

The Winthrop Woman Study Guide

The Winthrop Woman by Anya Seton

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Plot Summary

The Winthrop Woman is Anya Seton's story of Elizabeth, or "Bess" Fones, who is a niece of the venerable John Winthrop. Winthrop became the first governor of the New Plymouth colony in America., and dominated his people with harsh puritanical religion and punishment. His task was huge and daunting, and he became quite cruel and radical. His relationship with his niece, Bess, was tenuous. He whipped Bess in front of the entire family for a childish act of deception and later resented her marrying his son, her first cousin. Bess was too much a free spirit for John's liking, and it fell to him to arrange her marriages and protect her, being her uncle and also father, by marriage.

Elizabeth longs for freedom and autonomy. She feels traumatized forever over the whipping she received at the hand of John Winthrop as a child, and experiences the constraints of the intensive male oppression of the times in which she lived. Her religious faith is thin and, unlike her beloved mother-in-law, Margaret, she is unable to turn to the Bible to find comfort and submission. Bess maintains an open heart and mind toward those who are different, unlike the Puritan family of which she is a part.

An ironic aspect of Bess's drama is that, although she married Henry (Harry) Winthrop, her first cousin, she was always in love with his brother, Jack. When Harry died, Jack had already become engaged to Bess's sister, Martha, and a marriage between them was never even a possibility. Bess settles for an arranged marriage to Robert Feake, whose mental illness finally debilitates him entirely. Bess manages to buy a large piece of property, a feat unheard of for women of her time. Bess endures an inordinate amount of strife, turmoil, and danger as a colonist in the New World. The competition among countries for American land, the shifting borderlines among the colonies, and the influences of zeal, power, fear, and humility color her life. Further complicating her story are her arranged marriage to a mentally imbalanced man and the threats of being separated from the man she loves. Considered a black sheep for her progressive religious thinking, Bess is tested and tormented until she finally finds a sense of spiritual peace.



Chapter One

Chapter One Summary

The Winthrop Woman is Anya Seton's story of Elizabeth, or "Bess" Fones, who is a niece of the venerable John Winthrop. Winthrop became the first governor of the New Plymouth colony in America., and dominated his people with harsh puritanical religion and punishment. His task was huge and daunting, and he became quite cruel and radical. His relationship with his niece, Bess, was tenuous. He whipped Bess in front of the entire family for a childish act of deception and later resented her marrying his son, her first cousin. Bess was too much a free spirit for John's liking, and it fell to him to arrange her marriages and protect her, being her uncle and also father, by marriage.

Young Elizabeth Fones travels in a cart with her mother, Anne, a Winthrop, her sister, father, and baby brother to her mother's family manor in Groton, England. The grand manor was built in 1558 when Anne's grandfather was the wealthy Master of the Clothworkers' Guild, but Anne had moved to London to cramped quarters, having married an apothecary, Thomas Fones. Bess's younger sister, Martha, is timid and afraid of visiting the Winthrop home, but Bess is excited about seeing her cousins, Jack and Harry, who are her beloved playmates.

The elderly Winthrop mother is stern and formal. Her son John, Anne's brother, tormented from the loss of two wives, is still living at home and obsessed with his piety, boring the children with his long-winded, interminable praying. Aside from the disapproving atmosphere, Groton Manor is a children's wonderland with ponies, ponds, woods, castle ruins, and an old mill.

Anne's elderly father, not so bound by restrictive new religious ideas, allows the family to celebrate the King's birthday in the old way. Certain noble couples attend the Winthrops' celebration. Typically serious, John arrives in a temporarily lighter mood, and shows an interest in Margaret Tyndale, the daughter of a knight, whose brother wants her to marry well.

The children have been taught that papists and their religion are evil and, although they do not call themselves Puritans, the elderly Winthrop mother and her grown children practice a very strict form of Protestantism. Bess is not good at needlework, and has left her embroidery sampler for the hobgoblin Puck to finish for her, promising her grandmother it would be done. Her aunt Lucy tries to punish her, and Bess proclaims she hates God, since her prayers are seldom answered. She escapes her aunt and grabs a plate of rare dates on her way to the stable. The entire family assembles to witness Bess being thrashed with a stick, which she is forced to kiss as the rod which has saved her from damnation. Her uncle John has no mercy on her, but her grandfather makes him stop and admonishes him for his religious zeal.



Chapter One Analysis

The reader gets the sense of a wonderful homecoming for Anne, one that is underpinned by harsh asceticism and severe punishment for stepping outside the boundaries of the strict new religious rules. Elizabeth is just a child and endures the unfortunate humiliation and punishment of an adult criminal at the hands of her uncle, for believing that goblins will finish her work.

The contrast between the merriment and the punishment, and the close relationship of Elizabeth with her cousins, sets the tone of this story, wherein conflict among people based on rank and chosen belief systems is at the root of vast pain and suffering in early New England.



Chapter Two

Chapter Two Summary

Back in London, in the Fones' apothecary, Elizabeth, and her father's apprentice discuss the celebration of Christmas, and how King Charles celebrates it because his wife is a Papist. Bess's family does not celebrate Christmas because they are dissenters from the Episcopalian faith of the King. The king has taken to foisting old Roman religion on the Church of England.

Bess is learning the apothecary business, grinding and mixing a mithridate [cure-all] for a local countess. Being a bold young woman, Bess asks the Countess to pay for her medicines. The countess calls her family Puritans, and leaves, withdrawing her business from the Fones's Apothecary.

Bess's mother has passed on and her father is ailing. Her stepmother Priscilla remarks that Bess's cousin Harry is a wild young man who has sent them inferior tobacco from his plantation on Barbados, which was funded by the Winthrops. Bess is in love with Harry's brother, Jack, and remembers his last visit to her, when he encouraged her to marry Edward Howes. Although it would only take a special license to marry a cousin, Jack does not seem interested.

Bess's father wants her to marry the intellectual Howes, but she passionately longs for wildness and freedom. Her father recognizes the blood of his Cornish grandmother with gypsy eyes. Howes is the clerk to the husband of Bess's aunt, Lucy Winthrop. Bess agrees to become betrothed to Howes on Christmas day, but is not happy. Her uncle John Winthrop, who is quite ill and staying at Lucy's, says derogatory things about Bess, unaware that she can hear him.

Chapter Two Analysis

Set in London, this chapter reveals that the Fones family teeters on the edge of radicalism for their religious beliefs and, although related to the prestigious Winthrops, they are not well off. The groundwork for Bess's relationship with her cousin Jack is set, as is her wild and rebellious nature. The reader learns that Harry, Jack's brother, is wild and perhaps careless, having used his father's money planting mediocre tobacco. Her uncle, John Winthrop, still holds an opinion of Bess based on the incident when he whipped her as a child. The Winthrops have many tentacles of family through marriage.



Chapter Three

Chapter Three Summary

The romantic Bess is full of springtime and goes downstairs for a remedy for Martha's toothache. An elegantly dressed man comes into the shop asking for their best tobacco. After smoking some, he realizes he cannot pay for it, but says his name is Robert Seaton and he is a friend of the Earl of Thanet. He secretly whispers to Bess to climb over the wall for a valentine that awaits her.

Bess is surprised to find her cousin Harry, who is no longer in Barbados but is in London in her garden, decked out like a pirate with earrings and cutlass. He wants to know where he stands with his father and uncle, and reminds Bess that they were both black sheep as children. He is potentially in trouble in Barbados for killing a man. He offers her rum and shakes off the notion that he is attracted to her. He wonders if Bess's father will take him in, since he has no money. Bess tells him to dress up and talk positively about himself to her father.

Harry returns later that evening dressed in Seaton's elegant clothing, with his Egyptian servant named Peyto trailing him. Peyto has a T carved into his face and both ears cropped for stealing horses, but he is devoted to Harry, for whom he worked in Barbados. Harry admits the latest tobacco he sent from Barbados was bad, and offers his uncle some of the same tobacco that Seaton took from the apothecary earlier that day, promising better product later. Bess thinks his trickery is funny. Thomas Fones writes to Harry's father at Groton to tell him of the improvements in Harry, but Winthrop is doubtful. Harry is not his favorite child.

Harry and Peyto stay with the Fones'. Harry's friend Robert, although he really is friends with the wild Earl of Thanet, has no money himself and also moves in with the Fones family. Thomas Fones becomes ill again, which gives Bess more freedom. She has all but forgotten her engagement to Edward Howes, who curses Harry Winthrop for his rowdy ways. Fitch, the Fones' servant, tells Howes that the household is being run by the devil, with Peyto sleeping with the servants, Thomas being ill, and Harry hoodwinking Bess. But when Howes finds out that Robert Seaton may be a Catholic, he is gravely concerned, since England is in great political upheaval with the King threatening to banish Parliament and peoples' rights being threatened.

Bess is enjoying the life of high society with Harry and his friends, wearing makeup and going to improper places with this group, such as bear fights. The group sees the royal barge with the king and queen. The queen has heard from Lady Carlisle that Bess is impudent and her family are Puritans, and the king questions Thanet on his choice of friends.

Later in the park, Harry tells Bess he loves her, gives her rum, then after they make love, tells her that they need to marry. Upon their arrival home, Thomas Fones is so



enraged he hits Bess with a stick and kicks Seaton out of the house for being a papist. Harry tells Thomas Fones that he wants to marry Bess immediately. As they are cousins and she is not of age as well as betrothed—Thomas feels they have gone mad.

Chapter Three Analysis

Bess has gotten caught up in the glamorous party life that Harry and Robert having been living through Count Thanet, seeing wealth and a sense of freedom she has never experienced. She has already stated that she wants wildness, and now she has experienced it; however, marriage to Harry was a snap decision and could very well ruin all her fun. On this particular night, after seeing the king and queen, she is completely enraptured with the "bawdry" life of her cousin and friends, and the rum puts her judgment over the edge. In this period of history, if a man and woman have sexual intercourse, their marriage is assured and expected, unless the woman is a prostitute.

The reader also learns earlier that Bess has been in love with Harry's brother, Jack, for many years, but did not think she could have him. Bess's aunt Margaret has a premonition about this affair, knowing Harry and Bess, but she casts it aside.



Chapter Four

Chapter Four Summary

Bess's father is grieved and anguished over Harry's betrothal to Bess. When John Winthrop arrives in London, Thomas Fones is on his deathbed, and asks John to forgive Bess and Harry, as he has. Winthrop grudgingly pays for the special license required for cousins to marry, and instructs the two to go to Groton after the wedding until he can figure out Harry's finances. In the meantime, the elderly Anne Winthrop has passed on, as well.

Although the entire family is in mourning, the Downing family hosts a wedding feast for Bess and Harry. Bess realizes that she actually has always loved Harry's brother, Jack, and never intended to marry Harry, and soon recognizes that Harry will not be a great husband due to his alcoholism.

Wanting to spend one crown on a wedding gift for Bess, the two stop to see Robert Feake, the goldsmith, who sells them a cheap brooch. There is madness in Feake's family; he is effeminate, depressed, and interested in Bess. Feake's apprentice has seen him this way before, talking to himself and sleepwalking. But his spirits lift when he receives a request from John Winthrop and Emmanuel Downing for a consultation.

In spite of Winthrop's dislike of the Egyptian servant, Peyto, Harry picks him up to bring him along to Groton with them.

