

# **Where the Lilies Bloom Study Guide**

## **Where the Lilies Bloom by Vera Cleaver**

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## Overview

Where the Lilies Bloom is about selfreliance in the face of terrible odds. In this book, four orphaned children struggle to stay together and avoid being put in an orphanage. There are many obstacles: poverty, the harsh winter weather, the threat of their father's death being discovered, and the possibility of losing their house. The family must also deal with internal conflict brought on by normal sibling rivalry, aggravated in this case by the fact that one sibling, fourteen-year-old Mary Call, is the designated leader and the others are supposed to do as she says.

Readers come away from this book, which shows a group of children overcoming enormous obstacles, with a feeling of empowerment. The novel seeks to educate readers about poverty and in so doing encourages them to feel more compassion for the poor. Most readers will come away with a renewed sense of family pride and an appreciation of the importance of closeness within a family.

## About the Author

Bill and Vera Cleaver, married in 1945, wrote seventeen books together. Although they won few awards, their books have consistently received high critical acclaim.

Vera Fern Allen Cleaver was born on January 6, 1919, in Virgil, South Dakota, and grew up in Florida during the Great Depression. William Joseph Cleaver was born on March 24, 1920, in Hugo, Oklahoma, and grew up in Seattle, Washington. Although neither finished college, they both put a great emphasis on self-directed learning, claiming to be "graduates of the public libraries of America." Bill Cleaver served as a sergeant in the U.S. Air Force for many years, and Vera Cleaver was a U.S. Air Force accountant in Japan and France. During the early years of their marriage, the Cleavers wrote stories for pulp and family magazines. It was not until 1967 that their first young adult novel, *Ellen Grae*, was published.

The Cleavers derived many of the themes of their novels from their childhood experiences and observations, and in many cases they were the first writers to deal with these subjects in books for young adult readers. Both authors moved frequently as children and were exposed to poverty, illness, and family problems. Vera was the fifth of nine children, one of whom was mentally retarded. Bill's parents divorced when he was five, and he was sent to a private school in British Columbia, Canada.

Mental retardation and divorce or parental abandonment are discussed in several of the Cleavers' novels. Their novels also reflect the value that both authors, from childhood on, placed on education and literacy.

Nearly all of the Cleavers' books have appeared on "best book" lists of publications such as the *New York Times Book Review*, *School Library Journal*, *Horn Book*, and *Publishers Weekly*.

Their books *Grover* and *The Whys and Wherefores of Littabelle Lee* were National Book Award nominees in 1971 and 1974. *Ellen Grae* and *Where the Lilies Bloom* appeared on the *Horn Book Honor List* and *Me Too* was named an American Library Association Notable Book. *Dust of the Earth* won the 1975 Lewis Carroll Shelf Award and the 1975 Golden Spur award. *Queen of Hearts* was a 1979 finalist for the National Book Award. It has been suggested that one reason the Cleavers have won no major literary award is that no one of their books can be chosen as exceptional; rather, nearly all are consistently excellent.

Before Bill's death, the Cleavers worked together as a team on each book they produced. Bill usually came up with the basic plot and story line. Vera then did the actual writing, filling in details, dialogue, and action, while Bill researched the subjects and people they were writing about. After her husband's death on August 20, 1981, in Winter Haven, Florida, Vera completed their last joint novel, *Hazel Rye*, and she has since written two novels on her own, *Sugar Blue* and *Sweetly Sings the Donkey*. These, too, carry on the Cleavers' tradition of serious literature for young adults.



## Plot Summary

This National Book Award finalist, published in 1969, follows the struggles of Mary Call Luther and her siblings, as they struggle through the harsh Appalachian winter after the death of their father, Roy Luther. Mary Call has promised her father that she will keep her family together on the mountain and will not accept charity from strangers. This means that she must keep his death a secret and find a way to provide for her two sisters and her brother.

Mary Call has always felt that their landlord, Kiser Pease, has taken advantage of her father and kept him down. When Kiser becomes ill, Mary Call makes him sign over their house in exchange for their help. Kiser has wanted to marry Devola, the oldest sister, for some time, but because Devola is like a child, Mary Call has promised her father never to let that happen.

Once the Luthers have their house and their land, Mary Call makes a plan to help them provide for themselves. They will take up the tradition of wildcrafting and gather the wild medicine plants of the mountains. This can be a risky and dangerous job, but it is the best solution for the Luthers. Mary Call and the other children are eager to learn. At first, things go well, but then the harsh winter comes. Mary Call realizes that she may not have done enough to prepare for the long, hard months of cold and isolation.

The winter is the beginning of problems for the Luther family. Their neighbors are suspicious that they have not seen Roy Luther. Food becomes more and more scarce, as the weather becomes colder. The snow traps them in the house. A truck runs over Kiser Pease, and his sister threatens to turn the children out of the house. Mary Call tries to remain calm and smart in every crisis, but when her family might become homeless, she becomes desperate.

Mary Call asks Kiser Pease, a man she despises, to marry her. When he refuses, she finally breaks down and accidentally mentions that her father is dead. She plans to move the family to a cave, but Devola finally takes charge of the situation and announces that she and Kiser are getting married. Although Mary Call must break the promise she made not to let them marry, this change in their lives, and the help they get from Kiser, allows her to keep her family on the mountain and relieves her from the burden of her secret. Mary Call remains a tough and independent girl, but she realizes that she cannot take care of her entire family by herself.



# Chapter 1

## Chapter 1 Summary

The novel opens with a traveler stopping at the family's house for water. He tells Mary Call that he has been up in the mountains, and this is the fairest land he has ever seen. Mary Call tells him that it is horrible and ugly in the winter, but she admits that she has never forgotten what he said.

Devola is the oldest sister, cloudy-headed but confident in Mary Call's ability to manage things. The two girls work to gather witch hazel leaves for money. Devola works reluctantly, but instead of complaining, she talks about their neighbor, Kiser Pease, and his desire to marry her. Mary Call does not like Kiser, because he is ignorant and greedy. He has a witch's keyhole in his chimney, which shows that he is superstitious and uneducated. She believes that their father, Roy Luther, is getting a very bad deal sharecropping from Kiser. None of this matters to Devola. She just says that she likes his house and would keep it nice for him, if they were married.

The father, Roy Luther, is sick and has been for sometime. Mary Call believes he has let life defeat him. Now, they are just waiting for him to die. She is worried, because he has made her promise him many things. She has promised him a homemade burial, without an undertaker or preacher. This is a difficult promise, because she will have to pull his body up the mountain in her brother's toy wagon. She made the promise because, when her mother, Cosby Luther, died several years ago, the preacher and undertaker took advantage of them. The second promise is that Mary Call will keep her family, including Devola, her younger brother Romey, and her little sister Ima Dean, together on the mountain. Plus, they will not accept charity from strangers. This is a hard responsibility for Mary Call, because she is only fourteen-years-old. The last promise that Mary Call has made is that she will not let Devola marry Kiser Pease. If he tries to marry her, Mary Call is to go to a judge and tell them that Devola is like a child in her mind, even though she is eighteen-years-old. Mary Call is worried, because things are tough and tense waiting for her father to die. She also knows that she is young and ignorant, and may be unable to keep the promises she has made.

## Chapter 1 Analysis

This chapter outlines the burdens that have been placed on Mary Call by promises she made to her father. Although she is only fourteen, she must deal with her father's illness, act as a mother to the other children, and provide for them all. The scene with the traveler illustrates the contrasts of the land they live on, which can be the most beautiful land seen, or the cruelest. Right now, the Luther family is surviving. However, in the winter, the land will be hard and deadly, and they will still need to survive. The contrast between the beauty and bounty of the land in summer and the harsh nature of winter is



a theme throughout the novel and represents the family's struggles through the good time and the bad.

Mary Call is very concerned about ignorance and her family's place in society. Although her family lives in a worn-down house that they do not own, and they are sharecroppers, Mary Call looks down on their landlord, Kiser, as being ignorant and superstitious, because he has a witch's keyhole in his chimney. This witch's keyhole is a symbol of all the negative stereotypes of mountain people, and that is why it angers Mary Call. Although Kiser might have a better house, Mary Call considers her family better than him. Mary Call knows that she herself is ignorant and is painfully aware of this lack of knowledge, when Romey asks her how old the mountains are. However, she's determined to learn, to be independent, and to keep the promises that she made to her father.





## Chapter 2

### Chapter 2 Summary

Roy Luther has a terrible attack of illness, but he refuses to see a doctor, because one killed his mother. This attack has altered the look of his face, and he can no longer speak. After four of five days, Romey, his ten-year-old son, goes to work in the fields, himself. When he returns to the house, Romey mentions to Mary Call that he has not seen Kiser in a couple of days and believes he might be sick. Later, Romey and Mary Call go out to pick some lambs' ears for dinner. On the way back, they are caught in the rain and take shelter on Kiser's porch. All his windows are open, letting in the rain, so they look inside and see him passed out on the davenport. He does not wake up when they enter the house, and they can see that he is very ill.

While Mary Call decides what to do, Romey explores the house and finds a ton of food in the basement. Mary Call decides that they will help Kiser, because she thinks she can make him do something. She begins to peel and fry onions and sends Romey back to their house for Ima Dean and Devola. The four of them drag Kiser to his bathroom and put him in the bathtub wrapped in blankets. They fry up all the onions they can find and wrap him in the onions. They put onions in his long underwear, in a turban on his head, and in a collar around his neck. He begins to sweat and pant with the heat of the onions. Several times over the course of the night, he mistakes Mary Call for his sister and asks her to let bygones be bygones or rants about demons.

Around midnight, after the children have treated him for hours and enjoyed his food, Kiser begins to come around. Mary Call tells him that she and Devola, who is really Romey, have been there since the day before yesterday and that he is very sick and might die. She tells Kiser that he will die if they leave him. He offers her money to care for him, but instead of taking the money, Mary Call makes him sign a paper saying that their house and the land they work is theirs free and clear. She tells Romey that she will not let Kiser back out of their agreement. When it is time to leave, Romey wants to take some food home, but Mary Call makes him write an IOU for it.

### Chapter 2 Analysis

Roy Luther's fit makes him completely incapable of helping around the house or providing for the children. Even the younger children know that they cannot rely on him anymore. Mary Call feels that she has to hold things together, so the younger kids will hold it together. She wishes it would be over because waiting for Roy Luther to die is difficult. Romey also has to take on responsibilities like an adult. Mary Call is both sad and proud, when he acts like the man of the house and goes out to the fields. These events show how mature and self-reliant the children are, and how capable they are of providing for themselves. The family can get their own food from the land. They know the proper remedies to treat illnesses and injuries, so it does seem as though the



children can take care of themselves. Self-reliance is a central theme in the novel, and it is clearly seen in the way Roy Luther refuses outside help and makes Mary Call promise to get by on her own.

Although Mary Call makes Romey leave an IOU for the food that they take, which shows that she will not steal, she also shows that she is willing to lie to get what she wants. Mary Call's decision to help Kiser is entirely selfish. She never says that they are helping him out of pity or charity, or because it is the right thing to do. Instead, Mary Call is helping him to get what she wants and needs for her family. She even goes so far as to say that he is not a nice man, and he might deserve to die. Although she does not think he is a good man or an honorable man, when Mary Call makes the deal with Kiser to treat his illness in exchange for the land, she believes that he will keep his word and honor the paper that he signed. This paper, as part of an honest transaction, is a symbol of freedom and independence for the Luther family.



## Chapter 3

### Chapter 3 Summary

Roy Luther is able to eat soup but still cannot speak. Devola tends to Roy Luther and asks Mary Call to get her some razors when she goes to the store. Mary Call has been putting off the trip to the store, because it is so far away. In addition, the trip would take a long time and wear on their shoes. Romey is concerned that they only have \$54.84 in their moneybox. He asks Mary Call what they are going to do, but she does not know.

One night, Mary Call wakes up and goes to the window. She sees a figure that she thinks is Devola and calls out to her, but the figure dissolves. Mary Call suddenly has an idea and goes to the trunk in Roy Luther's room to find Cosby Luther's book, *A Guide to Wildcrafting*. She lights a fire in the stove and spends the rest of the night looking at the information on the plants of the Appalachians, the "wild gold" that drug companies will pay for.

The next morning, Kiser comes over. As his horse tears up her flowers, Mary Call tells him that Roy Luther is sick and cannot move or speak, and so he cannot come out to talk to Kiser. Kiser goes inside, and Romey asks if he should listen at the door. Mary Call tells him Luthers are not door crack listeners. When Kiser finally comes out, he seems disturbed and somewhat sympathetic. He is unable to look at Mary Call, as he tells her that he sees how it is. He tries to be kind by telling her that they can stay on through the winter at no charge, but they will have to get help from somebody, maybe the county. As they are talking, Mary Call looks out at Romey in the garden and sees how thin all her siblings are. She feels angry, thinking that it is not fair that Kiser takes everything from them, and they are still expected to say thank you. She tells Kiser about the note he signed, giving them the land, and tells him she will let him see it if he promises not to tear it up. He does not promise, but she gives it to him anyway.

