Pigs in Heaven Study Guide

Pigs in Heaven by Barbara Kingsolver

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Contents

Introduction

When *Pigs in Heaven* was published in 1993, Barbara Kingsolver was already a well-established and successful author. Her third novel garnered critical and popular success and earned her a nomination for an ABBY award, the American Library Association award, the *Los Angeles Times* Fiction Prize, and the Cowboy Hall of Fame Western Fiction Award. As in many of her other works, *Pigs in Heaven* focuses on the complexities of families, relationships, and communities.

In this novel, the protagonist, Taylor Greer, finds herself embroiled in a custody battle with the Cherokee Nation over her adopted Cherokee daughter named Turtle. As she struggles to keep her daughter and at the same time provide a nurturing and safe environment, Taylor is forced to re-examine and redefine her views on family and community. During the course of the story, Kingsolver introduces the issues of single motherhood, adoption, abuse, ethnic identity, and poverty. Her intermingling of politics and human drama results in a satisfying tale of love and understanding. Reviewers applaud the novel's realistic and compelling characters, its topical themes, and her insight into the complex inner workings of the human heart.

Author Biography

Celebrated author, journalist, and human rights and environmental activist, Barbara Kingsolver was bom in Annapolis, Maryland on April 8. 1955. but grew up in rural Kentucky. As she watched her father, a country physician, minister to the poor and working class, she began to develop a sense of social responsibility and devotion to community that would later be expressed in her writing. When she was in the second grade, her father accepted a medical position in the Congo and moved his family there. At that time, Kingsolver began her lifelong habit of writing in a journal.

During her junior year at DePauw University, where she was studying biology, she took time off to work in Europe as an archaeologist's assistant. After eventually earning a degree at DePauw, she lived for periods of time in Europe and America, supporting herself with a diverse array of job titles including typesetter, x-ray technician, copy editor, biological researcher, and translator. 1 she earned a master's degree in ecology and evolutionary biology from the University of Arizona and soon began working as a technical writer and freelance journalist.

By 1987 she decided to devote her time to writing fiction; the following year, her first novel. *The Bean Trees* was published to national acclaim. The novel earned her an American Library Association award. In 1993, the sequel to *The Bean Trees, Pigs in Heaven,* was published. Kingsolver continues to write in such diverse genres as poetry, nonfiction, short stories, and novels as well as book reviews.

Plot Summary

Part I: Spring

The novel opens in Kentucky with Alice, Taylor's mother, considering leaving her couch-potato husband, Harland. She acknowledges that "he's a good enough man." but that the marriage "has failed to warm her," and besides, "women on their own run in Alice's family." The narrative then shifts its focus to Taylor and Turtle and their trip to Hoover Dam. Taylor had found Turtle in her car three years ago and adopted her. The two live in Tucson with Taylor's boyfriend, Jax, a keyboard player in a band called the Irascible Babies. While at the Dam, Turtle sees Lucky Buster, a middle-aged retarded man, fall into a spillway. Turtle informs her mother and they are able to summon help for Lucky.

After Lucky is rescued, the story is splashed across newspaper headlines and Taylor and Turtle end up on the *Oprah* show as part of a program called "Children Who Have Saved Lives." Annawake Fourkiller. a lawyer for the Cherokee Nation, watches the show and hears the story of Turtle's abandonment and subsequent adoption. Annawake decides that Turtle's adoption is illegal according to the Indian Child Welfare Act, which guarantees that a Native American child cannot be adopted without tribal permission. As a result, she begins to make a case for vacating Turtle's improperly conducted adoption and then finding "a proper placement" for her, where she will learn about her heritage. Soon after, Annawake arrives in Tucson to discuss Turtle's adoption with Taylor. Their conversation so alarms Tayior that she grabs Turtle and a few belongings and flees, leaving Jax.

Part II: Summer

This section opens with Cash Stillwater, who bags groceries at a health food store in Wyoming and makes bead jewelry; his girlfriend, Rose Levesque, sells the jewelry to tourists at the Cheyenne Trading post. Cash is homesick and lonely, and so decides to go back to his home and relatives in Heaven, Oklahoma.

Alice joins Taylor and Turtle in Las Vegas, where they pick up a new traveling companion: Barbie, who has made it her "career" to look and dress like a Barbie doll. When Jax reads a letter from Annawake over the phone to Alice, detailing the harsh treatment her brother endured after being adopted by a white family, Alice decides "there's another way to handle this" and leaves for Heaven to try to talk things out with Annawake. Alice stays in Heaven with her cousin Sugar Hornbuckle, telling her that she has business with the Nation, but without explaining the details.

Part III: Fall

Taylor and Turtle end up in Washington, where they have rented a gloomy apartment. Soon after they arrive, Barbie steals the money Alice gave Taylor to help with expenses,

which leaves Taylor and Turtle destitute. Taylor has trouble finding someone to watch Turtle while she works; as a result, she cannot work many hours She admits that she misses Jax terribly and that she feels like she is failing to provide a good environment for Turtle.

In Heaven, Alice and Annawake discuss Turtle but cannot come to any resolution about what would be best for her. As a result, Annawake hatches a plot to get Cash and Alice together. After the two begin dating, Cash takes Alice to a Stomp Dance, a traditional Cherokee ceremony that involves the whole community. Alice notes the closeness of the inhabitants of Heaven, all of whom seem to be related. As she joins in the Stomp Dance, she feels, "entirely alive... for the first time she can remember, [she] feels completely included."

When Alice discovers that she and Taylor have Cherokee ancestors, she tells Annawake that she will use that fact to help Taylor keep Turtle. Annawake explains that since Alice and Taylor don't know the culture and they look white, Turtle would suffer if she stayed with them. One evening Cash tells Alice about his past. He explains that after his eldest daughter, Alma, killed herself, his youngest child took Alma's baby to live with her and an abusive boyfriend. In an effort to protect the child from the boyfriend's abuse, she gave it away to a stranger who was passing through Oklahoma. Alice realizes the child he is talking about is Turtle and that Annawake has tried to engineer a relationship between Alice and Cash in order to try to hold onto Turtle.

When Annawake threatens to serve Taylor with a subpoena, Taylor comes to Heaven. Soon after they arrive, Turtle recognizes Cash as her "Pop-pop." The Cherokee Nation determines Cash to be Turtle's legal guardian, but assigns joint custody to Cash and to Taylor, and asks that they come up with a plan to have Turtle on the Nation at least three months out of the year. Cash then proposes that Alice marry him so that she will be with Turtle in the summers. Alice, however, insists she doesn't want a husband "that's glued to his everloving TV set." Taylor decides to marry Jax, and informs Turtle that she will now have two families. After Cash takes them all back to his house to watch him shoot his television set, Alice admits that "the family of women is about to open its doors to men. Men, children, cowboys, and Indians."

Chapter 1

Chapter 1 Summary

Alice is sixty-one and has been married to Harland for two years; however, she is preparing to leave him because he is extremely uncommunicative. "His idea of marriage is to spray WD-40 on anything that squeaks," she thinks. He runs a paint and body shop during the week, but watches the Home Shopping Channel on cable TV endlessly when he is home. The house they live in, which was left to Alice by her first husband, is filled with Harland's collection of antique headlights.

Her neighbor, Hester Biddle, keeps Vietnamese miniature potbellied pigs and they often invade Alice's flowerbeds. Today, she picks up a flowerpot that Harland has ordered from HSN and throws it at them. She reminisces about the pig farm she grew up on in Mississippi and ponders where she will go when she leaves Harland. Her mother died some years ago and the farm was sold to pay off debts. She has one daughter, Taylor, a tall and pretty young woman who lives in Tucson; she also has a cousin, Sugar, who spent time living with Alice's family on the pig farm in Mississippi during the Depression. Alice reconnected with Sugar in 1955 when she saw her picture in a *Life* magazine drinking a can of soda pop and standing in front of a sign that read Welcome to Heaven, a small town in Oklahoma where she now lives. They kept in touch for several years, but eventually the correspondence stopped.

Chapter 1 Analysis

Pigs in Heaven is a sequel to Kingsolver's earlier novel, *The Bean Trees* and involves the same characters. Alice was known as Mama in the previous novel and was only referred to but never introduced as an actual character in the action in that novel. In this story, the author brings her forward and turns her into a fully rounded character who plays a crucial role in the action.

Pigs are worked into this novel in many ways. Alice grew up on a pig farm, the Vietnamese pigs invade Alice's garden in the opening chapter, the Cherokee Indian myth regarding the Pleiades identifies it as the "Seven Pigs of Heaven," the Cherokee community celebrates with events that are called hog fries. There are many possible interpretations of this. One is simply that the writer is having fun with it and we see this author doing that with other aspects of the story. Another possible interpretation is that she has chosen a symbol of the earthy, smelly, unattractive animal that, in fact, has worth and is valuable to make her point that one must look beyond outward appearances when making value judgments. She reinforces this later in this story when she presents a run-down community as a desirable and worthwhile place to live.

Chapter 2

Chapter 2 Summary

The story shifts now to Alice's daughter, Taylor. She and her little daughter, Turtle, are taking a vacation and are visiting Hoover Dam. Turtle is adopted; she had been left in Taylor's car three years earlier. Taylor named her Turtle because she grabs her hand and won't turn loose.

They encounter a man in a wheel-chair, who tells them that the angel monument in front of the dam is to men who were killed while building the dam. "Working for fifty cents an hour," he tells them. "A bunch of them were Navajo boys from the reservation." Turtle is a Cherokee Indian, but Taylor doesn't know anything more about her ancestry. Taylor's boyfriend, Jax, who is a musician from New Orleans and plays in a rock band, the Irascible Babies, has not come with them on this vacation.

After a day of sightseeing at the dam, they are leaving the area in their car when Turtle tells her mother that she saw a man fall into the canyon. Taylor realizes that she must return and report what the six-year-old girl has told her.

It is the Saturday before Easter and when they get back to the park, it is deserted; but Taylor has Turtle tell her exactly what she saw and show her where. They finally find a guard, who is asleep, but Taylor wakes him to tell him about the man who fell into the spillway. He calls his boss, who comes and quizzes them; everyone is skeptical about taking the word of a small child about such a serious matter, but Taylor stands her ground and assures them that if Turtle says she saw it, it happened. They don't believe anyone could have fallen in because they have a high fence to keep people out.

However, they continue to question Taylor and Turtle and figure out from the little girl's description that it is a retarded man they know, Lucky Buster, who hangs around the spillway. After a night of searching, they find him and bring him up on a stretcher.

Chapter 2 Analysis

When *The Bean Trees* ends, Taylor has just found Turtle, an abandoned and abused Cherokee child and gone through the adoption process. In *Pigs in Heaven*, the time is three years later and we get a good look at what has happened in the interim. When a child experiences severe abuse as early as Turtle did, the prognosis is not good. Yet we see, even in this first glimpse of her with her adoptive mother, that there has been a lot of dedicated and devoted effort made on her behalf and that it is paying off. The little girl is presented not only as an extraordinarily observant and communicative child, but also as heroic in her concern for Lucky. Already we believe that she will overcome her difficult start and continue to grow into a remarkable and successful adult.

Kingsolver considers herself a political writer and her novels deliberately focus on contemporary issues. In her own life, she has been an activist for many of the things she believes in, including her objection to the Gulf War. Her parents not only taught her the importance of doing what is right and committing to the service of others, they also demonstrated it in their own lives. The family went to live in St. Lucia in the Caribbean for a while when Barbara was a child, where her father, who was a medical doctor, provided treatment for impoverished people in a convent hospital.

One of the issues that she focuses on in *Pigs in Heaven* is how we treat our children. She presents the sexual abuse of little Turtle as abominable and the result of a broken family, but she also presents the other side-the need for the caring and unselfish devotion of the adults in their lives. This story is about nurture. In this second chapter, she makes the point that it's important to believe the child, to trust the child and to validate the child's perceptions and feelings.

Chapter 3

Chapter 3 Summary

The story about Turtle's role in the rescue of the man from the spillway at Hoover Dam gets into the news. Alice sees it on TV and calls Jax, who doesn't know anything about it. Since Alice caught only a small portion of the news report, they decide that it wasn't Taylor and Turtle at all. She tells Jax she's leaving Harland and he invites her to come and live with them. She hangs up and ponders how she hates TV.

Chapter 3 Analysis

In Kingsolver's family when she was growing up, there was no television much of the time; the children depended on books for their entertainment. She is making a statement in this story about the unhealthy influence of television. The condemnation of television and its impact on the lives of people comes out in many ways. Alice, of course, is the point character. She condemns TV as a force that turns people silent with each other, that cuts off communication at all meaningful levels. But the role of television in threatening Taylor's custody of Turtle and later the superficiality of "The Oprah Winfrey" show make the point even more strongly.

Chapter 4

Chapter 4 Summary

Turtle wants to drive Buster to his home, which is a motel, the Casa Suerte, next door to a diner in Sand Dune, Arizona, so Taylor complies. His mother, Angie Buster, runs the diner and she tells Taylor on the phone that Buster runs away frequently. It's in the diner that Taylor and Turtle learn that they are celebrities.

They return home to Jax and we learn in this chapter that Turtle had been very slow to begin to talk after Taylor got her and that she had sought Alice's advice often as she finally began to improve. The little girl's doll is a square dark-green utility flashlight she calls Mary, from which she is inseparable. She even sleeps with it at night. She doesn't turn it on; it doesn't even have batteries.

While they were gone, many messages came in from people all over the country, including someone from "The Oprah Winfrey" show who wants her to come to Chicago to appear on the show.

Chapter 4 Analysis

Kingsolver's novels have been very successful; one of the things that have made them so popular are her colorful characters. Not only are most of them likeable, we sympathize with them and are entertained by them. Lucky, a retarded middle-aged man is loved by his family and, more importantly, by Turtle, so we love him also. Angie, who mothers everyone, is relaxed and assured even though her life has very little about it to justify that. Her world consists of a run-down motel and restaurant and a retarded son that she has single-parent responsibility for. Nevertheless, Kingsolver presents her in such a way that we like her and even admire her.