Matthew Craddock has brought a silk-wrapped charter from England to Emmanuel Downing's private parlor, where he, John Winthrop, Isaac Johnson, Sir Richard Saltonstall, and Downing discuss the King's grant of territory between the Piscataqua River and Plymouth colony, westward to the Pacific Ocean. The men feel the king, in one action, is not only getting rid of those who do not agree with him, but also intending to milk any profits they might make in the new world. Winthrop suggests that they take the charter with them, and confides in them that his job has been dissolved by the king. The men would like to have Winthrop with them due to his legal knowledge. They need to find financial backing and plan a meeting at Lincolnshire.

Both young Harry and his father John Winthrop are in London, their wives waiting at Groton. Margaret, John's wife, and Elizabeth all try to encourage one another about their respective husbands' activities. They finally receive word that John and Harry Winthrop, as well as Priscilla, Sam, and Martha Fones, will arrive at Groton soon.

Chapter Four Analysis

Bess is a confused girl. She wishes she were a man playing in London like Harry, but convinces herself she is in love with Harry, as well. She finds life at Groton dull. Her mother-in-law reminds her to be glad for what God has given her. A pall is cast over



Bess's wedding day due to all of the problems involved, as well as the deaths, which might be blamed on her actions.

John Winthrop is obviously thinking strongly about going to the new world, but has not made up his mind. Whether Harry goes back to Barbados remains to be seen, but the dominant plot is becoming the Bay Company charter and the possibility of moving to America.



Chapter Five

Chapter Five Summary

The Lincolnshire meeting exposes John Winthrop to people who are anxious and eager to settle in the new world, and John decides he is going to emigrate. There is a definite Puritan influence in the group, which includes Isaac Johnson's wife, Lady Arbella, and John Cotton, a powerful nonconformist. Roger Williams, Thomas Hooker, and Anne Hutchinson are also in attendance. Winthrop is wanted by the group for his presence, not his money, and is careful to watch his pride. He tells the group his horse fell in a bog and he might have drowned had God not wanted him to serve another purpose. Thomas Dudley is angry when the Earl proposes that Winthrop might be the leader of the new world; he thought he might hold the post himself, since the governor, Matthew Craddock, does not plan to go. Dudley feels better qualified, having turned around the fortunes of several estates and, had he known of Winthrop's popularity in the group, he might not have decided to go. His son-in-law Simon Bradstreet and his daughter Anne Dudley are already planning to go with him. But finally, Dudley is elected only as deputy, and Winthrop is elected Governor of the Massachusetts Bay Company in 1692.

Young John Winthrop, known as Jack, arrives in Groton, disturbing Elizabeth's peace. Jack has agreed to go to the new world with his father, though Margaret is still worried. Jack has heard about Harry's misbehavior and his friends in London. Bess's sister Martha flirts with Jack, and Bess goes to her medical chamber where she mixes medicines and treats the servants and tenants of the house. Jack tells her that Edward Howes is very hurt over her rejection; Bess informs Jack she is pregnant. Since they are brother and sister now, they must be friends. Bess looks forward to going to Barbados with Harry, yet is uncomfortable about seeing Jack. Bess does not believe in God ever since her flogging as a child.

Harry is appointed to supervise the manor while his brothers help John get prepared for the big voyage. John is forced to write off the expense of Harry's unsuccessful endeavors in Barbados, and now insists that Harry accompany him on the voyage to New England, leaving Bess behind with Margaret until their respective babies are born. Jack will accompany them later. Bess is very upset over this, but the family is forced to do whatever John Winthrop says.

Peyto has been accused of being a witch at the stables in nearby Boxford. Peyto's cropped ears and burned cheeks have been exposed, his tarot cards have frightened some people, he talks to his donkey in a strange language, he has a strange mole, and other coincidental problems have been attributed to him. Peyto has escaped, and Harry sneaks him to the attic in the manor's bakehouse. Bess and Harry feed him, but Peyto is sick and his foot is injured, and Bess's treatments are not working. Peyto tells Bess he has foreseen death for Harry. Jack finally figures out they are hiding Peyto and, after inspecting the alleged witch mark on his body, Jack gives Peyto money and Harry smuggles him off the property. Harry stays gone a few days drinking. Jack feels for Bess



and her relationship with his wild brother, but he and Bess's sister, Martha, are becoming close.

Chapter Five Analysis

Seton's use of the character Peyto illustrates that anyone whose habits or customs were slightly different were immediately under suspicion and considered dangerous during this tense period of English history. Religious fervor generated intense fear of evil, and burning Peyto's donkey and planning his death in accordance with scripture was a common response to fear.

Bess is miserable except when she and Harry share the secret of Peyto's rescue. Harry is a terrible husband who drinks and probably philanders, and Bess is bored. Bess is also having to endure watching her sister win the heart of the man she really wanted to marry.



Chapter Six

Chapter Six Summary

The Massachusetts Bay Company is prospering and planning its first voyage for March, with seven hundred people, including two ministers, signed on to sail to New England on several ships. John feels it is God's work that is making the venture successful. He is exceptionally proud of his son, Jack, and feels there is hope for Harry and Bess. However, John becomes painfully upset when Jack tells him he wants to marry Martha Fones. Jack has already applied for the special license that allows first cousins to marry, and has almost felt pushed into the idea by the innocent Martha. Bess does not want to be left behind in England with Jack and Martha together.

John Winthrop goes to Groton for the last time, having been in London preparing for the trip. He, Harry, and the two younger boys say goodbye, and Margaret and Bess comfort one another.

The crew on the *Arbella* sees the last of England, some experiencing sadness, but most being seasick. George Phillips, one of the ministers aboard, does not want to be under Winthrop's supervision, and prays that the settlers do not turn Puritan. Winthrop is worried because his son Harry and a young passenger named William Pelham missed the boat's departure. Hoping Harry is on another ship, John thinks that sometimes he is too confident in his opinions. Lady *Arbella* is supportive and kind.

Harry is on the ship named *Talbot*, enjoying himself gambling and drinking, while Pelham has left on the *Mayflower*. John's two captains, Daniel Patrick and John Underhill, catch up with Jack and get him onto the *Talbot* after a night of prostitutes and alcohol. Both captains are married to Dutch women. Daniel is Irish and a former papist.

Since Margaret is ailing from her child's birth, Bess decides the manor will celebrate May Day, feeling the villagers need some entertainment. The local Vicar (rector) forbids the celebration, which is strictly pagan, but the people are frustrated about all of those who have left with Winthrop, and the festivities proceed. The villagers crown Martha (Mattie) the queen of May Day. A fight ensues and the rector is clouted on the head while trying to break it up. The rector's men call for the constable, who sees no real damage, since the rector is sitting up and seems fine. The same night, Bess goes into labor; the rector tries to give her last rites, but she angrily rejects him. Bess gives birth to a girl named Martha Johanna, after Martha and Jack. She will call her child Joan.

The *Arbella* arrives near Salem and the gentry are all dressed in their finest clothing. John Winthrop has the charter in a box and they expect a big welcome, but there is no food or housing in Salem, and John Endecott advises them they need to move on. He tells them many of the colonists are wanting to return to England, and many are ill.



In Charlestown on the Mystic River, John Winthrop sits in his private wigwam taking care of business. Some settlers want to go home, some Indians wonder when the whites will leave. The Talbot has finally arrived, but the captains Patrick and Underhill bring John the sad news that his son, Harry, drowned in Salem in the river, and they have brought his body. Emmanuel Downing travels to Groton to tell the family the bad news about Harry. John's letter encourages Margaret to praise God that, even with Harry's death, the rest of them are safe and healthy. Bess is having to nurse her own baby as well as Margaret's. After they dine, Jack takes Bess out to the garden and tells her about Harry. Jack has a flash of ironic pain that Bess is now free, and he is not, but even if that were not so, scriptures forbid one from marrying his brother's wife.

Chapter Six Analysis

The irony of Jack becoming half-heartedly engaged to Bess's sister and then Bess losing Harry is sad, since Jack and Bess have always loved each other.

John Winthrop is dealing with a lot of negativity in the new world, but seems determined to stay and do his duties as governor, rationalizing and justifying all the hardships as God's will. There is already trouble stirring with the Indians, and Captain Peirce sees the settlers as making a foolish choice, foreshadowing the turmoil that is ahead for the Winthrops.



Chapter Seven

Chapter Seven Summary

John's son Forth, from his earlier marriage to Anne Forth, dies from a lung infection, adding to the Winthrop family's grief. Nearly a third of Winthrop's company has died since they arrived in the new world, including Lady Arbella and her husband, and Winthrop notes that the ones who seem to die first are the ones who yearn most for home.

Pond, the local miller, receives a letter from his son, who wants to come home since so many are sick and have died. Pond wants Margaret to tell John he was mistaken about God's will for them to emigrate. But Groton Manor has been sold and the rest of the family will sail for New England in August, and Margaret trusts John's decisions.

John and Margaret want the widowed Bess to consider marrying William Coddington, a rich widower who has asked about Bess's virtues. Bess reluctantly beautifies herself for his visit, but is so repelled by Coddington she behaves badly toward him, making insulting remarks about his girth and his name. John is still holding Bess's dowry, which she would like to have back. Margaret's baby remains unresponsive, and Margaret has still not recovered from her illness from childbirth.

While waiting in Sandwich for the Lyon to arrive, Bess and Jack have an illicit encounter near the sea, which compels Bess to read Bible passages about adultery. Jack tells her Mattie is afraid of marital relations and childbirth.

The Winthrops' youngest son, Deane, will stay in England to go to school and Margaret, although she is sad, looks forward to seeing her older sons, as young Mary looks forward to seeing her father. The family departs on the huge Lyon, which Bess considers beautiful. Christopher Gardiner, whose wild and guileless French wife Mirabelle, makes friends with Bess aboard the ship, and has given John much trouble in New England. The passengers lose sight of England's coastline. Bess meets the young William Hallett and is intrigued by him. She attempts to administer some healing to a little boy and to Margaret's baby Ann, but both children die. Martha Winthrop becomes extremely ill and depressed, and when the ship survives a deadly storm out at sea, Martha attempts suicide by jumping into the ocean. Jack is now resolved to save his marriage to Martha, and takes off her wet clothing and takes her to bed.

Chapter Seven Analysis

This is an especially dramatic chapter, including leaving the homeland, forbidden love between Jack and Bess, the sexually liberated Mirabelle's influence on Bess, the dramatic storm at sea, deaths of two babies, and finally, Martha's forced triumph over her fear of marital relations. Seton packs a lot of detail into a chapter, and this one takes us through the pain of leaving England and the pain from loss of a child, and the



physical and mental illnesses that being at sea can exacerbate. The change for the group is so radical, and the future so uncertain, that their challenges are sometimes insurmountable. Margaret's poor health and the loss of baby Anne foreshadows a rough crossing for her. The fact that Bess has no seasickness while all around her people are ill illustrates her robust health and positive spirit.



Chapter Eight

Chapter Eight Summary

With the end of the storm, the ship is undergoing repairs and Martha's mental health improves. Bess gets better acquainted with Will Hallett, who was raised and educated by nobles when his father was unjustly hanged, and who recently escaped an apprenticeship with a cruel master.

The ship arrives at Boston and the passengers meet Chickatabot, a friendly Indian who trades furs for pipes and knives. Bess is fascinated by him.

Bess continues to hear rumors of people who have been banished from John Winthrop's colony for their beliefs, such as Roger Williams and Phillip Ratcliffe. It seems as though Winthrop is behaving as a king, punishing anyone who does not agree with him. Bess still fears him, and is angry when she finds he has arranged another marriage for her, this time with the jeweler, Robert Feake.