### Chapter 3 Analysis

Romey and Mary Call are both shouldering the burdens of taking care of the family. Romey is worried about money and what they will do now that their father is unable to take care of them. Mary Call feels frustrated that her family is so thin and poor, and later, when she talks to Kiser, her frustrated feelings about her father are also apparent. While Mary Call takes action to try to make things better, her father simply takes things as they happen. He does not get angry, and he does not leave. So, the Luthers are stuck in the situation they are now in. In many ways, Mary Call is more mature and forward-thinking than her father is.

Mary Call does not respect Kiser and does not see him as an equal, but as a man who has taken advantage of her family and kept them down. Nonetheless, when Kiser asks to see the note, she gives it to him, even though he has not promised that he won't tear



it up. While she does not respect him as a man, she does respect him as the other half of a business deal. In this scene, Kiser is trying to be kind to the Luthers. Although he has not always treated them fairly, this attempt at kindness shows the reader that he may not be the monster Mary Call describes.

While Mary Call does not seem to trust in her father or her neighbor, she does trust herself. The figure in the mists is a reminder of her mother, and in this time of crisis, this figure gives Mary Call the idea of how she can provide for the family. By following her mother's tradition of wildcrafting, Mary Call might be able to provide for her family. The fact that Mary Call briefly thinks the figure is Devola foreshadows the future, when Devola will remind Mary Call of her mother. Mary Call will listen to Devola, because her mother has always represented strength and wisdom.



# Chapter 4

## Chapter 4 Summary

Mary Call gathers the family and tells them that Kiser wished them luck and warned them that sometimes freedom comes at a price. The children wonder what they are going to do, but Mary Call tells them about her wildcrafting idea. Romey asked why they never tried wildcrafting before, and Mary Call says she does not know. She secretly thinks that it is because Roy Luther was too proud and thought it was a woman's or child's task, instead of men's work, like farming. The children begin to study the book and learn about different plants, but Devola is not able to remember much of what they learned.

Romey and Mary Call walk to town to see Mr. Connell, the owner of the general store. Mr. Connell is a kind man, who has always treated the Luthers fairly, but Mrs. Connell looks down on the Luthers and does not like them. When they get to the store, Mrs. Connell asks about Roy Luther and tells Mary Call that they heard he was sick. Mary Call says he just took a spill on the porch, and he is getting better and eating like a horse, but Mrs. Connell says that she knows they are lying, and while they should pray for his recovery, they should expect the worse. Mrs. Connell and Romey argue with each other, because Mrs. Connell thinks that their father was too proud and should have asked for help. Romey argues that they are fine now and will continue doing just as well, even if their father dies. Mrs. Connell thinks this is unrealistic and tells them about a cruel aunt that she lived with after her parents died. Romey's response is that he would have run away if he had been her.

When they tell Mr. Connell they are going to wildcraft, he is very excited. No one has harvested their mountain since Cosby Luther was alive, and there is plenty of stuff out there to gather. Ginseng is worth thirty dollars a pound. He tells Mary Call to be careful and take her time, study the book, and watch out for snakes and poisonous roots. Romey says that he would kick the snakes in the behind, which makes Mr. Connell laugh. On the way home, Mary Call chastises Romey for being rude and saying he would kick snakes in the behind and calling Mrs. Connell an old bat. Romey does not feel bad, but he asks what they will do if Roy Luther dies. Mary Call tells him they will hide it.

## Chapter 4 Analysis

Now that the Luthers are on their own and no longer working for Kiser Pease, they need to find their own way to make ends meet and support themselves. While the children do not think that this will be a problem and are very excited about wildcrafting and the money they can earn, Kiser's warning about the price of freedom is also a warning about the price of pride. Roy Luther's pride has, in the past, kept them from wildcrafting, since it was not considered men's work. On the walk to the store, Romey asks Mary Call

what the smell in the air is. She tells him that it is the land, a fair land that they will learn more about. Knowledge and education are important to Mary Call, and this opportunity seems full of promise. The smell of the earth is the smell of optimism and a symbol of freedom and independence. This is a contrast to the conversation with Mrs. Connell in the store. Mrs. Connell tells them that they cannot be self-reliant. She dislikes them for their pride, and because they think that they can be independent, something she was not able to accomplish.



# Chapter 5

## Chapter 5 Summary

The Luthers discover that wildcrafting is more difficult than they had thought. The mountains are filled with dangerous terrain, with chasms and sharp boulders. They come across a timber rattlesnake one day and are chased away from the plants they were gathering by a swarm of yellow jackets on another. One day, they think they find ginseng, but it turns out to be goldenseal, which is still desirable but worth less. They daydream about what they will buy with the money they earn. Ima Dean wants a car. Devola changes her mind from wanting yellow shoes to wanting a present for Roy Luther. Romey wants a book. They carefully begin drying the goldenseal, turning it every four hours even though the book does not say this is necessary.

That night, Mary Call goes to see Roy Luther. He looks at her with his one good eye, as she tells him that she and the other children are all going to be fine, so he does not need to worry. She tells him that they have the house and the land from Kiser Pease and that they have taken up wildcrafting. They will be earning enough money to keep themselves, and she has plans to fix up the house a little with the money they will make.

The next day, Mary Call, Ima Dean and Romey take the goldenseal to Mr. Connell's store. Mr. Connell acts as though he is excited for them and pays them. They use the money to buy supplies, and Ima Dean and Romey get drinks. Mr. Connell asks after Roy Luther, and Mary Call tells him that Roy Luther is doing better. Mr. Connell warns them that Mrs. Connell wants to go out and pay them a visit, but Mary Call tells him that it is not a good idea, since visitors wear sick people out. Mr. Connell gives them peaches, and Mrs. Connell comes outside and says she will be bringing them some oatmeal bread in a day or two. Mr. Connell kindly puts the groceries in their little wagon for them and tells Mrs. Connell to give the younger children some candy. Later, when Mrs. Connell comes out with the candies, she tells the children that Ima Dean looks ragged and their father should not let them go out like that. On the way home, Ima Dean throws out the candy, because it was old and dirty. As they walk, Mary Call begins to worry about the approaching winter, which her brother and sister are innocently unconcerned about.

When Mary Call goes in to see Roy Luther the next morning, she finds that he has died in the night. She closes his eyes, turns him to the wall, and covers him with his blanket. Then, she shuts the door and tells the others not to go in that room today for anything. Ima Dean and Devola go berrying, but Romey keeps asking why they cannot see Roy Luther, and why they are not going wildcrafting that day. He can see that Mary Call is upset. Finally, she tells him that Roy Luther has died in the night and orders Romey not to fuss or carry on, because Roy Luther did not want that. They will bury Roy Luther that night, in a place Roy Luther chose and dug out himself. They will not tell the others until it is over.



Romey does not feel it is right not to tell the others, and he takes off running across the fields. She feels bad that he has to help her and that he has to mourn alone in silence. They carry on through the day, and Mary Call pretends everything is okay. They do laundry, and Devola cleans the floor. Romey takes Mary Call aside and asks why they do not tell the others, but Mary Call thinks that it is easier to look back on things once they are done. Mary Call eats the dinner meant for Roy Luther to hide the fact that he is not eating it.

Mary Call has forgotten that the Connells might visit, but when they arrive, she takes them into the sitting room and tells them that Roy Luther is sleeping. She will not disturb him, because he has not slept well since his fall. Mrs. Connell points out a crack in the ceiling, and Mary Call says that Roy Luther is too busy to fix it. Mrs. Connell says that it is commendable that he kept the children together without outside help, but pride goes before the fall. She repeats that she would like to see him, but Mary Call insists that she will not wake him. After they leave, she realizes that it is dark and time to bury Roy Luther.

## Chapter 5 Analysis

The Luthers are very giddy and joyful over their new tasks. While they are taking care to make sure they do everything properly, they are also excited about what they money will mean for them. However, while Ima Dean, Devola and Romey daydream about what they will buy, Mary Call never mentions anything that she wants. She only says that ten dollars has to go into the money box. Later, when Mary Call is at the store with Romey and Ima Dean, both of the younger children get drinks. Mary Call does not buy one for herself. While the money does mean that there are things to look forward to, and treats for the other children, Mary Call always remembers that her responsibility it to provide for them, and she does not think of what she may want for herself. Mary Call's generosity is never directly stated in the novel, but it is a constant theme. She always put the needs of the family ahead of her own.

At the store, Mr. and Mrs. Connell stand out in sharp contrast to one another. While Mr. Connell is kind to the Luthers and excited about their new career, Mrs. Connell is rude, even though she hides it behind a mask of concern. Her remarks about Ima Dean's ragged appearance and her gift of the bad candy reveal that she is a woman with little compassion, who does not like to see the Luthers trying to improve their lives. Ima Dean's polite silence in the face of Mrs. Connell's insults shows that even the youngest Luther has her pride.

Mary Call feels terrible that she must break the promise she made to Roy Luther that she would bury him herself. However, she knows that she cannot do it alone. She is ashamed that she feels weak, and she asks God for strength. Although Mary Call is sad for herself, she is also concerned about making things easier for her sisters, and she regrets having to share the burden of Roy Luther's death and burial with Romey. As Mary Call eats Roy Luther's dinner, she ponders death, and why it must happen. She comes to realize that it is beyond people's understanding and meant to be beyond



understanding. With all other things, Mary Call strives to find the answers, but here, she realizes that she cannot.



# Chapter 6

## Chapter 6 Summary

Mary Call and Romey have a difficult time getting Roy Luther up to his grave on Old Joshua. It is dark and foggy, and somewhat frightening. A raven flies out of the woods and perches on his body. Mary Call prays for strength to finish the task and Romey cries, but he tries to keep his sister from seeing it. Romey becomes upset and angry and tells Mary Call that she is awful and ugly, and he hates her. He tells Mary Call that this is not a decent way to bury their father, and the words have a harsh effect on her, because she has been secretly praying that it will be decent enough to tell the others about. She tells Romey that this is what Roy Luther wanted, that they will not take him to the undertaker, and that she needs his help to do this. As he thinks it over, she wonders how she can stand this and be so calm about the situation.

Romey finally says that he will come back someday and give his father a grand funeral like Napoleon's. Mary Call tells him that Napoleon had a simple funeral. When they finally get to the grave site they see, from the wood boards and the rocks piled around, that Roy Luther had put a lot of effort into preparing his grave, and he must have known that he was dying long before they knew he was sick. They take a moment to say nice things they remember about their father. Romey says that he was light-hearted before he became sick, that he never whipped him, and that he was proud to call him his Dad. Mary Call cannot think of anything better to say than that, so they slip him into his grave and bury him. They say the Lord's Prayer and tell Roy Luther not to worry about them. On the way back home, Romey says that he believes that they did give him a decent burial.

The next morning, they break the news of Roy Luther's death to Ima Dean and Devola. Devola is silent, but Ima Dean cries into Mary Call's skirt and then runs out into the yard. She tries to whip her rooster to make him lay an egg, but the rooster attacks her, and Mary Call runs out and brings her back inside. Romey tells Ima Dean to stop being a baby, and that nobody else likes it. They give her some sugar to calm her down. They go wildcrafting that day and gather the rest of the goldenseal, taking care to seed the bed. Romey is worried that it will not grow back, and they will run out, but Mary Call tells him not to worry, that there are plenty of other things they can gather. Romey is also worried about the roof and wonders whether or not he and Mary Call should go to school and leave Ima Dean and Devola on their own.

The children come up with an idea to put up a sign that says "Mad Dog" or "Small Pox" to keep people away. Before they have the chance, Kiser shows up at their gate, all dressed up. He wants to talk to Roy Luther about marrying Devola. Mary Call puts him off by saying that she is not allowing Roy Luther any visitors, and Kiser will have to talk to her. Kiser says that he would hate to be the man who marries Mary Call, because she is not sweet like her sister. Mary Call tells him that she promised Roy Luther to never let Kiser marry Devola, but Kiser tries to convince her that it would not be that bad. He has



brought them hams, and he says that the whole family could come over for dinner on Sundays, and he would take them for a ride in the car. Trying to manipulate Kiser, Mary Call says that Roy Luther might be scared to ride in cars, and Kiser volunteers to bring his over so Roy Luther can get used to it. Mary Call can even set up the back seat with pillows, so he can lie down and listen to the radio.