That Turtle's safety blanket is a flashlight she never turns on reminds us poignantly of the struggle this little girl has gone through to function in a world that served her very poorly at a time when all humans deserve nurturing and care-infancy and early childhood.

Chapter 5

Chapter 5 Summary

Taylor and Turtle fly to Chicago, the first time on a plane for both of them and they appear on a show that features children who have saved lives. They resist the efforts of the people who are preparing them for the show to put a frilly dress on Turtle, but Taylor submits to makeup.

Chapter 5 Analysis

Having these characters experience flying on a plane for the first time reinforces the point that Kingsolver is going to make over and over-happiness is not limited to the things that cost money. She shows us value in characters that live at what many would consider the fringes of society in terms of what they possess and are able to do. Yet in this novel those people are heroic and their lives are seen as more valid and more worthwhile than those who live more affluently. She is making the point that Americans would do well to scrutinize their value systems more carefully.

Chapter 6

Chapter 6 Summary

Annawake Fourkiller, a recently graduated lawyer and an intern in a law firm in Tahlequah, Oklahoma, sees "The Oprah Winfrey" show featuring Turtle. She finds out they are from Tucson and that the little girl is adopted.

Taylor is telling Oprah about Turtle's being left in her car. She tells her that the child had been abused and "hadn't been growing right" before she got her. She also says that because of the Indian Child Welfare Act, she couldn't adopt her without tribal permission. A woman who said she was the child's aunt had given her the little girl because, she told her, someone was hurting the child. It had been the middle of the night and she didn't feel that she could just not take her. The next summer, Taylor tells Oprah, she went back to Oklahoma and legally adopted her. "Turtle's Cherokee," says Taylor.

Now Annawake, watching the show, reacts. "Can't be," she says. "Not legally."

Annawake has grown up under the care of her father and the watchful eyes of her Uncle Ledger. She has five brothers. However, her twin brother, Gabe, was adopted by a white family when the two were ten years old.

Chapter 6 Analysis

We are going to see in the character of Annawake a person who has come out of the very fringes of society that Kingsolver focuses on in this story, yet she is an achiever to the nth degree. She has become that because of the influence of an uncle who is the epitome of the Native American culture that rejects the affluence so important to white people. The contrasts in this character are used very masterfully by Kingsolver to bring a laser-sharp focus on the devastating exploitation and mistreatment of American Indians, most particularly the Cherokees, by the dominant culture.

Annawake was brought up with five brothers in a family that experienced the pain of an alcoholic mother because of her displacement to a boarding school when she was a child. There she was robbed of the ability to belong to either the Christian white culture or the native Cherokee culture with its own spiritual beliefs and practices. She learned early on with her brothers that she had to fight to hold her own, but her Uncle Ledger also picked her out to become a representative of the tribe in hopes she would find ways to meet some of the needs created by the mistreatment of the Cherokee people.

She is clearly more aggressive than she should be in pursuing this one adoption of this one child, but it represents for her the theft of the tribe's children that she intends to put a stop to. By showing an "ideal" adoption of a very needy child as the case that will pit the tribe against the adopting parent, Kingsolver is setting up the conflicts in this story.

For most of the story, Annawake looks like the villain. Turtle, under Taylor's nurturing and devoted care, is overcoming her difficult start. Annawake intends to disrupt that adoption. We are on Taylor's side in this battle.

Chapter 7

Chapter 7 Summary

Franklin Turnbo is Annawake's boss in the law firm and questions Annawake's filing a suit to recover the child she has seen on "The Oprah Winfrey" show. She has researched the case and found that the transfer of custody was witnessed by a notary in Oklahoma City and that the parents as listed are not enrolled as Cherokees. He feels that it is none of her business and that they are should spend their time on real needs. Annawake is angry, however, that the child was taken without the necessary authorization and she feels that "all the housewives watching TV last Friday saw that our kids could be picked up as souvenirs."

Turnbo confronts her and points out that she is taking it personally because of her anger over the adoption of her twin brother. She says that she only wants to make a case for vacating the adoption. Then, she says, they can find a proper placement.

She is going to be in Tucson at a Native American Law conference soon, so she plans to just go by and talk to the mother and listen to her story. Turnbo agrees reluctantly.

Chapter 7 Analysis

This chapter moves the plot along in that it puts Annawake in her official setting. We can also see that her concern is personal; the tribe, itself, would not be making these efforts to track down and bring to justice this mother who has adopted one of their children. It also presents the means for her to contact Taylor-for the two conflicting forces to collide. The contest is set in motion. Not until the end of the story will we know which side wins.

One of the major reasons people read stories is that resolution makes us feel good. Without conflict and without tension, there can be no resolution. We experience this in our own lives; however, the conflicts may go on for a long time, even a lifetime, without any satisfying resolution. Not so in stories-the conflicts end one way or the other. Someone or something wins and someone or something loses in the end and we can sigh and experience a sense of satisfaction. This keeps us reading.

Chapter 8

Chapter 8 Summary

Taylor, Jax and Turtle live in a small house in a compound owned by a locally famous artist, a woman named Gundi, who tends to run around naked. Annawake comes to Jax and Taylor's home and finds Taylor on a ladder putting a boom box in an apricot tree. She wants to keep the birds from eating the fruit, she tells her, because they are Turtle's favorite food. Jax and Turtle are not there because he has taken the little girl to the zoo to see two new rhinoceroses. Taylor tells Annawake that Turtle and Jax are trying to write a song about endangered species.

Annawake tells her who she is and why she's there. Taylor tells her that she didn't take the child, she was dumped on her, that Annawake's people had let her fall through the cracks and that she was in bad shape when she got her. She couldn't talk and didn't walk and had been sexually abused. "Nobody wanted her," she says.

Annawake tells her that she needs to get tribal approval for the adoption. They heatedly discuss the best interests of the child versus the best interests of the tribe. Annawake tells Taylor that Turtle needs to know about her heritage. She wants to see Turtle and says that she will come back the next day after dinner. Taylor angrily asks her to leave.

Chapter 8 Analysis

Another theme is now introduced-the best interests of the tribe versus the best interests of the individual. This will be discussed in many ways in this story. This is a discussion that has been going on in the world at least since Aristotle and is reawakened almost every generation. In this story, it can be seen graphically in the plight of the Cherokee nation where the interests of society at large have taken precedence over the interests of this particular segment. Annawake is the fierce defender of the interests of the tribe. Her Uncle Ledger has nurtured and fostered her competitiveness and her abilities to defend her people and, although Annawake has just gotten out of law school, she is already a warrior who will use all her skills and whatever is at her disposal to do that.

At this point, our sympathies are with Taylor and Turtle. Annawake's drive to right the injustice to her tribe makes her seem truly wrong. She seems simply trying to enforce a law for the law's sake or to satisfy a need for vengeance in her own life. As the story develops, we will see that it is far more complicated than that.

Chapter 9

Chapter 9 Summary

Annawake comes back and finds Jax alone, Taylor and Turtle long gone. Jax questions her and she tells him that it's not the Cherokee Nation pursuing the case but herself.. She says she doesn't know if the tribe's child welfare department would take the child, or even if they should.

Annawake reveals that she knows the adoption was rigged and Jax tells her the whole story. A social worker in Tucson was demanding adoption papers, so Taylor persuaded a Guatemalan couple to pose as Indians. The man in Oklahoma City who approved it was old, probably retired by now, he tells her and the Guatemalans long gone.

He goes into the house, brings out two bottles of beer and sits next to her as they look at the stars. He tells her that the Pleiades is called The Seven Sisters. She responds that in Cherokee there are only six and they are called the Six Pigs in Heaven. The story is that there were six bad boys who wouldn't do ceremony chores; all they wanted to do was play and have fun. Their mothers got together and made a stew of the little leather balls stuffed with hair that they played with. When the boys saw the stew, they said, "Only a pig would eat this." They ran around the ball court, asking the spirits to listen, yelling that their mothers were treating them like pigs. The spirits listened, turned the boys into pigs and they ran around and around until their hooves left the ground and they flew up into the sky.

Parents use the story to frighten their children into behaving, she tells him. She says Cherokee children learn to do what's right for their people. She feels that white people are obsessed with doing what's right for themselves as individuals. Jax accuses her of serving her own self-centered interests in the situation with Turtle, but Annawake insists that she's trying to see both sides.

"You can't," he tells her, "and Taylor can't. It's impossible. Your definitions of 'good' are not in the same dictionary."

Chapter 9 Analysis

While this chapter primarily just moves the plot along-Taylor takes the child and leaves. Annawake tries to explain herself. However, we also get the story of the *Six Pigs in Heaven* in this chapter for the first time. We will hear it again, but it reinforces the theme of self-interest versus the common good at this point in the story. It also raises the issue of what self-interest actually is.

Chapter 10

Chapter 10 Summary

Taylor and Turtle are hiding out at Casa Suerte, the motel owned by Angie Buster. Jax calls and tells her about his visit by Annawake and Taylor panics and bolts. This frightens Turtle and she reverts to one of the states she had been in when Taylor first took her. She goes inward and seems unaware of what is going on around her. Taylor's solution is to talk to her in an unending stream until she begins to respond.

A mysterious envelope has been placed on their windshield after they go into a supermarket to buy provisions for their trip. It has been left by mistake, but it has $50 in it, which Taylor is glad to see because she is running very short on cash. They head for Las Vegas and at Turtle's request stop off at Hoover Dam to throw the green apricots they have brought with them from the tree back home at the hole that Lucky Buster fell into. She says she hates it and Taylor realizes that she understands why they are on the run.

Turtle is afraid that she might have to leave Taylor, but Taylor assures her that it won't happen. "You're my Turtle, right?" Taylor asks and "once a turtle bits you, it doesn't let go, does it?" "Not till it thunders," Turtle replies.

Chapter 10 Analysis

This chapter does little to move the plot along, but it does give us more insight into Turtle's insecurities and how Taylor deals with them. The understanding between the two about the meaning of Turtle's name adds interest and depth to the relationship between these two characters.

Chapter 11

Chapter 11 Summary

The story takes another shift here and focuses on Cash Stillwater, a Cherokee Indian who is living and working in Jackson Hole, Wyoming. He works at a leather store but in the evenings makes bead jewelry, which his lady friend, Rose, sells in the shop where she works, pretending that she makes it. He is from Heaven, Oklahoma and has left after his wife died and one of his two daughters committed suicide. The other left, taking his granddaughter with her-the child of her sister, the daughter who had died.

After the man who owns the store that sells the beads commits suicide, Cash faces up to the fact that he can't deal with being away from his tribe and decides to go back home to Heaven.

Chapter 11 Analysis

Very often when a writer uses several different settings and keeps introducing new characters, the story line is difficult to follow. This would be true here if Kingsolver did not give us clues as to the relevance of this episode to the story we are already engrossed in. Later, we find that the characters themselves do not know that Cash is the missing link, the missing relative, but we know. We found it out here in Chapter 11 long before it comes to light for them. Kingsolver is building a structure here that will bring everything together eventually. We get some insights as to the kind of person Cash is here, but he will be developed more fully in later chapters.

Chapter 12

Chapter 12 Summary

Taylor has foolishly gambled the $50 she and Turtle found on their windshield and is without cash, so she calls Alice, who gets on a plane and comes to Las Vegas.

After Alice arrives, they go to the coffee shop in the airport to eat lunch. A waitress who dresses to look like a Barbie doll recognizes them from "The Oprah Winfrey" show. She claims to have the largest collection of Barbie-related items in the world.

Chapter 12 Analysis

Taylor's parenting skills are clearly derived from her own mother, Alice, the quintessential mother figure. She is reaching out now to help her daughter. Kingsolver introduces a comic-book character here, this Barbie who has transformed herself into the doll. She not only represents a value system that Kingsolver decries, she provides comic relief. It is no secret after reading this story that this author believes that women should have more substance than the personae so often presented, especially on television, whose sole reason for existence seems to be to look a certain way. Jax, a very sympathetic character in this book, loves Taylor because she wears jeans and a t-shirt and requires very little space to store her possessions. Kingsolver's heroic women characters are those who are down-to-earth, not pretentious, who use their life energies to make the world a better place.

Chapter 13

Chapter 13 Summary

Taylor and Turtle check out of the cheap motel they have stayed in overnight and are eating their breakfast in a waffle shop when they encounter the Barbie-doll waitress from the night before looking disheveled and unhappy. She has lost her job at the casino because she spent too much time talking to them, she says. She tells them that she has had her name legally changed to Barbie from Barbara because she was born the same year that Barbie was created. Alice feels sorry for her and takes her under her wing. She travels with them as they leave Las Vegas although Taylor has misgivings about her and tries to put limits on how long she can stay with them.

Chapter 13 Analysis

Again, we see Alice's mothering instincts at work. There is some foreshadowing here in Taylor's misgivings about allowing Barbie to come along. We see later that her misgivings were on target-Barbie is a disaster in the making.

Chapter 14

Chapter 14 Summary

When Taylor fled with Turtle, the commitment between her and Jax was indefinite-Taylor had told him that if he felt like being with someone else it was acceptable since, she said, "It was going to be a long haul." Jax has no ambivalence. He loves Taylor and wants only her. He wants to marry her and bring up Turtle and have children of their own.

Gundi brings him a registered letter and he must come to her house to sign for it before the mailman will turn loose of it. The letter is from Annawake; in it she explains further why she is so driven to pursue the matter of Turtle's adoption. She reveals what happens to Indian children who grow up in white families. They seem to do well as long as they are in the families, but when they must make it in the world on their own, they flounder and become casualties.

Then she explains about her own twin brother, Gabe, who was adopted at age ten by a family from Texas. He wrote her often, so she knows what it was like for him. At school, it was assumed that he was Mexican and he was put in Mexican classrooms where Spanish was spoken; consequently, he failed. The Mexican kids beat him because he wasn't like them and his parents told him he was letting them down. From the age of fifteen he was in the juvenile justice system and is now in prison. She closes with "as a citizen of Turtle's nation, as the sister of Gabriel Fourkiller, I want you to understand why she can't belong to you."

