

Outer Banks Mysteries and Seaside Stories Study Guide

**Outer Banks Mysteries and Seaside Stories by
Charles Harry Whedbee**

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1. Indian Gallows

1. Indian Gallows Summary

Along the coast of North Carolina lies Colington Island. On this island grow three-hundred-year-old American live oak trees, and there are two trees which have branches growing into one another, forming a large doorway. The bloody history of this tree goes back to 1711, when a settler named Robert Austin is shipwrecked along with his family. The family is saved by the Tuscarora Indians, who help them find a safe place where they can settle. A young Indian prince named Roanoke becomes close friends with Elnora Austin, Robert's daughter, and Roanoke falls in love with Elnora. He tells her how he feels, but she is engaged to a man in Europe, who is supposed to come to America soon.

Many of the Indians grumble about the white settlers, and want to get rid of them before they use up all the resources. Roanoke's father, King Cashie, starts the Tuscarora Confederacy, a group plotting to slaughter all of the white people and take back the land for the Indians. At the appointed time, Roanoke sneaks up to the Austins' homestead, but sees that he is too late to save them. Robert and his wife both lie on the ground, murdered. Roanoke does not see Elnora, but he finds her in a secret cave that the two of them have played in before. Roanoke and Elnora escape in his canoe, braving ocean waters by night, and hiding during the day, lest the Indians torture them both to death. They finally make it to Edenton, where they warn the citizens of the impending Indian attack. The Indians are planning to kill all men, women, and children. A ship has just arrived, bearing muskets, ammunition, and Henry Redwine, Elnora's fiance.

With a few days of frantic work, the people of Edenton manage to fortify their town against Indian attackers. When the tribes show up, they find that the siege is more than they can handle, and they give up after a bloody fight. King Cashie's leg is broken by a cannonball, which also kills several of his warriors. After the Indians go back home, Elnora and Henry are married. Most of the settlers are friendly toward Roanoke, but he knows that they do not trust an Indian. He decides to go back to his father.

Roanoke is immediately taken prisoner, and the elders of his tribe tie him to a stake for a day while they discuss his punishment for betraying them in the raid. His father, King Cashie, decides that since he has sided with the white men, he will die the death of a white man. King Cashie makes a noose and hangs his son from the tree, which to this day is known as the Indian Gallows Tree.

1. Indian Gallows Analysis

This story is a classic example of the tragic romance, which is a popular theme in literature and drama all over the world, and throughout the ages. Although there are many stories in which both lovers die tragically, perhaps more common are examples in



which one lover goes on to be happily married, while the rejected one undergoes some huge sacrifice for the welfare of their beloved. Poor Prince Roanoke bravely sacrifices everything for the safety of Elnora, only to lose her immediately to a man with more guns. His return to his tribe, a suicidal choice, could be seen as merely reflecting his inner state, since the woman he loves has turned to another, and forgotten about him.

Other examples of this type of tragic, suicidal love triangle include "A Tale of Two Cities" by Charles Dickens, Puccini's opera "Madame Butterfly" and its adaptation, "Miss Saigon," and Hans Christian Andersen's "The Little Mermaid." Perhaps the reason that such stories are so enduring and appealing is because so many people have felt unrequited love, so they can easily sympathize with the main character, who proves his or her own value by giving all for the love of another. Sometimes, the sacrifice is seen as redeeming the martyr from some sinful act, although not in the case of Prince Roanoke, who seems to have pure motives.



2. The Gray Man of Hatteras, 4. The Little White Cloud, & 5. The Dram Tree

2. The Gray Man of Hatteras, 4. The Little White Cloud, & 5. The Dram Tree Summary

In 1966, Apprentice Seaman Brooks and his Coast Guard crew are going around warning all the locals and the tourists that a bad hurricane is on the way, and everyone needs to take shelter. On the coast of Cape Hatteras, they see a man standing on the beach, beckoning to the sea as if warning someone in the water that they need to come to shore right away. When Brooks approaches the man, the figure disappears. Most of the crew are already familiar with the Gray Man of Hatteras, as he is called. He is believed to be the ghost of a man named Gray who lived in the 1800's, and who drowned in a sudden storm. Every year, whenever a terrible hurricane is coming, the Gray Man can be seen on that stretch of beach, warning travelers to avoid his fate.

There is great fishing off the coast of Hatteras, due to the convergence of a cold Arctic current, and the warm Gulf Stream current. The place where the two currents come together is always marked by a little white cloud, which is the result of condensation from different temperatures of water. The locals claim that long ago there lived an Indian princess named White Cloud. White Cloud finds a shipwrecked Spaniard, and she nurses him back to health. They fall in love and decide to marry, but he wants to go back to Spain first and claim his inheritance. White Cloud waits for years, but she never hears from her lover again. When she is dying, she requests that she may always wait and watch for him, and her wish is granted. She takes the form of a little white cloud, to wait forever for her man to return.

For hundreds of years, a gigantic cypress tree stands in the harbor of Edenton, with its base actually in the water. This tree, being the most prominent object in the harbor, is used as a landmark by many. Its most popular use, however, is as the Dram Tree. There is a hollow space in the trunk, and sailors start the tradition of bringing a fresh bottle of rum and stowing it in the tree whenever they come back from a voyage. Whenever a ship is leaving the harbor, they stop at the tree and each man on board takes a swig, or dram, from the bottle. There always seems to be enough for everyone, even though no one keeps track of how much rum is in the tree. Bad luck befalls any ship when its sailors do not drink at the tree, but certain disaster or even death await any who do not put a bottle in. The Dram Tree stands until the great ice storm of 1918, when it is snapped off by an advancing ice floe.



