

# Turn Homeward, Hannalee Short Guide

## Turn Homeward, Hannalee by Patricia Beatty

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## Overview

Turn Homeward, Hannalee tells of the adventures of Hannalee Reed, a twelve-year-old who works at a mill in Roswell, Georgia. The mill manufactures grey cloth for the uniforms of Confederate soldiers. When some of General Sherman's soldiers take over Roswell, they round up all of the mill's employees and declare them to be traitors because they made cloth for rebel uniforms. They are shipped north to Kentucky, where they are separated from each other and given to whoever needs workers. Hannalee ends up being a servant.

As Beatty points out in her notes, the novel covers historical fact up until Hannalee begins work as a servant.

Roswell is a real place which was captured by Union soldiers in 1864 and burned down, with its mill being destroyed. The events of the employees being rounded up and held outside for five days, their rescue from drunken guards by Union cavalry, and their ride in a train are all true events. Even the advertisement which offers their services to any Union people who want them is true. The rest of the book is Beatty's speculation on what might have happened to some of the workers.

## About the Author

Patricia Robbins Beatty was born on August 26, 1922, in Portland, Oregon, to Walter M. and Jesse (nee Miller) Robbins. Her father was an officer in the Coast Guard and his career required his family to move often. As a child, Beatty did a great deal of reading. She seems to have been an introspective child; she was hospitalized for five months when she was ten years old, and during that time she read constantly, which seems to have enhanced her thoughtful nature. Her family returned to Portland in 1935, and Beatty spent her young adult years there, attending both junior high school and high school.

Beatty was not strictly a bookworm in those years. She took up horseback riding, becoming knowledgeable about caring for horses. Horses figure in several of her books. Her love of learning was probably the reason she decided in high school that she wanted to become a teacher. After high school, she attended Reed College, where she received her B.A. in 1944. For a while, her interest in the natural world made her contemplate getting a degree in marine biology, but she eventually earned her degree in literature and history. While at Reed College, she was an athlete, participating in fencing.

She met John Beatty while she was in college. After he left the U.S. Army, they were married on September 14, 1950. He became a history professor in California, and they had a daughter Ann Alexandra. From 1947 to 1950, she was a high school teacher in Coeur d' Alene in Idaho. From 1952 to 1953, she worked for Dupont corporation as a technical librarian, then was a librarian in Riverside, California from 1953 to 1956. She did not return to teaching until the late 1960s, when she began teaching courses on creative writing for UCLA.

According to her own recollection, her work as a librarian was dull, and she took up writing to relieve her boredom. The publication of *Indian Canoemaker* in 1960 began her career as a writer of books for young people. She had lived among Native Americans for much of her childhood because her father was often stationed on Western reservations. She drew on her knowledge of Native American customs for the book; the book also reveals her characteristic penchant for thorough research into the history and backgrounds of her subjects. With the publication of *Bonanza Girl* in 1962, Beatty became a full-time writer. In about 1962, she found herself consulting her husband, a professor of history, about details for a book she was working on.

This led to their collaboration on *At the Seven Stars*. He specialized in the history of the fifteenth, sixteenth, and seventeenth centuries, and their several collaborations usually were focused sometime in those eras. Patricia Beatty became very knowledgeable about American history, so when she was not collaborating with her husband, she was writing books about America on her own.

John Beatty died in 1975. Patricia Beatty later married an economics professor, Carl G. Uhr, on July 31, 1977.

Beatty remained a very productive writer, with her books published during the 1980s earning much praise from book reviewers. Her last few years saw her writing some of the best books of her career. She died of lung cancer on July 9, 1991, in Riverside, California.

Beatty recollected with some bitterness how she was treated by some people when she began publishing books.

