

Oldest Living Confederate Widow Tells All Study Guide

Oldest Living Confederate Widow Tells All by Allan Gurganus

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Contents

Oldest Living Confederate Widow Tells All Study Guide.....	1
Contents.....	2
Plot Summary.....	3
Book I, pgs. 1-22.....	4
Book I, pgs. 23-64.....	5
Book I, pgs. 66-88.....	6
Book I, pgs. 89-152.....	7
Book II, pgs. 153-218.....	9
Book II, pgs. 219-318.....	11
Book III, pgs. 319-363.....	13
Book III, pgs. 364-477.....	15
Book III, pgs. 478-509.....	17
Book III, pgs. 510 - 546.....	18
Book IV, pgs. 547-606.....	19
Book IV, pgs. 607-632.....	21
Book V, pgs. 633-645.....	22
Book V, pgs. 647-692.....	23
Book V, pgs. 693-718.....	25
Characters.....	27
Objects/Places.....	30
Themes.....	32
Style.....	34
Quotes.....	36
Topics for Discussion.....	38



Plot Summary

Oldest Living Confederate Widow Tells All, by Allen Gurganus, is the story of Lucy Marsden. She is the widow of the last surviving soldier of the Civil War. This is her story of slavery, the Civil War, family, sharecropping, and the South. The book opens with the death of her husband, Captain Marsden. He had been famous in the area with people coming to interview him and to take pictures. Lucy would prompt him to tell his battle stories for them. Lucy did this for the last thirty years of his life.

This book tells the story of two Civil Wars. The first is the one involving the conflict between the North and the South. Lucy tells the story of the slaves, like Castiglia, the burning of the plantations during Sherman's march, and the surrender at Appomattox. Her husband, Will Marsden, was thirteen years of age when he and his best friend joined the battle for the South. Ned was soon killed by a lake in Virginia and Will never recovered from the death.

The second war is on the domestic front in Lucy's own home. Lucy and Will fight the eternal male-female battle, which begins on their wedding night. Women were expected to do certain things and to behave in certain ways whether they wanted to or not. In spite of this, Lucy remained dedicated to her husband until the day he died.

Will became celebrated for his war stories. He was highly sought after for speeches and interviews. Lucy relates many of these stories in this book. The reader sees how Lucy's life long friendship with Cassie began. Cassie had been the personal slave of Will's mother, Lady Marsden and claimed to be an African princess. As Sherman's troops are approaching The Lilacs, the Marsden plantation, Lady Marsden wants to hear Cassie's story. Lucy relates the story at a latter point in the book.

After she was free, Cassie lived in Baby Africa where she had a mink farm. She used the pelts to make herself a mink coat over quite a few years. When Lucy was first brought to the Marsden house after her marriage, she was afraid of Cassie but was curious about her. When Will heard of Lucy wandering around Baby Africa, he fired Cassie. Lucy and Cassie's friendship began at this point.

Lucy tells her tales throughout the book. Will never got over the effects of the War Between the States and Lucy, who lived with the ghosts of that war, was constantly fighting the second war in her own home.



Book I, pgs. 1-22

Book I, pgs. 1-22 Summary

Oldest Living Confederate Widow Tells All, by Allen Gurganus, is the story of Lucy Marsden. She is the widow of the last surviving soldier of the Civil War. This is her story of slavery, the Civil War, family, sharecropping and the South. The book opens with the death of her husband, Captain Marsden. He had been famous in the area with people coming to interview him and to take pictures. Lucy would prompt him to tell his battle stories for them. Lucy did this for the last thirty years of his life.

The book opens with Lucy thinking of his death. The house is now quiet, with no more visitors. Lucy comes to like the quiet. She is now in a home and people come to see her to hear her stories. She is ninety nine years old and the oldest living confederate widow.

Lucy thinks of her husband and her life with him. She describes herself as the veteran of veterans. The people who come to see her want to know about the past.

Lucy tells the story of the death of her husband's friend, Ned Smythe at Appomattox. The men are swimming and Ned was shot and drowned. Willie tried to rescue him but he was already dead. Lucy then talks about the number of deaths in the Civil War.

All of Lucy's children are now dead. She outlived them all.

In After Appomattox, Lucy says Willie hardens after Ned's death. The men never tells Willie where they buried Ned since they are afraid Willie would dig up the body. In the next few weeks, Willie is taken prisoner and escapes. When the war end, Willie walks home. He and his mother stay in rented rooms since their farm had been destroyed by Sherman. Some of her furniture had been saved by a slave girl.

Book I, pgs. 1-22 Analysis

This section introduces the characters of Lucy and Willie Marsden. Ninety nine year old Lucy is in a state nursing home and telling stories of her and her husband's life. Willie was thirteen years old when he became a Confederate soldier. Lucy relates how he was affected by the war. He was just a child when he had to experience the horrors of war and he never forgot the experiences as is true of most soldiers.



Book I, pgs. 23-64

Book I, pgs. 23-64 Summary

There are shortages in Falls, North Carolina. Ned Smythe's mother, Winona was a widower and she had not gone out of her yard after Ned left for the war. She learns of her son's death via letter delivered by the postman. The neighbors knew from her wailing that Ned had been killed and came to do what they could to help, including Lucy's mother. Two days later, they noticed a gray army tent in her yard where she slept. She wanted to live the way her son lived before dying.

Lucy explains how the Lanes' End charity home obtained its name. She thinks it should be called something else.

Will Marsden avoids Winona's house. He spends time in spots where he and Ned used to play. He finally decides to visit Winona and tells her about Ned's death. She started screaming and throwing plates at him until he left. Will was not yet sixteen.

Will bartered in his business and as a result, became rich. He and his mother would often picnic on their burned out property. Will had inherited three farms and owned a livestock farm that rented horses to people. All of the slaves are gone. He continues to make weekly visits to Winona and tells her stories about the war. Will soon is telling stories at dinner parties.

By the time Will is thirty six, the ex-private had promoted himself to a captain in his war stories.

In *The Tailor and the Leg*, Willie is quiet during the war. He befriends forty year old Corporal Salvador Smith after Ned's death. They are captured together and escape together. This is when Will is shot. Sal tends to him. Will is afraid the doctors will cut off the leg as was the practice at the time. The wound begins to fester and the surgeon wants to amputate the leg but Sal will not let him.

Book I, pgs. 23-64 Analysis

Lucy tries to understand the younger generation. This is evident from her conversation with the teenage candy striper, Sondra, who calls herself Zondra. Lucy tries to understand the Mohawk hairdo and the ring through her nose but does not understand why anyone would want to look like that.

