain Kidd arrives at the Leonberger residence, the narrative is told from his perspective, allowing the reader's anger at Johanna's treatment to grow along with Captain Kidd's. This section must be told from an adult perspective because Captain Kidd, more so than Johanna, understands the harsh abuse and abnormality of the Leonbergers' treatment of Johanna. The brief switch into Johanna's perspective--that she wants only to "make herself welcome, wanted" (198)--serves only to underscore how damaging, distorting, and destructive life with the Leonbergers is to Johanna. In just a matter of days, Johanna has internalized the idea that she is worthless, that she is unwelcome and unwanted to someone who loves her as much as Captain Kidd.

Discussion Question 1

How does the real San Antonio compare to the San Antonio depicted earlier, in Captain Kidd's memories?

Discussion Question 2

Why is Captain Kidd justified in reclaiming Johanna?

Discussion Question 3

How does the Captain feel about age and aging in this chapter?

Vocabulary

excursion, sanctuary, miserly, stagger, trudge

Chapter 22

Summary

Johanna and Captain Kidd drive north from San Antonio, retracing their steps past Wichita Falls, where their journey began. Along the way, Captain Kidd gives readings. In Dallas, he learns that Mrs. Gannett has remarried, to a man slightly younger than she is. Eventually, they travel throughout Texas, from East Texas where they see the state's large populations of former slaves towards the Gulf where they breathe in the sea salt.

Though she never learns to pronounce the letter, "R," Johanna learns English during this time. Captain Kidd abandons a Kiowa-English dictionary project. Johanna retains many of her Kiowa values, such as courage, and keeps a minimalist lifestyle. Captain Kidd learns from her how to value the truly important things in life, and recommits himself to his readings. After three years, Captain Kidd's daughters and grandchildren move to San Antonio. Captain Kidd and Johanna decide to join them, but Johanna struggles to adjust.

One day, John Calley arrives to pay his respects to Captain Kidd. He meets Johanna, and begins coming more regularly to the house. He decides to relocate to South Texas, and eventually Johanna and Calley are married. Captain Kidd gives her advice for married life, telling Johanna jokingly not to scalp anyone or to steal a neighbor's chickens. Shortly before Captain Kidd walks Johanna down the aisle, he says that "time seems to have been sweeping ahead very fast they last years" (208) and gives her his gold hunting watch.

Johanna and Calley move to Missouri, and she helps him on his cattle drives. The Comanche Indians kill Britt Johnson and his two friends in 1871. Simon and Doris have six children, their names all beginning with the letter "D." The Horrells are eventually killed in "the Great Lampasas Square Shoot-Out" of 1877, for which they are finally mentioned in the so-called "Eastern papers" (209). The Kiowa live on in the form of "stories of their lives, told and retold" (209)—including the story of "Cicada, the little girl taken from them" (209).

The Captain, when he dies, is buried with his runner's badge. As the final line of the book notes: "He said he had a message to deliver, contents unknown" (209).

Analysis

Like an epilogue, Chapter 22 offers an accounting of the characters' lives, focusing less on how they lives and more on how they died and who they left behind. No character is fully punished for their actions, as the story of the Horrells attests. The Horrells, in fact, get exactly what they wanted out of their lives: newspaper publicity. Through his respect for Captain Kidd and his love for Johanna, John Calley is redeemed in the end. Through

their love and affection for one another, Johanna and Captain Kidd are, if not necessarily redeemed, given new meaning and purpose for their lives.

The final reference to the Kiowa, and to Johanna's Kiowa mother in particular, posits that their reward will come, not in the form of particular actions, but in the form of "stories" after their deaths. In this sense, the novel suggests that it, itself, is a story told about the Kiowa, therefore honoring their memory. However, the novel's suggestion that the Kiowa will be remembered in later years does not change the fact that Johanna's happy, contented life with Captain Kidd comes at a steep cost and devastating loss for her Kiowa family. In the epilogue, many of the other characters are shown to have exchanged their lives for the things they wanted. For example, the Horrell Brothers effectively exchange their lives for publicity and notoriety, which they wanted. However, Johanna's Kiowa mother, Three-Spotted, will be given "stories, told and retold" in exchange for her "little blue-eyed girl" (209). The final chapters asks, without answering, whether this is a worthwhile, or fair, exchange, and whether any life can ultimately be condensed into a story.

The Captain's decision to be buried with his runner's badge carries similar notes of ambiguity. While the author suggests that the Captain has a message to deliver, the author refrains from explaining the "contents" of said message. Thus, the reader is left to puzzle out what the contents of the message are, and even perhaps to ask whether the contents matter at all. Perhaps, the final chapter suggests, what matters is the recognition that our individual lives carry "messages" and have purpose, and that, as the Captain exemplifies, it is not our place to fix the meaning of those messages, to determine the singular purpose of the message. That interpretative act is left, instead, to the people who receive the message, to the rest of the characters and people in one's life.