There is much dissension in the Bay Colony, with prisoners being punished for speaking out against the rigidity of the governor. Thomas Dudley, the deputy governor, disagrees with Governor Winthrop over the location of the capital of the colony. The colony has patterned itself after the Separatists in England, and required church membership and a public attestation of salvation, none of which was part of the original plan. Winthrop, increasingly rigid, has now banned drinking among his family members, which irritates Jack.

The free-spirited Mirabelle, with whom Elizabeth has become friends, decides to board with Captain Underhill and his wife. Her husband has gone north, escaping from the jail to which Winthrop had sentenced him. Bess is disappointed at being in Boston without her.

Bess meets Robert Feake, her future husband, whom she had met when he sold Harry the diamond brooch for her in London. Feake is delicate, pale and effeminate, and has never forgotten her. His home is north of Boston in Watertown. Bess consults Jack on whether to marry Feake. Jack gives her one of his doeskin gloves and tells her if she ever needs him she can send it to him and he will quickly help her. Bess marries Robert Feake in a somber and joyless ceremony, devoid of wine, music, and dancing.

Young Mary Winthrop is attracted to her father's adversarial assistant, Thomas Dudley.

Chapter Eight Analysis

Arrival in New England is something of a letdown for Bess, whose ideas of adventure seem to fizzle with her arranged marriage to Feake. But, as Mirabelle advised her, it is better to get a husband she can control, so she is settling for Feake as a way to escape



the iron hand of John Winthrop. Martha's attempted suicide and deep depression over not being able to consummate her marriage indicates her mental weakness. Jack is understanding and compassionate with her, though his love for her does not involve passion, since his true passion is for Bess, whom he can never have.

The new colony is patterned after the Separatists in England, who are stern, rigid and oppressive. This is ironic since the purpose of the emigration to New England was to find religious freedom. Winthrop has become even more severe and dictatorial with his new responsibilities.

It is interesting how accustomed to death these folks seem to be. Many babies were lost in those times and, although they grieve and mourn them, it is an accepted part of life, much more so than now. Margaret's baby Anne never does thrive and finally just wastes away, even though she is being breast-fed by the healthier Bess.

Meeting the young man, Will Hallet, as well as receiving the glove from Jack, will become important later in Bess's life.



Chapter Nine

Chapter Nine Summary

Bess lives happily in Watertown with her husband, Robert. Watertown dares to challenge John Winthrop's authority through several incidents, and Bess is pleased to be a part of the community. Feake is not much of a farmer, and has a strange, dark reaction whenever Bess brings up London. There seems to be something in his past that disturbs him.

Bess and her little daughter, Joan, get an unexpected visit from Chiefs of the Narragansetts, as well as James Sagamore, Indians who try to take guns from her in exchange for beaver hides. Their visit is interrupted by her neighbor, Captain Daniel Patrick, who sends them away, scolding the Indians for trying this when they claim to be friends to the English (Daniel Patrick is the Irish soldier who rescued Harry Winthrop when he missed his boat).

Bess is forced to endure the gossip of the local Watertown women, primarily Goodwife Warren, wife of John Warren. Bess has only one servant and many chores, but she prefers her garden and the outdoors.

Margaret Winthrop has just given birth to her seventh child, and is well into her forties. The child has been born, but Margaret is seriously ill. Bess uses her healing skills and is able to save Margaret's life, for which John is extremely grateful. However, the baby is too weak to live and passes away.

Mary Winthrop, John's pious and strange daughter, elopes with his adversary, Samuel Dudley, much to everyone's outraged astonishment. The two confidently weather the storm and built their home in Newtown, where Samuel had fought Winthrop to establish the new colony's capital.

Captain Underhill nervously tells Winthrop that there are suspicious activities involving the local Indians, and an Englishman has been killed north of Piscataqua, even after smoking a peace pipe. Daniel Patrick and Captain Underhill set off emergency alarm cannons to test the people's understanding of reporting to their assigned areas in case of danger and, as they expected, it is something of a failure. The frightened and alarmed people scatter frantically.

When Bess returns home from nursing Margaret back to health, her servant Sally reports that Feake is behaving strangely, hiding and talking to himself, fearfully clinging to Daniel Patrick during the test alarm. Captain Patrick informs her, however, that he has appointed Feake as a lieutenant, which seemed to jolt him out of his disturbed state. Feake returns from his military duties happy and seemingly normal.

Chapter Nine Analysis

Bess's early training at her father's pharmacy in London serves her well as an adult, and she has developed an intuitive gift for healing. She does not jump to superstitious conclusions about illness, but uses logic and knowledge to guide her, unlike many people around her. She has more faith in herself and her intuition than in any religious dogma, which makes her a controversial character.

The tension over the strange behavior of Indians threatens some trouble ahead for the colonists. Robert Feake's strange behavior seems to have been quelled by having a purpose and a title, and Daniel Patrick is a compassionate friend who seems to understand this. In addition, Patrick cares for Elizabeth.



Chapter Ten

Chapter Ten Summary

The controversy surrounding John Winthrop's governorship results in a divided vote. John's iron-fisted methods of leadership have begun to resemble tyranny, and his opposition to democracy, based on his religious interpretations, has begun to be disturbing to those who came here for freedom. It turns out that the charter allows for participation by the people in decisions, so Winthrop grudgingly allows each district three representatives. Robert Feake is chosen as one of Watertown's select men. As a result of this new system Winthrop is ousted from office, and Thomas Dudley, now his son-in-law, is voted in. Boston is finally in a merrier mood as they celebrate in the interim period between governors. During the celebration, Elizabeth spots Will Hallet, who is now eighteen.

Bess plans a visit to her sister Martha, who is pregnant and needing her. Bess's daughter Joan and Robert Feake will stay with the Patricks, while Bess takes the baby, Lisbet, with her to Ipswich. The reader learns that the Indian John Sagamore's village has been wiped out by illness, and the Narragansetts are almost gone, as well. John Winthrop thinks it is the work of God, but Bess protests that these Indians were not their enemies. John Winthrop shares his angst with Bess about God's intention that their commonwealth be successful, and how he has been asked for an accounting of funds, which is an outrage to him. His idealism regarding God's electing him as leader of the colony, and new challenges from Roger Williams, have Winthrop distressed and anxious.

Bess's servant, Sally, is whipped by Nathaniel Turner's wife for not wanting to accompany Bess through Indian territory. Bess, Turner's young son, Sally, and the baby press on toward Ipswich, where they find Martha ill with the same affliction that took Bess and Martha's mother long ago. Jack is not aware of how ill Martha is, thinking she is only suffering from a cold.

The Reverend Nathaniel Ward is an unpleasant dinner guest, criticizing Goodwife Amy Gage's cheery clothing and revealing a distinct misogyny. The evening of singing and gaiety is interrupted by an attack on the cattle by a panther.

Laud, the new, puritan-hating archbishop appointed in England, is close friends with the King. A few of the discontents from New England have told Laud how things are going in Massachusetts, and Laud has vowed to crop "King" Winthrop's ears. Matthew Craddock, a friend in England, has suggested the charter be returned to England, which Governor Dudley and Winthrop agree will never be done.

The sickly Martha asks to be taken to a special hilltop where she can see the ocean. She has dreamed of going home to England. When her stillborn child is delivered, she passes away.



Chapter Ten Analysis

The very fabric of the settlement imagined by John Winthrop is breaking apart. His stilted ideas have been shown to be out of favor with the freedom-loving colonists, and although he was initially a good strong leader, his increasingly zealous religious severity costs him the governorship. Bess and Jack have finally come to a more peaceful point in their relationship, since Jack admits he loved Martha and since they combine their focus on Martha's health.



Chapter Eleven

Chapter Eleven Summary

There is religious struggling in England, as well as concerns in the colony. The Pequot Indians have murdered their trading friend, John Oldham, and Anne Hutchinson's controversial opinions and prophecies are causing division in Boston.

Robert Feake continues to be moody, as the Feakes consider a move to Dedham to help settle the town at the suggestion of John Winthrop. Bess's servant Sally is jailed for venery [indulgence in sexual pleasure] and escapes, aided by the good Daniel Patrick.

Bess and her two daughters are staying at the Winthrops' while Robert is in Dedham. Young Deane Winthrop, who initially stayed behind in England to finish his studies, is not as enthusiastic about church as his father, and favors Anne Hutchinson's beliefs. John Winthrop is also at odds with the new young governor, Henry Vane, who sympathizes with Anne Hutchinson, admitting that he, too, has had a personal experience with God. Bess is fascinated with Anne Hutchinson, who has the nerve to walk out on the Reverend Wilson's judgmental and long-winded sermon.

Jack Winthrop has married Elizabeth Reade, whom he met on a trip to England. Bess is disturbed that he has replaced Martha so quickly, and also hurts because of her own love for Jack. Jack kisses her, and his wife enters in time to see it. Elizabeth calms her fears, but there is a wedge between the two Elizabeths from that time on.

On Fasting Day, Bess feels out of place among her own people until she hears John Cotton's passionate Doctrine of Grace sermon, with which Anne Hutchinson concurs, saying Cotton is "God's elect". Of course, John Winthrop thinks Anne Hutchinson has bewitched Cotton. John Wheelwright, Anne Hutchinson's brother-in-law, also delivers a sermon on this day, urging people to fight against the opposing Covenant of Works, defying Wilson and Winthrop, who are enraged. A fight breaks out in church, and John Cotton soothes the congregation, praying that the breach can be healed.

Bess sneaks out to visit Anne Hutchinson at her home. Anne explains to her that God is love, and that she has felt it often. In the peaceful atmosphere with Anne, Bess experiences a moment of grace. Captain Underhill and William Coddington (who still resents Bess for insulting him) appear at Anne's home to tell her her boat has been burned in a riot. Coddington threatens to talk to John Winthrop about Bess visiting Anne.

When Bess leaves, Robert is waiting outside for her, angry and trying to think of an alibi for her. She wonders if he would have wanted to marry her if she were not a Winthrop. Bess realizes that the feeling she experienced at Anne's is elusive, and silently she asks God to forgive her for not loving enough.



Chapter Eleven Analysis

Bess is learning what her true spiritual leanings are, and they are not in accord with those of her family. She is clearly not alone in her love for Anne Hutchinson, but she is on dangerous ground, since John Winthrop is still a very powerful man.

The differences within the congregation are typical of organized religions that split off into other factions. As John Cotton points out, both sides are looking for God's grace, but in different ways; however, the disagreement is enough to cause violence between the two groups.



Chapter Twelve

Chapter Twelve Summary

Winthrop has organized his followers under two magistrates, Thomas Dudley and John Endecott, who accuse Wheelwright, Anne's brother-in-law, of contempt and sedition. Hutchinson's party, with John Underhill, Governor Vane, and William Coddington, sign a petition for remonstrance and proper procedure. The two factions, however, must call a temporary truce to deal with the problem of Indians.

Letters from Providence and Connecticut warn of hideous Indian massacres, prompting the Bay Colony to prepare for war. In the meantime, Bess is teaching five children, including Daniel Patrick's three, who have been admonished at church for not knowing their catechisms.

The General election pits John Winthrop against Governor Vane, and is a bitter fight, but Winthrop is returned to office. Daniel Patrick decides to take Robert Feake with him to fight Indians, and Feake is enthused about going, even though Bess is again pregnant.