Will began his storytelling when he first began visiting Ned's mother. She wanted to hear war stories so Will told her the stories of the battles and became an experienced story teller. He began to tell war stores in public and people liked to hear them. Over the years, he promoted himself from private to captain in his stories.



Book I, pgs. 66-88

Book I, pgs. 66-88 Summary

Lucy talks about how Lanes' End was better when it was directed by Larry Winch. The residents had their choice of room color and the food was much better. But he had problems with the state over money management problems.

Willie, who Lucy calls Cap, is wearing a uniform when she first sees him. She is rather impressed. She is fifteen years of age at the time and he is approaching fifty but they begin going on walks together. Her father refers to her as Miss Engaged.

In Bull Run Honeymoon, when Lucy marries Will, reporters from Raleigh covered the event. They honeymoon in Georgia. When they arrived at the hotel near Atlanta, Will finds a war veteran and they sit and talk about Antietam. Lucy and Will finally go to their room. Lucy knew nothing about the facts of life and Will had to use a pillow to muffle her screams. She thought of running back home and living with her maiden aunts. During the night the Captain has nightmares of the battles he was in and talks in his sleep. Lucy had never thought of pain being associated with war stories. She forgives him for the pain he has caused her.

Book I, pgs. 66-88 Analysis

Lucy is fifteen years of age when she marries Will who is approaching fifty. She sees him as a boy who is still scared from the war, even though the war ended over thirty years ago. She is unprepared for her first time with Marsden and views it as her own war battle. Lucy seems to like to tell this story of her honeymoon.

Lucy also discusses life at the Lanes' End home where she has lived for fourteen years. She mentions how important soap operas are to some of the people and how she used to think the other women were talking about family members. They seem to have eventually got her involved in the soap operas.



Book I, pgs. 89-152

Book I, pgs. 89-152 Summary

They arrive home from their honeymoon at night. Cap carries her into the house. He puts her down in front of a black woman who must weight two hundred pounds. He introduces her to Castalia and says that he wants them to get along.

Cassie has drawn a bath for Lucy. She offers to help Lucy undress but Lucy says she can manage on her own. After Cassie leaves, Lucy relaxes in the tub.

In How to Return, Lucy and Cap stops at fourteen different Livestock Barons on the way, home from Georgia. Livestock is Cap's business. Along the way, Lucy kids him about being lost but she soon begins to recognize where they are as they approach Falls. They stop at Hodgepath's produce stand to purchase some fresh produce. Lucy thinks of this as she lounges in the tub.

She notices the provisions Cassie has setup: a basin of hot water, a bar of soap and cruet of vinegar. She doesn't understand what it is for and washes her hair with the water.

Cap gets up for work the next morning and tells Lucy to stay in bed. He says he wants her to be pampered. Cassie would bring her a breakfast tray. Lucy dresses and goes downstairs. As Cassie cooks her eggs, Lucy tells her that she wants them to be friends. Cassie tells her that she doesn't know how to be a boss.

Lucy eats the entire four egg omelet as Cassie waited to wash the dishes. Cassie is pleased when Lucy tells her the eggs were perfect.

Two weeks later, Lucy's parents are at the Captain's house for dinner. Lucy has learned to ring a silver bell to summon Cassie, as Captain has taught her but decides to walk to the kitchen to summon Cassie. She finds her eating donuts and is asked why she did not knock first.

Lucy learns what other married ladies do during the day and begins to emulate them. She read novels in the afternoon and soon learns to lock the door of her reading room to keep from having run-ins with Cassie.

Cap tells Lucy stories about the days of slavery and how Cassie once ran away. Lucy follows Cassie on her shopping day. She learns that most merchants find it easier to give Cassie the price she wants rather than haggle. Cassie ignores her.

Lucy learns that Cassie believed that she is descended from African royalty. This is the reason for her attitude. Lucy also learns that Cassie is a midwife. Another day while Cassie is working at Captain's house, Lucy goes to see Cassie's house and sees her



two boys on the porch. Afterwards, she goes downtown. She has been craving salt and feeling queasy.

When Lucy goes home, she finds Cassie bathing. She tells Cassie she has seen her boys. Captain is not happy about her visit for Baby Africa. He fires Cassie and now Lucy will be busy doing the cooking and cleaning. Lucy finds Cassie packing her belongings. They talk and Cassie tells Lucy that Lucy is pregnant.

Book I, pgs. 89-152 Analysis

Lucy wants to be friends with Cassie but is not sure how to approach her. She does not know how to act around servants and Cassie tells her as much. At one point she even asks Cassie if she can learn to cook and help her around the house. She does not seem to understand that this is how Cassie earns her living.

Lucy had hoped that Cassie would thaw toward her and when it didn't happen, she decided to learn what she could about Cassie and the days of slavery to try to better understand her. Captain tells her that Cassie is descended from African royalty and that is the reason for her haughty attitude.

Captain is afraid that Cassie and Lucy will team up against him. He brings this up several times but never explains what he means by it and says he will fire Cassie if that ever happens. When he finds that Lucy has been seen in Baby Africa, he fires Cassie. This probably could not happen at a worse time for Lucy who learns she is pregnant. Now she will have to do all of the cooking and cleaning by herself.



Book II, pgs. 153-218

Book II, pgs. 153-218 Summary

Captain tells Lucy what it is like to be in war and how he obtained a watch from a dying Union soldier. He had dragged the injured soldier into a ditch with him. The soldier, Simon Utt, asks him to send the timepiece to his family if he doesn't survive. When he dies, Will takes the address from Simon's pocket and leaves him in the ditch. That night, he began writing a letter to Mrs. Utt.

Will constructed a wood box for the watch and burned pictures on the outside. While standing in line at the mail tent, he realized that as a Confederate soldier, he can't send a package to a northern address. He had killed the man!

For the remainder of the war, Will didn't shoot much at the enemy unless one of his officers was there and then he shot over their heads.

After the war, Will mails the letter to the Utt family but keeps the watch until a time when it was safer to send valuable items through the mail. Will displays the time piece on his mantle and is in regular correspondence with the Utt family. Eventually, Will journeys to Malden, Massachusetts. He is afraid traveling in the north and refuses to eat. At the Utt's house, he gives the watch to the women. Soon dozens of neighbors arrived. He had wanted to tell them the truth about Simon's death and finally, he does. After hearing the story, Mrs. Utt thanks him for the watch and says goodbye. Will returns to Virginia, meets his relatives and rides home with them. Back in Falls, Will buys an expensive platinum Swiss watch.

In *One Old Man in Here I Like*, Lucy says that there aren't many men at Lanes' End. There are only twelve men compared to the twenty-nine women. People are known by their room numbers. Lucy liked Professor Taw who is interested in physics so she begins to learn about physics. She goes to him for help and finds he knows the author of the textbook she has been reading.

