

The Sisters Brothers Study Guide

The Sisters Brothers by Patrick deWitt

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Contents

The Sisters Brothers Study Guide.....	1
Contents.....	2
Plot Summary.....	4
Chapter 1 Pages 1-18.....	5
Chapter 1 Pages 19-37.....	6
Chapter 1 Pages 38-58.....	7
Chapter 1 Pages 59-78.....	8
Chapter 1 Pages 79-98.....	9
Chapter 2 Pages 99-117.....	11
Chapter 2 Pages 118-140.....	13
Chapter 2 Pages 141-155.....	15
Chapter 2 Pages 156-167.....	17
Chapter 3 Pages 168-184.....	18
Chapter 3 Pages 185-197.....	19
Chapter 3 Pages 198-216.....	20
Chapter 3 Pages 217-234.....	21
Chapter 3 Pages 235-257.....	22
Chapter 3 Pages 258-276.....	23
Chapter 3 Pages 277-298.....	25
Chapter 3 Pages 299-309.....	26
Chapter 3 Pages 310-318 and Epilogue.....	27
Characters.....	28
Objects/Places.....	31
Themes.....	33
Style.....	35



Quotes.....37

Topics for Discussion.....39



Plot Summary

"The Sisters Brothers" is a novel by author Patrick deWitt. The story follows Eli and Charlie Sisters. The two men are brothers, who are also contract killers that work for the commodore. The Sisters Brothers set out for San Francisco, California to complete their next job for the commodore, which is to find and kill Hermann Kermit Warm. According to Charlie Sisters, the commodore wants him to take the lead on this particular assignment so the brothers don't encounter any of the problems they did on their previous job assignment.

The two brothers set out on their horses, Nimble and Tub, on the two-week journey to San Francisco. Even with Charlie acting as the lead for the job, the two brothers encounter obstacle after obstacle along the way. One of the biggest obstacles is Charlie Sisters himself. Charlie frequents saloons and typically ends his nights in a drunken stupor. Waking up with a hangover almost every morning, Eli Sisters heads to the chemist to buy some morphine to help Charlie feel better so they can continue on their journey.

Each person the brothers come into with and the experiences they have along the way transform and shape them as human beings. By the end of the novel, they collaborate with the man they are supposed to kill and kill the man that hired them. Both brothers change forever, turning in their careers as contract killers for a more traditional and quieter life.



Chapter 1 Pages 1-18

Chapter 1 Pages 1-18 Summary

It's 1851. The narrator, Eli, is sitting outside of the commodore's mansion waiting for his brother Charlie to come and tell him about the new job. The narrator is studying their two new horses, Tub and Nimble. Eli and Charlie's old horses burned up in a barn.

Eli finds out that the new job is to find a kill a prospector in San Francisco California, Herman Kermit Warm. Charlie produces a letter from the commodore's scout, Morris, to give Charlie an Eli details on the target. They learn he is a solitary man that likes to frequent the saloons. He also has the ability to fight. Herman confronts Morris, asking him why he's following him. The scout just pretends he doesn't know what Herman is saying.

The commodore wants Charlie to be the lead man on this job. The commodore thinks they had problems with the previous job because there wasn't a lead man. The next morning, Eli and Charlie encounter a weeping man. Eli invites the weeping man to camp with them. When they ask him why he's weeping, the man says they're all gone and he wants to be gone too. After feeding the weeping man, they part ways with him.

Eli learns that Herman Warm took something of the commodore's. Charlie says that the commodore has a lot of money. Charlie and Eli continue on their journey.

Chapter 1 Pages 1-18 Analysis

There is foreshadowing that the job Eli and Charlie perform is a dangerous and illegal one. This would indicate why Eli has a leg injury that he acquired on the last job, and why Eli's horse was killed in a barn fire. The inference is that Eli and Charlie are hired killers, or contract killers. Eli has some resentment against Charlie for being the lead man on this job because it means that Charlie makes more money than Eli does, and Eli thinks they should always split the money in half.

Eli suggests that the commodore hires them to kill for reasons other than stealing from him. Eli questions how a powerful man like the commodore could be victim to so many thieves.



Chapter 1 Pages 19-37

Chapter 1 Pages 19-37 Summary

The morning after setting up camp, Eli finds a spider in his boot. Eli is afraid of spiders, and he falls sick with a fever from the spider bite. Charlie goes to the nearest town for the doctor to obtain some medicine for Eli that ends up putting Eli to sleep. After a few days, they start riding on their journey again. Eli feels as if he is not entirely in his body, however.

One morning, Charlie is surprised when he looks at Eli. He hands Eli a plate to look into and Eli can see the left side of his face is swollen, which they conclude is blood pooling in his face that needs lancing. In the next town, they find a dentist, who says he has a tooth problem. Eli thinks the spider bite is the reason for his swollen face. The dentist, Spencer Watts, says there is not any scientific evidence that links the two. Spencer Watts takes out a lancing tool and sets to work.

Charlie tries to buy some Novocain from the dentist, but Spencer says no. Charlie retires to the saloon across the street while the dentist finishes with Eli. Then, the dentist introduces Eli to a toothbrush and toothpaste powder after the dentist removes Eli's teeth. Charlie returns from the saloon pointing his gun at the doctor. He tells Eli to gather the numbing medicine and they ride off. They ride until they reach the home, where an old woman answers the door. Eli has a bad feeling about the woman so he suggests that they keep riding. Charlie leads Eli into the room they are staying in for the night.

The woman tells Eli and Charlie that she knows they are killers because of the dead men that are following behind them. The next morning, the woman is door but she leaves a string of beads on the jamb of the door. Charlie decides to climb out the window instead of leaving through the door. Eli watches Charlie ride off and has a feeling that they will never return. While Charlie is gone, he coughs up a black cylindrical object that he throws into the fire. Eli eats breakfast and then decides to brush his teeth.

Chapter 1 Pages 19-37 Analysis

The old woman Eli and Charlie stay with for the night has the ability to see spirits. The dead men following them are how she tells that Eli and Charlie are killers. Because Eli crosses the threshold of the cabin with the evil beads on the doorjamb, there is an inference that bad magic and bad luck is now with Eli.



Chapter 1 Pages 38-58

Chapter 1 Pages 38-58 Summary

Tub's eye is red and swollen, and Tub is acting strange. They reach the camp of the five prospectors Charlie killed for the ax. Charlie tells his about the killings while he and Eli empty their pockets. They ride off until dark, where they stop at a town, where Charlie buys some new clothes and Eli buys a new hat. As they ride away, Eli mentions that the man selling clothes has an honorable business that he might like to have some.