2. The Gray Man of Hatteras, 4. The Little White Cloud, & 5. The Dram Tree Analysis

Some of these stories are presented in a different order in the book. In this study guide, the longer stories are examined individually, while the shorter vignettes are presented in groups of two or three, since they are only a few pages long. The stories are numbered in the book, and for clarity, these numbers are included in the titles of the stories.

The three stories mentioned in this section point to a mix of history, science, and legend that can be found in the oft-repeated folktales of North Carolina. Often, there are geographical and historical details, showing that Charles Henry Whedbee, the author, knows the area well, and these details help anchor the stories in reality. Whedbee relates these tales as though the supernatural aspects just might be true, without committing himself to believing or debunking them. He treats these folk stories as a way to get to know the people of the area, rather than examining them skeptically, or looking over his shoulder for ghosts. For instance, in "The Little White Cloud," he tells first the scientific basis for the weather phenomena, and then tells a touching story that says more about the turbulent history of Carolina, and the encounters between Indians and European settlers, than about the magic of undying love.



3. The Affair at Brownrigg Mill

3. The Affair at Brownrigg Mill Summary

Although the persecution of women and men accused of practicing witchcraft is well-documented in American history, there was very little of this sort of occurrence in North Carolina. Whedbee suggests that this is because "Tar Heels," or people of North Carolina, have more sense than that. In the only known legal case related to witchcraft in that state, a woman named Susannah Evans is indicted for witchcraft. The grand jury dismisses the case by writing "IGNORAMUS" on the indictment paper.

The only other widespread story about witches is the story of Brownrigg Mill, run by Tim Farrow, the miller. Tim lives with his daughter there, but their home is lonely after the death of Tim's wife. One day, Tim is surprised to see a canoe with an elderly lady in it emerge from the river to his mill pond. When Tim goes to help the lady out of the canoe, he is surprised to see that it is a beautiful young woman, with shiny black hair and emerald-green eyes. She is the most beautiful woman Tim has ever seen, and when he sees how tenderly she speaks with his daughter, he decides to court her. After a few days, they have decided to get married, and Tim is overjoyed to have such a wonderful wife, and a mother for his child.

As time passes, some of the people in the community begin to grumble against Tim's wife, complaining that they do not even know where this woman came from, or who she is. They think that she is too strange. The cattle of these complainers start to get sick and die, and when some of the people continue accusing Tim's wife, the families of these folks are also struck down from a mysterious illness. Soon, everyone in the town is afraid of the woman they call a witch. Tim always laughs at them and defends his wife, but he can tell that she is not happy anymore either. She acts restless, as though she does not love him anymore. Tim notices that someone has been coming into his mill and sabotaging the place, and he assumes that his neighbors are trying to drive his wife away. Tim secretly hides in the mill one night, during a terrible storm, so that he can catch the burglar in the act.

Tim is terrified when the mill seems to be filled with frogs croaking loudly, and huge fireflies. He hears a frightening pounding at the door, and the door bursts open, and fifty huge cats run into the room. They run in circles around Tim, clawing at any body part they can reach. Tim grabs the only weapon handy, his razor-sharp ax. He takes aim at the biggest, meanest cat, and cuts off its front paw. The cat flees, screaming, and the other cats follow it. Tim runs back to the house, and there he finds his wife, glaring at him, with one of her hands cut off. As he watches, she turns back into a cat and runs out into the night.

Tim remembers the storm, and he worries that his mill will be destroyed if he does not open the sluice gate of his dam. He rushes out onto the dam, but the dam breaks, drowning him. His little girl goes to live with an aunt, and someone else takes over the



mill. For years, a big, black, three-legged cat hangs around the mill, but the new miller does not like the cat, and wants it to go away. He loads up his gun with silver coins, and shoots the cat. It does not die, but it does run off, never to be seen there again.

3. The Affair at Brownrigg Mill Analysis

This is an exciting story. There are many old beliefs that witches can transform themselves into animals, such as dogs or cats. The miller shoots the cat with silver, which is commonly believed to be the way to kill a werewolf, which is another type of shape shifter. The obvious problem with this story is that it is presented as historical fact, and compared to a real, documented court case, but anyone can see that the story is fictional. If Tim dies right after the confrontation with the cats, who could have told the story in the first place? This plot-hole makes it clear that this is a popular story from the area, and that Whedbee is telling it just as he has heard it, and not altering it to make it a better story. It would be easy enough for the storyteller to claim that Tim's daughter is hiding and sees everything, especially since Whedbee indicates that the little girl has grown up to live a normal life.



6. Currituck Jack

6. Currituck Jack Summary

In the days of the American Revolution, the British navy makes things hard for the colonists by setting up a blockade around certain ports, so that the people of Boston have very little access to supplies. In North Carolina, a Quaker named Caleb White wants to do something to help. It is against their religious beliefs for Quakers to participate in violent activity, so Caleb helps the war effort by building a small, fast ship to run supplies past the blockade. The ship, which is painted completely black so that she can sneak around undetected at night, is called the Polly. When the Polly is finished, Caleb, his relative Sam, and a slave named Jack load her up with supplies and head up the Atlantic coast toward Boston.

By a coincidence, the Polly happens to come into contact with the Fame, a British warship. For a day or two, the Fame chases the Polly, as the Polly tries to hide in fog banks. Finally, the Fame catches up, and the British soldiers board the small ship and take her crew prisoner. When the soldiers catch Caleb and Sam trying to untie Jack, they throw Caleb and Sam down into the hold, and lash Jack directly to the deck, face up in the freezing rain. For several days, Jack endures this torture as the British soldiers try to convince him to defect to their side, pretending that they plan to free him. Finally, Jack pretends to change sides, thinking he can best help his friends this way.