Chapter 14 Analysis

There is yet another theme in this story, even a subplot-the tensions between Taylor and Jax regarding their relationship. Jax wants commitment; Taylor is ambivalent about it. As the story progresses, we see those conflicts play out and in the final chapters, we see them resolved. Kingsolver is writing about something she knows about here. She had what appeared to be a very solid first marriage-so solid that she published two articles in major women's magazines about its permanence and solidity. However, not too long after those articles were published, that marriage ended in divorce. So this writer has done a lot of thinking about these matters. She went on to marry again, but the subject of lifelong relationships between a man and a woman gets a lot of play in this story and adds to the richness of the plot.

Chapter 15

Chapter 15 Summary

Following the delivery of the registered letter, Gundi offers Jax tea, saki, sympathy and a session in a Japanese bathtub. They end up having sex.

Chapter 15 Analysis

This chapter is short, but it's important. We are impatient with Taylor that she left Jax with so little to survive on. He is miserable and we feel his misery. She made no demands on him and later in the story she acknowledges that this is not a good way to build a life. She corrects it then; but at this stage, we don't blame Jax. We also know that it is only a blip on the screen of his relationship with Taylor. It even gives an opportunity, in a sort of backhanded way, to know even better the depth of his devotion to her.

Chapter 16

Chapter 16 Summary

The story returns now to Taylor, Alice, Turtle and Barbie, who are still with them. Taylor would like for her to go her own way, but Alice continues to encourage her to come along with them. Barbie has a large square black bag that she hangs on to, even when she goes to the restroom.

Chapter 16 Analysis

The only function of this chapter is to move the little group on down the road. We are reminded again that Barbie's presence with them will not end up positively.

Chapter 17

Chapter 17 Summary

Alice sneaks Barbie's bag into the bathroom that night and discovers that it is full of silver dollars. Taylor confronts Barbie about the cache of silver the next morning and Barbie replies that the manager kept the key in the cash register, so she just helped herself. Taylor tells her she doesn't want an encounter with the police, but Barbie assures her that the manager wouldn't call the police because it would draw attention to his gaming odds, which are not within legal limits.

Taylor calls Jax and he tells her about the letter from Annawake and that he has had sex with Gundi. She goes and gets Alice to talk with him. Alice comes out of the phone booth crying and announces that she is going to Oklahoma to stay with her cousin, Sugar, who is married to a Cherokee, so she can try to figure out what to do about Turtle.

Chapter 17 Analysis

We know now that Taylor's feelings about Barbie were accurate. She is not to be trusted. This is another foreshadowing of the disaster that will come later because of her.

The letter from Annawake is frightening enough that Alice, the motherly one, decides to take things into her own hands and find a solution. Also, we can see the various parts of the story begin to come together. Sugar was introduced in the first chapter and now we will see how that piece of the puzzle fits into the whole.

While Taylor is hurt by Jax's infidelity, the implications are yet to play out. Will it end the relationship? We just don't know at this point. Kingsolver keeps us guessing.

Chapter 18

Chapter 18 Summary

The story shifts to Cash now, who has come home to Oklahoma. A hog fry is planned to celebrate his homecoming and we find that the friend that Alice is going to visit is a part of this community and that it also includes Annawake.

Chapter 18 Analysis

This chapter begins to bring the pieces together. Alice doesn't know that Annawake lives in Sugar's community, so it turns out to be a lucky coincidence. We know what Alice doesn't know-that Cash is Turtle's grandfather.

Chapter 19

Chapter 19 Summary

The town is Heaven, Oklahoma and Alice connects with Sugar by telephone from a motel where she, Taylor, Turtle and Barbie are staying. Sugar and Alice talk about their lives since they last wrote to each other. Sugar and her sister-in-law, Letty, are preparing for the hog fry for Cash. Letty is reputed to be the nosiest person in the community, Sugar tells Alice.

Chapter 19 Analysis

There are several instances in this story where Kingsolver uses foreshadowing to set up something that will occur later and this is one of those instances. Letty's nosiness will play an important role in the further development of the plot. It will be responsible for bringing Cash and little Turtle together eventually and for bringing a successful climax to the plot.

Chapter 20

Chapter 20 Summary

Alice arrives in Heaven and is appalled at the obvious poverty and the run-down condition of all the buildings. Sugar tells her that after the Trail of Tears from North Carolina, the reservation they were given was fairly prosperous, but the naïve Indians were cheated out of their allotments by clever crooks. Sugar married Roscoe Hornbuckle in 1950 and they've lived here ever since. They have several children and Sugar has undergone breast surgery for cancer. She says the boys have given them a lot of trouble, but their daughters are fine. All the children and grandchildren live near them in run-down houses or trailers on the original sixty acres of homestead land that was Roscoe's mother's.

The town is called Heaven because of a favorite water hole on the creek. The residents called it, in Cherokee, "the best place" to swim and fish. It somehow came to be translated "heaven" in English. When Alice inquires about Fourkillers, she finds that Ledger is a chief and that there are many Fourkillers in the community. They walk to Sugar's house from town and Alice gets a glimpse of what life is like in Heaven. The homes are shacks and there are scores of children. The only house that seems at all well kept is owned by the only white family in the neighborhood.

Chapter 20 Analysis

The name of Heaven for the town is clearly ironic. Alice finds the place about as opposite to heaven as she can imagine with its obvious poverty and hardscrabble existence. However, by the end of the story, she realizes that it is, in fact, an ideal place to live and bring up children. This again underscores the point Kingsolver wants to make: judgments should not be made on an appearance of affluence alone.

Chapter 21

Chapter 21 Summary

The story shifts back to Taylor now. She, Turtle and Barbie are in Seattle, Washington and Taylor is driving a van for the handicapped. She has found an inexpensive apartment and Barbie baby-sits while Taylor works. Taylor has stashed the money her mother left her inside a photocube, thinking no one would think to look there for it.

Barbie wants to get a job in an office. She says she can counterfeit money if there's a color Xerox machine. When Taylor questions her about the ethics of this, she reveals that she has done it before, which is why she had to leave Bakersfield. Barbie doesn't understand the implications of this behavior.

Taylor agrees to a date with another van driver, Kevin and they go to the lakefront on Saturday, where Turtle swims with other children. When they return to the apartment, Barbie is gone and has taken everything she can carry, including the photo cube with the money.

Chapter 21 Analysis

In her story about counterfeiting, we get another chilling indication that Barbie is not to be trusted, again a foreshadowing of the disaster that finally comes in this chapter when she leaves with the only means Taylor and Turtle have to survive-the money her mother left her.

Chapter 22

Chapter 22 Summary

Taylor has to give up her job. With Barbie suddenly gone, she needs to take time off to get Turtle enrolled in school and find a baby-sitter. The agency must let her go since she is on probation, so she gets a job at J. C. Penney's; but she isn't able to pay the electric bill because she needs to buy school clothes.

She is evasive when she talks to her mother. She doesn't want her to know about Barbie and the money. She knows her mother has left her everything she has, so there is no help from that source. Taylor is desperate. She can't make enough at Penney's to pay a babysitter, so Turtle will have to come to the store after school and hang out.

Meanwhile, Alice has an appointment with Annawake to talk about Turtle. They start out amicably, but Alice tells her about what the abuse did to Turtle. "What I think," she says, "is that you people had your chance and now it's Taylor's turn. And she's doing a good job."

Annawake's answer is that the Indians love their children in ways that white people don't understand; that even if a parent is unable or unwilling to care for the child, a relative will step in. But Alice's response is, "So with all this love going around, how does it happen that somebody walks up to my daughter's parked car one night and gives a baby away?"

Annawake says that in her mother's generation the chain of caretaking was broken. The federal government put the children in boarding schools and obliterated their culture and their family ties. That generation of kids never learned how to be in a family. It's the ones in Annawake's generation who are the casualties, she tells Alice. Nevertheless, she says, that child fell out of a family and is missed. In fact, says Annawake, she knows who that family is.

Her own mother became an alcoholic and was institutionalized at the age of thirty-five, but she says that she and her brother had people looking after them, mostly her Uncle Ledger, a medicine man. He is not a doctor, but a kind of minister and was the force in her life that assured that she would make something of herself.

This chapter closes with the following sentence: "Annawake stares at Alice, the woman from the family without men and hatches the most reckless plan of her life."

Chapter 22 Analysis

At this point, Annawake has talked to Taylor, Jax and now Alice. All have delivered the same message-that she should leave things alone. But now everything is beginning to come full-circle. Alice has made a good choice in coming here because she is bringing

the situation with Taylor and Turtle to the source. If there is to be a solution, it must be worked out here. Annawake's plan foreshadows the conclusion of the story, but the plot will thicken considerably before that point is reached.

Chapter 23

Chapter 23 Summary

This short chapter sets Annawake's reckless plan in motion. She returns a dish she has taken home from the hog fry to Cash's sister, Letty, Sugar's sister-in-law and the town gossip and meddler. She tells her that Alice (who doesn't even know who Cash is) is a secret admirer of his and is dying to meet him. Annawake tells her that Alice is nice-looking and divorced and likes a man that will talk to her. "Well, goodness me, Cash will talk your ear plumb off," answers Letty.

Annawake surmises that they will probably run into each other and Letty agrees. Annawake leaves, knowing that Letty will make it happen.

Chapter 23 Analysis

This was foreshadowed previously when Sugar told Alice on the phone that Letty was nosy. Now the clever Annawake is using her meddlesome tendency to achieve her own ends-to bring Turtle's Cherokee grandfather together with her adoptive grandmother. It is exactly what she hopes will be accomplished; we don't know yet.

Chapter 24

Chapter 24 Summary

Taylor is desperate. She can't meet her monthly obligations on her Penney's pay and she calls Jax, who begs her to come home. He will send her plane tickets if she will just use them. He does not believe that Annawake will have Turtle taken away from her. Taylor is discouraged and struggling, but she is determined to make it on her own.

Chapter 24 Analysis

So we know that Turtle and Jax are still talking to and trying to support each other. Taylor is expressing the old-fashioned Horatio Alger approach so important to white Americans-making a go of it on one's own. By having her fail at this, Kingsolver is bringing the validity of that value into question, yet another sub-theme. This writer is piling a lot of her convictions into this one story.

Chapter 25

Chapter 25 Summary

The story shifts back to Alice in Heaven now. Cash has called her and they are going out and she doesn't know why. She insists that she has never met him; but Sugar, who is in on the set-up with Letty, assures her that she did, in fact, meet him one day when they were in town. He comes to get her in his ancient pickup truck and they talk about their histories and their families. Cash tells her about his wife's poor health and their two daughters. Alice tells him how much she likes and admires the teenagers in Heaven. "They're a nicer bunch than I'd ever in this world expect a teenager to be," says Alice.

"Cherokee kids know the family, that's sure," Cash says.

He tells her his older daughter is dead and that his father died in 1940 and he didn't know it for sixteen days because he was in boarding school, which he describes as a kind of prison for children. He was able to leave it when he was in seventh grade because his mother needed him at home. That's all the education he got and he didn't learn much English. He feels that he didn't provide what his daughters needed.

Alice and Cash hit it off, have a good time and pick huckleberries to take back to Sugar. He has picked up an arrowhead and gives it to Alice and invites her to go to the stomp dance with him a week from Saturday. She feels good, not because she feels romantic, but just because he chose her.

Chapter 25 Analysis

As mentioned earlier, even though Kingsolver tends to introduce a lot of new characters and to weave her story back and forth, it's easy to keep track of what's going on because she gives so many clues that tie the episodes in the different parts of the story together. We, the readers, are aware that it's Turtle's two grandparents getting together here even though they don't know it. But now there are many clues to the connection between the two stories as they talk about their own personal histories.

Also, Kingsolver plugs her theme about the suffering and mistreatment of the Cherokees here again. We see one more instance where the interference of white people in the lives of these people has destroyed lives.

Chapter 26

Chapter 26 Summary

Cash picks Alice up at midnight to go to the dance, which will last all night. On the way, they figure out that Letty has set them up. "Every once in a while," he says, "the old gal chases a pair of folks up the right stump."

Ledger Fourkiller, Annawake's uncle, is the medicine chief and presides over the stomp dance; and Alice at last meets Letty. She is annoyed that the tribe is managing her love-life.

A fire, which has been kept burning perpetually since the Trail of Tears, is at the center of the ceremonies. The dance is a highly formalized, ritualistic arrangement of all the people in the clan that involves pipe-smoking and a one-step dance performed in tiers of people, mostly according to age and sex. Alice is directed to a particular area by Sugar, who is surprised that Alice is not aware that their grandmother-Sugar's and Alice's-was a full-blooded Cherokee, which makes Alice a part of this clan even though she has not been aware of it.

The next morning, back at Sugar's house, Alice ponders that these people really love one another and dance in the woods for no other reason than to promise goodness, to lose track of themselves and to keep an old fire burning.

Chapter 26 Analysis

Having others managing her love-life predictably annoys Alice, but Cash is a little more forgiving. We also find out that he is feeling positive about the situation when he says that she sometimes gets it right. However, we, the readers, know that while Letty was involved, this was not her doing alone.

Now a new wrinkle is introduced. It may be that, with Alice's surprise Cherokee heritage, there is no reason to remove Turtle from Taylor's custody. If that is true, then all the efforts on the part of Annawake are for nothing.

In this chapter, we get a glimpse of the spiritual basis for the tribe's continuity and we also see Annawake's beloved Uncle Ledger in his role as leader and what that means.

Chapter 27

Chapter 27 Summary

Sugar takes Alice to the Cherokee Heritage Center to show her their grandmother's name on the rolls. She tells Alice that all she needs to do to be enrolled is to prove that she is descended from their grandmother.

Alice and Annawake meet privately at her Uncle Ledger's houseboat to discuss Turtle. Alice tells Annawake that she and Taylor are eligible for tribal enrollment and asks whether it would make a difference in the adoption situation. Annawake responds that it's more than that. Skin color makes a difference in what happens with Cherokee children in the mainstream culture. Also, a relative has come forward and asked Annawake to try to find the child that she believes is Turtle.