They share the only room left at the hotel. Eli shows Charlie the toothbrush and toothpaste, but Charlie says he doesn't like it. Charlie says it makes Eli look like a rabid beast. This causes Charlie to try out the numbing medicine they stole from the dentist. They go to the saloon and both wake up with hangovers the next morning. Eli thinks he feels less as if he has a hangover and more fatigued.

When Eli goes to the chemist to get something for Charlie's brandy sickness, he arranges with the woman in the lobby for Charlie to get a scorching hot bath. As Charlie heads for the chemist, he thinks that he has only been with a woman one night at a time. When Eli returns, he finds Charlie in the tub having an imaginary conversation with Eli. Eli stands outside listening to Charlie and then makes his presence known when Charlie pauses in the conversation.

Chapter 1 Pages 38-58 Analysis

Eli seems to detest killing people for no reason. Charlie, on the other hand, doesn't have a problem killing for anything. Ironically, Eli and Charlie are professional killers. Charlie ends up showing some remorse for killing the youngest of the men.

Eli's interest in the shopkeeper's business foreshadows Eli going into a legitimate business one day. It could be after the numerous debacles they encounter on their journey to San Francisco to kill Hermann Kermit Warm. The discussion Eli and Charlie have about the tailor suggests they might open a store that sells clothing.

Charlie intends to use the numbing medicine as part of their job. He infers that they can find a way to profit from it. Eli questioning his ability to have a relationship with a woman suggests that he will fall in love for the first time as the novel unfolds.



Chapter 1 Pages 59-78

Chapter 1 Pages 59-78 Summary

Charlie drinks the morphine Eli brought him from the chemist. Charlie realizes Eli overheard him. Eli leaves, but Charlie begs Eli not to go. Eli winds up spending some time with the girl that sells baths in the lobby. He goes to the girl's room in the hotel, which is sparse and very unlike a room belonging to a woman. Eli removes the stitches from his mouth from the tooth extractions. He's removing the stitches too early so they strings are coated with blood. Then, Eli shows the woman his toothbrush and paste. She is new to brushing her teeth too, so she gets her toothbrush and paste and they brush their teeth together.

Eli starts to talk to the woman. When she asks about his mother, Eli admits that she won't have anything to do with him or his brother until they get a new line of work. When Eli leaves, he finds things to do so he doesn't return to the room with Charlie until after dinner. The next morning, they eat breakfast together and Charlie tries to make up with Eli. Eli is not ready, so he asks about the duel scheduled in town today.

Eli goes to the duel. A woman on the sidelines is shot in the leg and one of the duelers dies. Eli returns to the hotel room to pack. Charlie catches Eli trying to leave the bath girl a five-dollar tip. As they ride off, Eli sees the woman standing in the window of their room holding the five dollars in her hand. They ride until it is dark and they set up camp for the night inside of a cave. Eli wakes up to a rider-less horse standing at the mouth of the cave. Charlie says if the rider shows up to wake him again.

The next morning, Eli tells Charlie he plans to keep the horse for his own. Charlie says they can try to sell Tub in Jacksonville while they re-shoe the new horse. Two miles out, they find a dead Indian, which they assume is the horse's rider.

Chapter 1 Pages 59-78 Analysis

While they don't know it in the nineteenth century, morphine has severe side effects. Since Charlie is drinking so much morphine to counter the effects of his hangover, Charlie might overdose or die from the side effects.



Chapter 1 Pages 79-98

Chapter 1 Pages 79-98 Summary

They continue on their journey, and arrive in Jacksonville. Eli drops off the horse for shoeing, Charlie goes to the saloon and Eli goes to eat. The next morning, Charlie wakes up hungover again. Eli goes to the same restaurant to eat breakfast while Charlie gets himself together for the long ride they have ahead of them today. Eli goes to the chemist to find some more tooth paste.

Eli takes some of the flavors available to the back to sample each one before buying a flavor. He buys the mint flavor, which is the same one he had from the dentist. Eli also buys some supplies for their trip. Eli stops to pick up the horse and the stable hand offers to buy Tub. Eli says he decided not to sell Tub, but tells him to make an offer on the black horse. They settle on thirty-four dollars.

Ten miles out of town is the first time Charlie realizes Eli is riding Tub and that he sold the black horse. Along the journey, Charlie continues to throw up bile from being brandy sick. They come across three wagons surrounding a campfire, but they don't see anyone. When Charlie calls out a greeting, a fifteen-year-old boy points a gun in Charlie's face.

They get the gun away from him and convince the boy that killed his father along the way, even though this is a lie that they confess to the boy later. They feed him and the boy vomits is up because it's been too long since he had such a hearty meal. Eli gives him the majority of his food. When the boy asks if Eli is going to be hungry, Charlie says he's fasting in the name of love.

The boy explains he is stuck there because his uncle left with their money. The oxen died so they can't pull the wagons. The boy's father went off to get help but he's been gone for a week now. Charlie says the girl Eli was with is Sally, which is something Eli doesn't know. Charlie says he's telling his brother about getting the name out of the girl for the sex he had with her so that Eli won't go about starving himself for no reason.

Chapter 1 Pages 79-98 Analysis

Eli is expecting a curse to hit him for crossing the door back in the cabin. When his hands begin to tingle after he eats, it reminds Eli that a curse of magic should be hitting him soon. Ironically, Eli has a soft heart, even though he is a contract killer.

Eli is trying to cut back on his food intake. This is because the girl at the hotel told Eli that he is too heavy for her preference. This also indicates that Eli intends on returning to the town where they bought the clothes and stayed in the hotel. This is likely where Eli plans to set up a legitimate business after they get the money from the job killing the man out in San Francisco.



Charlie implies that he got for free what Eli paid five dollars for and didn't even get. Eli is implying that Sally had sex with Charlie. Eli believes that the girl he met in the hotel loves him and that they have something special. When Eli finds out that he is mistaken, he decides to resume eating as he normally does.



Chapter 2 Pages 99-117

Chapter 2 Pages 99-117 Summary

The boy rides his hidden horse with the Sisters brothers to California. The horse, Lucky Paul, looks sickly and decrepit. The boy insists his horse can keep up, but they lose the horse and the boy right away. Eli and Charlie ride away while Charlie laughs heartily. They ride until they reach California.

They run into a gold prospector almost right away. Charlie insists that there isn't any gold in the nearby river stream. Eli goes after the prospector while Charlie uses the bathroom. Eli hears a rifle cock behind his head. The prospector mistakes Eli and Charlie for the workers of the big boss, Mayfield.

Eli gets the rifle away from the prospector and shoots, but it isn't loaded. Charlie comes out of the woods at that time and shoots the prospector in the head, killing him. Eli stomps on what is left of the man's skull because Eli is so angry because the prospector had been jabbing in the leg with the rifle. They bury the prospector with a letter he had written to his mother. The next morning, Charlie seems like he's in a good mood. He didn't get to drink the night before and with nobody around to anger Charlie, Charlie's demeanor is like it was before they started working for the commodore. Eli takes the time to teach Charlie how to brush his teeth.

