

Rifles for Watie Study Guide

Rifles for Watie by Harold Keith

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Overview

Jeff Bussey, the main character of *Rifles for Watte*, learns about the cruelty, destructiveness, and waste that war creates. Few readers realize the intensity of the Civil War battles waged west of the Mississippi River, and this novel examines the issues, weapons, and strategies involved in the western campaigns. All the characters, whether admirable or evil, are believable, and Jeff Bussey's courage, perseverance, loyalty, and consideration for others make him an inspiring role model for readers of all ages.

About the Author

Harold Verne Keith, the son of Malcolm Arrowwood and Arlyn Kee Keith, was born on April 8, 1903, in Lambert, Oklahoma Territory, where his father was a grain buyer. From 1921 to 1924, Keith attended Northwestern State Teachers College. In addition to his studies, he wrote for daily and weekly newspapers in Watonga, Alva, Cherokee, and Enid, Oklahoma. After transferring to the University of Oklahoma, he became sports editor for the Oklahoma Daily, the student newspaper. Many of his columns dealt with the history of Sooner athletics, emphasizing the individuals as well as their accomplishments. Some of these columns were picked up by daily newspapers throughout the state.

Keith's experiences as a long-distance runner for the University of Oklahoma Brief Garland, 1971 The Runt of Rogers School, 1971 The Bluejay Boarders, 1972 Susy's Scoundrel 1974 The Obstinate Land, 1977 Forty-Seven Straight: The Wilkinson Era at Oklahoma, 1984 taught him the philosophy he later put in the mouth of the character Sergeant Pete Milholland: "You can always go farther than you think you can." In 1928 Keith placed first in the indoor mile and two-mile races at the Missouri Valley Conference championship meet. He also ran the anchor mile on the University of Oklahoma's All-American distance medley relay team.

After graduating with a bachelor's degree in history in 1929 and working briefly as an assistant to a grain buyer in Hutchinson, Kansas, Keith returned to the University of Oklahoma as sports publicity director, a job he held until his retirement in 1969.

On August 30, 1931, Keith married Virginia Livingston. After the birth of their two children, John Livingston and Kathleen Ann, Keith continued to study Oklahoma history, receiving his master's degree in 1938. Research for his thesis, "Clem Rogers and His Influence on Oklahoma History," provided some of the material for his first book, a biography of Clem's famous son, the humorist Will Rogers. In interviews with Civil War veterans, Keith also gathered much of the information he eventually used in Rifles for Wattle. Published in 1957, the novel was awarded the Newbery Medal in 1958. Keith has also received the Western Writers of America Spur Award (1975) and two Western Heritage Awards (1975 and 1979).

Since his retirement, Keith has pursued his interest in long-distance running, University of Oklahoma athletics, and writing. In 1973 he set the U.S.

Masters national records in the two and three-mile runs, and in 1974 he set the record for 10,000 meters. His most recent book is Forty-Seven Straight, a history of the University of Oklahoma football program during the tenure of head coach Bud Wilkinson. Keith's manuscripts are housed at Northwestern State College library and the University of Oklahoma library.



Plot Summary

Rifles for Waitie, by Harold Keith, is about a 16-year-old boy, Jeff Bussey, who travels a 4-year journey from young adulthood to manhood via the conflicts of the Civil War in the Kansas, Missouri, Arkansas, and Cherokee Nation territories. Jeff's vision of fighting in the war is one of a glorified adventure; however, he finds he is in for a rude awakening.

Jeff decides to enlist in the Union army at Fort Leavenworth, Kansas, after two proslavery Missouri men raid his family's farm and threaten to kill his father. Jeff fights back, proving the courage in his character. Jeff recruits two neighbor boys, 16-year-old David Gardner and 18-year-old John Chadwick, as he travels the road to enlist. The first time the Kansas Volunteers meet on the drill field with Captain Asa Clardy, Jeff sasses the officer after Clardy slurs Jeff's name. This is the first run-in of many to come that Jeff has with officers. Jeff's friend, David Gardner, deserts the army after he finds he is unable to cope with the dehumanizing behavior inherent in army life.

The Kansas Volunteers are soon granted a furlough, and Jeff goes home with a ravenous hunger and a more mature mindset. After the furlough, the Kansas Volunteers march to Springfield, Missouri, where they meet General Lyon's reinforcements and head to Wilson's Creek, where they fight and lose their first battle. Jeff is unable to fight in the battle because a major orders him to go back and find the quartermaster. Jeff is furious. Although Jeff witnesses the aftermath of this battle as his comrades return either wounded and bleeding or dead, he feels no fear, desperately wanting to fight in what he thinks is a glorious adventure. Deserter David Gardner approaches Jeff for the first time in 2 years, and Jeff hardly recognizes David because he has grown into a husky young man who served his hard-labor punishment for desertion and is now reinstated. David feels a debt of gratitude toward Jeff, and Jeff is just glad that his friend is alive.

After Jeff's company moves into Cherokee Country, he meets Lucy Washbourne, the daughter of a Confederate, and falls in love at first sight. Jeff has a natural ability for dealing with animals, and he helps the Washbourne women get their cow to feed her calf by rubbing salt on the calf's back. The Washbourne women are in awe of Jeff. Later, when Lucy's brother, Lee Washbourne, is executed at Captain Clardy's order, Jeff finds a way to return the body to the family. The Washbourne family feels beholden to Jeff and his unselfish acts of compassion and love. Jeff realizes that he fights for different reasons in the Cherokee Country. The Union men fight to prevent Stand Waitie's men from raiding and harming the innocent Union women and children left behind after the husbands and brothers go off to war. Jeff begins to think the war is stupid; everyone fights for different reasons. The Cherokee rebels fight so that the political party led by Ross does not overtake the Indian country.

When Jeff gets to fight in his first battle at Prairie Grove, his glorious dreams of war evaporate. He becomes scared for the first time and thinks realistically about the fact that he may die. Jeff prays and vows to always go to church if he makes it out alive. Jeff makes it through the battle, and he and fellow soldier, Noah Babbitt, receive Medals of



Honor for their actions over and above the call of duty. When the regiment moves to Van Buren, Jeff enters a Methodist church-turned-hospital in Cane Hill and watches his 14-year-old comrade, Jimmy Lear, dying on a cot. Jeff sees Jimmy as a child and feels sorry that such a young boy is dying. Jimmy was allowed to stay in the army as a drummer only because of his age, but he becomes a hero when he drops his drum, picks up the musket of Sergeant Jake Lonagan, and begins fighting after the 230-pound, muscular sergeant flees the battle out of cowardice. Jimmy bequeaths his beloved drum to Jeff. Jeff introduces Jimmy to Jesus, telling him that Jesus will save him and give him everlasting life.

General Blunt promotes Jeff to Union scout and sends him over to the rebel side to gather information about when the rebel reinforcements are due to arrive. When scouts Jim Bostwick and Jeff move into enemy territory, the true test of Jeff's character arises. Certain events unfold causing Jeff's stay on the enemy side to become delayed by 14 months. Jeff fights against his own comrades, witnesses the death of fellow scout Jim Bostwick at the hands of his own comrades, falls violently ill with malaria, suffers the illness for a year and is cared for by a generous, well-respected rebel family.

Each day Jeff remains in close vicinity to the enemy, the closer he comes to a decision to switch sides. The clincher for Jeff's decision to return to his side is when he hears that General Stand Waitie is buying repeating rifles from an officer on the Union side. Jeff must stay to find out the name of the Union traitor. Once Jeff discovers Captain Asa Clardy is the officer peddling the contraband to the rebels, he decides to return to Fort Gibson. Clardy, who waits to meet with Stand Waitie at their camp, recognizes Jeff and blows the whistle on him. Jeff is now in a fight for his life. The rebel cavalry chase Jeff with a bloodhound, but fortunately, Jeff's skill with and love for animals saves him. Jeff returns to his parents' home in Kansas as a civilian, and he finds a letter from Lucy, his first love, asking him to not wait too long to come back to marry her.

Jeff experiences many adventures and learns many lessons during the war, from battling as a soldier, working through his punishments, spying on the rebel side, falling in love with a Confederate daughter, and fleeing from the enemy cavalry on foot by himself. Jeff is less invincible than he first thought, more realistic about the nature of man and war, yet he retains his compassion and love for animals. Jeff is less apt to speak out before he thinks and more apt to feel a cautious optimism toward his fellow man. Jeff loses his innocence and naivety and replaces these with a wisdom hard won through the brutal conflicts of the Civil War.



Chapter 1, Linn County, Kansas, 1861

Chapter 1, Linn County, Kansas, 1861 Summary

This fact-based historical novel opens with 16-year-old Jeff Bussey plowing the field on his family's farm in Linn County, Kansas in 1861. As he guides the mules and plow, he thinks about the past, the present, and the future. He recalls the 16-month drought of last year. One-third of the population of Kansas Territory decided to flee the state for fear of starving. He remembers his father's opinion of the drought. Emory Bussey, a veteran of the Mexican War and a Free State man in the raging guerilla warfare over slavery dividing the people on the Kansas-Missouri border, thinks the drought is a blessing to the new state. The weakest families evacuate; the strongest ones remain. Jeff thinks of his mother, Edith Bussey, and he compares her life in the rolling hills and stately homes of Kentucky to the Kansas land of tumultuous weather and violently opposed political factions.

Jeff's desire to enlist in the army is strong. Despite his youth, he is aware of the issues since his father speaks daily about the country's current events. After going with his father to hear Abraham Lincoln speak on his campaign trail for the Presidency, Jeff knows he wants to join the Union side. Jeff remembers the violence and crime along the border, including the Marais des Cygnes Massacre, when a band of Missouri proslavery ruffians captured 11 Free State men, forced them into a gulch, and shot and killed five of them. Jeff laments the theft by bushwhackers of the only two horses belonging to his family. Jeff's pondering and plowing suddenly cease when he hears the sound of his father's large sea horn, which blows only in case of an emergency.

Chapter 1, Linn County, Kansas, 1861 Analysis

The first paragraph of the book foreshadows the events of the entire novel and the major issues behind the Civil War. The black soil of the field, which Jeff rips up and turns over with his plow, represents opposing sides of dual imagery. On one side, the iron blade of the plow rips up the black earth and turns it over in long, smooth, root-veined rectangles. This evokes an image of digging the graves of those who die in the war. On the other side, the black soil that the plow uncovers symbolizes a form of rebirth and freedom for black slaves. Jeff uproots the dried, cracked fields of the drought in a symbolic, ground-breaking gesture that is a sign of the eventual abolishment of the oppressive viewpoints of a whole country. The mules strain forward strongly and represent strength in numbers.

Jeff's teenage personality exudes an irony between his fighting desire to enlist in the army and the compassionate, big-hearted, animal-loving side to his person. Jeff is a 16-year-old boy whose enthusiasm for the adventure of war outweighs the possibilities of the cruelties of war.



Chapter 2, Bushwhackers

Chapter 2, Bushwhackers Summary

Bess, the older of Jeff's two sisters, slips out through the front door of their house to sound the alarm. Jeff hustles home, guides the mules into the corral without removing their harness, and hurries to the house. Jeff sees his father limping toward their back porch coming from the garden. On the porch, Jeff's mother stands with two dirty, unshaven strangers carrying sawed-off muskets and wearing blue ribbons on their hats. The men attempt to impersonate Union Home Guards and ask Jeff's father for something to eat. Emory Bussey flat out calls them liars but also tells them that he never turns away the hungry.

Emory invites the men inside and the ladies begin to prepare a meal. Jeff's father tells his son to go back and unharness the mules. Jeff obeys his father's command even though he fears for his father's life. Bess screams and runs from the house to warn Jeff that the men are going to shoot their father. Jeff bursts into the house to find his father unharmed, but held at gunpoint. One bushwhacker announces the arrest of Emory Bussey, but Emory refuses to budge. The bushwhacker pulls the trigger on his rusty musket, but the gun's cartridge refuses to fire. Jeff shouts and attacks the man with his bare fists. The other bushwhacker knocks Jeff unconscious by clubbing him on the head with the barrel of his gun. All members of the Bussey family, including Jeff's dog Ring, enter the fight, quickly scaring the men away. When Jeff regains consciousness, he tells his father he wants to go to Fort Leavenworth the next day to join the volunteers. Emory Bussey consents.

Chapter 2, Bushwhackers Analysis

The raid of the Bussey family farm by bushwhackers is, in essence, the last draw for Jeff at home. He is compelled by their unnecessary cruelty after one of them knocks him unconscious and threatens his father's life. This event stands as the first major turning point in the novel, in which Jeff proves to himself and his family that he has the courage to fight back. When he regains consciousness, he tells his father he wants to go to Fort Leavenworth the next day to enlist with the volunteers. Emory Bussey consents, and Jeff begins his coming-of-age journey.

This chapter also defines a major turning point for the Bussey family because this is the first time the parents let go of their only son. The family is close-knit and believes in protecting each other come what may. Jeff feels the only way to protect his family is to leave what little security there is at home and fight for his beliefs. Edith Bussey becomes quite emotional and cries because she is giving up her first-born child. Not only is Jeff leaving home, he is going to war. Circumstances require that mother and father let their first-born child go because that child is no longer a child but a young adult well on his way to manhood.



Chapter 3, Fort Leavenworth

Chapter 3, Fort Leavenworth Summary

Jeff's trip to Fort Leavenworth uncovers some surprises. First, his feelings of loneliness begin to overwhelm him. Second, along the wagon path that he travels by foot, he recruits two neighbor boys. Eighteen-year-old John Chadwick and 16-year-old David Gardner join Jeff after hearing the exciting story behind Jeff's skirmish with the bushwhackers. Third, the new recruits follow Jeff without saying a word to their parents.

At Fort Leavenworth, startling and depressing ideas are revealed to Jeff. The boys undergo physical examinations by the army doctor. While performing Jeff's physical, the physician mentions Jeff's fine chest. It is a chest fine enough to be shot. Upon completion of the exams, the boys head over to answer questions by the enlistment officer. The officer asks Jeff where he wants the army to send his pay upon his capture. Jeff begins to feel the darker, realistic side of his adventure. Perhaps he is not as invincible as he thinks.

Chapter 3, Fort Leavenworth Analysis

Jeff's individuality of thought and action prove him to be a responsible leader. His ability to recruit the two neighbor boys without really trying says something not only about Jeff, but about the two boys as well. John Chadwick, the first recruit, is 18 years old and is of legal age to enlist. He does not do so because his parents will not allow it. Once he hears about Jeff's adventure with the bushwhackers, he summons his own courage to disobey his parents and follow Jeff to war. David Gardner, the second recruit, is the same age as Jeff, and rationalizes that if Jeff can go, then he can go. Neither of the two recruits informs his parents, which shows a blatant disregard for authority figures and a lack of responsibility for their own actions. Jeff cannot understand this.

When Jeff recounts his story about surviving a whack to the back of the head with a gun barrel, he jokes that he is hard-headed and goes as far as saying that the gun's barrel broke upon impact. The reader wonders whether Jeff's teenage invincibility is heightened after this incident.

It is ironic that Jeff fears neither death, nor the destructive nature of war. Instead, his fear revolves around the war's ending before he sees any action. He is eager to begin fighting because he does not want to miss what he thinks will be the great adventure of his lifetime. Jeff's experiences with the army doctor's mentioning the possibility of Jeff's chest being shot and the enlistment officer's question regarding where Jeff wants the army to send his pay should he be captured shed light upon a human being's fragility in war. This is something that was beyond the grasp of Jeff's mind until now.



Chapter 4, Captain Asa Clardy

Chapter 4, Captain Asa Clardy Summary

Jeff meets Captain Asa Clardy for the first time while his new company is assembled on the drill field. Jeff dislikes the man immediately. Captain Clardy's first order to his company is to "Fix bayonets!" Jeff and the new volunteers never move, at which time the Captain steps in front of Jeff, asking him if he heard the order. Jeff replies that his bayonet is not broken and all members of the company roar with laughter. This angers the Captain and the Captain asks Jeff's name. Jefferson Davis Bussey is Jeff's full name, and upon hearing this, the Captain becomes even more incensed as the company laughs again. Captain Clardy demands Jeff change his name, for Jefferson Davis is the name of the president of the enemy confederacy. Jeff refuses the Captain's demand, and receives a punishment for his boldness. Jeff is assigned to kitchen duty daily for a week after drills. Jeff is still angry about the Captain's comment about his name, and he decides to play an innocent trick on him in the kitchen. Daily, the Captain comes to the kitchen to sip the bean soup that he likes so well. One day, Jeff decides to switch the bean soup for some dishwater.

After kitchen duty on the sixth day, Jeff meets Sergeant Mike Dempsey, who tends to the cavalry horses. When one of the horses runs astray, Jeff calms the horse and brings him back to the Sergeant. Jeff befriends Sergeant Dempsey and confides in him about his run-ins with Captain Asa Clardy. Dempsey, in turn, teaches Jeff to follow the company commands and orders barked by Captain Clardy.

The soldiers train hard but always seem to be hungry. Even though they eat three meals a day, they yearn for variety. After finding a watermelon patch that is guarded by another company, Jeff's company decides to create a strategy to roll some of the melons out of the patch.

Before the army travels across the Missouri River, the companies are granted a short furlough to return home. Two days before the furlough, Jeff awakens to find David's desertion note pinned to his bed. Jeff does not understand how David could leave the army with all of its excitement and promise of glorious adventure. Jeff decides not to report David so that his neighbor gets a head start.

Chapter 4, Captain Asa Clardy Analysis

Jeff's initial interactions with the Captain prove once more the courage in Jeff's character. He exudes courage, love, and responsibility toward his family. He also exhibits integrity and the willingness to stand up for his beliefs. After all, his beliefs are what brought him to the army in the first place. There is irony in this situation. Although Captain Clardy penalizes Jeff for talking back, Jeff takes his punishment like both a boy and a man. As a newly ranked man, he follows the orders of his superior with no



problem. As a boy, he feels repaid for the Captain's slur on his name after Jeff performs a bait and switch with the bean soup and dishwater. Ironically, and unknown to Jeff, he is strategizing. Strategy is a large part of war success but not usually against those who appear to be on your side.

Another instance of strategy and irony occurs when the soldiers raid the watermelon patch. The raid is cleverly planned and performed without a hitch. The hungry privates enjoy eating their newly, if illegally, acquired fruits, feeling proud of their accomplishment rather than ashamed of their means to a delicious end. Jeff knows at this point that privates are just as capable of strategy as the higher-ranking officers.

Jeff is flabbergasted over David's desertion of the army. He says he just cannot understand why David would leave when they would both be heading home in 2 days, anyway. Jeff learns that not everyone his age feels and thinks the same way that he does. David Gardner is not war material and admits this to himself. Jeff learns another lesson about human nature and the differences among people.



Chapter 5, Furlough

Chapter 5, Furlough Summary

Jeff learns some background about Captain Clardy from his father. Captain Clardy becomes envious of a man named Jefferson Davis in his former regiment, the Mississippi Volunteer Rifles. After the regiment elects Jefferson Davis the Colonel, Captain Clardy is beside himself with jealousy and rage. Clardy wants the job so badly, he cannot see straight, and he decides to leave the South forever. Jeff's father tells him that Captain Asa Clardy has strange and vindictive ways about him. Not many people trust Clardy.

Jeff enjoys a happy homecoming as he visits with his family and shares stories of his new life in the army. Jeff savors his mother's home cooking, telling her there are no cooks like her in the army, and he helps with chores around the farm. Jeff sees his home through different eyes.

On his return trip to the army, Jeff tells the Chadwick family how their son, John, is faring. He approaches David Gardner's home and happens to overhear David's mother telling him to go back to the army. Jeff and David make the trek back to Leavenworth together.