She compares the situation to a custody case that was won by a surrogate father who had lost all his relatives in the holocaust and wanted a child so he could pass on his heritage. It's that way with the Cherokee children, she says. She reminds Alice that the surrogate father won in the courts. Then Annawake tells the story of the Trail of Tears, the hardship and the deaths that came from the inhumane expulsion from their lands in North Carolina. She recites what President Van Buren had said to Congress: "It affords me sincere pleasure to be able to apprise you of the removal of the Cherokee Nation of Indians to their new homes west of the Mississippi. The measures have had the happiest effect and they have emigrated without any apparent resistance."

Annawake fills Alice in on the history of her people. At first the Cherokees lived without interference and had a well-organized system that included the first free public school system in the world, the first telephone line west of the Mississippi and the highest literacy rate in the country, she tells her.

Once the railroad came through and white people realized what good land the Cherokees had been given, the tribal government was dissolved by federal order and the mandatory boarding schools were introduced. Families were divided and land was sold off. Alice points out that times have changed and that those things are no longer true; but Annawake responds, "No, they just take our kids." She says the tribe has lost more than a quarter of its living children.

Annawake and Alice come closer to an understanding. Both want to work out what is best for Taylor and Turtle.

Chapter 27 Analysis

Much has been resolved by now; however, the real climax will come later when the council meets to make a decision. Annawake and Alice have come to a meeting of the minds, more or less, so that part of the conflict seems to be resolved. Kingsolver uses

this chapter to hit home the cause that she wants to illuminate-the mistreatment of Native Americans by the dominant culture and the results of that mistreatment.

Chapter 28

Chapter 28 Summary

Turtle is having stomachaches and is being taunted at school because of her clothes. She complains that Taylor is mad all the time. The desperate mother calls Alice, who tries to persuade her to come on to Heaven and get the confrontation over with. Taylor feels that she doesn't have any chips and will lose if she comes.

She takes Turtle to a free clinic to find out why her stomach is hurting and finds out that due to her Native American heritage, she is lactose-intolerant. All the milk Taylor has been forcing her to drink has been making her sick. Then she remembers that Annawake had said to her, "I bet she hates milk." She decides that they need to go back to Oklahoma and deal with Turtle's status.

Chapter 28 Analysis

Again, Kingsolver has inserted a minor foreshadowing incident in her story. The factor in Turtle's being Cherokee that becomes the trigger, ultimately, of the solution of the conflicts is her lactose intolerance. Annawake planted the seed for this development when she asked Taylor about the milk in their face-to-face encounter earlier.

Chapter 29

Chapter 29 Summary

Alice is in Cash's kitchen. He is living in the original log house built by his family at the time it homesteaded here. He cooks for her and has given her a pair of silver earrings he has made. They end up in bed.

Chapter 29 Analysis

The plot thickens. It appears at this point that Annawake's strategy is working although we still don't know what she expects to come from Cash and Alice's union. How does this solve Taylor and Turtle's crisis?

Chapter 30

Chapter 30 Summary

Cash serves her breakfast in bed and he tells her the story of his family. Four years ago, he had three funerals: his mother, who was old; his wife, who died of cancer; and his oldest daughter, Alma, who drove her car off a bridge. Alma left her baby, Lacey, with his other daughter, who ran off to Tulsa with a worthless man. Cash tried to keep in touch with her because of the baby, but she went to a bar one night and gave the child to some girl passing through in a car. When Cash found that out, he packed up and went to Wyoming.

Then Alice puts it all together. She tells him about Taylor and Turtle and they figure out that it is Annawake who has set them up and Alice is angry.

Alice goes back and tells Sugar the whole story and then goes looking for Annawake. After going to her home and her office, she finds that she is back at the houseboat and she confronts her there. Although she is angry at her manipulation, she ends up forgiving her. She tells her that Taylor and Turtle are on their way to Heaven.

They sit with their feet in the water and look at the stars and Annawake tells Alice the story of the *Six Pigs in Heaven*. Alice insists that there are seven and Annawake replies that it's the *Six Pigs in Heaven* and the one mother who wouldn't let go.

Chapter 30 Analysis

The Six Pigs in Heaven myth is important to this story. We have heard it twice and we have seen pigs and heaven referred to in many ways. The only conclusion we can arrive at is that the theme is somehow embedded in these two symbols. Heaven, Oklahoma, as setting provides another strong clue. Kingsolver paints this place as one that would not be considered by most people as heaven, yet the story shows us that our value systems need to be adjusted. It's not the Cherokee Indians that neglect and abuse their children-it's the mainstream culture that has intruded. It's not the evident poverty that is responsible for the tragedies in the lives of the children. In Heaven, Oklahoma, the children are loved and cared for.

The misbehaving pigs in the myth are symbols of the children whose lives have been warped by the cruel mistreatment of the white man. They have been separated from their mothers and their families and have lived out unhappy, warped lives as a result. But it's the following generation that has "acted out" the warping. It's Turtle's (Lacey's) mother, the Indian child, whose parents were victimized by the forced displacement to the boarding schools, but it's the daughter, Alma, whose life has been so twisted that she was unable to care for her own child.

We have already seen that Barbara Kingsolver is a political writer. The themes in her stories reflect her convictions and in this story she is expressing her outrage at the treatment of the noble Cherokee Indians by the white people who seized their lands and their lives.

Chapter 31

Chapter 31 Summary

Taylor goes alone to Annawake's office and finds Cash there with her. They discuss their own two stories and Annawake explains the law that applies. Cash shows Taylor a picture of Turtle as a baby, which does not help, but he also shows her a picture of Turtle's mother when she was the age that Turtle is now and Taylor knows, beyond the shadow of a doubt, that Turtle is Cash's granddaughter. She is terrified that she might lose her and Annawake and Cash can see how devoted she is to the little girl. She tells them that she has realized that she should not keep her away from her own people.

Then Alice and Turtle come into the office. Turtle looks at Cash and runs to him, calling him "Pop-Pop," the name she had used for him when he and his wife had cared for the little girl before her mother died.

Chapter 31 Analysis

What has been anger and combativeness before now becomes understanding and common concern for the little girl and the people in her life. This is the climax of the story. The two sides have confronted each other. We don't know yet who will win, but by now we can believe that, regardless of what the ultimate decision is, Turtle will come out the winner; so the reader can, in fact, realize resolution on that score.

Chapter 32

Chapter 32 Summary

Cash and Alice drive back to Sugar's together and they quarrel, mostly out of their frustration with the situation.

Taylor and Turtle meet with Andy Rainbelt, who is in charge of the child welfare department for the Cherokee tribe. He asks questions but assures them that nobody is going to hurt Turtle again.

Turtle is exhausted and takes a nap at Sugar's house while Alice and Taylor go for a walk. Taylor tells her mother that she is going to marry Jax because when Andy asked Turtle about her family, she said she didn't have one. She says that when you don't put a name on things, you just accept that it's O.K. for people to leave when they feel like it.

Annawake goes to Uncle Ledger's houseboat and discusses the situation with him and they talk about Gabe. He tells her to call him, tell him she misses him and try to bring him back to Heaven. She hasn't thought of that as a way to deal with her anger and she agrees that she will do that.

When she asks him what to do about Turtle, he tells her the story of Solomon's ruling in the case of the two women who claimed the same child-to cut the child in half. However, he tells it in Cherokee as if it were a Cherokee story. He tells her to go with her heart regarding the child.

Chapter 32 Analysis

Now we're seeing the subthemes come to resolution. There's no doubt about how this writer feels about marriage-she's for it! The relationship between Taylor and Jax isn't in this story just to add interest-it's to make a point. What Taylor, Jax and Turtle need is a family, a name, so people won't just leave when they feel like it.

We also see a better way to deal with Gabe than being angry about his separation. Ledger's approach is to take action, do something about it, which is exactly what Annawake has done with Taylor and Turtle.

Kingsolver is a master of characterization-the creation of character. Ledger's leadership in the tribe has been a stabilizing force there, but it has also been an undercurrent in this story. He is now presented as a Cherokee Solomon, an interesting combination of cultures-ancient Jewish and modern American Indian. In the very early years, the American Indian was spoken of as being noble. Ledger embodies that; it's the best term to describe him. For much of the story, he has seemed a minor character, but in the long run, he has been playing a major role in the action as embodied by Annawake. It's because of him that she is so aggressive in her protection of even the smallest of their

people. This writer's characters are memorable. They linger in the mind of the reader long after the story is finished.

Chapter 33

Chapter 33 Summary

At last the tribal council meets. Annawake recommends that Cash have legal guardianship of Turtle, that Turtle's name be officially recognized as Turtle Stillwater, but that Taylor and Cash have joint custody. The tribe will pay for counseling for Turtle in consideration of her abuse.

Andy opens the meeting for anyone who wishes to speak. Cash stands and suggests that he and Alice Greer get married and the little girl could come and spend the summers with them. Letty, Sugar and Annawake argue about who actually set the courtship up and how soon the marriage should take place.

Alice then speaks up: "Did anybody ask me if I wanted to marry Cash?" She says that she doesn't intend to marry another man with a television set.

Cash invites them all to his house to witness something he is about to do. They all follow him to his house where he makes a ceremony of placing the television set in the back yard and putting a bullet in it. The story closes with Alice understanding "that her life sentence of household silence has been commuted."

Chapter 33 Analysis

The climax of the story is in Chapter 31 where Annawake and Taylor confront each other and the swords are laid down. When Turtle recognizes her grandfather, the battle is over. So now we are seeing the denouement, the unraveling of all the actions. We've already seen that happen with regard to Jax and Taylor and with Annawake and Gabe and now we see all the strands separating into satisfying conformations.

Turtle's life will be the best of all worlds. She will spend most of it with the mother who has loved her and is helping her heal. The rest she will spend with the grandfather who was a positive force in her life before her aunt took her away.

We also see a resolution in the story of Cash and Alice. They will settle down in Heaven with all the relatives around them. They will be a family living among family members.

An important factor in characterization is dialogue-we know what characters are like by how they speak and by what they say. Kingsolver's style is unusual in that most of her characters speak much of the time in one-liners, reminiscent of the monologue of a stand-up comic. It's not unusual to have one character whose dialogue is funny or entertaining, but all of her characters do this. Some examples:

In the first chapter, Alice, in speaking of her exasperation with Harland, her husband, thinks, "His idea of marriage is to spray WD-40 on anything that squeaks."

When Annawake and Jax are talking about Taylor's putting a boom box in the apricot tree with his music on it, he says, "It terrified the birds, I hear. I think I've found my market."

When Alice, who hasn't yet met Jax, tells Taylor she thinks of him as looking like Rhett Butler, Taylor responds: "Oh, that's Jax to perfection. If you leave out the hair, the face, the body and the mustache." What does this do for the story? In this case, it makes it entertaining and easy to read. It is a serious story about serious issues by a writer with convictions. The question is, does the lighthearted dialogue dilute the seriousness of the subject matter? Actually, it creates an emotional setting where the serious issues stand out in stark relief. This is a serious treatise on very serious and very real issues, but it goes down with a spoonful of sugar.

The point of view in this story is omniscient. We know what almost all of the characters are thinking and feeling, which is important in a story where the action occurs in so many different places-Tucson, the Hoover Dam, Las Vegas, Jackson Hole and Oklahoma, . However, we get much more insight into what's going on with Taylor and Alice than we do with Annawake, which controls where our sympathies lie. Also, we have no clue as to what Barbie thinks. We can only judge her by her actions and she is an unsympathetic character.

Kingsolver does not attempt to conceal her own autobiography in her writing of this story. In addition to all the other aspects of her life that have gone into making it a successful literary creation, it's worthwhile to note that her father, Dr. Kingsolver, had Cherokees in his ancestry.

Characters

Alice

Alice is Taylor's mother and Turtle's grandmother. At the beginning of the novel, she is stuck in an unhappy marriage. Since "women on their own" tend to run in her family, she decides to leave her husband. She worries, though, that all the women in her family are "in danger of ending up alone by their own stubborn choice." Yet she is a caring and supportive mother to Taylor, who insists that she "always knows what you need." When she participates in the Stomp Dance in Heaven, the sense of connection she experiences makes her feel "entirely alive," and for the first time, completely included. She also is able to form a romantic connection with Cash and thus declare her "family of women" ready to "open its doors to men."

Sugar Boss

See Sugar Hornbuckle

Barbie

Barbie works as a waitress in a Las Vegas casino when Taylor, Turtle, and Alice meet her. After Barbie gets fired, Taylor begrudgingly decides to take her with them on the road. A shallow and insecure woman, Barbie makes it her "career" to look and dress like a Barbie doll. Moreover, she is a criminal: Taylor soon discovers that she stole money from the casino before she left, and that she was caught counterfeiting in her home in Bakersfield. Shortly after they arrive in Washington, Barbie steals money from Taylor and disappears.

Angie Buster

Angie is Lucky Buster's mother. A kind, loving woman, Angie lets Taylor and Turtle stay in her motel when they first start out on the road.

Lucky Buster

A mentally-challenged man, Lucky Buster falls into a spillway and is rescued after Taylor and Turtle get help. He and Turtle become fast friends.

Annawake Fourkiller

Annawake Fourkiller is a lawyer who has returned to Oklahoma to intern on an Indian Lawyer Training grant. After seeing Turtle on *Oprah,* she concludes that according to the Indian Child Welfare Act, Turtle's adoption is illegal. Initially, the pain over the memory of the tragic consequences of her brother's adoption causes her to take a firm stance against Taylor's position. After considering Turtle's close attachment to her mother, Annawake softens and tries to engineer some kind of compromise.