As they are about to leave, the boy rides up on his horse Lucky Pa. The boy has blood on his face, he says he got when he encountered some prospectors hunting for a red bear. They clean the boy up, but when they explain he cannot ride with them, he starts to cry. Eli escorts the boy to the dead prospector's camp to show him the gold and supplies. Eli tells the boy to leave the next morning to Jacksonville, where he can exchange the gold dust for cash with the sheriff there. Eli gives him advice so that the boy can finally make it back home to his girl.

Eli and Charlie ride off, heading south. The red bear Mayfield is paying one-hundred dollars for walks right out in front of them. Charlie goes after the bear to shoot it. Eli goes after him to skin the bear because Mayfield only wants the bear's pelt. Charlie leaves to try to find Mayfield, while Eli continues to remove the pelt from the bear. Charlie returns to pick up Eli and the bear pelt to take them to Mayfield.

Chapter 2 Pages 99-117 Analysis

The journey through California proves to be especially treacherous, because of all of the prospectors that are looking for gold. It is the time of the big gold rush. In another twist of irony, Eli is angry because the prospector is a bully. A bully is precisely what Eli and Charlie are, however, so in reality Eli hates himself. Hating himself is what will propel Eli to get out of killing people and find a more honorable profession.

Eli believes that you have to earn good luck. This explains why he and Charlie have met so many obstacles and challenges so far in their journey. What rivals this belief is the red bear everyone is hunting walking out right in front of Eli and Charlie.



Chapter 2 Pages 118-140

Chapter 2 Pages 118-140 Summary

When night falls during their visit to Mayfield, a Chinese boy comes in to light the candles in the room. Mayfield says the boy is working to save the money to bring his family over from China. Mayfield makes the boy dance for his visitors. Eli asks Mayfield about the payment for the pelt and Mayfield throws two eagles at Charlie, who pockets the cash.

Mayfield then rings a bell and whores enter the room. Eli notices that Charlie and Mayfield resemble each other. To prove Charlie and Eli are not the limping man that robbed him when he was in Oregon City, Mayfield wants Eli and Charlie to click their heels together. Eli refuses. When Mayfield describes the man that robbed him, Charlie says the man's name is Robinson. Mayfield says he plans to have the man gutted.

When Mayfair leaves, Charlie tells Eli that Robinson is already dead so he shouldn't worry. Charlie wants to stay the night but Eli wants to leave. Charlie exerts his authority to say they are staying. The three men drink a lot of brandy. This is when Eli notices a sickly looking woman standing in the corner of the room.

When Eli winks at her, she watches Eli as she leaves the room. Eli goes after the woman. He finds out she is Mayfield's bookkeeper. During the conversation, the woman admits she is sick, brandishing a handkerchief with dried blood in it from her pocket. The woman warns Eli that she overheard the trappers talking and making a plan to do something to Eli and Charlie. The woman finds a room to hide Eli because he is drunk.

The next morning, the bookkeeper returns to the room where Eli is sleeping. She asks why Eli shot his pistol into the floor the night before. He admits that sometimes when he's feeling low, he wants to die. Eli notices a man outside his window that he knows. He asks the bookkeeper to come outside with him. Later, when Eli returns to the hotel, he realizes it is the weeping man he saw outside, and he tells the bookkeeper about him.

She asks about the business Eli and Charlie have in San Francisco. Eli tells her they are after Hermann Warm because he did something wrong. He says he wants to return to their home in Oregon City when the job is over. She says she hopes she will see Eli again. Eli promises to

Chapter 2 Pages 118-140 Analysis

Mayfield making the Chinese boy dance is to prove that he has total control over the boy. Essentially, the boy is a slave to Mayfield because the boy is desperate for the money to bring his family over to the United States. As Eli observes Charlie while they

are visiting with Mayfield, Eli sees Charlie's future. Charlie symbolizes himself as he is now, but Mayfield symbolizes what Charlie will be when he is older.

Mayfield is trying to exert his authority and power over Eli and Charlie. He wants them to click their heels together to prove they aren't the man that robbed him. Mayfield is two-faced, however, so even though he pays the brothers for the pelt and invites them to drink and party with whores, he is up to something, such as robbing Eli and Charlie, or killing them.

Eli has a bout of self-loathing. When he drinks, his true feelings come out. This is why he shot his pistol. Eli implies to the bookkeeper that he is a contract killer, but he never comes out and says that what he is.



Chapter 2 Pages 141-155

Chapter 2 Pages 141-155 Summary

Eli comes across a girl that is seven or eight. She's crying about a bad dream she had the night before but is remembering now. She says it's about a dog, pointing at a three-legged dog across the street. She tells Eli that he was also in her dream. She says in her dream she brought some poison to give the dog, which she hates. She says an orb starts spinning beside her and the three-legged dog starts to whirl in the orb too. When Eli turns around, the dog is frothing at the mouth and the dog is no longer breathing. Eli decides it is time to leave Mayfield for now.

Eli goes back into the Mayfield Hotel to look for Charlie. Eli finds Charlie and tells him that the bear's pelt is now missing from Mayfield's parlor. When Charlie returns from talking to Mayfield, Mayfield says one of his trappers says that he saw Eli running through the hotel with the bear pelt under his arm.

When Charlie makes fun of the fabric Eli is wearing, Eli removes it. He folds it up and puts it away. As they start to leave the hotel, Eli says they are outnumbered so they have to return the money so they can leave without a fight. When Charlie demands Eli's portion, Charlie realizes Eli gave his money to the bookkeeper.

They end up crawling out of Eli's hotel room window. They make it their horses when one of the trappers points his gun at them. Charlie challenges the trapper to a draw and says Eli will count it out. Eli counts to one. They both fire their pistols, and kill the trappers. One of the trappers is shot, but not yet dead when Eli approaches him. The trapper admits that he didn't want to come after the brothers like Jim, the big trapper, did.

They return to Mayfield's parlor. Charlie blames Mayfield for them having to kill the four trappers and then the stable boy. Charlie demands to know where Mayfield keeps his safe, but Mayfield refuses to tell him. Charlie starts to beat Mayfield with the butt of his gun to convince Mayfield to tell them the location of the safe. Mayfield says he'll tell them if they promise not to kill him.

The final agreement is to give Mayfield one hundred dollars to cover his trip to Oregon City to find Robinson. The brothers decide this is justice because the first person Mayfield encounters will tell him that Robinson is dead and they will be long gone with the rest of Mayfield's money.

