

# **Seventh Son Study Guide**

## **Seventh Son by Orson Scott Card**

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# Plot Summary

Seventh Son by Orson Scott Card is about a young boy named Alvin Miller Jr. and the trials that he faces as he grows up. The book is set in Colonial America; however, it is slightly different than traditional history because most of the people have magical abilities. Also, some events that formed US history never took place, which changed their world.

Before Alvin is born, his mother, Faith, while pregnant with him, is trapped inside a wagon on a raging river. She survives because her oldest son, Vigor throws himself in the pathway of a tree about to destroy the wagon. Faith and her family are taken to safety in a nearby town, where she gives birth at Peggy Guester's house.

Peg Guester's daughter, Little Peggy is five at the time and helps by using her sight at the birth of Alvin Jr. Peggy is a torch, which is a powerful ability that enables her to see peoples' true thoughts and their potential future and past. When she touches Faith during the birth, she sees constant incidents of drowning in the baby's life and realizes that it is her job to protect him from evil forces. He is a Maker who may help save the world from the Unmaker.

Alvin Jr. is unaware of his importance, so he is able to have a fairly normal childhood. He also takes his ability to talk to animals/insects for granted, as well as his skills at creating objects. Alvin does not know that Peggy saved his birth caul and is able to see and protect him from great distances.

Peggy's heavy burden at a young age, due to her ability to see the future of others as well as some people's distrust and anger of her knack, causes her to grow up quickly. She becomes a reclusive, slightly bitter young woman who, despite her anger, refuses to blame Alvin or let anything bad happen to him. Peggy realizes her life might be better if she did not save Alvin, but she also knows that without her help, the Maker will die young.

Other people in Alvin's life are being swayed by the forces of good and evil. Reverend Thrower is being visited by what he thinks is an angel of God but is actually the Unmaker. Alvin's sister's husband is also influenced by the Reverend, and both believe the Miller's to be unchristian and a dangerous influence on the town. Alvin is also visited by a Shining Man, who helps him to understand that his knack needs to be used to help others not selfishly for himself.

Alvin is learning right from wrong and Peggy's sacrifice seems to be worth the effort. He is intelligent and striving to be good; however, he has to do a great deal of maturing before he will be a true challenge for the evil Unmaker. Luckily, he has a protective angel in Peggy as well as many good people around him to guide him.



# Chapter 1

## Chapter 1 Summary

The Seventh Son by Orson Scott Card is the story of a young boy's fight against an evil greater than the devil, the Unmaker, in a magical version of Colonial America. Alvin Miller Jr. is the seventh son of a seventh son and a Maker who uses his powers to fix things, which fights evil and protects the world. He is not alone as the Miller family, a girl named Peggy Guester, and a storyteller named Taleswapper work together to protect the boy and in turn the world.

In chapter one, a young five-year-old girl, little Peggy, is gathering eggs. Despite her young age, she finds most of the eggs to bring back to her mother. The only chicken that scares her is Bloody Mary. Peggy knows that Bloody Mary is out to hurt and kill humans, especially her. Peggy was once nipped by the chicken, and even though her father can't see the wound, Peggy remembers the nip.

Inside her house, Peggy is immediately afraid when her father, Horace, calls her name in his stern voice. She knows he is angry that she did not get the eggs from Bloody Mary. When the child says it is the only time she did not get the eggs from Mary's brood box, her father shows Peggy the numerous eggs he has gathered from that box.

Peggy's father yells at her and tells her that she is a liar and he would rather she should die before she continues on her evil path. Peggy's mother is furious at such a statement and defends young Peggy, saying that Horace should not make such a cruel statement.

Horace beats Peggy with a hazel rod for lying and not getting the eggs. After the switching is over, Peggy cries and walks to Oldpappy's house. He agrees that the chicken is a nasty beast and she was unfairly treated. He tells her to go to her secret place to think, and Peggy leaves for the spring house feeling much better and tells Oldpappy he is the best adult she knows.

## Chapter 1 Analysis

In chapter one, Peggy is sure that Bloody Mary, a hen in her family's chicken coop, is out to kill her. According to Peggy, she is the only one who can hear Bloody Mary's evil thoughts, which is the first indication that some people in this novel have abilities beyond what is considered normal.

When Peggy's father is beating her, she also reads his thoughts about a lady who is naked. Horace always thinks about this woman when he is upset about something, which implies he is probably having an affair and is feeling trapped and resentful of his wife and child tying him down. Peggy's ability to read unspoken thoughts seems to apply to both animals and people, which foreshadows her ability to see and know



people's true feelings as well learning about things that she really does not want to know.

At her Oldpappy's home, Peggy tells her grandfather that her father would like to see her dead. This implies that Peggy is having a very unhappy childhood and may not grow up to be a well-adjusted adult. Oldpappy explains that her father's behavior is because he beat Horace too many times as a child. The result of Oldpappy's excess discipline seems to be that now his son is showing the same trait. This bad behavior is being passed down through the generations and the reader has to wonder if Horace's children will exhibit this characteristic as well.



# Chapter 2

## Chapter 2 Summary

A huge family in a good wagon is traveling through the wilderness in chapter two. The family once owned a mill and lived in a large house; however, due to misfortune, they have left New Hampshire to claim new land out west.

The family consists of the father, Alvin, a slightly pudgy man, his wife Faith who is pregnant, six boys, one older girl, and five younger female children. Faith asks Alvin to find a place for her to rest and he knows his next child is ready to be born.

Alvin sends his oldest son Vigor ahead to check for a stopping point on their trail. Vigor brings word back of a roadhouse about three miles away across a very small river. Alvin would prefer not to cross the river but knows that his wife is ready to give birth and he needs to find a safe place to stay.

## Chapter 2 Analysis

A once prosperous family is heading west in chapter two. The large family is an advantage when staking out land because they have plenty of people to defend and work the land. Alvin is sure that they will once again be a successful family. His belief foreshadows their future wealth and standing in a new community.

Alvin's pregnant wife Faith is subtly urging him to stop soon so that she will be able to give birth in comfort. Vigor tells them that there is a place to stop ahead after they cross a small river, which causes Alvin to feel fear. He seems to be extremely distrustful and hateful towards water, which implies that something bad happens to the family near water. While Alvin tries to be nonchalant because it is a small body of water, his fear of the river foreshadows the fact that something bad will happen to the family when they attempt to cross the river.



# Chapter 3

## Chapter 3 Summary

Peggy is resting in the spring house in chapter three. She dreams of water whenever she sleeps in the house, which is full of leaks and dripping water. The floor of the house is wet clay and a stream goes through the middle of the house. The spring house is always cool because of the water and Peggy likes that she is unable to hear people's thoughts in the house.

Peggy wakes up due to the noise the smith is making and thinks about the fact that no one asked her if she minded the smith coming to town. She knew that a smith makes a location prosper so her father's house would become an inn and that eventually the blacksmith would set up near the spring house so he might have a source of water. She does mind the smith's proximity to the spring because the noise disturbs the one place that used to be quiet and private for her. Now that the blacksmith works near the spring house, Peggy is able to read his mind because he is too near for the water to drown out his thoughts.

Hearing the thunder and lightening of a storm, Peggy runs outside to witness the sights and sounds from the storm. She checks the stable to see if the horses are still there and listens to the animals talk to one another about the storm.

Noticing the water is rising, Peggy is upset when she realizes that the Hatrack River is holding a wagon with people hostage on its rising water. She runs to get help before everyone in the wagon is killed by the storm. At the smithy's, Makepeace listens to her tale and orders the men to head immediately to the Hatrack. Peggy runs to her father's house to get additional help. People at this time hurried to help someone in trouble.

## Chapter 3 Analysis

In chapter three, the reader learns that Peggy's ability is dulled by water. She spends a great deal of time in the spring house with water running through the center so that she does not have to constantly hear the thoughts of others. Her ability to see heartfire is referred to as being a torch, so it makes sense that water would dull the fire. Peggy's ability is extremely strong, and even when people try to hide their thoughts from her, she can still read everything. She knows that she can never tell people the entire truth about the strength of her seeing because they already fear her, including her father who says she is evil and a liar.

Peggy agrees with her father that she is evil because she seems to feel that she should not be able to read people and feels that seeing people's true thoughts makes her wicked, especially when she sees her father's thoughts of the naked lady. The reader knows that the ability is warping the young girl and that knowing so much at such a young age is not evil but a burden that would be hard for anyone to bear. She is only



five and still carries a straw poppet she has named Buggy around, so one realizes she is a child at heart but has had to mature beyond her years because of her ability.

The storm that arrives while Peggy is at the spring house is horrible and causes her to speculate about the farmer and his horses. She knows the farmer is not coming back tonight and hears the horses talking to each other and calming one another down. While she is listening, she senses that the water around her is rising and Peggy gets a vision of a wagon in danger on the River Hatrack. She races to get help and some of the people dismiss her as an annoying child; however, Makepeace respects her gift. The reader realizes that people either fear her, dismiss her, or avoid her, which is bound to cause problems with a child's emotional growth. Peggy may grow into someone that they should fear because of their behavior toward her as a child.





# Chapter 4

## Chapter 4 Summary

Alvin Miller is trying to safely get his family across the Hatrack River in chapter four. Alvin's sons attempt to push and pull the wagon and horses across the river with their mom inside. Eleanor, Alvin's oldest daughter, is trying to get the horses to move as well and get the wagon across quicker. Meanwhile, Alvin carries all his daughters across the river to safety. Alvin's wife, Faith refuses to leave the wagon, so they tie the wagon to a tree on the other side of the river and unhitch the horses.

Just as the family is making progress, the river gets extremely turbulent and starts to rock the wagon and causes the wheels to sink further into the muck. Measure notices a huge tree heading for the wagon and screams a warning. Vigor throws himself into the water at the tree, which causes it to roll and only give a glancing blow to the wagon. This causes the wheels to break out of the mud but does not destroy the vehicle or hurt Faith or Eleanor. Vigor is smashed between the tree and a boulder and slips into the water while Alvin watches helpless.