Gabriel Fourkiller

Gabriel is Annawake's twin brother. Sent to live with a white family after their mother was hospitalized, she explains the hardships he subsequently endured:

He failed in school because they put him in the Mexican classrooms and so the teachers spoke to him in Spanish, which he didn't understand. The Mexican kids beat him up because he didn't wear baggy black pants and walk with his hands in his pockets. When he was 13 ... his new Mom ... told him he was letting his new family down. When he was fifteen, he was accessory to an armed robbery.

As a result, he is serving time in prison. Annawake feels it is her job to protect the Nation's children from what happened to her brother. Her description of Gabriel's life touches Alice. Subsequently, she decides to go to Heaven and talk to Annawake about Turtle.

Ledger Fourkiller

Ledger is Heaven's medicine chief. He leads the ceremony at the Stomp Dance and offers Annawake sound advice about Turtle's fate. In an effort to get her to think about what is best for Turtle, he tells her an old Indian legend, which turns out to be the Bible story of King Solomon.

Taylor Greer

Taylor adopted Turtle soon after she found the young girl abandoned in her car three years ago. She is a loving and attentive mother, but has been unwilling to commit to her boyfriend, Jax. Her fierce devotion to Turtle prompts her to flee with her daughter. However, her inability to provide a good home for Turtle makes her feel like a failure. Taylor's love for her daughter eventually makes her realize that she alone cannot provide a suitable environment for her.

After she is told that she must share custody of Turtle with Cash, she understands that the "absolute power of motherhood" has been taken away from her - "that force that makes everyone else step back and agree that she knows what's best for Turtle." She

admits that the responsibility of motherhood at one time "scared her to death. But giving it up now makes her feel infinitely small and alone."

Turtle Greer

Turtle (also Turtle Stillwater) has "been marked in life by a great many things." Abandoned and then found by Taylor, it was discovered that the little girl was severely abused. As a result, Turtle became very attached to Taylor - it was said she gripped her like a snapping turtle, and the name stuck. Not surprising, she has a fear that she will be abandoned. Taylor remembers that when she found her, "Turtle gazed out at the world from what seemed like an empty house." With Taylor's devotion and encouragement, Turtle has been able to emerge from her protective shell and form relationships with others, such as Alice and Jax.

Gundi

Gundi is an eccentric, locally famous artist in Tucson. She owns the "little colony of falling-down stone houses in the desert at the edge of town" where Taylor lives with Jax. Gundi will not let people rent there unless she approves of them. She and Jax have a brief affair after Taylor leaves.

Letty Hornbuckle

Letty is Sugar's sister-in-law and is described as "the nosiest person in three counties." Letty is Cash Stillwater's sister and conspires to get Cash and Alice together.

Sugar Hornbuckle

Sugar (also known as Sugar Boss) is Alice's second cousin and friend. She became the most famous citizen in Heaven after her picture appeared in *Life Magazine.* She and Alice spent their last years of childhood together at Alice's farm during the Depression.

Steven Kant

Taylor meets Steven Kant, a disabled air traffic controller, while driving a handicapped van in Washington.

Kevin

Kevin is a young man who works with Taylor in Washington. After she goes on a date with him, she decides he would have been a better match for Barbie, since "the two of them could jabber at each other all day without ever risking human conversation."

Rose Levesque

Rose is Cash's girlfriend in Wyoming. Since she is "shorter and heavier than she feels she ought to be, she clacks through her entire life in scuffed high heels, worn with tight jeans and shiny blouses buttoned a little too low. You can tell at thirty paces she's trying too hard."

Boma Mellowbug

Boma is Heaven's resident eccentric. She "sees things no one else does."

Lou Ann Ruiz

Lou Ann is Taylor's friend, who is like a "second mother" to Turtle. Taylor and Turtle lived with her before they moved in with Jax.

Turtle Stillwater

See Turtle Greer

Minerva Stranger

Alice's mother, Minerva, was "a tall fierce woman" who ran a hog farm alone for fifty years. She instilled an independent spirit in her daughter, who passed it on to Taylor.

Cash Stillwater

Cash Stillwater bags groceries and makes bead jewelry. He is homesick and mourns the deaths of his wife and daughter and the disappearance of his granddaughter. When he recognizes that he is "simply dying of loneliness," he decides to go back to his hometown of Heaven, Oklahoma. When Alice meets him there, she can feel "sadness rising off him in waves." The two become lovers. When faced with the problem of Turtle's custody, he expresses his love for Alice and his granddaughter through a marriage proposal.

Jax Thibodeaux

Jax is Taylor's boyfriend and a keyboard player in a band called the Irascible Babies. Taylor does not feel very connected to him before she leaves with Turtle, but he is passionately in love with her. After she leaves, Jax notes "how clearly these days he can hear the emptiness inside things." He supports Taylor's desire to keep Turtle, but tries to

get her to consider Annawake's point of view. By the end of the novel, Taylor decides to establish a firmer connection with him and tells Turtle that he will be her new "Daddy."

Franklin Turnbo

Annawake works in Franklin's law office. "Like many his age, he's a born-again Indian," who didn't think about being Cherokee until he began to study Native American law.

Themes

Justice and Injustice

One of the main thematic concerns in the novel is the issue of justice and injustice. At the heart of the story is the following question: should an adopted child be taken away from a mother who provided her with the only comfort and love she has ever known, so that the child can gain a sense of her cultural identity? In response, both sides have valid and relevant points; as a result, it is difficult to come up with a definitive answer.

Annawake Fourkiller answers yes to the question; "as a citizen of Turtle's nation, as the sister of Gabriel Fourkiller," she provides a strong explanation why Turtle "can't belong" to Taylor. She insists that Native American children who have been taken away from their homes in the past "have no sense of themselves as Native Americans, but live in a society that won't let them go on being white, either. Not past childhood." Yet, Taylor finds Annawake's position unjust, since it would separate her from her daughter. Likewise Annawake finds Taylor's attempts to hold on to Turtle unjust, claiming that Turtle would suffer if she never gained an awareness of and acceptance by the Cherokee Nation.

Individualism

The women in the Greer family possess a sense of individualism and thus feel that their own views are just. Alice acknowledges that "women on their own run in [her] family." Neither she nor Taylor feel the need for a husband or a traditional family, at least until they face losing Turtle. Both have had men come and go in their lives and have learned to live independently.

Taylor's sense of individuality prevents her from establishing a stronger relationship with Jax. She reveals her own tendency to cut herself off from others in her observation that there is "one thing about people you can never understand well enough: how entirely inside themselves they are." Jax's conversation with Gundi at one point in the novel illustrates the problematic nature of individuality: Jax asks, "How can you belong to a tribe, and be your own person, at the same time? You can't. If you're verifiably one, you're not the other." Gundi, however, foreshadows the compromise that will be reached at the end of the novel when she responds, "Can't you alternate: Be an individual most of the time, and merge with others once in a while?"

Alienation and Loneliness

Several characters experience loneliness in the novel. Alice feels alienated from her husband Harland and so decides to leave him. Jax suffers excruciating loneliness after Taylor flees with Turtle Eventually, Taylor also admits to feeling lonely on her own with

just Turtle. As the characters experience these emotions, they are forced to redefine their notions of individuality and family.

Custom and Tradition

Annawake insists that Turtle must learn the customs and traditions of her race for her to gain a satisfying sense of who she is and where she belongs. She argues that Taylor would not be able to help her gain this knowledge on her own. When Annawake tries to explain this to Taylor, she focuses on the differences between white and Native American culture. Native Americans are "good to their mothers. They know what's planted in their yards. They give money to their relatives, whether or not they're going to use it wisely." They have extended families that share in the upbringing of the children. Eventually it is that strong sense of community that becomes Annawake's most compelling argument for Turtle to be reunited with her relatives.

Style

Point of View

Kingsolver employs the third-person point of view throughout the novel. As a result, she is able to give a balanced portrait of each faction of the argument for custody of Turtle. Sybil Steinberg in her review of the novel in *Publishers Weekly* writes that one of its strengths is Kingsolver's ability to "make the reader understand and sympathize with both claimants on Turtle's life, the Cherokee Nation and Taylor."

Structure

Kingsolver effectively shifts between characters and their stories. This structure, coupled with the use of the third-person narrator, allows the author to present many perspectives so the reader can see all sides of the issue.

Symbol

Kingsolver often uses storytelling to symbolize the novel's conflicts and themes. For example, the story of "Six Pigs in Heaven" is told twice in the novel, each with a different interpretation. The story, an old Native American myth, involves six boys who would not do their chores, which included work for the tribe. As a result, their mothers cooked their leather balls and served them for lunch. When the boys complained to the spirits that their mothers treated them like pigs, the spirits agreed. The spirits then turned them into pigs and pulled them up into the night sky where they remain to this day.

Annawake informs Jax that "Six Pigs in Heaven" illustrates the importance of "do[ing] right by your people," while Americans learn to "do right by yourself." When Annawake is able to understand Taylor's point of view, she finds a different moral when she tells the story to Alice. Then she explains that the point is "to remind parents always to love their kids no matter what, I guess, and cut them a little slack." When she and Alice look up into the night sky and see seven stars, Annawake calls them "the Six Pigs in Heaven, and the one mother who wouldn't let go."

Annawake's Uncle Ledger tells the final story about two mothers fighting over a child and of the medicine man who makes a wise decision that will identify the mother who loves the child the most. When Annawake recognizes the "old Indian legend" as the Biblical story of Solomon, she understands that the power of a mother's love for her child is as strong in white as well as Native American cultures.

Denouement

Some critics have found the resolution of Turtle's custody issue too sentimental and unrealistic; others find it a satisfying compromise. The denouement does not, however, provide a happy ending for all. While the decision to split Turtle's time between Taylor and her grandfather (and now Alice) will be beneficial for Turtle, Taylor will be separated from her daughter for a few months each year. She admits that having to give up exclusive custody of Turtle "makes her feel infinitely small and alone."

Historical Context

The Trail of Tears

After years of pressure from white settlers who urged the government takeover of Native American land, Congress passed the Indian Removal Act in 1830. Prior to that time, the Cherokee had developed a strong agricultural economy and political system in the American Southeast; moreover, they were determined to keep their land. In 1827 the Cherokee Nation formulated its own constitution, which called for total jurisdiction over its own territory

However, Congress soon determined that Native Americans had only temporary rights to the property. As a result, eight years later they were forced to evacuate their homes in Georgia, Alabama, North Carolina, and Tennessee and travel 800 miles along the Tennessee, Ohio, Mississippi, and Arkansas Rivers to reservations west of the Red River. The arduous journey, which came to be known as "The Trail of Tears," started in March 1838 and took one year to complete. En route approximately 4,000 Cherokee□mostly children and elderly□died after contracting measles, whooping cough, pneumonia, pleurisy, tuberculosis, and pellagra. Today approximately 4,500 Cherokee live in North Carolina, descendants of some members of the tribe who successfully resisted removal from their homes in 1838 as well as those who later returned after being relocated.

Native Americans Push for Civil Rights

In the late 1960s and early 1970s, many Native Americans, including members of the American Indian Movement (AIM), actively protested the treatment of Native Americans in the United States. During those years, groups of Native Americans seized the federal prison at Alcatraz Island and the Bureau of Indian Affairs, which garnered much media attention. Their protests against government policy reached their peak in 1973: in February of that year, the Movement, led by Russell Means and Dennis Banks, occupied Wounded Knee, South Dakota, where three hundred Sioux had been massacred by federal troops in 1890. The group held eleven residents of the town hostage and determined to keep them until certain demands were met.

As a result of subsequent negotiations, encouraged by extensive media coverage, the American government created a task force to investigate past injustices, including broken treaty agreements. In 1978 a more peaceful demonstration occurred during "The Longest Walk," a 3,000-mile march across the United States that ended five months later in Washington, D.C. Native Americans from eight different tribes participated in this event, which helped them gain a stronger sense of solidarity.

Critical Overview

A popular novelist, Barbara Kingsoiver's fiction has garnered much critical and commercial success. Since its publication in 1993, most reviewers and literary critics have responded positively to her third novel. ***Pigs** in Heaven.* In fact, it was nominated for an ABBY award and received the American Library Association award, the *Los Angeles Times* Fiction Prize, and the Cowboy Hall of Fame Western Fiction Award.

Many commentators have praised King-solver's appealing characters and insightful and sympathetic portrait of familial bonds. Victoria Carchidi suggests "we read her for the homey quality of her writing. The characters are like someone we know, or would like to know, living on the in-terstates and small towns we grew up in or drive through." She maintains that "Kingsolver teaches her readers the language of tolerance and negotiation through characters with human failings and human nobility."

Travis Silcox contends in *Belles Lettres* that despite "a midpoint flatness ... Kingsolver's supporting characters enrich the story." Some critics, however, fault Kingsolver for avoiding the novel's more unpleasant characters. A reviewer in *Kirkus Review* argues that while "all will be amicably, hilariously, and heartwarmingly settled to everybody's satisfaction," it is not "the truly wonderful book it might have been□characters who seem important disappear: carefully marked trails turn out to be merely picaresque, leading nowhere." The reviewer concludes that the novel is "a terrific read nonetheless."

Other critics praise the novel's focus on social issues like adoption, abuse, poverty, and ethnicity. The reviewer for *Publishers Weekly* comments:

Kingsolver's intelligent consideration of issues of family and culture□both in her evocation of Native American society and in her depiction of the plight of a single mother□brims with insight and empathy.... In taking a fresh look at the Solomonic dilemma of choosing between two equally valid claims on a child's life, Kingsolver achieves the admirable feat of making the reader understand and sympathize with both sides of the controversy.... In the end, both justice and compassion are served.

A *Los Angeles Times Book Review,* critic asserts: "That rare combination of a dynamic story told in dramatic language, combined with issues that are serious, debatable and painful ... *[Pigs in Heaven.]* is about the human heart in all its shapes and ramifications."

In her review for *The Nev\ York* ***Times Book*** *Review.* Karen Karbo claims that Kingsolver "somehow manages to maintain her political views without sacrificing the complexity of her characters' predicaments." She continues: "Possessed of an extravagantly gifted narrative voice, she blends a fierce and abiding moral vision with benevolent, concise humor. Her medicine is meant for the head, the heart and the soul and it goes down dangerously, blissfully, easily."