Chapter 2 Pages 141-155 Analysis

The trappers are framing Eli and Charlie for stealing the bear's pelt. This could put their lives in danger before they are able to leave the town. One of the trappers working for Mayfield is the one that stole the pelt. Since the trapper works for Mayfield, he is under



Mayfield's orders to hide the pelt so that they can blame it on Eli and Charlie. This way, Mayfield can demand his hundred dollars back and he makes out with the bear pelt and the money.

Charlie plans to cheat at the draw. Charlie will pull his gun before the count ends. Charlie will take the trapper by surprise in order to kill him before the trapper is able to kill Charlie and then Eli. Of the two brothers, Eli is the more compassionate one. This trait is ironic since Eli is a professional killer.

Charlie is trying to assuage the guilt of murdering the trappers and stable boy by saying that it's Mayfield's fault. Eli and Charlie are lying about not killing him if Mayfield tells them where his safe is. If they don't kill Mayfield, then he'll send his men after them and they will have to deal with it for the rest of their trip to San Francisco and then back home again in Oregon City.



Chapter 2 Pages 156-167

Chapter 2 Pages 156-167 Summary

When Mayfield shows them the insides of the open safe, he says finding the gold that is now inside the safe was the only time he was lucky in his life. Mayfield leaves. The brothers count the money and hide the gold that is too heavy to take with them. They get away with about fifteen thousand dollars, which Eli and Charlie split in half.

Eli runs into Charlie's whore in the hall. He gives her a hundred dollars to pass on to the bookkeeper and gives the whore a double eagle. They leave Mayfield, now two days late for their meeting with Morris. They start talking about the day Charlie killed their father after he beat their mother and broke her arm. Eli questions if you can go crazy and then come back to normal. Charlie says he doesn't think so.

Chapter 2 Pages 156-167 Analysis

Eli feels that his happiness is false. He feels this way because he feels guilty for the way they came by the money. It seems as if Charlie and Eli believe that their father was crazy. Eli worries that the craziness he sometimes feels is hereditary.



Chapter 3 Pages 168-184

Chapter 3 Pages 168-184 Summary

When Charlie and Eli arrive in San Francisco, they find the harbor filled with ships and utter chaos all around them. They talk to a barefoot man holding a chicken. The man says that thriftiness has left the area. The man also says that he could return to his own town but that he would not be the same man he was before.

Eli and Charlie arrive at Morris' hotel, but he's not in his room. Eli finds a bell in the hotel room to ring for service. The bell is hooked to a horn to talk into. The woman thinks it's Mr. Morris. She says they are glad to have him back because they were worried when he left with the little bearded man. They admit they are not Mr. Morris, but are his colleagues.

She says he left four days earlier. Morris told her they were heading to the illuminated river. She says Morris didn't seem as if he was going with the bearded man under duress and that he didn't leave any instructions for Eli and Charlie. She admits that Morris did leave a book that he wrote in behind. When the woman delivers lunch to the room for Eli and Charlie, Charlie tries to bribe her to give them the book, but she says they'll never see the book. Charlie indirectly threatens the woman, which gets her to hand over the book to them.

Chapter 3 Pages 168-184 Analysis

The barefoot man is describing the law of supply in demand, without putting a name to it. For example, since there are more men in town, there is more of a demand for whores. With a shortage of whores in town, the men are paying more money than other places in the country to spend time with the whore. This means that whores in San Francisco are making a lot of money—a lot more than whores in other parts of the country. The gold rush is making people greedy, so it is causing them to do things they would not normally do in the name of hunting for gold.

The fact that Mr. Morris left with a bearded man suggests that Morris is in danger. It seems as if Morris might be acting as a sort of a double agent. He seems to have taken up with Hermann Kermit Warm to prospect for gold, which explains why they say they are heading to the illuminated river—a river that shines with gold.

Eli and Charlie plan to get their hands on Morris' book. The book likely contains the information they need to locate Morris and, ultimately, Warm. Charlie and Eli are going to have to kill the woman in order to get their hands on the book.



Chapter 3 Pages 185-197

Chapter 3 Pages 185-197 Summary

Warm keeps approaching Morris. Warm knows that Morris has been following him and now Warm is following Morris. The second time Warm is waiting in Morris' lobby, Warm offers to take Morris to lunch. After lunch, Warm says he knows that Morris works for the commodore.

Warm goes on to say that he is going to share his secrets with Morris because he knows that Morris is a good man. Warm pulls out sheets of paper with calculations all over it. Morris doesn't know what any of it means, so he asks Warm. Warm says it is one of the greatest scientific discoveries of their time. Warm says he'll give Morris a demonstration and that he'll pick Morris up the following morning.

The next morning, Warm knocks on Morris' door. A covered crate is at Warm's feet, which Warm brings into the room as part of the demonstration. Warm demonstrates that he has created a liquid that is put into the river to make the gold in the riverbed illuminate so that it can be extracted. Warm says he thinks Morris is the other man that he needs to see this plan through. Hours later, Morris writes that he is having an uneasy feeling.

Charlie tosses the journal aside, he says he believes it all. Charlie says the commodore told him Warm would hand over the formula when threatened and that Charlie should guard it with his life.

Chapter 3 Pages 185-197 Analysis

Warm is turning the tables on Morris. Since Warm knows Morris has been following him, Warm starts to follow Morris. Warm implies that the commodore is lying about Warm stealing from the commodore. Instead, Warm says that the commodore wants to steal his invention. Morris sees the opportunity Warm is offering him as a way to break free of the wrath of the commodore and get rich. Morris has an uneasy feeling about working with Warm because it is going to put Morris' life in danger.



Chapter 3 Pages 198-216

Chapter 3 Pages 198-216 Summary

Charlie and Eli arrive at the Black Skull, which is the restaurant where Morris and Warm had lunch together. Eli and Charlie find the proprietor playing a game with a woman where he tries to guess the hand the woman holds a small piece of cloth. When they ask about Warm, the proprietor says Warm ran out on him after they made a deal.

Eli and Charlie guess what their deal was. They also reveal that he made the same deal with the man he brought her for lunch a few days earlier. When they return to their horses, a man is looking at Tub's eye, saying that it needs removing, he says the animal doctor will do it for twenty-five dollars. The man offers to do it instead for five dollars. Eli helps to get Tub onto the blanket after the man gives Tub some medicine to make him sleep.

The problem is that they lie Tub down on the wrong side so he can't get to the bad eye. Eli uses some ropes to help roll Tub over. The man is finally able to remove Tub's bad eye. Charlie returns after Tub is standing back up. The man suggests Eli doesn't take Tub on his journey for a week.

Charlie and Eli go to the most expensive restaurant in town. They eat steak and drink very expensive brandy. Eli suggests they don't mention finding Morris' diary so they can just return to Oregon City. Eli suggests they open a store together. When they return to the hotel, Eli realizes he has never been an efficient killer. Instead, Charlie has been manipulating Eli's temper to get Eli to kill when necessary. Eli tells Charlie this is his last job.