Now the wagon is free of the muck and the rope holds the wagon from being thrown down the river. The rope holds and causes the wagon to move to the shore where Faith announces the baby is ready to be born. Alvin helps Faith out of the wagon and nobody tells her that Vigor died trying to save them. On the shore, the town people arrive with men, horses, and a wagon to help the struggling family. Faith is immediately put in the wagon and sent to the midwife to help with the birth of her next child.

Alvin shakes his head no when Eleanor looks to him in question about Vigor because he does not want her to inform Faith about Vigor's death as they head to the midwife's. Alvin and the rest of the family stay behind with the town's men to gather their possessions. They discuss the death of Vigor and how the water is much calmer. Alvin tells the men that his new child would have been the seventh son of the seventh son and the men know this is a powerful birth.

## Chapter 4 Analysis

In chapter four, the Miller family is stuck in the Hatrack River and Alvin knows that his wife is not going to leave the wagon. She is pregnant with their child and knows the child is going to be born at any minute. The family is determined to help her and not let the child be born in the river. The river gets more insane, as if it has a mind of its own, which foreshadows the fact that water has a vendetta against the Miller family.

Vigor shows what a brave man he is when he hurls himself at a tree headed for the wagon. He is willing to risk his life to save his family without a second thought. Alvin sees what must be Vigor's death but he mentally orders his oldest child to live long



enough for his new child to be born. In Alvin's mind, his son is going to hear his plea and stay alive, which foreshadows Vigor hanging on long enough for Alvin Jr. to be born.

As soon as the Miller family is safely on the shore, the rain lessens, which causes the river to recede to a manageable level. Alvin's fear of water and its interest in destroying his family appears to be grounded in fact. The reader knows that water may plague the family throughout the book. The people on shore agree, when they learn that Faith is carrying the seventh son of a seventh son. Typically, the child is a dowser, which water dislikes, so water will be trying to kill the new child and will continue to try throughout his life.



# Chapter 5

## Chapter 5 Summary

In chapter five, Peggy is looking at all the heartfires she is able to see in the area. She is worried about the people in the river and afraid that the water is going to sweep them away. Her grandfather tries to reassure her that she gave a warning in enough time to save the family. Minutes later, she tells Oldpappy that one is lost and the rest of the family is safely ashore with Makepeace. Peggy is feeling guilty that she fell asleep in the spring house and did not get help to the family on the river sooner. Her grandfather explains that the spring house water is what feeds to the Hatrack River and the water lulled her to sleep. He also says that the blacksmith was able to wake her because the combined elements of earth and fire are stronger than water.

Even though she is upstairs, Peggy can feel that Faith is downstairs about to have the baby and she also knows that Vigor is still alive in the river. At that moment, her mom grabs her to help at the birthing of the baby. The twin sons of Faith yell at Peggy's mom that their brother is still alive and Peggy confirms their words. Peggy is at a loss for words when confronted by her mother, Peg, about the truth of Vigor being alive, but Oldpappy defends her. Her mother knows the baby must be born now and that Faith has waited long enough to have her child.

Peg tells Peggy to explain to Faith about Vigor and tells her that they have sent out a search party. Peggy tells the group that Vigor is alive and tangled in roots. Faith wants to have this baby now while Vigor still lives, and little Peggy says the baby is fine but not coming because of the beseeching done by Faith. Faith explains that she beseeched the child not to come in the wagon and Peg quickly breaks the spell and grabs the baby and pulls him out.

Little Peggy sees multiple futures for the young child and grabs him and removes the birth caul. Just as the child is born, she tells the group that Vigor is dead but survived long enough for the babe to be a seventh son of a seventh son. Faith starts crying and Peg is afraid that she is going to hate her newborn, but Peggy says that Faith will not hate her son.

After the birth of the baby, Peggy goes to the attic and grabs a box that her grandfather gave her. She places the caul in the box to keep it for the future. When she goes back downstairs, her grandfather is happy to tell her that they are eating Bloody Mary for dinner.

Late that night, Vigor's body is brought back to the house. Alvin shows the baby Vigor's body and tells him that someday he will know of the sacrifice his older brother made. They name the baby Alvin Jr. in honor of him being the seventh son of a seventh son. Two weeks later, after building a bridge across the Hatrack River, the Miller family leaves.



## Chapter 5 Analysis

Peggy is describing the heartfires she sees out the window, including water, which is the darkest she has ever seen it. Dark is usually considered to be the evil with light being the counterpart. The heartfire of water in most minds, is evil and out to destroy life, which is evident by its attempt to destroy the Miller family.

Peggy is upset when she feels one of the Millers is dying and blames herself for the loss. Her grandfather is quick to explain why it is not her fault and tries to take away her guilt. Peggy seems to take on the weight of the world and get nothing in return. While her grandfather attempts to make her feel special and important, this foreshadows the angry adult she becomes due to other's condemnation.

Later, when Alvin brings home his oldest son's body, he is extremely sad and not too manly to show his tears. When the other children and his wife tell him that the baby is the seventh son, he is extremely proud of Vigor for holding on long enough for the child to be born. He also yells at the Hatrack River, taunting it because it was not able to stop the birth. Alvin feels he won this battle at a great loss but does not realize that little Peggy is going to help with the war. He knows water is a danger but he hopes the threat is over.

Meanwhile, Peggy is angry that she feels like she has to save the baby. She refuses to allow the water to win and kill the child. Peggy knows that if she does not keep the caul and the baby safe she would feel like a murderer because she can see Alvin Jr.'s fate, which is to be a constant battle against water. Even at five, she hopes the baby is worth the trouble and she does not appreciate the awesome responsibility that has been placed on her young shoulders. Peggy does not seem to get much of a childhood, which explains why she seems angry and bitter at a young age.



# Chapter 6

## Chapter 6 Summary

In chapter 6, the town is building a new church for Reverend Philadelphia Thrower. The building is going up very quickly and Thrower is proud of the progress. He knows that even once the church is built, there is a great deal of spiritual work that needs to be done. The one person who is not helping to build the church is Alvin Miller Sr., and Thrower questions Faith about his continued absence. She makes excuses for him; however, she is unable to provide one for today. Faith asks Thrower to drop the subject just as she notices Alvin Jr. playing near the construction site.

They argue for a few more minutes about religion and science versus magic such as hexes. Then Faith scolds Alvin Junior and Calvin for wrestling near the building of the church and getting in the way of the workers. Thrower is worried about the souls of the people in the town, but he knows he is doing the right thing; after all, he has seen the Visitor. He remembers his vision of the west being overrun by nonbelievers and the Visitor appearing and telling him to go do God's work in the wilds of America.

After getting permission from the Scottish Church to move to America and build a church, he moved to the Vigor Township to start his worship. Thrower knows that Alvin Miller's family is the first group of people he needs to try and convert because Alvin is well respected in the community and started the town.

The voice of David Miller interrupts his musings asking him to bless the ridgebeam they are about to raise and set in place. Alvin Junior asks if blessing a piece of wood is a type of charm, and Thrower explains he is not blessing the wood but asking for God's love and protection on the church and its congregation.

Measure and Wastenot lift the beam with the help of other men in the congregation. Once the beam is settled on top of the church, Thrower and everyone else go inside to admire the work. As Measure is nailing the beam in, it jerks up and away and starts to fall towards the ground where Alvin Jr. is standing. The boy is almost crushed but the beam splits in two and falls on either side of the six-year-old boy. Breathing a sigh of relief, Faith scoops up her son while Thrower tries to understand how such a miracle occurred.

Faith promises to not let Alvin Jr. anywhere near the church, especially since Thrower calls Alvin the devil's spawn. Thrower reaches over to feel Alvin's head to double-check for any strange bumps or marks and finds a perfectly average child's head. After the incident, the men go back to work and the broken ridgebeam disappears.



## Chapter 6 Analysis

Thrower, the pastor in Vigor Community is watching the Miller family and the locals build the church in chapter six. He is extremely egotistical and cannot understand any other beliefs but his own. Thrower thinks everyone in the America's is a heathen and needs to be saved. He believes in religion and science and feels the belief in magic to be a drain on society.

Faith is the only believer in the family, and while the rest of the children are helping build the church, Thrower knows they do so reluctantly. Alvin Senior is a particular problem because they have already had an argument about religion and magic. Thrower knows that if he can't convince the Miller family to stop using magic and see only his point of view, his work in the town is lost.

When Thrower calls Alvin Junior the devil's spawn, the family is quick to respond and Wastenot says that is hysteria, thus mimicking Thrower's words about superstition. That he can call a child a name and be so mean towards his flock shows that his behavior is not truly Christian. Thrower is swayed by his own ego and his belief in himself and acts poorly towards others, foreshadowing his future evil acts towards the Miller family and his being swayed to do evil by the Visitor.

Also, when Thrower checks Alvin's head for any marks of strangeness and finds a perfectly "normal" head, Faith points out that nobody is that "perfectly normal." Alvin Junior seems to be a paradox, which indicates how special he truly will be.



# Chapter 7

## Chapter 7 Summary

Alvin Sr. brings the ridgebeam home in chapter seven to examine the pieces. The rest of the family gets out of his way while he puzzles over the wood. Alvin is tired of all the hugging and the attention his father is giving the pieces of wood. Amazingly, it seems the only normal person in the house right now is Calvin, as every one else is acting even stranger than Calvin. Alvin does not want to hang out with Calvin who is always following him around and just watching him, but he is unable to complain because his mom tells him to be nice to his brother.

Alvin Sr. asks Measure if he is sure that he got all the pieces of the ridgebeam and Measure's sarcasm angers Faith, who proceeds to give him a lecture. Everyone is quiet during the yelling until Alvin Jr. starts laughing at one of his mom's outrageous statements. His laughter breaks the tension and everyone laughs. After the moment of hilarity is over, everyone goes upstairs to bed.

On his way up the stairs, Alvin Jr. decides to tease his older sister Matilda and pokes her in the rump. The twins find it hysterical but his sister screams and promises revenge. Alvin realizes he needs to use the outhouse, so he hurries out to do that and then goes back to his room. As he is pulling on his nightgown for bed, he feels prickles all over his skin. Hearing a giggle, he realizes the girls put pins in his nightgown. Alvin can talk to roaches and knows how much the girls hate them. Since he is angry at his sisters, Alvin sends the roaches in his room to the girl's beds, where many are stomped on by his sisters.