However, some commentators deride the novel's sentimental predictability. Maureen Ryan refers to Karbo's review in her *Journal of America Culture* essay, insisting that

Karbo unconsciously articulates the unease that Kingsolver's books inspire. Her medicine is meant for the head, the heart, and the soul and it goes down dangerously, blissfully, easily The dangers in King-solver's novels are not the challenges and perils that her characters all too easily overcome; they are the soothing strains of that old-time religion, lulling us into oblivion with her deceptive insistence that if we love our children and our mothers, and hang in there with hearth and home, the big bad world will simply go away.

Ryan concludes that Kingsolver's work to be "contemporary American fiction *lite.* It's what we're supposed to eat these days, and it's even fairly tasty, but it's not very nourishing and we go away hungry." Most critics, however, would agree with Wendy Smith's assessment of the novel in the *Washington Post Book World:* "There is no one quite like Barbara Kingsolver in contemporary literature. Her dialogue sparkles with sassy wit and the earthy poetry of ordinary folks' talk; her descriptions have a magical lyricism rooted in daily life but also on familiar terms with the eternal."

Criticism

- Critical Essay #1
- Critical Essay #2
- Critical Essay #3
- Critical Essay #4
- Critical Essay #5
- Critical Essay #6

Critical Essay #1

Perkins is an Associate Professor of English at Prince George's Community College in Maryland and has published several articles on British and American authors. In the following essay, she examines how the characters in Pigs in Heaven *struggle with the concepts of individuality and community.*

In an interview with critic Robin Epstein in *The Progressive,* Barbara Kingsolver explains:

In *Pigs in Heaven* I wanted to choose a high-profile event in which a Native American has been adopted out of the tribe and in which that adoption is questioned and challenged. Because it brings into conflict two completely different ways of defining good, of defining value. The one is that the good is whatever is in the best interest of the child; the other is that the good is whatever is in the best interest of the tribe, the group, and the community. What I really wanted to do in that book was not necessarily write about Indians. I wanted to introduce my readers to this completely different unit of good and have them believe in it by the end, have them accept in their hearts that that could be just as true as the other.

This conflict between the individual and the community lies at the heart of the novel. As Taylor Greer and Annawake Fourkiller each insists on her own notion of what is "good" for Turtle, Taylor's adopted Cherokee daughter, each delineates boundaries and constructs borders that separate and isolate one from the other. When they are forced eventually to cross those borders, as they struggle to determine Turtle's fate, they begin to redefine their concepts of self and family.

After Taylor and Turtle help rescue Lucky Buster from a Hoover Dam spillway, his mother Angie explains that Lucky often wanders away from the house: "He just don't have a real good understanding of where home ends and the rest of the world takes up." At the beginning of the novel, Taylor and Annawake, unlike Lucky, know die boundaries of their own individual worlds and determine to keep within them. Taylor's boundaries delineate her individualism while Annawake's mark her sense of tribal community. Taylor has defined herself and Turtle as a family unit and has only allowed Jax to exist on the borders. Annawake divides her world into two parts□Cherokee and white□and sees little need for any border crossings.

Kingsolver foreshadows the border disputes that will soon arise in the novel in three symbolic scenes. In the opening scene, Alice, whose independent spirit and love for her daughter will prompt her to help Taylor retain custody of Turtle, complains that her garden is constantly overrun with her neighbor's pigs eating her flowers. Desert birds infest Taylor's apricot tree in Tucson. She finds inventive ways of chasing them away, including blasting Jax's music at them, but inevitably "one by one the birds emerge from the desert and come back to claim their tree." Cash notes before he leaves that pigeons from the city have been swarming in his town in Wyoming. These incidents foreshadow Taylor's and Annawake's movement into each other's territory. Jax's conversation with

Gundi reflects this struggle between individual and community that lies at the heart of the custody battle over Turtle. Jax asks, "how can you belong to a tribe, and be your own person, at the same time? You can't. If you're verifiably one, you're not the other." When Gundi responds, "can't you alternate: Be an individual most of the time, and merge with others once in a while?" she proposes a compromise that Taylor and Annawake will eventually come to embrace.

Initially, both Taylor and Annawake refuse to consider the other's point of view. Taylor values the independence she gained as a young child when she had to accept the departure of her father. This independent spirit also resulted from the sense of otherness she developed when she was a young girl, during the time that Alice supported the two of them by cleaning houses. One afternoon while Taylor was helping her mother clean, she overheard a boy say to his friend, "you don't have to talk to her, that's the cleaning lady's girl." Taylor admits she grew up that day. As a result, she has learned to keep a part of herself detached from others, especially men, since as she notes, they often leave.

When she decides that there is "one thing about people you can never understand well enough: how entirely inside themselves they are," she reflects her own feelings of separateness. Taylor, however, has been able to forge a special bond with Turtle and as a result considers the two of them to be a family unit. Alice observes that they "share something physical, a beautiful way of holding still when they're not moving. Alice reminds herself that it's not in the blood, they've learned this from each other." Taylor's independent spirit, though, prompts her refusal to broaden her concept of family to include Jax or especially Turtle's Cherokee ancestors.

Annawake is equally committed to her sense of community. She becomes adamant about Turtle's return to the Cherokee Nation, citing the illegal nature of her adoption and the necessity of helping Turtle gain a sense of her heritage. In a letter to Taylor, she writes that the Cherokee children who have been taken from their homes "have no sense of themselves as Native Americans, but live in a society that won't let them go on being white, either. Not past childhood." After sharing the tragic story of her brother, Gabriel, who was sent to live with a white family after their mother was hospitalized, she ends the letter with "as a citizen of Turtle's nation, as the sister of Gabriel Fourkiller, I want you to understand why she can't belong to you "

Annawake constructs borders between the Cherokee and white worlds when she points out their differences. As she defines her tribe's sense of community, she creates a hierarchical value system. Cherokees, she claims are "good to their mothers. They know what's planted in their yards. They give money to their relatives, whether or not they're going to use it wisely." She also finds their sense of family, which actively involves relatives in the process of raising children, superior to the white version. She insists that the entire Cherokee nation is Turtle's family "We don't think of ourselves as having extended families. We look at you guys and think you have *contracted* families "

The old myth "Six Pigs in Heaven" that she relates to Jax reflects the importance she and the Nation place on the concept of community. In this story, six boys refuse to do

their work, are thus transformed into pigs, and then become the constellation known as the Pleiades. Annawake explains that like other Native American myths, this one teaches children to "do right by your people" unlike American stories that teach children to "do right by yourself." When Alice and Annawake meet to discuss Turtle's future, Kingsolver offers a symbol of Taylor's and Annawake's inability to venture outside the borders they have each constructed around themselves. As Alice tells Annawake about Turtle's relationship with Taylor, she draws a pig with fences around it in the sugar that has spilled on the table. At that point Alice and Annawake admit that they each have trouble communicating with the other. When Annawake declares, "words aren't enough," Alice responds, "if we could get [our views] across, we wouldn't be sitting here right now."

After Alice spends time in the community of Heaven, she becomes a bridge between the two sides of the argument over Turtle. She encourages Taylor and Annawake to expand or redefine their concepts of family and community in order to effect a compromise. Taylor had already been prompted to reevaluate the "family" she has created on the road with Turtle. She acknowledges that she had trouble supporting the two of them and that she missed Jax. She admits to Alice, "I thought that ... the only thing that mattered [was] keeping the two of us together. But now I feel like that might not be true. I love her all right, but just her and me isn't enough We're not a whole family." This change of heart prompts her decision to take Turtle to Heaven and try to settle the custody dispute.

Alice also helps Annawake redefine her vision of community and family when she describes the strong bond that exists between Taylor and Turtle. Uncle Ledger encourages Annawake to consider Taylor's point of view when he tells her a story about two mothers fighting over a child and of the medicine man who makes a wise decision that will identify the mother who loves the child the most. When Annawake recognizes the "old Indian legend" as the Biblical story of Solomon, she understands that the power of a mother's love for her child is as strong in white as well as in Native American cultures. As a result, Annawake is able to find a different moral when she tells the "Six Pigs in Heaven" story to Alice. She explains that the point is "to remind parents always to love their kids no matter what, I guess, and cut them a little slack." When she and Alice look up into the night sky and see seven stars, Annawake calls them "the Six Pigs in Heaven, and the one mother who wouldn't let go."

When Taylor and Annawake begin to tear down the borders that have separated them, they are able to agree to a compromise that will be in Turtle's best interests. Taylor decides to provide a more secure sense of family for Turtle by making Jax her "official daddy" and by allowing her to spend vacations in Heaven with Cash, her grandfather, and her Cherokee relatives. Annawake realizes that the strong familial bond established between Taylor and Turtle should not be broken.

Maureen Ryan, in her essay on *Pigs in Heaven,* writes: "each of the protagonists in Kingsolver's novels must come to acknowledge the authonty of seasoned customs, which is variously embodied in an appreciation for continuity, a sense of place, and family values that prevail over danger and instability in their fictional world." Thus, by the

end of the novel, Alice recognizes that "the family of women is about to open its doors to men. Men, children, cowboys, and Indians."

Source: Wendy Perkins, in an essay *tot Novels for Students,* Gale, 2000.

Critical Essay #2

An American critic, editor, and journalist. Smith is the author of Real Life Drama: The Group Theatre and America, 1931-1940 *(1990). In the following review, she provides a highly favorable assessment* of Pigs in Heaven.

There is no one quite like Barbara Kingsolver in contemporary literature. She writes about working-class lives with an exhilarating combination of grit and joy that only Lee Smith among her peers can match, and Smith's work is more firmly rooted in a specific region (Appalachia), while Kingsolver engages the whole of American culture in novels and short fiction—*The Bean Trees, Homeland and Other Stories, Animal Dreams*—that sympathetically explore the worlds of people from many different backgrounds. She is the equal of any bestselling author in her gift for engaging, accessible storytelling, and she illuminates her themes through imagery woven into her plots with a technical aplomb that would delight any English professor. Her dialogue sparkles with the sassy wit and earthy poetry of ordinary folks' talk; her descriptions have a magical lyricism rooted in daily life but also on familiar terms with the eternal. Her political sophistication is as impressive as her knowledge of the human heart. It seems there's nothing she can't do.

Pigs in Heaven, her third novel, resoundingly reinforces that impression. Even the ungainly title, at first glance a startling lapse for someone as careful with words as Kingsolver, turns out to be a key metaphor, drawn from a Native American myth about the stars we know as the Pleiades, that encapsulates the book's most important theme: the delicate, often painful balancing act any society must perform between the needs of the community and the rights of the individual. But that's a dry way of describing an issue Kingsolver has embodied in a dramatic, emotionally complex story that sets up a powerful situation—a mother threatened with the loss of her child—and proceeds to gently thwart our preconditioned response to it.

Taylor Greer, heroine of Kingsolver's first novel, returns here with her adopted daughter, Turtle, the Indian girl who was abandoned in Taylor's car in *The Bean Trees.* While visiting Hoover Dam, the 6-year-old sees a man fall into the spillway; the ensuing nationwide media coverage of his rescue attracts the attention of Annawake Fourkiller, a lawyer for the Cherokee Nation in Oklahoma, who travels to Taylor's home in Tucson to warn her that the adoption of a Native American child without the consent of her tribe is illegal.

The reader's sympathies, of course, are immediately with Taylor, who rescued a girl who had been tortured and sexually abused. Smart, angry Annawake comes across as obsessed with the desire to avenge the disastrous adoption of her twin brother by a white family; her explanation of the 1978 Indian Child Welfare Act appears abstract compared with Taylor's love for Turtle. When the panic-stricken adoptive mother takes off with her daughter to avoid submitting to the Cherokee Nation's judgment, it appears that *Pigs in Heaven* will be a tale of a courageous individual defying interfering authorities.

But Kingsolver would never make things so simple. People's hunger for a meaningful place within a loving community has been a central subject in all her books; she has a working-class person's understanding of the ways in which the ideal of individualism can be twisted into a justification for the strong to oppress the weak and the victims to blame themselves. In her perfectly calibrated narrative, which juggles several simultaneous storylines, she prompts us to see the need for collective justice as well as personal fulfillment□not, as Annawake misguidedly does, by making blanket statements, but by showing how these issues work themselves out in particular lives.

Taylor's mother, Alice, goes to visit a cousin on Annawake's reservation (it's typical of King-solver's craftsmanship that this development was set up in *The Bean Trees),* allowing the author to give emotional weight to the Cherokee Nation's claim on Turtle by painting an attractive portrait of a neighborly environment in which everyone looks out for each other and by bringing to light the girl's grieving grandfather. Even the forbidding Annawake becomes human when viewed through Alice's shrewd, tolerant eyes.

At the same time, Taylor's life on the run with Turtle heartbreakingly demonstrates how impossible it is to be a good mother when you're totally cut off from any support system. Barely scraping by in a series of low-paying jobs, forced to leave Turtle with a flaky, larcenous ex-waitress named Barbie who is hardly the ideal babysitter, Taylor finally despairs when she learns the milk she's been urging her daughter to drink is actually making Turtle sick; like many Native Americans, she's lactose intolerant.

Those who see political correctness lurking behind every bush will doubtless be irritated by King-solver's careful, warmhearted denouement, which asserts that conflict between the individual and the collective can be resolved to everyone's benefit. But within the context of her sensitive story replete with appealing people who deserve to find happiness, her conclusion is both dramatically and emotionally satisfying. Like all of Kingsolver's fiction, *Pigs in Heaven* fulfills the longings of the head and the heart with an inimitable blend of challenging ideas, vibrant characters and prose that sings.