Discussion Question 1

What do you think is the meaning of the novel's final line?

Discussion Question 2

Which characters, in the end, get what they want and which are thwarted?

Discussion Question 3

What lessons do Captain Kidd and Johanna learn from one another?

Vocabulary

hoggish, volatile, clipped, despoil, indignity, minute, devoid, ascot, wreckage

Characters

Captain Jefferson Kidd

Captain Jefferson Kyle Kidd is one of the novel's two main protagonists. He agrees to transport the young Kiowa captive, Johanna, over a 400-mile, three week long journey to her relatives in southern Texas. He was born on March 15, 1798, and in the novel's fifteenth chapter celebrates his 72nd birthday. Even at his advanced age, Captain Kidd is around six feet tall, and has a clean-shaven, angled face and white hair. He has been involved in three wars: the War of 1812, the Mexican War in the 1840s, and the Civil War in the 1860s. During the War of 1812, he served as a private and was promoted for his courage attempt to rescue his captain's life in the Battle at Horseshoe Bend. At the same battle, Kidd was shot in the hip with what he believes was a spoon. Eventually, he becomes a message carrier for the army.

By early middle age, Kidd has opened a printing shop in San Antonio, where he also meets his wife, Maria Luisa Bentacort y Real. Maria is part of an old Spanish family, and together they have two daughters, Elizabeth and Olympia. In 1870, when he meets Johanna, Kidd is trying to convince his daughters to move back with him to Texas. During the Mexican War, President Taylor enlists Kidd for his expertise in communications and print. In the Civil War, the majority of Kidd's savings are appropriated by the San Antonio Commission for the Support of the Confederacy.

After his wife dies, Kidd decides to leave San Antonio and to travel small towns in North Texas. At each stop, he gives a "reading" of the most recent news from around the world. In the years immediately following the Mexican War, Kidd believes that the world will be "a more peaceful place" (29) if people only had accurate knowledge about the world. Around the time of the Civil War, however, Kidd comes to view remote, whimsical tales of mysterious, faraway places more important than "hard information" (30). Throughout the novel, he rebuffs any audience member's attempts to steer the conversation towards local Texas politics.

Believing his years of raising daughters to be far in the past, Kidd initially wishes he could find someone else to take care of Johanna, who he believes to be "an immense amount of trouble" (38). Over their journey, Kidd grows to pity her for her strange position as an outsider of two cultures, and to appreciate Johanna's ingenious tactics on the battlefield. He teaches Johanna survival skills for her new culture, such as how to speak English, tell time, operate a stove, and eat using a fork. In the end, he adopts Johanna, whom he regards as a granddaughter.

Johanna Leonberger

Johanna is one of the novel's two main protagonists. When Johanna is six years old, she and her family are victims of a Kiowa raid. The Kiowa kill her parents and her

younger sister, but take Johanna as a captive. She spends the next four years with the Kiowa, during which time she comes to believe that she too is Kiowa and that her name is “Cicada.” Under the threat of losing their government rations, Johanna’s Kiowa family hands her into an Indian agent. Johanna’s Aunt Anna and Uncle Wilhelm Leonberger offer a 50-dollar coin in compensation for her safe return to them.

By the time Captain Kidd takes her from Britt, Johanna only wants to “go home” (10) to her Kiowa father, Turning Water, and her mother, Three Spotted and has already jumped out of a wagon twice. Johanna resents many of the aspects of her new English life, not least of all the restrictive dresses, stockings, and shoes she is forced to wear and the occasional baths she is forced to endure. At first, Johanna does not speak English and frequently sings—or wails—Kiowa chants. Over their journey, Captain Kidd teaches her how to speak English; her first word is “In-di-a,” followed by her own name, “Cho-henna” and that of the Captain, which she pronounces “Kep-dun.” Johanna never learns how to pronounce either the “r” sound in either English or German, but she does learn to eat with a fork, and to tell time. She also learns to shed some of the habits she learned with the Kiowa, such as scalping. Over the course of their journey, Johanna also proves herself to be an adept fighter. As Captain Kidd realizes, the ten-year-old Johanna has already experienced gunfights, and figures out how to load shells with U.S. Mint coins.

As they approach Castroville, Johanna grows fond of Captain Kidd and even prefers to stay with him than to attempt to reunite with the Kiowa. However, Johanna dislikes the Leonbergers, who treat her cruelly and even whip her. Eventually, the Captain adopts Johanna, and they go to live with the Captain’s daughters in San Antonio. There, she meets John Calley for the second time, and they are married. She accompanies her husband on his cattle drives, and lives long enough to see an airplane land in Texas.

Wilhelm Leonberger

Wilhelm is Johanna’s German-American uncle. He is slight and light-haired with a tanned face. He and his wife, Anna, offer to take Johanna, who Wilhelm says must “learn our ways again” (189). He is portrayed as stingy, and twice asks Captain Kidd if he has a receipt for the wagon he bought.