A few minutes later, after Anne leaves his room promising the worst kind of revenge, Alvin senses a figure in the room. The man is bright and shining, so Alvin calls him the Shining Man. The man cuts his hand deliberately, which causes Alvin to see everything from the perspective of the roaches. Alvin feels terrible and thinks the Shining Man is showing him that he should not hurt something for his pleasure.

Unable to sleep, Alvin listens to his mom and dad argue about the beam that almost killed him. Alvin Sr. explains that water in the beam caused it to break and this is the fourteenth attempt by water to kill Alvin. They argue about religion because Faith feels that angels are watching over Alvin Jr., but Alvin Sr. disagrees. In the end, Faith lays down an ultimatum that Alvin Sr. must help with the church or their marriage is over. The next day, Alvin Sr. and Jr. work on the altar for the church.

## Chapter 7 Analysis

Alvin Sr. is sure that there is something in the ridgebeam that provides a clue to the reason that the beam fell on Alvin Jr. Alvin Jr. is confused because everyone is so tense and seems to be hugging and making a huge deal of his accident. His family continues



to shield him from the dangers that occur around him. Alvin Jr. senses something is strange but still considers himself a normal kid and does not realize how much his family protects him so that he is able to live a "normal" childhood.

Later that night, Alvin Jr. decides to use his ability to speak to roaches to send them in to torture his sisters. This decision is not without consequences, and a Shining Man appears to teach Alvin Jr. right from wrong. Alvin is given a vision that makes him feel he is a roach and he sees the world from their perspective. The boy realizes that he murdered the roaches by sending them to certain stonping death. The Shining Man also uses the example of a Red killing for food, so that Alvin Jr. learns that some deaths are necessary, but only if they serve a valid purpose. Alvin takes the time to analyze everything he has learned from his experience, the Shining Man, and his parents, and knows that he will never choose to hurt another living thing for a selfish purpose again. Despite his young age, Alvin is quick to do the best he can for all living things, which foreshadows his importance in improving life in the future.

After the visit, Alvin hears his parents arguing about the ridgebeam and religion. Alvin Sr. is angry that water is continuing to attempt to kill Alvin Jr. and knows the war is far from over. Eventually, the family is going to have to tell Alvin Jr. that water is killing him, which may force him to grow up sooner rather than later. Faith thinks that Alvin Jr. is protected by a guardian angel; however, Alvin Sr. scoffs at the idea. They seem to both be partially right, because Peggy is protecting Alvin Jr. but she is not technically an angel. Maybe the guardian angel can help Alvin Jr. enjoy his childhood a while longer.

Later, when Alvin Sr. and Jr. are working on the altar, a hint of another of Alvin's abilities is shown. He is able to fit things together and make things with ease. Alvin Jr. already seems to be quite powerful and he is seen to have at least two abilities, which indicates the kind of power he may have in the future.





# Chapter 8

## Chapter 8 Summary

Reverend Thrower is going to visit Eleanor and Armor Weaver in chapter eight. Armor is very religious, which appeals to Thrower because he can talk about his profession and God all evening with Weaver.

The Weavers own a store that sells to the many farmers in the area. Armor Weaver tells Thrower that it took his life savings to build such a large inventory in the store. Thrower asks Armor how the locals pay for the inventory and is told that it is a combination of trade and credit. Eleanor is pregnant, so as long as they have enough food to eat, they are satisfied with the trade.

Armor is also trading knowledge so that he knows the area better than any other one person. He would like to be the government once the land is settled and ready to be "ruled." Eleanor is also learning the lay of the land and Armor explains what a huge help she is to his lifestyle.

After eating Eleanor's delicious meal, she leaves and Armor and Thrower talk about witchcraft. Apparently, Eleanor used to do certain things that Armor considered witchcraft but no longer does anything obvious with spells or hexes. Sensing some slight disagreements, Armor changes the subject to Thrower's church, but it leads to the superstition of the congregation. Armor tells Thrower that he needs to be careful about how he preaches or he'll not have a congregation.

On Thrower's way home, he runs into the Miller family, carrying the new altar. After the Miller family leaves the church, the Visitor appears to Thrower and tells him that just because the Alvin's built the altar, it does not make them Christians. The Visitor consecrates the altar and tells Thrower that Alvin Jr. needs to serve him by the time he is fourteen or he will be destroyed.

## Chapter 8 Analysis

Thrower is over at Eleanor and Armor's house in chapter eight. Eleanor is from the Miller family, so she might have a special power that Thrower does not approve of, so it is surprising that he is so comfortable. Armor is apparently highly religious and his views are similar to Thrower's, so he justifies eating there because he has someone to talk to on an intellectual level, plus Eleanor is a wonderful cook. Once again, Thrower's ego is obvious and he seems to feel that only those that agree with his viewpoint have any intelligence.

Armor does seem to have a few different views than Thrower, which is evident when Armor tells the priest that he considers Eleanor his equal helpmate and he her helpmate as well. The Reverend considers Armor "henpecked" when he hears this, as he feels



the man should be the total boss of his wife. This is Armor's one redeeming characteristic, because it turns out he once called his wife a witch and she is forbidden to have anything to do with her families "magic." The reader knows that Eleanor is probably more subtle with her magic and that may eventually cause problems between her and her husband. When Armor says the only thing more important than his wife is the bible, it foreshadows him turning on Eleanor for his belief in God.

After Thrower leaves the Weaver's house, he gets a special delivery in the form of an altar from the Miller's. After the altar is dropped off, the Visitor arrives to talk to Thrower. He touches the altar and says that it now is aligned with him, which means the altar is now a force for evil. Also, the Visitor orders Thrower to get Alvin Jr. on their side or he will be killed. Thrower feels momentary doubt about the Visitor because he threatens the child; however, he decides to ignore that qualm as he is so enthralled with the Visitor. Even though Thrower may wonder why an angel would want to harm a child, he agrees to do all he can to save Alvin. He is easily swayed by the Visitor and does not seem to be able to think and analyze on his own when the "angel" is around. One has to wonder who the Visitor is and why he has so much influence over the Reverend.



# Chapter 9

## Chapter 9 Summary

Taleswapper is wandering the land in chapter nine, amazed at the changes of the landscape over the last few years. As more and more people clear the land for crops and homes, the vast areas of forest he is accustomed to are becoming harder to find. Looking into the distance, he sees a large building and walks in that direction.

Near the river, Taleswapper sees several buildings, including one marked Weavers. Knocking on the door, he examines the baskets of herbs hanging on the porch and notices a hex for protection on their bottoms. Armor Weaver answers the door and asks why Taleswapper is lying on his porch floor looking up. Taleswapper says that he trades his knacks for food and shelter, which causes Armor to say they need no help.

Eleanor appears behind her husband and says that they have adequate food to share their dinner, but Armor tells Taleswapper that this is a Christian home. Armor feels that anyone that can walk around unprotected in the wilds like the storyteller does must use magic, and he will not have that in his home. Eleanor gives up trying to get her husband to be nice and tells Taleswapper to go to her father's house, Alvin Miller.

Before going to the Miller's home, he stops at the church. Taleswapper notices that the dark altar seems to have been touched by evil and is shocked that such a thing exists in a church. The preacher arrives and welcomes Taleswapper until he tells Reverend Thrower that the altar is marked by the devil. The preacher does not believe him and says that Taleswapper is a liar and chases him out of the church.

Walking out of the church and over several bridges, Taleswapper sees the Miller house. He keeps walking down the hill away from the house and realizes there is a ward on the home. He feels he is being pushed toward a stone building so he decides to go there. He sees two boys inside playing and a man standing overhead about to throw a pitchfork at them. Worried about the danger, he yells, just as the man pushes the pitchfork into the hay. Introducing themselves as Alvin Miller Sr., Alvin Jr., and Calvin, they welcome Taleswapper to their home.

He spends the evening getting to know the family, their beliefs in religion and magic, and in Alvin Senior's case, his lack of religion. Taleswapper also explains a little about himself and how he goes around telling stories and learning new stories from others to pass along. Alvin Jr. is excited to learn more tales and asks Taleswapper about Ben Franklin, who he loves to talk about, since he lived with him for six years.

## Chapter 9 Analysis

Taleswapper is surprised by how much of the land is populated and that there are farms and clearings visible in every direction. He is frustrated that his visions have not been



clear lately, and the reader learns they have been slipping from him before he can discern the meaning of his visions and dreams.

One of Taleswapper's remembered conversations is with Old Ben and took place back in '85 when he was not quite thirty. Ben asked him how you know when you see a glorious light, whether it is a sign from God or the devil. This conversation makes the reader think about the brilliant light that both Thrower and Alvin Jr. have seen. Thrower's light has him do evil acts while Alvin's Shining Man wants him to think about the consequences of using his power for his own gain rather than for the good of others. This foreshadows the fact that it is hard to distinguish between good and evil by a "heavenly" light, but instead you must look at the acts the person in the light is asking you to perform.

When Taleswapper walks to the nearest large building, he notices the strong hexes on the front porch. He thinks it is strange that the hexes seem to be hidden but learns that Armor, the husband in the family, is a strong Christian and does not want magic performed in his home. The fact that Eleanor is using her magic in secret against her husband's wishes foreshadows Armor getting angry at her deception and leaving her.

When Taleswapper then goes to the church and tells Thrower that the altar is touched by the devil, he vehemently denies this possibility and chases Taleswapper out of the church. Even with strong evidence that the Visitor is evil, Thrower refuses to believe he could be wrong about the fact that he is being visited by an angel from God. Thrower's elevated ego and belief that he knows best blinds him to the fact that the devil is using him for his own evil purpose.

Taleswapper leaves the church, upset by his reception at the two places he has been in town and wonders if he should leave. The town thus far seems to be a dangerous place for "good" people and the reader worries what may happen to Alvin Jr. if he stays in the town. As Taleswapper approaches the Miller's home, he keeps walking away and wonders what kind of strong magic has him walking down the hill away from the home. This power shows just how strong the whole Miller family is and it seems most of them have some knack. It is not surprising that young Alvin, as the seventh son of a seventh son, is so unusual.