Jack tells the soldiers that he will fight for Britain now, and they let him work alongside their crew, although he is gravely ill from his abuse at their hands. He sneaks a knife down to his comrades, and the three of them mutiny against their captors. They kill several soldiers, and take the rest prisoner. They manage to land safely in Annapolis, and get Jack to a hospital, where he finally recovers. Jack is honored by the Continental Congress, and freed, and he ends up buying the freedom of another slave, whom he marries. He lives happily on his own farm with his own family, and is a prominent citizen, considered to be a paragon of physical strength, good morals, and patriotism.

6. Currituck Jack Analysis

The moral of this story seems to send a mixed message about slavery and freedom. The narrator explains that it is possible, in the days of slavery, for a slave to earn money and eventually buy his freedom from his master, and suggests that Jack's community assumes that he will soon buy his freedom. Instead, the government frees him in order to reward him for his bravery, and he is allowed to keep all the money he has been saving up for this purpose. When he is considering the offer of the British, he decides that he does not just want to be a free man, but that he also wants to live in a country where everyone is free, and that is why he wants to stay with the colonists. A problem with this logic is that slavery is still legal in America after the American Revolution. A bigger problem is the implication that Jack and his new wife deserve to be free because



they are upstanding, moral people. This implies that there is nothing wrong with one race enslaving another, as long as the best citizens are allowed to be free. Stories like this, which seem to simultaneously preach for and against slavery or racism, would have had a different message in the time in which they actually take place. In late eighteenth century America, simply suggesting that a black slave was morally and physically superior to most whites was a rather subversive message.



7. The Legend of Old Buck

7. The Legend of Old Buck Summary

Many people are familiar with the old Christian legend of Saint George killing the dragon. A lesser-known part of the story is that the dragon appeals to George for mercy, and asks that he let its spirit live. George agrees to let the dragon's spirit go, if it will promise to never again return to England. The dragon's spirit moves to Europe, where it possesses various animals. In the sixteenth century, a duke named Don Carlos falls out of favor with the king of Spain, and is exiled, along with his family, to America, which has only recently been discovered by the Europeans. Don Carlos fills a galleon with his family, his riches, and his prize fighting bull, Bucca. Bucca is the biggest, meanest bull anyone has seen, and Don Carlos plans to use Bucca to sire a line of fighting bulls, so that Don Carlos can set up bullfighting in the New World.

While they are on the way to America, the spirit of Saint George's Dragon decides to leave Europe, and swoops in and possesses Bucca. Immediately, the bull goes crazy, with red, glowing eyes, and wreaks destruction in the hold of the ship. The ship soon is caught in a hurricane, and between the bull and the storm, the ship is dashed to pieces. Only Bucca and the two youngest sailors, who are assigned to taking care of him, survive drowning. In the water, the two sailors manage to grab hold of Bucca's horns, to which they cling as he swims away from the shipwreck. Finally, the bull manages to swim to Hatteras Island, where he lumbers off into the woods. The two sailors, half-drowned, are rescued by a group of Indians, who adopt the young men into their tribe.

According to local legend, Bucca, or "Old Buck," still wanders those woods, watching over the children of the island. Bucca keeps track of which children are good or bad throughout the year, and at Christmastime, he reports to their parents so that the good children will get lots of Christmas presents.

7. The Legend of Old Buck Analysis

This story shows the way in which cultural traditions and beliefs can travel across time and place, and are often incorporated into a foreign belief system. It is obvious that Bucca now occupies some of the cultural place of Santa Claus, who supposedly keeps a list of which children are naughty or nice. One interesting aspect of this is that Santa Claus, or Saint Nicholas, is a real Christian saint, who was a real, historical person, and who is now said to have magical powers which have very little to do with the original bishop. In this story, some of Santa's magic powers and duties have been given to Bucca, an entity supposedly freed by the intercession of the historical Christian Saint George. The fact that an entity associated with evil, death and destruction is helping with Christmas celebrations says something about the unique culture of Hatteras Island.



8. The Beckoning Hands

8. The Beckoning Hands Summary

There is an old mansion along the Chowan river that was built long ago by a pirate. The beautiful mansion is connected to the shore by a long, secret tunnel. The pirate hopes to join respectable society and live there happily with his wife and his daughter Caroline, but his wife does not approve of his piracy, so she lives separately from him. After the pirate kidnaps an old woman's only son, who is killed at sea, the woman curses him and says that his family line will die out. Soon the pirate dies of a fever at sea, and his wife and daughter move into the mansion.

Young Caroline grows into a lovely woman, and they hold her wedding at their beautiful home on New Year's Day. On her wedding day, Caroline acts strangely, and runs up the stairs in her wedding dress, daring her bridegroom to chase her. Her mother worries that this is because of the old woman's curse. The groom looks everywhere for Caroline, but the girl has vanished from the grounds. After a few months, Caroline's mother dies from her grief.

On the next New Year's Day, some children see a pale woman at the windows of the mansion, beckoning them with her beautiful, enticing hands. Each year on New Year's, this apparition can be seen at the windows. Finally, a man rents the house in order to investigate the legend. On New Year's, he has a vivid dream in which he sees Caroline running down the hallway in her wedding dress. She trips and accidentally triggers a trapdoor, which drops her into a sealed room under the floor. When the man wakes, he goes to the section of hall from the dream, and manages to open a trapdoor in the floor. In the tiny room he finds a skeleton in a wedding gown, extending her hands to the door in a gesture of beckoning. The townspeople bury her remains, but some say that they can still see her hands at the windows, beckoning.