Anna Leonberger

Anna is Johanna’s German-American aunt. She is described as a thin woman with precise gestures, olive skin, and black eyes like a Bavarian. She offers to take Johanna into their home because she needs the extra help. She is generally unsympathetic to Johanna, and believes she “must be corrected strong” (189).

Mrs. Gannett

A recent widower and about 45 years old, Mrs. Gannett is single-handedly running her deceased husband's livery barn. Compassionate and generous, Mrs. Gannett watches over Johanna, bringing her sweets and singing her lullabies. Mrs. Gannett functions as a potential love interest for Captain Kidd, who frequently admires her strength of character and her appearance. In the end, she remarries to a 62 year old man living in Dallas.

John Calley

He and a group of men stop Captain Kidd's wagon on the way towards Durand. He has a trim black beard, dark skin, and black eyes. Somewhat of a bully, Calley defends his actions to Captain Kidd, explaining that there is no official authority in reconstruction-era Texas. At Captain Kidd's reading in Durand, Calley apologizes to the Captain. Eventually, Calley, Johanna and the Captain meet again in San Antonio, and Calley and Johanna end up getting married.

Almay

A pale-haired man who follows the Captain and Johanna from Wichita Falls to Dallas, Almay offers to buy Johanna. He wants her to become a child prostitute. He is killed by Captain Kidd in a shootout near Brazos River.

Doris Dillon

Simon's Irish fiancée with dark black hair. Doris watches Johanna, who reminds Doris of her younger sister who died during the famine, during his reading in Spanish Fort, and gives her a doll. Doris also observes that Johanna is like a "fairy person," neither "one thing or another" (55).

Simon Boudlin

A fiddler in Spanish Fort, and a friend of Captain Kidd. Simon is happy to watch Johanna but hesitates when his fiancée offers to take her into their household.

Britt Johnson

A freed black man, Britt works as a freighter in Wichita Falls. His wife and two of his children were captured by Kiowa. In total, Britt has rescued four Indian captives. He is unwilling to take Johanna to Castroville, and commissions Captain Kidd instead.

Adolph

A man on horseback in D'Hanis, whom Captain Kidd commissions to deliver the message to the Leonbergers that their niece is alive. A sensible, sensitive man who exhausted and killed his best horse in the search for the Kiowa who kidnapped Johanna, Adolph tells the Captain about Wilhelm and Anna's abuse of their nephew.

Elizabeth

Captain Kidd's eldest daughter, whose husband lost his arm fighting in the Civil War for the Georgia State regiment. She has two children, and an aptitude for understanding legal matters. Captain Kidd relies on her to follow through on the family's claim to Captain Kidd's wife's "Spanish land." She and her family eventually move back to San Antonio to be with her father.

Olympia

Captain Kidd's youngest daughter, whom he considers a "bore" (82). She is described as a fluttering, gasping woman who affects helplessness and sensitivity. Her husband died in the Civil War. She eventually moves back with Elizabeth to be with their father.

Symbols and Symbolism

Curative Waters wagon

The wagon that Captain Kidd buys, which once transported ill people to “Curative Waters East Mineral Springs Texas,” represents the own curative properties of Captain Kidd and Johanna’s friendship. Although it accrues some bullet holes in the Brazos gunfight, the act of defending their wagon as a team only strengthens their bond.

Coins

Coins symbolize alternative value-systems, especially around economic value and commerce. In the political and economic ravages of Reconstruction-era Texas, even small nickels and dimes are rare and precious; the Spanish gold coin seems almost priceless. Often the characters’ interactions with these coins elucidate how greedy or generous they are. While Captain Kidd only works hard to earn just enough money to provide for Johanna and himself, John Calley and his crew intimidate people like Captain Kidd into giving them money. Because she does not understand coins as “legal tender” (201), Johanna puts coins to their best and most important use in the novel: as ammunition.

Newspapers

Throughout the novel, newspapers function as symbols of both connection to and escape from the world. By giving readings Captain Kidd hopes that he can distract his audience from local Texan politics with stories about strange and marvelous parts of the world. The novel draws a distinction between the local “eastern” newspapers in Austin and Houston that peddle propaganda, and the New England and international newspapers that offer readers more expansive and generous worldviews.

Runner's badge

The messages that Captain Kidd delivered as a runner for the Army symbolize both the unknowability of what we write and send out into the world, and the optimistic belief that we must continue to do so. Captain Kidd's request to be buried with his runner's badge suggests that he takes pride in the work that he has done over the course of his life.

Taina doll

Doris Dillon gives Johanna this doll, which Johanna mistakes as a "taina," a sacred figure for the Kiowa. As Doris points, the doll represents Johanna herself, as both the doll and Johanna are frequently forced to dress up in new costumes while never

apparently completely natural and real in them. When Johanna leaves the doll by the Red River to watch over the Indian Territory, it becomes the part of her soul that will always belong to the Indians.