Once Taleswapper is welcomed into the Miller family, he now sees a loving, wonderful, close knit family. When Alvin asks about Ben Franklin, Taleswapper wonders how the boy knows to ask about the person he most likes to talk about. He sees almost right away how special Alvin Jr. is, and the reader knows that Taleswapper is going to have a good as well as an important impact on Alvin's life.



# Chapter 10

## Chapter 10 Summary

Alvin Jr. wakes from a nightmare on a Sunday in chapter ten. He hates Sundays because you must be quiet and not play, and he doesn't like to kneel and get preached to about the fires of damnation. Alvin Jr. does not hate religion, he just hates Reverend Thrower who hovers over him in school, waiting for any excuse to hit him with the cane. Certain parts of religion strike Alvin as funny, and Measure warns him that their mother and Thrower are going to beat him for his behavior.

Normally, Alvin Jr. didn't have any problem getting dressed, but on Sundays, the correct clothes did not appear. He is taking hours to get ready and his mother is angry and yelling that he missed breakfast. Taleswapper offers to make sure that Alvin Jr. makes it to church on time, and Faith agrees.

Taleswapper and Alvin Jr. take a shortcut to church and Alvin explains that his father thinks Thrower is an idiot and that is why he isn't going to church with them. Taleswapper doesn't immediately go to church and instead recites a poem to Alvin Jr. Alvin asks Taleswapper if he sees the devil in their church and is frustrated when another poem is recited. While Taleswapper does not lie, it is difficult to get a direct answer. Taleswapper explains to Alvin Jr. the impact of words, which causes Alvin Jr. to have a terrible vision. Avoiding the discussion of his vision, Alvin tells Taleswapper he had a vision about a Shining Man.

While Taleswapper and Alvin talk, Alvin is fiddling with something in his hand. When Taleswapper grabs his wrist and Alvin drops the item, Taleswapper explains that his ability to make something is special and wards off the Unmaker. He tells Alvin that the Unmaker is the enemy of everything and that Alvin's job is to fight the evil.

Alvin explains to Taleswapper that in some part of his mind he has always known that he must make things faster than the Unmaker can destroy them. Alvin Jr. continues to question Taleswapper and is thrilled that he is taken seriously and does not get angry at him like Thrower. Taleswapper also confides in Alvin that he has a book at home to keep track of any proverbs he hears. Not only does he write in the book, but others write in the book, including Ben Franklin. Alvin is excited and wants to read what Ben wrote in the book.

As Alvin is dragging Taleswapper back to the house, they discuss if Ben is a maker, and apparently they disagree. Ben does not think he is a maker but he does think the most important thing he ever did was coin the term American. The term helped unify everyone in the states, giving everyone in the nation a sense of belonging and partnership, preventing a war among the states.



At home, Faith is angry that Alvin did not make it to church, but Taleswapper takes the blame. Furious, she makes Alvin sing hymns to her while she makes dinner. At dinner, Alvin Sr. announces that they are going to get a millstone tomorrow for Taleswapper.

After dinner, Alvin Jr. looks at Taleswapper's book and notices a shining light on one page. A five-year-old girl wrote that a maker is born, which shocks the family. Taleswapper could not remember the name of the child who wrote the words and he also tells them she wrote them in there when he wasn't looking. Alvin Jr. hopes that someday he can hear the girl's story. Right then the boy senses the Unmaker and knots his shirt tails to make something to chase the evil away.

## Chapter 10 Analysis

Alvin Jr. is having nightmares and wakes in a sweat in chapter ten. He used to tell his parents about the nightmares, but they dismissed his fears as normal growing pains. The reader wonders if Alvin's nightmares are actually predictions of the future and if it is another developing power.

Sundays are his least favorite day because he must go to church. It is not religion that Alvin hates, but Reverent Thrower, who seems to be looking directly at him when preaching of death and damnation. Thrower seems to show Alvin Jr. unwarranted hatred, and this foreshadows an attempt to destroy the boy.

Alvin Jr. recognizes that his mother is highly religious and would be very angry if he misses church, but he can say mean things to Thrower and his father may not beat him that hard. The difference in their religious beliefs and attitudes toward Thrower may cause problems for the family and Alvin Jr. in the future.

The reader notices another one of Alvin's powers, when he is being slow getting ready for church and Taleswapper offers to make sure he gets there on time. Faith is ready to yell at them both but Alvin Jr. subtly signs a calming on her, like his sister Eleanor did on her husband Armor Weaver. Alvin appears to have the same powers as his family and powers unique to himself.

When Alvin Jr. and Taleswapper stop before going to church, Alvin Jr. notices that the poems Taleswapper recites makes the landscape around them change to fit the words. Taleswapper's words cause good things to happen around him, but when Alvin Jr. thinks about what Thrower says in church, he imagines horrible evil happening around him. The effect their words have on the world around them continues to distinguish the good guy from the bad guy.

Alvin Jr. discovers that he is a Maker, someone who fights the Unmaker, who wants to destroy everything. Taleswapper explains that the Unmaker is even more evil than the devil as the devil does not actually want everything destroyed or there would be nothing and nobody to convert to serve him. The devil does not realize how dangerous the Unmaker is to his own plans, so he continues to serve him. Poor Alvin now has to worry about water, the devil, and an evil greater than the devil, the Unmaker. Considering that



for his whole life he has been taught about God and the devil, it must be difficult to realize there are greater evils in the world and that he is destined to fight a bigger evil than the devil.

When Alvin Jr. is questioning Taleswapper, he realizes that if something doesn't make sense to Alvin, he doesn't believe it, which is why he doesn't like Thrower. Thrower doesn't take the time to answer his questions and just gets mad at him, so everything feels false coming from a man who refuses to have a discussion with him. Thrower is taking the wrong approaching to make friends with Alvin Jr., and this foreshadows that the boy is not going to be swayed to Thrower's side.

Faith is so angry that Alvin Jr. missed church that she says she sometimes wishes the boy was not born. Alvin is upset and Taleswapper chides her quickly and she says she does not mean it. Words seem to be extremely powerful, and a joke or a momentary lapse can hurt worse than any physical act. Everyone needs to be mindful of what they say or it might come true or cause something horrible to happen.

Later that night, Alvin Jr. looks at Taleswapper's book and sees a brilliant light on one of the pages. Alvin Sr. is furious when the boy sees light and tries to stop him from continuing his search for the bright page. The reader wonders if he is afraid Alvin Jr. may learn something that might hurt or force him to grow up too soon. When Alvin Jr. finds the page and it says a Maker is born, the look that Taleswapper and his mother exchange indicates that they suspect who the Maker is and who wrote the words. Considering Peggy is an innkeeper's daughter and is the only five-year-old girl at the birth of Alvin Jr., it is easy to deduce that she knew Alvin is a Maker. She knows that he is needed to fight the Unmaker and save the world, which is why she is so willing to protect Alvin.



# Chapter 11

## Chapter 11 Summary

Taleswapper is getting ready to help get the millstone in the morning in chapter eleven. With the help of some of the Miller children, he prepared the millhouse without help from Alvin Sr. to receive the millstone. He worries about the fight he feels is coming between the Red and the locals while he gets ready. Alvin Miller scoffs at his fears as he feels the Indians are only interested in whiskey, not war.

After breakfast, Taleswapper and the Miller's head off to the quarry to get the millstone. Alvin Junior is looking for a good stone to cut and Taleswapper is amazed that such a young boy can find the correct stone and cut it. Taleswapper asks if Alvin Sr. is the seventh son and if Alvin Jr. is the seventh son of a seventh son and receives confirmation. While Alvin Jr. works on the stone, Taleswapper tells everyone stories about politicians. In turn, the Miller family opens up to him a bit more and tells Taleswapper about their various knacks.

Admiring Alvin Junior's work on the stone, Taleswapper is continually amazed at his knack. Alvin Sr. and Taleswapper sit down to talk about water and its desire to destroy Alvin Jr., and they question if the boy is good or evil. Alvin Sr. wonders the same thing but he thinks the water is the evil because Alvin Jr. seems to be able to distinguish right from wrong and accepts punishment when he is wrong.

Alvin Sr. tells him a story of a friend who is sometimes forced by some power greater than himself to almost kill his son, which makes them wonder if some children are not meant to grow up. Taleswapper tells Alvin Sr. that somebody is obviously watching over the boy or he would be dead by now. Taleswapper suggests that he send Alvin Jr. away to help keep him safe.

The next morning, Taleswapper watches Alvin cut the stone and realizes he has quite a knack with stone. He can understand why he is the one to do the cutting. Taleswapper is amazed that the stone is cut on the back as well and in the quarter dress pattern he had shown Alvin Jr. After the stone is free, Alvin Sr. tries to send Alvin Jr. home, but he refuses and they all travel home with the stone. As they get to the millhouse, Taleswapper noticed that Alvin Jr. is no longer beside him and panics. He sees Alvin Jr. just as the stone heads straight for him and attempts to push the boy out of the way. Unfortunately, Alvin's one leg gets hit by the stone and is badly mangled as well as broken. Later that evening, everyone is worried that an infection will take his life; however, Taleswapper convinces the child that he must use his gift to fix his leg. Alvin at first refuses but Taleswapper convinces him that it is not a selfish act for his own gain, but for mankind's benefit because his life needs to be saved to fight the Unmaker.





## Chapter 11 Analysis

While the Miller family and Taleswapper travel to the quarry to cut the millstone, Alvin Sr. talks bitterly of water. They plan to use a new device that does not involve water to get the stone back to the millhouse. Alvin Sr. is constantly watching for any signs of water attacking his son and worries that even the rain may start unexpectedly and snatch his son away. The rest of the family seems to know and understand their father's concerns, but Alvin Jr. still seems to be oblivious to the threat.