8. The Beckoning Hands Analysis

The tragedy of this tale is a common theme in popular ghost stories. In many versions of the story, the couple decide to play hide-and-seek on their wedding day, and the bride hides in a trunk, which locks shut. In such versions, the bride is at fault for behaving so foolishly and inappropriately. In this case, the guilt falls on the pirate, who incurs a curse through his cruelty, and who creates a family home with such dangerous traps for his enemies. It is especially appropriate that the cause of the girl's death is her father's piracy. Perhaps the reason such stories are so common is because of the poignant symbolism of something being destroyed at its own beginning. A skeleton in a wedding gown represents both hope for the future, and an ending of all hope. It also represents purity until death, much like a virgin sacrifice.



9. The Jobellflower & 10. Rodanthe's Drum of Old Christmas

9. The Jobellflower & 10. Rodanthe's Drum of Old Christmas Summary

Way back in the days when the Outer Banks are largely uninhabited except by fishermen, there is a married couple named Joe and Josephine Bell who like to spend their vacations traveling up and down the banks. They usually stay in the homes of the locals, who appreciate the visits, as well as Josephine's midwife skills. One winter, Josephine gets sick and dies, but she asks Joe to keep traveling their route, visiting people. One day, Joe finds a clump of beautiful yellow-orange flowers growing in Josephine's garden, and he imagines that they are her gift to the people of the coast. Joe digs up the flowers, and travels up and down the coast, planting flowers everywhere. To this day, "Jobellflowers" cover the area. They are named after both Joe and Jo Bell.

In 1746, there was a bloody battle between Scotland and England, with Charles of Scotland trying to take the throne. Twelve-year-old Donald McDonald, a Scottish drummer boy, is shot in the shoulder with an arrow, and manages to run away after the Scots are slaughtered. Donald bleeds all over the Golden Drum of Charles, and is rescued by an old man who tends his wounds. After the battle, the English are determined to stamp out any Scottish resistance, so Donald has to hide. He finally takes a ship to America so that he can start over.

Donald's ship is wrecked, not far from the Outer Banks. He only survives by clinging to the drum, which floats. Donald is rescued by the Payne family, whom he marries into. The drum is passed on down the family line, and every year at Christmas, the Paynes play the drum. It is said that the drum beats a warning in times of war.

9. The Jobellflower & 10. Rodanthe's Drum of Old Christmas Analysis

The story of the old drum shows how the people of Carolina take pride in their stubborn independence and resistance against the rule of England. In the first place, the drum starts out as a tool to overthrow the English monarch so that the Scottish Charles can rule. The fact that Donald clings so fiercely to the drum, even when his battle is certainly lost, shows that he respects loyalty toward his liege, even while he rebels against English control. As the years pass, the drum is used to celebrate Old Christmas, as it is called in the Outer Banks. Old Christmas falls on January 6, and by choosing to continue celebrating on the January date, the people show that they are not willing to let

the English dictate the dates of holidays. The English king changed the date of Christmas from January 6 to December 25 in 1752.



11. The Core Point Ghosts, & 13. The Legend of Mattamuskeet Lake

11. The Core Point Ghosts, & 13. The Legend of Mattamuskeet Lake Summary

In the area called Core Point, a respectable young lady is engaged to a young man, right before the Revolutionary War. When the war starts, the young man is killed in a battle, and the girl confesses to her parents that she is pregnant. The girl's parents cannot agree about what is to be done, and the entire town gets involved. Most people condemn her, and the girl is so ashamed that she is driven insane by the shunning. When the baby is born, she is overwhelmed by postpartum depression, and she murders her child, and gives the corpse to her father. The girl is sentenced to death, and she is hanged on the very tree that stands over her baby's grave. They say that on a full moon, people can still hear the mother and baby crying for one another.

The next story is about the Mattamuskeet Indians, who live in a bountiful paradise until there is a drought. All of their food dries up, and the people are starving. They try to appease the Great Spirit by building a huge bonfire and burning most of the food and supplies that they have left. Unfortunately, the ground is so dry from the drought that the peat under the altar catches fire, creating a huge underground blaze that spreads for miles. The area burns for thirteen months, devastating the land, and leaving burned-out cavities in the ground. Finally, the Mattamuskeet people resolve to sacrifice one of their people, to please the Great Spirit. When they cast lots to determine whom to sacrifice, they are grieved to see that Prince Pamlico, their leader's son, has been chosen by the Great Spirit.

Just before Prince Pamlico's sacrifice, a young woman named Wacheeta stands up to plead for his life. She is betrothed to him, and she obtains permission to make a quick appeal to the Great Spirit to spare him. Wacheeta prays hard, and suddenly there is a clap of thunder, and an enormous downpour. The area is flooded, and Prince Pamlico's life is saved. The burned-out cavities in the ground fill with water, forming a huge lake, which becomes a bountiful hunting and fishing ground.

11. The Core Point Ghosts, & 13. The Legend of Mattamuskeet Lake Analysis

The Core Point Ghosts really shows a cultural contrast between today and the colonial era. The young woman is driven insane by the merciless judgment of her family and community, simply because she has been impregnated by the man to whom she is already engaged. She is not promiscuous, and she would be married before the baby's birth, if her fiancé had not been killed. In fact, the narrator points out in an aside that

such rule-breaking was quite common in those days. Today, although there is still some social stigma attached to teen pregnancy, and having children outside of marriage, it is not generally a matter that would drive a woman to insanity. The narrator also points out that it seems inappropriate to hang the mother over her baby's grave.