Mary Call mentions that Devola likes music. At that moment, Devola comes outside singing. Mary Call says that it is a shame that Devola cannot listen to the radio, unless they go to the store. Kiser is eager to please and tells Mary Call that he will bring a radio when he brings the car. He is counting on Mary Call to put in a good word for him with Roy Luther. After their talk, he sits on the porch with Devola, and Mary Call makes Ima Dean and Romey sit on the porch while they are courting. Later, Romey says that he wishes Roy Luther could sit in the car, and it is too bad that none of them can drive, but Mary Call says that she is going to try to drive when the car comes.

## Chapter 6 Analysis

The imagery in the opening of the chapter shows the woods in a different light from the children's daytime wildcrafting trips. In this chapter the woods are dark, cold, and spooky. The raven, a traditional symbol of death, frightens the children, but they continue on with their mission. Mary Call is proud of her ability to handle difficulties. It is difficult to bury her father, but Mary Call is tough enough to make it through the situation. Being tough and acting tough are Mary Call's tools for handling frightening or sad situations, and her tough attitude appears each time she must face a difficult situation. It is something she is proud of. Although Romey is upset with her, she knows that she is doing the right thing by obeying her father's wishes. She is worried that the funeral will not be decent, and will not properly honor their father, but as she tells her brother, even Napoleon had a simple funeral. Her father's preparations show that the gravesite was truly what he wanted, and obeying his wishes and paying respect to the man that he was makes the funeral decent.

Romey begins to worry about the family's welfare, now that Roy Luther is dead. He is worried about money and about leaving his sister home alone during the day. He does not want to go to school and even thinks it is unnecessary, since they are going to be wildcrafters. Nonetheless, Mary Call says that they must go to school if they do not want to be ignorant. She tells him about the stereotypical toothless, uneducated "happy pappy" of the mountains, and asks him if he wants to be poor and dependent on others for his keep. The happy pappy is a symbol of everything that Mary Call promised her father she would not do, and is everything that Mary Call despises in others. Mary Call's scolding is a way of making Romey a child again, and shows that he still has growing up to do. Mary Call is the calm one. She seems to prefer it that way, because her brother is too young for the strain of worry and responsibility.



# Chapter 7

## Chapter 7 Summary

The next morning, Kiser brings the freshly washed car over and gives it another wipe-down before coming to the house to talk to the family. While they watch him wipe off the car, Romey tells Mary Call that he knows how to drive. Once, he drove the principal's car half-way to town. Kiser comes to the door and gives them the keys to the car. He tells them that he will be gone for a few days to buy hogs. He offers to help carry Roy Luther to the car, but Mary Call tells him Roy Luther is sleeping late. After Kiser leaves, Mary Call lures the others up onto the mountain for a morning of work with the promise of an afternoon ride. When they return to the house, the four of them get into the car, and Romey tries to teach Mary Call to drive. She backs into their fence. Romey tries to drive the car next, but he cannot quite reach the pedals, and he is still too short to see. Devola mentions that Kiser taught her how to drive, but the others just ignore her and give up and go in the house. Later, they look out the window and see her driving in circles in the yard.

For the next two days, the Luthers do not get any work done, because they are having too much fun with the car. Finally, it runs out of gas. Ima Dean is upset and wails until Mary Call loses her temper, then Ima Dean and Devola run off towards the mountain. Romey points out to Mary Call that Ima Dean is only five and does not know better, but Mary Call responds that she is only fourteen and has to take care of all of them. She is sick of doing all the work, while they play around. Romey and she argue, and he leaves to go after Ima Dean and Devola. Mary Call goes up the mountain to work alone. She is angry that the others do not appreciate her, and contemplates just walking off and leaving them to the county people and Kiser. While she is still mulling the idea of leaving, she is attacked by a swarm of hornets and stung five times. Mary Call is very ill, and even vomits, but she manages to make it home and finds Kiser waiting for her.

While the children were gone, Kiser tried to talk to Roy Luther, but the door was locked. When he looked in the window, he saw that Roy Luther was gone. Mary Call tells him that Roy Luther is not a prisoner and comes and goes as he pleases. When the children arrive, she asks them where Roy Luther is, and Romey says that he is still up on the mountain and that Ima Dean was being a baby. Kiser gives Devola a pig, and she thinks it is very sweet. The children go into the house without asking what is wrong with Mary Call, even though she looks awful from the stings. Mary Call tells Kiser he can take the car back, but he gives them more gas and says Devola can drive it if she likes. He even offers to take Devola to get her license. Mary Call tells him that Devola loves the pig, as she is very fond of animals. She also mentions that Devola likes milk, but they never have any, because they do not have a cow. Kiser says he will bring them a cow the next day.

Mary Call is sick and goes to bed, but she can hear the others making a pen for the pig. Finally, Romey comes to her room and apologizes, telling her that they know she is not



hateful, that they were hateful and are sorry. He tenderly strokes her hair, until she falls asleep. She dreams that she marries Kiser Pease, and their problems are solved.

## Chapter 7 Analysis

Mary Call has a great ability to talk Kiser into things, mostly because Kiser is so eager to please the Luthers so that he can marry Devola. After talking him into loaning them the car, Mary Call also talks Kiser into leaving them the keys, by saying that they need to lock the car, and she talks him into giving them a cow. Her dream at the end signifies that Kiser is capable of giving them many things. He may not be a smart man, but he is wealthy. The car, the radio, the pig, and the cow, are symbols of his wealth. They also show a gentle, generous side of Kiser that Mary Call is not willing to acknowledge.

The arrival of the car gives the family a needed break. They have been working hard and just suffered the loss of their father. Now, all of them, even Mary Call, get to have a little fun. Mary Call needs to be the parent though, and that responsibility is beginning to wear on her. When she shakes her sister and yells at her siblings, the stress she is under is obvious. It is hard for her to be the parent, when she is so young. The others still get to behave like children, while she needs to be the adult. Even when she thinks of leaving them, Mary Call knows that they would be provided for. Devola would probably marry Kiser, and her brother and sister would probably be taken by the county people. Just as Mary Call realizes that she could break her promises to her father, her accident makes the other children realize that they need her.



# Chapter 8

## Chapter 8 Summary

Kiser comes to the Luther house the next morning with a Hereford cow. He is eager to take Devola to get her driver's license, but he does not want to take Ima Dean. Mary Call tells Kiser that Ima Dean is going with them. She wants Ima Dean to keep an eye on the couple, and she warns Kiser not to try sneaking off to a judge to marry Devola. Kiser warns Mary Call that if he does not talk to Roy Luther soon, there will be trouble. Mary Call tells him that Roy Luther is not quite right in the head, but insists that her father listens to her, and she sent him up on the mountain to dig roots.

Kiser leaves with Devola and Ima Dean, but Mary Call is so distracted by their discussion that she does not ask for a ride to town. As she and Romey walk to town to register for school, Romey remarks on how their sins are catching up with them. Mary Call responds that burying their father the way they did was not a sin, and that paying a preacher and an undertaker would have been. It would have been against Roy Luther's wishes. She tells Romey that they are going to have a problem with Kiser soon. If anyone finds out Roy Luther has died, Kiser will send them all to the county home and probably marry Devola. She tells Romey that Devola is mentally a child, and they cannot let her marry Kiser. Romey says that he would like to blow Kiser's head off. Mary Call does not like his violent talk, and reminds him that violent talk is part of the reason mountain people have such bad reputations for being ignorant and poor. Their father always told them to be better than that. When Romey realizes that his shoes have a hole, and says that he hates being poor, Mary Call reminds him that if he is not ignorant, he will not be poor for long. She promises that they will buy him new shoes when they sell their roots the next day.

At the school, the principal, Miss Breathitt, is happy to see the Luthers. They ask if they can work in the cafeteria to earn their lunches, and she agrees. When Mary Call asks how old the Smoky Mountains are, Miss Breathitt tells her about the Paleozoic era and loans Mary Call a book so she can learn more. As they leave the school, Alma and Gaither Graybeal invite Mary Call and Romey for some fresh molasses, but Mary Call makes Romey refuse the invitation. As much as she would like to have friends and go over to their house, she worries that their friends will return the visit or will somehow figure out that Roy Luther is dead. Romey and she begin to worry about the winter, about the work they need to do to prepare. Mary Call thinks that she may never be able to take care of the house and family the way she needs to. She decides that she will tell Kiser that she loves him and wants to marry him, in order to scare him away. Romey agrees that this is a good plan, especially now when she looks so frightening from the hornet stings.

When they arrive home, Ima Dean and Devola are already there, and Devola calmly tells Mary Call that Kiser got sick. Ima Dean clarifies that Kiser was run over by a large truck and broke both his legs and maybe his jaw, and he was taken to the hospital. The



girls brought the car back to the house. Mary Call is relieved that Kiser is not going to be around for a while. They have the car and cow, but Mary Call is still very worried that something will come up and make things hard for them again.

## Chapter 8 Analysis

Mary Call is constantly worrying about taking care of her family, but she feels that education is important so that they do not grow up ignorant. Education is the only way that they will move up in the world. Romey's shoes are a symbol of where they are now, as struggling, young children. Mary Call's remark to Romey about education reinforces the theme that education and knowledge are crucial to their survival and success.

Mary Call has a lot of respect for Miss Breathitt, who is not only kind to them but also seems very intelligent. While Mary Call does believe that they can take time off work to go to school, she does not think that it is safe for them to have friends, since friends will make it difficult to keep a secret. In spite of everything that Kiser has given them recently, Mary Call does not consider him a friend. She only sees him as a threat.

Romey responds to her negative attitude with violent talk. This worries Mary Call, because it only reinforces the stereotype that mountain people are ignorant and violent. She tells Romey that violence will not solve anything, and that it will only hurt them. Mary Call's concern for her family's reputation is something that repeatedly effects her decision making. Keeping the family secret is her other major concern, and that is part of the reason she is relieved when Kiser is injured. Instead of worrying about the neighbor's welfare, the Luthers, particularly Mary Call, do not seem to care about it, beyond relief at his absence.



# Chapter 9

## Chapter 9 Summary

Mary Call is desperate to prepare for winter. She drags the children out of bed every morning at dawn to dig for roots, gather bark, and otherwise wildcraft to earn some money. The others are sullen and miserable in the morning, and Mary Call hates herself for what she feels they must see her as - a miserly, skinny crone, who drags them out and works them hard. While she does believe in God, she wonders why he is not sending any help her way. She feels that she and the children are on their own in the world, and any good they get must come from themselves.

Romey's shoes finally give out, due to the rough trails of Old Joshua, and on their next visit to the general store, they buy him new ones. The shoes and food supplies they get take most of their wildcrafting money. While they are at the store, Mrs. Connell asks after Roy Luther, and Mary Call says he is doing better, and that she needs to buy more razors for him. As they are paying Romey remarks that he hates when others take joy in people's misfortunes. Mrs. Connell is offended and says that she will have to pay a visit Roy Luther to talk about Romey's manners. As they leave, Romey vows to make her pay, but promises not to shoot her, because he does not want to seem crazy. As they return to the house, they see a car with Georgia license plates.

Romey makes a sign that says "POX" and nails it to the fence, but Mary Call points out that the health people will come if people think they have pox, so he takes it down. He and Mary Call talk about the future, and the cow. With the milk and cottage cheese, it feels like things are going better. Romey has not given up on his plan to "fix" Mrs. Connell. Ima Dean reports that he has Kiser's bear skin in his closet and plans to use it to scare Mrs. Connell away, but Mary Call is busy studying and only half pays attention. She intends to ask Romey about the bearskin, but she is tired from studying. When they get a ride to school from the Graybeals, she forgets. After school, the Graybeals offer them a ride home, but Mary Call declines, even though it is raining. Romey remarks that the Graybeals must think they are crazy, but Mary Call responds that they cannot have friends anymore, and he knows why. Romey is depressed about it, but he understands. As they start to cross the fields, he takes off his new shoes so the rain does not ruin them.

Mrs. Connell comes to visit Roy Luther that night. Mary Call and Devola see her coming up the road in her car, and scramble to make sure things look natural. They shut Roy Luther's door, and arrange his things around the house so it looks like he is there. As she nears the house, Mrs. Connell turns around and speeds away quickly, scared by a bear at the gate. Romey has stuffed the bearskin with their pillows and put it out in the yard to scare Mrs. Connell away. Although Mrs. Connell has left for the time being, Mary Call finds herself wishing that winter would come early and keep visitors away. She is sure Mrs. Connell will come back.