Chapter 5, Furlough Analysis

Jeff's father enlightens him regarding Captain Clardy's jealousy when his regiment, the Mississippi Volunteers, elects Jefferson Davis as Colonel. Clardy covets the position, and when he is not elected, he leaves the South forever. Jeff now knows why the man curses his name and anything southern.

Jeff sees his home through different eyes now. He takes an evening walk before bedtime and looks around at certain objects on his old stomping ground. He sees the creek where he remembers trapping skunk and muskrat. He views his duck blind on the riverbank. He looks at the oak tree where he recalls twisting a rabbit out with a forked stick. The author describes these childhood objects as "... sleeping in the bright Kansas moonlight." (Page 35) These toys seem unimportant to Jeff now. This symbolizes the transition Jeff is making from childhood to adulthood. He is putting to rest the toys of childhood and becoming a man.

There is irony in the fact that David Gardner deserts the army because of homesickness, but once he is home, his mother does not allow him to stay, telling him to return to the place from which he came. Poor David struggles with the right decisions to make in his life and has trouble following through once a decision is made. David is not like Jeff in his strength of character and beliefs. The boys may be of the same age, but they clearly have different, distinct personalities. Again, Jeff acts as a mentor to David. Jeff has leadership qualities, whereas David seems to be more of a follower.



Chapter 6, March

Chapter 6, March Summary

The cavalry, infantry, and artillery, lining up in that order, begin the battle march from Fort Leavenworth to Springfield, Missouri. Jeff's anxiety grows as the troops wait half an hour before moving. He thinks it is good to be moving aggressively into Missouri for a change instead of waiting for the bushwhackers to come across the border and hit them first. He is not prepared, however, for how aggressive the battle march itself turns out to be.

The regiment walks easily throughout each cool morning only to find that as the sun rises higher and higher, the group's collective exhilaration wanes. Walking becomes hard, sweaty work. The troops cover 20 to 25 miles per day, marching from dawn to dusk. A constant thirst for water consumes the men, and some of them lose their internal battle to balance their fluid consumption. They learn the hard way that more is not always better. Three men guzzle water and drop out, and an ambulance picks them up. The men learn to fight and outsmart the flies. They eat breakfast early and supper late. At noon, the flies end up eating as much as the men.

Jeff asks Noah Babbitt about his longest walking trip. Noah's answers that it was a 900-mile walk from Topeka, Kansas, to Galveston, Texas, to see the magnolias in bloom. Jeff calculates this to be a 1-and-a-half-month trip, each way. Jeff finds Noah an odd character, but likeable and easy to get along with.

Upon reaching Grand River, the troops meet up with General Lyon and 3,000 Missourians and lowans. Two columns quickly form and resume the march. Jeff realizes his previous assumption that all Missourians are rebels is incorrect because he meets some Missouri men who are undeniably Union and dressed more completely than Jeff's unit.

Jeff befriends a 14-year-old Missouri boy whose name is Jimmy Lear. Jeff shows Jimmy how to put dried grass in his hat and pour water on it to alleviate some of the heat. Jimmy shows Jeff how to make lice kill each other on a sheet of white cartridge paper.

Wanting to be prepared for battle, Jeff cleans his gun and fires it into the sky, as he normally does when cleaning his gun at home. A sentry arrests Jeff and brings him to Captain Clardy, who orders Jeff to all-night sentry duty after marching in the heat all day.

When Jeff begins to nod off, he goes to the cook's mess to get coffee, so he is able to stay awake all night. The cook, Sparrow, divulges his secret about Captain Clardy. Sparrow tells Jeff that he knows Clardy is the murderer and thief who killed the widow in Osawatomie and stole \$800. This nugget of information keeps Jeff awake all night.

Jeff sees David Gardner again at the edge of Springfield. David is working as a laborer and digging. The guard tells Jeff he cannot talk to the deserters. Jeff at least feels relief



that David has not been shot to death. Sergeant Millholland passes along the information Jeff gives him about David's returning voluntarily to his outfit to the court handling the case.

On August 9, 1861, the soldiers march into an anxious and near panic-stricken city of Springfield. Everyone knows a battle is close. Jeff feels put off by one of the merchant's wives because she tells him he is awfully little to be fighting. He feels invincible. He thinks he can take care of himself. General Lyon speaks to the Kansas Volunteers, giving them a pep talk and telling them to not be scared. Jeff is not scared. He is excited and impatient to get started.

Chapter 6, March Analysis

In this chapter, the soldiers fight many battles before any actual war battles. Many conflicts arise--man versus nature, man versus himself, and man versus man.

The soldiers fight Mother Nature's hot sun during the afternoon portions of the march. Sweat drips from the tips of their noses and their feet burn as the heat seems to come up through their shoes. Jeff befriends a Missouri boy named Jimmy Lear, showing him how to put dried grass in his cap and pour water over it to cool down the heat. Gnats crawl on their arms and lice infest their hair. Jimmy Lear shows Jeff how to make the lice kill each other, which stands as a symbol of the war itself, comparing the more savage nature of man to that of these killer insects. Jimmy places two lice on a sheet of white cartridge paper, and they viciously go after one another. Flies seem to devour their noontime lunches. In Jeff's letter home to his family, he says that the flies seem to eat as much of their lunch as they do. This hyperbole, or exaggeration, shows Jeff's sense of humor, which is one way he handles the stress of his situation. He wants his family to know that he remains strong in the midst of the hunger, thirst, and fatigue he endures.

There is internal conflict within each soldier as he struggles to balance his body's craving for hydration and his mind's rational thought that too much water makes a man in this position ill. Three soldiers lose this internal battle to balance their fluid consumption. They succumb to their body's craving and guzzle water. They drop out, and an ambulance takes them away. The remaining soldiers learn the self-control necessary in a situation like this. Another battle waging inside the soldiers is that of the mind-body connection regarding fatigue. Each soldier carries 40 pounds on his back, including musket, canteen, haversack of rations, 20-pound knapsack, and 40 rounds of ammunition. When one of the soldiers complains that he is weary, Sergeant Millholland sneers and says that fatigue is mostly mental, which then perks up the group, kicking their collective mind-over-matter strategy into gear. Psychologically, the group strengthens.

A minor man-versus-man conflict arises when Jeff cleans his gun in preparation for the first battle. Just as he does at home on the farm in Kansas, he fires his gun into the sky as part of the cleaning process. Unbeknownst to him, the army prohibits this type of



action until permission is given by a higher-ranking officer. Jeff comes face-to-face with Captain Asa Clardy once again. He punishes Jeff by putting him on all-night sentry duty after hiking all day. This man-versus-man conflict turns into a man-versus-self conflict as Jeff forces himself to stay awake all night. Ironically, Jeff's run-in with Captain Clardy gives him some informational ammunition against the good Captain. When Jeff gets coffee from the cooks' mess, one of the cooks named Sparrow divulges a potentially damaging secret about Clardy. Sparrow tells Jeff he sees the Captain at a widow's house--a widow who falls prey to a robbery of \$800 and a murder. This keeps Jeff awake all night.

Certain assumptions Jeff makes about life are no longer valid as he spends more time in the army and gets to see more of the world. Jeff assumes that all Missourians are rebels. He finds this to be untrue when he meets the unmistakably Union Missourian soldiers under the command of General Lyon at Grand River.

Jeff realizes that Noah Babbitt is an odd character, a man preferring to walk rather than ride a horse. Babbitt says that riding makes his head dizzy and his feet sore, which is ironic, but it is a positive influence on Jeff under their immediate circumstances. Even though Babbitt is a little odd to Jeff, he likes him because he is easy to get along with.



Chapter 7, Battle of Wilson's Creek

Chapter 7, Battle of Wilson's Creek Summary

General Lyon decides upon an aggressive plan of attack against the Confederate soldiers sleeping along Wilson's Creek. The Union soldiers secretly hike 12 miles during the night up to the ridge of the valley where Wilson's Creek flows. They wait until daybreak to perform a surprise ambush of the enemy. General Lyon's regiment, numbering 3,800 men, enters from the north, and Colonel Franz Sigel's regiment, numbering 1,200 men, enters from the south. The Union army is at a disadvantage with a total of 5,000 men, while the Confederate army has 9,000. General Lyon wants to harm the enemy, slowing them down so that they cannot follow the Union to St. Louis.

As Jeff's company hikes during the night, getting closer to battle, one of the soldiers named Jim Veatch tosses his playing cards onto a sumac bush while another soldier named Neeley North picks them up and pockets them. Noah Babbitt explains to Jeff the superstition behind this action.

The first time Jeff feels panic is when the first gunshot rings up ahead. Captain Clardy and a medical orderly rush to the front of the line. They return with Walter Van Orstrand, who wears a bandage on his left hand, after shooting off one of his own fingers. Clardy thinks the boy deliberately shoots his own finger to receive a medical discharge from the army. The boy pleads it is an accident. Jeff cannot believe that anyone would want to leave the army when the first battle is so close.

At daybreak, an officer whispers the command to fix bayonets. Cannons sound from Colonel Sigel's south side and the rebel battery answers. The battle begins with a steady stream of gunfire. The first Union line of attack with musket fire beats the Confederates back to the creek for the Union's first victory. Jeff's line is second in the line of advance. He feels a wild thrill at this first victory.

A major riding on horseback shoots down Jeff's excitement when he orders him to go to the rear to find the quartermaster. Jeff feels furious, is inclined to disobey the order, but Sergeant Millholland talks him out of it. Jeff marches back down the slope while hearing the sounds of cannons and muskets firing, and the wild, frenzied shouting of a battle he should be fighting.

Captain Clardy sees Jeff and begins a spattering of verbal abuse. Jeff is not about to take this from Clardy, so he mentions the information he heard from Sparrow regarding the widow and her \$800. Clardy fumes, demands to know who told him that, and suddenly wants to befriend the boy he abuses. Jeff refuses and feels better after telling this man off.

Jeff finds the quartermaster; they ride back in a wagon and meet several wounded Union soldiers. They learn that the Union has lost this battle. The Confederates



outnumber the Union men. General Lyon is killed and Colonel Sigel is lost. The religious boy, Zed Tinney, dies of a shot to the forehead when the line charges. Ford Ivey dies during the retreat. John Chadwick receives a wound to his left arm from a rebel Minie ball. Noah Babbitt escapes with a red welt across his neck.

Sergeant Millholland tells Jeff about Sergeant Lonegan's cowardice after he throws away his gun and runs. Little Jimmy Lear drops his drum, picks up Lonegan's musket with the bayonet on it and charges right on with the advancing line. Upon hearing this, Jeff feels bitter and embarrassed, wondering what the other men think of him. Even after witnessing the aftermath of what his comrades endure, Jeff still craves what he thinks is the glorious adventure of war.

Chapter 7, Battle of Wilson's Creek Analysis

General Lyon's strategy involves weighing the risks of charging and attacking the enemy versus retreating from the scene. The Union army operates at a disadvantage for several reasons. First, they have no reinforcements. Second, their provisions are running low. Third, there are reports that the rebels' plans are to cut off the Union's communications. Finally, the Confederates outnumber the Union almost two to one, yet General Lyon decides on the execution of a surprise attack. His rationale is to harm the enemy enough to prevent them from following his Union soldiers to St. Louis.

As the troops get closer to the enemy, a silence befalls the group. Historically vivid is the detail where the men "...stopped to bind the cannon's wheels in blankets and horses' hoofs in sacks ..." (P. 54) so that the enemy does not hear their approach.

Jim Veatch, a superstitious member of Jeff's company, tosses his playing cards into the sumac bushes, only to find Neeley North, a not-so-superstitious member of Jeff's company, picking them up and pocketing them. Noah Babbitt explains the superstition behind the church belief that playing cards is wrong. Veatch believes that if he dies with cards on him, he will not go to heaven. The playing cards represent an allegory of the war. In cards as well as war, there is a certain amount of luck and strategy that go into playing both games. Jeff still cannot understand all the gloominess regarding war and death. After all, the leaders at the fort inform everyone that very few men die in proportion to those who fight. Why doesn't Jeff think about and relate to those who do perish in war?

One common theme apparent throughout the chapters is Jeff's disbelief in the somber attitudes of so many of the men enlisted to fight in the war. When Walter Van Orstrand shoots off one of his own fingers on his left hand, the boy pleads it is an accident. Captain Clardy calls him a liar, saying he does it on purpose to receive a medical discharge. This happens every year. Clardy tells Van Orstrand, "You're yellow as a dandelion." (P. 56) The color yellow symbolizes cowardice; the dandelion, a flowering weed, represents a femininity worthy of plucking and discarding. Jeff wonders why anyone wants to leave the army when their first battle is upon them. Jeff remains the teenager who feels invincible. He is also the teenager whose mind deals with the



emotions of envy and a lust for what he thinks is the glorious adventure of war. At this point, the reader realizes that Jeff will have to learn certain things the hard way. The reader also remembers from Chapter 3 Jeff's self-proclaimed assessment that he is hardheaded.

Jeff's physique is small relative to the majority of his comrades. Jeff envies Sergeant Jake Lonagan because he is 230 pounds with bulging muscles and has a perfect mastery of the army's arms manual. However, two events transpire causing Jeff to rethink the heavy value he places on the superficial look of a person. First, Sergeant Lonagan mocks one of Jeff's comrades, Zed Tinney, while Tinney prays, holding his bible, in case he dies in the battle. Sergeant Millholland, Jeff's immediate commanding officer, verbally reprimands Sergeant Lonagan, sending him back over to his own outfit. Sergeant Lonagan does not look as good in Jeff's eyes anymore. Second, as the battle unfolds, Sergeant Lonagan shows his true color of cowardice when he throws down his gun and runs away. Little 14-year-old Jimmy Lear drops his drum, picks up Lonagan's musket with the bayonet on it and charges right into battle. Jeff's envy now turns from the big, hulking Lonagan toward the brave, slight Jimmy Lear.

It is ironic that Jimmy Lear is upset over losing his drum after he picks up Lonagan's gun and place in battle. Sergeant Millholland considers Jimmy a respected hero, but Jimmy does not see it that way. Instead, Jimmy tells Jeff he hopes he never hears another gun go off as long as he lives. Jimmy feels afraid he will be sent back to St. Louis now that General Lyon is dead. Jeff's envy eats him up inside.

Directly before Jeff's line of advance enters the battle, a Major orders Jeff to go to the rear in search of the quartermaster. Jeff fumes as he marches back to the rear, hearing in the background the cannons and muskets firing and the wild, frenzied shouting of his line of advance fighting. Jeff sees Captain Clardy on his way back, and Clardy lays into Jeff, telling him to get back in line. Jeff's anger prompts his courage to give Clardy a taste of his own medicine. Jeff asks Clardy what he is doing back here so far away from the front lines. At least Jeff has the excuse of a Major's orders. Jeff asks Clardy if he is looking for some other widow's \$800. Now Jeff's anger transfers to Captain Clardy. The Captain is livid, demands to know how Jeff knows this information, and suddenly wants to befriend Jeff. Jeff refuses and feels much, much better after telling the "good" Captain off. It seems Jeff gets to fight after all with verbal ammunition and wins some of the Captain's "respect" because now three people know the secret behind Clardy's dark past.

Jeff returns with the quartermaster and sees his company returning from battle. He learns that their side loses. General Lyon, Zed Tinney and Ford Ivey die in battle. John Chadwick suffers a serious wound to his left arm by a rebel Minie ball and Noah Babbitt suffers the minor wound of a red welt to his neck. All returning soldiers look dirty, wounded and forlorn. Jeff desires to know the stories behind each soldier, but no one speaks. Jeff is consumed more with bitterness and embarrassment over what the other men think of him. The same theme dominates. Even after witnessing the aftermath of death and destruction of the battle, Jeff cannot fathom the men's gloominess about war.

Jeff hopes for another battle the next day, but he knows his wish is hopeless. It appears Jeff will have to learn this lesson the hard way.

Chapter 8, Hard Lessons

Chapter 8, Hard Lessons Summary

After only 6 hours of sleep following the Battle of Wilson's Creek, the sentry Ben Gerdeon informs Jeff of his assignment to ambulance duty. After breakfast, Jeff reports to the field hospital where his detail is to carry those with bad leg wounds to and from the amputation tent. Jeff feels sorry for the wounded men, and he takes care of them by bringing drinks of water and swatting the flies and gnats away from them.

To Jeff's surprise, he meets up with Ford Ivey, who is indeed alive, although he has suffered a leg injury bad enough to warrant amputation. Jeff is happy Ford is alive and learns the story behind Ford's injury. Ford pleads with Jeff not to let the surgeon amputate his leg. Ford does not want to live as a crippled person for the rest of his life. Ford clings tightly to Jeff's hand and does not want Jeff to leave his side. Jeff tries to console Ford, but it is to no avail. The surgeon gestures for Jeff to leave the tent, and Ford thrashes about wildly. Jeff's heart breaks, and his eyes water, but he knows he needs to follow the surgeon's orders.

Jeff has no time to find out how Ford's operation goes, for his detail assignment is now to bury the dead Union soldiers. Jeff recognizes the first victim as the cavalryman wearing his black wedding suit. Jeff wonders whether the bride knows her new husband is dead yet, and he thinks how awful it is to be buried without identification or a proper service.

Next, Jeff's assignment is to return to the Wilson Creek battlefield in an ambulance to recover the body of General Lyon. Here, Jeff sees Negro burial parties interring their dead. This duty falls to the winning side of the battle. Jeff also finds and befriends a shepherd dog who mourns the loss of her former rebel master. Jeff has always made friends easily with animals and becomes Dixie's new master.

The next day, the quartermaster issues new uniforms to the soldiers. To Jeff's delight, the uniforms consist of trim blue coats with bright brass buttons. He admires his uniform so much that he breaks his usual custom of sleeping in his pants for warmth. Instead, he hangs his uniform neatly on the tent pole, so as not to wrinkle it.

Jeff reveals to Noah Babbitt his encounter with Captain Clardy the night of the battle. Babbitt warns Jeff to stop disrespecting the officers, especially Captain Clardy, who cannot be trusted. The next morning, Babbitt wakes Jeff up early to show him that the cook Sparrow is lying on the outskirts of camp dead with a knife through his back. Jeff feels an overwhelming responsibility for the death of Sparrow.

After supper, Jeff feels better and sees his outfit returning to a form of normalcy after some rest and relaxation. Jim Veatch and a group play cards, Bill Earle sings tenor to a group of soldiers who are probably feeling homesick, and Noah Babbitt soaks his feet in



salt water. Jeff falls asleep, only to have nightmares that Captain Clardy and his cutthroats creep toward his bed, each carrying a dagger. He tosses and turns. His new dog, Dixie, guards him. Dixie, no longer a Confederate dog, now sides with the Union.

Chapter 8, Hard Lessons Analysis

As the title of this chapter suggests, a few realities come alive for Jeff as he witnesses the death and destruction that war leaves behind. Jeff's work at the army hospital proves emotionally wrenching for him as he sees his comrade, Ford Ivey, lying on a litter awaiting the amputation of a brutally wounded leg. Tears sting Jeff's eyes as Ford clings to Jeff, begging him not to let the surgeons cut off his leg. Ford is panic-stricken and terrified at the thought of living life as a crippled man. The surgeons order Jeff to leave the tent, but Jeff feels torn between helping his friend and obeying the order. Jeff feels helpless as he witnesses a man's life being changed forever because of war. Jeff comes face to face with the cruelties of war and he begins to think of the soldiers not as machines, but as human beings.

When Jeff helps place the corpse of the recently married man into a rocky Missouri soil trench, the emotional side of his person rears again. He visualizes the actual human beings--the family members--left to deal with the consequences, picking up the pieces of a life so destructively torn apart. Jeff finally sees the human element in all the chaos.