At the quarry, Taleswapper is unable to take the silence and tells everyone stories about important political figures. This leads to a discussion about Armor Weaver, who the Miller boys say wants to be the king or even God if he could be. Their dislike of Armor is evident, which indicates future problems between their family and their brother-in-law. Part of the dislike stems from his dislike of Eleanor's knacks, and Taleswapper earns their respect by telling them he knows she still uses her abilities but just hides it from others. Taleswapper seems to be a good man who knows when to keep quiet. This discussion also foreshadows Armor's outrageous ego and ambition, as well as future problems between him and his family-in-law.

Alvin Jr. starts to cut the millstone free and Taleswapper is once again amazed at how quickly and cleanly the stone breaks. He wonders if the stone is too soft and the other Millers laugh at his disbelief. Once again the group sees how powerful Alvin Jr. is and how oblivious he is to the full extent of his powers.

When the group gets back to the millhouse with the stone, Alvin Jr. sees the huge stone heading towards him, and it breaks in half to slide by him. The boy is so upset at the stone breaking that it reforms immediately and ends up hurting his leg. Ironically, Peggy is probably trying to protect him, but Alvin Jr. cannot bear the thought of the stone he worked so hard on being broken and mentally orders it back together. Alvin Jr. needs to learn of the threats against him so that he does not counteract his guardian angel's help.

Faith sews her son's leg back up as much as possible but knows that infection could kill the child. When Taleswapper suggest to Alvin Jr. that he fix himself, he refuses to go against the Shining Man's lesson. This shows the reader that Alvin Jr. takes all his lessons to heart and hopes that he is never swayed by evil. Eventually, Taleswapper shows Alvin Jr. that his death is what the Unmaker wants, so helping himself is fighting true evil.



# Chapter 12

## Chapter 12 Summary

Alvin decides to work on healing his leg in chapter twelve. He is able to heal most of the leg but he causes himself to bleed a great deal while working on the leg. Alvin's family and Taleswapper come in the next morning to find his leg almost healed. Each one takes turns examining the leg and stating their amazement at the boy's rapid healing.

Taleswapper and Alvin Sr. talk about Alvin Jr. being sent away to prentice to a blacksmith in another town, knowing that the boy needs to be protected by someone other than themselves. Calvin comes in a few minutes after Alvin Jr. overhears this conversation and Alvin tells Calvin they are sending him away. Calvin does not believe they'll send the seventh son away.

Eleanor gets home from her parent's house and tells Armor the good news about her brother's leg. Armor says her family is touched by the devil and that only witchery could make the leg be almost healed in two days. Eleanor yells at her husband and he takes back his horrible words and she tells him that the family is sending Alvin Jr. away.

Taleswapper prepares to leave and is amazed at all that he is taking with him and how much better he feels after his stay with the Miller family. He knows he gave the family some wonderful gifts as well, including a wood burning he made of their oldest son, Vigor, from a vision he had of the boy's face. Taleswapper goes to say goodbye to Alvin Jr., who is upset that he is not able to write in the book. Alvin Jr. also tells Taleswapper that there is an unseen problem in his leg that is slowly killing him. Taleswapper assures the boy is capable of fixing the spot and the solution will come to him soon. Taleswapper leaves and as he walks he wonders if Alvin Jr. will ever write in the book.

## Chapter 12 Analysis

Alvin is attempting to work on his leg but is finding it is not as simple as stone. Knowing very little about anatomy makes it difficult and he causes himself to bleed a great deal because the tissue is unable to accept the rapid flow of blood. Once he realizes this and slows the flow down, the skin his mother sewed back on begins to revive. As he helps the layers to grow, the outward leg looks healed within a day but the inward part still needs work. Alvin is learning that he can fix almost anything, including making repairs to his body if he can figure out how something works. By looking at his good leg in his mind, he sees how to repair the bad leg. Alvin's mind powers are amazing and his powers seem to expand as he challenges himself to do more complicated things.

The next day, Alvin's injury appears healed to his family and they are amazed and shocked. Faith immediately attributes the healing to God; however, Alvin Sr. reacts angrily and says maybe it is the boy, not God who did healing and is sarcastic about her always giving God the credit for anything good that happens. Alvin Sr. seems to be



covering his fear for his son's life and his fear of his son's powers with sarcasm and anger. He wants to be happy but is worried what is going to happen with their lives as the boy gets older.

Alvin Sr. and Taleswapper talk about sending Alvin Jr. away to be safe and prentice with a blacksmith. Ironically, this is the same blacksmith whose ching, ching noise wakes little Peggy, who then warns the town when the Miller family is stuck in the Hatrack River. Taleswapper seems to be helping Alvin's life come full circle. Maybe he subconsciously knows that Alvin Jr. needs to be around an element that fights water such as a torch like Peggy.

Later, Eleanor and Armor fight over her family and the fact that Alvin Jr. is miraculously healed. Armor is angry because he feels that he has to compromise his values about the witchcraft that he feels he has to overlook and learn to accept. He worries that Thrower is right and that the family is friends with the devil and the child is a minion of the devil. When Eleanor starts to cry, the softer side of Armor is shown and he apologizes to his wife. Once again the reader sees how his beliefs conflict with his love for his wife, and eventually this will cause serious problems in their marriage.

Taleswapper is leaving the Miller home and he knows he is richer in material things and stories. He worries that something may happen to Alvin Jr. before he makes it to leave and prentice with the blacksmith. Taleswapper's last thought when leaving town is to wonder if Alvin Jr. is ever going to be able to write in his book and that foreshadows the long, hard path Alvin Jr. has in front of him.



# Chapter 13

## Chapter 13 Summary

The Visitor and Thrower are arguing about Thrower not having convinced young Alvin to share his own beliefs in chapter thirteen. Thrower is not aware that the Miller family plans on moving away and the Visitor is quick to point out that he has not converted the boy to their side yet and doesn't have much more time. If the boy isn't converted, the Visitor wants him dead, so he uses the bible against Thrower to show that the Lord approves of killing if the reason is justified.

Family members have been taking turns sitting with Alvin, who has a high temperature. When Measure sits with him, he whistles a melody that has no repeats and is like a map the boy can follow and helps him to see his bad spot in his leg. Alvin realizes he cannot fix it, but if someone will cut out the bad spot then he may make repairs.

Armor is still upset about Alvin's miraculous healing and goes to the church to visit Thrower for spiritual council. After a quick discussion, they decide to visit the Miller family to see for themselves if the devil is inside Alvin Jr. Faith welcomes them both into the house, but Alvin Sr. quickly throws Armor out of the house for things he says about their witchery. Faith refuses to allow Thrower to be forced to leave, so he goes into the boy's room to exorcise the devil from Alvin Jr.

Alvin Jr. finds Thrower's attempts to remove the devil hysterical, and the funnier he finds it, the angrier Thrower seems to get. Eventually, the family tells Thrower that they are getting ready to perform surgery on Alvin Jr. and he volunteers to perform the surgery. The tools continue to disappear each time Thrower is ready to do the surgery and eventually he gives up and leaves. Measure whistles and performs the surgery per young Alvin's instructions and everything appears to be successful.

## Chapter 13 Analysis

The Visitor is reading Thrower's thoughts in chapter thirteen and is angry that Alvin Jr. is not on their side yet. When the reverend interprets one of the Visitor's statements, he is surprised that the Visitor seems to call himself an angel, and the Visitor quickly chastises the preacher for making an assumption. The Visitor is quick to point out that he did not call himself an angel, which is a tipoff that he is not an angel, but Thrower is too stupid to realize this.

Finally, the Visitor uses Thrower's faith in God to point out that God allows people to be killed and the preacher should not worry about killing Alvin Junior. It is interesting how Thrower's faith is being twisted. Also, when Thrower is praying to God and his tears burn the altar, he should have realized that the altar has been touched by the devil.



Armor arrives, as if a sign from God, and Thrower takes this to mean he should go take care of Alvin Junior. At the house, the family is getting ready to perform surgery on Alvin Jr. and he knows this is the perfect time to volunteer and kill the boy. It seems that a force stronger than the Visitor wants Alvin Jr. alive because the tools to perform the surgery disappear each time the surgery is about to begin, so the Reverend does not get the opportunity to kill the boy at this time.



# Chapter 14

## Chapter 14 Summary

Armor is furious that he is kicked out of the Miller's home in chapter fourteen. Eleanor is quick to attempt to make him feel better, but every calming word makes him furious. Eventually, he hurts her, and before he can beg forgiveness, she wards him away from her. Armor is angry that Eleanor performs witchcraft against him in his own home and runs from his house to the church.

Thrower is angry that he is unable to kill Alvin Jr. and surprised that Satan has so much power in the Miller home that they are able to make a man of God leave the house. The Visitor appears and yells at Thrower and calls him weak while continually changing shape, which makes Thrower feel small and insignificant in the face of such glory and power.

Armor hears Thrower praying for forgiveness for not killing Alvin Jr. and also realizes that Thrower is having visions. Thrower runs up to a window and puts his hand through it just as Armor walks over to stop him from hurting himself. To prevent more problems, Armor knocks Thrower unconscious and takes care of the bleeding. When he wakes, Thrower tells Armor that they must align themselves to remove the devil from the Miller family, and they make a pact to help each other.

## Chapter 14 Analysis

Armor is angry that Eleanor's family does not have more respect for his beliefs and manliness. He pushes his wife hard enough that she falls on the floor, but then he realizes the irony of trying to make himself a bigger man by hurting his wife and knows that this is not the Christian way he is trying to follow. Armor seems to have conflicting feelings and knows what he does is wrong, but his pride and ego continue to blind him to the meaning of a true Christian.

Armor might have apologized, but Eleanor performs a fending, preventing him from walking towards her or moving in her direction. Armor realizes that for her powers to be this strong she must be practicing her magic, and he knows that Eleanor is never going to stop being a witch. Knowing how he is going to react, Eleanor must have been afraid for her life and knows that Armor is never going to accept or forgive her. His helpmate attitude is not stronger than his version of his faith.

When Thrower attempts to kill himself in front of Armor and survives, he takes this as a sign that he still has a chance to destroy the Miller family and Alvin Jr., instead of realizing that God does not typically kill those who do not perform horrible acts. The preacher still thinks the Visitor is an angel, not the devil. Ironically, the biggest clue is when the Visitor transforms into various types of reptiles, which is a form the devil typically takes.