Chapter 3 Pages 198-216 Analysis

Warm seems to be a con artist. He is telling the same story he told Morris to many different people. Warm is getting what he can out of each person and then he moves on to the next. Eli and Charlie intend on heading down to the river, where people are digging for gold, to try to find Warm and Morris.

Eli doesn't want to carry out their mission. Now that they have their own savings and the money from Mayfield, they don't need to work as killers to make money. While Eli works to make money, it seems that Charlie does it for the money and for the satisfaction.



Chapter 3 Pages 217-234

Chapter 3 Pages 217-234 Summary

Eli and Charlie pick up Tub to leave. Eli says Tub is learning how to work with one eye. Eli and Charlie go to the ferry to board it. When they reach Sacramento, they ride their horses off the ferry. Charlie speaks to Eli about how they are planning to deal with Warm. They decide to kill Morris first, extract the formula from Warm and then slowly kill him.

Charlie asks Eli why they are doing this for the commodore. So, they start to plan how they can get the formula for themselves and then escape the wrath of the commodore. They plan to kill the commodore so it looks like he dies in his sleep and then to return a few days later without the formula.

They go to the river, where they find a sign from Warm trying to keep people from searching for gold in his river. They camp overnight and wake up to a strange man standing over them. It's another prospector. They ask the prospector if he saw Warm and Morris. He says he did, saying they had mules loaded down with gear.

When it is time to douse Tub's eyehole with alcohol, Charlie pulls out the numbing medicine and suggests they try it so it doesn't hurt Tub so much. Tub starts hacking and coughing blood. They decide to camp for the night to allow Tub to rest.

They leave Tub to rest and walk to Morris and Warm's camp. They see Morris talking to himself. Warm comes up behind them holding a gun. Eli and Charlie talk to Warm and Morris to try to convince them that they are on their side and are quitting the commodore. Warm falls out of the tree where he was sitting and by the time Charlie and Eli get to where he should be, Warm is gone.

When they get back to their own camp, Tub is gone. They find him where he slid down an embankment. Eli checks to see if Tub is still alive, but Tub is dead. Charlie offers to help Eli pay for a new horse. Charlie tells Eli that force is the only way they will be able to handle the situation with Warm and Morris.

Chapter 3 Pages 217-234 Analysis

Eli thinks that he loves his brother more than his brother loves him. Charlie is playing devil's advocate with Eli. In a twist of irony, Eli and Charlie discuss the moral ramifications of carrying out their plan. What is ironic about it is that they are killers that are concerned about the morality of killing.

Charlie has finally found a good use for the numbing medicine. It also shows that he has a compassionate side—something he hasn't shown much up until this point in the novel. It seems as if Tub is dying.



Chapter 3 Pages 235-257

Chapter 3 Pages 235-257 Summary

Eli and Charlie start to make their way into Warm and Morris' camp. Suddenly, Charlie points out that there are men with guns coming into the camp from the opposite side. Eli recognizes the two men as the blue-eyed brothers he met previously upriver. When the two brothers start to talk to Morris and Warm, everyone realizes that Warm and Hollow are drunk.

The larger of the two brothers says Warm and Morris have had too much to drink. The brothers say they will come back later. Morris screams out to Warm, but Warm shoots the bigger brother in the face. Eli and Charlie start shooting to drop the rest of the men that are with the brothers. Warm thinks he has shot them all alone, so Charlie yells down to them to let them know Eli is the one that shot the rest of the men.

Eli and Charlie make a deal with Warm and Morris. They offer to work alongside Warm and Morris and to protect them. In return, the Sisters brothers want half of the profit from the gold they find. As the conversation between the four men continues, Warm refers to his partnership with Morris as the "company." Warm says this because he says the "company" is likely to grow as they use the formula to find gold.

Warm cautions that the formula is harmful to their skin. Because of this, Morris and Warm are having problems with their legs. Eli and Charlie mention the numbing medicine and that it might be helpful.

Chapter 3 Pages 235-257 Analysis

Eli starts to make his transformation into his killer mode. It's as if he has two personalities—his standard self and his killer side. For now, the Sisters brothers need Warm and Morris alive to use the formula to find gold. Once the brothers are able to acquire some gold and earn the trust of Warm and Morris, they plan to steal the formula and kill Warm and Morris.

Once again, Charlie has found another use for the numbing medicine. The brothers are using it as a bargaining tool to negotiate their partnership with Warm and Morris.



Chapter 3 Pages 258-276

Chapter 3 Pages 258-276 Summary

Eli falls asleep. When he wakes up, he finds Warm burning the bodies of the dead brothers in the fire. Eli finds out that Charlie took Morris for a swim to help with the burning sensation Morris is feeling on his legs from the irritation from the formula. Eli urges Warm to take him to Charlie and Morris. This causes Warm to realize that Eli doesn't trust Charlie.

Warm scratches his legs. Eli notices his skin is darkening. Warm also has blisters forming on his legs. Warm asks Eli if he thinks Charlie is going to kill Morris. Eli says he doesn't know. Warm asks Eli how they came to work for the commodore.

Eli says they got a reputation for fighting opponents because of Charlie's bad temper. At this time, Warm and Eli find Morris and Charlie at the river and everything is fine. Morris calls to Herman to come into the water because it helps with the burning sensation.

That night, Warm tells Eli his life story. His father comes to America from Germany. He says his father is an inventor, but a diabolical one. For example, he updates the guillotine to chop the head into multiple pieces rather than to cut off the head. His father ends up committing suicide by killing himself with an ax.

As Warm gets older, he takes to drinking and becomes irritable, like his father. This causes a rift in the relationship between Warm and his mother. He moves away and marries a woman that he doesn't even like. When his marriage ends, Warm turns to thievery. His bad behavior causes him to move from place to place.

One day, Warm wakes up with a hangover and dressed in a militia uniform. All of the other soldiers seem to know him but he doesn't remember joining. It turns out another soldier, Jeremiah, goes into town, finds the lowest soul there and then dresses him up in the uniform. Warm stays in the militia because it is a steady life that forces him to gain control of his life.

One day, Warm meets a chemist, Briggs. Warm is fascinated by his work. Warm convinces Briggs to let him study and learn with him. Warm sets up a laboratory in the barracks and then invents the gold-finding formula one night.

Chapter 3 Pages 258-276 Analysis

Fire is a biblical symbol of purification. Warm burning the bodies of the dead men is an act of purification. Eli is getting to know Warm better. Eli finds Warm to be charismatic. Warm's charisma is what enables him to swindle people, so Eli has to be careful not to allow Warm to swindle him. Warm's roots seem to be evil, which might explain why he an evil side of his own.