In *The Passable Kingdom*, Lucy has her first daughter. Since the doctor is out of town, Cassie delivers the baby named Louisa. Lucy was comforted by Cassie, who delivered all nine of her children.

After seventeen years, Will sees Sal Smith, the man who saved his leg. Sal is quite prosperous but had lost his own leg. He made his money in latex.

Over the years, the Captain's storytelling grew. Some people considered them tall tales and complained. Lucy also remembers all of his stories. They children also liked hearing him tell his war stories.



Book II, pgs. 153-218 Analysis

Will had killed Simon Utt and it had affected him. He hung on to Simon's watch for as long as he could. Instead of mailing the watch to the Utts, he decides to travel to Massachusetts to hand-deliver it. Will feels a need to tell them the truth about Simon's death. He wants to be forgiven for killing Simon, which is something the Utts could not do. Telling the Utts about Simon's death is a way of easing Will's conscience.

At some times, Lucy objects to Will telling war stories to their children. Like most parents, she wanted to protect them for the realities of war while they were young, but she couldn't make Will stop. The children liked hearing the stories and she wanted to keep peace in the house.



Book II, pgs. 219-318

Book II, pgs. 219-318 Summary

When Lucy is a school girl, she is given an assignment on the Civil War and chooses Lady Marsden as her subject. She has to interview the woman.

Lady Marsden had lived in a seventy room mansion, The Lilacs, that was destroyed by Sherman. The house was full of clocks and she was known to be a master at fixing clocks. After her son went to war, she spent her time playing Catacombs with the slaves. Before the war, she was known for her Lilac Time Gala, a large party which was a tradition in the area.

There is no party in April 1865. Richmond was burning. Sherman had captured Raleigh and was expected at the Lilacs. Lady Marsden is playing the piano as news comes of other plantations burning. The slaves are salvaging various items from the house while awaiting Sherman's arrival. Cassie stayed with Lady Marsden until the Yankees arrive. Cassie and Zelia, another slave, get Lady Marsden out of the house.

Former slaves crowd the roads carrying belongings of their former masters. Many of the former slaves spit on Lady Marsden. They cheer as the Yankees arrive. Cassie grabs Lady Marsden and they hide in a tree until Cassie goes to greet the Yankees. There are four of them and they set fire to the house. Cassie grabs a sheet from the clothesline and wraps it around Lady Marsden. She is burned in the fire. The former slaves rescue her and tend to her injuries.

Most of the slaves remain on the grounds of The Lilacs. Even though they are free, they have no place to go and no way to get there if they did. Those who tried to go to Falls returned. Falls is dangerous for everyone. The Marsden group of blacks vote to remain with Lady Marsden until she recovers or dies. As she recovers, they decide to teach her the basics of survival and then leave, eleven days after the fire.

When the former slaves leave, Cassie goes with them. She plans on going to New York City. They leave Lady Marsden surrounded with food and water and a mirror. She waves as they leave.

Lady Marsden is able to find a walking stick to help her walk. She eats whatever she could find.

The Marsden slaves find that they can not take any house in Falls and decide it is theirs. They camp along the river where other freed slaves join them. Some of them find jobs in Falls. The community along the river becomes known as Baby Africa.

Six weeks after the fire, Cassie goes to the livery owned by the Marsdens and tells the manager where to find the Marsden furniture. The livery manager retrieves and stores the items. He didn't find Lady who had a hiding place in the woods.



Will returns two months after the fire. He stops at The lilacs where he finds his mother. They move into the boarding house.

Book II, pgs. 219-318 Analysis

While a school girl, Lucy has to write a paper on a character from the Confederate Civil War. She selects Lady Marsden as her subject and has to interview the recluse. From this, the reader learns of the final days at the Lilacs and how Lady Marsden survived until her son returned.

The slaves knew they would be freed when Sherman's troops arrived, but they remain with Lady Marsden, who is badly burned in the fire. Even though they care for her for eleven days, until she could survive on her own, they are somewhat cruel to her. They force her to look at her burned self in a mirror as they taunt her. Many of them bear grudges for their treatment as slaves. But she wouldn't have survived if they hadn't remained and cared for her.



Book III, pgs. 319-363

Book III, pgs. 319-363 Summary

Lucy tells how they purchased a Model T Ford, one of the first to be made. They have eight of their nine children at the time and leave for a tour of the Civil War places. Captain makes Lucy and the kids get out of the car at each of their stops whether they wanted to see the war sites or not. Lucy notices that as they near the places with the most painful memories, the facts of his stories change.

Lucy didn't want to go on the trip. She wants Will to go alone but he is afraid of facing the memories. She finds that he is very patient and good with the children while they traveled. Lucy hopes that revisiting the places with bad memories will help Will to heal. He told her more and more stories, many of them new. He talks about his friend Ned's singing voice and how the unit made him sing for them.

One night, Lucy, now pregnant with her ninth child, finds Captain sleeping behind the wheel of the car. He is dreaming and talking in his sleep. She gently wakes him and sends him back to the cabin.

They reach the lake where Ned Smythe was killed. Will climbs a tree and sits in it. Then he showed them a leather cord. The two oldest kids, Louisa and Ned, climb the tree to reach their father and Lucy had to scream for them to come down. The Captain finally climbs down, bringing a piece of the harness with him. Lucy, thinking he wanted to be alone, says she and the kids would wait in the car but he tells her not to leave him.

Cap is very quite on the trip home and eats nothing. He stays in the car while his wife and kids eat at diners. Lucy is worried about the change in him when they are home. He is often gone for long periods of time. The children also shy away from him. His hair turns white within a few months. Lucy misses having him around and spends a lot of time talking to Cassie.

In a Hunger to be Vertical, Lucy's ninth baby is born. She is worried about Will who is gambling heavily.

Book III, pgs. 319-363 Analysis

Like many war veterans, Will carries a lot of emotional scars. Lucy, with eight children and pregnant with the ninth, did not want to make the long trip with him. She wants him to go alone but he said he is afraid to. As they drive closer to areas with painful memories, his stories change. There were also many new stories. At the lake where Ned was killed, she worries about his emotional condition with the kids along.

Will changes after the visit to the lake. He is quite and eat nothing on the ride home. His hair turns white in a few months and he stays away from home. Cassie tells Lucy that



he is remourning the death of Ned. Whether he is or not, he was experiencing some emotional difficulties.

With nine children in the house, Will keeps a gun collection there under his bed. Lucy does not like this.



Book III, pgs. 364-477

Book III, pgs. 364-477 Summary

Lucy doesn't want any servants, even with nine children. Her mother had had slaves. Lucy's mother, Bianca, was unruly as a child and Maimie L. Beech was brought in to be her nursemaid. Bianca is better behaved after four months. Mamie hides the fact that she can't read and always quits when her charges reach the age of six, lest she be found out.