12. The Mysterious Maco Lights

12. The Mysterious Maco Lights Summary

In the days just after the Civil War, there is a railroad man named Joe Baldwin. Joe is a conductor, which means he rides in the caboose of the train and signals to the engineer, using a lantern. One night, the train is near Maco Station, and Joe realizes that the caboose has become disconnected from the rest of the train. As the caboose drifts to a dead stop on the tracks, Joe sees the approaching light of an express train coming up behind him. Desperately Joe waves his lantern, trying to signal the other train to slow down. Unfortunately, his warning does not save them, and the train crashes into the caboose, becoming derailed.

Joe is beheaded in the collision, and they never do find his head. His lantern flies through the air and lands, still lit, in a swamp. Soon, people start seeing a strange light in the Maco area, as though someone were walking along with a lantern, and then throwing it up in the air. Then the light disappears. For years, people try to track down the source of the light, but the only explanation anyone can give is that Joe is looking for his head. Eventually, the Maco Station starts using multicolored lanterns for a signal, to tell them apart from "Joe's light."

12. The Mysterious Maco Lights Analysis

Some of these stories seem to be more folklore than fact, but this one seems to have more connections with the real world. The narrator describes in detail one attempt by a group of World War II veterans to surround and identify the source of the lights, and also mentions President Grover Cleveland's experience with them. In fact, the narrator presumes that his readers might try to find Joe's light for themselves, and cautions them to stay away from the railroad tracks, for their own safety. The lights have been so much incorporated into the mundane reality of the Maco locals that the narrator suggests that they would welcome a scientific explanation to this strange phenomenon.



14. The Fountain of Mercy & 15. The Queen of the Sounds

14. The Fountain of Mercy & 15. The Queen of the Sounds Summary

In 1717, the parents of young Alan Scott die in an epidemic, and the boy goes to live with his grandparents, Alan and Flora McInnes. They decide to travel by boat from Charleston to Jamestown, but there is a storm on the way, and their ship is destroyed. The entire crew dies, and only the three of them survive in a longboat. They huddle together in the bottom of the little boat throughout the terrifying storm, and finally, emerge into calm waters. They spend days sitting under the burning sun on a totally placid ocean, and the heat is unbearable. They have no food or drink, and they are all delirious with fever and thirst.

One night, Alan McInnes wakes to see an apparition of his late daughter Ann, standing on the water, and telling him to drink from the fountain of mercy. In desperation, he paddles to where she stands, and drinks some of the ocean water, and finds that it is sweet instead of salty! He and his family drink their fill of the fountain of mercy, and are rescued two days later by a passing ship. The ship captain also drinks some of the water, and it is delicious. Everyone who hears the story agrees that it is a miracle, brought about by intense prayer. In modern times, scientists know that there are in fact freshwater rivers which flow under the surface of the ocean, and which sometimes spring up from the surface like a fountain. For those who can find them, these freshwater pools can provide salvation from thirst.

"The Queen of the Sounds" happens just after the Civil War. A Union corporal named Frenchy Godette loves to party, so he decides to invest in a showboat. He builds the Queen of the Sounds, a splendid steamboat with theater, dancing, gambling, and best of all, a player piano. For two years, the lovely boat travels up and down the coast, entertaining the people. Then Frenchy starts dating a witch, who gets him involved in witchcraft and worshipping Satan. Frenchy puts most of his energy into his new attempts to contact the devil, and so the Queen of the Sounds does very few performances. Frenchy announces that he is going to have a big, evil celebration, in which he will invite Satan himself onboard the boat. On the appointed night, the player piano plays at full volume, accompanied by strange lights, and at midnight, the boat explodes in a ball of fire. No bodies are ever found, although for many years, piano music can still be heard. Some people say that the boiler exploded. Others say that Satan came to drag them all to Hell, while others claim that God wiped them out for their blasphemy.



14. The Fountain of Mercy & 15. The Queen of the Sounds Analysis

The story of "The Queen of the Sounds" has an opposite theme to "The Fountain of Mercy." One story is about goodness and faith being rewarded by God, while the other is about vice and sacrilege being punished by Satan. The narrator also seems to present them with different attitudes toward their accuracy. In "The Fountain of Mercy," he explains the scientific meaning of the fresh water in the ocean, but uses this to corroborate the belief that it is a miracle, rather than disprove it. In this, he implies that religious faith and scientific proof do not need to be mutually exclusive. However, in "The Queen of the Sounds," the narrator points out that some of the ghostly music was written after the destruction of the ill-fated boat. Although he does not come right out and say so, he implies that living people are creating some of the ghostly disturbances. Since this is the last story in the book, this attitude seems to place all of the supernatural occurrences into a more skeptical light, as though they are to be taken with a grain of salt.



Characters

Prince Roanoke appears in 1. The Indian Gallows

Prince Roanoke is the son of King Cashie, the leader of the Tuscarora Indian tribe. He lives in the early eighteenth century. Roanoke is a brave, compassionate man, who looks past the color of a person's skin. He is kind enough to help Elnora Austin, the girl he loves, even though she makes it clear that she is engaged to another man. Roanoke enjoys getting to know the European girl and her parents, and he falls deeply in love with Elnora. Roanoke has to decide whether to be loyal to his family and tribe, or save Elnora and her people. Knowing that he will be killed if he is found out, Roanoke faces the dangers of battle to warn the people of Edenton of the approaching Indian attack. Roanoke also shows how much pride and self-respect he has, when he decides to leave the safety of the white settlement and return to his people. He knows that they will not show mercy for his betrayal, but he faces his fate without crying out. Because he saves many of the white people from death, he ends up dying the death of a white criminal, hanging from a gallows, disowned by his own people. There are many places in North Carolina named after this prince, who saved the lives of so many people, and sacrificed his own.