Warm has a need for attention. This is why he acts the way he does; it is to get attention from whomever he can. Since Warm never formally joined the militia, he leaves and set up a lab nearby, where he perfects the formula. This coincides with the gold rush so he heads west. This is where Warm meets the commodore.



Chapter 3 Pages 277-298

Chapter 3 Pages 277-298 Summary

Once it's dark enough to use the gold-finding solution, the four men head down to the river. When they see how hard of a time Morris is having with his legs, they all offer him a portion of their share so that he doesn't have to work. The other three start to work.

Charlie ends up pouring the solution on his right hand. It starts to burn his flesh right away. This causes Charlie to drop the barrel of solution. The current starts to take the barrel away. Charlie and Eli both realize that Charlie's injury is to the hand that he shoots his gun. Eli bandages Charlie's hand and then they continue to work.

Morris ends up falling into the river. Warm jumps in to save him. This covers both men in the poisonous water. As they make it to the bank, they are writhing in pain. Both men go blind. Morris dies at dawn. Eli and Charlie take the delirious Warm into his tent. The family of beavers from the river have also crawled onto the banks to die.

Eli and Charlie bury Morris. When they return, they tell Warm of his death. Warm recites a speech he wants them to include on Morris' tombstone. A few hours later, Warm is dying. When Eli enters Warm's tent, Warm has forgotten that Morris died and he thinks Eli is Morris. Warm starts to talk to Eli, thinking he is talking to Morris.

Warm tells Morris that he loves that he's surrounded by such great men. He says it's the first time he feels as if he belongs. He also tells Morris that he wants Morris to carry on their work after he's gone. Then, Warm dies.

Chapter 3 Pages 277-298 Analysis

Eli feels empowered by the work. The solution gives them all the power to see gold in the riverbed. This makes Eli feel invincible. Charlie's accident snaps Eli back to reality. As Eli and Charlie work at finding gold, it is really the first real job they have ever had. This honest work is one of the things that is giving Eli such elation.

Eli implies that this is the last moment of happiness they feel. After this, everything that can go wrong must go wrong. This foreshadows Morris and Warm dying. Additionally, the deaths of the two men mark a transition for Charlie. He starts to change from the obnoxious person he has always been to being quieter and more in control of his temper.



Chapter 3 Pages 299-309

Chapter 3 Pages 299-309 Summary

When Eli emerges from Warm's tent, he finds a group of Indians outside with Charlie. The Indians are searching their belongings for anything of value. The Indians leave with what they want, which is the gold. The following morning, Eli buries War. Eli reads Warm's notes but Eli can't understand anything because Warm's penmanship is so bad.

As Eli and Charlie leave the camp, Eli decides that he wants to be a leader—a leader to himself. They arrive in Mayfield three days later. Eli decides he is going to pay his mother a visit, if she is still live when they return home. When they arrive at the Mayfield Hotel, it is burned to the ground, which means the gold they've stowed is gone too.

As they sit and drink in front of the remains, Eli sees the weeping man. Eli picks up a rock, throws it at the weeping man and tells the weeping man to get away from here. Then, Charlie sees his whore approaching them. She throws the hundred dollars he gave her to give to the bookkeeper. She goes to get the other whores and they all attack Eli and Charlie. They steal their money and pistols, except for the hundred dollars Eli has tucked in his boot.

Chapter 3 Pages 299-309 Analysis

Charlie and Eli spend the three-day ride reflecting on the men that they want to become. Ironically, the two thieves have their gold stolen by the Indians. In another twist of irony, the gold they've stowed is gone because the Mayfield hotel is burned to the ground. Eli realizes that he didn't love the bookkeeper, but is rather in love with the idea of the bookkeeper loving him.



Chapter 3 Pages 310-318 and Epilogue

Chapter 3 Pages 310-318 and Epilogue Summary

Charlie's hand is amputated in Jacksonville. While Charlie is in recovery, Eli goes to the same restaurant he had visited before, but only drinks a glass of water. When they arrive at their home in Oregon City, their house is in disarray from a burglary. There is a letter there from Rex admitting that he stole the money. Eli gets Charlie situated into his bed and looks around the house.

Eli decides he will never sleep in his house again. Eli goes to the commodore's mansion. Eli has a blade in his hand when he enters the mansion. Eli finds the commodore drunk in his bathtub. The commodore is giving a speech—talking to nobody but himself. Eli attacks the commodore, pushing the commodore's head beneath the water in the tub. The commodore struggles but he dies. Eli positions him to make it look like he accidentally died from drunken drowning. Eli goes back to get Charlie and they ride to their mother's house.

Their mother meets Eli at the door. She looks over Eli's shoulder to look at Charlie and ask what happened to him. She has the boys wait outside while she gets into bed. She calls for them to enter and they go into her room. She has Eli tell her what happened to Charlie's hand. Eli and his mother reconcile. Eli goes out to retrieve Charlie. Charlie greets his mother and his mother greets Charlie. They both refuse food, but Charlie says he wants to take a bath.

After Charlie leaves, Eli tells his mother he is thinking of opening a trading post. She says she can't imagine Eli running a store. She tells Eli that he and Charlie can stay in their old room. She says she is glad that Eli and Charlie are still a united front.

Chapter 3 Pages 310-318 and Epilogue Analysis

The amputation of Charlie's shooting hand represents the end of Charlie's career as a contract killer. Eli's return to the commodore's mansion represents him coming full circle in life—he is back at which he began when the novel first began. Eli's reconciliation with his mother marks the start of his new life, a rebirth. Charlie too has gone through a transformation. He seems as if his bad temperament is gone and has been replaced by a guileless man.



Characters

Eli Sisters

Eli Sisters is one of the main characters of the novel. He is the youngest of the Sisters children. Eli's older brother is Charlie Sisters. Eli is the huskier, heavier or fatter of the two brothers. When comparing the two brothers, Eli is also the more sensitive of the two.

Throughout the novel, Eli meets a couple of different women. Eli admits that he has never been with a woman, except for one-night stands. Primarily, Eli has been with whores and not in relationships with them. When Eli meets the bookkeeper that works for Mayfield, he admits to himself that he truly does want to fall in love.

Eli has apprehensions about their line of work throughout the entire novel. He is always questioning Charlie on the reason the commodore wants the people killed. He aspires to open his own store. After he tells Charlie that this is his last job, Eli does end up returning to his hometown, he reconnects with his mother and vows to make changes in his life.

Charlie Sisters

Charlie Sisters is the other main character of the novel. He is the oldest of the Sisters children. Charlie's younger brother is Eli Sisters. Charlie is a drunk. One of the first things he typically does when they get to a new town is head to the nearest saloon. He tends to wake up every morning with a hangover, and tends to send Charlie to the chemist to buy morphine to help him feel better. When comparing the two brothers, Charlie is the less compassionate one of the two.