McCloud rewards Maimie with a bonus and she uses some of the money to buy a bottle of perfume for Bianca. She bathes the little girl's hair in the perfume. While the child lays in the sun to dry her hair, wasps cover her head, attracted by the perfume and the child is stung repeatedly. Maimie falls asleep and isn't aware of the child's predicament. Bianca runs around the town with the wasps stinging her. Bianca is rescued by Mrs. Lucas, who chases her and cuts off her curls. It took Bianca more than three weeks to recover from the attack. Maimie is fired by McCloud who gives her a good reference.

Bianca is very fearful after the accident and would never trust black servants. After she marries, she does her own housework.

Maimie can't find work after the incident. McCloud sends her a check to help her out. Her pastor wants her to work with the black children in Baby Africa, but she refuses. She goes to the McCloud Mansion when they are giving a party and demand to see McCloud. He sends word for her to go around the back so the children won't see her. She leaves and walks into the river. It is a while before her body was found. McCloud attended the funeral.

Why I Say Ain't reveals that Lucy has a collection of prisms as a child. Her best friend is Shirley Williams who is from a poor family.

Bianca meets her future husband after a train accident. Samuel cares for her and she asks him to marry her. After the marriage, she is just about a social outcast among her friends. Samuel gets along with Lucy's friend, Shirley. Many of the men come to see Samuel, including Captain Marsden to talk.

Samuel becomes the local assistant postmaster. He is home by two the first day. That's how long his only job lasted. In spite of everything, he and Bianca have a good marriage.

Lucy uses the word 'ain't' like her father did. Her mother and teacher are always correcting her.

Bianca inherits the family money and her sisters get the family mansion when their father dies. She doesn't see her sisters but Samuel and Lucy visit them.



At fourteen, the Captain takes an interest in Lucy. Her mother is at first against the marriage, but her father pushes for it. Shirley steps into high society, marries well, and dies during childbirth.

Book III, pgs. 364-477 Analysis

In this section, Lucy talks about her mother Bianca and father Samuel. Bianca is the spoiled daughter of the wealthy Angus McCloud. After a train wreck, Samuel Honicott, a poor boy from Bear grass, nurses her back to health. When she appears in Falls, she announces she is marrying him.

Although they have a good marriage, Samuel lives off of Bianca's money. She lost her place socially when she married Samuel and she spends her life pushing Lucy toward social refinement so she would marry well and the family would recover its social position. This is rough on Lucy who is caught between two worlds. Her best friend Shirley is from a poor family and because of this, Bianca does not like her. Lucy never did stop using the word 'ain't' much to her mother's consternation.



Book III, pgs. 478-509

Book III, pgs. 478-509 Summary

Will is sitting in a ditch in Appomattox. They are waiting for Lee to pass by. The South has lost the war. Will is fifteen years of age at the time. He buries the musket that he killed three men with. The men in his unit discuss what they would do now that the war was over.

While waiting for the peace to be signed, Will thinks of the three men he killed and of all he has been through in the last three years. He isn't interested in seeing Lee. He just wants to leave, especially after Lee passes by. Sal wants to wait to hear the terms of the surrender. Will says good bye to Sal and the other men and begins walking south, never breaking pace. After ten minutes of walking, he turns to wave, but the men are out of sight.

Will has grown several inches and is now in puberty. He doesn't know what he is going home to and suffers from sunstroke during the long seven week walk. He eats what people give him or he could steal and sleeps in barns at night. Along the way he talk to people and learn about the devastation of Sherman. A man he meets in Sharpsburg gives him money for food. Will refuses a ride because he wants to be able to tell his wife and children that he walks home from Appomattox.

In Bunting, Wrinkleproof, Marsden is in his sixties. He is asked to lead the yearly parade of the Daughters of the Confederacy in Raleigh. The locals help him prepare for the role. Lucy knows that younger women are attracted to him but it is her that he loves. Cap was more famous after the parade.

Book III, pgs. 478-509 Analysis

Will spent three of his childhood years fighting for the losing side in the Civil War. When Lee is passing his unit at Appomattox on his way to sign the surrender, Will doesn't even want to see him. He just wants to leave and go home. He wants to pick up the life the war had robbed him of. He won't accept a ride during the seven week walk because he want to be able to tell his wife and children that he walked home from Appomattox. Once when hearing him tell the story, Lucy wonders when he would ever arrive home. He always seems to be living the war and she feels that the three soldiers he killed are in the house with them. Lucy, for the most part, is happy with Will and is devoted to her children, but she had had her share of swollen lips.



Book III, pgs. 510 - 546

Book III, pgs. 510 - 546 Summary

As Ned approaches his twelfth birthday, Will wants to take him on his first hunting trip. Lucy is against it even though Ned wanted to go.

Lucy's kids like to visit at Cassie's and play with her kids. Cassie has a mink farm and the kids like to feed the minks. Cassie has been using the pelts to make herself a mink coat. The kids prefer to visit Cassie to visiting their own grandmother.

In A Minstrel Show for Good, Lucy begins to teach Sunday School. She takes the assignment very seriously. She had hated Sunday School as a child. Lucy makes dolls to tell the story and plays it out for her own children. They like it and help her with the stage and props. Her shows are a big hit.

Cap has invested their money in Louisiana oil. At the same time, the local banker has been caught using bank money for his own use. The Marsden family loses a sizeable amount of money but Will keeps adding to his gun collection.

Book III, pgs. 510 - 546 Analysis

Lucy's life is more or less routine. She is a housewife with nine children. When she is asked to teach Sunday School, she is a hit in the community for using dolls, stages and stage props. Will seems a little jealous of her success. He likes the publicity for himself. He does not encourage or support her but she helps to organize his interviews and speaking engagements. Will had made a name for himself from the myth he created surrounding his Civil War days.



Book IV, pgs. 547-606

Book IV, pgs. 547-606 Summary

Cap named the boys in the family and each of the boys is named for buddies of cap. The youngest is named Archie. The kids are home from school because of reported cases of scarlet fever in the county and Lucy is making Halloween costumes with them when she notices that Archie is hot with fever. Lucy rushes the baby to the doctor's office. Will joins here and the doctor tells them that Archie may have scarlet fever. The baby dies while they are at the office.

In *The Tribe That Answers*, Cassie talks about the tribe in Africa. The biggest event of the year for the tribe is the Dance of the Rare Red Bird. After the festival, a bid rd boat arrives. Old Reba, the King's great aunt and a relative of Cassie's, and the others go to see the boat. Cassie's mother, the Queen, carries her aboard the ship. Suddenly, the ships doors open and pale men emerge and kill some of the tribe and capture the others. Soon they are placed in chains in the bottom of the boat. The babies were left to crawl around.