Jorongo

This thick, wool blanket that Johanna wears symbolizes her tendency to retreat from the new men and women she encounters on the road, and to find comfort, security, and courage in her Kiowa past.

Spanish land

This is the tract of land that was owed to Captain Kidd's wife, Maria Luisa Bentacort y Real. It represents the Captain's dream of abandoning his itinerant lifestyle and of uniting his family.

San Antonio

The prominence of San Antonio in Captain Kidd's memories suggests that, for him, San Antonio is not only a city on a map but also a symbol of the life he once had with his wife and children. While today Captain Kidd is an itinerant drifter, San Antonio represented the rooted, intact life he had before the Civil War and his wife's death. It also represents his dreams for the future, when he can reunite his family.

Captain Kidd's Kiowa-English dictionary

Although Captain Kidd only begins work on the dictionary in the final chapter, it crystallizes Captain Kidd's long-standing ability and desire to mediate between cultures. It also represents his continued belief in the importance of language.

Gold hunting watch

The gold hunting watch, one of the few possessions Captain Kidd has, symbolizes the passing of time. When the Captain gives the watch to Johanna on the day of her wedding, it marks the culmination of Johanna's education and the end of Captain Kidd's responsibility for her.

Settings

Wichita Falls

This town is located near the border of the Indian Territory and is the place where Captain Kidd meets Johanna.

Spanish Fort

Located a mile from the Red River, which is the boundary between Indian Territory and "that which was not Indian Territory" (47), Spanish Fort is also known at Red River Station. Although it is a busy place, whatever fortresses once existed are gone now. The streets are packed with freight wagons and lined with supply stores. When Captain Kidd and Johanna arrive, the smoke-filled streets have turned to red mud from the flooding, and the wind is strong enough to blow people's hats off their heads. Doris and Simon live near Spanish Fort.

Dallas

The small town of Dallas is even busier than Spanish Fort, and has several blacksmith shops and two-story buildings made of brick and stone. People dress fancier here; the men wear "tight-fitting clothes" and the women are wearing elaborate dressed involving whalebone corsets. Mrs. Gannett lives here, and runs her husband's livery stable. From Johanna's perspective, Dallas is located "deep inside enemy territory" (69).

Brazos River

On their way to Durand, Captain Kidd and Johanna get caught her in a shoot-out with Almay.

Durand

South of Dallas and located off the Bosque River, Durand is has a main street with a livery stable, school, wool warehouse, a wagon maker, and a leather repair shop. Otherwise, the town is sparse and scattered among the woods.

Lampasas

Captain Kidd and Johanna stop at Lampasas on the long, arduous journey from Durand to Castroville. High, dry, and flat, with little tree cover and a good spring of water, Lampasas should be a safe place for them to stop and rest. That said, Captain Kidd

knows from past experience that two feuding families have brought trouble to the area. The spring is surrounded by great live oaks and lush Carrizo cane. Robins and yellow orioles cover the tree limbs.

Castroville

Like Dallas, Castroville is a small town with some big square two-stony houses with gallerias running along their second stories. The Captain notes that Castroville looks like engravings of European villages that he has seen, and the street life mimics the “careful and precise pacing” (182) of life in Alsace-Lorraine. Castroville is known for its seed, and has big warehouses for it.

D'Hanis

Fifteen miles west of Castroville is a small, mostly German “daughter community” (182) called D’Hanis. Anna and Wilhelm Leonberger live here. Johanna does not like it in D’Hanis, and pleads with Captain Kidd to take her back to Dallas. Johanna’s parents and sister are buried in the St. Dominic’s church here. The community of D’Hanis frightens Johanna with their excitement at the news of her return.

San Antonio

Perhaps the most symbolic of the different stops that Captain Kidd and Johanna makes, San Antonio exists both as a physical city and as Captain Kidd’s vivid memory of his former life with his wife. After Captain Kidd hands Johanna off to her relatives, he visits the lively city of San Antonio. There is a strong Spanish and Mexican influence here, and the novel often describes the Mexican women washing laundry in the river. Vendors sell grain, hay, “piles of fruit and simmering cauldrons of chili” (194) at the market in the Plaza de Armas. Captain Kidd lived with his wife and raised his two daughters here. Eventually, Captain Kidd’s daughters and grandchildren move back to San Antonio, and Captain Kidd and Johanna join them.

Themes and Motifs

Alternative families

The preponderance of non-biological family units in the novel suggests that true family members are not the ones who share bloodlines, but who provide stability and make sacrifices for one another. Simon and Doris are not yet married, while both Mrs. Gannett and Olympia have been widowed after the deaths of their husbands in Civil War. The fact that very few of the secondary characters belong to traditional, nuclear families reflects the high death count and widespread ravages of the Civil War in Texas. While the state tries to reenter the union and to rebuild its authority, characters like Captain Kidd, who is trying to reunite with his daughters by bringing them to Texas, are trying to rebuild their lives, family first. In this novel, alternative families are the few blessings born of war and death.