Bess receives a letter from her Aunt Margaret saying the Pequots were wiped out at Mystic, and none of Patrick's men were lost. Margaret asks Bess to come to Boston to choose a maid from the captured Pequot squaws and children. Bess is not a good housekeeper or seamstress, and has found the help of a young neighbor girl inadequate. Bess chooses a servant named Telaka, who has one eye and a scarred face and neck. Telaka was captured and tortured by the Pequot and taken from her native Siwanoy tribe which resides far west where there are no white men. Telaka learns the household chores quickly and becomes fairly fluent in English, which the fearful gossiping neighbor women attribute to the devil. Telaka keeps a tame bluejay in Bess's kitchen. Bess gives birth to another daughter, and names her Hannah. Jack's wife gives birth to a son.

Anne Hutchinson and her brother-in-law Wheelwright are charged by the church synod of eighty-two counts of heresy. The ousted governor Harry Vane returns to London, while John Cotton confesses his error in supporting Anne Hutchinson. Anne's mockery of a trial consists of thirty men badgering one very wise and strong woman; Winthrop acts as judge and prosecutor, and tries to trip Anne up on her testimony. The verdict is Anne Hutchinson's imprisonment and banishment from the colony. Winthrop's victory over Anne is not enough and his zeal has turned to cruel sanctimony. He removes the loyal Captain Underhill from office and disarms every person who signed the Remonstrance. Anne is suspected of witchcraft and even Margaret Winthrop is afraid of her.

During the excommunication procedure, Anne and Bess see each other, and both sense a moment of peace from the connection. As Anne is declared a leper and leaves the



church, Bess follows her outside, much to John Winthrop's horror. John sends Bess to her room like a child, but later determines that Bess was bewitched by Anne during the excommunication.

Chapter Twelve Analysis

In a rebellious mood, Bess chooses a servant whose looks are appalling, but Bess is not snobbish. Telaka gives the Feake's neighbors fodder for gossip, and the bluebird in the house does not bode well, since superstition and fear dominate the colonists' thinking.

The transcripts of Anne Hutchinson's trial and excommunication are part of American history and reflect a disgracefully unjust and power-hungry John Winthrop. Bess's empathy for Anne surely reflects only one person's feelings for her, but any disagreement was silenced for fear of punishment.

Bess seems to revert to her childhood when Winthrop sends her to her room, even though she is a grown woman expecting her fourth child. His tyranny over her life has never stopped having an effect on her.



Chapter Thirteen

Chapter Thirteen Summary

Toby Feake, Robert's nephew, has arrived from Germany. Toby is an excellent sailor. The Feakes have been summoned to the Winthrop home to hear John Cotton's sermon in which he reveals in detail the monster to which Anne Hutchinson has given birth. Winthrop feels Bess has learned a lesson about truth.

Bess gives birth to her first son two days before Christmas, and holds a celebration with pine boughs, candles, drinking, singing, and dancing. The tithing man, Job Blunt, pays a visit and promises to report the celebration to the court. Daniel Patrick knocks Job out with his fist and they pour liquor into his mouth. Telaka mistakes Job for a Pequot, and tries to put some kind of herb in his mouth, but Job runs away from the Feakes' home. When Job reports to the local minister all of the transgressions, he accuses Telaka of witchcraft and says that Bess is having an affair with Daniel Patrick. Job has accused Daniel of adultery, and John Winthrop banishes the Patrick family from the colony. Daniel is angry that he has never received his pay for the Pequot war, or the lands promised to him by Winthrop, and has written Winthrop angry letters. Bess pleads with her uncle, since the Patricks are the Feakes' best friends, but the Patricks leave for New Amsterdam.

Robert is stricken with cholera and remains ill for a long period of time. Telaka "hears" from her gods that Daniel Patrick and his family have settled in her old Sinawoy country. Toby Feake buys a trading ship and leaves Watertown to become a trader. The Feake children become ill with measles and the winter is harsh, but Telaka gathers herbs to keep the family strong and healthy, which does not go unnoticed by the local gossips, many of whom are ill with scurvy and other illnesses due to poor nutrition. The local women decide Bess and Telaka are witches, due to unexplained events and invented experiences. Young Dolly Bridges feigns a fit on the church grounds, saying the witches are bothering her, pointing to Bess. A boy claims that a dark figure grabbed him in the night and then went back toward the Feakes'. Telaka is seized by a mob of frightened villagers, and they are approaching the minister's home to take Bess when Winthrop and his men arrive, just in time.

Bess and Robert decide to flee in the night on Toby's ship to where the Patricks are living, and Winthrop, distraught over the recent embezzlement of his funds, as well as his niece's troubles, approves of their plan. The Feakes, along with Telaka, leave in the night on Toby Feakes' boat, with the kind aid of the Reverend Phillips.

Chapter Thirteen Analysis

The level of hysteria in the colony is perhaps partially due to hunger and ill health. It is also well known that some of the underlying reasons for accusations of witchcraft were



based on jealousy of those who owned more land and lived more comfortably. Added to the fear of the devil instilled by the colonies' religious leaders, the stressful living conditions prompted the people to find someone to blame. In this case, dead pigs, an accidental fall from the barn, and a burned house are all attributed to Bess and Telaka. Bess's statement that she and Telaka understand each other fuels the fear in the women, since Telaka is mysterious and strange. Bess's need for gaiety, dancing, music, and love all work against her in this stifling atmosphere of fear and abuse of power.



Chapter Fourteen

Chapter Fourteen Summary

On their trip from Watertown, Toby Feake stops in Plymouth for supplies and to find some coats to buy for Bess to trade with the Indians. He stays out all night and tricks Bess into thinking that Governor Bradford wants to jail her, but the constable turns out to be Will Hallet, who comforts and soothes her. They realize they are in love, but Will is returning to England to see his mother and make some money.

On the journey, Telaka saves the group from Indians by speaking with them and telling them who she is. They finally reach Telaka's homeland, as she had predicted earlier. Her mother and relatives are happy to see her. Daniel Patrick runs out to greet them, and sheds tears of joy when he learns they will be staying.

Bess enjoys bathing in the ocean and exploring the pristine woods. She decides she wants to buy Monakewaygo, a neck of land with white sand that becomes an island when the tide is in. Together, the Feakes and Patricks purchase from Telaka's father, Mianos, all the land the English have named "Greenwich", for the sum of twenty-five English coats. Chief Mianos does not smoke the peace pipe, but the deal is made and Elizabeth is thrilled to own miles of land.

Chapter Fourteen Analysis

The exodus from Watertown is proving to be a wonderful change for Bess, who loves nature and appreciates its beauty. She is as close to freedom as she has ever been, now owning her own piece of land. The fact that the chief did not smoke the peace pipe is disturbing, and may indicate trouble later. Bess, whose marriage to such an odd man has not been fulfilling, is deeply in love with Will Hallet, despite their six-year age difference, but substitutes that empty space with the new excitement of their land purchase.



Chapter Fifteen

Chapter Fifteen Summary

Bess and Daniel Patrick head for New Amsterdam to settle a dispute between the New Haven Colony and the Dutch, who are arguing over which of them has jurisdiction over the land purchased by the Feakes and Patricks. New Amsterdam is fully Dutch, with windmills and wooden shoes.

Captain Underhill, earlier banished from the Bay Colony and from Piscataquah, has now moved to Greenwich, and accuses the Siwanoy of murder, since a Sinawoy brave's body was found with a Dutch murder victim in a ravine. Daniel Patrick and John Underhill, who were formerly comrades, argue over Underhill's wish to attack the Indians, and Daniel decides to put their Greenwich land under Dutch jurisdiction, rather than the New Haven colony.

Robert Feake is having headaches and mental troubles again, so Bess and Daniel go to New Amsterdam together. Daniel sees a French Jesuit priest in town and asks for his blessing, having been raised Catholic. Bess is shocked by this, assuming he had renounced his religion long ago. Bess and Daniel meet with the Dutch governor, William Kieft, a pompous, dim-witted man who bullies and oppresses the otherwise peaceful Indians. Daniel signs his allegiance to Holland, but Elizabeth is asked to kiss the flag instead, as is the governor. Bess is relieved to learn that Anne Hutchinson is planning to live in Greenwich.

Bess gives birth by herself to baby Robert, who is now a Dutch child by birth. Robert is needing help with his crops, but gets a strange feeling from the Indian Nawthorne when he asked for help from the Tomacs. Telaka arranges for some Rowayton boys to help out.

Telaka brings her brother Keoferram to Bess for healing a chancre on his leg. Bess nurses him to health. Daniel has been to Stamford and learned that the Dutch Governor, Kieft, has slaughtered almost two hundred unsuspecting Manhattan and North River Indians in cold blood for revenge over an unrelated incident involving Hackensack Indians. Daniel has heard this news from Underhill, who is anxious to go to war with the Indians. Robert mentions that Nawthorne gave him a present, but when he goes to tie the necklace around young Lisbet's neck, Bess will not let her wear it, and has a queasy feeling about it.

Chapter Fifteen Analysis

Clearly there is trouble coming with the Indians. The governor's irrational slaughter of so many Indians who were not even involved in the original problem is going to send waves of rage through the tribes, perhaps including those in Greenwich. Bess's intuition is telling her that Norwalk's gesture toward Robert was not one of kindness.



Each time Bess senses a time of deep peace, her world is disrupted by a drama. Symbolically, her new haven with its white sparkling sand is cut off from the world each day by the tides. She is finding her spiritual peace in her own way.

It is interesting to note how parts of the new world are being claimed by countries other than England, such as Holland and France. New Netherlands is the area around Long Island and Manhattan, which was owned by the Dutch in these early years.



Chapter Sixteen

Chapter Sixteen Summary

The Indians in the New Netherlands are on the warpath since Kieft massacred those who had come to him for protection. Roger Williams comes through and negotiates a short-lived truce. Telaka, whose absence was unusual, came to Bess and told her that the Sinawoy had found other fishing grounds. Telaka is abhorred at seeing the necklace Norwalk had given Robert, since it signifies evil. Her behavior is distant and strange.

Toby upsets the gravesite of Telaka's mother, which means her spirit is lost forever. Telaka comes to Bess to explain that her father has never been happy with selling his land for coats, and thought it would only be the two families. With all of the violations by the white man, and now the damage to the gravesite, Mianos has lost his patience and Telaka tells her he has killed Toby, Daniel, and Daniel's assistant, Ben Palmer. She learns that the necklace Nawthorne gave Robert contains the finger bones of a murdered Dutch woman. When Daniel and Toby return, they have the head of Mianos and the murdered corpse of Ben Palmer. Bess begs Telaka not to tell her tribe that they have killed Mianos, and Telaka promises to lie for them, but says Daniel Patrick will pay the blood curse.

The group buries Ben. Toby, who has been showing unusual concern and caring for Anneke, Daniel's wife, sets off for New Amsterdam. Daniel's young son, caught in a sinking boat is rescued from the ocean by two Siwanoy, who are kind to him, proving to them that Telaka has kept her word not to tell the tribe who killed Mianos.

A contingent of the Dutch army arrives at Greenwich, and includes an old enemy of Daniel Patrick's named Blauvelt. They bring the news that Anne Hutchinson and her family has been massacred by the Weckquasageeks, a tribe friendly with the Sinawoy. Kieft has commanded the army, led by Daniel, to attack the Sinawoys. Daniel knows that the only Indian left in the village is a half-wit by the name of Wasobibbi. He gets Wasobibbi to lead the army in the opposite direction of the tribe's location, promising him wampum. Robert is angry to be left behind, believing that the Sinawoy may be just as dangerous as Kieft thinks.