When the boat docks, they are bathed and led off in chains to a shack where the chains are removed. Reba is brought along on a stretcher. White people prod their bodies and check their teeth. They are sold into slavery. Cassie, her mother and several others are sold to the Marsdens. Their king is separated from them. Cassie's mother, the Queen, is put to work washing dishes.

One day, eleven years later, when the queen is sent out to pick okra, she runs away. She is caught and brought back in ropes. The Queen is whipped and placed in the root cellar, where she finds a cup. She begins to dig a tunnel. They found her dead. Cassie never finds her father.

This is the story that Lade Marsden asked to hear as Sherman's men approached The Lilacs.

Book IV, pgs. 547-606 Analysis

Archie, the youngest of the Marsden's nine children, dies of scarlet fever at the age of six months. Lucy rushes the baby to the doctor's office and Will meets her there, leaving work as soon as he hears the baby was sick. Lucy is comforted by him and feels lucky that he is the kind of man who would drop everything at work and run to the doctor's office. They talk about how lucky they have been with the children who have had nothing more serious than measles, and they have been lucky.

As Sherman's troops approaches The Lilacs, Lady Marsden asks to hear the story of Cassie's tribe's arrival. Cassie tells her the story which is filled with vindictiveness and hatred toward the Marsdens. She was only three when captured in Africa and couldn't



possibly remember all of the details. She had to be repeating the story as it was told to her. With all of her hatred and hostility, why did she stay to work for the Marsden's after the war?



Book IV, pgs. 607-632

Book IV, pgs. 607-632 Summary

Cap's popularity has increased in the South. Lucy's job as Sunday School teacher had been terminated. Her son Ned tells Lucy that he is staying overnight at his friend, Billy's. Lucy learns that Ned didn't tell her the truth. Will had actually taken the boy on a hunting trip. Will's gun collection has now expanded to Lucy's sewing room.

As she is making potato salad, she hears her neighbor Ruth's phone ring. Ruth comes to tell Lucy that the call is for her. Ned has been shot accidentally by Will. His eyes are damaged. Lucy goes into the gun room and begins to smash the glass on the trophy cases. People help her move the guns into a pile in the yard and build a bonfire. When told the live ammunition could explode, she tells the people to take the guns away.

Cassie comes to comfort her. Lucy tells her that Will wants them to kill him. She keeps one pistol planning to do just that. People begin to gather at the house. Unknown to Lucy, Will's friends recover the guns. Will is returning that evening to pick up Lucy. He arrives around two in the morning in the lieutenant Governor's motorcade, waking all of the children. Will is crying as he greets Lucy, but shoves a handful of ducks at her.

They explain how the safety came off the gun that shot Ned. It was not Will's fault. Lucy aims the pistol at Will, telling the children to go back to bed. Cassie steps in between them.

Lucy brings some shortbread to the hospital for Ned. When he came home from the hospital, she asks Will to move out so he is staying at the New Ricks Hotel. Lucy takes Ned for his training classes. Her father gives her money as Cap's gambling debts mount. He has to sell Lady Marsden's final farm and is living in the back of his livery stable now. He asks Lucy for a dinner invitation and begins to spend ore time with the children. Eventually, he moves back into the house again.

Lucy enrolls Ned in the best school for the blind.

Book IV, pgs. 607-632 Analysis

Lucy had always been against Will having a gun collection and she doesn't want him taking Ned hunting. But Will did so behind Lucy's back and as a result, Ned is blinded in a hunting accident. Lucy and Will separate for a while after Ned returns home from the hospital. Lucy told him to move out but eventually allows him to move back in.

Lucy thinks of killing Will and of running away. She wants to protect her children from being hurt. Even though she does everything possible for Ned, she still does not handle the situation well emotionally.



Book V, pgs. 633-645

Book V, pgs. 633-645 Summary

Lucy decides to leave. She figures Cassie could sit with the kids until Will decides what to do with them. When she reads of a mother killing her husband and five children and thought that the woman's actions made sense, she feels it was time to leave. Will is out of town at a convention.

Lucy walks to the depot in the middle of the night. At the train station, she decides she will go to St. Petersburg, Florida. It is one and one half hours before the train would depart. She talks to a woman who asks if she has a husband and children and is running away. The woman tells her not to do it and tells Lucy her story.

The woman had a husband and three children in Baltimore when she ran away with a salesman. She became ashamed when the other boarding house tenants said they were too noisy. Suddenly, she missed her children so she left the salesman and returned to Baltimore. She found her family had moved. When she went back to the salesman, she found he also had moved. Since then, she has followed clues to find either one of them.

After hearing the story, Lucy returns home. She finds Cassie asleep at the table. After Cassie departs, she makes breakfast for her kids. She feels better for several weeks. When Will is away at a convention, she decides to leave again, but this time to take the kids with her. As she is packing, she receives a telegram saying that Will is hospitalized with a possible stroke. He doesn't even know her name when she arrived at the hospital. She brings him home and carex for him and the children.

Book V, pgs. 633-645 Analysis

Lucy decides to run away. She can feel the pressures building in her and find it difficult to cope. When she reads a story about a woman who killed her husband and five children, she knows she is making the right decision. She gets as far as the train station. The story of the woman from Baltimore makes her think of her own children. She doesn't want to be without them, in spite of all the day to day problems. So after two months, she decides to take them with her and then she learns that Will had a stroke. Now he cannot care for himself and needs her. He is the father of her children.

Lucy should probably had made arrangement to have her kids watched and taken a brief vacation. She might have been able to think clearer if she had done so.



Book V, pgs. 647-692

Book V, pgs. 647-692 Summary

Lucy tells how her children like to eat anything, including Lucy's diamond ring. Lucy tries to make the child, Baby, vomit. When that does not work, she has to wait until the child passes it. Cap is away at a convention at the time. The ring had been Cap's mother's ring and she remembers when he gave it to her. She was fourteen years of age at the time.

Lucy turns the diamond ring incident into an educational experience for the older children. She has them look up diamonds and give reports on what they find. When they look for Baby, they find that she has run away. At the bank, they learn she has withdrawn her money and is going to Hollywood to become a movie star. They look around the area for her. When they don't find her, they return home. There is a small package on the table. In it is a ring from the local jeweler. Baby used her savings to buy the ring.

Lucy tries to keep the distraught Baby busy and to boost her morale. Eventually, Baby passes the ring and the children say that Lucy is married again.