Perhaps more important, though, is the lesson he learns about his own selfishness, irresponsibility, lack of control and vengeance. After Jeff bitterly tells off Captain Clardy, and after Sparrow dies of a knife wound to his back, Jeff blames himself for the cook's death. This lesson seems to be the hardest one on Jeff. He is now scared, not necessarily of war, ironically enough, but of Captain Clardy killing him. He realizes what Noah Babbitt tells him about speaking disrespectfully to the officers is true, especially with Captain Clardy. Babbitt is older and wiser than Jeff, and he acts as a mentor to the younger boy. The reader gets the feeling that Jeff learns an important lesson about self-control and the difference between being a boy and becoming a man. A boy lashes out easily, unable to control his anger, whereas a man knows the arts of self-control, self-containment, and self-assurance.

The new uniform issued to Jeff, the pride he takes in the material, and the fact that he breaks his normal routine of sleeping in his pants to stay warm by hanging up his uniform so it will not wrinkle shows that Jeff has a little further to go in his journey against superficiality.

Finally, Jeff's ability to coax Dixie away gently from her previous rebel master shows that Jeff retains his boyhood trait of gentle animal lover and tamer. This is a personality characteristic that he can easily carry from boyhood to adulthood. It seems to remain a constant in his life, perhaps something that helps get him through the tougher times of a sometimes harsh world. The challenge for Jeff is to transfer some of his love of animals to love of his fellow man. A paradox is found in the peaceful, animal-loving side of Jeff and the persistence he shows in wanting to fight battles against men.



Chapter 9, Light Bread and Apple Butter

Chapter 9, Light Bread and Apple Butter Summary

Jeff finds satisfaction in everything but the food. There always seems to be too little of it. One day he takes Dixie for a walk in hopes of finding some ripe persimmons. He smells the nice aroma of a cider press. It feels good to get away from the camp for awhile and as he walks through the Missouri woods, he thinks of his mother's brightly colored rag rug that lay beside her bed.

During his walk, he finds a small unpainted clapboard house with apple trees in the backyard. Tempted to just take some apples, he instead decides to knock on the door and ask permission. The woman refuses him at first, worrying that if she feeds one soldier, all the others will want food, too. Jeff promises not to bring anyone to her home. She sees Jeff's boyish, honest face, and this softens her attitude. She invites him in and gives him light bread, apple butter, and milk, which he eats ravenously.

Jeff converses with the woman, who is named McComas, telling her a little bit about himself and she does the same. After eating and feeling full for the first time in a long time, Jeff asks Mrs. McComas if she has any work that needs to be done. She hands him an ax, and he chops firewood for her that will last a week. She appreciates this, since her husband is off at war as well. Jeff leaves her house with a sack full of apples fallen from the trees for his messmates back at camp. Jeff's bunk mates are so pleased with his ability to rustle and forage grub from the housewives, Bill Earle tells him he gets the job every time because the farm wives take pity on Jeff's small frame and boyish face.

Jeff volunteers for what Captain Clardy calls an important duty. The men are to visit the homes of rebel soldiers who violate their paroles by returning to the Confederate army. The Union men punish the parolees' families by confiscating their livestock and property and bringing it back to camp with them. To Jeff's horror, one of the houses they visit is the McComases' residence. They confiscate the only cow the woman has to give her children milk. Secretly, Jeff conspires with the night sentry to return the McComases' cow late that night for a promise of light bread and apple butter. His plan succeeds.

Three months later, when Jeff is preparing to clean his gun, he decides to get permission from Captain Clardy to fire it off to make the cleaning go faster. Clardy grants permission, Jeff fires, and a patrolman arrests him by order of the Colonel. Jeff says he has permission from Captain Clardy, the patrolman decides to check, and Clardy blatantly denies ever giving the permission. Jeff finds himself under arrest again. He spends one night in the guardhouse and spends 2 weeks of his time on the most labor-intensive of jobs.

In May 1862, Jeff is transferred to Fort Scott, Kansas, and becomes a part of a Federal invasion force of 6,000 men under Colonel William Weer. In June Colonel Weer's army



leaves Fort Scott and moves into the Cherokee Indian nation, where they are to restore to their homes the loyal refugee Indian families who fled into Southern Kansas early in the war.

Chapter 9, Light Bread and Apple Butter Analysis

In biblical times, just as Eve tempts Adam with the apple, Jeff feels a temptation to take some apples from Mrs. McComas' backyard trees. Instead, remembering his manners and upbringing, he knocks at the door to ask permission. Like a true man, he possesses self-control and politeness. These, along with his boyish looks and honesty, prove to be great assets for Jeff in the pursuit of food from housewives. The light bread, apple butter, and milk given to Jeff symbolize life sustenance. Jeff promises the woman he will not bring the other soldiers back to her house to raid her low food supply.

Ironically, Jeff volunteers for one of Captain Clardy's duties--a duty he knows nothing about. The assignment is to punish the families of the rebels who break parole to remain in the Confederate army. The punishment consists of stealing the livestock and property of these families and bringing them back to the camp. To Jeff's horror, the McComas family is on the list. After Jeff's detail confiscates the only cow the McComas family owns, Jeff is stunned into executing a bold plan of conspiring with the night watchman to return the cow in exchange for some light bread and apple butter. The plan succeeds, and Jeff's integrity remains intact. He keeps his promise to the enemy's generous farm wife. Jeff is courageous enough to stand up for what he believes, even though, ironically he is doing something kind for the enemy side.

Later, Jeff learns a tough lesson regarding whom to ask permission of and when. There are some people who are worthy and others, like Captain Clardy, who are not. Jeff asks permission of Clardy to fire his gun so that it becomes easier to clean. Clardy grants permission. A patrolman arrests Jeff for firing his gun, and Clardy figuratively stabs Jeff in the back by boldly lying about the former permission given. Clardy continues to discriminate against and to find ways to punish Jeff. The Captain assigns him, like a slave, to the road crew, the most laborious of jobs. Jeff sees David Gardner again, and David thinks Jeff is a deserter because he is on the ditch crew. Jeff thinks about how hard his life has been over the past 2 weeks, all because of Clardy's tyranny. Jeff still wants to fight in battle, but he is torn by his loathing of all the cruelty and tyranny that accompany war.

Finally, the army grants Jeff a reprieve, so to speak, from his duty on the chain gang. The government transfers him to Fort Scott, Kansas, where he prepares to enter the Cherokee Indian nation to help restore order to the families who fled during the invasion of General Stand Waitie's group of rebel Indian soldiers. Jeff enters this part of his army life a little more skeptical and a little less naive than before.



Chapter 10, Foraging in the Cherokee Country

Chapter 10, Foraging in the Cherokee Country Summary

On their way from Fort Scott, Kansas, into the Cherokee Indian nation, lack of clean drinking water proves to be a major challenge. Because of a dry spring season, the creeks dry up. Indian cattle stand in the sinkholes. The army cooks scoop up the green water, boil it, and skim it through clean white dish towels until it is drinkable. Jeff refuses to drink the water, but he is surprised at what good coffee it makes.

Jeff sees his first regiment of Union Indian Home Guards, the Creeks and the Seminoles, who arm themselves with antiquated long-barreled Indian rifles and wear small blue military caps on their bushy heads. Jeff finds them an odd lot but is glad to be out of the road gang and back in the infantry. They march through the rocky roads of General Stand Waitie's territory. Stand Waitie is a Cherokee who owns slaves and commands a small rebel cavalry unit that raids the homes of the Union Indian sympathizers.

Jeff meets Joe Grayson, a Cherokee Indian boy who impresses Jeff with his knowledge of the signs before a rain comes. They strike up a friendship, and Joe fills Jeff in on landmarks, homes, and farms in the Cherokee nation. Also, Joe relates the story of how the U.S. government makes the Indians leave their homes in Georgia. Joe explains that Rebel Cherokees and Union Cherokees hate each other. The Rebel Cherokees sign the treaty in Georgia, giving up the Indian land there. President Jackson ratifies the treaty and forces the Indians to move.

Stuart Mitchell enters the picture and asks to wipe his cornbread in their skillet gravy. He proceeds to tell them he spent time as Waitie's prisoner for several months. He hates the Rebel Cherokees, and the unit asked him to join the Union mess. Their food is so intolerable that they set up a protest committee and call upon Sergeant Millholland. He grants permission to do some foraging at night but only from people who have plenty of food. During this time, they eat very well, enjoying honey, peaches, apples, sweet potatoes, corn, and beef cattle. While cooking their beefsteaks one evening, the rebels attack, killing Sergeant Millholland. Jeff finds the sergeant's body and suffers grief for the loss of his friend and hatred for the enemy who kills him. Everyone grieves the loss of Sergeant Millholland.

The company pools the rations of rice that night, and Jeff boils it. He does not know how to cook rice, so it boils over on him. Each man comes to the fire and eats the rice off the blanket on the ground around the fire, not bothering to use their plates. They lament the loss of their steaks.



Chapter 10, Foraging in the Cherokee Country Analysis

A lack of rain causes the springs to dry up; therefore, the men find clean drinking water only every 3 or 4 days when their path nears the Grand River. To survive, the cooks scoop up, boil, and strain through white dish towels the green, muddy water standing in sinkholes with the cattle. Jeff refuses to drink this water, but ironically, he drinks the coffee made with such water. He notices what good coffee it makes, too. Unknown to Jeff is the manner in which coffee grows. The richer the manure is, the richer the coffee will be.

Jeff realizes the army's careless disregard for civilian's private property, especially food, after his camp raids the Arkansas farmer's apple wagon. A paradox is found here because theft in camp is penalized harshly. A soldier may not steal from another soldier, and if he does, the army punishes him harshly. The superiors penalize the Missouri boy who steals \$12.50 from a comrade by making him stand on a stump wearing placards, front and back, announcing THIEF. Someone shaves his head and he forfeits all his pay. All soldiers seem to think the punishment fits. However, as a matter of survival, the soldiers steal food from civilians and think nothing of it. The commanding officers turn their heads in another direction or participate willingly in the theft, such as in the following example.

In search of food, the soldiers pilfer the Cherokee nation's land of plenty. One day Jeff is cooking the steaks that Sergeant Millholland cut from the cattle they kill. While the meat cooks, Jeff and Stuart Mitchell strip their clothes to boil them with the pokeberries the Indian boy Joe tells them will kill the lice that torment them daily. Unexpectedly, the rebels raid their camp, shoot at them and steal their food. Ironically, Millholland is shot to death. He is the one who gives permission for the foraging, which army regulations prohibit, and he is the one who slices the dead cattle into steaks. Here is an example of how life has a way of punishing those committing sin. Jeff simultaneously grieves the loss of his friend and fumes over the enemy's theft of his friend's life and the red meat they are about to eat. Here, an observant reader wonders why the talk of spies does not instill in the men a more skeptical attitude, particularly toward the newcomer, Stuart Mitchell.

It is worth noting here that Jeff thinks about the fact that Sergeant Millholland is now buried in the rocky soil of enemy territory. This fact touches Jeff's heart.



Chapter 11, Lucy Washbourne

Chapter 11, Lucy Washbourne Summary

The Kansas Volunteers now have a new commanding officer, Sergeant Jim Pike, and they head into Tahlequah, the Cherokee Indian Nation's capital, which is a member of the Southern Confederacy. They march well, handling themselves with good manners, strength of character, and precision. It is their commanding officers' hopes to impress the people of Tahlequah sufficiently enough so that they may change their minds about joining the Confederacy, and they may wish to instead side with the Union.

Once in town, Jeff's assignment is to escort Captain Clardy and some of the other Union officers to find a home where they may dine. In the middle of town, they find an elegantly landscaped log home. Clardy clumsily stomps onto the porch and knocks on the front door. A young mixed-blood Indian girl opens the door, and Jeff thinks she is the most beautiful girl in the world. She is all he can think about, even though he is hungry as well. She is part of a rebel family, one that favors slavery, and now that the Yankees fight over slavery, her family no longer has anyone to cook and clean for them. Since the women have no firewood to cook with, the Union soldiers swap their labor for a meal.

Jeff chops firewood outside and learns from a Negro passerby that the girl is 16-year-old Lucy Washbourne and her father, Levi Washbourne, is a captain in General Stand Waitie's cavalry. Lucy comes out of the house just before dusk to milk the cow, but since she does not know how, she sits on the wrong side of the cow. The men laugh, and Jeff tries to help her. Her defiance pushes Jeff away and her attempt to milk the cow is not successful. Jeff sneaks into the smokehouse, retrieves and cleans a pail, milks the cow, and delivers the liquid to the back door. Another daughter, Liz, opens the door and accepts the milk, telling Jeff they are very beholden to him. Lucy feels embarrassed about not milking the cow correctly, but her sister explains that their slaves usually milk the cows. Lucy's sister comments about Jeff's boyish looks and, once again, Jeff is invited inside to eat. The daughters wait on him hand and foot.

Weer's army does not stay long in Tahlequah. Soon they march back to Fort Scott, Kansas, where Jeff hopes for a winter furlough so he can visit his family. Unbeknownst to him, however, the army plans a Union invasion of Western Arkansas, where Jeff's destiny is to fight in a real shooting battle at last.

Chapter 11, Lucy Washbourne Analysis

Most notable in this chapter are the vivid, historical descriptions of the town of Tahlequah and its inhabitants, and the fact that Jeff, as more of a man than he was when he left home, feels smitten by Lucy Washbourne.



Jeff feels surprise that the Indians here are so different from the ones he knew back home. The Potawatomi and the Miami near his Kansas home are blanket Indians, who live in teepees. He expects the Cherokee are the same, but he remembers what Joe Grayson tells him about the mixed-bloods. In Tahlequah, there are log houses chinked with red clay and chimneys of rock and mud. Some of the town's buildings are made of brown stone and red brick. They live well.

The Washbourne home is a log house located in the middle of town. Its shade comes from several majestic sycamores, and the ornate gate to its fence has wrought-iron hinges. Yellow rose bushes border the walkway to the house. "Jeff saw that the rafters of the house were of peeled pine poles held together with wooden pegs." (P. 113) Behind the property are slave houses and a barn. The Washbourne family is one of the more well-to-do families.

Lucy Washbourne can do no wrong in Jeff's mind. He feels dizzy around her, soaking up her beauty. He notices so many of her details, such as her black sun-streaked hair tied in a dark green bow, her complexion, which is " ... lovelier than wild strawberries," (P.113) her long, light green cotton dress, and the way she " ... looked as fresh and clean as a green shrub after a rain." (P. 114)



Chapter 12, Battle of Prairie Grove

Chapter 12, Battle of Prairie Grove Summary

On Sunday, December 7, 1862, at 2 o'clock in the afternoon, another battle begins with the boom of rebel cannon from a heavily wooded ridge called Prairie Grove. The Union army stations its men in open fields. Jeff still feels eager to start fighting, and he compulsively checks the priming on his rifle and the cap box in his belt. Jeff's first contact with propaganda comes when Sergeant Jim Pike asks Noah Babbitt to read the circular the Confederate General T.C. Hindman issues to each of his men. The circular urges the the soldiers to destroy the other side. Jeff feels stunned that the enemy speaks so gravely of the Union.

The rumbling and booming of the cannons come from all around them now. A squadron of Union cavalry ride out of the trees, and after finding the enemy, determine their position and draw fire. The infantry's job is to follow and clean up. The enemy shoots at the Union men, and the Kansas Volunteers find the shots get closer, so close in fact, they attempt to dodge the fire.

Jeff struggles to keep his mind on the battle. His thoughts stray, taking him home to Linn County, Kansas. He imagines what his family is doing right about now. He gets angry because he is showing emotion. Jeff prays hard. His dreams of war are different from this reality, and he vows to go to church regularly hereafter if he makes it out alive.

The enemy kills or wounds several of the Union soldiers before the infantry has to shoot back. This angers Jeff further. Finally, the Union order to "Fire!" is given. Jeff feels vast relief. Both armies operate at full firepower now. Flat on his belly, Jeff fires as fast as he can. Head to head with the enemy now in the trees, they fight hand to hand with anything they can find. Jeff rushes an enemy soldier and holds him by his legs, and Noah Babbitt comes up beside him and hits the enemy over the head with his gun. At first, the rebels appear to retreat. At second look, the rebels prepare to fight more Union soldiers closing in from another direction. The Kansas Volunteers go over to help their battery. They win. The lieutenant asks for Jeff and Noah's names. They won!

Jeff's ears ring, and his eyes feel red and sore from the cannon smoke. His hands ache from bare-knuckled fighting, and his whole body feels tired, dirty, and completely in awe that he is still alive. Jeff tells Noah, " ... anybody that ever joins anything is crazy. I'll lay in the woods until moss grows on my back a foot long before I'll ever join anything again." (P. 139)

Chapter 12, Battle of Prairie Grove Analysis

During the Battle of Prairie Grove, Jeff realistically thinks about the possibility that he may die. The climactic moment of the novel occurs here when Jeff completely changes



his mind about what his first war battle will be like. Jeff's imagined daydreams do not coincide in the least with reality.

When a rebel cannon ball fires 50 feet ahead of the men and they all dodge it, landing flat on their stomachs atop each other, fear and anger develop. Next, a charge of grape flies overhead, " ... screeching like forty locomotives." (P.128) The men duck. Nervous laughter sounds. Jeff feels a hysterical urge to laugh but finds he cannot. His throat is dry, his palms itch, and he can hear his pulse pounding. Jeff's body gives him messages that his brain is not yet able to grasp. It is the stress mechanism of the body at work, the fight or flight syndrome. Jeff knows he just wants to get out alive.

Reality hits Jeff, and he feels angry at how little control a soldier in the ranks has over his own destiny. A soldier starves to death, receives poor treatment from the officers, marches all night, and is shot to pieces during the day with no protest. The officers have them coming and going. Jeff gets violently angry. The reader realizes there is a minor parallel theme at work in the novel. The army treats its soldiers in the ranks the same way a slave owner treats his slaves. This is the major issue of the Civil War.



Chapter 13, Expedition to Van Buren

Chapter 13, Expedition to Van Buren Summary

Jeff and Noah sleep in a haystack after the battle. They wake up and walk 14 miles to Rhea's Mills, where they eat from the mess wagons and where the quartermaster replaces their lost equipment. Jeff reviews with awe the battle he survived. He looks at his painful and swollen hand but realizes that, in the grand scheme of things, it is a small price to pay. The day before the army leaves Rhea's Mills, General Blunt hands out Medals of Honor to both Jeff and Noah.

On Christmas Day, the group marches to Cane Hill, which is a college town ravaged by the war. As Jeff enters the Methodist church turned hospital, it begins to rain. Jeff meets up with his young friend Jimmy Lear, who lay dying on a cot after a caisson ran over him, breaking both his legs, and hurting him internally at Prairie Grove. Jeff never forgets the look on Jimmy's face after the doctor tells him he is going to die. Jeff tells Jimmy the story of how Jesus is the only one who can save him, and Jimmy gives Jeff his drum, which is his most prized possession.

The group leaves Cane Hill, and on their way to Van Buren, they battle the icy waters of Cove Creek, which get deeper and deeper the farther along they go. Captain Clardy rides in an ambulance, while Bill Earle grabs one of the iron rails on the rear, hoping to be towed across the stream. Captain Clardy stomps on Bill's hand causing him to release his grip and almost drown in the waters. Jeff saves Bill.

When they reach Van Buren, they realize the Union has already won over this particular city because they witness the flight of a rebel regiment. As they march into town, "The Star-Spangled Banner" plays, and Jeff feels proud. The soldiers are ravenously hungry and stop in front of a Negro man carrying a ham. Noah Babbitt gets the man to give him the ham in a gentlemanly fashion. Jeff asks Noah what he would have done if the man did not oblige, and Noah says he would have shot him. The troops plunder nearly every store in the town, eating, getting new shoes and other necessities. The bugles sound, and Jeff is assigned to guard three dismounted rebel cavalymen. He takes them to the prison compound. A rebel cannon fires, hitting a red brick building in the center of the town and wounding or killing several other people. One wounded man lays dying in the street, and Captain Clardy approaches him, stomping the heel of his boot into the man's eye. The man dies. The Union soldiers punish Clardy for his brutality by lining up and walking past him, forcing him to salute all 50 soldiers until his arm grows numb. Jeff tells Clardy that he is not fit to be an officer. Upset over Clardy's brutality, Jeff walks along the river levee. A Negro man asks Jeff to come see a 100-year-old man who is dying. This man loves freedom and he prays to live long enough to see a Lincoln soldier. Jeff goes to see the man, and once the old man sees Jeff, he raises his hands, blesses God, and falls back dead.