Johanna, whose life has been touched by war and death to an extreme degree, finds two accidental, non-biological families throughout the novel. The most important instance of this is Johanna's evolving relationship with Captain Kidd. From the very start, the novel presents Captain Kidd and Johanna's relationship in familial terms. Captain Kidd, at first reluctantly, thinks of Johanna as yet another burdensome daughter he must raise. Eventually, he begins to think about Johanna not as a burden but as a helpful addition and partner to his life. Johanna reciprocates, as she calls Captain Kidd her "kontah," the Kiowa word for grandfather. When Captain Kidd adopts Johanna, he simply formalizes the deep, familial affection that has developed between them. The moment when she introduces herself to John Calley as "Johanna Kidd" reminds the reader that Johanna has now found her family—one that belongs to her both emotionally and legally.

Laws and outlaws

The book is set in Texas in the years after the disastrous, devastating Civil War, during what is considered the first period of the Reconstruction. The political atmosphere at the time was rife with questions about the treatment of ex-Confederates and freed blacks, and conflicts between white supremacists and supporters of emancipation. These tensions show up in details such as the reaction of the audience to the news story about the 15th amendment, Captain Kidd's reactions to Britt Johnson, a freed black slave, and Britt's own remarks about his situation.

However, the novel's numerous scenes involving menacing outlaws and law enforcement alike demonstrate the general lawlessness and disorder, if not complete breakdown, of Texan society during the early 1870s. On the side of the outlaws, Captain Kidd and Johanna encounter Almay and the two Caddos, the Horrell brothers who have been acting as self-appointed law enforcement to not only detain but to kill Mexicans, and John Calley, the black-bearded man who refuses to let them pass into Durand if

they do not pay him money. The novel represents these men as scurrilous, even reprehensible in their outlaw behavior. Of these men, only John Calley is given any redemptive possibilities, as he later apologizes to the Captain and marries Johanna.

Additionally, the similarities between the obvious threat of these outlaws and the ominous presence of official law enforcement are striking. At many of the Captain's readings, two Army officers are stationed at the front door. Although they are meant to be keeping the peace, their presence make the Captain nervous--nor are they ultimately able to stop the fistfight that breaks out between the two audience members. Meanwhile, all such strangers, whether they are official military or rogue outlaws, make Johanna nervous with, as the novel suggests, good reason. For example, while the Captain vouches for Johanna, the Army lieutenant looks at Johanna strangely, asks for her identifying papers, and suggests that she learn to behave herself properly. The novel suggests that while these authorities may be stationed to ensure the peace, they are also there to regulate and monitor society, a project that bears more heavily on social "outsiders" like Johanna.

Language

The function of language in this novel is twofold. On the one hand, language functions as an important means of connection and communication between two people. Many of the scenes between Johanna and Captain Kidd focus on teaching and learning English. As Johanna's command of the English language improves, so does her relationship with Captain Kidd. Language gives Johanna a means not only of communicating factual observations about her world, but also of voicing her affection for Captain Kidd.

It is important to note that command of the English language is also associated in this novel with safety and security in white American society. The broom maker's hostile remark that while Johanna "looks English," she does not speak the language highlights Johanna's vulnerability when she can speak only Kiowa. As Johanna's English improves, she is less likely to be victimized, cast out, or marginalized for being "different."

However, language also has a second function in the novel. In the printed form of a newspaper, language has the ability to transport listeners and readers to other parts of the world; it invites them to imagine other peoples and other worlds, and in doing so to sympathize with them. The novel shows how this sympathy and understanding, in turn, allows the novel's most avid readers, like Captain Kidd, to better understand their own historical situation and context. In part because he is a news reader and a storyteller, Captain Kidd sees the pettiness, divisiveness, and toxicity of Texas politics around this time, and tries to heal different Texan communities by bringing them uplifting, inspiring, and intoxicating stories from around the world. Ultimately, the novel shows that while words may not always prevent a fistfight from breaking out, for those like Johanna and Captain Kidd choosing the power of the printed word over brute force brings triumph, joy, light, and laughter.

Journey

As the map on the inside of the front and back covers indicate, this novel charts Johanna and Captain Kidd's mostly unidirectional journey from the north of Texas to the south. While the oscillations between cities and open stretches of road, maximize opportunities for Johanna and Captain Kidd to learn about both themselves and each other, the movement of the journey from north to south often reinforces the characters' development, regarding each other and on a personal, individual basis.

Along the way, the journey forces both Johanna and Captain Kidd to abandon some of their preconceived notions about who they are and what they stand for. For Johanna, moving away from Indian Territory also means moving away from the Kiowa, who she considers her family, and towards a new understanding of family, community and identity. Johanna has ultimately to reject the Kiowa, as she does near the spring house in Lampasas.