Source: Wendy Smith, "The Mother and the Tnbe," in *Book World Washington Post,* June 13, 1993, p 3

Critical Essay #3

In the following review, Koenig offers a negative assessment of Pigs in Heaven, *faulting the novel's political implications and reliance on tidy resolutions.*

The six pigs in Heaven, explains a character in Barbara Kingsolver's *[Pigs in Heaven],* are the American Indian version of the Pleiades, or the seven sisters (one more example of Indians' being shortchanged). Originally six naughty boys who complained about being punished, they were turned into a constellation by the gods as a warning to other children. But if the moral of that story is the novel's stated theme□"Do the right thing"□the title unfortunately suggests its tone, a cute, dreamy mindlessness that subverts the issues of conflict and choice it propounds. Starting with charm. King-solver drifts into ingratialion.

Two years into a dismal second marriage, Alice feels she has made another mistake. Her silent, uncompanionable husband "has no words for Alice□nothing to contradict all the years she lay alone, feeling the cold seep through her like cave air, turning her breasts to limestone from the inside out." Ripe for flight, Alice takes off when she gets a call from a daughter in distress. Taylor has adopted a little Indian girl. Turtle, who had been sexually molested, beaten, and abandoned. Turtle's help in saving a life gets her on the *Oprah Winfrey Show,* where she attracts the attention of Annawake Fourkiller, an aggressive defender of Indian rights. Annawake tells Taylor that Turtle was improperly adopted, since the necessary tribal consent was never obtained, and that she is bringing an action to return Turtle to the Cherokee. Taylor's response is to scoop up her kid and head, with her mother, for the open road.

Barbara Kingsolver has a lovely eye (and nose) for details: the "face-powder" scent of peonies, a "quilt-cheeked" crowd pushing against a wire fence. In Alice and Taylor she creates women who are decent and good-natured, with a sisterly camaraderie and a tart sense of reality (though suspiciously articulate for, respectively, a housecleaner and an auto-parts saleswoman). But television seems to provide not only the motor for King-solver's plot but the tone of her characterization and prose. A sticky cloud of niceness soon envelops all but one of the main characters and most of the minor ones, too. I would be far more interested in Annawake's determination to take a child from the woman who has mothered her for half her life if she were envious or demented or pursuing the case out of a desire for personal gain. But Annawake is merely the kind of character we can easily forgive (and patronize): A Bright Girl Who Is Too Hard on Herself.

The prevailing coziness dissolves any chance of suspense: Who can envision a tragic ending for any of these sweet people, all of them terribly concerned about doing the right thing? (The ramshackle narrative, with characters roaming here and there and settling down for picnics and Kaffeeklatsches, doesn't help, either.) Split between real life and literature on one hand and soap opera and sitcom on the other (the dialogue is part honest talk, part TV banter). *Pigs in Heaven* introduces a number of serious

problems (failed marriage, child abuse, ethnic identity), then resolves them with a dopey benignity and a handful of fairy dust.

The one rotten apple is Barbie, a waitress who has legally changed her name to match the doll's and has a Barbie hairstyle as well as an identical wardrobe of "thirteen complete ensembles and a lot of the mix-and-match parts." Barbie is fired for her obsession ("They say I tell people too much about my hobby. This is, like, so stressful for me, that choice of words. Barbie is not a hobby, do you understand what 1 mean? This is a *career* for me, okay?") and goes off with Turtle and the two women for a while, eventually proving to have not only the mental equipment of a Mattel toy but the morals of Klaus. But why, one wonders, would the sensible Alice insist on taking up with someone who is clearly inflammable plastic from the neck up? (It is perhaps best not to think about such things as consistent characterization in a novel like this; you might then start thinking, Why, if Alice is so nice, does she abandon a husband merely for being dull, and why does he make no attempt to find her?)

What is most dismaying is that Kingsolver, clearly a nice, well-meaning woman herself, with a large and affectionate public, has no idea of the appalling implications of her work. Having seen what passions Turtle inspires, Taylor decides to marry her adoring live-in boyfriend, who thinks she's "the Statue of Liberty and Abbey Road and the best burnto of your life." She has come to realize that children feel more secure if their parent figures are married and, come to think of it, heck, she would feel things were more permanent herself. ("When you never put a name on things, you're just accepting that it's okay for people to leave when they feel like it.") After a generation of the greatest freedom and opportunity women have ever known, we're supposed to feel a warm glow at one of them emotionally reinventing the wheel' I don't know about thepigs in Heaven, but the naive self-congratulation here is enough to make the angels weep.

Source: Rhoda Koerig, "Portrait of the Artists' Friend," in *New York (magazine),* Vol 26, No 24, June 14, 1993, pp 99-100

Critical Essay #4

Karbo is a novelist. In the review below, she praises Kingsover's blending of political commentary and emotional insight in Pigs in Heaven.

Barbara Kingsolver's terrific new novel, *Pigs in Heaven,* picks up where her highly acclaimed first novel, *The Bean Trees,* left off In this heart-twisting sequel, her feisty young heroine, Taylor Greer, is faced with the possibility of losing her 6-year-old daughter, Turtle. Taylor, an outspoken, self-professed hillbilly from Kentucky, had headed west to avoid the poverty and despair that were snagging her former schoolmates. Passing through Oklahoma, she was snagged instead by a child.

In the offhand way that can lead a person in a whole new direction, Taylor stopped at a bar on the edge of the Cherokee Nation; there, an Indian woman deposited a little girl on the front seat of Taylor's Volkswagen and promptly disappeared. The tiny, silent toddler, whom Taylor called Turtle for her fierce snapping-turtle grip, had been beaten and abused. Taylor kept on driving, and when the car broke down in southern Arizona, she decided just to stay put. Thus Taylor Greer became a single mother.

When *Pigs in Heaven* opens, three years have elapsed since Taylor officially adopted Turtle. Not surprisingly, their household in Tucson is a happy specimen of the kind of family life that could never be described as traditional. Taylor has found love of sorts with a musician named Jax, who plays keyboard for a group called the Irascible Babies. Turtle is doing well, considering her devastating past Together, the three live in a dilapidated stone house at the Rancho Copo, an eccentric low-rent community owned by a local artist. This is deep Kingsolver territory, familiar to readers of her previous novels and short stones, a frowzy stretch of desert where modern-day absurdity, occasional beauty and grinding injustice (usually perpetrated against Indians and Central Americans) intersect.

Early in the book, when Taylor and Turtle are on a visit to the Hoover Dam, Turtle is the only witness to a freak accident: reaching over a wall to grab a soda can, a man falls off the dam and into a concrete spillway. When he's rescued as a result of their efforts, Turtle and Taylor make national headlines and are asked to appear on *Oprah,* as part of a program called "Children Who Have Saved Lives."

It goes without saying that *everyone* watches *Oprah,* even a brilliant, beautiful attorney for the Cherokee Nation, Annawake Fourkiller, who begins a campaign to investigate Turtle's adoption. According to the Indian Child Welfare Act, if an Indian is adopted without the consent of the tribe, the adoption is invalid. Soon thereafter, Annawake pays a visit to Tucson, where she has an awkward conversation with Taylor's boyfriend:

"You think Taylor's being selfish," he states.

Annawake hesitates There are so many answers to that question. "Selfish is a loaded word," she says

"I've been off the reservation, I know the story. There's this kind of moral argument for doing what's best for yourself."

Jax puts his hands together under his chin and rolls his eyes toward heaven. "Honor the temple, for the Lord hast housed thy soul within. Buy that temple a foot massage and a Rolex watch."

"I think it would be hard to do anything else. Your culture is one long advertisement for how to treat yourself to the life you really deserve. Whether you actually deserve it or not."

Annawake is right, of course. Still, when I read this, visions of the long-suffering Cherokee who knows the value of kith, kin, sacrifice and every other noble thing missing in American society trudged through my head. And when it turned out that Turtle has relatives in a town on the reservation called Heaven, Okla., I almost despaired, foreseeing a thinly disguised morality play in which Taylor would be forced to give up Turtle simply because Taylor's skin color was politically incorrect.

I couldn't have been more wrong, which attests to Ms. Kingsolver's resounding achievement. For as the novel progresses, she somehow manages to maintain her political views without sacrificing the complexity of her characters' predicaments.

Ms. Kingsolver not only respects Taylor; she also understands a single mother's greatest fear□ that her lack of resources can be used against her in an effort to take her child away. (When Annawake Fourkiller visits Taylor's house, she notes that it "is truly rundown by social-service standards ... and accepts that this could be used to her advantage.") But Ms. Kingsolver also respects the virtues that Annawake sees in the Cherokee Nation: the rare sense of really belonging and, even rarer, the privileged place held by young girls in the spiritual life of the community.

If the novel falls short, it is in its consideration of the people who gave Turtle away in the first place. This child has, after all, suffered a great deal, yet even though Taylor repeatedly attests to the abuse inflicted on Turtle before she came into her care, the actual perpetrators remain offstage, dismissed as alcoholics who left the reservation and moved to Tulsa. Near the end of the novel, one of Turtle's relatives, acknowledging his suspicions that the little girl was being beaten, admits that "I should have gone and got her. But my wife was dead and I didn't have the gumption." To which Taylor replies, "I've let her down too." But this exchange seems pat and perfunctory.

On the other hand, the solution to the question of whether Turtle would be better off with her mother or her people, while answered in a way that is fanciful, is also satisfying and just. That it is gained by way of a few suspiciously happy coincidences does little to diminish the many pleasures of Ms. Kingsolver's novel. Possessed of an extravagantly gifted narrative voice, she blends a fierce and abiding moral vision with benevolent, concise humor. Her medicine is meant for the head, the heart and the soul□and it goes down dangerously, blissfully, easily.

Source: Karen Karbo, "And Baby Makes Two," in *New York Times Book Review,* June 27, 1993, p. 9.

Critical Essay #5

In the following positive review, Shapiro provides a thematic analysis o/Pigs in Heaven.

Turtle Greer, 6 years old, with a lifetime of memories her adoptive mother can only guess at, got her name from the way she holds on. She has a grip like a clamp, and when she clutches Taylor's hand, or her hair, or her sleeve, there's no dislodging those fingers. Turtle was shoved into Taylor's car three years earlier while she was parked by a highway in Oklahoma. Later, Taylor saw that the little Cherokee girl had been beaten and abused. "This child is the miracle Taylor wouldn't let in the door if it had knocked," writes Barbara Kingsolver in her fine new novel *Pigs in Heaven.* "But that's what miracles are, she supposes. The things nobody saw coming."

Pigs in Heaven is full of miracles, especially the kind that start out□like Turtle's life□as disasters. At the beginning of the novel, Turtle and Taylor are on a trip to the Hoover Dam, where Turtle is the only person to see a man fall over the side. Taylor finally persuades someone to believe her daughter, and the rescue makes Turtle a heroine. But becoming a heroine, which culminates in an appearance on *Oprah,* engenders a new disaster. Annawake Fourkiller, an Indian-rights lawyer, sees the white mother with her Cherokee daughter on TV and decides the child must be returned to the Cherokee Nation. Fourkiller has a personal stake in the issue: years earlier her brother was adopted by a white family. She also has the law on her side, for according to a recent Supreme Court ruling, no Indian child can be adopted out of the tribe without its consent. But Taylor isn't about to let go of the little girl who clings to her mother's hand as if to life itself. They pack up and run.

Kingsolver's fans will remember Taylor and Turtle from her wonderful first novel, *The Bean Trees* (1988). Her equally wonderful second novel, *Animal Dreams* (1990), took up a different cast of characters□two visionary sisters from tiny Grace, Ariz.□but retained the savvy wit, the political edge and the unabashed sentiment that make her books so satisfying With *Pigs in Heaven* Kingsolver takes a risk she hasn't taken before: she challenges her own strong, '60s-style politics by pitting its cultural correctness against the boundless love between a mother and child. For all its political dimensions, this is no polemic but a complex drama in which heroes and villains play each other's parts□and learn from them. Fourkiller, though passionate in her belief that Turtle belongs with her own people, understands the damage that would be done if the law had its way. And Taylor, for her part, begins to understand the power of Turtle's connection to her past.

There are no perfect solutions to the conflict Kingsolver sets up here, and the denouement relies on a somewhat unwieldy coincidence. But while it is less deftly plotted than her first two novels, *Pigs in Heaven* succeeds on the strength of Kingsolver's clear-eyed, warmhearted writing and irresistible characters. There's Barbie, for instance, a waitress obsessed with Barbie dolls. She even dresses like one, in grown-up doll clothes she makes herself. And Alice, Taylor's mother, who has gone through two marriages wondering if there are any men at all who talk. Her current

husband is so devoted to silence that he not only ignores her, he watches TV all day with the sound off And there's Taylor, as smart and funny this time around as she was in *The Bean Trees* but with a new vulnerability born of her devotion to Turtle. Taylor is wonderfully tough-minded□too much so for her own good, perhaps, but she doesn't know how to be any other way until Turtle teaches her. Very few novelists are as habit-forming as Kingsolver, so if her work is new to you, go ahead and get all three books. Read them in any order; they bloom no matter what.

Source: Laura Shapiro, "A Novel Full of Miracles," in *Newsweek,* Vol CXXO, No 2, July 12, 1993, p. 61

Critical Essay #6

An American novelist, short story writer, educator, and author of children's books, Gerber was one of the judges on the committee that awarded Kingsolver the 1993 Los Angeles Times *Book Award for Fiction. In the following essay, she offers a stylistic and thematic analysis of* Pigs in Heaven.

Talk shows have recently made their way to the center of our culture: the media has declared the media its subject□we hear and read impassioned debate about talk show hosts, their guests, their content. These shows are not just a reflection of our times but have become a major force□a public forum, a judge, a hanging jury. While there used to be a respectful separation between subjects and categories, we now see presidential candidates and heads of state on the same couch and in the same setting where only the day before sat cross-dressers and male exotic dancers. In an excess of democracy, we have allowed issues to become mixed up, we don't quite know what attitude to take toward any issue. Is this serious stuff, or entertainment?