Back in camp, the orderly sergeant assigns Jeff the guard duty to commandeer any liquor the men may try to bring back. Out of boredom, Jeff decides to uncork the canteens and bottles and sniff them. He gets to one smelling like the apple cider his father makes at home and replaces the water in his canteen with the fruity smelling liquid. Later that night, he drinks some, only to find he has trouble speaking, and the sky of stars seems to swim. Noah enlightens Jeff of the fact that it is not apple cider, but rather high-proof applejack that he drinks.

Chapter 13, Expedition to Van Buren Analysis

Jeff gets the opportunity to learn many lessons in this chapter, but whether his veil of adolescent naivety lifts high enough to allow him to grasp the significance of certain events is a subject for another chapter. For instance, when General Blunt celebrates Jeff's heroism in the Battle of Prairie Grove by draping a Medal of Honor around his neck, Jeff blurts out, "Shoot, General, ... all we did was load her and swab her." (P. 142) This is a telling detail about Jeff's innate character as well. He is quite modest.

Jeff sees his young soldier friend Jimmy Lear as he lies dying on a cot in Cane Hill. The rain signifies the tears and profound sadness Jeff feels as he watches a 15-year-old boy die. Jimmy Lear verbally bequeaths his most prized possession, his drum, to Jeff and this signifies Jimmy's final acceptance of death. The drum becomes a symbol of the steady beat of Jimmy Lear's life and death in war, and it becomes a constant reminder to Jeff of who Jimmy was. Jimmy's life and memory lives on through his drum. Jeff introduces Jimmy to Jesus, telling him, no doubt, that he will have everlasting life.

The battle against Mother Nature on their way to Cane Hill shows Jeff how strong human beings can be. The icy waters of Cove Creek represent how the world can indeed be a cold, harsh, and unfriendly place. The water's depth, growing deeper and deeper, signifies the chance in life of drowning. If it were not for the help of Jeff, Bill Earle may have drowned in the waters. Captain Clardy's action against Bill Earle is simply in line with the bitter, brutal character Clardy remains thus far. Jeff realizes in amazement how much a person can take if he is forced to.

Once in Van Buren, Jeff's life slows down enough for him to soak up the meanings of some of life's lessons thus far on his coming-of-age journey. "The Star-Spangled Banner" plays as the soldiers march, and Jeff feels proud. He guesses that starving and fighting all day and being marched to death is what makes a good soldier out of a person. Put another way, one must pay his dues, sometimes learning the hard way, before reaping the many rewards of life.

When Noah, Bill, and Jeff encounter the Negro carrying a ham, Noah is able to get the black man to give him the meat. Jeff wonders what Noah would do if the man had not given in so easily. Noah says he would have shot him. Jeff thinks it is funny how war changes men, for Noah looks dead serious when he says this. The ham represents life sustenance, the survival of the fittest, and ironically, the Negro man handing over the ham represents a slow restoration of order to the country. Jeff retains the politeness his



mother teaches him, although he also gains the wisdom to know how to use the politeness. After the army assigns him three rebel prisoners to guard and escort to prison, Jeff eyes one soldier's boots, thinks of stealing them, but does not. Someone else will just take them anyway, he says.

The prisoner later tells Jeff that he is the only gentleman in camp. Jeff also retains his love for animals and respects other men, even enemy soldiers, who love animals. Jeff can tell some of the rebel prisoners are heartbroken about leaving their pets, who they know they will never see again. When another Negro man asks Jeff to visit a 100-year-old dying black man, he obliges. The Negro man's freedom means everything to the old man, and he wishes to see a Union soldier. Upon seeing Jeff, he blesses God, lies back in his bed and dies. Jeff realizes this is part of why they are fighting, and freedom means a lot to the southern people, too. The issues of war are not as narrow as Jeff once thought. It is not just about the Kansas-Missouri border bushwhackers. A whole country is affected.

Finally, when Jeff stands guard duty, commandeering any alcohol the men attempt to smuggle in with them, Jeff decides to sniff some of the bottle corks. When he finds one that smells like the apple cider his father makes, he pours it into his canteen. Later, he drinks some, only to find that he is intoxicated. Noah Babbitt enlightens the young lad that he has drunk high-proof applejack. Noah helps sober Jeff by dunking his head in cold water and rubbing him down with whiskey. There is a little humorous irony in this event.



Chapter 14, The Cow Lot

Chapter 14, The Cow Lot Summary

The Kansas Volunteers return to the Cherokee Indian Nation of Tahlequah, and Jeff is so excited to see Lucy Washbourne again that he primps himself to go over and pay them a visit. He approaches their home and hears the women out back in the cow lot. The cow will not let her calf near her so the calf can eat. The Washbourne women, unskilled with farm animals, fail to move the cow near her calf so the baby can eat. Jeff asks if they have tried salting the calf's back. Lucy's mother fetches a cup of table salt, Jeff spreads it on the calf's back, the mother comes over to lick the salt, and the calf nudges the mother's udder. The Washbourne women are in awe of Jeff.

The Union soldiers gathered outside the gate of the Washbourne home taunt the rebel women and eventually pick a fight with Jeff. Jeff beats two of the three men down barefisted, and Lucy helps chase the third man away with a pitchfork. Each is grateful for and impressed with the other. Jeff feels smitten with Lucy, but Lucy cannot let herself feel anything for Jeff because he is the enemy. Lucy's brother Lee, with whom she is close, fights with General Stand Waitie's Confederates and so does her father. As of late, her brother has been reported missing, so she is extremely worried about him. Jeff wonders how he can find a missing enemy soldier. They have enough trouble finding their own missing Union men. Lucy and Jeff converse regarding the issues behind the war, and she is so defiant and stubborn in her beliefs that Jeff thinks he is destined for unrequited love.

Chapter 14, The Cow Lot Analysis

The spring season coincides with the return of the birds and the bees, thoughts of love and romance. The weather and the feelings the weather bring with it to Jeff have him impulsively prancing barefoot over the sandy soil during their trek back to Tahlequah. The surrounding greenery and new grass growing symbolize rebirth and growth.

During the cow scene, the reader easily identifies the stubborn, obstinate cow as a representation of Lucy. The reader sees Jeff as the hungry calf. Like the cow, who will not allow the calf to feed from her udder because of how painful it may become, Lucy will not allow Jeff to get too close to her because he is the enemy and the enemy causes only pain to her and her family. Jeff is hungry for the attention and affection of the most beautiful girl he has ever set eyes upon.

Lucy asks Jeff directly why he makes war on them. Jeff feels simultaneously taken aback by her directness and relieved to have the lines of communication open. Their talk proves confusing and maddening to both of them. Jeff begins to think it is a stupid war. The issues, he says, are all mixed up. Each state in the Union seems to have a different reason for fighting.



Chapter 15, Fate of the Brandts

Chapter 15, Fate of the Brandts Summary

Jeff stands guard at Fort Gibson, which the Union virtually abandoned because of its location away from the centers of fighting. The fort now houses more than 6,000 Indian refugees. He meets an almost unrecognizable David Gardner, who has grown. After serving his punishment for desertion, he has now been reinstated as part of a cavalry unit. David informs Jeff that his unit will soon receive cavalry training, about which Jeff is elated. Jeff notifies Noah of the Army's plans to convert the unit into cavalry. Noah is disappointed but understanding about the reasons.

Jeff fumbles with many of the saber or sword commands and passes. He experiences a difficult time adjusting to the use of a saber while riding a horse, but not so difficult a time as Noah suffers. Since Noah's training fares worse than Jeff's, Jeff feels a little better about his own troubles.

General Waitie's strategy is to drive all the Union refugee families back to Fort Gibson, where the Union army feeds them with the few rations coming over by mule and ox trains. Waitie does everything in his power to prevent the trains from getting through, thus forcing the Union to evacuate the fort and return to Kansas. Waitie's reason for fighting is to leave the whole Cherokee Nation to the Confederates. Jeff's cavalry duty is to prevent these depredations.

The fate of the Brandts comes too quickly for the cavalry to save the family. The rebels shoot the father to death, burn down the house, kill the mare in the barn, and leave two newborn calves to die of starvation. The Union cavalry escort the mother and her two sons back to Fort Gibson.

Before Jeff falls asleep that night, he wonders whether Lucy's brother, Lee, rides with the Waitie raiding party that burned the Brandt home. He doubts it somehow. He wonders how he can help Lucy find her brother, and he vows to consult with Noah about it in the morning.

Chapter 15, Fate of the Brandts Analysis

In this chapter, Jeff meets up with David Gardner, a character who seems to undergo the greatest physical changes up to this point in the novel. David physically grows into a husky young man over his past 2 years in the army. David seems to feel a debt of gratitude to Jeff, who at first acts as a mentor and good friend to David. David says, "... No more desertin' for me, Jeff. I worked out my punishment. Now I'm reinstated. You and Ma was right."

Jeff loves horses, and he discovers that the horse assigned to him can teach him more than any of the drillmasters, and he won't have to curse him. It is ironic how Jeff feels



the horse is smarter than any sergeant on the premises. Jeff has lots of trouble using the saber, both on foot and astride his horse. However, the human characteristic that allows us to forget our own troubles by watching the hilarity of another's is what helps Jeff cope. Poor Noah experiences much more difficulty than Jeff.

Jeff knows he fights for different reasons in the Cherokee Indian Nation. The Union assigns his cavalry the task of preventing the destruction by Stand Waitie's group of Confederate soldiers of innocent Union women and children. Unfortunately, the fate of the Brandt family seems sealed before the Union cavalry gets a chance at prevention. It is all in the timing. What happens to the Brandts signifies the random unkindness of life in a time of war. In war and life, new strategies unfold, but during the time it takes to prepare and execute the new strategies, the other side has extra time to execute its same strategy. It is ironic that the Union army grants a furlough to the Brandt father to come home so he can help his wife and children, but before he can help them, the enemy kills the father. Mr. Brandt, also a soldier, dies at his home.



Chapter 16, The Name on the Watch

Chapter 16, The Name on the Watch Summary

As Jeff walks sentry one night, David Gardner, also on sentry, asks Jeff to accompany him to the other side of the river and talk with the rebel pickets. Jeff thinks it's the craziest idea he's ever heard, but he thinks about Lucy and her brother, Lee. He wants to collect information, if he can, about Lee to tell Lucy. A swap of the Union coffee for the Confederate tobacco eases the tension among the enemies, as they later strip off their clothes to go swimming together in the river. Jeff inquires of Joe, a Waitie man, about Lee. Joe discloses that Lee never returned from a scouting mission, and their officers are afraid the Yanks captured him. Waitie tried to get Lee back on a prisoner exchange, but he has been unable to get in touch with the Union Commander.

One evening, Captain Clardy requests that tenor Bill Earle sing a song, any song. He sings many songs, and finds that from across the river, an enemy baritone joins in the singing. Jeff knows without a doubt now that Clardy remains distrustful, and Jeff wonders what could possibly be on Clardy's secret agenda.

The next morning, the orderly sergeant shakes Jeff awake an hour before dawn, and tells him to dress in 15 minutes for special duty. Clardy marches the men in a hollow square, and Noah figures out the reason is for an execution. A fife and drum play the "Dead March." The condemned man is a rebel spy who turns out to be Lee Washbourne, Lucy's brother. Jeff discovers the dead man's identity when he looks at the gold watch placed atop the pile of personal belongings at the foot of the yellow pine coffin.

When one of the men in the 10-man firing squad faints, Clardy orders Jeff to fill his position. Jeff refuses, and Clardy arrests Jeff after the execution. While the company marches past the open coffin, and Jeff realizes who the victim is, he enlists Noah, giving him two shinplaster bank notes to give to the old woman named Belle so that she may hire someone to come back and claim the body to bring it back to his folks in Tahlequah. Jeff does not want Lee buried in an unmarked grave.

Another night when Jeff stands sentry with his dog, Dixie, in front of General Blunt's tent, Dixie walks over to the tea cup General Blunt places on a rock to cool. Dixie laps up some of the liquid with her tongue, and an irritated Blunt drives her away. The next morning, one of Blunt's orderlies commands Jeff to report immediately to General Blunt. Jeff wonders what punishment he will get this time.

Chapter 16, The Name on the Watch Analysis

Although Jeff thinks the idea of fraternizing with the rebel boys at the river is crazy and frightening, he discovers he enjoys the secret rendezvous. At once, the boys crave the thrill-seeking adventure, and the apparent camaraderie that unfolds while stripped of



their battle vestments. They learn that each of them is similar in his respective homesickness, and that both sides feel a sense of loss of control over their own lives because they are enlisted men obeying the commanding officer's orders. They feel delight in taking some of the control over their own lives back by meeting on neutral ground with the other side.

Clardy's stunt with his song request from Bill Earle is confusing until the next morning when the Union soldiers execute the enemy spy before dawn. It is as if Clardy's warped sense of humor carries him through creating solidarity between the two sides, only to swipe the feeling away the next morning with the execution of Lee Washbourne.

The morning of the execution, the weather feeds the premonition of the execution to come. The skies are heavily overcast and wild with wind. Jeff feels singularly depressed and thinks this is due to the complete reversal in the weather. His feelings of dread and foreboding, as if something unpleasant is about happen, foreshadow the execution.

Since Jeff knows about his pending arrest, he asks Noah to ride the 20 miles to see the old woman Belle. Jeff instructs Noah to hire someone to help her bring Lucy's brother's body home to a proper final resting place. Noah obliges. Jeff wants Noah to explain that he didn't know who the prisoner was until he saw the name on Lee's gold watch after it was too late. The engraved gold watch symbolizes wealth, and within the confines of war, there is no discrimination against any man, rich or poor. Jeff hopes for the best when it comes to Lucy's feeling about this matter.

After Jeff's dog Dixie drinks some of General Blunt's tea, Jeff quietly hides behind the trees, scout-like, hoping the General will not see him. The next morning, Jeff's orders are to report to General Blunt immediately. It is ironic that Jeff feels he is in for more punishment. Instead, General Blunt wants to recruit Jeff as a scout.



Chapter 17, The Ride of Noah Babbitt

Chapter 17, The Ride of Noah Babbitt Summary

When General Blunt reveals that he wants Jeff to become a scout rather than punish him, Jeff's initial reaction is to shy away from the thought of becoming a scout. Eventually, Jeff reasons that acting as a scout has to be better than any punishment he would have been given, that is, if he makes it back alive. Jeff cannot forget the execution of Lee Washbourne.

Three hours later, the Union patrol of 40 men travels by horse toward rebel territory. A dozen men, including Noah, station themselves on the Union side of the Arkansas River. Another dozen men plant themselves across the river on the rebel side. The rest of the scout patrol ride to Fort Smith Road, which is the pathway of communications between the rebel Indian Commander Cooper and the rebel forces in Arkansas. Jeff attempts to capture the Confederate courier, who fires his pistol at Jeff, misses and drops his gun as his horse rears. The courier veers off into the trees and Jeff follows, quickly catching up to him. The courier's horse stumbles and throws its rider.

The courier disappears; however, Jeff confiscates the haversack attached to the rebel's saddle. Lieutenant Orff captures a prisoner, but since Joe shot the rebel to dismount him, it is uncertain whether the prisoner will survive the ride to Fort Gibson. When the scouts stop at a creek, the rebel cavalry strikes. Many shots are fired since it seems there are between 75 and 80 rebels. The Union men mount their horses and attempt to head back to Fort Gibson. Noah fumbles as he tries to mount his horse properly. Noah successfully hangs on for dear life as he rides his horse every which way, all the way back to the Union fort.

An old woman selling whortleberries at Fort Gibson says she saw part of the skirmish, and she thinks Lieutenant Foss must nearly have escaped capture. When someone tells her she is mistaken, Lieutenant Foss was not in the fight, she continues on, saying that she saw the clever horseback riding and so did some of the rebels. The rebel leader, she says, thought Foss was teasing them with his horsemanship, trying to trick them into an ambush, but they were too smart to fall into that kind of trap. Everyone laughs. Jeff and Lieutenant Orff recount their failures to General Blunt. Jeff gives Blunt the haversack, which pleases Blunt immensely, for the correspondence in the bag enlightens Blunt to the enemy's strategy.

At the end of the chapter, Jeff decides to take his day off to visit Lucy and her family. He wants to express his condolences and to find out whether Lucy likes him in the least.

Chapter 17, The Ride of Noah Babbitt Analysis

It makes sense initially that Jeff thinks he is in trouble again. After all, Captain Clardy hates Jeff and punishes him each chance he gets. It is ironic, however, that General



Blunt wants to promote Jeff to scout patrol, despite the negative comments Clardy makes about Jeff to Blunt, and despite the incredibly poor history Jeff has in the army as a result of Captain Clardy's bitterness. The General seems to think Jeff is fit because he witnessed Jeff's actions at Prairie Grove, and after all, Jeff received a Medal of Honor. Jeff shows no enthusiasm over becoming a scout because his first thought is of Lee Washbourne's execution. Jeff seems to have lost the boyish, naive enthusiasm over the war that he used to have when he first joined the Kansas Volunteers. He is growing, he is learning, and he is becoming a man.

Jeff is very disappointed when he fails to capture the rebel courier. He never stops to think about the contents of the haversack, which prove to be much more important than any rebel prisoner. Jeff's young mindset reflects one of the glass being half empty, rather than half full. If Jeff cannot follow the orders of his commanding officers perfectly, then he thinks he is a failure. Here, his mind gets another chance to expand and he is able to see "the big picture."

The ride of Noah Babbitt is the big irony in this chapter. Jeff sees, and laughs at, the fact that what was in reality a ride to survive, was interpreted by the enemy as a taunting, teasing technique to trick them into an ambush. The enemy is by no means stupid enough to fall for such a blatant lark, so they back off.

Jeff ponders the near misses he experiences in this last battle. He thinks about the proximity of the pistol shot the rebel courier took at him. He thinks about the rebel ball that severed the sunflower 6 inches from his nose. He thinks he cannot hope to keep dodging rebel bullets forever. He thinks this may be the last chance he gets to see Lucy. The reader sees that Jeff's character swings 180 degrees in his mind's eye regarding the war, death in war, and the possibility of dying himself in the war. In the beginning, he felt invincible and thought naively, although not as naively as some of the boys. Jeff is clearly not the same person now that he was when he first joined the Army.



Chapter 18, Sunday

Chapter 18, Sunday Summary

When Jeff arrives at the Washbourne home, he sees what looks at first glance like a deserted home. He decides to knock on the front door, and to his surprise a Negress answers. He asks for Miss Lucy, and the Negress shakes with fear because a Union soldier stands on her master's front porch inquiring about one of the Washbourne daughters. The Negress, named Perce, tells Jeff Lucy is not home. As Jeff begins to feel frustration, Mrs. Washbourne, Lucy's mother, appears at the front door and welcomes Jeff inside. The Washbournes feel tremendous gratitude toward Jeff for going out of his way to return Lee's body to them, enabling a proper burial for their one and only son. To Jeff's surprise, Lucy also feels a deep debt of gratitude toward him. Jeff and Lucy spend the day together, talking and getting to know each other better. Jeff feels the passion of his first true love with Lucy, and at the end of their visit, Jeff is simply bowled over when Lucy says goodbye with a kiss.