Armor joins forces with Thrower to help him in purging the devil from the Millers, not because he wants to perform a Godly action but because he wants his version of his wife back. It does seem as if Armor does love his wife in his own strange way, and this love may even be stronger than his belief in God. Perhaps he will even be willing to help kill a young boy for that love. Armor does not seem to be able to find a good balance between the love of his wife and his love for God.



# Chapter 15

## Chapter 15 Summary

In chapter fifteen, Taleswapper asks Makepeace Smith, the blacksmith, if he is willing to take Alvin Jr. as his prentice. Smith already has a prentice and is reluctant to take on a new one; however, his current one is planning to move to another town soon so there might be a place for Alvin. The blacksmith says he will take him if the boy is obedient and can be in the town by the first of April.

After talking to the blacksmith, Taleswapper visits the Inn to see young Peggy, but instead runs into Peg and Horace, her parents. Peg says that Peggy has become an angry, cold young woman who no longer lives with or gets along with her parents. Taleswapper goes looking for Peggy and finds her working in the local doctor's office.

Peggy is sharp and snippy with Taleswapper, but thaws somewhat when he answers right back without getting angry. Eventually, after a small conversation, she admits to taking care of Alvin Junior. She tells him that Alvin is not going to make it by town in April and that several futures have him dead by a Red or worse. They agree to join forces and protect Alvin until he is able to make it to the town and prentice with the blacksmith.

Meanwhile, both Alvin Sr. and Jr. are working at the mill, grinding peoples' flour. It seems the mill has become a big success and the father and son enjoy working at the mill together.

## Chapter 15 Analysis

Makepeace Smith, the first person to believe Peggy when she tells him about the family drowning in the river, is the blacksmith that may teach Alvin Junior. His life seems to continually go full circle and people that have helped to protect him in the past may continue to protect and help him in the future.

At the Inn, Taleswapper wonders where Peggy is and learns that she hides herself from the town as much as possible. She is conscientiousness about her duty to help people, but does so reluctantly. He makes a comment that a person who once had such a soft heart may have good reason to have turned bitter, and her family becomes defensive. The reader cannot help but wonder if they feel they may have contributed to Peggy's change in personality.

When he runs into Peggy, Taleswapper asks her if she is alright with the heavy burden of protecting Alvin Junior. She is both sad and glad at the burden that is making her life more difficult; however, Peggy knows that she is going to continue to protect the Maker. For the betterment of the world, Taleswapper agrees to help her whenever she needs it. After holding Peggy briefly to comfort her, Taleswapper leaves.





# Characters

## Little Peggy

Peggy is a young girl in the first part of the book and her grandfather sometimes calls her Margaret or Maggie. She is slight, smart, observant, and considers herself a bit wicked. Peggy carries around her doll Bugy wherever she goes and it seems to be her only friend besides her grandfather, Oldpappy. Despite her young age, Peggy is already an outsider in her community because of her ability to read people's innermost thoughts as well as see both past and future actions and consequences.

Peggy's father frequently hits her on the thighs with a hazel rod and calls her wicked, which causes her to retreat inward and withdraw from others. She believes that she is wicked because of her father and the community's reaction to her ability. As she grows up, Peggy becomes a reclusive, angry person who is bitter at her path in life. Despite her general anger at the world, Peggy is still hopefully enough to protect Alvin, the Maker.

At the age of five, Peggy is present at Alvin Junior's birth. When she touches his mother's stomach, she sees all the child's future paths lead to death by drowning. Knowing she can help the young child, she saves his birth caul in a box for future use in aiding him. Anytime Alvin is in trouble, Peggy attempts to help and sometimes even saves the child's life. She knows saving Alvin will make the future a better place.

Peggy grows up and becomes a sarcastic, reclusive young woman who lives alone. She reluctantly gives readings to others in the community, despite the fact they still view her with suspicion and distrust. Peggy also continues to watch over Alvin and has devoted much of her life so far to ensuring that he stays alive and well. Her responsibilities and abilities make her mature at a very young age.

## Alvin Miller Jr

Alvin Miller Jr. is a smart, sweet young boy. Before he is even born, the water in the Hatrack River tries to destroy him because he will be a dowser as the seventh son of a seventh son. Alvin is to be much more because he will also be a Maker. Of course, the Unmaker wants Alvin Jr. dead so that he can do his evil without someone opposing him. Once he is born, Alvin is saved by little Peggy when his birth caul keeps him from breathing. Peggy watches over Alvin using the birth caul that she saves.

Alvin is taunted frequently by his siblings and sometimes tries to pay them back with his own set of pranks. One day, he retaliates by convincing a lot of roaches to go into his female siblings beds. The roaches are quickly squashed by the others, which makes him feel bad that he sent them there.



A Shining Man appears to him and helps Alvin understand he should not use his powers for his own benefit but should help others instead. He says he will be good and tries very hard to think about what is best for others after the meeting with the Shining Man, which is quite remarkable for one so young. Fixing things and making them right again is Alvin's knack, and after the meeting with the Shining Man, he achieves this purpose even better.

Alvin also becomes good friends with Taleswapper when he comes to town. He learns a lot from the man, including information about the Unmaker, who he did not really know about before Taleswapper's arrival. Alvin tells Taleswapper that he has to make things faster than the Unmaker can break them down but Taleswapper says that is impossible.

## **Alvin Miller Sr.**

Alvin Miller is the seventh son in his family. He is a larger man with a little bit of fat that would disappear with a bit of hard work. Alvin likes hard work and used to own a mill and have a large house until they ran into problems with the weather and the government. He does not let the run of bad luck get to him, which shows his optimistic attitude.

Alvin is proud of his huge family and loves each of his kids, but he also knows a large family makes him wealthy in more ways than one. His family is close and loving and he also knows that he is lucky to have this much free labor. Alvin is practical, smart, resourceful, and loving, essentially a good family man.

Alvin is not highly religious and seems to actually avoid organized religion; however, he has a highly developed sense of right and wrong. He tries to raise his family to be strong, loyal, and to respect others, which allows his children to make the right decisions about right and wrong as they get older.

Despite his dislike of Reverend Thrower, when his wife insists he help out with the church, he agrees to build an altar to keep harmony in his family. Alvin and Alvin Jr. continue to develop their relationship by working on the altar together and grow closer than ever. Alvin does everything he can in his life to honor and protect his family.

## **Faith Miller**

Faith Miller is pregnant with Alvin Jr. in the first few chapters of the book. She and her family are traveling across country to get a fresh start. Knowing how close she is to having a baby, Faith shows her stubborn side when she refuses to leave the wagon during a precarious situation. Her stubbornness and pregnant state result in the death of her oldest child, who dies while attempting to save her and her unborn child's life.

Even after the death of her oldest son, she bravely faces life with a positive attitude. Faith refuses to blame her new son for the death of her oldest child, despite the fact that she may have been able to leave the wagon if she hadn't been pregnant. Her ability to



know that everything happens for a reason and not place blame makes her an excellent wife and mother.

Faith is also a religious woman and tries to teach her family good Christian values. Even though she believes in God, she does not dismiss her and her family's abilities as anything less than a wonderful gift. Reverend Thrower tries to convince her that the superstitions she and her family believe in are evil and hysteria but she does not feel this to be true.

## **Reverend Philadelphia Thrower**

Reverend Philadelphia Thrower is the reverend of the church in the Vigor Township. He is originally from Scotland and graduated from the University of Edinburgh. Thrower's huge ego makes him feel that his beliefs come directly from God, and that his viewpoint is the only one. His ego gets in the way of his bonding with the people in Vigor town that he is attempting to save. Thrower seems to make enemies easily by being too forceful in pushing his ideals on everyone else. He turns Alvin Sr. against him when he gives a sermon against the peoples' beliefs in knacks, hexes and similar type "hysteria."

He seems to dislike Alvin Jr. from the beginning and it is found that he is being encouraged to feel this by a Visitor he thinks is an angel. The Visitor says he must convert Alvin to his side or the boy will have to die. Thrower does not seem to suspect the Visitor's true identity, but when Taleswapper tells him the devil has touched his altar, Thrower says he is wrong. Here the reader suspects he knows the Visitor's true identity but does not care or perhaps he feels he is already in too deep with him and has to continue on his current path.

## **Taleswapper (Bill Blake)**

Taleswapper comes to Vigor town seeking work and new tales to tell. Telling stories and collecting stories is his knack and the reason for his nickname as well. After being turned down by Armor for work, shelter and tales, Eleanor Miller Weaver tells him to go up the track to Alvin Miller's (her father's) home and that he will give him work and shelter.

He does stop at the church before heading there, touches the altar, and tells the Reverend his altar has been touched by the devil, so the reader knows this is a special person with several knacks as well. Bill is welcomed by Alvin Miller and stays there while getting to know and like the family.

Taleswapper is quite impressed with young Alvin and knows he has to help save him, which is why he agrees to take a letter to the blacksmith near Fort Dekane asking if Alvin can be his prentice. This is where Peggy lives, so Alvin will be near her, which Taleswapper knows will be a good thing.



## **Vigor Miller**

Vigor Miller is Alvin Miller's oldest son and is a strong, smart, brave young man who dies early in the book. Vigor dies attempting to get the families' wagon and his mother Faith across a raging river. A tree heads for the wagon and he knocks the tree off course but is swept away in the process. He stays alive long enough for his youngest brother to be born, making the new brother the seventh son of a seventh son. He obviously loved both of his parents very much to sacrifice himself for his mother.

## **Armor Weaver**

Armor is Eleanor Miller's husband and believes magic is evil and forbids her to perform any. He is greatly influenced by Reverend Thrower and in the end turns against Eleanor.

## **Measure Miller**

Measure Miller is one of Alvin Miller's sons. He is a smart, aware boy, who is very careful and meticulous when performing tasks such as lifting the ridgebeam for Thrower's church.

## **David Miller**

David Miller is old enough to have his own wife and land by chapter seven and lives near the rest of the Miller family.