## Chapter 9 Analysis

Although Romey talks about leaving Trial Valley as soon as he is old enough and never coming back, his actions in this chapter show that he does respect and care about his sister. When he decides to get back at Mrs. Connell, he takes efforts to reassure Mary Call that he will not use violence, because he listened to what she said. After he is done talking about his future, he offers to fix Mary Call some cottage cheese to cheer her up. Although Mary Call and Romey often disagree, he makes efforts to make her feel better, knowing how much stress she is under.

The differences between the Connells are once again apparent in this chapter. While Mr. Connell is kind and friendly, and willing to help the Luthers when he can, his wife is rude and nosy. Her snootiness and superior attitude toward the Luthers, even when she is giving them something to be nice, like the bread or the candy, is the type of haughty charity that Mary Call fears, and probably part of the reason her father made her promise not to accept charity. While Mary Call does seem to be annoyed by Mrs. Connell, these opinions affect her. She works hard at school and studying to make herself smarter, so that she can plan a future for herself, just as her brother does for himself.

The shoes, the supplies, the car with the Georgia license plates, and Mary Call's fears of winter all foreshadow the troubles coming to the Luther children. Although Mary Call and Romey seem to think that things are getting better, and they are feeling more prepared now that they have the cow, the cost of living and the harsh nature of the mountain winters are still forces working against them. Although Mary Call is doing a good job taking care of her siblings, here the reader begins to see that she might not be capable of doing it alone, no matter how smart or tough she is.



# Chapter 10

## Chapter 10 Summary

At the end of October, the temperature suddenly changes and a strong windstorm blows some of the shingles off the Luthers' roof. Mary Call and Romey go up on the roof in the cold and wind to inspect the damage. Romey complains that they are working too hard. He does not want to repair the roof. He wants to leave, never come back and never see them again. Mary Call responds that things are not any better for her than for him. She knows that he is just worried about the winter coming, and what they will do. They have a store of food in the house, including squashes, cabbages, and salted pork, along with dry goods like flour and dried beans, but Mary Call still worries that it will not be enough to last them the long five months of winter. She is also worried about the house, which is drafty and needs repair. They've stacked up fire wood on every wall, and brought the pig and rooster inside. Now, the house seems dirty and cold. When the first heavy snow falls, two days before Thanksgiving, Romey begins to worry about the cow. Kiser said it was a hearty cow, but he keeps his cows in the barn. Romey decides to share his room with the cow, even though he is worried about its toilet habits.

As Mary Call and Devola are getting food for Thanksgiving dinner, Devola complains that Mary Call is being stingy, and she never remembers having so little for Thanksgiving when Roy Luther was alive. Mary Call reminds her that when Roy Luther was alive, they would stuff themselves on Thanksgiving, and then starve the day after. Devola says that she does not like how mean and ugly Mary Call has been. Mary Call responds that she is glad she is not sweet and pretty, because she does not have time to be sweet and pretty if she is going to keep them all from starving or freezing to death. Devola tells her that a man stopped by the other day. Kiser had sent him to see Roy Luther, and wanted the stranger to bring Devola to the hospital to see him. Devola did not go, and Mary Call is worried again about Kiser. If he sends someone, she is worried that they will find out the truth. Then, she does not know what she would do to stop them.

Mary Call tells Devola to get what food she will need for the next few days, because Mary Call is going to lock the door to keep her siblings from taking the food. They go upstairs and Mary Call and Devola wash clothes. Mary Call remarks that the sight of their gray, thread bare clothes makes her feel older than God.

That night, part of the roof gives out under the weight of the snow. Mary Call is awakened by the noise, and finds that their sitting room suddenly has a hole in the ceiling. Her mother's rocking chair has been crushed. Eventually, the others come to inspect the damage. Mary Call tries to talk to them about what they should do about the hole and asks if they think they should board up the room until spring, but Romey is very upset about Cosby's rocking chair being ruined, and Ima Dean and Devola comfort him. They take Romey and the rocking chair to a different part of the house, and Mary Call resentfully thinks she should just sit down and freeze to death. The rooster and the



pig come in to see what is going on, and the rooster crows. Mary Call looks up to see a fox perched on the roof, looking down at them. She asks God to help her figure out what to do, because if that fox attacks her, she thinks it will win. She cannot afford to be hurt or killed, and she cannot let it attack the rooster or pig. The fox jumps down to attack the pig, but Mary Call hits it in the head with a two by four and kills it. When the others run back in, she tells them that they need guts to get by and that was how she beat the fox.

## Chapter 10 Analysis

Both Romey and Devola confront Mary Call and tell her that she is being too hard on them. Romey is tired of working so hard, and Devola thinks that Mary Call is being unnecessarily stingy and mean to them. Mary Call knows that she is hard on her brother and sisters, but she has to be tough to keep them alive. She is willing to be mean and stingy if that is what it takes to keep them together. When Mary Call's old worries about Kiser finding out the truth resurface, she is desperate enough to think of violence, but quickly realizes that it would not solve anything and result in her being hung. She is willing to do many things to keep the secret, but not that. Mary Call's concerns are proved to be legitimate when the roof caves in, showing that the Luthers may have more troubles than they can handle.

After Mary Call and Devola have a confrontation about food in the cellar, each is willing to give in to the other. Although Mary Call is worried that someone is stealing food, and they will not have enough, she is willing to give Devola more food than she asked for. Devola is willing to ask for less food than she usually would. Although they have been arguing, they can each understand the perspective of the other, and neither of them wants to fight.

Mary Call knows that she has to be tough, but her siblings do not seem to understand how crucial it is to their survival. When the roof collapses, Mary Call is upset that no one will help her think about what to do. She is frustrated that they care more about a sentimental rocker than fixing the roof or closing off the room. To Romey and the other girls, the rocker is a symbol of their old life, when they had parents who loved them and provided for them. It is a symbol of security. Mary Call is so focused on the moment that she cannot appreciate what her siblings are mourning.

The fox is a metaphor for the adversity that the Luthers are facing, and Mary Call battles it alone, much as she is struggling to keep the family together alone. When she kills the fox, she knows that she has what it takes to survive, but when her siblings see her they can tell that she is frightened by how big her eyes are. Devola has to help her remove a large splinter from her hand. Although Mary Call is tough enough to survive, she is still frightened and has weaknesses that allow her to be hurt.



# Chapter 11

## Chapter 11 Summary

A false spring comes to Trial Valley, melting the snow and swelling the river. While Devola and Ima Dean let the animals out and scrub the house, Mary Call and Romey take advantage of the weather and go wildcrafting. They enjoy the outing, and Romey even jokes that he would like a picture of them, covered in mud and wild-haired, to remember this day sometime when he is far away. Mary Call says she would like a copy to have in her office someday.

Kiser's sister, Goldie Pease, comes to see them, getting stuck in the mud on her way up the road. She demands to see Roy Luther, but Mary Call says he is asleep. Goldie thinks it is odd, but Mary Call explains that he does not sleep well at night since his fall. Goldie was called to the area by Kiser, who wants her to take him home from the hospital, and she has stopped by to see if Roy Luther could do some work at Kiser's house. She is astonished to see that the roof collapsed and is even more surprised when Mary Call tells her it is none of Kiser's concern since the house and the land now belong to the Luthers. This makes Goldie very angry. She tells Mary Call that the land belongs to her, not Kiser, and he had no right to make that deal. She inspects the house, except for Roy Luther's bedroom, and tells Mary Call that she is taking back her land, and she wants the Luthers out in two weeks. She does not want Kiser's leftovers, and she says that the paper he signed was not legal. As she is leaving, she also takes the keys to Kiser's car.

Mary Call is furious and desperate. She is angry with herself, for not knowing that the deal was not legal. There should have been legal papers and notification, and she is frustrated with herself for being ignorant and not knowing that. She does not think that Goldie is a smart woman, but she does believe that she told the truth. The others can see that she is upset and ask her why she is bawling. She denies that she is crying, but she is so angry that she takes the gun from the wall to go after Kiser. Romey talks her out of doing something rash by reminding her that she said violence does not solve problems. He tells her that if she kills Kiser he will never again believe anything she says.

Mary Call is worried about where she can move her family. It is getting cold again, and she knows that there is no way she can tell a new landlord that her father is sleeping or digging for roots during a move. They would not believe her, and if they did, they would probably think Roy Luther was crazy and not want him as a tenant. As she lays in bed worrying, Mary Call begins to think that maybe they could live in a cave somewhere for the winter. The next morning, another blizzard comes and buries them in snow.



## Chapter 11 Analysis

Mary Call's dreams of an office sometime in the distant future show that while she is busy working to keep her family together in the present, she also has goals and ambitions for the future. Although her thoughts are usually about her family, she does want a future for herself as well. This shows that she is still in many ways a child who wants a grown-up life, instead of the mother she often resembles, such as when she gets up in the night to check on the other children.

After the conversation with Goldie Pease, Mary Call is furious with herself and with Kiser. She has worked so hard to keep her promises, and now everything may be ruined, because Kiser lied to her. The paper and the car, symbols of the freedom and hope that Mary Call had for a better life for her family, are both taken from her. She is left with only the worry that she has failed miserably, and her family is in trouble. Her anger almost makes her betray herself by hurting Kiser, but Romey talks her out of it, reminding her of her own words. Knowing that she still has to take care of the others and that they do learn from her, Mary Call calms down and tries to think of a solution. Although Mary Call does calm down, she may have reached the point where she can no longer find solutions for their problems.



# Chapter 12

## Chapter 12 Summary

The blizzard takes its toll on the Luthers. Some of their food is frozen, but they eat it anyway, and they lose their electricity. Romey has to give up his room entirely for the cow, and the smell is horrible. They huddle by the wood-burning stove and try to study, but Romey is in a bad mood and complains to Mary Call that she is ugly and demands to know if she has a plan yet. She does not have a plan yet, but she does have a notice from Mr. Connell that they are looking for people to make roping in their homes in November and December. Romey is despairing about the snow and their situation and says that God has forgotten them. Mary Call tells him that things will get better, and he must be tough.

Instead of being inspired by her speech, Romey tells her she is crazy, and he sneaks off into the blizzard to talk to Kiser. It is an hour before Mary Call realizes he is gone, and Devola finally tells her where Romey went. Mary Call goes out to look for him, telling Devola and Ima Dean to stay in the house. She wades through the snow, and because she is so tired, she almost gives up the struggle, but she finds Romey. His ankle is hurt, but they manage to make it home. Mary Call is upset with Romey, because he was going to beg Kiser to make good on his word and buy the land from his sister so the Luthers can stay in the house. Begging is beneath the Luthers, Mary Call tells him. It demeans them and lowers them, and she promised their father they would not beg from anyone or take charity. She threatens to lock Romey up if he tries it again.

Later, rain washes the snow away. Mary Call is trying to think of a plan, since she knows that Goldie Pease will turn them out into the fields once their time is up. When she sees that Roy Luther is not there, the county people will separate them. She finally decides that she will marry Kiser Pease herself, and she believes she can talk him into it, no matter that she is only fourteen. Once they are married, she will make him buy the land and put it in Devola's name. Then, she will leave him and go back home. She will plant some heavy trees so she does not have to look at his house with the witch's keyhole anymore.

## Chapter 12 Analysis

Romey's despairing words, "The Lord has forgotten us. This land is forgotten. *We're forgotten. We're forgotten people,*" have a profound effect on Mary Call. For a moment, Mary Call is inclined to agree, but then she thinks about it and realizes that they are only in the world by God's grace, and what they do with their time is up to them. Romey's words are the words of a child. She knows that eventually spring will come, and things will be okay. Spring is a symbol of hope for Mary Call. If they can make it to spring, then she knows that they can survive anything. She knows that she is tough and smart, and she believes that someday she will be a big shot. She tells Romey that things are tough



now, but someday they will change. The Lord has not forgotten them. If she is tough, then he must be tough, too, because he is a Luther. Although she finds strength by realizing his words are not true, she also realizes that she must convince the others that they are strong like she is, since they are afraid.

Later, when Devola tends to Romey's ankle, Mary Call realizes that even her cloudy-headed sister has something special in her, and Mary Call believes it is up to her to find a way, a life, where Devola is not wasted. Even though her sister is not tough, and does not have it in her personality to be tough or smart, her sweetness and her tender attitude are wonderful, and Mary Call realizes that she has something to offer to the world.

Mary Call wants everyone in her family to be the best that they can be. She wants them to be smart, tough and proud. This is part of the reason that the opinions of others matter to her, and why she believes that begging is beneath them. She does not want her brother or sisters to lower themselves and beg, because she wants them to have respect for themselves and to be respected by others.