Chapter 18, Sunday Analysis

Jeff goes to the Washbourne home out of his love for Lucy, and despite the fact that Lucy's mother tells Jeff that she knows Lucy will be happy to see him, he remains doubtful. Jeff simultaneously feels hope that Lucy will see through their differences so that she may be able to love him and doubt that this dream will become reality. This basic characteristic of human nature acts as a protective mechanism against a potentially painful situation in life. If Jeff expects the worst but something better happens, then he is happy. If the worst comes to fruition, he is at least prepared in his own mind.

It is ironic that while Jeff's company is on the warpath, the men loot. Of course, they do so in a more genteel manner than some of the other Union companies. Jeff is outraged that the Washbournes fall victim to looting by his own Union side. He goes so far as to say that it is illegal to loot. Jeff realizes that Lucy does not hold him accountable for the actions of the looters who steal their cow and kill their calf for veal. After all, Jeff has already shown the women how he feels about their cow. Lucy tells Jeff there is no reason for him to feel bad about it. After all, a cavalry outfit is the culprit, not the infantry. Jeff feels shame because he is now a part of the cavalry, and he is honest with Lucy regarding his change of service. Jeff is growing into a more sensitive, honest man whose integrity is endearing to Lucy.

Lucy tells Jeff the thing they miss the most on Sundays is never hearing a church bell. The churches are not even shielded against the mass destruction of war. Most of the churches in the area have been destroyed, and the ministers have scattered. It is too dangerous to preach and remind citizens of the hope and faith they have in God. Lucy and Jeff decide to travel over the hill to visit Sehon Chapel, a deserted church a half-



mile east of the Cherokee Female Seminary where her sisters attended school. Late on this particular Sunday afternoon, Jeff and Lucy renew the faith they both have in God by going to church. Lucy shares with Jeff this chapel and tells him how she and her brother Lee would frequent the services there. Lucy and Jeff get closer and closer, and Jeff laments the fact that he has to leave Lucy, go back to the war, and may never see her again. He realizes the fragility of his life in war and acknowledges the abundance of luck he enjoys so far in not being shot. Jeff finds a new reason to live, and it is to love the most beautiful woman he has ever seen.

In a symbolic gesture, Jeff asks Lucy to care for his dog, Dixie, while he is away. This action symbolizes the hope Jeff carries that he will see both Lucy and Dixie again, and until he does, he hopes that Dixie protects Lucy and reminds her of Jeff each and every day. The kiss that Lucy gives Jeff before he leaves tells Jeff everything he needs to know, and he will never forget the feel of her lips against his. He feels the happiest he has ever felt in his life. The Washbourne home that "... was etched blackly against the red sunset." (P. 226) symbolizes the Indian and Negro issues, the red and black representing different issues of the war than what Jeff fights for. The scenery and the day that Jeff and Lucy spend together transcend the whole of the war itself.

The chapter ends with Jeff on scout duty meeting up with a large detachment of rebel cavalry. Their mission is to mix with the enemy and find out whether the rebel General Steele is bringing reinforcements up from Texas to join Cooper.



Chapter 19, The Wrong Side of the River

Chapter 19, The Wrong Side of the River Summary

Jeff and Jim Bostwick, dressed in butternut-colored clothing like the rebels, run into the main body of the enemy command force. Bostwick does all the talking and lies his way through, saying that he and Jeff want to join the Waitie camp. Sam Fields, a rebel officer, escorts Jeff and Bostwick to see rebel Cherokee Major William P. Adair, a lawyer who lives on Grand River and is one of Waitie's most highly trusted officers and personal friends. The Major questions Jeff briefly, finds out his full name is Jefferson Davis Bussey, and tells Sam Fields to swear them in. After all, with a name like that, he must be all right.

At roll call, all men are accounted for and present. There are no deserters. Jeff rolls with his assigned guard patrol to a weather-beaten church with a graveyard, named Hancock Mission. It is a church for whites and Indians only. The church reminds Jeff of Lucy and the deserted chapel they visited. Jeff meets a young Negro slave named Leemon Jones, who drives a small herd of red cows. Jeff learns that slaves cannot serve in the army. The masters consider their slaves as property. Leemon tells Jeff the slaves are too valuable to serve in the war. Jeff informs Leemon about Fort Gibson up north, telling him about the black army fighters there.

The next morning Jeff observes how the rebels prepare for battle against the Union. As the battle begins, Jeff feels relief when Sergeant Fields orders him to the rear to hold the horses. Jeff does not have to shoot at his own friends. Bostwick is not so lucky and dies at the hands of his fellow comrades. The enemy troops of Steele and Cabell do not arrive at the scene of the battle to act as reinforcements, and the rebels flee, beginning their retreat. Jeff saves Sergeant Fields, who suffers a shoulder wound, by boosting him onto a horse and riding double until they both arrive at a safe place along the Texas Road. They meet up with Cabell's advance and travel southward through cold, hard-driving rains. The enemy cook, Heifer Hobbs, directs the weary men to their tents back at their original camp. When Sergeant Fields reports the news of Bostwick's death to Jeff, the Sergeant recounts how Bostwick fell close to him when a shell hit him. The Sergeant figures Bostwick's canteen holds whiskey, and since the Sergeant suffered an injury, he needs a shot of whiskey. The Sergeant drinks from the canteen and realizes he is drinking Yankee coffee. The Sergeant accuses Jeff of being a blue belly. The cook, Heifer Hobbs, rescues Jeff when he reminds the Sergeant how Jeff helped save his life. Heifer fills Jeff in on the reason Sergeant Fields is so suspicious. Lee Washbourne was his best friend. Jeff, feeling weak, flushed and feverish, bunks with Heifer for the night.

The next day, the rebels stay at camp all day, and Jeff scouts for information about Steele's reinforcements. He gets the information Blunt is after and plans his escape. Suddenly, Jeff becomes violently ill, suffering severe stomach cramps, chills, and fever. Jeff makes it to his horse, but knowing he is too ill to make it to Fort Gibson, he remembers Leemon Jones, the slave boy. He asks Leemon to deliver the information to



Blunt. Leemon is thrilled to oblige. Leemon drops Jeff off a small distance from the rebel camp and heads to Fort Gibson.

Chapter 19, The Wrong Side of the River Analysis

Jeff is now on his own, liable for his own actions, and able to think and strategize by himself with no help from Union commanding officers barking orders for him to obey. He sleeps, walks, eats, and fights with the enemy. At immediate risk is his own safety and life, as he works to fulfill his scout intelligence mission. More of a man than he was when he first joined the army, Jeff observes and picks up important clues, showing foresight gained from the lessons he has learned thus far. For instance, Jeff notices that Bostwick drinks coffee from his Union canteen that he likes so much.

This coffee is strictly a northern beverage; there is nothing like it in the south. Jeff fears that once the rebels smell the authentic northern coffee, the rebels will know they are spies. Jeff's thoughts of the coffee foreshadow what is to come later, as Bostwick dies and Sergeant Fields drinks from the canteen, discovering that Jeff and Bostwick are Yankees. Another instance of foresight occurs when Jeff meets the slave, Leemon Jones. Through their conversation, Jeff realizes he has found an ally in Leemon and keeps in mind the fact that he may need to use him down the road. He does use Leemon after he gets too sick to make it back to Fort Gibson with the information his commanding officer Blunt needs. Leemon obliges.

Luck, good fortune, and timing are Jeff's partners as he seeks to fulfill his mission. In front of a harried Major William P. Adair, Jeff talks his way simply through the brief admission process. Jeff's politeness in calling the Major "sir," his boyish, pleasant-faced, clean-cut, slightly scared look, and Jeff's full name all work to his benefit in getting permission to be sworn in as a rebel fighter. The qualities Jeff does not particularly like in himself actually work to his advantage.

The cook, Heifer Hobbs, acts as a father figure to Jeff. Heifer sees his estranged son in Jeff and takes care of him like he would his own flesh and blood. When Sergeant Fields voices his suspicion about Jeff, Heifer comes to Jeff's rescue, reminding the sergeant about how Jeff saved his life after he suffered a shoulder wound. The enemy soldiers view Jeff as a hero on their side. It is ironic when Heifer hands Jeff a Union canteen from which to drink the rebel coffee.

The type of language used to describe the scenery on the wrong side of the river is symbolic. "A lemon flush of daylight lay across the eastern horizon." (P. 231) A lemon represents the sour, bitter taste in the air. There is the sour feeling of suspicion by Sergeant Fields against Jeff and Bostwick. There is the sour feeling of moving among the enemy and not getting caught. There is the sour feeling of having to perhaps fight against one's own side.

When Jeff meets the slave, Leemon, at the Hancock Mission church while he stands on guard patrol, Jeff remembers Lucy with a strong longing. He remembers the deserted

chapel they visited. The introduction of the chapel and now the church highlights a recurring minor theme, possibly symbolizing the marriage of Jeff and Lucy.



Chapter 20, The Jackmans

Chapter 20, The Jackmans Summary

Jeff awakens in a plush bedroom of the wealthy Jackman family, which is made up of rebels living north of the Canadian River, near Briartown. The family cares for Jeff, who suffers malaria, for almost 2 weeks. Mrs. Jackman is Colonel Waitie's Aunt Maggie. Jeff meets Hannah, the slave woman who cares for him and the rest of the Jackman family. He wonders whether they know he is a spy.

A courier brings news from Mr. Jackman that he is moving the family south to live for the rest of the war because Blunt's Union army prowls so close. Hannah tells Jeff he is coming with them, but Jeff has other ideas. He wants to get back to Fort Gibson. Jeff's attempts to leave after all are asleep fail because he is still too weak. The morning the family plans to leave, Hannah tells Jeff that the Pins, Indians of full Cherokee blood and sympathetic to the Union, convince all the Jackman slaves to leave and steal all the cattle. Mrs. Jackman, remaining practical, comes to Jeff, who offers the idea of using the old, retired stock to pull the wagons. They do, and on their way, Mrs. Jackman buys some stronger, younger oxen, which speeds up their trip.

Their trip ends at a deserted log house where they stop to rest in Choctaw country. With their slaves gone and their cattle stolen, they do not need a large place, so Mrs. Jackman sends a letter to her husband notifying him of their change of plans. Their lifestyle drastically changes now that they no longer live in the plush two-story house with slaves to do all the work. Jeff's malaria returns, and he is too weak to help physically, but he gives direction. Jeff lies recuperating from his second bout of malaria in August 1863. He watches as battle preparations get under way, and the traffic increases along the Texas Road.

Mr. Jackman visits his family while on furlough. When he meets Jeff, he divulges all manner of details regarding the Confederates' battles. Mr. Jackman tells Jeff how they are getting their hands on the new repeating rifles. Colonel Waitie thinks he finds a way to smuggle in hundreds more from the North. Jeff now knows his job is to find out where the shipment of guns is coming from and to stop it, if he can.

Chapter 20, The Jackmans Analysis

Because Jeff is the subject of so much kindness by the Jackmans, Jeff's emotions become mixed. He gets closer to the enemy family that cares for him, and he cannot help but feel gratitude. The closer he gets to the Jackmans, the further he wants to pull himself away. This inner struggle continues for many months as he suffers two bouts of malaria, which leave him physically weak and helpless. He fights to keep his mind secretly strong, trying to always remember which side of the battle he is on. The entire time he is pretending to be a rebel, each day remains a test of his strength of character.



While Jeff stays in the nicest, most plush house of his lifetime, he finds it hard to understand that a man like Waitie can be both a raider and a man who finds him such a "princely refuge" (P. 255). Jeff hears a grand piano playing, knows the family lives in a two-story house, feels the Jackmans are intelligent, respectable, Christian people with a good reputation, but he does not understand how they can be so proud that the men and boys in their family serve under a leader as barbarous as Waitie. Later in the chapter, Jeff is surprised to learn that Stand Waitie is elected as principal chief of the southern segment of the Cherokees, and it is his responsibility to feed the refugee families in Choctaw. Corn, wheat, molasses and sugar are available at the rebel supply center at Boggy Depot, where the Jackman women go quite often. In essence, Jeff sees how the enemy fathers, sons, and brothers take care of their families while they are away at war.

Jeff secretly feels elated at the news of the Union win against General Steele at Perryville, but he does not want the Jackmans hurt by it. Unfortunately, Sophie Chavis, one of the Jackman daughters, learns that her husband died there. Jeff's emotions remain queerly divided throughout the time he is with the Jackmans.

Jeff regains his strength, and his condition improves as he stays all winter with the Jackmans. When springtime comes, Jeff feels a sense of renewed hope. The last line of this chapter reads, "It would soon be time to plow." (P. 269) This sentence provides a double meaning. Springtime on his family's farm in Kansas is the season when plowing begins. In Jeff's immediate situation, with the scout knowledge he acquires, Jeff knows the time to plow means a time to get back to work, back to his work in the Union.



Chapter 21, Boggy Depot

Chapter 21, Boggy Depot Summary

Jeff feels sad the day he leaves the Jackmans. The family gathers in the front yard to kiss him goodbye. They seem sad to see him go as well. Heifer brings a horse named Flea Bite to give Jeff. Jeff feels the thrill of ownership. When it comes time for Jeff to mount the horse, his dizziness disallows it, so he rides in the back of the commissary wagon, leading the mare and simply watching her.

The whole brigade, including Sergeant Fields, is glad to have Jeff back. Jeff almost wishes that they would mistreat him. The brigade moves into Boggy Depot, the rebel's war capital. Jeff sees his first rebel flag in town. A cannon booms behind Jeff and Hooley Pogue, and the Choctaws and Chickasaws sing the Choctaw war song, something they do at every sunset gunshot. Jeff witnesses the unique entertainment the rebels enjoy.

Sergeant Fields orders Jeff to escort Major Boudinot to see Colonel Waitie at headquarters. Jeff is elated to possibly meet the infamous Colonel. Jeff is surprised to find the old man sleeping on a quilt outside the headquarters tent is indeed Colonel Waitie, without a bodyguard. During the meeting Jeff stands outside the tent eavesdropping. He learns that Boudinot has brought gold and money for Waitie to buy the 200 repeating rifles from a Federal Union officer at Fort Gibson. This officer peddles the contraband to them, and Jeff knows he needs to find out the name of the offending officer.

Each day, Jeff sees the fierce loyalty of Cherokee rebels to their cause. The rebels find out that a Union steamer, carrying a \$120,000 cargo from Fort Smith to Fort Gibson for the Union soldiers and refugees there, is on its way. The Waitie outfit goes to Pheasant Bluff where they hide in the cane along the river's south shore, awaiting the boat. Jeff sees the steamer with the Union flag at full mast and Union soldiers holding muskets behind barricades of cotton bales on the deck.

Chapter 21, Boggy Depot Analysis

Jeff's lessons and tests continue during this chapter as he reunites with the rebels. Jeff feels ashamed as he watches Heifer cook. Everyone in rebel country treats him well-- Heifer, the Jackmans, and the rebel riders. His treatment is almost the opposite of what awaits him back in the Union outfit, especially with Captain Clardy. Jeff begins to feel conflicted about being pitted against the rebel men in the war.

When Jeff sees his first rebel flag in town, he realizes this is a symbol of a long war. The rebels have their own President, their own Congress, and their own army. The war has raged for up to 3 years now and because the rebels believe fiercely in what they fight for, they will probably continue fighting until the bitter end. As Jeff eavesdrops on Major



Boudinot and Colonel Waitie, he learns that a Union traitor is going to peddle the powerful repeating rifles to the rebels. Jeff thinks that if the rebels get the rifles, they may win back the entire Indian country in 3 short months.

Jeff's first impression of Stand Waitie, before he meets the man, is one of strength, brutality, endurance, and fierce loyalty. The name "Stand Waitie" carries significance as a strong, persistent, and tenacious name. The name is pronounced *Stand Weighty* and is a reminder that the rebels, as well as this man who guides them, believe strongly in their issues for waging war. The actual impression Jeff gets when he meets Waitie disappoints him. Waitie's small stature and friendly countenance prove to be another lesson to Jeff regarding superficiality. The look of a man does not make the man.

Jeff delays his return to Fort Gibson, partially because he aims to discover the name of the Union traitor, and partially because he begins to like the Waitie outfit. The Waitie men do not fight for slavery. They fight for political reasons, trying to keep the rival Ross party from taking over. Jeff likes the informal way they wage war. They fight well and eat well. Jeff rides, eats, and sleeps with the enemy, sharing all the danger that binds fighting men together.



Chapter 22, Pheasant Bluff

Chapter 22, Pheasant Bluff Summary

Lying in wait, the rebels know that when the cannons fire, every horse is to climb the bluff or jump into the river as the men attempt to board the armed steamer. After four guns blast the boat, the bugle signals the charge. Hundreds of rebel cavalry ride their horses through the Arkansas River toward the boat. The pilot runs the boat aground on a sand bar, and all the Union soldiers scatter into the woods on the north bank of the stream. The Waitie men plunder the cargo, mostly the union-issue clothing and boots. They take the Federal greenback money, which Yancy Pearl says will not be worth anything once the rebels win the war. All the soldiers rip up or burn the greenbacks. When Fields watches Jeff, Jeff also throws his bank notes overboard. A few rebels suffer wounds. One is Hooley, and Jeff feels distressed. Hooley catches a Minie ball low in the stomach. The surgeon stops most of the bleeding but has to perform surgery to remove the bullet. Most of the booty is given to the refugee families. The greatest raid of Union cargo comes when a wagon train travels from Fort Scott, Kansas, carrying \$1,500,000 in cargo. This is considered the worst disaster of the war to Union arms in the Indian country, and rebel morale soars high. Most of this cargo goes to the refugee families as well.

A special duty leads Jeff and 20 rebel cavalry to a heavy green Conestoga wagon where Jeff learns the identity of the Union officer selling contraband repeating rifles. It is Captain Clardy. The rebels purchase 200 repeating rifles for \$12,000 in gold coins. The rebel Colonel Thompson inquires about the remaining 800 rifles to be purchased by Waitie. Clardy says he deals only with Waitie himself; therefore, Clardy rides his horse back to the rebel camp with the others to wait for Colonel Waitie. Jeff decides to go back to Fort Gibson to turn Clardy in.

Jeff takes one last stroll into town and stops in front of a hotel where loud music plays, and a crowd dances. As Jeff stands on the front porch, a blond lieutenant and a girl wish to enter the hotel. The girl sees Jeff and realizes she knows him. She yells, "Jeff!" Jeff knows it is Lucy Washbourne.

Chapter 22, Pheasant Bluff Analysis

Jeff fights, not as a safe horse-holder, but as an actual cavalryman, in his first battle alongside the enemy. Jeff looks to his right and sees Heifer Hobbs, in battle beside Jeff, acting as a doting father. Jeff realizes that this man would die for him, and Jeff feels tormented with guilt about having to leave the rebels and hurt Heifer.

Jeff fears the battle, knowing full well the Union soldiers can easily shoot them or thrust them with their sharp bayonets. Jeff thinks about death realistically now. He also ponders what an odd way it is to die at the hands of your own countrymen, like Bostwick



does at the battle of Honey Spring. Two Union soldiers are dead as mackerel aboard the boat when the rebels plunder the cargo. The use of language describing the dead soldiers reflects the location of their deaths on the river. The reader thinks about fish, the mackerel, dying if they are out of water and floating on the surface of water once dead.

When the rebels begin to rip up and throw overboard wads of Union money, Jeff is torn between holding on to the bills that Yancy Pearl hands him or following in the footsteps of his supposed fellow comrades. Jeff thinks they have a lot of nerve throwing away good Union money when their cheap bills do not buy much. Jeff knows that \$300-400 in greenbacks is enough to buy a farm or pay for college. The temptation Jeff feels to keep the money is overridden by the life-or-death situation he is in as a scout for the Union. He throws the money overboard.