Early in Barbara Kingsolver's energized novel, *Pigs in Heaven,* Turtle, the adopted Cherokee child of Taylor, a single mother, finds herself on the *Oprah Winfrey Show.* She has saved the life of a man who tumbled into Hoover Dam. Her appearance seems an innocent enough moment of recognition: Turtle appears as one of a group of "Children Who Have Saved Lives." The talk show, seen by millions, turns out to be the instrument not of Turtle and Taylor's happy notoriety, but of their possible ruination. As soon as Turtle is noticed by Annawake Fourkiller, a Cherokee Indian activist/attorney, the talk show provides the stage on which the electronic village meets the Indian village. When Annawake Fourkiller is alerted to the fact that the child may have been illegally adopted by Taylor, who found Turtle in her car (details of this discovery are told in Kingsolver' s earlier novel, *The Bean Trees)* she becomes determined to wrest Turtle from her mother and return her to her tribe.

The subject of the novel coincides with what brings high ratings to talk shows: adoption, ethnicity, child abuse, single motherhood (you name it, *Pigs in Heaven* has it). In fact, the "talk show" concept becomes a metaphor for the book's structure. On a talk show, people with Big Problems get to tell their stories straight from the heart. We hear their voices, see the tears on their cheeks, can judge firsthand the sincerity of their confessions, listen to the logic (or illogic) of their reasoning. By then we're thoroughly invested in the outcome and are willing to stay tuned through the commercials, the arguments of the experts, the prissy righteous statements or the passionate and sometimes violent outbursts of those who have been wronged□or feel they have been. Finally, the bit players come in, the speakers from the audience step forth and add their opinions, interpretations, their judgments and their praise. In fact, every character in *Pigs in Heaven* stands for some philosophical point of view, some political idea, some standard of behavior, and many of the situations operate, likewise, on a symbolic level.

Because Taylor and Turtle are soldered together by an accident of fate, by love, by a powerful psychic bond and by the Tightness of their union, we want it to come out right

for them. In *Pigs in Heaven,* Kingsolver asks us to hear everyone out, wait till all the evidence is in. We're happy to. She's an expert entertainer, is supremely able to command our attention, involve our opinions, arouse our sense, engage us□and what better combination of responses can a novel call forth in any reader?

Pigs in Heaven is that rare combination of a dynamic story told in dramatic language, combined with issues that are serious, debatable and painful. Kingsolver knows the world well, she's compassionate, she's smart, she can get into the skin of everyone from the airhead baby-sitter to the handicapped air-traffic control worker, to Taylor's mother who is having a late-in-life romance.

On a recent radio interview, I heard Kingsolver discussing *Pigs in Heaven.* She said that in 11th grade she learned what fiction had to be about: "Man against Nature, Man against Man, and Man against Himself." "Why all this against-stuff?" she said, suggesting how puzzled she was about this way of looking at the world. It certainly wasn't her way. Barbara Kingsolver is for, not against, and her fiction is about getting people together, getting them to live in the global village (not just the Indian village or any other exclusive fenced and guarded fort). When the interviewer asked her if her ability to understand all her characters was something like Flaubert's saying "Madame Bo-vary, *c'est moi,"* she replied: "I think he knew what she felt like and it wasn't like female-anatomy-stuff. It was the human heart."

That's what *Pigs in Heaven* is about-□die human heart in all its shapes and ramifications.

Source: Mernll Joan Gerber, "Those Ideas in the Air," in *Los Angeles Times Book Review,* October 31,1993, pp 10, 12.

Adaptations

No film versions of *Pigs in Heaven* have been made, but an audio version was produced in 1993 and read by Kingsolver.

Topics for Further Study

Research the adoption of Native American children by white families in America in the past. How many children did this involve? How many others became wards of the state or were forced into boarding schools? How do Native American groups handle this situation today?

Some experts insist that interracial adoptions are damaging to the children involved. Investigate the sociological and psychological effects this kind of adoption can have on a child. What is your opinion on the matter?

Research the cultural aspects of the Cherokee people. What other customs are typical of this tribe besides the ones mentioned in the novel?

What other laws besides the Indian Child Welfare Act have been passed to help establish Native American rights? Has this legislation been beneficial for the Native American community? In what ways?

What Do I Read Next?

In her first novel, *The Bean Trees* (1988), King-solver chronicles the beginning of the relationship between Taylor Greer and her adopted Cherokee daughter Turtle. Their story continues in the sequel, *Pigs in Heaven.*

Kingsolver's *Homeland and Other Stories,* published in 1989, contains twelve short stories focusing on various characters who struggle "to form and maintain meaningful relationships.

The Great Arizona Orphan Abduction (1999), by Linda Gordon, narrates the harrowing real-life story of the abduction and relocation of forty Irish orphans by Catholic nuns, and their subsequent adoption by Mexican American families in Arizona.

Jacquelyn Mitchard's best-selling novel, *The Deep End of the Ocean,* was published in 1996. It focuses on the devastating consequences suffered by a family after the disappearance of a three-year-old child.

Further Study

Demarr, Mary Jean, *Barbara Kingsolver A Critical Companion,* Greenwood, 1999

This reading is a critical study of Kingsolver's novels which provides insight into her background as a both journalist and feminist.

Epstein, Robin, "An Interview with Barbara Kingsolver," in *The Progressive,* Vol. 12, No. 9, February, 1996, p. 337. In this interview, Kingsolver discusses the novel's defining themes.

Lyall, Sarah, 'Termites Are Interesting But Books Sell Better," in *The New York Times,* September 1, 1993, pp Cl, C8.

Lyall examines the book's thematic concerns and asserts that it reveals "a droll wit and an intricate understanding of the almost imperceptible subtleties of relationships."

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Introduction

Purpose of the Book

The purpose of Novels for Students (NfS) is to provide readers with a guide to understanding, enjoying, and studying novels by giving them easy access to information about the work. Part of Gale's□For Students□ Literature line, NfS is specifically designed to meet the curricular needs of high school and undergraduate college students and their teachers, as well as the interests of general readers and researchers considering specific novels. While each volume contains entries on □classic□ novels

frequently studied in classrooms, there are also entries containing hard-to-find information on contemporary novels, including works by multicultural, international, and women novelists.

The information covered in each entry includes an introduction to the novel and the novel's author; a plot summary, to help readers unravel and understand the events in a novel; descriptions of important characters, including explanation of a given character's role in the novel as well as discussion about that character's relationship to other characters in the novel; analysis of important themes in the novel; and an explanation of important literary techniques and movements as they are demonstrated in the novel.

In addition to this material, which helps the readers analyze the novel itself, students are also provided with important information on the literary and historical background informing each work. This includes a historical context essay, a box comparing the time or place the novel was written to modern Western culture, a critical overview essay, and excerpts from critical essays on the novel. A unique feature of NfS is a specially commissioned critical essay on each novel, targeted toward the student reader.

To further aid the student in studying and enjoying each novel, information on media adaptations is provided, as well as reading suggestions for works of fiction and nonfiction on similar themes and topics. Classroom aids include ideas for research papers and lists of critical sources that provide additional material on the novel.

Selection Criteria

The titles for each volume of NfS were selected by surveying numerous sources on teaching literature and analyzing course curricula for various school districts. Some of the sources surveyed included: literature anthologies; Reading Lists for College-Bound Students: The Books Most Recommended by America's Top Colleges; textbooks on teaching the novel; a College Board survey of novels commonly studied in high schools; a National Council of Teachers of English (NCTE) survey of novels commonly studied in high schools; the NCTE's Teaching Literature in High School: The Novel;and the Young Adult Library Services Association (YALSA) list of best books for young adults of the past twenty-five years. Input was also solicited from our advisory board, as well as educators from various areas. From these discussions, it was determined that each volume should have a mix of □classic□ novels (those works commonly taught in literature classes) and contemporary novels for which information is often hard to find. Because of the interest in expanding the canon of literature, an emphasis was also placed on including works by international, multicultural, and women authors. Our advisory board members□educational professionals□ helped pare down the list for each volume. If a work was not selected for the present volume, it was often noted as a possibility for a future volume. As always, the editor welcomes suggestions for titles to be included in future volumes.

How Each Entry Is Organized

Each entry, or chapter, in NfS focuses on one novel. Each entry heading lists the full name of the novel, the author's name, and the date of the novel's publication. The following elements are contained in each entry:

- Introduction: a brief overview of the novel which provides information about its first appearance, its literary standing, any controversies surrounding the work, and major conflicts or themes within the work.
- Author Biography: this section includes basic facts about the author's life, and focuses on events and times in the author's life that inspired the novel in question.
- Plot Summary: a factual description of the major events in the novel. Lengthy summaries are broken down with subheads.
- Characters: an alphabetical listing of major characters in the novel. Each character name is followed by a brief to an extensive description of the character's role in the novel, as well as discussion of the character's actions, relationships, and possible motivation. Characters are listed alphabetically by last name. If a character is unnamed□for instance, the narrator in Invisible Man-the character is listed as □The Narrator□ and alphabetized as □Narrator.□ If a character's first name is the only one given, the name will appear alphabetically by that name. □ Variant names are also included for each character. Thus, the full name □Jean Louise Finch□ would head the listing for the narrator of To Kill a Mockingbird, but listed in a separate cross-reference would be the nickname □Scout Finch.□
- Themes: a thorough overview of how the major topics, themes, and issues are addressed within the novel. Each theme discussed appears in a separate subhead, and is easily accessed through the boldface entries in the Subject/Theme Index.
- Style: this section addresses important style elements of the novel, such as setting, point of view, and narration; important literary devices used, such as imagery, foreshadowing, symbolism; and, if applicable, genres to which the work might have belonged, such as Gothicism or Romanticism. Literary terms are explained within the entry, but can also be found in the Glossary.
- Historical Context: This section outlines the social, political, and cultural climate in which the author lived and the novel was created. This section may include descriptions of related historical events, pertinent aspects of daily life in the culture, and the artistic and literary sensibilities of the time in which the work was written. If the novel is a historical work, information regarding the time in which the novel is set is also included. Each section is broken down with helpful subheads.
- Critical Overview: this section provides background on the critical reputation of the novel, including bannings or any other public controversies surrounding the work. For older works, this section includes a history of how the novel was first received and how perceptions of it may have changed over the years; for more recent novels, direct quotes from early reviews may also be included.
- Criticism: an essay commissioned by NfS which specifically deals with the novel and is written specifically for the student audience, as well as excerpts from previously published criticism on the work (if available).

- Sources: an alphabetical list of critical material quoted in the entry, with full bibliographical information.
- Further Reading: an alphabetical list of other critical sources which may prove useful for the student. Includes full bibliographical information and a brief annotation.

In addition, each entry contains the following highlighted sections, set apart from the main text as sidebars:

- Media Adaptations: a list of important film and television adaptations of the novel, including source information. The list also includes stage adaptations, audio recordings, musical adaptations, etc.
- Topics for Further Study: a list of potential study questions or research topics dealing with the novel. This section includes questions related to other disciplines the student may be studying, such as American history, world history, science, math, government, business, geography, economics, psychology, etc.
- Compare and Contrast Box: an □at-a-glance□ comparison of the cultural and historical differences between the author's time and culture and late twentieth century/early twenty-first century Western culture. This box includes pertinent parallels between the major scientific, political, and cultural movements of the time or place the novel was written, the time or place the novel was set (if a historical work), and modern Western culture. Works written after 1990 may not have this box.
- What Do I Read Next?: a list of works that might complement the featured novel or serve as a contrast to it. This includes works by the same author and others, works of fiction and nonfiction, and works from various genres, cultures, and eras.

Other Features

NfS includes □The Informed Dialogue: Interacting with Literature,□ a foreword by Anne Devereaux Jordan, Senior Editor for Teaching and Learning Literature (TALL), and a founder of the Children's Literature Association. This essay provides an enlightening look at how readers interact with literature and how Novels for Students can help teachers show students how to enrich their own reading experiences.

A Cumulative Author/Title Index lists the authors and titles covered in each volume of the NfS series.

A Cumulative Nationality/Ethnicity Index breaks down the authors and titles covered in each volume of the NfS series by nationality and ethnicity.

A Subject/Theme Index, specific to each volume, provides easy reference for users who may be studying a particular subject or theme rather than a single work. Significant subjects from events to broad themes are included, and the entries pointing to the specific theme discussions in each entry are indicated in boldface.

Each entry has several illustrations, including photos of the author, stills from film adaptations (if available), maps, and/or photos of key historical events.

Citing Novels for Students

When writing papers, students who quote directly from any volume of Novels for Students may use the following general forms. These examples are based on MLA style; teachers may request that students adhere to a different style, so the following examples may be adapted as needed. When citing text from NfS that is not attributed to a particular author (i.e., the Themes, Style, Historical Context sections, etc.), the following format should be used in the bibliography section:

□Night.□ Novels for Students. Ed. Marie Rose Napierkowski. Vol. 4. Detroit: Gale, 1998. 234-35.

When quoting the specially commissioned essay from NfS (usually the first piece under the □Criticism□ subhead), the following format should be used:

Miller, Tyrus. Critical Essay on □Winesburg, Ohio.□ Novels for Students. Ed. Marie Rose Napierkowski. Vol. 4. Detroit: Gale, 1998. 335-39.

When quoting a journal or newspaper essay that is reprinted in a volume of NfS, the following form may be used:

Malak, Amin. □Margaret Atwood's □The Handmaid's Tale and the Dystopian Tradition,□ Canadian Literature No. 112 (Spring, 1987), 9-16; excerpted and reprinted in Novels for Students, Vol. 4, ed. Marie Rose Napierkowski (Detroit: Gale, 1998), pp. 133-36.

When quoting material reprinted from a book that appears in a volume of NfS, the following form may be used:

Adams, Timothy Dow. □Richard Wright: □Wearing the Mask,□ in Telling Lies in Modern American Autobiography (University of North Carolina Press, 1990), 69-83; excerpted and reprinted in Novels for Students, Vol. 1, ed. Diane Telgen (Detroit: Gale, 1997), pp. 59-61.

We Welcome Your Suggestions

The editor of Novels for Students welcomes your comments and ideas. Readers who wish to suggest novels to appear in future volumes, or who have other suggestions, are cordially invited to contact the editor. You may contact the editor via email at: ForStudentsEditors@gale.com. Or write to the editor at:

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