The raid is unsuccessful, but the officers hear Robert betraying Daniel's trick with Wasobibbi, and Blauvelt accuses Daniel of being a traitor and shoots him in the head. They restrain Blauvelt, but see the insane Robert Feake go to Daniel's corpse and wash his hands in Daniel's blood.

Chapter Sixteen Analysis

This is a very dark chapter in Seton's story, with gruesome misunderstandings and massacres, and the brutal death of one of her most likeable characters, Daniel Patrick. It is clear now that life is going to change completely for Bess, since Robert has finally



gone totally off the edge psychologically, Daniel is dead, Anne Hutchinson is dead, and the army is determined to wipe out their Indian friends.

Telaka's loyalty to Bess is clearly illustrated since she believes that her mother's soul will be lost forever due to the disturbance at the gravesite, and knows that Daniel has killed her father, yet agrees to lie for the white men to save Bess's family from being attacked.



Chapter Seventeen

Chapter Seventeen Summary

John and Margaret Winthrop feel that Captain Patrick's death is a natural consequence of his ungodly behavior, and that Anne Hutchinson's demise is the natural end result of her heresy. But John writes a letter to his niece, inviting her to come to Boston.

After Daniel is buried, Bess talks George Baxter into leaving her and Anneke alone, and asks him to leave the Sinawoys alone, as well. Robert Feake is now unable even to feed himself in his madness, and Toby builds a special room onto Bess's house to lock Robert in.

Keofferam, Telaka's brother who is now the Chief, comes with gifts of turkey and venison for Christmas, which is meaningful for Bess. However, Captain Underhill arrives by ship with soldiers and a renewed plan to attack the Sinawoys, and has the evil Nawthorne along as his assistant. Toby Feake is eager to join in the attack, and Bess is watched carefully so that she is unable to warn the Sinawoy. The army wipes out more than a thousand Indians in a surprise attack. Underhill plans to be well rewarded for his deeds with land in Manhattan. Bess is terribly depressed about the massacre, even when Underhill gives her a message from Will Hallet, who has returned to Boston.

Bess receives a letter from George Baxter granting her all of the land to administer as she sees fit, given Robert's condition. Bess is determined to be discerning about how she sells the land, and is relieved to have this power. Toby informs Bess he will marry Anneke, despite their age difference, when the mourning period for Daniel is over. Bess has a strange dream about Baxter's letter, and Will Hallet, Jack, Harry and John Winthrop.

Chapter Seventeen Analysis

Through much grief and turmoil, Bess has finally gained power and control over her life with the official ownership of the land. Her dream of swiping at the men in her life with Baxter's letter symbolizes her pent-up anger over being powerless, and now having gained some power to throw back at them.

Will Hallet's message portends a renewed presence in her life. Bess's resignation about tending to Robert in his madness seems to confirm that she has always seen him only as another one of her children.



Chapter Eighteen

Chapter Eighteen Summary

The six families of Greenwich travel to Stamford for Joan Winthrop's wedding to Thomas Lyon. Joan is the daughter of Bess and Harry Winthrop, and is now sixteen. The couple plans to live with Bess at Greenwich Cove. Robert clings to her skirt like a child but is better and somewhat more lucid and has grown plump. He suddenly seems to come out of his fog and remembers things from the past up until the day of Daniel's death.

They crossed from Dutch to English territory, where the Puritanical magistrate and minister feel that the Feake property should belong to the New Haven Colony, rather than the Dutch. They hope to persuade the other Greenwich families of their logic.

Robert's new awareness turns again to insanity, and he rapes Bess with his hands on her throat. He tells her he has a devil and he hurts what he loves; he feels he killed Dan with his words, and that he will never heal from his sinning.

When they return home, Robert goes into a sort of vacuum, moving zombie-like through his days. When he finds out Bess is pregnant, he does not remember having been intimate with her for years. Bess's new son-in-law is lazy and tries to take control of her property. There is a scene when he sells her pig without consulting her.

While Bess is resting in solitude on her island, Will Hallet appears. He tells Elizabeth his debts are paid and he wants to buy some land, perhaps in Greenwich. After some awkward moments, Will sings to her, and they go to the secret pond where Elizabeth pets a tame deer. Bess and Will finally realize that they are in love and, in spite of Bess's pregnancy, Will plans to stay with her and help her.

Chapter Eighteen Analysis

Romantic love is a common theme in Seton's stories. Elizabeth, now more mature and hardened by her suffering, is just as attractive to Will as ever, and she falls in love easily with him, under a backdrop of sparkling ocean, white sand, deep woods, and a magical lake and a quiet approach that finds her resting naked, still beautiful after five children.

Robert's temporary lucidity only lasts long enough for him to become violent, and it can be assumed that he will never totally recover his sanity, therefore, Will Hallet's appearance is fortuitous, since Bess has been attracted to him since he was a teenager.

Young Thomas, Joan's husband, is clearly looking for an easy ride through Bess's wealth, and is not likely to be a good house guest for very long.



Chapter Nineteen

Chapter Nineteen Summary

Hallet is accepted into the community of Greenwich and is asked to train a small band of soldiers for protection. Bess's son-in-law, Thomas, is not pleased, feeling he should have the position, given that he is the new son of the largest landowner.

During the busy maple sugar time, Bess goes into labor and delivers a deformed child, who dies fairly soon. Bess is ill for many days, but Will Hallet's presence seems to help. Anneke realizes what is going on between them.

Robert Feake comes home after having escaped the Reverend Bishop and Thomas Lyon's grasp. Feake has signed a paper giving all his property to Bess and Will Hallet, and he has decided to return to London. He takes his share of money from the family chest and disappears. Jealous Thomas, having banished Will from the Feake home, keeps constant watch on Bess for the next period of time. Anneke advises Will to leave Greenwich, knowing that a relationship with Bess will bring trouble to her and her family. Bess finally sneaks away to see Will and they decide to travel to New Amsterdam to secure a divorce for Bess, and to marry.

Chapter Nineteen Analysis

Again, male domination becomes an issue when Thomas Lyon decides he is man of the Feake house. His treachery in trying to take control of the property by duping Robert Feake foreshadows more desperate moves on his part. Since he is lazy, the reader can assume he will continue to try to get his living from the Winthrop/Feake coffers. Anneke's warnings to Will reveal that she knows what Thomas Lyon might be capable of, and dreads it.



Chapter Twenty

Chapter Twenty Summary

The journey to New Amsterdam is long and tedious. Will and Bess see the remains of the town where Anne Hutchinson had lived. Reaching George Baxter's home, they show him the paper signed by Robert Feake, and explain their request for a divorce. Governor Kieft's administration is in shambles, and Kieft is about to be replaced. Baxter manages to arrange a meeting and the couple learns that the only way to obtain the divorce is to have it granted to Robert in absentia, with the reason being cited as adultery on Bess's part. Bess reluctantly agrees, and Kieft plans to use her case in his favor when he is called before the authorities in Holland. The divorce is granted, but Bess is not free to remarry for a period of time. She sails back to her home and withdraws emotionally from her family as she waits for Will, who returns a month later.

Will is unable to get the new governor Stuyvesant to agree to his marriage to Bess, and when he returns home he suggests to her that they be married in the sight of God or man. They perform their own marriage ceremony in Will's home, and Bess spends the night with Will as his wife. In the morning, Toby Feake, Thomas Lyon, and their neighbor, Angell Husted arrive, armed and angry over the adultery. Will and Bess show them the divorce paper from New Amsterdam and their wedding rings. When Thomas challenges them on their marriage, Will warns him he will not be allowed to bully Bess any longer, and that he should move from her home to Stamford, and start spending his own money.

Toby tells them Thomas has been writing to John Winthrop to attempt to get what might be due to Joan from her late father's Barbados holdings, as well as to contest the paper signed by Robert Feake, which granted his property to Elizabeth and Will.

Chapter Twenty Analysis

Although their marriage is not sanctioned by the government, Bess and Will defy the established structure and do things their own way, which is typical of Bess's character. The idea of watching over one's neighbors to make sure they do not commit a sin was known to be encouraged by John Winthrop as a way to keep the colonists on the straight and narrow. It is interesting that the neighbors would approach them armed and angry over Bess spending the night with Will, as if it were a personal affront.



Chapter Twenty-One

Chapter Twenty-One Summary

Thomas and Joan have moved to Stamford, as Will suggested. Will is working the land and Anneke is again Bess's close friend. They organize a harvest festival to fall on Halloween, and invite the entire village for a feast with dancing and singing. Interrupting the festivities, Thomas Lyon and Reverend Mr. Bishop arrive with an injunction and a letter signed by Robert Feake, discounting his earlier letter that granted all of his possessions to Bess and Will. With the help of their neighbors, they rejected the injunction and sent the men away, since they had no jurisdiction in Dutch territory to serve an injunction. In the process of reading Thomas's letter from John Winthrop, Bess is grief-stricken to learn that Margaret has passed away.

Bess becomes pregnant, and they pass the winter peacefully, selling some of their land. Toby has named his ship after the late Ben Palmer. All seems well until a government ship arrives with a letter from the Dutch Director-General and a group of soldiers. Bess and Will are informed that Will is banished from the colony and that Bess, as an adulteress, may never see him again under the threat of bodily punishment. She is also barred from selling any land or property, and Will must forfeit his own property. The new Governor is abiding by English ways, and the sentence is harsh. Bess knows she has only one option, and sends Toby to find Jack, sending along the glove to signal that she needs him. Accompanied by military guard, Bess, Will, and the children are led to the border of the colony where they stay in a neighbor's cabin. The cabin is raided and all of their money is impounded on behalf of Robert Feake. Just before Bess's two children, Hannah and Johnny, are to be taken from her, Toby arrives to fetch them and take them all to Jack Winthrop, who has sent for them.

Chapter Twenty-One Analysis

Bess's son-in-law, still determined to get her property, has gone to great lengths to disrupt and disempower her. She assumed that Robert Feake was out of her life forever, but Thomas continues to use Robert as a pawn to try to gain control. Again, Seton uses the literary device of creating a sense of peace and serenity as a precursor to disaster and crisis. It seems amazing that the government would pay to send soldiers and officials to arrest people for adultery, but the laws are based on religion.



Chapter Twenty-Two

Chapter Twenty-Two Summary

At his home in Pequot, Connecticut (which later becomes New London) Jack Winthrop receives a letter from his father John, who appears to be trying to help Bess. Jack has given Bess and Will six acres and a home in town, but Will is unhappy about being dependent again.

Jack tells Bess that Robert Feake is in jail in England after having confessed to murdering his apprentice, Ralph; however, there is some doubt that Ralph is even dead. Bess feels sure Robert did not commit the crime but does believe that he struggles with demons.

Bess gives birth to a healthy boy, while Jack's wife gives birth to a girl they name Martha, after John Winthrop's new wife. Will and Bess help Jack with his business dealings and medicines, and Jack writes two more letters on their behalf to Governor Stuyvesant, which as yet are unanswered.

John receives the shocking news that his father is dead, and rushes to Boston. Jack learns that in his last days his father became more interested in peace and regretted his harshness, mentioning that he should not have made little Bess kiss the rod with which he whipped her as a child. With his father's death, Jack's ties to Boston are severed.