Hooley Pogue catches a Minie ball to his lower abdomen, and Jeff is distraught because he does not think of Hooley as the enemy. He thinks of Hooley as a friend. Jeff cannot watch as the surgeon sterilizes the scalpel with whiskey and cuts out the bullet from Hooley's stomach. Jeff assists by ripping off most of his shirttail, so the surgeon can bandage the wound.

Once Clardy's identity as the peddler of contraband is clear to Jeff, Jeff is able to make a decision that, on the surface, appears climactic. Jeff feels alternately elated and depressed about his decision to leave the enemy's side. Once he makes the decision, however, he relaxes. Jeff plans to leave for Fort Gibson to turn Clardy in and catch him red-handed. Jeff feels glad to have his internal struggle end.

At the end of this chapter, once Jeff's decision appears final, he comes face to face with the love of his life, Lucy Washbourne.



Chapter 23, The Redbud Tree

Chapter 23, The Redbud Tree Summary

Lucy excuses herself from Lieutenant Chavis, and she and Jeff go around to the side of the building. Behind a redbud tree they embrace and kiss passionately. With Lucy, Jeff forgets about the war, Clardy, the repeating rifles, and returning to the Union lines. Lucy thinks Jeff now fights on the side of the rebels because his uniform reflects the possibility. Jeff's heart sinks as he explains everything to her. She attempts to get him to stay on their side. He has to make his decision all over again. Through much emotional turmoil, Jeff still decides to go back to Fort Gibson. Jeff tells Lucy he wants to marry her and spend forever together, but he now sees that it is impossible. Lucy's fierce pride and violent patriotism cause her to act like she can easily let Jeff go. As he walks away, she yells after him, kisses him and says she will wait for him.

Back at camp, Jeff prepares to leave and passes by the headquarters tent, when he bumps into Clardy and the Captain recognizes him. Jeff runs toward the horse lot, only to hear Clardy shouting for the sentries. They cut him off from the horses. Jeff will have to walk the 125 miles back to Fort Gibson with the rebels chasing him every step of the way.

Chapter 23, The Redbud Tree Analysis

"There the heart-shaped leaves of a small redbud tree screen them from sight." (P.296)
The use of language in this sentence extolls the love Jeff and Lucy share for each other. From the heart shape of the leaves to the redbuds, the symbolism shows the emotion of love. Love is considered an emotion of the heart. Love is represented by the color red. The smallness of the tree may indicate the growth of new love.

While Lucy attempts to change Jeff's mind about returning to the Union, Jeff experiences an extremely agonizing *dyja vu*. The decision is there to make once again with a twist. Here lies another appearance of climax in the story. Lucy forces Jeff to decide between the girl he loves and his country. He stays true to his country, the state of Kansas, and his belief that the only way the war can be settled is for the North to subdue the South. Lucy finally lets go of her staunch "rebel-to-the-backbone" attitude, and allows her love for Jeff to soften her rigidity.

Jeff returns to the rebel camp to prepare for his flight. At any moment while he is back at camp, he may change his mind about staying. As Jeff lets lovely thoughts of Lucy carry him through the camp, he absent-mindedly bumps into Clardy outside the headquarters tent. Captain Clardy recognizes Jeff and blows the whistle on him, causing the climactic uproar in the rebel camp and the climactic flight of Jeff.



Chapter 24, Flight

Chapter 24, Flight Summary

Jeff tries to calculate where the rebels will search for him. Since he figures the last direction they would expect him to go is south, this is the way he heads, toward Texas. Jeff intermittently hears the sounds of Mother Nature and the galloping rebel horse hooves, along with enemy shouts. Jeff learns his pursuers are using a bloodhound to track him down. Jeff runs, walks, and crawls for days until one day he hears his enemy chasing him with Sully, the bloodhound. Jeff thinks he is doomed when he falls into a small hole in the ground, and Sully finds him. As luck would have it, the men are so far behind Sully, they never catch up with him. Jeff befriends Sully and travels the remaining distance to Fort Gibson with him. Jeff reunites with Lieutenant Orff, and once he sees Noah again, he realizes he has never felt so glad in all his life.

Chapter 24, Flight Analysis

Jeff, once the battling soldier in a company of men, has now become the individual prey. Jeff's basic human and animal survival instincts kick into gear and he confronts the conflicts of man versus man, man versus self, and man versus nature during the climax of the novel.

As the enemy cavalry's hunted prey, Jeff plans his strategy immediately. In the conflict of man versus man, Jeff forces himself to think like the enemy and act in direct opposition to what his pursuers think his first move encompasses. Jeff needs to throw his pursuers off his trail, so he heads south, the last place they would expect him to travel. Jeff knows the odds stack heavily against him because he has no horse.

During Jeff's battle with himself, the hunger pains and fatigue that he endures prove to be his major obstacles. He passes a shanty where a woman bakes cornbread and roasts beef in the fireplace. It takes all the willpower he can muster to not barge into the house and snatch the food away from them. Further into his trip, he encounters a ghost town, enters one of the buildings, and collapses to sleep on the plank floor. In the morning, the sound of a squealing wild hog awakens Jeff. He finds that a pack of wolves have slain the creature, so Jeff runs the wolves off with a stick. For 3 days, Jeff stays here, cooks, and eats the meat until he regains his strength.

In the conflict of man versus nature, Jeff crosses many hurdles. A major hurdle is the thunderstorm he must travel through for all of one long night. The rain, combined with his growing fatigue and hunger, slows him down. The rain symbolizes the depressing circumstances of his situation. Soon Jeff hears horses' hooves striking the ground. At first Jeff is optimistic in thinking that he has found a stray horse to ride. A second look reveals the enemy cavalry coming after him with two black Newfoundland dogs. Jeff cannot believe they track him so quickly; however, he guesses his muddy footprints



during the rain storm lead them directly to him. Jeff lies flat on the ground and prays. It is at this moment that Jeff overhears the men speak of the bloodhound, Sully, who is the best at tracking anything.

Conversely, nature guides Jeff to his ultimate safe destination. Jeff uses the darkness of night to travel safely. Jeff listens to the sounds of the whippoorwills and the owls, which mark time for him. Jeff uses the large Clear Boggy creek to wash off his scent, as he guesses dogs are a part of the tracking team. Ironically, the rain benefits Jeff, as well as hinders him, because the rain washes his scent clean. Jeff uses the moon and the North Star to guide him. Jeff eats wild grapes and wild hog. As Jeff is hunted like a wild animal, the reader finds major irony in the fact that Jeff fears Sully, the bloodhound. Jeff loves animals and has an innate ability to befriend them. Here, Jeff thinks that when Sergeant Fields arrives with the bloodhound, he is doomed. True to Jeff's character, he befriends Sully as Jeff lies hiding in a small hole. The enemy is so far behind Sully that, in a twist of fate beneficial to Jeff, he and Sully travel off into the distance and completely lose the predators. Ironically, Jeff is able to lure Sully away from the enemy. The enemy loses what they think is their ace in the hole in tracking Jeff's whereabouts.

When Jeff reaches the mountains that he must climb, he doubts he has the strength to conquer them. Just then, Jeff remembers Sergeant Pete Millholland's words, "You can always go farther than you think you can." (P. 309) Jeff thinks it is funny how a man's words, even after his death, can go right on helping people. Jeff does go much farther than he thinks he can because he and Sully make it back to Fort Gibson. Jeff is only 14 months overdue on a scout mission, but he returns.



Chapter 25, Linn County, Kansas, 1865

Chapter 25, Linn County, Kansas, 1865 Summary

In June 1865 the war is over and Jeff finds it a difficult adjustment to return to civilian status. He experiences so much over the 4-year period that it seems as if 15 years has passed instead. Jeff, John Chadwick, David Gardner, and Bill Earle travel the road home, first stopping at Bill's Aunt Phoebe's house for dinner and a sleepover. Jeff goes home a sergeant. General Blunt personally sees to the promotion after Leemon Jones arrives at Fort Gibson with the intelligence.

The homeward bound men witness the aftermath of the destruction of the war and raids on houses, farms, and fields as they ride their horses north. The process to rebuild all that was lost will take a long time.

Jeff finds it difficult to leave Bill Earle, a comrade that he ate with, bunked with, and fought so long with. Jeff remembers his goodbye with Noah Babbitt and how grateful he was to have become so close to him. They all promise to keep in touch.

After crossing the Kansas line, Jeff, David, and John become excited. The men arrive at David's mother's house first. The cornrows are straight, there is a healthy cow and calf, and Mrs. Gardner introduces David to his new father. David's sisters have grown taller than their mother. Next, Jeff and John arrive at John's parents' house. John jokingly asks Jeff whether he thinks his father will still try to whip him for joining the army. John grabs a stack of firewood and heads toward the front door, where his parents stand. John says that he finally gets back with the firewood.

Jeff reaches his parents' home and notices an addition to the house. He also sees his dog Ring, who remembers his master. Jeff sees a sister he thinks is Bess, but finds out she is instead Mary. Bess is now married and lives with her husband elsewhere. Jeff's mother cries as she sees her son, who no longer looks like the son who left 4 years ago. Jeff's father stands with a silent look of pride on his face. Jeff recounts his experiences in the army and after dinner, he reads Lucy's letter. He can't believe that she asks whether he thinks about her at all. She is all he can think about. He thinks he wants to leave right away to go and see her, but he knows it is still too dangerous until the treaty is signed. Jeff attempts to fall asleep in the new room at his parents' home but when he cannot get comfortable, he quietly climbs out the window and sleeps outside with his dog, Ring.

Chapter 25, Linn County, Kansas, 1865 Analysis

While in the army, Jeff serves the Union as an infantryman, cavalryman, scout, and impromptu artilleryman at the Battle of Prairie Grove. Jeff knows that few men have experienced the war as fully as he has, and he feels proud. He remembers the rebel family, the Jackmans, and hopes that their plush home is still standing. He realizes he is



more tolerant and has sympathy for the rebels, despite the fact that they are the enemy. Although the South started the war, Jeff does not want the families harshly punished. Jeff, as more of a man now than when he left Kansas in 1861, has learned many lessons. These include lessons in self-control, compassion toward his fellow man, an elimination of invincible feelings, fear, love for the opposite sex, and patience. At the end of the novel, Jeff is facing his next lesson: how to return to civilian status after acting as a soldier for 4 years.

The last chapter answers the questions that give the reader a satisfied feeling of closure, yet leaves other questions open. For instance, the Union and rebel singing that occurs across the river is a signal to Captain Clardy that the rebels have the money needed to purchase the repeating rifles from him. This is unclear until now. The reader also learns that Captain Clardy is stabbed to death; however, the murderer remains a mystery. Lucy's letter fills Jeff in on his rebel friend, Hooley Pogue, and how he is faring while healing from the Minie ball wound to the abdomen. The biggest question left unanswered is whether Jeff and Lucy will reunite. Will Jeff attend the new university like he plans to? Will Jeff keep in contact with his fellow soldiers and friends? The reader does not know, but still wonders.



Characters

Jefferson Davis Bussey

Jefferson Davis Bussey is the main character in this historically vivid coming-of-age novel. Jeff begins his journey against the backdrop of the Civil War, when he starts out in 1861 as an invincible, anxious, courageous, and loyal 16-year-old boy, who evolves into a more self-controlled, wise, and patient man. Jeff witnesses and learns so much during his 4 years in the army that once the war is over, he feels as if, instead, 15 years has passed.

Jeff, already possessing the inherently good qualities of character, such as consideration of his fellow man, a respect and love of animals, loyalty, individuality of thought, and proven leadership skills, hones these skills throughout the war. On the other hand, Jeff's teenage feelings of invincibility, anxiety, and vengeance are tamed as he witnesses the destructive nature of war upon loved ones and the great country for which he fights.

Jeff proves to himself and his parents his courage to fight back against the Bushwhackers when two of them raid his family farm. As a naive 16-year-old boy, his feelings of invincibility heighten during this skirmish, and his self-proclaimed hardheadedness prompts him to join the Union army and recruit two neighbor boys, John Chadwick and David Gardner, along the road to enlist at Fort Leavenworth. Jeff is anxious to fight in his first battle because he fears the war will be over before he gets his chance at what he thinks will be the most glorious adventure of his lifetime. At Fort Leavenworth, Jeff feels annoyed as the doctor and enlistment officer speak about the possibility of death. Jeff feels no fear.

When Jeff meets Captain Asa Clardy, he suffers discrimination because of his full name, for Jefferson Davis is another man elected to a position Clardy coveted while serving with the Mississippi Volunteers. This discrimination parallels the major issue behind the Civil War, the racial division between black and whites. Jeff avenges Clardy with the bean soup-dishwater switch and feels much better. Jeff's individuality of thought causes trouble for him with the commanding officers throughout the novel, until he learns the art of self-control.

While on furlough, Jeff sees his home, not through the eyes of a boy playing with the various toys on his old stomping ground, but rather through the eyes of a young adult who has learned some positive and negative ways of human nature. When David Gardner deserts the army, Jeff cannot understand his friend's decision. Jeff's mind still functions as if all boys his age think the same way regarding the great adventure of war.

The battalion's march to Springfield, Missouri, pounds some realism into Jeff as his body suffers thirst, hunger, and fatigue because the walk proves to be hard, sweaty work. Here Jeff learns self-control over how much water to consume without making



himself sick under the dire circumstances. Jeff also hears advice from Sergeant Pete Millholland regarding fatigue being a mental condition. Jeff remembers this lesson of mind over body and the words, "You can always go farther than you think you can," during the climactic events at the end of the novel when Jeff flees the rebel camp.

The major test of Jeff's character comes when General Blunt sends him over to the rebel side to acquire information as a Union scout. Jeff's compassion for the enemy grows as he spends more time with the Confederate soldiers under Stand Waitie's command. However, once Jeff learns about an officer on the Union side peddling the repeating rifles to the rebels, he realizes he must stay to find out the name of the officer and return to Fort Gibson to complete the job he is hired to do. Jeff stays true to his Union side and the country he fights for, even as his love for Lucy Washbourne tempts him to desert the Union and stay with the rebels. Jeff finds out that Captain Clardy is the Union traitor and prepares to go back to Fort Gibson to expose the man and catch him in the act. Unfortunately, Jeff lets his guard down as he thinks of Lucy and he bumps into Clardy, who recognizes Jeff and alerts the sentries. Jeff finds himself fighting for his life as he flees the rebel camp and runs, walks, and crawls the 100-plus miles back to Fort Gibson. The culmination of everything Jeff has learned in his life is necessary to help him survive this ordeal. Jeff survives, making it back to Fort Gibson, and before he knows it, the war is over.

Jeff rides back to his home in Kansas and, along the way, views the destruction left behind. He feels glad the war is over, but he knows years will pass before people can rebuild what was lost. Jeff looks forward to attending the new university, and he looks forward to one day being reunited with Lucy after he reads her letter sent to him at his parents' home.

Jeff learns many lessons throughout the novel. These include lessons in self-control, compassion toward his fellow man, an elimination of invincible feelings, fear, love for the opposite sex, and patience. At the end of the novel, Jeff is faced with his next lesson, how to return to civilian status after acting as a soldier for 4 years.

Captain Asa Clardy

Captain Asa Clardy is a main character and acts as the antagonist to Jeff's protagonist. Clardy is a vindictive man who holds grudges and uses his senior position to dole out the worst punishments for Jeff. Clardy remembers how his comrades from the Mississippi Volunteers pass him over and elect Jefferson Davis to the highly coveted position of Colonel. Clardy's jealousy engulfs him. The only time Clardy appears genteel toward Jeff is when Jeff divulges the secret about the widow's murder and theft of \$800. The cook, Sparrow, sees Clardy leave the scene and tells Jeff about it one night when he is in a drunken state. After Jeff blurts the information to Clardy, Sparrow is mysteriously found stabbed to death in the back with a knife. Clardy attempts to instill fear in everyone that he meets.



Captain Clardy turns out to be a traitor to the entire Union side since he is the officer corrupt enough to sell the repeating rifles to the enemy. In the end, Clardy is found stabbed to death. Lucy's letter to Jeff reveals that Stand Waitie's group found out Clardy was the officer who ordered Lee Washbourne's execution. It is not clear to anyone who stabs Clardy, for he was only successful in doling out abuse and making enemies. He had a lot of enemies.

Noah Babbitt

Noah Babbitt acts like a wise big brother to Jeff, and Jeff looks to Noah for answers to questions. Noah is a bit of an odd character in that he enjoys long walks. The longest walk he takes is a 900-mile trip from Topeka, Kansas, to Galveston, Texas, to see the magnolias in bloom. The time period to complete such a walk is about 3 months total, up and back. At the beginning of the book, Noah says he likes walking better than riding horses. Riding a horse makes his feet hurt and his head dizzy. By the end of the book, Noah has become a proficient horseman.

Noah remains a mentor and friend to Jeff throughout the novel. Noah is a former printer who has worked at various newspapers, and he is well-versed in current events. Noah is easy to get along with, and Jeff likes him instantly.

Lucy Washbourne

Lucy Washbourne is a 16-year-old mixed-blood Indian girl whose father, Levi Washbourne, is a captain in General Stand Waitie's cavalry. She is the rebel girl for whom Jeff falls head over heels. He loves her at first sight. She is a self-professed rebel-to-the-backbone. Lucy is fiercely proud of her father and brother, who both fight with General Waitie. Lucy's fierce pride holds her back, initially, from allowing herself to feel anything but scorn for Jeff and the Union side. Lucy and her family favor slavery; however, this is not the major issue that involves them in their rebel status. The Indians fight to keep the Cherokee Nation as it is, not allowing the Ross party to take over.

Lucy lets down her guard when Jeff is able to get their female cow to feed her calf, when Jeff sends Noah with news of her brother's execution, and when she talks to him at his first visit after Lee's body is returned to their family. Lucy spends the day with Jeff and ends the day with a kiss and acceptance of ownership of Dixie, Jeff's dog. When Lucy meets Jeff again in town toward the end of the novel, she thinks he has switched sides because he wears rebel colors. He explains the situation to her, and she tries to get him to change sides. Jeff cannot bring himself to do that, for he will stay true to his beliefs. Lucy's staunch backbone begins to bend, and she runs to him and kisses him, telling him she will wait for him.

Lucy writes Jeff a letter and sends it to his parents' home in Kansas. The letter answers what questions it can and notifies Jeff that she is waiting for him. Lucy warns Jeff not to make her wait too long, for she has already declined several offers of marriage.



Sergeant Pete Millholland

Sergeant Pete Millholland is the white-haired, blue-eyed farmer from Kaw River, Kansas, whom the Kansas Volunteers elect as their sergeant. Millholland is a big lout of a man who walks bowlegged with an awkward roll, as if he follows a plow on his dirt farm. Millholland attempts to better himself in military life by studying the army manual by campfire light each night. Millholland is a hard worker and teaches his men the principle of mind over matter. During their first march, he tells the men that fatigue is mostly mental. He says, "You can always go farther than you think you can." This is a quote that returns to Jeff's mind as he hikes the 125 miles to Fort Gibson by himself, tracked by enemy rebel cavalry.

Sergeant Millholland dies at the hands of the rebel army after he gives permission for his men to forage in the Cherokee Country from people who have plenty to eat. All the men grieve the loss of their good sergeant.

General Stand Waitie

Stand Waitie, leader of the rebel Cherokee Nation, is an icon, an idol of uncritical devotion by his nation's followers. The Cherokee rebels fiercely pride themselves on following their hero. To the Union side, Waitie is a vicious predator, the epitome of evil to the poor families and Union sympathizers whose property is so nastily raided causing further death and destruction during the war. Stand Waitie's physical attributes contradict the look of an Indian leader who so violently leads raids against his enemy. The man's name, Stand Waitie, pronounced "Stand Weighty," symbolizes the persistent and tenacious opinions of this man and his followers. The Indian rebels staunchly support their causes and issues and will stop at nothing to win.