## **Wastenot/Wantnot Miller**

Wastenot and Wantnot Miller are the twin boys of Alvin and Faith Miller. Wastenot is protective of Alvin and is angry when Thrower calls Alvin Jr. the devils spawn.

## **Calm Miller**

Calm Miller is one of the older boys in the Miller family. Later in the book, he is living on his own land with his own wife and family.

## **Calvin Miller**

Calvin Miller is the youngest child of Alvin and Faith Miller. He follows Alvin Jr. around and stares at him constantly, making his brother uncomfortable.



## **Eleanor Miller**

Eleanor Miller is a strong-willed female who has a take charge attitude. When their mother is in labor after their harrowing struggle with the Hatrack River, she gives orders that everyone obeys as she helps their mother go to the Guester's house. Despite her young age at the time, everyone listens, stops fighting, and unifies as a family. Eventually, she marries Armor Weaver, who is highly religious and eventually turns on his wife for her "witchcraft."

## **Matilda Miller**

Matilda Miller is a snotty young woman who considers herself a lady and better than the rest of the kids in the family.

## **Mary Miller**

Mary Miller yells at Alvin Jr. not to sing dirty songs and is the youngest daughter of the Miller family.

## **Anne Miller**

Anne Miller is one of Alvin's sisters.

## **Beatrice Miller**

Beatrice Miller is close in age to Matilda and helps the other girls torment Alvin Jr.

## **Elizabeth Miller**

Elizabeth Miller is one of the daughters of Faith and Alvin Sr.

## **Oldpappy Guester**

Oldpappy is Peggy's grandfather on her father's side and he encourages and jokes with her whenever he gets the chance. He seems to have learned from his mistakes because he says he hit Horace with the hazel rod too much as a child, so now Horace is too quick to use the rod on little Peggy. He wants Peggy to understand that her knack as a torch does not make her wicked but makes her special.



## **Horace Guester**

Horace is Peggy's father and is an angry, vicious man. He berates his daughter and his wife and is also cheating on his wife with another woman. Horace gets angry when anyone lies or is "wicked" but has no problem being wicked himself and beating little Peggy.

## **Peg Guester**

Peg is Peggy's mother and she is a strong, quiet woman who feels a great sadness at life. Peg is a good midwife and is the one who delivers Faith's baby. Peg does seem to be depressed by the death of her other children at a young age when Horace talks about them dying when he is hitting little Peggy.

## **Unmaker**

The Unmaker is an evil that is trying to destroy Alvin through the people in his life and water. The Devil serves the Unmaker and is helping the Unmaker convert Alvin to the side of evil or destroy him.



## Objects/Places

### Hazel Rod

The hazel rod is what Peggy's father uses to beat her with if he feels she is lying.

### Chicken Coop

The chicken coop is where Peggy's family keeps the egg-laying chickens and where the reader learns that Peggy is afraid of one of the chickens named Bloody Mary.

### Bloody Mary

Bloody Mary is a very mean hen that hates everyone and destroys her own eggs as well. Little Peggy is scared of her with good reason and says Mary's heartfire is strong and mean and it is unusual for an animal to have such a strong heartfire.

### Bugy

Bugy is Peggy's straw poppet that she carries around with her, and occasionally she pretends Bugy can speak. Peggy uses the doll to convey thoughts and actions that she is too afraid to voice or perform.

### Wagon

The wagon is the only thing the Miller's have left after they lost their mill and house. The family's attempt to save the wagon results in their oldest son's death.

### Hatrack River

The Hatrack River is the where the Miller's oldest son Vigor dies trying to save his pregnant mother from dying. The river calms down once the rest of the family makes it to the shore. The baby, Alvin, will be a dowser, so the water wants to kill him as water hates dowsers.

### Heartfires

Heartfires are the auras around people, animals, and "things" such as fire, water, earth, and air. In these auras, little Peggy can see their innermost thoughts and even read some of their future and past.



## Birth Caul

The birth caul is a soft sac of skin that surrounded baby Alvin inside his mother's womb. The caul is what Peggy uses to see Alvin from great distances and protect him from harm.

## Carven Box

The carven box is a box that Oldpappy was given by his father who brought it to the colonies, and Oldpappy passes it on to Peggy. It is full of sentimental trinkets until Peggy dumps the box to store the newborn's caul inside. The box is used to keep and protect the caul, which is what Peggy uses to keep Alvin from being killed.

## Roaches

Alvin has an agreement with the roaches that if they do not climb into Calvin's or Alvin's bed, he will not stomp on them. He betrays their trust by sending them into his sisters' room where many are killed. Just the fact that he can communicate with such a small insect is odd in itself.

## The Visitor

The Visitor is a creature that appears to Reverend Thrower. Thrower thinks he is an angel but the reader learns that the visitor is evil.

## Reverend Thrower's Church

Reverend Thrower's Church is finally being built after three years of asking the Scottish Church to let him come to America to build a country church. He builds his church in Vigor town with the help of most of the residents; however, Alvin Sr. does not come to help.

## Ridgebeam

The ridgebeam falling in the church almost kills Alvin Jr. because the Unmaker causes it to be weakened by water.

## Spring House

The Spring House is a house with a spring running right through the center. Little Peggy seeks peace here as the water helps dull her torch ability.



## Altar

Alvin Sr. tells his wife he will build an altar for the church with young Alvin's help. He does not want the boy at the church anymore until it is finished. Later in the book, the Visitor touches the altar and says it is now his altar and turned for his purpose. Later, when Taleswapper touches the alter he knows it has been touched by the devil (the Visitor) and tells the Reverend, who will not believe him.



# Themes

## Maker Versus Unmaker

One of the main themes in the book is the Maker versus the Unmaker. Water, as a minion of the Unmaker, has been trying to destroy Alvin Junior before he is even born. His mother, while she is pregnant with him, is almost killed on the Hatrack River in Hio Territory. When he is being born, he almost drowns in the womb and then again almost dies from his own birth caul. Everyone and everything is made of water, so Peggy, the five-year-old present at his birth, is asked to not save the birth caul by the water within herself. Instead, she defies the water and saves the caul, thus committing her life to protecting the Maker. She knows that this child is able to fight the Unmaker and save the world from being undone.

Alvin does not know he is a Maker until he is ten years old, and even then does not understand the full extent of his purpose as a Maker. As he is growing up, Peggy and his family try to shelter him from the full scope of his powers as well as the danger to him from water. When a stranger named Taleswapper comes into town, Alvin learns more about his past and future in a short time than he has learned in almost ten years.

Taleswapper possesses a book in which people write the most important thing they have seen or done, and Peggy had written that a Maker had been born. This page glows when Alvin looks at it, which confirms to Taleswapper and Alvin that he is a Maker. Taleswapper explains to him that the Unmaker attempts to unravel the world and is more evil than the devil. He tells Alvin that if the devil were smart, he would align with God and fight the Unmaker, but instead he is in allegiance with the great evil.

Alvin tells Taleswapper that he has visions that make him afraid and he never gets a clear picture of the danger. He has a vision in front of Taleswapper and immediately starts to create something from the grass around him. Taleswapper explains that Alvin Jr. is making something anytime he has a vision because he is pushing the Unmaker away. Alvin attempts to make things faster than the Unmaker can destroy things. The hope is that someday Alvin is going to be powerful enough to make something that can destroy the Unmaker and save the world.

## Religion Verses Magic

One of the other important themes in the book is religion versus magic. There seems to be three different views about religion and magic. The first is that magic does not exist, only science and religion; the second is that magic exists but is the work of the devil and religion is the work of God; and the third is that magic is a gift from God and religion and magic can coexist if not for the crazy religious fanatics.

The Miller family seems to fall into the third category and believe that magic and religion can coexist. While Alvin Sr. seems to have a negative view of religion and especially of



Reverend Thrower, it is not quite clear whether he has a negative view of God, or if he just worries that the super religious people take a dim view of magic and may hurt his family. The rest of the Miller family dutifully go to church because their mom is an avid believer and knows that God gave them their magic to make the world a better place.

Unfortunately, some religious people in the community cannot accept magic or accept that magic is a gift from God. Armor, who is married to the oldest Miller daughter Eleanor, believes that witchcraft exists but is the work of the devil. He makes his wife promise to never use her magic. Armor deludes himself into believing that not performing magic makes the magic go away and makes her "safe" in the eyes of God. In the end, when Armor pushes her and performs an ungodly act, she uses her magic to protect herself. He leaves the house and her believing that her entire family has fallen under the influence of the Devil.

Thrower, the preacher in town, thinks that a belief in magic is superstition as well as the work of the Devil. He believes that everything can be explained by science or as possession by the devil. Thrower alienates many in his community by saying magic does not exist and telling them that God and a belief in magic cannot coexist. He tries to kill a young boy who he believes is possessed by the devil because he performs magic. Thrower's faith blinds him to the good and the bad in magic and religion. In the end, the belief in either to the exclusion of the other and the intolerance of both sides causes bad feelings between friends and families.

## **Working Together for a Better Future**

One of the other themes in the book is the importance of working together for a better future. The first example is when the Miller family is trapped on the Hatrack River. A young girl named Peggy warns a group of men that the family is going to die if the Miller family is left alone on the river. The men and the community band together to rescue them from the water, deliver Faith's child, and provide them with shelter until they are able to travel. If the family and the community had not worked together, Faith and her baby probably would have died.

Taleswapper also provides an example of how important working together as a community or as a nation can be. He tells the story about Ben Franklin coining the term American. Originally, different territories, states, and types of people were fighting among themselves; however, when Ben gives everyone on this side of the water the name America, it joins everyone together as a nation. They are no longer transplants from other countries but are now united under one name and nation. If he had not convinced everyone that this was a united country under the name America, the in-fighting would have caused many peoples' deaths.

Finally, Peggy and Taleswapper join together to help protect Alvin Junior. The Miller family is having a difficult time keeping Alvin Jr. safe. Peggy is helping by protecting Alvin from a distance, and when Taleswapper learns of her sacrifice, he offers to help.



All of these burdens are too much to bear alone, but as everyone learns to work together, a better, brighter future looks possible.