Bess has become ill since her uncle's death. Will tells her that King Charles has been beheaded and there is no more monarchy in England but, now, only a Puritan Commonwealth under Oliver Cromwell, but Bess is thinking that if she had not been wicked earlier in her life things might be different for everyone now. Learning that they are staying at Jack Winthrop's, the new governor of Connecticut has sent Captain Mason to arrest Bess and Will. As the captain waits, Jack receives a letter delivered by Toby from George Baxter at Governor Stuyvesant's office. Jack quickly catches Toby and arranges for Will and Bess to get on his boat. Jack has suddenly been made magistrate and, with this new letter from Baxter, he feels there may be hope for Will and Bess. The Feake children go to the Winthrop mansion, and Bess is not told all the details, but writes a thank you note to Jack for all he has done and departs on the boat.

Chapter Twenty-Two Analysis

It seems that the hardship is finally getting the better of Bess, who has also gone through another childbirth under a tremendous amount of stress. The guilt she feels goes all the way back to her childhood interaction with the Countess of Carlisle and its repercussion of Winthrop losing his office and, as a result, emigrating with the Bay Colony. She feels as though she drowned with Winthrop's death.



Chapter Twenty-Three

Chapter Twenty-Three Summary

Bess and Will, still aboard Toby's boat, are afraid to disembark at any city for fear of arrest. Baxter's letter has told them that if they return to New Amsterdam they might find something to their benefit, but Bess thinks it is a trick. At the door of the governor's mansion, she gives up all hope.

They are graciously received at Stuyvesant's mansion by his wife, Judy, who interrupts the governor to plead for the couple. The governor, who wants to stay on friendly terms with Jack Winthrop, has already written a document reinstating their land to them, and giving Bess permission to marry Will. The two are married the next day in a church by the Governor's minister, with Toby Feake and George Baxter in attendance. The governor had not been told of recent persecutions in other colonies, or he might not have been so lenient.

Stuyvesant and Baxter encourage Jack to relocate in Dutch territory and, given the harsh governing of the colonies, Jack is considering it, but his wife guesses that he is more attached to Bess than he should be. He realizes that he must put Bess behind him, and goes about his business.

Bess learns that she is not able to visit Joan, since Joan and Thomas live in New England, and Thomas is still trying to get her land. Joan comes to visit Bess, but they quarrel over Joan's greediness. Elizabeth tells her to lie in the bed she has made for herself. Lisbet becomes displeased with her surroundings after having been in the Winthrop mansion, and the two little boys are quarrelsome and impatient. Young Hannah has taken to reading the Bible.

Robert Feake has returned to Watertown and Thomas has somehow gotten him to write up another document to invalidate their claim to their land. Will travels to Watertown and finds that Robert is being cared for by the town. Watertown's selectman feels the town did wrong by the Feakes and wants to take care of Robert. Will finds Robert living at Samuel Thatcher's home, right next door to the house where he and Bess once lived. Robert is calm when he can see his old house, does not remember anything, and will say anything he is asked to say. Robert lives in a fantasy, pretending that he is still with Bess and near the Patricks. He does not realize that he ever left Watertown, but has a pardon from England for the crime he thought he committed. Will leaves money in Watertown to take care of Robert and to pay for any of Robert's former land holdings in Greenwich, as well as the silver ladle Robert had given Bess long ago and the gold chain. He obtains a quitclaim and heads for home, stopping at a tavern.

Will overhears that Greenwich has been given over to New England and is no longer Dutch. He hears a man named Jeffrey Ferris talking about buying up land in Greenwich and tells him who he is. Will tells Bess they may be forced to sell all of Greenwich, since



they cannot safely live in New England. Will wants to move to Hell Gate, where the whirlpools are treacherous and where he had always wanted to live before coming to Greenwich.

Chapter Twenty-Three Analysis

As much as Bess wants to keep her island, it does not look as though it is destined to be. She is harder and more bitter than before, but her relationship with Will is her primary interest. She has transferred her hatred of John Winthrop to her son-in-law; even though this new turn of events has nothing to do with Thomas Lyon, she assumes he has won. The fact that their luck has turned around completely does not comfort Bess, as she seems to always expect the worst and most often is right. After finally resettling in Greenwich, they are faced with starting over again somewhere else.



Chapter Twenty-Four

Chapter Twenty-Four Summary

Bess and Will have been at Hallet's Point above the Hell Gate whirlpools for five years. She has a real English garden, and they are celebrating Hannah's eighteenth birthday, wherein Hannah will also become betrothed to John Browne. Anneke and Toby live in nearby Flushing, all still in Dutch territory. Joan has died and Elizabeth is estranged from her granddaughter. Lisbet seems to be in love with Captain Underhill, who is old enough to be her grandfather. Bess, not feeling well, uses foxglove leaves to feel better.

A young widow who resembles Bess when she was young has befriended the Hallets, especially Will. Also causing some jealousy for Bess is a cobbler named Wickenden who is taking a lot of Will's time preaching about the voice of God talking straight into the human heart.

There is considerable racial tension in discussions with John Browne's father, who seems to hate everyone who isn't like him. Governor Stuyvesant is now fighting the Swedes for land south of them.

The town of New Amsterdam becomes saturated with Indians who, although they say they are protecting the people from the Mohawks, are actually looking for a man named Van Dyke who shot a squaw while she was picking his peaches. The Indians, including Mohicans, Wappingers, Tappans, and Montauks, agreed to talk with the town leaders about their grievances. Nawthorne, who betrayed the Sinawoys, is willing to bargain for whiskey and ammunition, promising to be a best friend to the Dutch, just like he had to the English. They finally agree on a settlement and the Indians leave the fort, only to capture and kill Van Dyke and another man. New Amsterdam's cannon scares them to their canoes and they promptly go to Staten Island, Hoboken and Pavonia, killing or capturing all the inhabitants, after which they head to Gate. The Indians invade the Hallet home, tying up Will. Nawthorne shoots Bess, and they tie up the children. However, Keofferam, Telaka's brother whom Bess had once healed, finally recognizes her. He kills Nawthorne and puts the Hallets outside. The Indians set fire to their home, but leave the family unharmed, with the exception of Bess's wound. In Flushing, Hannah nurses Elizabeth's arm, but Will is too discouraged to start over again, even though their money survived the fire. Bess buys a small house in Flushing on her own for them.

Hearing the word in a dream, Bess insists on sailing to Monakewaygo, but as she makes her way to the little pond she has no idea why she has come there. Telaka comes from the woods and informs Bess that she will die in the next few months. They hold hands and look deep into the pond, and Bess experiences the light and love of God, and a deep understanding. When she returns to Will he is amazed that she looks lit up from the inside. She wants to go and find Joan's daughter, her granddaughter, and Thomas.



Chapter Twenty-Four Analysis

Bess has finally found the peace that has been so elusive throughout her life. The simple contact of love through Telaka causes all of her fears and jealousies to melt away, and she is now ready to face the person who has caused her so much grief. Anya Seton places much emphasis on spiritual seeking, and does a good job of bringing a much tormented Bess to a state of serenity and acceptance of her self and her life. She realizes that one small act of kindness saved her life with Keofferam, and experiences a deep insight into the true nature of spirituality.



Characters

Elizabeth (Bess) Fones

The main character in this story, Bess Fones is a freedom-loving, independent English woman whose personality tends to get her into trouble in the strict and religious environment of her family and community during a tumultuous time in history.

Bess does not like being under the authoritative thumb of John Winthrop and deliberately makes decisions that she knows will inflame him. Although she is in love with her first cousin, Jack, she marries his wilder brother, Harry, even though her family is outraged. She deliberately insults a suitor to whom she has been promised and eventually marries the effeminate and crazy Robert Feake because she feels she can control him better. Bess is a kind woman who wants something more from her life than the usual drudgery assigned to women of her day. She does not show the bigotry or prejudice against those who are different, although she is shocked when she learns her good friend Daniel is a devoted "papist". Bess eventually finds the love of her life and her own personal happiness after many trials, tribulations, and losses.

Toward the end of her life Bess realizes that she did make many mistakes that may have cost other people. For example, by demanding that a local countess pay her father for her pharmaceuticals she accidentally may have cost John Winthrop his job in England since the countess was close friends with the queen. Although none of her trespasses were terribly serious, she did flaunt the rules and rejected the authority of her uncle, who was abusive to her in his way.

Bess serves as an example of the individualistic type of person who survived emigration to America, and whose type of character was eventually drawn upon to illustrate what true Americans are made of. She married her first cousin, she wanted to own her own land, and she wanted to marry Will Hallet, a younger man whose station was far beneath her own. These behaviors were unacceptable, given the caliber of the Winthrop family, and Bess continued to question the authority and oppressive rules and beliefs that impinged on her personal sense of freedom.

John Winthrop

John Winthrop, the venerable governor of the Bay Colony, is initially Bess's uncle, although when she marries his son, he becomes her father. He is asked to lead the colony to the new world and, in his passionate religiosity, becomes overzealous and cruel. Winthrop felt that God deals out punishments and rewards as He sees fit. Winthrop considered himself one of the "elect" of God and took the triumphs and tragedies in his life as personal signals from God as to whether he was on the right track.



Winthrop was accused of trying to be king of the new land, and was voted out of office, but later voted back in by a population frightened and nervous about the new challenges they faced. His unfair treatment of good people like Anne Hutchinson and Roger Williams was a result of his fearful religious beliefs and his dire need to protect and preserve the Bay Colony in the way he thought God wanted. Winthrop was a complex character, both in this story and historically, whose iron-fisted governance often served to work against him. However, there are those who believe that had Winthrop not been as strict and rigid as he was, the colony would never have survived and American history might have looked quite different.

Winthrop meant well and, although he took his position far too seriously and tried to be hands-on with every aspect of the colony, he started out with a good heart, and at his death was remorseful for having been too harsh. He realized he should not have made Elizabeth kiss the hazelwood stick with which he beat her, an act that set a pattern of rebellion for her lifetime. In spite of being an extreme controller, John Winthrop's interest in and protection of his family was honorable, and in this story, he protects and helps Bess, even though he often feels she is a lost cause.

Jack Winthrop

The older son of John Winthrop and his first wife, Anne, Jack is industrious, smart and kind. His love for his first cousin, Bess, is confusing for him at times, and he marries her sister, Martha for reasons that are not clear, even to him. A major force in the new world, Jack settles the area of Connecticut known as New London, and develops mines and other natural resources throughout New England. Although he is not a political or religious leader, his wealth and works in the new world bring him great respect and considerable power. He remains a loyal friend to his cousin, Bess, and eventually helps her out of more than one life or death situation.

Henry (Harry) Winthrop

Harry is the wilder son of John Winthrop, brother to Jack, who marries Bess Fones, his first cousin. Harry uses his father's money to farm tobacco in Barbados, but basically fails in the endeavor. He parties in the streets of London with his rowdy friends who have royal ties, and introduces Bess to a free lifestyle which appeals to her. After marrying Bess, he philanders and drinks and misses his boat to America. When the two captains Underhill and Patrick track him down and get him on a later boat, he drowns in a river in Salem before ever reaching his family. Bess gives birth to his daughter, Joan, whom he never sees.