With the illegal purchase of the repeating rifles from the Union officer, Captain Clardy, Waitie stands strong in his beliefs and fights to win and take care of his people by keeping the Cherokee nation intact and unchanged by the rival Ross political party. Stand Waitie fights and raids for different reasons than pro-slavery versus anti-slavery. The raids of food, clothing, and money are the Cherokee Indians' way of providing for and caring for their refugee families that have been displaced by the Union soldiers.

Sergeant Sam Fields

Sergeant Sam Fields is the immediate Indian rebel cavalry leader with a heightened suspicion of all men after his good friend, Lee Washbourne, is executed. Fields eventually trusts Jeff, a Union scout, on a very superficial level. During their first battle together, Fields is wounded in the shoulder and Jeff saves him by helping to get him back to camp safely. Fields remains suspicious of Jeff because the man named Bostwick who enlisted on the rebel side with Jeff drinks northern coffee from a Union canteen. The rebel cook, Heifer Hobbs, allays Fields' doubts about Jeff's loyalties.



Heifer Hobbs

Heifer Hobbs is an extremely homely man whose name "Heifer" suits him because of the shape and look of his large head. Hobbs plays an important role with Jeff. Heifer acts as a doting father to the young Jeff Bussey, looking after him and caring for him when Jeff becomes ill, and standing up for him when suspicions arise regarding Jeff's loyalties. Jeff realizes Heifer would die for him as they raid the Union steamer at Pheasant Bluff. Heifer's kindness and love toward Jeff make it difficult for Jeff to return to Fort Gibson and leave this man who cares so much for him. Jeff feels mean for having his job to do.

General Blunt

General Blunt is a commanding officer on the Union side in charge of Jeff's regiment. Although Captain Clardy denigrates Jeff to General Blunt on several occasions, General Blunt believes in Jeff's abilities, for he saw Jeff in action at Prairie Grove when Jeff and Noah assist the artillery in completing and winning the battle. General Blunt hands the Medals of Honor to these two soldiers. General Blunt promotes Jeff to scout duty because he believes he is the soldier capable of obtaining the necessary information regarding the time of arrival of the enemy reinforcements from the south.

David Gardner

David Gardner is the 16-year-old neighbor friend of Jeff's who he recruits to enlist in the army. David later deserts the army, feeling homesick and like he is not army material. David's mother forces David to return to the army, and after David serves his two years of punishment for desertion, he feels grateful to both his mother and Jeff for getting him into the army. David undergoes such great physical and mental changes in the army; he is unrecognizable to Jeff when they later meet. David becomes a strong, tall, intelligent man.

Jimmy Lear

Jimmy Lear is a 14-year-old Missouri boy whom Jeff befriends when his company completes the march to Springfield, Missouri. Jimmy Lear's character is important for many reasons. First, Jimmy is a Missourian on the Union side who reverses Jeff's preconceived notions about all Missourians being Confederates. Second, Jimmy is a 14-year-old boy who wants to fight in the war, even though Jeff thinks he is too young. Jeff acts a mentor to Jimmy, showing him tricks to stave off the heat during their hard, long march. Third, Jimmy becomes a hero in the Battle of Wilson's Creek when Sergeant Jake Lonagan throws down his gun and flees. Jimmy drops his drum, picks up the rifle and begins fighting. Jeff feels envious of Jimmy and wonders what his comrades think of him, a man unable to fight in battle yet. Fourth, as Jimmy lay dying in a church turned hospital of wounds too grave to heal, Jeff feels sad to see such a young



boy so scared and dying. Jeff introduces Jimmy Lear to Jesus Christ, telling Jimmy that when he meets Jesus, he will live forever. In a symbolic gesture, Jimmy, as he comes to grips with his impending death, verbally bequeaths his beloved drum to Jeff. The drum symbolizes the life and death of little Jimmy Lear. Jeff will have the drum forever to keep Jimmy's memory alive.

Sergeant Jake Lonigan

Sergeant Jake Lonigan is a soldier on the Union side who is 230 pounds of bulging muscle, has a perfect mastery of the manual of arms, and can throw down any man in the company. Jeff envies Sergeant Lonigan until two things happen. First, Lonigan taunts one of Millholland's soldiers for praying. Millholland tells Lonigan to leave his men alone and go back to his own company. Lonigan looks worse in Jeff's eyes. Millholland looks better. Second, when Lonigan throws down his rifle in the middle of battle and runs like a coward, Jeff's opinion of the bulky sergeant reverses. Jeff no longer envies Sergeant Jake Lonigan.

Ford Ivey

Ford Ivey is one of Jeff's comrades in his company who is brutally wounded at the Battle of Wilson's Creek. Left for dead, Ivey is later brought back to the hospital tents with a serious leg injury. The only way for Ivey to survive is to have his leg amputated. Jeff is assigned to ambulance duty and must care for the injured men before they go in for amputation. Jeff's heart breaks, and he feels helpless when Ford Ivey clings to him, pleading for Jeff to stop his amputation. The doctors order Jeff out of the tent, and there is nothing else he can do.



Objects/Places

Linn County, Kansas

The Bussey family farm is located here. Jeff Bussey leaves Kansas in 1861 as a 16-year-old boy off to war and returns as a 20-year-old man.

Mule-driven Plow

Jeff plows the field in Kansas, turning over the black soil, foreshadowing the men killed in war and buried in graves. The plowing is also a symbol of rebirth and freedom for black slaves.

Kansas-Missouri Border

The conflict between Missouri proslavery Bushwhackers and the Free State Union men of Kansas prompts Jeff to enlist in the Union army.

Fort Leavenworth, Kansas

This is the place Jeff, John, and David enlist as Kansas Volunteers in the Union army. Their training takes place here.

Bayonets

These are the main weapons used by the infantry in fighting the war from 1861 to 1865.

Bean Soup-Dishwater

This is the switch job Jeff pulls to avenge Clardy for the slur on his name.

Watermelon Patch

This is where a few of the boys in Jeff's company conspire to roll the melons out past the guard standing sentry. Jeff realizes the lower-ranked boys are just as capable of strategy as the officers. The watermelons are a symbol of the boys' hunger for variety.



Springfield, Missouri

This is the destination of the regiment's first march to meet up with General Lyon and his reinforcements.

Dried Grass and Water

Jeff shows Jimmy Lear this trick of putting dried grass in his hat and pouring water over it to alleviate the heat.

Lice

Jimmy Lear shows Jeff how to make the lice kill each other, which stands as a parallel to the battling sides of war.

Deck of Cards

One soldier tosses his cards onto a sumac bush while another soldier behind him picks them up. The cards are a symbol of the war as a game of luck, opportunity, and strategy.

Jimmy Lear's Drum

The 14-year-old Missouri boy is allowed to stay in the army as a drummer only because he is too young to enlist legally. The drum is a symbol of Jimmy Lear's life and death in war.

Lonegan's Musket

This is the tool Jimmy Lear uses to become a hero, because Lonegan's cowardice forces him to drop the gun and flee during the Battle of Wilson's Creek.

Dixie

Dixie is the Confederate dog Jeff befriends, claims as his own, and gives to Lucy until Jeff can return.

Light Bread and Apple Butter

The rebel farm wife McComas gives Jeff some when he asks politely for it. Later Clardy assigns his men to confiscate the livestock of rebel parolees' families. The McComas



family is one of these families. Jeff's anger prompts him to bribe the night watchman into helping him return the McComas cow, in exchange for the light bread and apple butter.

Coffee

Coffee is a symbol of the North and it causes trouble for the Union scouts on the wrong side of the river.

Washbourne Cow

This is the tool for Jeff to use in gaining Lucy's respect and love.

Prairie Grove

Here is the location of Jeff's first fighting battle. They win, and Jeff and Noah are awarded Medals of Honor.

Cane Hill

Jeff sees his young friend Jimmy Lear here for the last time. Jimmy dies here in a Methodist church turned makeshift hospital.

Negro Man's Ham

Noah Babbitt, in a gentlemanly fashion, gets the man to give him the ham.

Applejack

Jeff drinks this thinking it is the same apple cider that his father makes back home. He gets drunk for the first time.

The Watch

After Lee Washbourne's execution, Jeff is able to identify the dead man by the name on his watch. Lee is Lucy's beloved brother.

The Jackman's House

The rebel Jackman family nurses Jeff back to health after his two bouts with near-deadly malaria.



Repeating Rifles

The high-tech guns are a symbol of a prolonged war, a war in which General Waitie's group may win after the illegal purchase from Captain Clardy.

Rebel Flag

The flag is a symbol of the staunch beliefs of a community with their own President, Congress, and army. The flag is also a symbol of a long war, showing the Indian rebels are serious.

Greenbacks

During the raid of the Union Steamer at Pheasant Bluff, the rebels throw the money overboard, thinking it will be worthless after the Confederates win.

Redbud Tree

The tree symbolizes love and screens Jeff and Lucy as they make known their love for each other.

Setting

Rifles for Watte begins at the Bussey family farm in Linn County, Kansas, during the spring of 1861. Once Jeff Bussey enlists in the Union Army, his company moves through Missouri, Arkansas, and Texas, but most of the action takes place in territory belonging to the Cherokee Nation, with brief forays into areas belonging to the Creek Nation and the Choctaw Nation. All of this land is now part of Oklahoma. The novel ends in June 1865, when Jeff returns to his family's farm after his discharge from the army, but Keith suggests that Jeff will soon return to the Cherokee Nation to marry Lucy Washbourne.



Social Sensitivity

Rifles for Watie shows great sensitivity in dealing with four significant social issues: war, sectional rivalry, racial hostility, and the role of the nonconformist.

Jeff expects war to be exciting and noble, but finds that it is frightening and dirty. The initial training is so dehumanizing that one of his friends deserts, and only Jeff's sense of humor and his loyalty to the Union cause enable him to endure this experience.

His individualistic attitude naturally resists military discipline, keeping him in constant conflict with his superior officers. The dark reality of war negates the glory of Jeff's heroic acts. Though a brave soldier, Jeff cries during his first battle, laments the deaths of his comrades, and is horrified by the amputations he observes. Forced to witness Lee Washbourne's execution, Jeff faces the constant threat of a similar fate while in the custody of Watie's men.

The book also demonstrates that human nature transcends regional and ideological boundaries. Jeff's Confederate enemies are as kind, honorable, and brave as his fellow Union soldiers. In fact, the Confederate officers generally show more concern for their men's welfare than most Union officers do. Though the Union opposes the system of slavery, an account of the Cherokee Trail of Tears brings the North's sense of justice under question.

Clardy's cruelty toward the dying Confederate prisoner, the callousness of the confiscation orders, and Washbourne's execution offset the violence of the Confederate bushwhackers. As Jeff becomes better acquainted with his fellow soldiers and his Confederate enemies, he discovers that kindness and cruelty can be found in both armies and that the Union and the Confederate soldiers are actually very much alike.

Neither the Native American nor the black characters conform to conventional stereotypes, thus confounding Jeff's initial suppositions. The Jackmans and the Washbournes—both Native American families—surprise Jeff with their sophistication and their elegant homes. Even more astounding to Jeff is Stand Watie, the leader of the Confederate Cherokee. Jeff expects a large man with an air of command but finds that Watie is a short, nondescript man who sleeps beside a campfire, just as his followers do. Through Leemon Jones and the black regiment he joins, Keith acknowledges the important role that blacks played in fighting the Civil War.

Jeff asserts the supreme value of individual conscience. Despite the orders of his superiors, he makes his own decisions concerning the issues he confronts. His individualism keeps him in perpetual conflict with army discipline, and he finds the casual attitude toward discipline one of the most appealing characteristics of Watie's army.

Literary Qualities

The most striking literary quality in *Rifles for Watie* is its abundant historical detail. As Keith traces Jeff's development from a sixteen-year-old farm boy to a mature Union war veteran, he accurately recreates the routines and customs of the Civil War era. When Jeff is at home in Kansas, for example, he helps his father "thresh the wheat by hand, using two hickory clubs tied together with buckskin," and he and his family feast on " 'sweet toast,' homebaked wheat bread toasted in a pan over the fireplace coals." But when Jeff is in the field with his regiment, he learns about the grim realities of army life: when his friend Ford Ivey is wounded in the leg and has to have an amputation, Jeff watches the orderlies place him on a wooden table in a crowded, dirty tent, smells the "sweet odor of chloroform," and notices one of the attendants "cleaning bone fragments from a small saw." Jeff also meets a variety of people during his experience in the war—free blacks, slaves, Native Americans, Confederate sympathizers—and Keith uses these encounters as opportunities to relate historical information about the social and economic status of each group.

Much of Keith's historical detail is drawn from his extensive research on the Civil War. Keith interviewed twentytwo Confederate war veterans and studied veterans' diaries and letters in preparation for his novel. Although the plot of *Rifles for Watie* is completely fictional, several of the characters, such as General Stand Watie, are based on real-life figures.

In *Rifles for Watie*, Keith not only tells an exciting story, but also presents a realistic view of human nature—especially as revealed under the extreme stress of war. Keith has observed that a good plot spells constant trouble for the hero, who faces new complications as soon as he extricates himself from previous conflicts. The crisis, according to Keith, presents "the final knockdown punch" just as the protagonist thinks he or she is safe. In *Rifles for Watie*, Jeff finds himself in a continuing series of conflicts with Asa Clardy, Lucy Washbourne, Stand Watie's men, and his own divided loyalties. These conflicts, along with the actual battles, yield a fuller and more realistic picture of war than most war novels offer.



Themes

Journey from Young Adulthood to Manhood

Jeff begins his journey with a decent upbringing and certain good qualities of character that he refines along the way. Jeff is considerate of his family and animals, he is loyal to his beliefs, he is an individual thinker, and he is a hard worker with proven leadership skills. As a teenager, he has feelings of invincibility, anxiety, and vengeance. Jeff also has a teenaged know-it-all attitude. Jeff has led a rather sheltered existence up until the point he decides to enlist in the Union army. He does not understand the true nature of some men, and some of his beliefs are general assumptions that do not stand the test of an expanded horizon.

Jeff proves to himself and his parents his courage to fight back when two proslavery Missourian men attempt to arrest and kill his father at their family farm. Jeff begins to fight one of the men with his bare knuckles until the other man hits Jeff on the back of his head with the butt of his gun, knocking Jeff unconscious. When Jeff awakens, he immediately asks for his father's permission to enlist at Fort Leavenworth. As a naive 16-year-old boy, his feelings of invincibility heighten during this skirmish, and once he arrives at Fort Leavenworth he feels annoyed by the doctor and enlistment officer as they insinuate the possibility that Jeff may die in combat. Jeff is anxious to fight in his first battle because he fears the war will be over before he gets his chance at what he thinks will be the greatest adventure of his lifetime.

When Jeff meets Captain Asa Clardy, he suffers discrimination of his full name, Jefferson Davis Bussey. Clardy demands Jeff change his name, for Jefferson Davis is another man elected to a position Clardy coveted while serving with the Mississippi Volunteers. Jeff tells Clardy he refuses to change his name and Clardy punishes Jeff by placing him on kitchen duty for one week. Still fuming over Clardy's slur on his family name, Jeff avenges Clardy by switching Clardy's bean soup with dishwater. Many friends, comrades, and family members warn Jeff to steer clear of Captain Clardy. Clardy is notorious for jealousy, vindication, and murder. Jeff's individuality of thought and hardheadedness cause much trouble for him with the Captain and other officers, until he learns the art of self-control and until he learns to listen to those people wiser than he.

Jeff first realizes that what people say about Captain Clardy is true when the mess cook named Sparrow is found stabbed to death. This is one of the hardest lessons Jeff learns because Jeff feels solely responsible for Sparrow's death. Sparrow divulges a potentially devastating secret about Captain Clardy's past to Jeff. During a moment when Jeff's anger causes him to speak before thinking to Captain Clardy, Jeff tells Clardy he knows all about the widow who is murdered and robbed of \$800. Clardy demands to know who told Jeff about this. Jeff simply says that a little bird told him, and Clardy figures it out. Jeff feels the fear of dying for the first time while in the army. Jeff is still not scared of dying in battle; rather he is scared that Clardy will kill him.



The battalion's march to Springfield, Missouri, pounds some realism into Jeff as his body suffers thirst, hunger, and fatigue because the walk proves to be hard, sweaty work. Here Jeff learns self-control over how much water to consume without making himself sick. Jeff also hears advice from Sergeant Pete Millholland regarding fatigue being a mental condition. Jeff remembers this lesson of mind over body and the words, "You can always go farther than you think you can," during the climactic events at the end of the novel when Jeff flees the rebel camp.

When Jeff fights in his first battle, the Battle of Prairie Grove, all thoughts of glory and adventure in war explode like the cannon and musket fire that shoot at close range. Jeff's legs feel paralyzed and his body experiences the stress mechanism of fight or flight. Jeff fights, tediously loading his single-shot musket and firing upon the enemy. Jeff feels fear for the first time. He fears for his life. He prays. He vows to always go to church if he makes it out alive. Jeff does indeed survive, and this one battle is all it takes for Jeff to realize what a dreamlike state he has been in over the glories of battle.

The major test of Jeff's character comes when General Blunt sends him over to the rebel side to acquire information as a Union scout. Jeff's compassion for the enemy grows as he spends more time with the Confederate soldiers under Stand Waitie's command. However, once Jeff learns about an officer on the Union side peddling the repeating rifles to the rebels, he realizes he must stay to find out the name of the officer and return to Fort Gibson to complete the job he is hired to do. Jeff stays true to his Union side and the country he fights for, even as his love for Lucy Washbourne tempts him to desert the Union and stay with the rebels.

Jeff finds out that Captain Clardy is the Union traitor and prepares to go back to Fort Gibson to expose the man. Unfortunately, Jeff lets his guard down as he thinks of Lucy and he bumps into Clardy, who recognizes Jeff and alerts the sentries. Jeff finds himself fighting for his life as he flees the rebel camp and runs, walks, and crawls the 100-plus miles back to Fort Gibson. The culmination of everything Jeff has learned in his life is necessary to help him survive this ordeal. Jeff survives, making it back to Fort Gibson, and before he knows it, the war is over.

Jeff rides back to his home in Kansas and, along the way, views the destruction left behind. He feels glad the war is over but he knows years will pass before people can rebuild what was lost. Jeff looks forward to attending the new university and he looks forward to one day being reunited with Lucy after he reads her letter sent to him at his parents' home.

Jeff learns many lessons throughout the novel. These include lessons in self-control, compassion toward his fellow man, an elimination of invincible feelings, fear, love for the opposite sex, and patience. At the end of the novel, Jeff faces his next lesson, how to return to civilian status after acting as a soldier for 4 years. Jeff learns so much during his 4 years in the army that once the war is over, he feels like 15 years has passed.



Individuality of Thought

Jeff Bussey remains an independent thinker throughout the novel, and as the reader traces the development of this major theme, he realizes this particular character trait simultaneously provides disadvantages and advantages to the main character during his specific journey through the conflicts of the Civil War. Of course, individuality of thought in the lower ranks of such a highly structured hierarchy as the Army causes many minor conflicts and punishments for Jeff. Conversely, Jeff's individualism assists him in his travels toward becoming a man because he already has a solid base to build upon. He knows who he is, how he was raised, and in the end he stays true to himself.

Jeff's first individual decision is to enlist in the army after he becomes fed up with the violence and crime along the Kansas-Missouri border. Second, Jeff's strength of character cannot allow Captain Clardy to slur his name and get away with it. Jeff talks back to Clardy and receives a kitchen duty punishment for a week. Ironically, the many run-ins Jeff has with the corrupt Captain and the harsh punishments he receives provide an avenue for Jeff to grow into an even stronger man. Jeff is an independent thinker; however he learns the art of self-control when it comes to thinking before he speaks. Therefore, the very fact that Jeff shows individuality of thought is not a negative characteristic; it is his uncontrolled urge to speak and act out that causes him the most trouble with commanding officers.