Friends, if such they were, and neighbors gave her a hard time about writing and thereby supposedly neglecting her duties as a mother. This made Beatty a feminist, and the fires for feminism still burned hotly in her to the end of her life. She chose to create strong young women in most of her novels; she wanted to portray young adults coping with hard times and challenging situations. This gives her novels an utterly uncondescending quality because Beatty seems to have been at all times conscious of what young people can accomplish.

Beatty received several awards for her work, including the Scott O'Dell Award for Charley Skedaddle (1987), given to an outstanding novel that focuses on an aspect of American history.

Among her other awards are the Commonwealth Club of California Medal in 1965 for *Campion Towers* and the Southern California Council on Children's and Young People's Literature Medal in 1983 for *Jonathan Down-Under*. *A Donkey for the King* was named a 1966 Horn Book honor book; *Red Rock Over the River* was named a 1973 Golden Kite Award honor book by the Society of Children's Book Writers; *Wait for Me, Watch for Me*, *Eula Bee* was named a 1978 honor book by the Western Writers of America; *Lupita Manana* was named a Jane Addams Children's Book Award honor book.



# Setting

The towns and other settings are all authentic, representing Beatty's careful study of the history of 1864 and 1865.

Roswell, Georgia was and is a real place, and many of the locations in the novel survive today, although some of the destroyed towns were never rebuilt. Beatty portrays Roswell as a peaceful town that, like most other Southern towns by 1864, is feeling the effects of the Civil War. Hannalee's father died of disease while serving in the Confederate Army. Her older brother Davey serves in the infantry stationed in Virginia. Food is scarce, although no one seems to be starving.

Hannalee and the other mill workers are proud of their contribution to the Southern cause; they make cloth for uniforms. Their town is dependent on the mill for employment, so when it is burned down, Roswell's economy is ruined. Most of the rest of the town is burned down as well.

Roswell contrasts with Cannelton, an Indiana mill town. The workers there are paid better than the workers in Roswell had been before the fire. They wear better clothes and eat much better food. When Hannalee works there after escaping from her job as a servant, after being forced to move to the North by the Union Army, she feels somewhat guilty about eating so much better than her mother in Roswell. In general, the Union town is happier and more prosperous than the Confederate one. The differences suggest that the Confederacy really is losing the war, because its people are much worse off than Northerners.

When Hannalee leaves Cannelton to find her younger brother Jem, she lives primarily in the countryside. She has learned that no one is safe from the war; even people living far from battle can be killed by someone like Quantrill's Raiders. Even so, few people bother her as she travels; some are even friendly. Yet, she sees a great deal of death. When she and her brother are making their way southeast, toward home, they find themselves on the edge of a battle at Franklin, Tennessee.

General Hood of the Confederacy was making a last effort to drive the western forces of the Union northward. It was a daring—perhaps desperate—effort on his part. Hannalee and Jem watch the bitter hand-to-hand fighting as best they can; the smoke from rifles and cannons obscures some of their view. Hood's soldiers fail to break through at Franklin; they later try to push the Union soldiers back at Nashville, again failing. These two battles mark the end of the Confederacy's hopes in the west. As they make their way through the battlefield after the fighting has ended, Hannalee and Jem see firsthand what battle does to people. The mangled dead are horrifying; this helps them to understand why Davey and other soldiers would not talk in detail about what fighting a war was like.

Most of the rest of their journey home involves stopping at farms and other remote households while keeping a peddler, Mr. Carewe, company.



Households in Tennessee do not seem to be suffering as much as those in Georgia. When they reach Roswell, Hannalee and Jem find people going without food. Life becomes a struggle to survive until spring gardens can be planted and harvested. The effects of the Civil War on Southerners are grim; the people's suffering makes the Confederacy losing the war seem inevitable. Nonetheless, Hannalee and the other Southern characters remain loyal to the Confederacy right to the end.