Will Hallet

Will is in his teens when Bess first meets him on the boat headed for America. He is strong, mature, and has the speech of a gentleman, although he is a yeoman by birth. His father was unfairly hanged, and out of a sense of justice he is taken in and educated



by Count Digby and his family in England, and later apprenticed to a cruel master from whom he escapes. Will is a likable, capable man whose attraction to Elizabeth grows into love as he matures. His determination to take care of her since her husband is insane and she has children turns into a commitment that lasts throughout Bess's life. Will is at least six years younger than Bess, and proves to be a strong, reliable force in her life, as well as a good husband and father. Due to Bess's odd circumstances and changing colony boundaries, Will finds himself in a major legal mess over his relationship with Bess, but sticks with her until they finally get it settled.

Martha Fones

Martha is the younger sister of Bess Fones. Martha is not strong, either emotionally or physically. She falls in love with Jack Winthrop, her first cousin, and out of fondness for her, he marries her. However, Martha is fearful of marital relations and of giving birth, and her years of marriage to Jack are fraught with depression and angst. While en route to America, Martha tries to commit suicide by jumping from the ship, but is rescued and afterward finally loses her virginity, due to Jack's insistence. She later dies of a disease, having always yearned to return to England. She is a sad character.

Daniel Patrick and Anneke Patrick

Daniel Patrick is a captain in the army who rescues Harry Winthrop and then delivers Harry's body to John Winthrop. He and his Dutch wife Anneke become close friends with Bess and Robert Feake, since they are neighbors in Watertown. When Patrick tries to demand the pay due him from Winthrop for his part in the Pequot war, Winthrop banishes him from the Bay Colony under false charges of adultery. Daniel and his wife move to Greenwich, where Bess and Robert eventually follow, the four of them becoming very close friends. Daniel's nephew Toby, a skilled sailor and tradesman, joins the family and later marries Anneke after Patrick's death. Daniel Patrick is killed by an old enemy named Blauvelt and the crazy Robert Feake washes his hands in Daniel's blood.

Margaret Winthrop

The third wife of John Winthrop, Margaret is stepmother to Jack and Harry, and is a very devoted wife and mother. She is extremely pious, as John expects her to be, but becomes and close friend and confidante of Bess, whose ways she tries to help mend. Margaret bears seven children of John's, losing one on the voyage to New England and others later, due to ill health. She seems to be a positive force in John's life, and Bess is angry when John remarries very quickly after Margaret's death.



Robert Feake

Robert Feake is a London goldsmith who is summoned by John Winthrop and Emmanuel Downing when they are preparing the Bay Colony for emigration to America. Robert is slight, silvery-haired and effeminate, and has insanity in his family. His behavior is strange and he has spells of disorientation involving someone named Ralph, and washing his hands in blood or holy water. No one is sure what these flashbacks might be about, but he goes in and out of bad times. Daniel Patrick makes Robert a lieutenant in the army, which pleases Robert and gives him a purpose. When Daniel is killed, Robert goes over the edge and remains insane for the rest of the story. He goes to London to confess to the murder of his apprentice, but is acquitted because he is not guilty. He is eventually taken care of by Watertown and lives out his life in a house next to the one where he lived with Bess, living in a fantasy of the past.

Toby Feake

Nephew of Robert Feake, Toby Feake comes to the new land with skills as a sailor and tradesman. He helps Bess and Robert escape from Watertown when an angry mob wants to burn Bess for witchcraft, gives them shelter when they are forced to flee from Jack Winthrop's home, and generally provides transportation for them up and down the eastern seaboard in his boat, named after his slain friend, Ben Palmer. Toby, who is quite a bit younger, marries Anneke Patrick when Daniel dies, and becomes a very successful trader in New England.

Thomas Lyon

Thomas Lyon marries Bess's daughter by Jack Winthrop, named Joan. Thomas is lazy and hopes to cash in on the fact that he has married a Winthrop, and that Bess is the wealthiest woman in the area, owning most of Greenwich. He tries to take over as head of her household when he marries Joan, and coerces the mentally ill Robert into retracting his grant of the property to Bess and Will Hallet. He is an opportunistic young man whose treachery serves to estrange Bess from her daughter until her daughter's death.

Anne Hutchinson

Famous for her banishment from the Bay Colony, Anne Hutchinson is an independent thinker and a kindred spirit with Bess. She is tried in Boston, with John Winthrop being the main force behind her conviction, in a trial that was totally unjust and inhumane. Her crime was to suggest that perhaps the spirit of God is accessible to us personally, which frightened and infuriated the rigid and superstitious Puritans. Anne, along with her brother-in-law John Wheelwright, is banished from the Bay Colony and lives in Rhode Island until her death at the hands of Indians.



Peyto

Peyto is an Egyptian who returns to London with Harry Winthrop from Barbados as Harry's devoted servant. Peyto helps establish the tone of this period in London, since he is accused of witchcraft because he reads Tarot cards and because he bears marks from being caught as a thief. The townspeople burn Peyto's donkey out of fear of him. Jack Winthrop helps Harry and Bess arrange for Peyto's escape.



Objects/Places

Groton Manner

Groton Manner is the Winthrop family home in England where Bess Fones' mother was raised, and where Bess received a whipping that affected her for the rest of her life.

Fones Apothecary

Elizabeth Fones' father, Thomas, owns the Fones Apothecary in London, which is where Elizabeth learns how to make mithridate and other medicines.

Barbados

Harry Winthrop went as a young man to Barbados to make his fortune growing tobacco. He did not do well in this venture, and squandered his father's investment. Later, some of the Bay Colony's settlers migrate to Barbados to escape John Winthrop's iron-fisted governing.

Massachusetts Bay Colony

This is the name of the charter granted to the colony, led by John Winthrop, that sailed to New England and settled in Boston, Massachusetts.

Newtown, Massachusetts

The area which later became known as Cambridge, on the outskirts of Boston. Newtown is where Thomas Dudley lived, and where Dudley wanted the new capitol to be built, while Winthrop wanted it in Boston.

Watertown, Massachusetts

A small settlement seven miles up the Charles River from Boston, where Elizabeth and Robert Feakes had their first home. Their neighbors, Daniel and Anneke Patrick, also live here but are banished by John Winthrop. Elizabeth and her Indian maid, Telaka, are accused of witchcraft here, and flee to Greenwich.

Ipswich, Massachusetts

The New England home of Martha and Jack Winthrop.



Mystic, Connecticut

Mystic is where the entire Pequot Indian tribe was wiped out by Captains Daniel Patrick and John Underhill and their troops.

Greenwich

The settlement to which Daniel and Anneke Patrick go when they are banished from the Bay Colony. This is where the Feakes go when they escape Watertown where Bess is accused of witchcraft. Together with Daniel Patrick, Bess and Robert purchase the area from the Sinawoy Indian Chief, Telaka's father, named Mianos. They decide to allow the property to come under the jurisdiction of the Dutch in New Amsterdam, rather than the English New Haven colony. The area later becomes New York City.

Monakewaygo

Monakewaygo is the peninsula of white sands at Greenwich that is cut off from the mainland whenever the tide is in. The intermittent island becomes a haven for Elizabeth Feakes.

Vredeland

Vredeland was the home of the banished Anne Hutchinson. Vredeland eventually became the West Chester region of New York State.

Hell Gate/Hallet Point

The area of whirlpools on the East River above which Will Hallet and Elizabeth settled and built their home. Their home was destroyed by fire during an Indian attack.

Stamford, Connecticut

The home of Thomas Lyon and Bess's daughter, Joan.

Flushing, New York

The town where the Feakes finally settled after losing their home at Hallet's Point.



Themes

Search for Truth

Throughout this story there is constant turmoil within Elizabeth over the unrealistic, rigid Puritanical religion foisted on her by John Winthrop, and the individual search for truth and for a genuine sense of her own spirituality. Elizabeth catches glimpses of something real when she is with Anne Hutchinson, and when she is in nature, particularly at the pond in the woods in Greenwich. But toward the end of her life, Telaka helps her see a glimpse of true beauty, whose significance is that of pure love. Elizabeth finds the truth, where the religious zealots of her time likely never did. It is also made clear in this story that one man's truth is not necessarily the same for another. The Indians did not see that their land rightfully belonged to white men, but the settlers felt entitled to the land because, if God had not wanted them to have it, He would not have let them settle there. The fact that people were still superstitious enough to believe in witchcraft reveals that people will often settle on whatever answers they can find to explain things they do not understand, or things that frighten them, rather than facing their fears and finding the truth.

Strength in Adversity

Elizabeth undergoes so much strife, pain, and fear in her lifetime that it is amazing she is able to live as long as she did. She gave birth to six children, losing one of them. Her first husband drowns. She was married, unwillingly, to a man who was insane and dangerous. Her life was threatened when she was accused of witchcraft and forced to flee her home. Her land was taken from her more than once at the hands of her own daughter's husband. She was threatened with the loss of her husband and children for being an adulteress. She endured an Indian raid and a gunshot in the shoulder. But the hardship that afflicted her the most for her entire life was the brutal childhood whipping she received before the entire family for a childish prank, the humiliation of which went far beyond the seriousness of the deed. Others in the story also suffer and are able to go on with their lives. Many people in the colonies die from disease and general poor health, not to mention Indian attacks, accidents, and other calamities of living in rough wilderness conditions. Bess's character is meant to portray the spirited individualist who is able to overcome the adversity with the strength that it took to settle in the new land.

The Nature of God

There is an ongoing dispute throughout the story as to the nature of God and how one must perceive God. Anne Hutchinson made the mistake of believing that one could experience God personally, and the Puritans, led by John Winthrop, felt it blasphemous to presume that man was capable of any such experience. The Puritans believed that everything was a sign from God, and was either approving or disapproving of their



deeds, forcing them to beg like frightened children at the foot of God for whatever fate He determined for them. A good example is John Winthrop's idea that when a whole tribe of Indians is wiped out, it means that God is approving of the white man's settling the land. Elizabeth, through personal experience, eventually determines that the nature of God is simply love. However, John Winthrop firmly believes in the wrath of God and takes life's tragedies as punishment meted out by God for ill deeds.

Family Ties

In the early days of America, if one married into a family, they immediately became part of that family. For instance, when Robert Feake married Elizabeth Fones, because she was the niece of John Winthrop, John Winthrop became Robert's "father". When Jack Winthrop marries his second wife, she and Elizabeth become cousins. The result of this was that people sometimes were eager to marry someone simply to acquire the relationship, such as Thomas Lyon, who married Bess's daughter Joan. In this case, especially, Thomas considered himself to have acquired the role of man of the house, and therefore thought he was entitled to control the family's fortunes. People who were tied to families higher up in society were treated differently and, generally, more respectfully, even if they did not share the particular name of the important family. In the colonies, however, this respect and awe of nobility began to break down as common people acquired more land and the equalizing forces of nature affected everyone to the same degree. In other words, Indian hostility, inclement weather, and hunger have the same effect on everyone, regardless of their last names.



Style

Point of View

The *Winthrop Woman* is told from an omnipotent point of view. The reader is able to see into the thinking and actions of all of the characters, not just through a narrator's eyes. Anya Seton allows us to understand the feelings of the characters, and the reader is able to empathize with their predicaments because one has a greater understanding of them than they do of themselves. For instance, Daniel Patrick's admission of his Catholic faith and his surprising submission to a priest reveals a side of him that he had forgotten, since he was raised an Irish Catholic but spent his adulthood in Holland and the colonies. The reader sees his angry, combative side relax and submit to his earlier values when he is before the priest. At times, Seton reverts to a narrative style to catch the reader up to the point in time that her next chapter begins, and she uses dialogue among the characters to help us understand their relationships. At several points in the story the characters' dreams either portend the future or give the reader a glimpse into their deeper thinking. Robert Feake's madness becomes evident through Seton's exploration of his character through narrative, as well as his actions and dialogue.