# Chapter 13

## Chapter 13 Summary

Early the next morning, Mary Call leaves a note for the others and walks to town to see Kiser. On the way to the hospital, Mr. Connell sees her and offers her a ride. He takes her to breakfast, and she looks around the town, which is a bit richer than what she is used to. Mr. Connell drops her off at the hospital and she goes inside to look for Kiser. She rings the bell at the front desk and waits for a long time, but no one comes to talk to her. The hospital is still and quiet. After waiting for a while, Mary Call goes in search of Kiser on her own. When she finds him, he seems happy to see her. He has lost weight, and his jaw is wired shut, so he has to talk through his teeth. He asks if Goldie is there with her, but she tells him no. Kiser is upset that he paid for Goldie to come up from Georgia, but she has not come to take him home. He asks after the Luther family, and Mary Call tells him that everyone is doing well. She says that Goldie came to the house and had a talk with Roy Luther, but since she is not a door-crack listener, she does not know what they said. She assures the distressed Kiser that no one said anything against him. Kiser repeats that he really wants to get out of the hospital.

Mary Call asks him if he wants to get married. Kiser is excited at the thought, and asks her to repeat that. When she does, he promises her that he will take good care of Devola, have the Luthers over for dinner every Sunday, and give Roy Luther some land of his own. Mary Call interrupts him and tells him that she cannot let him marry Devola. She tells him that she loves him and wants to get married. She adds that it doesn't matter that he is nearly forty, and she is only fourteen. He corrects her and says he is thirty, and that he does not believe she loves him, that she has no more use for him than a clot of dirt. Mary Call yells at him for calling her a liar and asks him if he wants to marry her. He says no. Mary Call loses her temper and shouts at him for treasoning her. She tells him she knows that he gave them that paper knowing it was no good, and he treasoned her, just like he treasoned Roy Luther to his grave. She throws his crutches at him and shouts that he is right, she has no use for him with his rotten teeth and his witch's keyhole. He tells her not to bawl, and she says she is not crying. As she walks home, she is upset that she has demeaned herself to him, and she cries all the way home.

The other children are still wondering where they are going to live, and Mary Call repeats her idea that they will live in a cave. Devola and the others try to reason with her, saying how hard it will be to move, how cold it will be, and that they will not have electricity or a bathroom. Mary Call says that they will use heavy paper and linoleum to line the cave. In spring, they will make good money from herbing and gathering and will build their own house. She tells Romey that even though they will be troglodytes, they will still have to go to school, since living in a cave is no excuse for ignorance. She goes out to Old Joshua to find a cave. She finds a dark, cold cave that she thinks will work.





When she returns, Kiser and Devola are waiting for her. Devola seems changed and reminds Mary Call of how Cosby Luther looked in times of crisis. Devola tells her to take off her coat and sit down. Mary Call obeys her, just as she would her mother. They tell Mary Call that Kiser has paid for the land and the house and put it in Devola's name, since Mary Call is a minor. Devola then tells her that she and Kiser are getting married, and that Mary Call should not look so tough, it is ugly. Mary Call does not feel tough anymore, she feels weary, and she tells them that they cannot get married, that she promised Roy Luther she would never let that happen. She repeats that they are going to move tomorrow. Kiser remarks that it seems that Roy Luther has put a lot of responsibility on Mary Call that he should not have, but Mary Call says that she can handle the responsibility, and Roy Luther knew she was tough and would take care of everyone. Kiser says that Mary Call looks sick, and Mary Call can see them looking at her worriedly. She repeats that they are not getting married, that the Luthers are going to go live in a cave. Suddenly, Mary Call breaks down and says "Roy Luther's dead, Devola. He's dead." Devola reassures her that they all know that Mary Call did the best she could, and she did well. Now, it is time to have some help. Mary Call stands up to object, but she faints.

## Chapter 13 Analysis

Mary Call has reached the point where she needs to take drastic measures to keep the promises she made to her father. Although she despises Kiser, and thinks that marrying him would be horrible, she heads to the hospital to talk to him. He seems happy to see her, which shows that the bad feeling she has for him are not shared, and he even seems concerned about her when she begins to cry. Mary Call is angry that she has broken down in front of a man that she does not like or respect, yet Kiser was trying to be kind to her when he said no. He is aware that Mary Call does not think he is a very good man, but he immediately takes steps to help her family by buying the land from his sister. His motivations may be simply to marry Devola now that he knows Roy Luther is dead, but his kindness extends to the rest of the family as well.

The other Luthers can see that Mary Call is no longer being the smart, reasonable girl that she normally is. Her plan to live in the cave as though everything was normal is farfetched and dangerous. Perhaps it is this strain that finally makes Devola take action. When she agrees to marry Kiser it may be, because she loves him, or because she wants to live in his house, but it is also the way that she is able to take the responsibility out of her sister's hands and let her rest. When Mary Call comes home and finds them in the kitchen, she recognizes the change in Devola, and treats her as an older sister for the first time. While she still protests that they cannot get married and tries to stick to her promise, she realizes that she is losing. Although Mary Call loves her family, she does not like to let it show through her tough facade. When she sees the concern on Devola and Kiser's faces, she is disgusted that they are so weak to let those feelings show. If Mary Call had been weak and allowed her feelings to show, she would not have been able to keep the promises she made to her father. It is not emotional weakness, but physical weakness, that finally takes the control away from Mary Call.



# Chapter 14

## Chapter 14 Summary

Mary Call admits to Romey that she and Roy Luther were wrong about Devola, but there was no way they could have known how she would change. If she tried to stop the wedding now, there would never be a judge who would believe that Devola was cloudy-headed. Romey does not think that they should buy Devola's wedding clothes, but Mary Call insists. She says that they are Luthers and cannot let Kiser pay for the clothes. They buy her a yellow dress and yellow shoes, just what she said she wanted when they began wildcrafting.

Kiser and Devola get married on a Sunday afternoon at Kiser's house, since the Luthers cannot repair their sitting room in time. The wedding is nice, with a violinist, cake, peppermint ice cream and coffee. After the wedding, Kiser tries to give Mary Call some food and money to take home, but she refuses, saying they are fine, and he only married Devola, not the rest of them. He tells her that he is her guardian now, and she has to listen to him part-way. He worries over their climbing in the mountains to wildcraft and tells Mary Call that he is going to build them a barn first thing.

Ima Dean does not like the new arrangement when Devola moves out, since she has to spend the day at Devola's, while Mary Call and Romey are at school. She says it is lonesome, and she wants to go to school, too. Mary Call tells her that she is too young, but she does begin to teach Ima Dean to read. Romey and Mary Call work at making roping for holiday decorations. Romey is pretty good at it, and Mr. Connell helps them out by buying them a wire-cranking machine and taking them to learn to use it. With school, Ima Dean's reading lessons, and the roping work, the winter begins to pass quickly. It seems that their biggest worries are gone. Mary Call is happy when Kiser comes to tell her that Roy Luther can stay buried up on the mountain. He smiles at her. She can see that he got his teeth fixed, although she does not say anything.

## Chapter 14 Analysis

Although Mary Call has had to give up on some of her promises, it finally seems that things are getting better for the Luthers. Devola marries Kiser, but Mary Call is able to keep Romey and Ima Dean with her. Roy Luther can stay buried up on the mountain, so Mary Call has the satisfaction of knowing that she kept her word the best that she could. As Kiser told her before, sometimes you need to accept help. It is only when Mary Call is forced to accept help that things begin to go better for her.

Although Mary Call has always worried that asking for help is lowering herself, Kiser shows her that he wants her respect by having his teeth fixed and cementing over the witch's keyhole. These two things were symbols of the ignorance and bad reputations that Mary Call felt kept the Luther family down. Although Mary Call disliked Kiser before,



he is making efforts to make life better for her and her siblings, and seems to genuinely care about them. Mr. Connell also helps the Luthers by buying them the roping machine, but Mary Call never seems to mind accepting help from him. She does ask Mr. Connell how Mrs. Connell feels, now that they know the truth, but Mr. Connell tells her that she should not worry about Mrs. Connell. Mary Call has seen that some people will respect you, even when you need help, yet others will not respect you, no matter how much you do on your own.



# Chapter 15

## Chapter 15 Summary

Mary Call has begun to think that spring will never come, that the Lord really has forgotten them, and the mountains are so old that the world is tired of supporting them. She realizes that these are childish thoughts, and spring does come. It fills the valley with greenery, the wild birds return, and Mary Call, Romey and Ima Dean once again begin the work of wildcrafting. She talks about the many different plants they gather: the waxy buds of Gilead trees they pull down with their rakes, the leaves and roots of skunk cabbage, and the pollen of black willows. Her brother and sister make fun of her for being stuck up and calling things by their proper names instead of their local mountain terms, but Mary Call likes learning the real names. Mary Call and the others learn all about the wild medicine plants of North Carolina, and she considers it to be a fine education.

## Chapter 15 Analysis

Education is important to Mary Call, because it makes her independent, and prevents her from being seen as ignorant or treated as though she was. The wildcrafting helps Mary Call and her siblings to be self-reliant and allows them to learn what many other people do not know, and this is something that she takes great pride in. Education and independence are entwined themes throughout the novel, and here the reader can see how they come to fruition for the Luther family. Mary Call and the children are able to be independent and support themselves, and they do make their lives better.

Mary Call also realizes that hope is a very adult feeling, whereas despair is childish and impractical. When she despairs over the long winter, she is ignoring the truth that she should know, that spring is coming. When she accepts that things will get better, and that she will make their lives better, then she is truly able to be free.



# Characters

## Mary Call Luther

Mary Call is a strong, intelligent girl, who is left in charge of her two sisters and brother at the age of fourteen when her father becomes ill and dies. She made promises to her father and intends to keep them, no matter what the consequences. She is not as pretty or sweet as her sister, but Mary Call has guts and intelligence. It is probably these characteristics that make her father leave her in charge of the family. Her struggles are a testament to her strong character, and her devotion to her family and her promises show her values. Although Mary Call makes some ethically questionable decisions during the course of the novel, mostly seen in her manipulation of Kiser Pease, she is doing what she believes is best for her family.

Education is very important to Mary Call, since she fears being ignorant or looked down upon by others. Education will help her to be better and stronger and to make a future for herself. If she is ignorant and can be taken advantage of, then she will fail to keep the promises she made to her father. Likewise, ignorance is a characteristic that Mary Call sees as a weakness in others, and she does not respect weakness. She is the one responsible for taking care of her family in a hard environment, under difficult circumstances, and that requires that she be tough. Toughness helps her to work hard and not give in to frustration or despair. Mary Call fears weakness, because it does not allow her to be independent or to take care of her family.

While Mary Call is not very affectionate toward her family or others, she is constantly thinking of them and their welfare and putting their needs ahead of her own. She lets them get treats at the store, while she saves the money intended for her own treats. She feels bad when they are tired, and she makes them get up early to work. Although she becomes frustrated when they do not seem to appreciate her efforts, Mary Call will not give up on them. She wants them to be the best they can be and to have the world under their control, instead of being controlled by the world.

## Devola Luther

Devola is the oldest daughter in the Luther family, and while she is sweet and pretty, she is also cloudy-headed, and her family believes that she will always be childlike. While she helps around the house and is very good at keeping house for her family and caring for them when they are sick or ill, she is not able to make decisions. Devola does not seem to care very much about anything. Even when Kiser, the man she eventually marries, is run over by a truck, the news does not seem to have much of an effect on her.

Devola does take the time to correct her sister, when she feels that Mary Call is being too hard on the rest of them. At the same time, she respects Mary Call's leadership.



They each take a different role in caring for the family. While Devola is tender, loving, and kind to her family, Mary Call is the practical, hardworking family member who holds things together. When Mary Call begins to slip in this role, Devola changes and becomes an adult. She seems to realize that now is the time that she must act as the mother of the family and make the decisions that her sister cannot. While Devola never says that she loves Kiser, she never seems opposed to the idea of marrying him, and making him happy by marrying him allows her to improve conditions for her family as well. This change in Devola allows things to change for the better for all the Luthers, since it releases Mary Call from one of the promises.

## Romey Luther

Romey Luther is the ten-year-old only son of the Luther family. He is young and, in many ways, immature. However, he tries his best to be the man of the family. As soon as his father becomes very ill he begins to work in the fields and worry about the money and food necessary to maintain the family. Mary Call worries about him, because he is so young, but he repeatedly demonstrates that he is willing to take on the responsibility of taking care of the family. Like Mary Call, Romey dreams of growing up and having a life somewhere else, but he needs Mary Call to tell him how to get there. He is determined, but he needs her direction to show him that school is important for his future, and to tell him that violence will not solve his problems. Romey does get frustrated with his sister, and he struggles under the burdens of burying their father and keeping their land, but he is willing to listen to Mary Call, and he shows that he is as brave and intelligent as his sister is.