## Social Sensitivity

Any modern reader of *Turn Homeward*, Hannalee is going to wonder about the issue of slavery and why it does not appear in the novel. Beatty explains that she deliberately chose characters who would contrast with those in *Gone with the Wind*, which focuses on upper-class plantation owners. She wants to present lower-class figures in *Turn Homeward*, Hannalee, people often left out of historical fiction dealing with the Confederacy. The historical facts are that people like Roswell's mill workers owned no slaves.

Some of them even opposed slavery.

Few of them ever saw any slave close up; the lives of people like wealthy plantation owners were remote from their own existence. Beatty points out that people like Hannalee's father were motivated by loyalty to their regions; they saw themselves as Southerners first, even when, like Hannalee's father, they thought slavery was bad.

Thus, while slavery was one of the most important issues of the Civil War, it was not an important issue for the people Beatty focuses on.





## Literary Qualities

In some ways, this is a typical Beatty novel. The main character, Hannalee, is Beatty's usual strong-willed, spunky heroine. The plot involves her traveling through a war-torn land. Beatty's novels feature many heroines like Hannalee and many plots involving travel from one place to another. The strong female characters reflect Beatty's desire to show what women can do in a crisis, and the traveling allows her to present a history lesson on some part of the world, usually in Europe or the United States. None of this is necessarily bad; young people seem to love both her characters and her plots. Beatty focuses on the lives of ordinary people and provides a wealth of historical detail that makes the past come alive. *Turn Homeward*, Hannalee provides a down-to-earth look at what the Civil War meant to many ordinary people in the Confederacy.

The dialogue is smooth and readable, while retaining the flavor of Southern speech patterns. Beatty claims to have tested the Reed family's dialogue on modern Georgians, who thought she captured the essence of the way Georgians talk, and who enjoyed hearing some of the old slang that modern Georgians do not use anymore. This is always a nettlesome problem for authors of historical fiction; they want their characters to appear genuine, but careful transcription of their pronunciations and slang can make their speech unreadable for modern audiences. In *Turn Homeward*, Hannalee, Beatty succeeds quite well in letting Georgians sound like Georgians while making what they say clear to readers from other regions.



# Themes and Characters

Turn Homeward, Hannalee focuses on events in the life of Hannalee Reed, a twelve-year-old worker in a mill in the Georgian town of Roswell. She tells the story in the first person, so every event is described from her point-of-view.

Therefore, much of the fighting of the Civil War in 1864 and 1865 is not discussed because Hannalee has no idea of what is going on. This is realistic; during the Civil War civilians often did not learn of battles and outcomes until a month or even more later. Hannalee's not knowing how the war is going on the battlefield adds some suspense to the novel because soldiers of either side could pop up anywhere; it also adds poignancy to the story because her life, like those of many others, is profoundly affected by events she knows nothing about.

Hannalee is an intelligent person, even though she can scarcely read or write, and she is good observer. This means her account of events is intelligent and her descriptions are colorful.

Already a very grownup young woman who takes pride in earning money to help support her family, Hannalee matures even further as she learns to cope with emergencies and unknown regions. Some of this is shown through her relationships with her younger brother Jem and her neighbor Rosellen Sanders. When the three of them are taken prisoner by Union troops and then shipped northward, Rosellen takes charge of them, seeing to the needs of both Jem and Hannalee. But soon Hannalee begins to think on her own. She decides that Jem must be kept with them, and she is the one who figures out how to make Jem look like a girl.

By the middle of the book, she finds herself doing the things that Rosellen had been doing. From a mill worker who had dreams of someday earning her way into an office job, she becomes a take-charge person who has been toughened by surviving some of the worst misery life has to offer.

None of the other characters in Turn Homeward, Hannalee is well developed.

Among the lesser developed characters is Rosellen Sanders, who wants to marry Hannalee's older brother Davey.

She is a beautiful blonde who is used to getting her own way because of her good looks, although Davey has twice refused to marry her because he is afraid he would make her a widow by dying in the war.