There are advantages to Jeff's individualism. Jeff is a naturally kind and compassionate human being if he is not provoked. For instance, when the rebel farm wife McComas feeds Jeff light bread, apple butter, and milk, she does this only after Jeff kindly asks permission. After Captain Clardy orders some of his men to confiscate the livestock of the rebel families whose husbands have broken parole, Jeff finds the McComas family becomes a victim. Jeff's intense anger prompts him to conspire with the night watchman in a scheme to return the McComas' cow in exchange for some of the light bread and apple butter. The men perform their hidden agenda without a hitch. In Jeff's mind, certain things in life are right, and certain things are wrong. Jeff has the courage of his convictions, and his integrity remains intact. This behavior shows that Jeff is compassionate, able to strategize, and able to think through problems independently, and he is much more suited to a leadership role.

Finally, the combination of Jeff's individual thinking and his newly acquired characteristic of self-control help him tremendously while he is a Union scout sent to the rebel camp. Many times Jeff is tempted to switch sides in the war. He falls in love with an Indian Confederate daughter, he gets closer and closer to the rebel men he is supposed to be spying upon, and he cannot help but feel a debt of gratitude to the Jackman family, who nurses him back to health after two bouts with malaria. It is not until Jeff learns that Captain Clardy is the corrupt Union officer selling repeating rifles to the rebels that he makes his decision to leave and head back to the Union's Fort Gibson. Jeff suffers a horrendous ordeal as he flees the rebel camp and hikes the 100- plus miles back to his fort, all while being chased by rebel cavalry and their bloodhound, Sully. Jeff's individuality of thought helps him survive since he quickly prepares his strategy and



uses Mother Nature and his ability to befriend Sully to make it all the way back alive. Jeff could have given up many times along the way, but he chooses not to.

Back at home in Kansas, Jeff plans to refine his thinking processes further at the new university.

Love and Respect for Animals

Growing up on a farm in Linn County, Kansas, Jeff learns a great respect for and skill with animals of all kinds. From training his dog, Ring, to riding and taming his horses, to leading the mule-driven plow, Jeff has a diverse knowledge of animals. This knowledge seems to be an innate part of his character, one that he brings with him from childhood and one that will serve him indefinitely for the rest of his manhood.

Several times throughout the novel, Jeff's ease in dealing with animals helps him. This ability has never been a drawback for him. For instance, in a minor scene, Jeff befriends Sergeant Mike Dempsey when he is able to tame a horse gone astray. Dempsey is grateful, and he helps Jeff learn to execute all the commands that his field sergeant barks at him. In a major scene, Jeff earns the respect of Lucy Washbourne because he is able to get their female cow to feed her calf by rubbing table salt on the calf's back. The Washbourne women are in awe of Jeff. In the most major climactic scene, Jeff befriends Sully, the bloodhound, who is supposedly helping the rebel cavalry track Jeff. Ironically, once Jeff first hears that a bloodhound will come after him, Jeff does not know how to react. He is slightly scared, for the first time, of an animal. The fear is unfounded, however. Jeff and Sully run off into the woods together, and both safely return to Fort Gibson. Jeff keeps Sully and brings him home to Kansas.

At one point, Jeff befriends a Confederate dog he names Dixie. Dixie acts as an animal companion to Jeff during the war, helping Jeff to relax in times of stress. Once Jeff becomes part of the cavalry, it is no longer practical for him to have Dixie, so he asks Lucy Washbourne to care for her, until Jeff is able to return for both of the ladies.'

It is easy to understand, after reading *Rifles for Waitie*, why Jeff has such a strong love for animals. Animals assist Jeff every step of his way.



Themes/Characters

The primary theme of *Rifles for Watie* is Jefferson Davis Bussey's development from a naive sixteen-year-old into a mature gentleman and soldier. From the beginning of the novel, Jeff possesses the courage needed to challenge the bushwhackers who raid his family's farm, the initiative to travel to Fort Leavenworth and enlist in the Union Army, and the self-confidence to make his own decisions about the people he meets and the issues of the time. Jeff knows nothing about the army, however, and thus his experiences in the Civil War are, above all, enlightening. A foot soldier, an artillery man, a cavalryman, a scout, and accidentally a spy, he excels in each role. Through this experience, he learns that issues and people are much more complex than he has previously believed; not all the Union soldiers win his respect, and he is surprised to discover that he can feel loyalty for personal friends, even when they are officially his enemies. Though initially eager to fight the enemy, Jeff is quickly convinced that war is not a worthwhile endeavor, and each personal contact with a Confederate soldier or sympathizer teaches him that he and his supposed enemies are actually very much alike. At the end of the Civil War, Jeff returns to the family farm, having learned several important lessons about human nature and about himself.

The novel also explores the nature of noble behavior. Jeff wants to be a gentleman and is horrified to learn that the Confederate sympathizers think of Union soldiers much as he thinks of the bushwhackers. Consistently courteous, especially to the Confederate civilians he meets, Jeff wins the respect of others with his kindness. When Union soldiers stop to rest and eat at the plush home of a Confederate family, the Washbournes, Jeff learns that both Mr. Washbourne and his son, Lee, are enlisted in a rebel cavalry unit commanded by the infamous General Stand Watie, who leads attacks on the homes of Union sympathizers. Despite this knowledge, Jeff uses his farm experience to help the Washbourne women, milking their cow and later showing them how to persuade the cow to accept her calf. Although he fights bravely and kills Confederate soldiers without reluctance in battle, Jeff refuses to be a member of the Union firing squad that later executes Lee Washbourne, and he demonstrates both compassion and a noble character when he arranges for Lee's body to be returned to his mother and sisters for burial.

Contrasting the hero's noble behavior, Captain Asa Clardy, who commands Jeff's unit, is vindictive, cowardly, cruel, greedy, and treacherous. He wrongly accuses Jeff of several transgressions and reports that Jeff is a troublemaker.

Clardy avoids serving at the battlefield, attempts to bully Lucy Washbourne, grinds his heel into the eye of a dying Confederate prisoner, and steals rifles from the Union Army to sell to Stand Watie. In addition, Clardy probably is responsible for the murder of Sparrow, a soldier who was the only witness to one of Clardy's earlier acts of robbery and murder. By revealing Jeff's identity to Watie's men, Clardy deliberately jeopardizes Jeff's life. According to Jeff's father, Emory, Clardy once "had the makings of a good officer," but became embittered by his failure to be elected colonel of the Mississippi Volunteer Rifles during the Mexican War.



A more sympathetic antagonist is the young, high-spirited Lucy Washbourne, who describes herself as "a rebel—to the backbone." A year younger than Jeff, she matches him in independence, courage, honor, loyalty, and even naivete. From their first meeting, when his dog chases her cat, they clearly are on opposite sides of every issue; yet each comes to respect and admire the other. After Jeff becomes a reluctant recruit in Watie's army, Lucy urges him to change sides, but she does not betray him when he tells her he must return to Fort Gibson with the information about the stolen rifles.



Style

Points of View

Harold Keith illuminates Jeff Bussey's coming of age journey in *Rifles for Waitie* through a third-person omniscient point of view. At times it seems as if the author directly narrates in an all-knowing fashion the great historical details of the clothing worn, the weapons used, and the dialects. The reader observes the fact that Harold Keith masters the vivid details of the time period through the point of view he uses to enlighten readers about Jeff Bussey's journey. The point of view lends authority and believability to the characters, the events, and the setting.

Setting

Rifles for Waitie occurs against a backdrop of the Civil War during the time period of 1861 through 1865 in Kansas, Missouri, Arkansas, and the portion of the Cherokee Nation, which is now included in the state of Oklahoma. The issues for the Indian Confederates and the Indian Union soldiers differ from the main issues of pro-slavery versus anti-slavery of the Civil War.

Language and Meaning

Harold Keith's use of language takes a novice historical reader to great heights of understanding for a time period not easily imagined. The symbolism, foreshadowing, and paradoxes remain clear to a reader of any age, in any time period. The piece is truly a classic, timeless piece of literature to be enjoyed by any age group, gender, or nationality.

The language is purely 1800's language, from the historically vivid descriptions of the scenery, the war weapons, and the clothing to the detail of the dialects and accents used when the characters converse. The use of language is woven well into the themes and time period, with a heavy concentration of symbolism in nature. The reader feels as if he or she is there, understanding each and every event and conversation.

Structure

Rifles for Waitie is written in chronological order as one can easily see by the titles of the first and last chapters. Harold Keith takes the reader on Jeff's journey from teenager to man via the conflicts he encounters during the Civil War, 1861 through 1865. Keith alternately introduces conflict with the lessons learned throughout the chapters. The climax of the novel occurs two chapters before the end of the book, although Keith keeps the reader guessing throughout the novel about the timing of the main climax. Minor climactic events occur through the book as Jeff comes into conflict or battle with

various characters and changes his way of thinking about the world as a whole. The structure of the book is important because it is a successful tool in keeping the reader interested until the end.



Quotes

"He spent the morning helping his father thresh the wheat by hand, using two hickory clubs tied together with buckskin and letting the wind blow out the chaff." Chapter 5, p. 34

"He helped his mother plait lamp wicks and fry refuse pork, out of which to make the fuel oil for the lamps." Chapter 5, p. 34

"Jeff thought it was a great sight to see the army, like a gigantic bull-snake, serpentine through the countryside in a long, loosely jointed column a mile in length, the cavalry leading, the infantry in the middle, and the artillery riding behind. His heart beat high. They were leaving the last jumping-off place, going farther and farther away from the security of the fort. Every mile they traveled took them nearer to battle." Chapter 6, p. 41

"You deliberately shot it off so you'd get a discharge. Well, it won't work. I'll have you court-martialed for cowardice. You're yellow as a dandelion." Chapter 7, p. 56

"Although the girl's skin had a brownish cast, her complexion was lovelier than wild strawberries. Breathless, he wondered what any girl that pretty was doing in this far-off Indian town." Chapter 11, p.113

"Jeff saw that despite her hostility, she was a girl who went well with July, even a hot, drouth-stricken July. She was wearing a long cotton dress of light green and looked as fresh and clean as a green shrub after a rain." Chapter 11, p. 114

"He had looked forward so long to his first battle. And now that the long-awaited moment had finally come, he discovered that some queer species of paralysis had gripped his legs. His chest felt heavy, as if a blacksmith's anvil was weighing it down. It was hard for him to breathe." Chapter 12, p. 128

"Loading a single-shot musket was an intricate operation. Rolling over on his back, he bit off the end of the paper cartridge, thrust it in the gun, poured powder into the muzzle, withdrew his iron ramrod from the groove beneath the barrel, and rammed the charge and the bullet down the barrel. Then he pulled the hammer back with his thumb and stuck a percussion cap on the nipple. After that, all he had to do was draw a bead on the enemy and press the trigger. With the firing of the shot, smoke and fire from the black gunpowder belched into his face, and then he had the whole thing to do over." Chapter 12, pp. 133 - 134

"I 'spect I'da shot him, youngster." Chapter 13, p. 150

"I'll bet Miss Lucy's got rebel beaux swarming all around her, hasn't she, mam?" Chapter 14, p. 162

"'Like flies aroun' a sugar bowl, soldier boy,' the old woman cackled merrily." Chapter 14, p. 162



"David's voice was deeper, and there was an air of assurance and competency about him. He didn't look anything like the lonely, scrawny, homesick fellow Jeff had known back at Fort Leavenworth." Chapter 15, pp. 177 - 178

"It wasn't right. A fellow who might get shot tomorrow shouldn't have to wait a whole year to call a girl by her first name or tell her that he loved her." Chapter 18, p. 225

"His face softening, he took his coat off the wagon wheel and put it on, and suddenly Jeff had the feeling that everything was going to be all right. The early morning sun peeked suddenly over the oak-covered eastern ridge, stabbing the scene with long streamers of golden light." Chapter 19, p. 235

"This was his first introduction to rebel "coffee," made by pouring corn meal in a skillet, stirring it until it parched brownly and evenly, then spooning it in a pot and pouring boiling water over it." Chapter 19, p. 234

"The sooner he could return to the fort and be out of this hospitable rebel family's debt, the easier he would feel. He disliked this sailing under false colors." Chapter 20, p. 260

"It would soon be time to plow." Chapter 20, p. 269

"These people are in this war for keeps. And if they get those thousand repeating rifles, they might win back the whole of the Indian country in three short months." Chapter 21, p. 282

"If I wasn't fighting to hold the Union together and clean up the border trouble in Kansas, I could change sides mighty quick in this war." Chapter 21, p. 280

"You can always go farther than you think you can." Chapter 24, p. 309

"Fire-blackened chimneys thrust themselves, gray and stark, against the June sky. To Jeff, they seemed like gravestones marking the spots where happy families had once lived." Chapter 25, p. 318



Topics for Discussion

1. Throughout the novel, Jeff demonstrates a knack for dealing with animals.

He has easily trained Ring, and he quickly wins the friendship of Dixie, Sully, and even General Blunt's supposedly vicious bulldog. Likewise, he knows how to manage the various horses, oxen, and cows he encounters.

What does this talent reveal about Jeff's character? How does Keith's description of this talent prepare the reader for the resolution of the novel's crisis?

2. What kind of man is Captain Asa Clardy? How does Keith reveal the extent of his evil character? What combination of events and background facts make Jeff his enemy? Is Jeff in any way responsible for the hostility that results?

3. When Jeff joins the Union Army, he is accompanied by two friends, John Chadwick and David Gardner. In the army, he meets a number of other young recruits, some of whom are killed or seriously wounded. These young men have enlisted for a variety of reasons, and they react differently to army life and war experiences. Why does Keith include the contrasting attitudes, experiences, and reactions of Jeff's friends?

4. Jeff himself changes during the four years of the Civil War. When he enlists, what is his attitude toward war? How does it change after his first battle?

What similar changes occur in his opinions about army officers, the Union and Confederate philosophies, and the people he initially considers his allies and enemies?

5. Wherever he goes, Jeff finds older, more experienced soldiers who befriend him, such as Mike Dempsey, Noah Babbitt, and Heifer Hobbs; young friends to share his adventures and complaints, including Bill Earle, Jim Bostwick, and Hooley Pogue; and suspicious enemies who are eager to catch him in a mistake, especially Sergeant Sam Fields and Captain Asa Clardy. What do their reactions reveal about Jeff's character and about human nature in general?

6. Although Jeff treats almost everyone with consideration, he shows special courtesy to the women he meets: Mrs. McComas, the women of the Jackman and Washbourne families, and Belle Lisenbee. What does Keith accomplish by making Jeff such a stereotypical, old-fashioned gentleman?

7. At the Jackmans' home, Jeff discovers that the family library consists of G.P.R. James's *History of Chivalry*, two Sir Walter Scott novels, William Gilmore Simms's *Guy Rivers* and *The Yemassee*, and an old copy of *Harper's Weekly*.

What does this selection of reading material, fairly typical of ante-bellum Southern families, reveal about the values and attitudes of the Jackmans and their fellow Confederates?



8. Jeff Bussey finds his given name, Jefferson Davis, both an asset and a disadvantage. How does it work for and against him? Jeff explains why his father, a dedicated Union man, named him for the president of the Confederacy.

How does Jeff's name influence his character development? How does it reveal one of Keith's basic themes?

9. Noah Babbitt, an actual historical figure, is one of the most carefully described minor characters in the novel.

Jeff discovers that this itinerant printer hiked from Topeka, Kansas, to Galveston, Texas, just to see the magnolias in bloom. How does Noah influence Jeff's attitudes? Why does Keith describe him in such detail?

10. Generally, critics praise Keith for portraying war with unusual realism.

What episodes develop this realism?

Aside from Jeff's romance with Lucy Washbourne, are there any romantic elements in this novel? What are they?



Essay Topics

Trace how Jeff's ability to befriend animals helps him in his journey toward manhood against the backdrop of the Civil War.

Describe how Jeff's early general assumptions about man and life reverse as his horizons expand. Include a description of the lessons he learns as these assumptions become invalid.

Compare and contrast Jeff's character at the beginning of his journey with his character at the end of his journey.

Discuss how Jeff learns to use what he thinks are his negative characteristics to his advantage.

Describe the three most important lessons Jeff learns while at war and talk about how he came to learn them.

Analyze Jeff's relationship with Captain Asa Clardy.

Compare and contrast Jeff's experiences with the Union side of the army to those under Stand Waitie's outfit.

Discuss two of the dominant themes running through the novel, tracing their development.



Ideas for Reports and Papers

1. In the opening pages of the novel, Jeff and his family are attacked by bushwhackers from Missouri, and later one of Jeff's commanders is a former Jayhawker from Kansas. Using history books, investigate the guerrilla warfare between the slaveholders from Missouri and the abolitionists from Kansas. How did this struggle influence the allegiances of citizens in both states?

2. Jeff Bussey learns a little about the Cherokees' form of government through his contact with Stand Watie. Research and describe the Cherokee government in the 1860s. How accurate is Keith's account?

3. Joe Grayson, one of Jeff's friends in the Union army, says that much of the political conflict between the Watie and Ross factions can be traced to their different reactions to the enforced Cherokee removal to the West, the march called the Trail of Tears. Research and describe the events leading up to the march, the march itself, the justifications given for it, and its effect on later American history.

4. Most of the people Jeff meets in the Oklahoma Territory are at least part Native American. Many well-known Oklahomans, including the humorist Will Rogers, have Native American ancestry.

Using biographies, histories, and other reference sources, describe the life of Will Rogers or some other famous Oklahoman of Native American descent.

5. Most accounts of the Civil War describe the warfare in the East, but in the West, the strategy, personnel, and weapons were somewhat different. Read an account of a campaign in the East, and compare it with the types of fighting Jeff experiences. Describe an important battle in the West.

6. Throughout the Civil War, Jeff fights with a single-shot Springfield rifle, but Keith says that some Union troops used Spencer repeating rifles late in the war.

Using military histories, describe the kinds of weapons that were used by each side, the period in which each was used, and the effectiveness of each.

7. At the end of this novel, the Cherokee Nation is about to sign a treaty with the U.S. government. Using history books and other reference sources, describe what has happened in the governmental affairs of the Cherokee Nation since 1865.

8. One of the most famous Civil War diaries was kept by Mary Boykin Chesnut. Read this diary and compare her experiences with those of the women in the Jackman and Washbourne families.



Further Study

Commire, Anne, ed. *Something about the Author*. Vol. 2. Detroit: Gale Research, 1971. Contains a brief biographical sketch, list of works, autobiographical commentary, and bibliography.

Fuller, Muriel, ed. *More Junior Authors*.

New York: H.W. Wilson, 1963. A brief biographical sketch.

Kingman, Lee, ed. *Newbery and Caldecott Medal Books: 1956-1965*. Boston: Horn Book, 1965. Section about *Rifles for Watie* includes a brief description of the novel, a biographical essay by Fayette Copeland, and the text of Keith's Newbery acceptance paper.

Kirkpatrick, D. L., ed. *Twentieth-Century Children's Writers*. 2d ed. New York: St. Martin's Press, 1983. Contains a brief biographical sketch and analytical comments about Keith's major works, along with a list of works.



Related Titles

Harold Keith's favorite topics are Oklahoma history, Native Americans, and individual achievement that surpasses reasonable expectations. His first book, *Boys' Life of Will Rogers*, combines these interests, describing not only Rogers's success, but also the story of his family's role in Oklahoma history and tribal politics. *Komantcia*, like *Rifles for Watie*, is based on historical fact. A young Spanish man captured by the Comanche comes to respect them and adapts to their ways, much as Jeff respects Stand Watie's men and feels a kind of loyalty to them. *The Runt of Rogers School* is the story of a small athlete who, like Jeff Bussey, succeeds despite his physical size and the teasing it inspires.



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