## Ima Dean

Ima Dean is the youngest sister in the Luther family. She is five-years-old and still acts like a baby when she gets frustrated, but she is willing to work with her sister and brother, and she respects them. Ima Dean is the only Luther who is truly too young to take on the burden of managing on her own, but she does act very independent and intelligent for so young a child. She comforts her brother, when he is upset. She listens to her sister, when she is given an order. When Mrs. Connell is rude to her, Ima Dean remains polite and calm and does not let the woman's behavior hurt or anger her. Sometimes, the others get frustrated with Ima Dean, but she is willing to learn, and they are willing to teach her. At the end of the novel, when Mary Call teaches her to read, Ima Dean is shown to be very similar to her sister in her desire to be intelligent and take pride in herself.

## Roy Luther

Roy Luther is the head of the Luther family. Although he is a sharecropper, he is very proud. Independence is important to him, and he instills this value in his children, particularly Mary Call. Although Mary Call is young, he makes her promise to remain



proud and independent by keeping the family together and not accepting charity from strangers. Although Roy Luther was a good and kind father to his children, the promises he receives from Mary Call puts them in a tough situation. He is proud enough that he does not want charity for his children, yet Mary Call also says that he is defeated and worn down, because he did not stand up for himself. He makes his daughter take on responsibilities that are very hard for a fourteen-year-old girl, yet his children were proud that he was their father.

## **Kiser Pease**

Kiser Pease is the Luthers' neighbor and landlord. He is thirty years old but looks much older, because he has not taken care of himself and has bad teeth. He is also superstitious, which is evidenced by the witch's keyhole in his chimney. While Mary Call can easily manipulate him, he has taken advantage of others, such as Roy Luther or Goldie Pease. In the beginning of the novel, Kiser is seen as a horrible man, someone who has trampled on the Luthers and has no regard for their ambitions. Roy Luther does not want Kiser to marry his daughter, but Kiser is almost foolishly in love with Devola and will do nearly anything to please her and her family. Even though Kiser is seen in a negative light in the beginning, by the end of the novel, he is the guardian of the Luther children and seems to genuinely care about their well being. This may be because he loves Devola, and they are her family. Or, it might be because he has watched Mary Call struggle and feels respect and compassion for her. Although Kiser seems to be the root of many of the Luther's problems, he also ends up being the solution to these problems. His assistance allows Mary Call to keep what promises she can.

## **Mr. Connell**

Mr. Connell is the kind owner of the general store. Throughout the novel, he is generous and friendly towards the Luthers, even though his wife is not. Mr. Connell gives freely to the Luthers, but never makes them feel as though they are taking charity. In this way, he allows them to be proud of themselves and that is why they like him. His advise to Mary Call not to worry about what Mrs. Connell or others think is meant to free her from her chronic worry that she is seen as an ignorant mountain person. Mr. Connell sees all the Luther children as individuals and treats them kindly, instead of with contempt.

## **Mrs. Connell**

Mrs. Connell is the wife of the general store owner, but their personalities are very different. Mrs. Connell had a difficult childhood and was forced to live on the charity of an aunt. As an adult, she has little compassion for others and looks down on the Luthers as inferior to herself. Through out the novel, she treats Mary Call and her siblings with contempt and seems determined to show them that they are lower than she is. She goes out of her way to see Roy Luther, perhaps because Roy Luther is defeated, and





she would rather deal with him than his proud children. Although Mary Call and Romey become angry with Mrs. Connell when she repeatedly mentions that they need help and that they are too proud, in the end, they do need help to get by. Mrs. Connell believes that it is a low thing to receive help from others, and she wants the Luthers to be lowered. Fortunately, others show the Luthers that they can still be proud, even if they accept help.

## **Cosby Luther**

Cosby Luther is the mother of the Luther children. Although she died three years before the novel begins, her presence is felt throughout the novel. When Roy Luther falls ill, and Mary Call does not know what to do, a figure appears in the mists outside, and Mary Call is suddenly reminded of her mother's book on wildcrafting. When Devola tells Mary Call that she is going to marry Kiser Pease, she has a strength and dignity in her that reminds Mary Call of their mother, and this is what causes Mary Call to obey her. The loss of Cosby's rocker is felt strongly by her children, because it was a symbol of the mother that they lost, someone who was tender, like Devola, but strong like Mary Call.

## **Goldie Pease**

Goldie Pease is Kiser Pease's sister. When he is sick he acknowledges that he had done harm to her in the past, and later it is revealed that he took her land. Although Goldie was taken advantage of in the past, she shows no sympathy for the Luthers but instead orders them off the land. Even though Goldie does not seem smart, Mary Call believes that she has the right to throw them out of the house and has no doubt that she will do it. Her lack of compassion and haughty attitude has a very negative effect on the Luthers and drives both Romey and Mary Call to desperation.

## **Fleetie Breathitt**

Fleetie Breathitt is the principal of the school. Mary Call has a great deal of respect for her, because she seems to know so much about everything. Cleanliness, friendship, and knowledge are things that she values and so Mary Call believes that they should be valued. She is always kind to the Luther children and treats them with respect, even allowing them to work in the cafeteria to earn their lunches. The Luthers are willing to work hard, and they want to be smart, so Miss Breathitt encourages them. Other students in the school do not like her, because she is strict. Once, Romey and a friend went so far as to steal her car and drive it part way to town.

## **The Graybeals**

Alma and Gaither Graybeal are friends with Mary Call and Romey during the school year. When they see Mary Call and Romey at registration, or after the term begins, they





offer them rides or invite them to taste the fresh molasses that their father has just made. Although Mary Call and Romey like the Graybeals and enjoy their friendship, after Roy Luther dies, they feel forced to turn down the invitations and distance themselves from the other family so that their secret is not discovered.



# Objects/Places

## The Luther House

The Luthers live in a run-down sharecropper house in the Trial Valley of North Carolina. The roof is coming apart, and it is cold and drafty in the winter, but it means a lot to the Luthers to own their home and the land around it. When Kiser Pease signs over the house, the house represents freedom to the Luthers, and they make plans to fix it up. When it is revealed that Kiser could not legally give them the house, they are left without a home. Eventually, Kiser does sign the house over to Devola Luther, and the house is truly theirs.

## Trial Valley

Trial Valley is the part of North Carolina where the Luther family lives. It is near two mountains called Sugar Boy and Old Joshua, and it is part of the Smoky Mountains.

## Sugar Boy

Sugar Boy is one of the mountains near the Luther's home in Trial Valley, and the children often go up the mountain to gather herbs and bark.

## Old Joshua

Old Joshua is the other mountain near the Luther's home. Old Joshua is rough and rocky and difficult to travel over. Roy Luther is buried on Old Joshua, and the fall season of wildcrafting on the mountain wears out Romey's shoes.

## The Witch's Keyhole

Kiser Pease has a nice large home, but there is a witch's keyhole in the chimney to let the witches out. Mary Call thinks that this is ridiculous, ignorant, and superstitious, and it is one reason that she has no respect for Kiser. When Mary Call loses her temper and tells him how she despises him for the keyhole, he cements it over before he marries Devola.

## The General Store

The children travel the Connell's general store five miles from their home to buy supplies and trade the "wild gold" they have gathered in the mountains for money.



## The Hospital

When a truck runs over Kiser Pease, he is sent to the hospital and stays there for several weeks to recover. Mary Call visits him there to ask him to marry her, and it is where she accidentally tells him that Roy Luther has died.

## Cosby Luther's Wildcrafting Book

Cosby Luther's book on wildcrafting, *A Guide to Wildcrafting*, was stored in her old trunk. One night, Mary Call sees a figure in the mist and suddenly remembers the book. Due to the fact that they have this book, the Luthers are able to learn about the plants of the mountains and make a living gathering them.

## Cosby Luther's Rocker

Cosby Luther's rocker is in the sitting room, and it is crushed when the roof collapses. Romey is very upset by its destruction, and he, Ima Dean and Devola try to fix it.

## Romey's Wagon

Romey's wagon is only a toy, but the Luthers use it to carry their groceries and supplies from the general store to their house. When Roy Luther dies, Mary Call and Romey must use the wagon to carry their father up Old Joshua for his burial.

## Kiser's Car

Kiser tries to use his car to impress Roy Luther and convince him to let him marry Devola. He leaves the car at the Luthers, and the children have a lot of fun driving it around. When he is run over by the truck, Devola brings the car back to the house, until Goldie comes and takes it away again.

## Romey's Shoes

Romey's shoes are worn out from all the walking and the rough trails of Old Joshua. He notices that they are wearing out long before they do, and when he gets new shoes is his very careful with them, since shoes are expensive, and takes them off in the rain to keep them from getting wet.

## The Pig

Kiser brings Devola a pig as a present. The children build a pen for it and, in the winter, bring it inside. Even though they are worried about food, they never kill the pig.



## The Rooster

The rooster is Ima Dean's pet. It claws her the day after Roy Luther dies, because she wants it to lay an egg, and its crowing attracts the fox that attacks the pig.

## The Cow

Mary Call mentions that Devola likes milk, but she tells Kiser that they never have any, because they do not have a cow. He brings them a Hereford cow. It is supposed to be a hearty cow, but the Luthers are worried that it will freeze in the winter. So, they bring it inside and put it in Romey's room, even though it makes the room unusable and smelly.

## The Fox

The night that the roof collapses, a fox jumps through the hole to attack the pig. Mary Call kills the fox, and although she is very frightened and gets a bad splinter, it proves to her that she is tough, and she will survive.

## The Cave

When Goldie Pease tells the Luthers that she owns their house, and they will have to leave, Mary Call realizes that they will not be able to fool another landlord and begins to look for a cave for them to live in. She does find a cold deep cave that she thinks will work, but when she returns to the house, Kiser and Devola tell her they are getting married.

## The Paper

When Kiser is sick, Mary Call and the other children take care of him. When he regains consciousness, Mary Call tells him that she will only take care of him if he signs a paper giving the Luther their house and the land around it. He is afraid he will die, signs it, and Mary Call puts it in her shoe. When Kiser sees the note later, he tells Mary Call good luck with the land, but the paper is actually worthless since Kiser does not own the land their house is on. The paper is very important to Mary Call, because it symbolizes the Luther family's freedom.

## The Money Box

The family savings and the money from the wildcrafting go into the moneybox in the kitchen. While the other Luthers plan on what they will buy with extra money, Mary Call always plans how much money they will put in the box.



## Setting

Although a particular period is never identified, the descriptions suggest that the story is set in the North Carolina mountains during the late 1950s or early 1960s. In many ways time moves more slowly in the mountains, and modern-day conveniences, such as electricity, refrigerators, radios, and cars, are luxuries in this setting. The Luthers' poverty is revealed by the description of their home, a "woeful," "seedy," and "downright disgraceful" shack. The mountains and land around the shack, though, are beautiful, "the fairest land of them all," and this fair land produces the wild plants that allow the children to survive. The plants have beautiful names: mayapple, witch hazel, ginseng, goldenseal, stargrass root, and queen's delight. The book's title refers to the beautiful mountain landscape, as well as to the mountain hymn, "Where the Lilies Bloom So Fair." Nature provides a livelihood for the children but it also brings suffering with its winter blizzards, spring rain storms, and scorching summer heat. To a large extent, the whims of nature determine whether life will be comfortable or dangerous for the Luthers. The children must be ever aware of natural threats such as storms and poisonous snakes. The story revolves around its setting, and nature itself almost becomes another character.

## Social Sensitivity

Where the Lilies Bloom shows how ambitious, intelligent people can be caught in the downward pull of poverty by factors beyond their control, such as illness, a poor local economy, or unfair land division. The novel also explores the potential abuses of the tenant farming system. The Cleavers never blame the true victims of poverty, but they criticize people who abuse the welfare system.

Parents or teachers should discuss the Luthers' extreme views on charity with young readers. The Luthers feel that charity is "seldom of real service to those upon whom it is bestowed and those who receive it are always looked upon with suspicion, every need and want scrutinized." Readers should be asked to decide how realistic this attitude is and to examine their own attitudes toward receiving and giving charity.

Another social issue raised by the Cleavers is that of children's rights. The Luthers are threatened, in large part, because of their youth. If they were older, Roy Luther's death would not have to be kept secret, because his children would not face the threat of a foster home. In this book, adults are not portrayed as exceptionally wise, good, or dependable. Roy Luther has let himself be beaten by poverty and by Kiser Pease; Riser has been selfish and greedy; Mrs. Connell is cruel and hateful. Mr. Connell and Miss Breathitt, the teacher, are the only admirable adult figures in the book. Readers might discuss the rights and protections that children should have. They should also talk about the qualities that make Mr. Connell and Miss Breathitt stand out as exemplary adults.