The war changed people, including Rosellen. When she is shipped north, she is tough and takes what steps she can to see to it that she and Hannalee are not molested. But after working at the mill in Indiana, she begins prettying herself to win the interest of one of the mill's owners. From a tough, diehard Southerner, she turns into a more delicate person, whose beauty may win her a good marriage and a secure future.



Jem is a standard sort of little brother. He is loud and brash, but basically a good kid who has to work for a living like the others in his family. Like Hannalee, he is a good survivor and is more help than hindrance during their journey home. His mother is a standard-issue character as well. She is pregnant at the start of the novel, but the baby has been born by the time Hannalee and Jem make it back to Roswell. She loves her children, has worked when not pregnant at the mill, but hopes that her children will have somewhat better lives. When Hannalee is taken from her, she gives her daughter a button from her clothing and asks her to remember to come home, back to Roswell. Hannalee often touches the button in order to remind herself of home.

The Northerners tend to be stock figures, each representing an idea.

When Hannalee is employed as a maid, Miz Fletcher treats her cruelly, abusing her often. The Fletchers had a son in the Union Army, but the son was killed. Miz Fletcher represents the unreasoning hatred the war generated.

On the other hand, her husband treats Hannalee kindly. He represents tolerance. Later, when Hannalee lives in a boarding house, the woman who runs the house teaches Hannalee and another Southern girl, as well as Northerners, how to read and write. She represents the many Northerners who felt compassion for those who had suffered in the war. She serves as a reminder that not all Northerners were bent on revenge and destruction. These characters each provide Hannalee with maturing experiences. The misery of working in the Fletcher household motivates her to take responsibility for her own life. Rosellen had urged her to make do until the end of the war. Hannalee learns to go beyond that and take action to better her life. Mrs. Charlotte Burton, who runs the boarding house, shows Hannalee that Northerners can be good, caring people. This enriches and broadens her view of what people can be like, making her wiser.

The theme of the novel is the effects war has on ordinary civilians. There is no great glory for the Reeds; father Paul dies of disease, and Davey is but an ordinary foot soldier, one of thousands of almost unknown fighters. By focusing on Hannalee, Beatty emphasizes the plights of civilians in war.

Hannalee is no glorified heroine; she does not like slavery, but she has done nothing to end it. She fights no battles, is not involved in any intrigues, and does nothing to shape the course of the war. She, like most of the people caught up in the war, simply struggles to survive, an achievement in itself.

The war despoils the land, destroys people's livelihoods, kills innocent and guilty alike, starves people, maims soldiers, and in general alters people's lives forever. The misery the Civil War creates for ordinary people is vividly portrayed. Hannalee's story represents the stories of survival of many others whose lives were torn apart by war.



## Topics for Discussion

1. If you have not read the sequel, *Be Ever Hopeful, Hannalee*, speculate about what might happen in it. Will Hannalee's family find work in Atlanta? Will one-armed Davey find work as a carpenter? Will Hannalee become educated and become a teacher?
2. Why is Hannalee so eager to go to school? Does she not work hard enough already?
3. Why does Beatty go out of her way to show Northerners who are nice to Southerners as well as those who are not nice?
4. By the time she is twelve years old, Hannalee has already been working a long time in the mill. Her younger brother is also already working there. Is this a good idea for people their age? How would this affect your life?
5. Jem talks big about sticking pitchforks into "bluebellies," but he is badly frightened when he actually sees Union soldiers. Why do some people talk big about fighting wars even when they know warfare involves people trying to kill other people? Would most people be frightened by actual combat?
6. Slavery is rarely mentioned in *Turn Homeward, Hannalee*, even though it was one of the Civil War's most important issues. Why is it not discussed more in the novel?
7. The Reed family has been ruined by the Civil War. The father is dead, the older brother has lost most of his left arm, their place of employment has been burned down, most of their hometown has been burned down, and they have to live in the home of a neighbor who has almost no family left. Why do they seem hopeful about rebuilding their lives at the novel's end? Is this realistic?
8. What are the clues in the first few chapters of *Turn Homeward, Hannalee* that the Confederacy is losing the war?
9. Were Hannalee and her fellow mill workers traitors? Why would the Union troops think so?
10. Read Beatty's "Author's Note" at the end of *Turn Homeward, Hannalee*. Is it interesting? Does it help your understanding of the novel?