In Music Changes During War, Lucy tells the story of Unison Randolph, a fifteen year old Virginian. Unison's father and brothers had been killed in the Civil War, leaving just her and her mother. Near their mansion is a division of Confederate troops, among them, thirteen year old Will Marsden. One day Lieutenant Prothero arrives with his mirror, silver hairbrushes, portable potty, and perfumes. All of these items are for his personal grooming. Prothero is acquainted with a Charleston cousin of Will's.

The widow Randolph invites the officer's to tea. This includes Lieutenant Prothero. Prothero fought well in battle and the men in the unit tried to figure out why he had been transferred.

After spending time alone with Unison, during which he touched her thigh, Unison refuses to see Prothero. He keeps coming to the house, saying that there shouldn't be a virgin over the age of thirteen in the Confederacy. He refers to his visits as guard duty. Unison chases him out of her bed chambers with a pistol.

One evening, Unison give a harpsichord concert. The entire unit is present along with women and children from the area. During this concert, a drunk Prothero dumps a keg of maple syrup into the musical instrument. Unison keeps right on playing. Prothero excuses himself and leaves and is gone for two days. He stays by himself when he returns and then the division receives orders to march. Prothero is killed in battle three days later. Unison travels to the campsite for the burial and plays hymns on her records. She plays for hours after everyone left and nobody could get her to stop until they threw rocks at her.



Book V, pgs. 647-692 Analysis

The incident with the diamond ring is something from the everyday life of motherhood. Lucy is extremely patient with her children. She is also very good at keeping them entertained. She knows Baby is upset about the incident and does her best to make the child feel better during the ordeal.

The story Lucy tells about Unison Randolph is one of the Captain's stories. It is Will's unit that was stationed by the Randolph mansion in Virginia. Prothero seemed eccentric, but it is only after his death that they realized that he was mad. The pressures of war were heavy, even on Unison. With the death of her father and three brothers in one week, Prothero reminded her and her mother of Unison's brother. When Unison sat and played the recorded for hours after Prothero's burial, she was probably achieving some kind of closure.



Book V, pgs. 693-718

Book V, pgs. 693-718 Summary

Lucy is aging as is the Captain. He stays in the back bedroom wearing nightshirts, many of which date back to the days of slavery. He has his relics from the war around him. Cassie helped Lucy care for Will and told many stories about Africa that were made up with time.

Lucy's kids are grown and gone. Louisa is a nurse in Newport News. Ned teaches the blind. The twins are real estate partners and are doing well. Baby was an actress.

Lucy drives Cap to Virginia to visit the lake where Ned died. They pass the land where The Lilacs once stood. It is now a mall with a Toys R Us. Cap keeps saying, "They shot Ned" as Lucy drives and looks for the lake where Ned died. Lucy finally finds someone who knows the spot she describes, and follows him to the lake. When they take him to the lake, Lucy knows they have to look for a piece of leather harness in the tree. She climbs the tree. In the end, she uses her own leather belt. Cap never knew the difference but tries to strangle Lucy with the belt, thinking she is the 'they'.

Cap is harder to handle when they returned home and has to be sedated. One day, while Cassie and Lucy are in the kitchen, Cap gets loose and ruins Cassie's mink coat with his excrements. When fighting Cap for the coat, he begins to choke her. Lucy fights him off with his scabbard. Cap dies. The sheriff records the death as a serious fall.

Lucy's big concern is Cassie's coat. She uses Cap's insurance money to buy a sable coat for Cassie and hand delivers it when it arrives.

When everyone is gone after the funeral, Lucy feels the silence in the big house. At first she is afraid, but then grows to like it. Cassie and Lucy bury the mink coat next to Lady Marsden's grave, which makes Cassie feel better.

In *It Ends in the Air*, Lucy experiences her first airplane ride. The passenger next to her points out Sherman's path as he buys her a drink. For Lucy, seeing the bright green of Sherman's path, the war has ended.

Book V, pgs. 693-718 Analysis

Lucy had a hard life with Cap always reliving the Civil War. When he is old and senile, she takes him to visit the lake where Ned died. She is good to him right up to the end. She has to climb the tree and look for the leather harness, and uses her leather belt as a substitute. He tried to strangle her with it. Will never got over the death of his best friend Ned. The next time he tries to strangle her for Ned's death, she kills him with his scabbard in self-defense.

After his death, she takes her first plane ride and sees Sherman's path from the air. The path is a brighter green than the surrounding growth. To Lucy, this represents the end of the war, the war she had lived with during her marriage to Will.



Characters

Lucy Marsden

Lucy Marsden was born in 1885. She grew up in Falls, North Carolina and was an only child. Lucy was born to a prosperous family and was fifteen years of age when she first became interested in Will Marsden, who was close to fifty at the time. They married and honeymooned in Georgia near Atlanta and return to live in the Marsden home. Lucy meets Castiglia, Will's maid, who used to be his mother's slave. She has a hard time getting along with Cassie, who Will soon fires, just as Cassie learns that she is pregnant with the first of nine children. Cassie delivers all of Lucy's children and becomes a friend of hers. Lucy's mother had come from a wealthy family but married the poor farmer, Samuel Honicott. As a child, Lucy picked up many of her father's habits, including the use of the ward 'ain't'. This was always a bone of contention between Lucy and her mother, who wanted Lucy to be a debutante and have a coming out party and marry well. Lucy was her way back into the society she had been excluded from when she married Samuel. However, this was not what Lucy wanted. For the most part, Lucy is happy in her marriage to Cap and is devoted to her children. She feels that Cap is still living his Civil War days and that she is living with the ghosts of the men he killed during the war and wonders when he will get over the war. She knows that other women find her husband attractive but that he loves her. She is widowed in her fifties and at the age of ninety-nine, has lived in the Lanes' End Home for fourteen years, having outlived all of her children.

Captain William Moore Marsden

Captain William Moore Marsden is the husband of Lucy and the father of nine. He had the distinction of being the oldest surviving Confederate soldier. He was thirteen years of age when he joined the Confederate Army in Falls, North Carolina in 1862. He was from a wealthy slave-holding family and was born in 1849. Marsden's fame increased as he grew older and the other surviving soldiers died. People came to see him to hear his war stories. Not yet sixteen at the end of the war, Will became rich by doing business on the basis of barter. He inherited three farms and ran a livery business that rented horses to people. He began to visit Winona, Ned's mother, and telling her war stories. This is how he became so good at storytelling. Will was almost fifty years of age when he met Lucy. They married and had nine children together. Will used to tell them war stories as bedtime stories. On a trip to the Civil War sites, Will changed. He insisted that Lucy and the kids come with. When they returned home after the month long trip, he stayed away from home a great deal and gambled. He still provided for Lucy and the kids but was more distant. Will liked to tell people how he walked home from Appomattox. While listening once, Lucy wondered when he would ever arrive home. Around Falls, he was known as a 'character' and received many requests to give speeches and to make personal appearances. Cap ran his livestock business and invested in other business ventures. Will suffers a stroke while away at a convention,



Lucy, who was taking the kids and leaving him, brings him home and cares for him. He dies at the age of ninety-two.