Setting

Although the beginning of the novel takes place in England, both in the country at Groton Manor and in the bustling city of London, the story is primarily told in the setting of the colonies in New England. The reader experiences along with Elizabeth the passengers' last look at the British coastline, as well as their first glimpse of Boston and Salem when they arrive in America.

The early settlements, often named by the local Indian tribes, are referred to by their original names, such as New Amsterdam and Watertown, which are now New York City and Cambridge. Anya Seton allows us to feel the wildness of the country in her descriptions of the beaches, the forests and rivers, and the jagged coastline along which Tobe Feake sails his trading ship. While most of the areas are uninhabited, with the exception of Indians, some are already built into small towns, such as the city of Boston. The reader can only imagine through stories such as Seton's what the United States must have looked like before it became so heavily populated. Seton does give the reader a sense of the vast size of the open territory from which the settlers choose their homes.

The Hell Gate area of the East River where the Halletts settled is especially beautiful, and is where Bess is finally able to have a real English garden, and still look out over the water. A house with real glazed windows, in the early part of the story, is a special place to be, since most colonists started out in sod huts until they could get houses built. Seton does a masterful job of contrasting the life of an English gentleman with the life of a colonist. For instance, John Winthrop initially conducts his colonial business in a



wigwam, after having lived all his life at the grand Groton Manor in England. Likewise, the women in the story are accustomed to fine clothing and surroundings, and are forced to use the surrounding natural resources in New England just to maintain a household, clothing, and shelter.

Language and Meaning

Anya Seton's writing style is fluid and natural, incorporating an omniscient narrator with segments of dialogue that never keep the reader wondering for too long about where the story is headed. Seton weaves a significant amount of historical fact with her fiction and, although the fictional story is the focus of the book, the reader leaves the story with an enlightened sense of the history and lives of those hearty souls who made the trip to New England. Seton treats the matter of native Americans quite fairly as she describes the horrible massacres perpetrated by them against white people, primarily as revenge for the many injustices and murders perpetrated against them. In fact, if Seton generates any sympathy for either side, it is for the Indians. Telaka, although looking terrible because of a facial injury that has left her blinded in one eye, is an intelligent, trustworthy, insightful and kind friend to Bess and her family. Her brother Keoferram spares the lives of Bess's family in exchange for a kindness done for him many years prior. Naturally, there was prejudice and bigotry among the colonists that pitted the English against the French and Dutch, the Dutch against the Swedes, Protestants against Catholics, and almost everyone against the Indians, but rather than discuss this in her narrative, Seton allows us to overhear revealing conversations among her characters.

Much of the language of Seton's main characters comes directly from their lives in Europe, particularly England. However, it is easy to discern the difference between the genteel and common folk by their language, since the commoners use a form of cockney and the genteel have more polished language skills. Daniel Patrick still carries a bit of Irish brogue, and Anneke, his wife, has a heavy Dutch accent, which Seton masterfully incorporates. Further, the Dutch in New Amsterdam are very genuinely portrayed and their broken English is easy for the reader to understand, due to Seton's astute and clever method of writing.

Structure

This book is 587 pages, divided into three sections that cover England in 1617 through 1631, the Massachusetts Bay Colony in 1631 through 1640, and Connecticut and new Netherland in 1640 through 1655. Each section is a little less than two hundred pages and there are twenty-four chapters.

The story follows the life of Elizabeth Fones, niece of John Winthrop, who endures tumultuous events, most of which are not within her control. The first chapter is a significant one that takes place in Elizabeth's early childhood. Later, when she is a teenager, the reader spends a short time in London as Bess's social life includes



gallivanting with her cousin and future husband. During this time in London, the reader also learns about Robert Feake, the goldsmith, whose insanity runs in his family and has already begun in him as a young man. He is summoned by the Bay Colony leaders, but one does not know until later his significance to the story, when John Winthrop arranges a marriage between his niece, Bess, and Robert Feake in Boston. During this time Bess also has a brief encounter with the queen and king of England as they sail on their royal barge.

As the reader travels chronologically through Bess's life, Seton shows the progress of the settlers as they adapt to their new land. For instance, in the early years of the settlements, many new colonists, such as the son of Mr. Pond, the miller at Groton Manor, who chooses to return to England, are unable to endure the harsh conditions. As time goes by, there are more and more settlers buying land from the Feakes in Greenwich, and there is more substance to the cities, such as Boston and New Amsterdam.

Studying Bess's life, the reader is able to learn much about the growth of America and its early, sometimes shaky early stages. Although Seton is partial to the love-story aspect of her novels, this is an exciting, entertaining piece of historical fiction.



Quotes

"'One party,' said Mr. Cotton, his beautiful voice ringing to the rafters, 'is but seeking to advance the grace of God within us, while the other seeks to advance the grace of God towards us, and so there is no need for conflict.'" p. 283

"'Well, Bess —' said Patrick fumbling for his pipe, and shrugging. 'The way I see it, His Worship and the magistrates and reverends have somehow turned a woman's liking for one kind of preaching above another kind o' preaching into a hideous crime against the Commonwealth, 'n that's the nubbin o' it.'" p. 308

"Then Mrs. Hutchinson said, 'I desire to know wherefore I am banished.' Governor Winthrop answered, as haughty as a Duke: 'Say no more! The court knows wherefore, and is satisfied.' And that was the end of it." p. 310

"'I am made of cobweb that tears at a touch, but you, Bess, have fiber like the great seines that seldom break, yet if they do they can be mended again and again.'" p. 441

"Elizabeth kissed Lisbet's silvery curls, fastened her bodice, and breathed deep of the soft shimmering air. The sun was warm on her shoulders, but a little breeze quivered through the leaves and made ripples on the blue pond. She saw a scarlet bird streak by and wondered what it was, but a chattering blue jay she recognized. Pale pink flowers like stars were struggling towards the light from under the log she sat on. She leaned over and freed them from grass and choking bark, then without picking it cupped one in her hand. In these things are my content, she thought with immediate guilt. Surely content should not come from the beauty of a tiny flower, but from religious conviction and the certainty of righteousness." p. 258

"Elizabeth turned somber eyes to the window where she could glimpse the tree line of Monakewago, her own particular purchase four years ago. And now she had a hundred times that acreage to do with as she pleased, to dower the girls, to educate the little boys to buy what she liked. Power. Everything else has failed me, she thought. But there is this." p. 430

"The Indians worked well and soon the Feake shed was overflowing with corn and beans and the great round golden pompions. They had no apples yet, but there were plenty of wild grapes and the odd little grayish bayberries which they would melt down into fragrant candle wax during the winter nights ahead." p. 396

"He raised his head and gazed across the little pond towards a distant hill. 'Would that like Moses I might hear the direct Voice of God on Sanai . . .' he said beneath his breath. 'And yet have I not, like all of the elect amongst us, had sign of God's special favor? If he were not pleased with our inheriting these parts, why does He drive out the natives and diminish them as we increase? Why hath He planted His true Church here, and declared His presence among us by the saving of many souls? — Ah, this I shall say to Mr. Williams at Salem tomorrow.'" p. 258



"As the little Feake boat skimmed down the Charles, Elizabeth turned towards the North Bank. 'Why, see, the college at Newtown is all built!' she said looking at a small brick building. 'And full of scholars, isn't it Robert?' 'Cambridge, wife —' said Robert absently. 'We must call Newtown "Cambridge" now, the court so ordered in May.' 'Aye, I forgot,' she said. 'Didn't some minister lately die and leave the college a vast endowment?' Robert nodded. 'One called John Harvard,' he answered and dropped the subject, which did not interest him." p. 321

"Indeed all the offspring colonies instead of honoring the supremacy of their parent at the Bay were showing themselves undutiful. Worse than that was a sudden wave of migration from Massachusetts to Virginia and Barbados. Winthrop struggled to restrain these renegades but the Devil continued his subversive machinations. There was a fearful threat from England. After five years Matthew Craddock wrote again for the Charter, saying that news of the colony's dissensions and jealousies was causing grave worry about the Bay's welfare, that the banishment of Mrs Hutchinson and so many other people was a source of marvel, and that there was a strong possibility that a governor-general would be sent out from England to regulate matters. As they had five years ago, Winthrop and his assistants decided to ignore the letters and foster the assumption that they had never been received." p. 329

"By this time Elizabeth had noted the fear with which the neighbors regarded her Indian, and had even been warned of Telaka by Goodwife Bridges. 'I know ye won't hold wi' what I say, Mistress,' said Sarah Bridges one day when they met on Bank Lane, 'but 'twouldn't be my Christian duty not to point out that yon scar-face squaw o' yours is monstrous weird.' 'Just her looks,' said Elizabeth quickly, hurrying on. 'She's very good to us.' 'How d'ye know?' persisted Sarah, panting along, her fat earnest face turned up to Elizabeth. 'How d'ye know what she does i' the dark o' night? I mean it kindly, Mistress, you being a young gentlewoman as hasn't seen the Devil's works as clear as I have.' Elizabeth gave an impatient smile. She liked Sarah Bridges better than the other goodwives, but she was tired of discussing Telaka and anxious to get back to Robert. 'Telaka's a fine woman,' she said. 'We understand each other.' This speech was later reported to Goody Bridge's gossips, and served in due time to light the powder keg which finally exploded under the Feakes." p. 333

"The pool became transparent to its golden depths, and her self was plunging in those depths and yet upraised with joy upon the rushing wind. The light grew stronger and turned white. In this crystal whiteness there was ecstasy Against the light she saw a wren fly by; the wren was made of rhythm, it flew with meaning, with a radiant meaning. There was the same meaning in the caterpillar as it inched along the rock, and the moss, and the little nuts which had rolled across the leaves.

"And still the apperception grew, and the significance. The significance was bliss, it made a created whole of everything she watched, touched and heard — and the essence of this created whole was love. She felt love pouring from the light, it bathed her with music and with perfume, the love was far off at the source of light, and yet it drenched her through. And the source and she were one." p. 584



Topics for Discussion

Discuss the role of women as property owners and participants in society in the early American colonies. How were American policies during that time different from those in England?

Anya Seton portrays Bess Fones as a rather wild girl and impetuous woman. Discuss the childhood event that may have set this course for Bess, and why it would affect her for the rest of her life.

The land Bess owns has a section that becomes cut off from the mainland when the tide comes in. How does Seton use this phenomenon as a symbolic device?

Discuss John Winthrop's character. Was he a good man? Explore his primary goal, and his behavior as a leader. Can his behavior be justified, given the circumstances?

The transition from life in England to life in the new land required characteristics that not all new colonists possessed. Discuss the challenges faced by the colonists, not only including the harsher conditions, but the psychological challenges, as well.

Discuss how it was that John Winthrop was not only an uncle to Bess Fones, but also her father. How did people perceive marriage as a connection to an important name, such as Winthrop?

Many babies are lost in this story. What was the general attitude toward death among the colonists? In what ways did they cope with their grief?

Discuss the character of Martha Fones. In what ways was she different from her sister, Bess?

The Winthrops did not consider themselves Puritans when they left England, but eventually adopted a Puritanical way of life in New England. Discuss the possible reasons for this, and the impact of their religious severity on those who disagreed with them.

What was at the bottom of the accusations of witchcraft? Do we see similar events taking place today?