Currituck Jack appears in 6. Currituck Jack

Jack is the black slave of Henry White, in the days of the American Revolution. Jack is exceptional in many ways. Physically, he is a giant, with great strength and endurance. Morally, he is gentle and kind, and a hard worker. Spiritually, he is loyal and stalwart. Jack saves up most of the money needed to buy his freedom from his master, and most of the white community expects him to soon take his place as a respected town citizen. Although he is a slave, Jack is so loyal and affectionate to his master, that Henry trusts the slave to go on dangerous ocean voyages without him. Jack is an excellent sailor, and also a formidable fighter, taking down several enemy soldiers, even after enduring a fever and days of exposure on the deck of a ship in a storm of freezing rain. When Jack is enticed by the British to betray his fellow crewmen, he resists, wanting to further the cause of American independence. Jack is clever enough, and a good enough actor, to trick the British, and also break out his crew. After Jack is honored by the Continental Congress and granted his freedom, he lives a quiet, upright life, on his own farm, with his family, who are all free.

Elnora Austin appears in 1. The Indian Gallows

Elnora is a young European girl whose parents are murdered in an Indian attack. Prince Roanoke helps her make it to safety, but then she marries another man.



Tim Farrow appears in 3. The Affair at Brownrigg Mill

Tim Farrow is a widower who marries an exotic, beautiful woman. She turns out to be a witch who can turn into a cat, and Tim is killed when he finally realizes her true nature.

Donald McDonald appears in 10. Rodanthe's Drum of Old Christmas

Donald is a twelve-year-old drummer boy wounded in a battle between Scotland and England. When he escapes to America, he brings the drum with him.

Joe Bell appears in 9. The Jobellflower

Joe Bell is married to Josephine Bell, and after she dies, he plants flowers all over the coastline in her memory. The flowers are called Jobellflowers, after both Joe and Josephine.

Caroline, the Pirate's Daughter appears in 8. The Beckoning Hands

Because Caroline's father is cursed by an old woman, Caroline dies shortly after her wedding day. She falls through a trapdoor and is entombed in a secret room, where she dies. Her ghostly hands can be seen at the windows of the house, beckoning.

Joe Baldwin appears in 12. The Mysterious Maco Lights

Joe sacrifices his life trying to warn an oncoming train of a caboose on the tracks, and he is beheaded in the crash. Sometimes, people see a bobbing light, as though Joe is walking around with a lantern, looking for his head.

Pierre Frenchy Godette appears in 15. The Queen of the Sounds

Frenchy loves partying so much that he builds his own showboat to entertain the people of the South. When he turns to Satan worship, his shows suffer, and the boat explodes when Frenchy invites Satan on board.



Don Carlos appears in 7. The Legend of Old Buck

Don Carlos is a Spanish nobleman who is exiled to America. He takes along a bull so that he can introduce the sport of bullfighting to the New World, but his ship is wrecked, and Don Carlos drowns.

Wacheeta appears in 13. The Legend of Mattamuskeet Lake

Wacheeta is a beautiful Indian maiden of the Mattamuskeet tribe. When Wacheeta's fiancé is about to be sacrificed to the Great Spirit, she intercedes for his life. Because of her prayers, the drought is ended, and a new lake is formed.

Alan McInnes appears in 14. The Fountain of Mercy

Alan and his family drift for days in a lifeboat without water. Alan sees a vision in which he is told to drink from "the fountain of mercy," and he discovers a pool of fresh, drinkable water in the middle of the ocean.



Objects/Places

The Dram Tree appears in 5. The Dram Tree

The dram tree is a hollow tree growing in Edenton harbor. For good luck, every ship that enters the harbor leaves a bottle of rum in the tree, and every ship leaving the harbor takes some rum from it.

Bucca the Bull appears in 7. The Legend of Old Buck

Bucca is a bull possessed by the spirit of Saint George's dragon. He watches over the children of Hatteras Island, and makes sure that the good ones get Christmas presents.

The Golden Drum of Bonnie Charlie appears in 10. Rodanthe's Drum of Old Christmas

This drum is known by many names, but it originated at a battle between England and Scotland. It is now in North Carolina, and is only played on January 6.

Old Christmas appears in 7. The Legend of Old Buck, & 10. Rodanthe's Drum of Old Chri

Old Christmas is on January 6, and many people of the Outer Banks area continue to celebrate it, in defiance of English meddling with the calendar.

The Fountain of Mercy appears in 14. The Fountain of Mercy

In some places, there are underwater, freshwater rivers that flow under the ocean, sometimes directly from mountain springs. These rivers can spray out like a fountain, and form pools of drinkable water.

The Queen of the Sounds appears in 15. The Queen of the Sounds

The Queen of the Sounds is a fancy showboat of the Reconstruction era, which has a player piano and many other entertainments. It explodes during a ceremony to invoke Satan.



The Indian Gallows Tree appears in 1. The Indian Gallows

There are two trees with horizontal branches that reach out and twine around one another, forming a doorway. This is used to hang Prince Roanoke.

Mattamuskeet Lake appears in 13. The Legend of Mattamuskeet Lake

This lake is formed after a drought has dried up all the land around a river, and the Mattamuskeet Indians accidentally set the ground on fire. The fire burns out a huge cavity in the earth, and when it finally rains, the cavity is filled with water.