Meanwhile, Captain Kidd is moving towards San Antonio, the place of his memories and dreams and aspirations. Captain Kidd's journey means returning to a place he knows, and that he once considered an essential part of his identity. However, when he finally arrives in San Antonio, Captain Kidd recognizes that the place does not have the same meaning to him as the people he loved and the memories he created there. Thus, he abandons San Antonio in order to go back for Johanna. Through the journey they both lose something about their pasts in order to gain something more meaningful for their future.

Age and wisdom

At seventy two years of age, Captain Kidd is this novel's oldest character. Moreover, he is frequently represented as the novel's most compassionate and far-thinking thinker. Frequently, the novel emphasizes the Captain's age, and his associated wisdom, in moments of political tension during his readings. For instance, during his Dallas reading, Captain Kidd is described by his "white hair" and "gold-rim glasses"(90)--two symbols of advancing age. Moreover, the novel describes how the Captain, as the "image of elderly reason and wisdom" (90), subdues the unruly crowd and argues forcefully for the importance of rational debate, intellectual engagement, and empathy over petty, local politics.

Scenes such as this one not only suggest the association between age and wisdom, but also portray that wisdom as a kind of authority in the world.

However, the authority that the Captain gains from his age is always in question, and later even challenged. When the fight breaks out, between two notably young people, Captain Kidd is unable to control the room. Youth wins over old age, and force wins out over debate. Through this structure, the novel interrogates society's attitudes towards old people, suggesting that years of life and experience in the world should (though it does not always) bring respect and authority. Frequently, the novel's youthful figures like

Johanna, John Calley, and the Texas Rangers during the Mexican-American war that respect Captain Kidd's authority and that go out of their way to lessen some of the aches and pains of old age are considered the most sympathetic.

The specific wisdom that the Captain has gained over his more than seven decades of experience in the world relates to his recognition that the world is large, and that time passes, smoothing over the more fleeting, damaging passions of local politics. It is clear that the Captain's experience in three wars, for example, gives him a more expansive, compassionate perspective. Thus, he is able to reflect that, "No matter what side you were on, if you survived Gettysburg you were to be congratulated" (91). In other words, political factions and this month's political brouhaha matter less to the Captain than the bigger facts of survival, war, death, and the like. Ultimately, the novel pits the wisdom, calm rationality, and intellect of old age against the aggression, foolishness, animosity, and passionate, divisive politics of youth.

Styles

Point of View

The novel is written from the third person, though its narrator mostly gives the perspective of Captain Kidd. Captain Kidd's life acts as the novel's natural bookends, from its first paragraph telling the reader his date of birth (1798) to its final paragraph summarizing Captain Kidd's request in his will to be buried with his runner's badge. However, there are exceptions, as the narrator occasionally knows the thoughts and feelings of other characters. One example of this is when the narrator remarks at the end of Chapter Two on the "peculiar knowledge about human beings" (18) that Almay and the Caddos have gained. Since Captain Kidd has not yet interacted with them, it is a clear example of the narrator's occasional omniscience.

One of the most striking breaks from the Captain's point of view occur when the novel occasionally switches into Johanna's perspective. Early on, Johanna knows how to speak and think only in Kiowa, and as such, her thoughts are often presented—as they are in Chapter One and Chapter Five—in italics. Often, these moments connect to Johanna's Kiowa name, "Cicada," suggesting that there are parts of Johanna's past and identity that the reader cannot access through the perspective of Captain Kidd, who does not speak Kiowa. Other moments when the novel gives particular insights from Johanna's perspective include moments when she reflects on her Kiowa family, including the opening paragraphs of Chapter Four and towards the end of Chapter Fourteen.

Only once, in the last line of the second to last paragraph of the novel, does it switch to the perspective of the Kiowa themselves. In this moment, Johanna is once again identified as "Cicada," also known as "Three Spotted's little blue-eyed girl" (209). In a novel ostensibly obsessed with restoring "Cicada" to her rightful place among white American society, these last words are a painful reminder that her re-insertion into that world also constituted a significant loss for her Kiowa family.

Language and Meaning

As the novel seeks to portray the diversity and heterogeneity of Texas during the Reconstruction period, it frequently pulls words and phrases from a variety of languages, such as German, English, and Kiowa. In general, the language that each character uses suggests a broader cultural identification. When Johanna is with the Kiowa, and thinks of herself as Kiowa, she frequently sings, speaks and chants in Kiowa. However, over the course of the novel, as Johanna grows closer to Captain Kidd and adjusts to the white American way of life, Johanna not only recovers some of her German but also learns how to speak English.

Even writing in English, the author finds ways of capturing the strangeness and discomfort that Johanna feels towards her new life. For instance, the author describes houses from Johanna's perspective as "immovable houses" (187). Added words like "immovable" de-familiarize and force the reader to think more critically about their assumptions of what a particular word means or an object looks like. Captain Kidd occasionally attempts to enter into Johanna's perspective, and to see the world from her point of view. After trying to teach Johanna how to eat with "old silverware" (76), Captain Kidd reflects that, to her, this silverware must seem like "outlandish instruments." The same objects are thus presented to the reader in three different ways: the narrator's perspective ("fork") to Captain Kidd's perspective ("old silverware") to, finally, Johanna's perspective ("outlandish instruments").