Where the Lilies Bloom also deals with the issue of mental disability. Devola is not incapable of learning, but she is slow and somewhat gullible. Naturally, Roy Luther is concerned about her future. However, in the process of insuring that she will be safe and provided for, he takes away her freedom of choice by forbidding her to marry Kiser.

Parents or teachers might discuss the rights of the mentally disabled and ask if Roy's decision is justifiable.

## Literary Qualities

Where the Lilies Bloom is a straightforward story, without many obvious double meanings, symbols, or mythic elements. It is narrated by Mary Call and, apart from occasional awkward phrases, which seem self-consciously "poetic," the writing is clear, smooth, and often beautiful. The Cleavers always research the geographic areas they write about, and as a result the colorful mountain dialect is authentic.

The Cleavers use humor to lighten what might otherwise be a very depressing narrative. Mary Call and Romey keep their wits about them, and they usually have some amusing observation about the people or situations confronting them. The scene in which Mary Call uses a mountain recipe to heal Kiser Pease of pneumonia—the recipe calls for the patient to be stripped and slathered with cooked onion slices—is very funny, although it also contains numerous references to the Luthers' poverty and to the possibility of Kiser's death. Romey, with his optimistic spirit, is often thinking of pranks. His most successful prank comes when he frightens Mrs. Connell away with a stuffed bear: "I like to died laughing, watching that old bird fly out of here," he says of his enemy, the "old bat." Throughout the book, even in the midst of the most serious situations, the authors include enough comedy that the reader never feels overwhelmed or hopeless.

Nature plays a symbolic role in the novel. It is portrayed as something that can be exquisitely beautiful or hatefully ugly, depending on the season and one's financial resources. As the Luthers' poverty moves them further and further away from a "civilized" lifestyle and toward a primitive way of life, they become ever more reliant on nature and more affected by weather. This move toward nature progresses slowly throughout the book. At first the Luthers try to save money by not using the electricity in their house. Then winter comes and the roof falls in, leaving a gaping hole in the middle of the house where snow and wild animals can enter. Near the end of the book the Luthers are so poor that they must move out of their shack and into a cave, like "troglydites." As this move towards primitivism progresses, there is an identification of the Luther children with animals or birds. When winter comes, the rooster, pig, and cow are brought indoors, and the house becomes a stable. The cow eventually takes over Romey's entire room, and "the smell that came from it was not good and it was not now a laughing matter." When the roof caves in, Mary Call must fight a wild fox for the rooster. She wonders if the fox has approached a human habitation because it is so hungry it has lost its natural fear, or because Mary Call herself no longer looks like a human. Finally, Mary Call decides the family must move into a cave.

It is interesting to note that as they become more identified with beasts and nature, the Luther children withdraw more from the company of other human beings. Mary Call makes Romey refuse an invitation to the Graybeals' house, and later declines a ride with Mr. Graybeal during a rainstorm. Romey also uses an animal to frighten away Mrs. Connell. Kiser Pease is, for the most part, the only person the children see, and his visits are often prompted by his desire to give animals to Devola; his gifts to her include a pig and a cow.



# Themes

## Ignorance and Education

Mary Call Luther is very concerned about being ignorant or being perceived as ignorant. As a mountain person and the daughter of a sharecropper, she has to overcome the perceptions that others have of ignorant, violent, poor mountain people. Mary Call does not want to be a person that fits the stereotype nor does she want any of her siblings to be. Mary Call sees a future for herself far from Trial Valley, and she knows that if she wants to be somebody someday, she needs to study hard and get a good education. Mary Call has respect for people who are educated, like her principal Miss Breathitt, because they are able to answer her questions. When Mary Call does not know something, like when Romey asks her how old the mountains are, she is frustrated with herself, but she remembers to ask later.

Mary Call's relationship with Kiser Pease is related to the idea of ignorance and education. Although technically the Luthers work for Kiser, Mary Call considers him beneath her, not only for his greed, but because he is superstitious and uneducated. He does not take care of himself, as the Luthers were taught to, and Mary Call learned in school. So, she does not respect him. When Mary Call learns that Kiser tricked her and that he could not give her the house and the land, she is angry with herself for not knowing the law. Although Mary Call looks at others and judges them on their level of education and knowledge, she judges herself most harshly.

Romey and Ima Dean learn that education is important and knowledge will control their lives from Mary Call. Learning new skills, such as wildcrafting, is what allows the Luthers to take care of themselves after Roy Luther dies. Learning the wild lore of North Carolina is as important to Mary Call as learning from her books, because she considers both forms of education important for making her life, and the life of her family, better.

## Pride and Independence

The Luthers are a proud family, especially Mary Call and Roy Luther, and this pride and independence both helps them and hurts them. To the Luther family, pride and independence are closely related. A person cannot be proud if they are dependent on others, and they cannot be independent if they have no pride, because others will take advantage of them.

While Roy Luther tells Mary Call that she must be proud and take care of the other children without accepting charity from strangers, he does not tell her that she must sometimes accept help. Mary Call looks back and sees that her father was sometimes defeated, that he did not have enough pride to stand up for himself. As a result, her family remained poor and continued to work for others, instead of themselves.





Mary Call may not think that her father had enough pride for himself, but he places his daughter in a position where she is too concerned with pride and independence. Mary Call wants to be proud of herself and her family, and it is necessary for them to remain independent when Roy Luther dies in order to stay together, but at the same time, it is impossible for a fourteen-year-old girl to be completely independent in those circumstances. When Mary Call breaks down in front of Kiser, she is ashamed, because she feels she lowered herself in front of him, yet when her despair broke through her pride she was finally able to get the help she needed.

Mrs. Connell sees the Luthers' independence as an insult to her own pride. The Luther children try to make it on their own and stubbornly insist that their lives will get better, but when Mrs. Connell was in a similar situation as a child, she remained stuck where she was, dependent on others. Now that she is an adult, she seems to resent the pride and independence that she sees in these children.

When Kiser lets Mary Call keep the paper that says they own the house, he warns them that there is a price for freedom. The type of freedom Mary Call is seeking is the freedom of independence, but it also means that there is no one she can rely on. She comes to learn this price as her family struggles alone through the winter, without aid from anyone outside each other and sometimes without the help of each other. These lessons help Mary Call understand and appreciate when their situation changes for the better. When she accepts a little help, they are able to live happily and independently in a situation where they can still be proud of themselves.

## Being Tough

Mary Call is able to keep her family together and work hard under harsh circumstances, because she is tough. She considers her guts and her toughness to be assets, although her sisters and brother often say that it makes her ugly and disagreeable. When Mary Call is worried about money or the future, she is often tough on her siblings, and while she might feel bad about making them work so hard, she knows that it is for their own good.

Several times throughout the novel Devola or Romey tell Mary Call not to look so tough, that it makes her ugly. While Mary Call declares that she does not want to be pretty and sweet, because it would get in the way of her fighting for their survival, there are times when she hates that they see her as such an ugly old crone. It would be nice if Mary Call was able to relax and have fun like her siblings, but she knows that there is no time for that if she is going to take care of them.

Mary Call's tough appearance breaks apart when Goldie Pease orders them to leave the house. She goes to Kiser's hospital room intending to marry him to get the house, but when she is refused, she loses her temper and her strength breaks. She shouts at him and reveals the secret that Roy Luther is dead. When she returns home the tough attitude is back, and she tries to convince her siblings that they can live in a cave. Unlike the tough Mary Call from the beginning of the novel, who was stubborn, gutsy,



and smart, this tough Mary Call is acting brave even though she is becoming more and more desperate. She feels that she needs to hide her fears from the others to protect them and to protect herself.

When Mary Call returns from the cave and finds Kiser and Devola waiting for her, she is weakened. Although she continues to insist that they can live in a cave and that they will live in a cave, her body betrays her. She is sick and tired and cannot remain tough any longer. When Devola and Kiser look at her with love and concern, Mary Call is disgusted, because they are letting their feeling show and that is a weakness to her. If Mary Call showed the same weakness and tenderness, then her family would fall apart, because no one else would do what is necessary. When Mary Call is weak and she faints, Devola becomes the strong one in the family. She may not be as tough as her sister, but the changes she makes improves their lives. Mary Call is still a strong and smart character, but when she accepts the kindness that was forced on her when she was weak, she becomes a little bit gentler herself.

## Hope and Despair

During the long hard winter Romey says that God has forgotten them and that they are forgotten people. The winter is difficult, and it is easy to forget that spring will come. It seems as though the entire world is frozen and hard. One important lesson that Mary Call learns in the novel is that hope is an adult emotion.

When Romey says God has forgotten them, at first, Mary Call agrees. When she thinks about it, she realizes that Romey has made a childish conclusion out of despair. She sees that the only reason they exist is because of God, and she has to believe that he has a plan. She knows that the spring will come, and life will become easier for them again. It is easy, when times are hard and the winter seems to drag on, to believe that the only world that exists is the one that she sees at the moment, but she has to remember that spring always comes, and it will not stop coming for her, because God has not forgotten her. Mary Call thinks that it is childish to believe that God has forgotten her and this will change the way the seasons work. Winter will always end and spring will begin, and she has to remember that her life will continue to change, and she has a future before her.



## Themes/Characters

Where the Lilies Bloom portrays poverty in a realistic light, neither glossing over its ugliness nor dwelling unnecessarily on any of its horrors. Mary Call Luther has promised her father that the family will never accept charity, so the four children must work for a living. Without letting anyone find out their father has died, Mary Call comes up with a plan: the family will become "wildcrafters," gathering and selling medicinal plants that grow wild in the mountains. Through extremely hard work, cleverness, and some luck, the Luthers survive. As the book ends one feels that the Luther family will be fine, and probably closer and stronger than ever.

The central conflict in the story revolves around Mary Call Luther's feeling of responsibility for her family. Her sense of obligation to fulfill the promises she made to her dying father leads to her feelings of inadequacy and rebellion.

She fights with her brother and sisters, who say she is mean and "hateful," and struggles with a part of herself that wants to run away from the entire situation. Mary Call is a strong character, made wiser than most fourteen-year-olds by her duties to her family and her sense of honor. As the narrative progresses, she senses her strength: she can win the fight against nature, provide for her family, and keep most of her promises to her father. Mary Call is a model of self-control and perseverance, and her character suggests that anything is possible for someone who has enough motivation.

The novel features several interesting and unusual characters. Romey Luther, the ten-year-old brother, is generally loving and mature for his age. Although rebellious at times, he "has none of the rough makings of a farm boy." Eighteen-year-old Devola Luther is a sort of mother to her younger siblings; she apparently suffers from a mental disability that makes her "cloudy-headed." Kiser Pease, one of the villains of the story, is really more comic than evil, with his yearnings for Devola, his superstitions, and his rotten teeth. Mrs. Connell (whom Romey calls an "old bat,") is the only truly evil character. She plagues the children with her criticizing, prying, and threats. She vows to make sure that the children go to "an institution for people like them" when Roy Luther dies.

She takes a sad pleasure in tormenting the children with tales of her own childhood as an orphan, and in ridiculing their old, torn clothing and proud refusal of charity. Even her gifts are meant to hurt: she gives Ima Dean, the youngest sister, a bag of candy, a real luxury to a poor little girl. When the child opens it, however, she finds the candy is so "old and dirty" that "nobody could've eaten it."

The need for emotional, financial, and physical security, the need to fulfill appointed duties and promises, and the need for family unity and pride are the themes that run throughout this story.

Although most readers will not have experienced the level of poverty that the Luthers endure, they will be able to relate to the spirit of struggle and will rejoice in the triumph of Mary Call and her siblings.

# Style

## Point of View

The story is told from fourteen-year-old Mary Call Luther's perspective. As the reader experiences the story through her eyes, they can see the hardships that befall her family with both compassion and with pride. Mary Call is a tough girl, and she does not dwell on sweetness or beauty, but on the practical necessities of life and the important qualities of pride, freedom, and intelligence. Even as a first-person narrator, Mary Call rarely admits when she is frightened, hurt, or crying, but she reveals these emotions as others see them in her, such as when her brother asks her why her eyes are so big after the fox attack, or when Kiser asks her why she is bawling in the hospital. Mary Call does not communicate these things to the reader, because Mary Call believes she is too strong for these emotions. The only way to see tenderness or emotion in Mary Call is to hear how others view her.

By using Mary Call as a narrator, the author is able to show the reader the conflict that occurs within Mary Call. It is very important to her to keep her promises, and it is a matter of honor that her family is independent, yet the tasks that have been laid on her by these promises are trying. She must be strong, but this strength interferes with the way the others deal with her. The reader can see that accepting kindness is difficult for Mary Call, and they can understand why. Although the reader may not be aware of Mary Call's emotions, they do know about her loyalty, her resourcefulness, and her frustrations.