Brownrigg Mill appears in 3. The Affair at Brownrigg Mill

Everything is going well at Brownrigg Mill until a witch moves in. When the miller cuts off the witch's hand, a storm damages the mill, and the miller drowns.

Core Point appears in 11. The Core Point Ghosts

A young lady in Core Point is engaged to a man in nearby Bath, but he dies, leaving her pregnant. Her family and community shun her so severely that she goes insane and kills her child. She is hanged over the baby's grave, and their ghosts can still be heard at Core Point, crying.

Maco Station appears in 12. The Mysterious Maco Lights

Around Maco station, people sometimes see a bobbing light, which they say is the ghost of a man killed in a train crash there. Supposedly, he carries a lantern, looking for his head.



Themes

American Independence

Many of these stories take place during the American Revolution, and they are undoubtedly told from a perspective that independence is something to be proud of, and something worth fighting for. The narrator describes how the colonists felt about their independence, saying, "The idea of a free and independent nation caught the imagination of the colonists, and the vision spread like wildfire." (11. The Core Point Ghosts, p. 102) Because of this vision, people do all kinds of brave acts, such as Currituck Jack's stalwart resistance when the British try to make him betray his master. The ornery hunters and fishers of the Outer Banks are determined to make a new nation for themselves, braving the wilderness rather than submit to the British king. As the narrator says, "They believed in their dream of a new life in a new world where a man's opportunities would be limited only by his industry and his ability, and not by the whim of any tyrant." (11. The Core Point Ghosts, p. 101)

The American love of independence can also be seen in how the Outer Banks people celebrate holidays, such as Old Christmas on January 6. This is in resistance to the British mandate that Christmas be celebrated on December 25, and one Old Christmas tradition is the playing of the the Golden Drum of Charles of Scotland. This drum was originally used in rallying Scottish troops against the English king, so it represents resistance to a distant, foreign ruler.

The History of the Outer Banks Area

This collection of stories is openly an affectionate tribute to the rich history and folklore of the Outer Banks of North Carolina. Most of the stories have details identifying exactly where and when they take place, and often the stories have an important impact on how things have turned out. As an example of how objects in the stories are connected with local and national history, the narrator says of the dram tree, "It saw the brave ladies of Edenton empty their tea caddies and pour the beloved tea onto the ground rather than submit to the exorbitant tax the British crown was imposing, and it heard their vows not to drink tea again until the tax was removed." (5. The Dram Tree, p. 41) Not only does this establish the tree's physical place, but also its relevance in the American Revolution, as this story is a precursor to the more famous Boston Tea Party. The varied history of the area includes that of Indians, Spaniards, Africans, Englishmen, Scotsmen, and others, and the combination means an interesting mix of history and legend, influenced by the points of view from all over the world. Referring to the people of Hatteras and Rodanthe, the narrator comments, "Their stories of daring in the face of nature's cruel fury are numerous and fascinating, and most of them contain more than a germ of truth." (10. Rodanthe's Drum of Old Christmas, p. 93) This implies that the truth has certainly been stretched through storytelling, but that this is real history, explaining how the narrator and his people have arrived at the present.



Ghost Stories

Most of these stories deal with ghosts, or at least with eerie, supernatural phenomena. Sometimes, it is a young person who has unjustly died, and can be seen or heard at the site of death. Other times, there are mysterious lights or music, hearkening back to an old steamboat explosion or train crash. In the ocean, there seem to be more helpful ghosts, alerting travelers of fresh water, good fishing territory, or warning of an impending storm. For example, after a man named Gray dies in a sudden hurricane, "Since the early nineteen hundreds the Gray Man has appeared on that stretch of beach between Cape Point and the Hatteras Lighthouse every time a hurricane threatens." (2. The Gray Man of Hatteras, p. 18) Usually, these ghosts are regarded affectionately by the locals. Why are there so many ghost stories in this area? It could be because of its proximity to "the graveyard of the ocean," as the stretch of treacherous shoals and rocks is called, because of the number of fatal shipwrecks there. It could also be because of the old and turbulent history of the area, which has witnessed conflicts between the Indians and the colonists, as well as the American Revolution and the Civil War. Just as the unhappy feelings from old conflicts can linger, so can perceptions of the details of those conflicts.



Style

Point of View

This collection of stories is told by Charles Whedbee, a native of the Outer Banks area, so the stories have a distinctive feeling of personal familiarity. The narrator does not make it obvious whether the stories are sought-out research, or just local stories repeated many times by the fire. Regardless, he owns the stories, telling them from the viewpoint that they are the stories of his own people. He mingles tongue-in-cheek skepticism with faith in the power of miracles, using both scientific explanations, and tragic ghost stories to explain phenomena, but never poking too hard into the origin of an interesting mystery. It is clear that he highly values the independence, cultural variety, and love of the sea and coastlands that the characters in the stories exhibit.

Generally, the narrator tells his stories from a third-person point of view, knowing only the details which are dramatic enough to make it into an oral legend. This means that sometimes, he knows things that no person could possibly know, such as the thoughts and actions of a person dying alone. These add color and meaning to the stories, while requiring the reader to suspend disbelief. Although Whedbee himself is white, he still imagines the motives of people of other races, such as when he says, "King Cashie hated the intruding whites with all his savage heart, and he never ceased to dream of the day when they would be driven from his once happy and uncongested hunting and fishing grounds." (1. The Indian Gallows, p. 6) This description calls the Indian king "savage," but it also acknowledges that he has a reason to be angry and want to drive the white people away.