The novel occasionally adopts the tone of the news stories that Captain Kidd himself reads aloud to his audiences. This is most striking in the opening paragraph to the first and third chapters, which give overviews of Captain Kidd's military career and other life achievements. However, as the novel progresses, it moves further away from the news story format, choosing to immerse the reader in the events of the story instead. Notably, Captain Kidd invents a catchy headline for his and Johanna's shootout at the Brazos River (126). However, no one learns the story and the term never catches on. The moment reflects the novel's belief that some things are missed in the catchy, dramatic language of newspaper.

Structure

The novel's overall structure tracks a geographical movement southwards from the small towns of North Texas like Wichita Falls and Spanish Fort, which border Indian Territory, towards towns like Fredericksburg and San Antonio in central and southern Texas. The chapters themselves are short, and tend to break off at the points when Captain Kidd and Johanna depart a town; the next chapter often begins with their arrival at a new location. Thus, for the most part, the chapters move forward sequentially and chronologically, although there are some chapters, such as the second chapter, that make significant departures from this formula in order to provide flashbacks into a character's past.

This structure works thematically for the novel in two ways. First, the novel's movement southward, into the heart of Texas, shifts the novel's political preoccupations. In the north, many of the conversations between Captain Kidd and men like Britt are about the Kiowa Indians; moreover, on the northern roads, Captain Kidd most fears an attack from the Kiowa. However, as they move south, tensions within Texas politics dominate. Over and over again, Captain Kidd and Johanna run into white Texan outlaws, like Almay or John Calley—not Kiowa Indians. Meanwhile, Captain Kidd's readings are increasingly interrupted by unruly audience members and fights (both verbal and physical) about Texas's newly appointed pro-Union governor, Edmund Jackson Davis.

This political tension, which increases as Captain Kidd and Johanna journey into southern Texas, is counterbalanced by the growing attachment and affection between

Johanna and the Captain. The “Great Brazos Ten-Cent Shoot-Out at Carlyle Springs” (129), in which Johanna and the Captain fight together and save one another’s lives, provides a climax for their relationship. The run-in with the Kiowa men near the Lampasas spring, when it becomes obvious that Johanna prefers Captain Kidd to the Kiowa, confirms their intense bond since the shoot-out. Their arrival at Castroville then confirms that while the Leonbergers technically “want” Johanna as a farmhand, they will never love her in the way that the Captain does. In this sense, the overall structure of the novel is also one that gradually removes obstacles to Johanna and Captain Kidd’s relationship and reinforces how much they need each other, to the point that it seems inevitable by the penultimate chapter that Captain Kidd will adopt her.

Quotes

My name is Cicada. My father's name is Turning Water. My mother's name is Three Spotted. I want to go home.
-- Johanna Leonberger (chapter 1)

Importance: This quote, the first from Johanna's perspective, shows just how deeply she has internalized her identity as a member of the Kiowa, to the extent that she thinks of herself as "Cicada" and her "home" with the Kiowa.

And then he had come to think that what people needed, at bottom, was not only information but tales of the remote, the mysterious, dressed up as hard information. And he, like a runner, immobile in his smeared printing apron bringing it to them. Then the listeners would for a small space of time drift away into a healing place like curative waters.
-- Captain Kidd (chapter 3)

Importance: In this quote, the author establishes Captain Kidd's belief that the outlandish, exotic news stories he can provide his listeners with temporary feeling of peace and relief. The quote also connects this belief with Captain Kidd's attraction to his job in the army as a runner and his choice in wagon, which also has the words "curative waters" written on it.

You can put her in any clothing and she remains as strange as she was before because she has been through two creations... To go through our first creation is a turning of the soul we hope toward the light, out of the animal world. God be with us. To go through another tears all the making of the first creation and sometimes it falls to bits.
-- Doris Dillon (chapter 6)

Importance: Here, the author uses Doris Dillon to identify the trauma that Johanna, as the victim of two painful losses of identity and as the child of two cultures, has undergone. In this quote, Doris also expresses the high possibility that Johanna, like so many other returned captives, will be unable to survive this experience intact.

He was suddenly almost overwhelmed with pity for her. Torn from her parents, adopted by a strange culture, given new parents, then sold for a few blankets and some old silverware... now sent to stranger after stranger, crushed into peculiar clothing, surrounded by people of an unknown language and an unknown culture, only ten years old, and now she could not even eat her food without having to use outlandish instruments.
-- Captain Kidd (chapter 8)

Importance: While watching Johanna's failed, frustrated attempts at such a seemingly simple task as eating with a fork, Captain Kidd is suddenly filled with a sense of despair and pity. This quote is the first of many examples when the Captain does the hard work

of putting himself into Johanna's shoes, and imagining her life "then," her life "now," and the vast changes and differences between them.