Castiglia

Castiglia had been a slave of Lady Marsden before the war. She now works for Will. She is also called Cassie. Cassie works six and one half days a week and was in a cottage Will purchased for her that is seven blocks away. Will eventually fires Cassie when he learns that Lucy has been seen in Baby Africa. Cassie had six children but never married. She remained Lucy's life long friend.

Lady Marsden

Lady Marsden was the mother of Will. She had been born into money, and made her debut in Charleston in 1840. She was educated at St. Cecilia's Christian Finishing School in Richmond. In Falls, she lived in a seventy room house on the plantation called The Lilacs. She is the mother of Will and was severely burned when Sherman's troops burned The Lilacs.

Bianca McCloud

Bianca McCloud was the mother of Lucy. She was born to a wealthy family in Falls with her father known as the Indigo Baron. She was the youngest of four daughters. She married Samuel Honicott when he came for her after a train wreck. They had one child, Lucy, who Bianca pinned her social hopes on. Bianca died at the age of fifty-two.

Ned Marsden

Ned Marsden was the oldest son of Lucy and Will. Around the time of his twelfth birthday, Will took the boy on a hunting trip, over Lucy's objection. Ned was blinded in a hunting accident. He adjusted and went on to become a teacher of the blind.

Samuel Honicott

Samuel Honicott was the son of poor farmers from Bear Grass, North Carolina. He cared for Bianca after a train wreck and married her. He did not work, living off of her money, but they had a happy marriage and one child, Lucy. He died at the age of fifty-eight.

Shirley Williams

Shirley Williams was Lucy's best childhood friend. She was from a poor family but went on to marry into wealth. She died giving birth to her second child at the age of nineteen.



Ned Smythe

Ned Smythe was Will's best friend. They went to fight in the war for the South at the age of thirteen. Ned was killed at a lake in Virginia and Will never recovered from his death.

Jerome

Jerome is the orderly at Lanes' End and is one of the people who care for Lucy. He is known for the massages he gives and his speaking voice.



Objects/Places

Falls

Falls is a town in North Carolina where Captain Marsden lived.

Cheatham

Cheatham is a Virginia town located near the North Carolina border where Ned Smythe was killed.

Georgia

Georgia is the southern state where Lucy and Will honeymooned near Atlanta.

Virginia

Virginia is a mid-Atlantic state adjacent to North Carolina's northern border.

Maldin, Massachusetts

Maldin, Massachusetts is the New England town Where Simon Utt was from.

Antietam Creek

Antietam Creek is the Maryland town where a decisive Civil War battle occurred.

The Lilacs

The Lilacs was the Marsden plantation located near Falls, North Carolina.

Baby Africa

Baby Africa is the name of the black section of Falls, North Carolina.

Lanes' End Home

Lanes' End Home is the start run charity home where Lucy resides.

Appomattox

Appomattox is the Virginia town where Lee surrendered to Grant, thus ending the Civil War.



Themes

Effects of War

The dominant theme of the book is the effect of war. Will Marsden was thirteen years of age when he and his best friend, Ned Smythe, walked out of Falls, North Carolina to fight for the Confederacy. They were both just impressionable boys. Ned was soon killed and Will never recovered from his best friend's death. For the rest of his life, he told war stories and became quite well known for this. He was sought after for interviews and speeches. Somewhere, over the years, he elevated his rank from private to captain and became known as the Captain. When he wanted to revisit the war location, he insisted that the pregnant Lucy and their eight children accompany him. He told Lucy that he was afraid to go alone. On the trip, she noticed a change in him as they approached locations that held painful memories. His stories began to change from the one she had heard all those years. After they visited the lake where Ned was killed, Will drove them home in silence. He wouldn't eat all the way home and waited in the car while Lucy and the children ate at a diner. He stayed away from home more often and his hair turned white in a few months. Will suffered from nightmares about the war throughout his life. He was never able to recover from the effects of the horrors of war or to find closure from Ned's death. As he grew aged and senile, Lucy came to represent the 'they' that killed Ned and he tried to strangle her at the lakeside where Ned died. The second time he tired at home, Lucy grabbed a scabbard to defend herself and killed him.

The Other War

A second dominant theme of the book is what can be called the other war. This is the war that Lucy fought from the day she married Cap. This war included many other things, other than the usually gender battle between husband and wife. Since Will was never able to let go of his Civil War battle day, they were always with Will and Lucy. At several points Lucy comments that her son Ned had somehow become the Ned Smythe of the war. Will named each of the boys after his war buddies and their oldest son was named for the deceased Ned Smythe. She also comments that each of the men her husband had killed in the war were living in the house with them. Lucy usually gave in to what her husband wanted such as accompanying him on the trip to visit the war sites when she was pregnant and with eight small children. She did not want to go and felt it was best for the children but she went with anyway. Naive and unprepared for the physical side of marriage, she felt as if she was part of one of Cap's war battles. When she finally did something successful outside their home, her stage show Sunday School teaching, Cap never mentioned her success, which hurt her. He felt that being celebrated and successful was his role and not hers. Lucy fought his version of the Civil War for her entire married life. It was only after Will's death when she was on a plane looking down at Sherman's path that she realized that the war had ended.



Dedication

A third theme of the book is dedication. No matter what Lucy thought or wanted for herself, she remained dedicated to her husband and family. She was always there to take care of them. There were times when she became overwhelmed and found it difficult to cope and at one point she considered running away. She made it as far as the train station where she had met another woman who had run away and now spent her life wandering around trying to find her family. This sent Lucy home where she was all right for two months, and then decided to run away again, this time taking her children with her. However, Cap, who was away at a convention, suffered a stroke. Instead of running away, Lucy brought Cap home and cared for him. As they aged and he grew senile, she continued to care for him, inventing her own version of adult diapers and seat belts. Cassie came to help her because Will was hard to control. Lucy decided to give Will a treat by taking him to visit the lake where Ned was killed. She even climbed the tree and used her own belt as the leather harness that Will had found in the tree many years before. However, in his senile condition, Lucy had come to represent the Yankees who had killed his best friend, and he tried to strangle her. Belligerent and unruly as he was, she brought him back home and continued to care for him. It did not dawn on her to do otherwise.