Charlie is also responsible for killing their father. Charlie tells Eli the story of the day their parents were fighting and their father ends up breaking their mother's arm. This is the same day that Charlie pulls a gun on their father and shoots him dead. Charlie says when he returns from taking their mother to the doctor, he finds baby Eli sitting in the sun, and this is how Eli got his freckles.

Charlie acts as the leader for this particular job, which is to find and kill Hermann Kermit Warm. The reader can see that Charlie's hardness starts to erode as the novel continues. At the beginning of the novel, Charlie kills people for almost anything. By the end of the novel, however, he has more respect for life. When Charlie's shooting hand undergoes an amputation, this represents the end of Charlie's career as a contract killer.



Commodore

The commodore is Eli and Charlie Sisters employer. He hires them to track down and kill Hermann Kermit Warm. The commodore says that Hermann stole something from him and that's why he wants him killed. At the end of the novel, Eli drowns the commodore in the commodore's bathtub.

The Boy

During their journey, Eli and Charlie come across a young boy at a wagon camp. The boy ends up pointing his gun in Charlie's face. When the Sisters brothers convince the boy they saw their father on the path and that they killed him, the boy starts to cry. The brothers admit to the boy later that they lied to get the gun away from him. The boy tries to make the journey to California with the brothers, but his horse doesn't run fast enough. When the boy catches up with the brothers later, Eli gives the boy enough gold to make it home and back to the girl the boy loves.

Hermann Kermit Warm

Hermann Kermit Warm is Eli and Charlie's target. He turns out to be a scientist. He creates a gold-finding solution, which is what the commodore instructs Charlie to take from Warm before Charlie and Eli kill him. Warm ends up getting the scout that works for the commodore, Morris, to work with him to find gold. When Charlie and Eli find Morris and Warm, the brothers work with Morris and Warm as well.

Morris

Morris is an employee for the commodore. Morris works as a scout, which is a kind of private detective. Morris' job is to find people for the commodore. Once Morris finds them, then it is Charlie and Eli's job to come in and carry out the killing.

Bath Girl at Hotel

The bath girl at the hotel sells hotel guests baths. Eli arranges a bath for Charlie while they are staying at the hotel. Eli ends up spending time talking with the bath girl at the hotel inside of her room. When they leave the hotel, Eli leaves a five-dollar tip behind for the girl. Later, Eli tells Charlie the girl's name is Sally. Eli also says that he had sex with Sally.

Bookkeeper

The bookkeeper works for Mayfield. She looks skinny and sick. Eli spots the bookkeeper when she is standing in Mayfield's parlor, after Eli and Charlie sell Mayfield



the bear pelt. The bookkeeper warns Eli that Mayfield and his trappers are trying to set the brothers up somehow. She is also the one that locks Eli in a hotel room so he can sleep off his drunkenness. She tells Eli that she hopes he will come back for her when he finishes the job in California. When Eli returns, the hotel is burned down, so Eli assumes the bookkeeper is dead.

Jeremiah

Jeremiah is a soldier in the militia. He is the soldier that finds Warm in a drunken stupor in town. Jeremiah brings Warm back to the barracks and dresses him in a uniform so that Warm thinks he has joined the militia.

Briggs

Briggs is the scientist that Warm meets when he's in the militia. Warm arranges for Briggs to teach him about science experiments. After learning about science from Briggs, Warm moves on to create the gold-finding solution.



Objects/Places

Commodore's Mansion

When the novel first opens, Eli and Charlie Sisters are at the commodore's mansion. Charlie is inside of the mansion getting their next job assignment from the commodore. Eli Sisters is waiting outside of the mansion with their horses. At the end of the novel, Eli sneaks into the commodore's mansion to kill the commodore.

Mayfield

Mayfield is one of the cities the Sisters brothers stop. Mayfield is named after the man that runs the town. This is the city where the brothers turn over the bear pelt to the man whose name is Mayfield. This is also the location where Eli meets the bookkeeper.

Oregon City

Oregon City is another city in the novel. It is the hometown of Charlie and Eli Sisters. The brothers return to Oregon City at the end of the novel to reunite with their mother.

San Francisco

San Francisco is another location where the brothers travel to during their journey. During the time frame the novel takes place, the gold rush is rampant in the city of San Francisco and its surrounding areas. The brothers catch the ferry from San Francisco to travel to Sacramento to find Warm. The brothers go back through San Francisco on their journey back to Oregon City as well.

Sacramento

Sacramento is the city where the brothers get off the ferry from San Francisco. This is where they find Warm and Morris' camp. After the brothers bury Warm and Morris, they catch the ferry again in Sacramento to return to Oregon City.

Numbing Medicine

When Eli has his teeth pulled, Charlie steals numbing medicine from the dentist. Charlie suggests using the numbing medicine when Eli has to douse Tub's eye socket with alcohol so that the horse doesn't feel any pain. Charlie also suggests giving some of the numbing medicine to Morris to help him with injuries he suffers from the gold-finding solution burning his legs.



Red Bear Pelt

The red bear pelt is what the prospectors are hunting when Charlie and Eli arrive near Mayfield. Charlie is able to shoot the bear. Eli then removes the pelt from the bear. They deliver the red bear pelt to Mayfield for the sum of one-hundred dollars. Someone steals the pelt but blames it on Eli and Charlie.

Toothbrush and Paste

The dentist gives Eli a toothbrush and paste after he pulls his teeth. The dentist shows Eli how to use the toothbrush and paste to clean his teeth. Throughout the novel, Eli continues to use the items. Eli even teaches Charlie how to use them.

Morris's Journal

When Eli and Charlie arrive at the hotel where Morris is staying, the hotelier gives them Morris's journal. The journal describes his meetings with Warm. After reading the journal, Eli and Morris know where to go to try to find Morris and Warm.

Gold-Finding Solution

The gold-finding solution is Warm's creation. When Warm adds the solution to the river, it makes the gold illuminate so they can scoop up the gold. A side-effect of the solution is that it burns the skin of humans that come in contact with it.



Themes

Good versus Evil

The primary plot throughout "The Sisters Brothers" is that of good versus evil. Primarily, the contract killers, which are Eli and Charlie Sisters, represent the evil in the novel. It turns out the target, Hermann Kermit Warm, is innocent, so he represents the good side in the novel. Since Eli and Charlie are contract killers, they are committing the sin of murder by carrying out the orders of their employer, the commodore.

Specifically, Eli Sisters is having an inner struggle with his good side and his evil side. He realizes that when he gets angry that his evil side comes out. His evil side causes Eli to strike out at others, and in some cases, this is what causes Eli to commit murder. Eli knows that killing people is wrong, which is where his good side comes into play. He strives to get out of the line of work he is in to open a trading post so he can earn an honest and guilt-free living.