# Style

## Point of View

Seventh Son is written in the third person. The third person style enables the author to let the reader see more viewpoints than first person would allow. No character is in every chapter, so one person could not tell the story, which means that the first person narrative is not possible. For instance, little Peggy is in chapter 1, 3, 5, and 15 but not in any other chapters. Even the main character, Alvin Miller Jr., does not appear until chapter 5, when he is born.

Dialogue is important in this novel as it helps the reader form an idea of how the characters think and also helps us view events. The third person descriptions of people and places are enlightening as well.

The reader realizes that this is America, but from the names of places, the reader can infer almost from the beginning that it is an alternate fantasy world. In this reality, folk magic is alive and history has taken a different turn. By changing the names of places slightly, Card creates the impression of a familiar with a slight alteration. An example of this is the Wobbish River for Wabash and Hio for Ohio. He does keep some names the same, such as New Hampshire, so the reader can visualize a map of the US and know what the basic country looks like even though many of the boundaries and states are different.

## Setting

The novel is set in Colonial America. This fictional America's history is slightly different from US history, because some of the names of states and their borders are different, some events have changed and folk magic is believed in and practiced by many of the characters in this version. The majority of the story takes place in a locale called the Wobbish Territory.

The primary family in the book the Miller's, who live in a small town called the Vigor Township. The township is named after the family's oldest son Vigor, who dies trying to save their mom and their unborn baby brother.

Vigor dies when the family is traveling from New Hampshire to Wobbish Territory through Hio. Fictional Hio is Ohio. Their wagon gets stuck in the Hatrack River near the border of Hio. A young girl named Peggy sees the heartfires of the Miller family and knows they are in danger at the river. The townspeople hurry to help rescue the family, as most people here are quick to help.

The family travels on after the baby is born and they live and prosper in Wobbish Territory until their son Alvin, the child who Vigor saves, is eleven. Though it is against his will, as he loves his son, something is making Alvin Sr. want to harm Alvin Jr. So



realizing the dangers to his son, plans are made to send young Alvin back to Hio to prentice with the blacksmith. Ironically, the blacksmith is the same one whose noise woke Peggy up and allowed her to warn the town of the danger to the Miller family.

## Language and Meaning

The language of this novel has an old fashioned flavor through the use of the vernacular of colonial times. There are also made-up words that have to do with magic such as heartfire, torch, and knack. Little Peggy sees peoples' heartfire, which makes her a torch, and some people use their knack to make things happen, such as Alvin's ability to perfectly cut a millstone in a unique way. These magic words add a very different flavor to the book, and the reader knows from the beginning that there is something strange about some of the characters. There are also words used that are not common to most young people's speech such as seeper, rods, and pate, but the reader can generally figure out the meaning just from the context.

Descriptive passages are important to help the reader understand the time period and the perils of the time, as well as the true extent of magic and visions. In the book, Reverend Thrower says one thing in his speech but the reader learns he is hiding his true feelings and, of course, is not telling anyone of his "Visitor". If the reader had to depend solely on dialogue, one would not be aware of what is really happening in peoples' lives and of the thoughts in their minds.

Dialogue is equally important in the novel, and most of the people give a great deal of information about their personality in the dialogue. The dialogue flows well and is interesting as well as enlightening. Oldpappy tells Peggy to go to a secret place but not in the woods where a Red might take her scalp, so from this one can infer that the Indians are not friendly. He does not make a big issue of the danger, but just reminds her there is a potential Indian hazard.

The reader also sees through the book's dialogue that the Miller children have a sense of humor. One example of this humor is seen when the Reverend Thrower tells Faith Miller that the people's superstitions are hysteria. Later, Wastenot Miller turns the table on the Reverend by saying it is hysteria on the preacher's part to call Alvin Jr. the devil's spawn.

The main characters are described well, but the Reverend Thrower is particularly well-developed as the evil person in the book. This novel is imaginative and one does not have to wonder why it was so well received in 1987.

## Structure

This novel is fifteen chapters long and has 241 pages. The chapters are of varying length from only two pages for chapter two to thirty-four pages for chapter eleven.



The chapters have numbers as well as names that foreshadow a main event in the chapter. The book spans a period of ten years and proceeds in a logical, linear fashion. It does not have a lot of confusing flashbacks, which makes it a quick read.

The plot of the novel is about the growth of a young boy, Alvin Miller, and the significance of religion versus magic in his life. Alvin, little Peggy, and many of the other people in this book have what they call a knack. For instance, little Peggy can see peoples' thoughts, and in some cases, even their past and future. Alvin is able to make objects do strange things and can even fix people's bodies as well as fix his own leg. These talents improve as he gets older, as do Peggy's. The conflict comes in the form of water trying to kill him, Reverend Tower being against him, and finally the Unmaker is out to get him through the water and the Reverend.

The subplot in the book revolves around friends and family. Alvin is greatly influenced by his family and one particular friend, Taleswapper, who is very important in his life even though he is only at the Miller home a short while. He is the one who explains the Unmaker to Alvin and helps the boy understand that he is a Maker or fixer.

The book is quick to read, but some of the ideas can be a little puzzling at first as to what the character's knacks are all about. Alvin's talent is so involved that even by the end of the book the reader isn't sure his talents are fully understood.

The character development is not done through a great deal of self-reflection, but over the passage of time, one comes to know the characters and their traits. There is a great deal of dialogue that is very important to understanding the characters as well. After finishing this book, the reader wants to read the next one in the series.



## Quotes

"Most animals didn't have much heartfire, but Bloody Mary's was strong and made a poison smoke." Chap. 1, p. 1

"Besides, the lady that haunted his heartfire, she didn't have no clothes on, and Little Peggy knew that she'd be whipped for sure if she talked about people being naked." Chap. 1, p. 5

"If you were a family with plenty of strong backs and clever hands, it'd be good land, too, as long as the weather was with them and the Reds didn't raid them and all the lawyers and bankers stayed in New England." Chap. 2, p.7

"She had dreams of water even when she wasn't here—that was one of the things that made some folks say she was a seeper instead of a torch." Chap. 3, p. 9

"She saw the bits of their past that they most wished they could bury, and she saw the bits of their future that they most feared." Chap. 3, p. 10

"Just a split second that lasted a lifetime, Vigor's eyes wide with surprise, blood already leaping out of his mouth, spattering out onto the tree that killed him." Chap 4, p. 17

"The cost was too high. All his eyes could see, all the way home, was Vigor dangling in the grasp of the roots, tumbling through the current like a leaf caught up in a dust devil, with the blood seeping from his mouth to slake the Hatrack's murderous thirst." Chap. 4, p. 21

"God gave her special eyes, so she'd better see and give warning, or the devil would take her soul." Chap. 5, p. 24

"They made her afraid, because so much would depend on her, and how she used the birth caul that was still warm in her hands." Chap. 5, p. 30

"Three years ago, right after he earned his Doctor of Divinity degree, it had dawned on Thrower what harm the Lord Protector was actually doing. He remembered it as the turning point of his life; wasn't it also the first time the Visitor had come to him?" Chap. 6, p. 38

"'But that makes him devil's spawn,' said Thrower aghast." Chap. 6, p. 45

"A seventh son of a seventh son, a startling shape to the head, and the miracle—he could think of no other word—of the ridgebeam." Chap. 6, p. 47

"His knack for making things go just where he wanted, making them break just in the right place, understanding how things ought to be and helping them get that way?" Chap. 7, p. 63





"But if you keep on saying that conjuring don't work, well, I reckon most folks'll wonder why they should come all the way to church to hear the preaching of a plumb fool." Chap. 8, p. 84

"But in your heart , you'll bend everything toward this remarkable child, to win him to my cause. Because if he does not serve me by the time he is fourteen years of age, then I'll destroy him." Chap. 8, p. 89

"Then he came close enough to see he held the fork. Like a javelin, ready to cast." Chap. 9, p.107

"Then let me tell you the name of the nothing. It's the Unmaker." Chap. 10, p.127

"Only cause I'd used my knack to cause harm to others, just for my own pleasure,' said Alvin. 'I made a promise then, my most solemn vow, that I'd never use my knack for my own good. Only for others.'" Chap. 10, p.130

"And yet here was this boy who, by mere belief and desire, could cut stone like butter and give strength to his brothers." Chap. 11, p. 167

"They say he knew that old wizard Ben Franklin. And that atheist from Appalachee, Tom Jefferson." Chap. 12, p. 189

"The bad place on my bone, it's growing, but it ain't spread all over yet,' Alvin said. 'I can't make it better, but I reckon if somebody cut off that part of my bone and took it right out of my leg, I could heal it up the rest of the way.'" Chap. 13, p. 204

"Gradually Thrower realized that the Visitor had changed shape, that he had stretched himself, like a long slender beast, a lizard, an alligator, bright-scaled and shining, longer and longer, until finally the Visitor's body was so long that it circled the room, a vast worm that gripped its own tail between it's teeth." Chap. 14, p. 225

"I just wonder about a girl who once wrote in my book, A Maker is born. I wonder if she still keeps an eye on that Maker, now and then, so she can see how he fares." Chap. 15, p. 238

"Their thoughts were remarkably alike, as they worked silently together. This is what I want to do forever, each one thought. Rise in the morning, come to the mill, and work all day with him beside me." Chap. 15, p. 241



## Topics for Discussion

Why do you think the pious Reverend is swayed by evil? Do you think people with strong beliefs can be misled easier? Why or why not?

What caused Eleanor's husband to turn on her? Do you think he is justified? Do you think she should have used hexes without telling him? Why do you think this relationship fell apart?

Do you think that religion is causing more harm than good in this book? Do you think some of the family and relationship issues would have still occurred without religion? Discuss.

Is Alvin Jr. justified in feeling guilty about how he used the roaches? Do you think that insects should be treated with such equality? Do you think that this situation is just used as a lesson and should be a general guide on how to live life? Discuss.

Do you think that the idea of things such as the sun, earth, and water having their own "thoughts and feelings" is unusual? Does everything have a spirit? Discuss.

How do you think magic abilities would alter our history? Give an example and support your answer.

In the book, there is good and evil, including God and the Devil; however, there is also the power of the Unmaker. Do you think there is evil greater than the Devil, why or why not?