There was no public money to rebuild. It was not only Sherman. It had been General Forrest who had blown up most of the railroads between Tennessee and Mississippi to keep the Yankees from using them. At any rate, they were all in tatters.
-- Captain Kidd (chapter 9)

Importance: This quote, from Captain Kidd's perspective, reflects on the Civil War. The reflections are characteristic of the Captain's and the novel's even-handed, judicial approach to the politics of slavery and reconstruction. As the quote shows, both sides bear responsibility for the damage and heartbreak of the Civil War. Also characteristic of the novel is this quote's reference to Sherman and Forrest only by their last names, leaving the reader to read between lines or to do extra research for him or herself.

And here he was in his mild and mindless way still roaming, still reading out the news of the world in the hope that it would do some good, but in the end he must carry a weapon in his belt and he had a child to protect and no printed story or tale would alter that.
-- Captain Kidd (chapter 10)

Importance: Despite the novel's overall faith in the importance of storytelling, this quote reminds the reader that there are some things, especially when it comes to life and death matters on the battlefield, that no amount of news reading or reporting can change.

To comfort himself and slow down his mind he thought of his time as a courier, a runner, and Maria Luisa and his daughters. Maybe life is just carrying news. Surviving to carry the news. Maybe we just have one message, and it is delivered to us when we are born and we are never sure what it says; it may have nothing to do with us personally but it must be carried by hand through a life, all the way, and at the end handed over, sealed.
-- Captain Kidd (chapter 13)

Importance: This quote provides one of the novel's principal philosophies, a kind of existential statement rooting the purpose of one's life in something that one cannot know oneself but can only trust to deliver in the end. This quote also foreshadows the Captain's final request to be buried with his runner's badge.

Johanna put her hands over her eyes. She could think only of her Kiowa mother, Three Spotted, her mother's laughter, and how they had all dunked each other in the clear water of Cache Creek in the Wichita Mountains, and screamed and fell backward straight into the water, and far up the mountainside a group of young men drummed for the fun of it. They had waded and splashed down the clear currents, four, five girls with strings of vermilion beads in their hair. She wept for them and for those mountains, a strange adult weeping with open hands and a bowed head. For all her terrible losses, which of a sudden had come back to her in a painful wounding rush.
-- Johanna Leonberger (chapter 14)

Importance: This quote, from Johanna's perspective, shows that many of her memories of her Kiowa past are warm, affectionate ones, as vivid as Captain Kidd's memories of his wife. Also similar to the Captain's memories, they are tinged with a painful sense of loss, the realization of which in this quote marks maturity.

What good was a beautiful town like that when she was not there? He turned his face to the sky in an effort to clear his head. They went away and never said another word to you again. In some strange way it made him mad. Not a word, not a sign. No messages from the Other World, or perhaps there were signs and he did not see them.
-- Captain Kidd (chapter 16)

Importance: In this quote, the Captain's thought that the death depart this world without leaving any message behind for their loved ones is a darker, more despairing thought than is typical for Captain Kidd.

He wondered if she would betray him. If she would call out to the young captive and his fellows who hid above on the bluff somewhere. If this was his last night on earth. This was what she had wanted so much, to return to the Kiowa and the life she had known. The people whom she considered her people, and their gods her gods.
-- Captain Kidd (chapter 18)

Importance: Captain Kidd's brief thought that Johanna may still prefer the Kiowa to him reveals the stakes of this moment for their relationship. The quote also reveals how intertwined both their lives have become; if Johanna chooses to return to the Kiowa, Captain Kidd will die.

She understood his voice and the stiffness of his arm. Somewhere ahead were strange white people she could only remember as if in poorly lit lantern slides called aunt and uncle and that they were going to them. The rest she could figure out for herself but not why, or where Kontah would go. The wind brought no news of her people.
-- Johanna Leonberger (chapter 19)

Importance: This quote powerfully captures both the deep bond between Johanna and Captain Kidd, who has become like a grandfather to her, and the strangeness of the concept of biological family as it appears to Johanna.

He was the man who read the news and she the little captive girl whom he had rescued and who it was said had crept up Indianwise on the depraved animal named Almay as he lay in his hoggish den and before the Captain could restrain her had beaten him to death with a bag of quarters."
-- the author (chapter 22)

Importance: This quote demonstrates how rumors spread, stretching the truth and spreading inaccuracies as they go. It also suggests that Johanna will always remain, in the eyes of white American society, a little strange and misrepresented.

In her daily company he found himself also ceasing to value these things that seemed so important to the white world. He found himself falling more deeply into the tales of far places and strange peoples.
-- Captain Kidd (chapter 22)

Importance: This quote draws a potential link between Kiowa values and the healing powers of reading about far-off, remote places, suggesting that the Kiowa not only share but embrace Captain Kidd's most fundamental beliefs.