Setting

The Outer Banks is a coastal area of North Carolina. Its people have a distinctly wild and independent nature. They pride themselves in being descended from some of the first Americans to rebel against British rule. In many of the stories, there are influences of genteel European culture surrounded by vast stretches of wilderness and Indian territory. As the narrator describes the town of Bath, "The town itself was an oasis of culture in the New World, and the countryside roundabout was inhabited by prosperous plantation owners, as well as by a variety of wild beasts and usually friendly Indians." (11. The Core Point Ghosts, p. 101) The setting changes somewhat depending on the historical era being described.

The ocean is so dangerous in the Outer Banks area that it is called "the graveyard of the ocean." Many of the stories focus on shipwrecks, and often the survivors only live because they are rescued by Indians. Throughout history, the people love hunting and fishing, and have feasts of oysters, clams, and fish. Sometimes the landscape, which is mostly sand, swamps, and inlets, changes permanently in a story. In "The Legend of Mattamuskeet Lake," a huge lake is formed because of an Indian maiden's prayers, and



in "The Jobellflower," the coastline is covered with flowers to memorialize a man's deceased wife. One very important aspect of the setting is the predominance of ghosts, who seem to appear at every full moon and holiday. These spirits are an important representation of the consciousness of the people of the Outer Banks.

Language and Meaning

Charles Whedbee's storytelling style is familiar and jocular. He makes it clear, through his affectionate language, that he is intimately familiar with the Outer Banks area, and that he finds comfort and value in these stories. His style is not so much that of a dry historian as that of a friendly old man sharing what he knows, with details and speculations to keep the stories interesting. He uses imagery to weave a spell around his reader, often foreshadowing some strange twist, or more often, some tragedy waiting for the characters. Whedbee is conversational, speaking as though there is a good possibility that his reader will go and investigate these very stories. For instance, when telling about the mysterious lights of Maco Station, he imperatively warns the reader not to be foolish enough to go playing on the train tracks. Often he uses the lingo of boats, referring to equipment and actions that might be very confusing for a land-lubber to read, but these references help the reader remember just how important boating is to the coastal area. When speaking of people of different cultures, such as the Indians, Whedbee does not use the condescending, condemning speech of some writers, but respects terms of royalty among the Indians, and tells stories of their helpfulness and bravery.

Structure

This collection of folklore is the third in a series, and presents fifteen stories of the Outer Banks of North Carolina. Since there have been two previous volumes, it could be assumed that this is a sort of collection of leftovers and miscellaneous tales, although many of them share themes of ghosts, American independence, and battles against the dangers of Indians and the sea. Some stories tell a tale in detail, fleshing it out, while others are only a few pages long, revealing just the bare bones of a legend. Because of the variance in length, some of the shorter stories have been examined together in this study guide, slightly out of order. The order in which they are presented in the book does not seem to have any significance, since they range all over history. In fact, some of the stories repeat things explained in an earlier tale, as though it is assumed that the stories might be enjoyed individually. Most stories start out by pointing out some observable, modern phenomenon, and hinting that it has a mysterious origin. This origin is revealed, and the story is concluded with an explanation of the results of the story. These results could be a popular tradition, a change in the landscape, or a ghost which can still be seen sometimes.



Quotes

Hope is the last thing that dies in a man . . . (1. The Indian Gallows, p.5)

Like a latter day Johnny Appleseed, everywhere he went Joe either sowed or set out his beautiful flowers. (9. The Jobellflower, p. 92)

Forgetting how well he had served them in the recent armed conflict, many of the whites distrusted him just because he was an Indian. (1. The Indian Gallows, p. 13)

Like the famous ghost ships and ghost crabs, many ghosts cannot claim ever to have existed in human form, but their spectral carryings-on continue to this very day to have a profound effect on humans. (15. The Queen of the Sounds, p. 132)

The little white cloud always hovering off the point of Hatteras is the spirit of the princess, waiting, faithfully waiting, for the ship that will bring her lover back to her. (4. The Little White Cloud, p. 39)

The rugs are no longer there, but that magnificent staircase still sweeps in its graceful and imposing curve, inviting the guest to enter and explore the regions above. (8. The Beckoning Hands, p. 80)

He felt threatened, terribly threatened, and he did not know by what or whom. (3. The Affair at Brownrigg Mill, p. 30)

Admittedly it was profitable, but it was also exciting, and it allowed him to satisfy the demands of his patriotism without violating his religious beliefs. (6. Currituck Jack, pp. 44-45)

Though his two owners had always been generous and fair with him, he wanted very much to be free. (6. Currituck Jack, p. 47)

Britannia still ruled the waves, by and large, and her capable seamen were determined to choke the life out of the American uprising. (6. Currituck Jack, p. 51)

Among those occupying troops was a roistering young corporal named Pierre "Frenchy" Godette, who was devoted to whiskey, gambling, and general cain-raising, in that order. (15. The Queen of the Sounds, p. 132)



Topics for Discussion

What are the differences between myth, legend, folklore, and history? Do they ever overlap?

What are some local legends or folklore from your area? What are some legends from your family?

Why do you think so many of the Outer Banks stories involve ghosts? What does this say about the people of the area?

Describe the relationships of the Indians to the European colonists. Give examples.

What do these stories say about romance? Are most of the romantic tales happy or sad?

Do you prefer the scientific explanations for unusual phenomena, or the supernatural ones? Which are you more likely to believe?

What does the story of Currituck Jack say about slavery and freedom? Do you find the tale to be racist? Why or why not?

Some of the ghost stories do not seem to have any scientific explanation. Suggest scientific reasons for some of these, such as the Beckoning Hands.

What is the role of hunting and fishing in these stories? How does this affect the character of the people of the Outer Banks?