Additionally, while Eli Sisters represents the good side of the partnership between him and his brother, Charlie Sisters represents the evil side of the partnership. Eli is more sensitive and emotional than Charlie. Eli has more of a conscience than Charlie does. Charlie is ruthless and doesn't feel bad about carrying out his orders to kill people, or to kill people that get in his way.

Mental States

Another primary theme in the novel is the mind or mental state of human beings. Primarily, the focus falls on the sanity, or insanity, of Charlie Sisters. This is especially true when Eli overhears Charlie talking to himself while he is bathing in the hotel. Later, Charlie talks with Eli about the fact that Charlie killed their father. This also calls Charlie's state of mind into question.

There is also some question as to how sound in mind the commodore is. He is ordering the Sisters brothers to kill people that are likely innocent. The orders seem to be for the commodore's gain. When Eli sneaks into the mansion to kill the commodore, Eli also overhears the commodore in the bathtub. The commodore seems to be giving a speech, but the only person in the bathroom is the commodore so the commodore is talking to himself.

In each case, alcohol plays a role in the mental states of these men. Greed also plays a role. Greed even causes some of the prospectors to go crazy. For example, one of the prospectors is mistaking mud for coffee because he has spent all of this time and money pursuing gold.



Relationships

Relationships are a third major theme that runs throughout the novel. Specifically, the novel speaks of the relationships between family members. In this particular case, it is the Sisters family on which the novel focuses.

Charlie and Eli Sisters are brothers. It seems as if Charlie and Eli have always been there for each other throughout their lives. Charlie Sisters even killed their father as a way to protect his mother and younger brother, Eli, from his father's abuse. While Eli seeks a relationship with their mother, Charlie doesn't seem to have a need to reunite with their mother.

By the end of the novel, however the brothers' feelings toward their family changes. Both brothers feel the need to reunite with their mother. Their mother welcomes them with open arms. It reveals that the Sisters are a family and that they will be there for each other no matter happens. While they experience the trials and tribulations that most families do, by leaning on each other, the Sisters can make it through anything that happens to them.

Style

Point of View

"The Sisters Brothers" is written in the first person point of view, from the perspective of one of the main characters, Eli Sisters. The novel swings back and forth between the present and the past. The present represents the journey the Sisters brothers are taking to carry out the contract killing of Hermann Kermit Warm. The past represents the time leading up to the commodore assigning the job to them.

The point of view of this novel is intimate, allowing a reader to connect closely with the main character, Eli Sisters. The book written in this manner allows the reader to get inside the head, thoughts and inner struggles of Eli Sisters as it pertains to the plot. The reader cares what happens to Eli. The point of view also allows the author to inject his own opinions into the narration and to expand on the events taking place around the other characters and the occurrences taking place.

Setting

The novel is set in several different locations as the Sisters brothers make their journey across the country to California. The novel covers the two weeks it takes for the Sisters brothers to travel from the commodore's mansion in Oregon City to California, where Hermann Kermit Warm is. The main characters are involved in the journey they set out on to track down and kill their target.

The setting of this novel works well with the plot. At first, the reader is not aware that the brothers are contract killers. However, as events unfold, killing is a constant part of the plot, the lives of the characters and even the outcome of the novel.

Language and Meaning

The language of this novel is relatively simple and easy to read. The language is from the 19th century, which is when the novel is set. The language is descriptive enough that it helps to explain the situations and is detailed enough for the reader to truly understand.

Structure

The novel is divided into three chapters and an epilogue. The length of each chapter is approximately 100 pages long. The chapters tell the story primarily in exposition and with some dialogue. The author injects his own voice and thoughts throughout the book, providing his opinions and feelings of the events unfolding in the novel.

The novel contains one main plot and several subplots. The main plot is the struggle of human beings in choosing between good and evil. One subplot is the mental states of the characters. Another subplot is human relationships.



Quotes

"We do have to make the trip. That is the job."
Chapter 1 Pages 1-18, p. 10

"To kill him is the thing."
Chapter 1 Pages 19-37, p. 19

"We will see how you feel about the miracle solution when the effects wear off."
Chapter 1 Pages 38-58, p. 52

"We are Eli and Charlie Sisters."
Chapter 1 Pages 59-78, p. 66

"I had a change of heart and have decided to keep him."
Chapter 1 Pages 79-98, p. 87

"It as though my entire head has been cleaned."
Chapter 2 Pages 99-117, p. 108

"Death stalks all of us upon this earth!"
Chapter 2 Pages 118-140, p. 132

"I will tell my grandchildren of the time I killed the famous Sisters brothers."
Chapter 2 Pages 141-155, p. 152

"She was pretty, and kind to me."
Chapter 2 Pages 156-167, p. 163

"It is wild. I fear it has ruined my character."
Chapter 3 Pages 168-184, p. 178

"The commodore's instructions was explicit on one point: Prior to killing Warm I was to obtain by whatever manner of violence necessary what was describe to me only as "the formula."
Chapter 3 Pages 185-197, p. 196



"You were to escort him to the River of Light, is that it?"
Chapter 3 Pages 198-216, p. 201

"I want to talk it through, Eli."
Chapter 3 Pages 217-234, p. 221

"The fabled Sisters Brothers?"
Chapter 3 Pages 235-257, p. 236

"Let me just say that my Father had some unnatural habits."
Chapter 3 Pages 258-276, p. 265

"Once you see the glow, take up your buckets and get to work, quickly!"
Chapter 3 Pages 277-298, p. 290

"What a pair."
Chapter 3 Pages 299-309, p. 305

"Our alliance has been broken and mended many times."
Chapter 3 Pages 310-318 and Epilogue, p. 324

Topics for Discussion

Who is the true Eli Sisters? Why does he say this is going to be his last job? Do you believe Eli will open a trading post? Why do you think he has never had a relationship with a woman?

Discuss the relationship between Eli and Charlie. Are they friends, brother, both, or something else? Does Eli really want to work with Charlie? Why does Charlie feel the need to protect Eli? How does Eli feel about Charlie? How does Charlie feel about Eli? How do Eli's feelings change after the job is over? What does he do about it? What happens to Eli?

Who is Charlie Sisters? Why does he tell Eli that he slept with Sally? Why do you think he doesn't have any remorse about killing? What do you think happens to Charlie now that he doesn't have his shooting hand anymore?

Who is the true Hermann Kermit Waters? Do you think he is telling the truth, or do you think the commodore is telling the truth? Why do you think he chose Morris as his gold partner? Why do you think he trusts the Sisters brothers?

Discuss the deaths of Warm and Morris. What impact do the deaths have on the Sisters brothers? How does it motivate them and how does it derail their lives?

What do you think happens to the Sisters brothers now? Do you think Charlie goes into business with Eli? What happens with their relationship with their mother?

Do you think someone finds out Eli is responsible for the commodore's death? What do you think they tell the public about his death?