## Setting

The setting is the Trial Valley, nestled near Old Joshua and Sugar Boy in the Smoky Mountains. While the land is beautiful and filled with promise and nourishment in the summer, in the long winter it is harsh, bleak, and cold.

There are many stereotypes that exist about the people that live in the Appalachian Mountains, and these stereotypes play into the impressions that the characters have of one another. Whether they are seen as kind, intelligent, ignorant, greedy, rude or proud, their personalities are associated with where they fit into the social structure of the region. The isolation of the Luther family, five miles from the store and even further from the town, show how far they are from mainstream society and how independent they must be, not only in practical ways but in spirit as well. When Mary Call visits the hospital in town, she notes how rich everything looks, and how different from her own situation. While both she and Romey want to move from the valley, Mary Call does not understand why the townspeople need so much. She and her family are able to get by on their own, with very little. That shows how strong they are.



The Luthers live in a run-down tenant's house on the land of Kiser Pease. While the Luthers take pride in their home, especially once they think they own it, its horrible condition shows their status in society, particularly in comparison with Kiser. While Kiser is ignorant and uneducated, he has a nice house with plenty of food and these things give him a higher status than the Luthers. The Luthers represent the strong, independent families of the Smoky Mountains. Their strength is connected to the land, and while the land may seem harsh at times and the people may seem hard, the land can also be beautiful and the people can be seen as strong and loyal. In this way, the land is a metaphor for the family itself, which may struggle through the harsh conditions of winter but always has the promise of spring to look forward to.

## Language and Meaning

The novel uses modern language to tell the story of the Luther family, but there are regional patterns of speech that reflect the way the people of the Smoky Mountains speak, and differences in speech patterns also reflect the different levels of education that the characters have. Since Mary Call is the narrator of the novel, the language of the story is her voice, and there is an effort to reflect her dignity in the way in which the story is told, while maintaining honesty. Mary Call never refers to her own fright, but she will tell the reader what others said to her, that her eyes were big or she is bawling.

There is a lot of natural imagery in the story, and the importance of the land and the mountains is reflected in the imagery used. Owning land is important to the Luthers, but they do not make much from farming. Instead, the wild, free land of the mountains is their path to freedom, but it is a hard path, just like the terrain of the land is hard. Through out the novel there are references to rocks, rough paths, crevices, and other images that point to the difficult path the Luthers have chosen for themselves. The images of winter and spring, with the mud, the cold, the wind, and snow, also reflect their harsh surrounding, which add to the hardships the family is enduring. The spring brings beauty to the valley and shows the contrast in the Luthers' lives. In the winter, they despair, but the spring brings them hope and opportunity. In the spring, the lilies bloom, and the valley and mountains are filled with flowers and herbs that give the children economic and educational opportunities.

Lilies are frequently a flower associated with God and Christianity, and the image of God appears often in the text as well. Mary Call prays when she is frightened and needs help, such as when she buries her father or fights the fox, and God is the only one who sees the weakness in her. God is the only one she asks for help. Mary Call's most important moments of despair or hope come when she thinks God has abandoned or forgotten her or when she realizes that God is taking care of her by giving her the strength to care for herself. When Mary Call remarks that the spring will come again, she means that hope will come again, and this reflects her confidence in God. These realizations are seen in the entwined images of spring and God.

## Structure

The novel is arranged in fifteen chapters and follows the events that effect the Luther family from the time their father is ill, in the summer, to the resolution of their problems through Kiser and Devola's marriage and the coming of spring. Some events move quickly, while others unfold over several chapters. As the story moves forward, and Mary Call becomes more desperate, the events unfold more quickly.

Since Mary Call tells the story, all the events are filtered through her perspective. More time is spent on events that effect the family more profoundly, such as Roy Luther's burial and death. Smaller details, such as the mention of a car with Georgia license plates, or the sight of a fox, usually foreshadow events that have a dramatic effect on the Luthers, such as the arrival of Goldie Pease, or the fox attack.



## Quotes

"I have never forgotten what he said - that this land was fair land, the fairest of them all. This is where the lilies bloom." Chapter One, p. 3.

"He's let things beat him, Roy Luther has. The land, Kiser Pease, the poverty. Now he's old and sick and ready to die and when he does, this is what we'll inherit - his defeat and all that goes with it." Chapter One, p. 11.

"You never did anything right to anybody, Kiser, and so you deserve to die, but I'm not going to let you." Chapter Two, p.27.

"You don't thank people who set you in bondage and hold you there year after wretched year. You hate them. And if it isn't in you to hate, as it had never been in Roy Luther, then you do second best; you pick up and get out. And if that isn't possible you start making plans to make it so. Do something. Do anything. But don't just stand there and let people beat on you and then thank them for doing it." Chapter Three, p. 45.

"Ah, I felt sorry for him then, this little brother, having to take half of this cold, terrible thing and do his mourning alone and in silence." Chapter Five, p.73.

"Lord, I've said it before and I'll say it again: You sure made some mistakes when You made me. Surely to my soul I must have moss growing on in my head where my brains should be. Nobody but a poor dement would do what I'm doing, hiding my old dead daddy over there on Old Joshua. Taking me on three snotnosed kids to raise. If I had the sense of a rabbit or even half that much I'd just take off across that bald over there and go down the other side of it and just keep right on walking and never look back. They'd make out all right without me. Probably even better." Chapter Seven, p. 109.

"The reputation we've got for being ignorant and crazy. That's what people who live outside of here say about us. That's what the flatlanders say about us; that we're ignorant and crazy and don't want to be any other way. You remember Roy Luther telling us that; it's one of the things he talked about the strongest. How people think we're crazy because we're always wanting to fight and blow people's heads off. A gun never settled anything, Romey. Brains are what solves things, the brains God gave us." Chapter Eight, p. 121.

"At that hour they hated me, and I hated myself, knowing how I appeared to them - a pinch-faced crone, straggle-haired, bony, ragged, too desperate for anyone with only fourteen years on them but still driven by a desperation that was unholy and ugly." Chapter Nine, p. 132.

"Being mean and ugly pleasures me more than anything I can think of. Opposite to what you think, I'm *glad* I'm not sweet and pretty like you. It takes time to be sweet and pretty and I haven't got any to spare. I'm too busy seeing to it that you and those other two up



there don't starve to death and don't freeze to death and that the county people don't come and haul you away." Chapter Ten, p. 149.

"The Lord has forgotten us. This land is forgotten. *We're* forgotten. We're forgotten people." Chapter 12, p.172.

"She stood, too, and I saw their faces wavering, hovering, kind anxiety in them, and love, too. That funny looks, I thought. How sickening, to let their feelings show like that." Chapter Thirteen, p. 197.

"It's all right. You did the best you could. You did real good. But now you've got to let us help you." Chapter Thirteen, p. 198.



## Adaptations

Where the Lilies Bloom is followed by *Trial Valley*, which takes place two years later, when Mary Call is sixteen. It tells of Mary Call's two boyfriends, one a local fellow, the other a social worker from Virginia. It is also the story of Jack Parsons, a little boy Devola finds abandoned in the woods, who becomes very attached to Mary Call. Because she has been raising her own younger siblings, Mary Call does not want the added responsibility Jack brings. *Trial Valley* seems overwritten when compared to *Where the Lilies Bloom*, and is disappointing as a result. Its plot is thin and its characters are not as well drawn as those in *Where the Lilies Bloom*. Even Mary Call herself seems less vibrant.

Still, *Trial Valley* is worth reading, if only to see the Cleavers' idea of how Mary Call, Devola, Romey, and Kiser change with age.

*Where the Lilies Bloom* was also made into a successful, full-length feature film in 1974. This MGM/United Artists production was directed by William A. Graham and starred Julie Gholson, Jan Smithers, and Matthew Burrill. The movie differs somewhat from the book; Mary Call is not such a compelling and strong figure, and the odds that she fights against are not as great. While many details are changed in the movie, changes in characters are even more surprising. For example, Devola is not shown as being mentally retarded, just impractical. The raw poverty and misery portrayed in the book are missing from the movie. Still, the film offers striking images of the North Carolina landscape and the wildflowers.



## Topics for Discussion

1. At the end of *Where the Lilies Bloom*, Mary Call has broken two of her promises to Roy Luther. She has taken charity (Kiser's gifts of ham, a cow, a pig, and a radio) and she has let Devola marry Riser. Furthermore, Riser is Mary Call's great enemy, symbolizing everything that is unjust. At the end of the book, Mary Call is, in a sense, Riser's child, because he has become her legal guardian. Does this mean that Mary Call has been beaten? Why do the authors give such a strong role to Riser in the story?
2. Is it right for Roy Luther to put such a heavy burden on his fourteen-year-old daughter?
3. If Mary Call did not have her family to think of, she probably would react differently to Roy Luther's death. How does her sense of responsibility affect the choices she makes?
4. Think about Mary Call's attitude about charity: that it demeans people and makes them smaller than they are. Do you agree with her? Why or why not? Is charity always demeaning? What is the difference, if any, between charity and kindness?
5. Have you ever tried to help someone, only to have that person snap at you? Have you ever done this to someone trying to help you? Mary Call's siblings get very angry at her, and at times she thinks of leaving them. What are the differences between Mary Call's fits of anger and those of her brother and sisters?



## Essay Topics

Discuss how Mary Call treats Kiser Pease over the course of the novel. Is she fair to him? How does Kiser's behavior change over the course of the novel?

Mary Call and Roy Luther do not think Devola is capable of making her own decisions. They think she is like a child. However, at the end of the novel, she has made the decision to marry Kiser. What do you think changed Devola?

When Mary Call shows Kiser Pease the paper that he signed, he warns her that there is a price for freedom. What price do the Luthers pay for their freedom?

Mr. and Mrs. Connell have very different attitudes toward the Luthers. Why do you think they are so different? What does this say about their view of the world?

When Mary Call kills the fox, she realizes that her toughness is what will help her survive. At what other points in the novel does Mary Call have to be tough or brave in the face of real danger and fear?

Education and ignorance are important themes in the novel. Discuss how Mary Call looks at education, and what she thinks it will do for her and her family.

Discuss the themes of winter and spring, and what they mean to the Luther family in terms of hope, despair, income, fear and protection.

At times, Mary Call says that she thinks God has made her wrong. At other times, she says that God gave her the guts to survive. Examine how Mary Call's views of God and prayers change throughout the novel.

Roy Luther was a proud man, but Mary Call felt that he had been defeated by life. He made Mary Call want to be strong and independent, stronger than he was. Do you feel Roy Luther was right to make her promise to keep the family together? Why or why not?



## Ideas for Reports and Papers

1. Retell a chapter of the novel from the point of view of another character, such as Riser Pease, Devola, Romey, Mrs. Connell, or Miss Breathitt.
2. Explore the developing characterization in *Where the Lilies Bloom*. For example, what does Mary Call mean when she says Devola is "cloudyheaded?" Does Devola seem cloudyheaded to you? Is she cloudy-headed at the end of the story? If not, what has caused her to change? Or you may want to focus on Riser, who changes dramatically during the course of the story. Is he a better person at the end? What has brought about his apparent reformation? Is it a lasting change?
3. Discuss the animals and birds used as symbols in the story. Do they mean the same thing to Romey as they do to Mary Call or Devola? What about the lilies of the title, or spring?
4. Research mountain life in North Carolina today. Is wildcrafting still practiced? Is poverty still a problem?
5. Think back on a time when you had a very hard decision to make, and reflect on the steps Mary Call took in making her decisions. How did your decisionmaking processes compare with hers?

How could reading about Mary Call have helped you in making your decision? Do you think she would have eventually made the same decision that you made? Why or why not?



## Further Study

Carpenter, Humphrey, and Mari Prichard. *The Oxford Companion to Children's Literature*. New York: Oxford University Press, 1984. Contains a brief overview of the Cleavers' major writings.

De Montreville, Doris, and Elizabeth D. Crawford, eds. *The Fourth Book of Junior Authors and Illustrators*. New York: H. W. Wilson, 1978. Contains a helpful autobiographical sketch and a biographical sketch with a short bibliography of articles about the Cleavers.

Estes, Glenn E., ed. *Dictionary of Literary Biography*. Vol. 52, *American Writers for Children Since 1960: Fiction*. Detroit: Gale Research, 1986. Includes a thorough critical analysis of the Cleavers' writings.

Kirkpatrick, D. L., ed. *Twentieth-Century Children's Writers*. New York: St.

Martin's, 1978. Includes a short discussion of the Cleavers' fiction and the prevailing themes, character types, settings, and tone of their works through 1977.

Senick, Gerald J., ed. *Children's Literature Review*. Vol. 6. Detroit: Gale Research, 1984. A thorough compilation of biographical facts on both Cleavers.



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