Style

Point of View

The points of view used in *Oldest Living Confederate Widow Tells All* are varied, depending on the situation. Many of the stories are told in the first-person point of view where the narrator is the storyteller. This is true in all of the situations involving Lucy since the book is basically her story. Cassie's story of slavery is also told in the first-person narrative, with Cassie functioning as the narrator and storyteller. The use of the first person in these situations makes the stories seem more credible because they are being related by the individual who was present at the time. The limitation of the first person point of view means that the information available to the reader is limited to the information that is available to the character, such as when Ned Marsden is injured in the hunting accident. Other stories in the book are told in the third person point of view, such as the story about Unison Sinclair. In this situation, Lucy is relating some of Will's war stories. Both points of view are present in the book and both are appropriate for the story telling nature of the book. Either Lucy or the characters tell the story.

Setting

There are various locations that function as settings for the action of the novel. Most of the action takes place in and around Falls, North Carolina since this is the place where most of the main characters live. Lucy was born and raised in Falls in a house located two blocks from the house when moved into when she married Will. Will was born and raised on The Lilacs plantation outside of Falls, not the site of a mall and a Toys R Us store. Baby Africa is the black section of Falls that developed after the slaves gained their freedom. This is where Cassie lived. The Lanes' End charity home, where the ninety nine year old Lucy resides, is also located in Falls. There are also scenes in churches, doctor's offices, people's homes and various places of business as the people move around in the activities of everyday life. Other scenes include some Civil War sites. Ned Smythe was killed at Cheatham, Virginia by the lake that Lucy and Will visited. There are also scenes at Antietam Creek in Maryland and at Appomattox, Virginia where the surrender was signed. When Will went to return Simon's watch, he traveled to Malden, Massachusetts. Will and Lucy honeymooned in Georgia, near Atlanta. Even though most of the action occurs in Falls, the setting changes as the characters move around.

Language and Meaning

Allen Gurganus describes his *Oldest Living Confederate Widow Tells All* as an 'ungrammatical testament.' The book is written in the everyday language of the time in the language of the common people. Despite her mother's prodding, Lucy never did stop using the word 'aint.' For the most part, the language is easy to understand but



there are some parts, such as the dialogue of the slaves or the language of Samuel's parents at Bear Grass where the reader has to slow down and figure out what it is that the characters are taking about. But this kind of language adds to the credibility of the characters and to the realism of the situation, even though it slows the reader down. The book would lose much of the character if it were not for this kind of dialogue. There are not terms with hidden meaning that the reader has to decipher. The language used is very appropriate to the nature of the novel.

Structure

The structure of the novel is divided into five books, each dealing with different stories pertaining to different things in Lucy's life. The action jumps around quite a bit in time, since little is in chronological order. This is a little irritating but is in keeping with a narrative by a ninety-nine year old woman. In this respect, it contributes to the overall atmosphere of the novel. There are chapters in each book with titled but with out chapter numbers. Each chapter begins with a biblical quotation that relates to the subject of the chapter, as does the chapter title. There is a Table of Contents showing the book divisions, the titles and the page number. There is no Introduction or Preface but none is needed. There is an Author's Note section in which Gurganus thanks various people and groups, discusses the references he consulted and discusses the issue of historical accuracy. The chosen structure is rather simple but works well for the book.



Quotes

"By then is was like getting your parrot going for company, you would say a key word and he'd chew it over, then you'd see it snag way in, and out whole favorites would crank - battle by battle - like rolls on some old player piano" (Book I, pg. 1.)

"Neighbors heard, walked, come rushing. Among them my own mother - who was not that yet - a thin strict half-spoilt heiress whose mission in life was to later whip me into ladyship and grammar and who failed at both, poor thing" (Book I, pg. 27.)

"With Carolinians, child, gene-knowledge means character-knowledge means history-knowledge means destiny-knowledge. And you can quote me" (Book I, pg. 67.)

"Look, you, one us might's well be getting what she want. Seem like it ain't ever gone be me. Your trouble is you ain't learnt to boss folks yet. You best start. That you territory. Bossing stay one thing Castalia can't train you in. Had no practice. Either white folks got it in that depart-ment or they don't. You don't" (Book I, pg. 105.)

"Slow, along the train ride to Malden, young Marsden understood how much the color of a Yankee uniform had, like four years' cataracts, tinted and blurred his whole picture of Unionists' pastures, Federal cities" (Book II, pg. 175.)

"But blackest of all (I learned from Castalia, Evidence Anne, and other ex-slaves I quizzed), blackest of everything might be the white heart dark enough to try and own lock, stock, and barrel another human. Some nerve" (Book II, pg. 227.)

"First, I figured I' been wrong to fear the trip. Bound to help. Between familiar battle zones, while pulling over more often than some from-around here tractor on a state road - he stayed right patient with the children" (Book III, pg. 326.)

"Momma overheard two preachers' wives make wisecracks concerning a certain young somebody's contrary Bear Grass grammar. When I explained I probably couldn't change, Momma stopped speaking to me. For three weeks, Shirl and Poppa shuttled room to room as go-betweens" (Book III, pg. 421.)

"To kill a person (several) before you've got a sprig of public hair, and to be praised to Heaven for doing that! Yikes" (Book III, pg. 482.)

"I'd had my golden public moment but, like ways, I gauged it most by how my loved ones saw me there, where I was happiest, making things up around the house" (Book III, pg. 543.)

"How I'd had him in me while waiting under the Virginia sycamore - how the sadness I lived through whilst carrying the funny gum-baring child had nearly killed me during my



gray and longest tiredness - but what pleasure his silly rust-red presence soon offered" (Part IV, pg. 551.)

"In my day, husbands worked at stores and offices. Us wives minded the houses. Now wives get to work in stores and offices and mind the house. Progress, who's she? "Lib" for women?" (Book IV, pg. 608.)

"Still, maybe a diet wouldn't kill me. If I stayed, I'd hurt him or me, or maybe even them. I felt sure of some rash act, though I knew that toting a hatchet bed to bed would always be beyond me. Your Luck walked" (Book IV, pg. 636.)

"I loved my children. My children are all gone.
I loved my ring. Here...look...I still have it" (Book V, pg. 662.)

"At last, I get to say down towards our world, 'The war is over'" (Book V, gg. 718.)



Topics for Discussion

How did Captain Marsden begin telling the war stories that he became so famous for?

What is the story of Simon Utt's watch? Why did Will feel he had to tell the Utts the truth?

How did Sherman's troops change Lady Marsden's life?

Why did Will want to make a trip to the Civil War sites? Why did he want Lucy to come with? What effect did the trip have on Will?

Will often tells stories of how he walked home from Appomattox. Once, while listening, Lucy wonders if he would ever arrive home. What does she mean by this?

How did Ned become blind? What effect did this have on Lucy's marriage? What did she do?

In what ways was Lucy fighting a war throughout her married life? Why? How did the war end for Lucy and when?