## Ideas for Reports and Papers

1. Describe how a mill like that in Roswell operated in the 1850s and 1860s. What, exactly, would Hannalee's job entail?
2. Describe Roswell, Georgia as it was prior to the Civil War. What role did it play in the war? What happened to it? Was the mill rebuilt? What is Roswell like today?
3. Why did General Hood abandon Atlanta? What did he hope to achieve in Tennessee near the war's end?
4. What might have happened had General Hood's forces won the battle at Franklin?
5. Make a map of Hannalee's travels.

Beatty says she used the roads and trails that would have existed in 1864 and 1865. Can you find any of them?

6. Some Tennessee and Kentucky families had members fighting on each side of the Civil War. Hannalee uses this fact to help her avoid mistreatment when she tries to disguise herself.

What effect did these divided loyalties have on the families who had soldiers in the Union Army and soldiers in the Confederate Army?

7. In Hannalee's day, children working in factories was commonplace. Find out what it was really like for young people like Hannalee to work in mills and other factories. Why did child labor laws come about?

8. Hannalee is eager for an education so that she can have a better life. Most people around her cannot read or write and do not know numbers. How did compulsory school attendance laws come about? How have they evolved?

All in all, are they good to have?

9. Hannalee and Jem discover that actual combat is even more horrible than they imagined it. How are soldiers persuaded to fight? How were they persuaded to fight during the Civil War? Why did they not do after the first battle what most of General Hood's troops did after the battle at Nashville, which is simply to stop fighting and wander home?

10. People like Davey made up the vast majority of soldiers in the Civil War. What other novels besides *Turn Homeward*, Hannalee discuss their families and lives? Are there many such novels? Why or why not?

11. What were the motivations for people of lower economic classes to support the Confederacy during the Civil War?



12. Why did General Sherman's troops burn towns?

13. Among the most controversial figures of the Civil War were Quantrill's Raiders. In *Turn Homeward, Hannalee* they are murderers and thieves who would steal from and kill anyone.

What were they like in real life? Why did many people, Northern and Southern, hate them? Why do some people still argue that they were heroes?

14. Why were Southerners short of food in 1864 while Northerners were not? Or were Northerners short of food, too?

## For Further Reference

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Review. In *Bulletin of the Center for Children's Books*, 38 (November 1984): 40. Declares that the "Structure, characterization, and style are solid."

Schott, Naomi. Review. *Interracial Books for Children Bulletin*, 16,1 (1985): 8. Admires the book for its "anti-elitist, anti-war" stance.

Telgen, Diane. "Beatty, Patricia." In *Something About the Author*. Vol. 73. Detroit: Gale Research, 1993: 16-20. A summary of Beatty's life and work, noting that "Beatty left a large body of critically acclaimed work that will long continue to draw young readers into the excitement of the past."

Tuchmayer, Harry. Review. *Voice of Youth Advocates* 7 (February 1985): 321. Finds *Turn Homeward, Hannalee* to be "predictable" and unrealistic, although "middle schoolers" ought to enjoy it.

## Related Titles

In the last decade of her life, Beatty wrote five other novels about the Civil War besides *Turn Homeward, Hannalee*. In *Be Ever Hopeful, Hannalee*, Beatty further shows the effects of the Civil War on the South. *Charley Skedaddle* is about a drummer boy in the Union Army who deserts it. *Eben Tyne, Powdermonkey* tells of the first battle between ironclad ships. *Jayhawker* discusses abolitionism. Each of these books displays Beatty's extensive historical research for the backgrounds of her novels.





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