

Wolf by the Ears Study Guide

Wolf by the Ears by Ann Rinaldi

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Overview

The moral and ethical problems created by the enslaving of fellow human beings form the underlying theme of *Wolf by the Ears*. Many readers will associate slavery only with the South of the United States, but Colonial New England was also heavily involved with the slave trade, and the keeping of African slaves and their descendants as farm and domestic workers was common practice. Many famous Americans, among them George Washington and Thomas Jefferson, kept slaves on their estates, and although Jefferson promoted human rights, and freed many of his own slaves, he was curiously reluctant to speak out forcefully against the institution of slavery.

The story of the novel is told by one of Jefferson's slaves, a girl named Harriet Hemings, whose mother Sally is the housekeeper at Monticello, Jefferson's home. Rumors among the household link Sally romantically with Jefferson, and Harriet suspects that she, herself, may actually be his daughter as well as his servant. Torn by her love for her home and a desire for freedom, Harriet becomes a symbol of a struggle which, years later, will tear apart the nation and engulf it in one of the bloodiest wars of history, the Civil War between North and South. In spite of being favored and well treated by the master of the house, Harriet longs to be acknowledged as his daughter. The social and political circumstances which keep her from taking her rightful place are the same that eventually precipitate a major national conflict.

Rinaldi brings the problem of slavery close to the modern reader by showing it through the eyes of an intelligent teen-ager.

About the Author

Ann Rinaldi was born on August 27, 1934, to Michael and Marcella Feis.

She attended high school in New Brunswick, New Jersey, and in 1960, married Ronald P. Rinaldi. Although her father, who was a newspaperman, had always discouraged her writing, she wanted to be a novelist, and started out by writing four novels, which according to her own statement, were terrible. Still determined to become a writer, in 1969 she was assigned a weekly column in the local newspaper, the Somerset Gazette. Encouraged, she syndicated her column in various New Jersey papers, but her final breakthrough came when the Trentonian hired her to write two columns a week. Soon she was writing feature stories. In 1978, she won the New Jersey Press Award and returned to her earlier love of fiction, selling her first short story.

Drawing on her experiences as a parent of two teen-age children, she wrote the novel *Term Paper* and its sequel, *Promises Are for Keeping*. Because of her son's interest in American history and bi-centennial re-enactments, Rinaldi began to write historical fiction. *Time Enough for Drums*, a story dealing with the American Revolution, and *The Last Silk Dress*, a novel about the Civil War, were both awarded Best Book for Young Adults by the American Library Association, as was her later novel *Wolf by the Ears*. In addition, Rinaldi received a Daughters of the American Revolution Award for her historical fiction.



Plot Summary

Wolf by the Ears is a fictionalized account of Harriet Hemings, the possible illegitimate daughter of Thomas Jefferson. While this novel embraces a controversial subject, it is a beautiful story of a young woman's struggle to understand the world she lives in and her place in that world. Ann Rinaldi is an award-winning writer who once again brings to life a small piece of history for young adults to explore and enjoy.

Harriet Hemings is a slave who lives at Monticello, Thomas Jefferson's home. Rumors abound that Jefferson is her father, but Harriet does not know what to think of those rumors. Harriet's mother will not discuss it with her, and there is no one else for her to ask except her brother, Beverly, an angry young man who believes not only that Jefferson is his father but that the man should publicly announce his connection to the Hemings family.

Harriet has been assured her freedom when she reaches the age of twenty-one. She does not want her freedom, though, because this means she will have to leave Virginia within a year and possibly never see her family ever again. However, Sally Hemings, Harriet's mother, will not allow her daughter to dismiss the idea of freedom. Sally convinces Thomas Mann Randolph, Jefferson's son-in-law and Virginia's governor, to talk to Harriet. Randolph makes a good case for freedom, but Harriet is still unsure.

One night, Harriet is in the tearoom. She thinks she is alone, but Charles Bankhead, Randolph's son-in-law, is in the room searching for the brandy he has not been allowed to indulge in. Bankhead sees Harriet and attempts to steal her favors for himself. Harriet's childhood friend and Jefferson's trusted butler, Thruston, thwarts the attack, but the damage is already done.

A few days later, Randolph suggests to Harriet that she become betrothed so that the overseer does not arrange a marriage for her and obstruct her chance to take her freedom. However, the man Randolph has in mind is not another slave. He is a white architect who has taken a special interest in Harriet. Randolph then goes on to explain that he believes that Harriet should pass into the white world when her time to leave comes.

Harriet is not happy with this idea, mostly because she is not sure she can turn her back on her race and the people at Monticello whom she loves. Harriet struggles with the idea until she meets her perspective husband, young architect Thad Sandridge. Harriet falls in love the moment they meet. Suddenly, her future seems very clear.

Over the next year, Harriet studies with Martha Randolph, Jefferson's daughter, learning all the things a proper white lady should know. Martha is not happy with Harriet's plan, though she goes along with it because her father has insisted. This does not stop Martha from revealing some family rumors of her own, however, by telling Harriet that her father is not Jefferson but a relative of his.



Harriet goes to Beverly with this new information. He is already aware of this rumor and investigated it. Despite his own mixed feelings regarding Harriet's decision to pass as white, Beverly promises to show Harriet proof contradicting Martha's accusations before leaving to take his own freedom. Harriet is upset to lose her brother, but she is proud of Beverly for going into the world as a free black man rather than lying and passing into the white world.

Finally, Harriet's time to leave arrives. Her mother's open grief and her younger brothers' sadness upset her. However, Harriet is excited about her future. When her mother gives her fifty dollars that Jefferson himself provided, Harriet takes this gift with a cynical eye to its true meaning. It is not until the next morning when Jefferson first asks her not to go if she is not prepared and then cries as she climbs into the carriage that Harriet realizes his true feelings for her. These feelings answer her questions regarding her paternity well enough that she is able to go into the future with an optimistic outlook.



December 1819

December 1819 Summary

Wolf by the Ears is a fictionalized account of Harriet Hemings, the possible illegitimate daughter of Thomas Jefferson. While this novel embraces a controversial subject, it is a beautiful story of a young woman's struggle to understand the world she lives in and her place in that world. Ann Rinaldi is an award-winning writer who once again brings to life a small piece of history for young adults to explore and enjoy.

Harriet Hemings has only been allowed inside the master's bedrooms twice, and today is one of those moments. Harriet's mother, Sally Hemings, who is the master's wardrobe mistress, asks Harriet to help her carry a tray of tea to the master. This day, the first snowfall of the season has arrived, and Harriet's brothers are outside sweeping the snow from the east portico. They are therefore unable to help Sally, as they might have otherwise. Harriet is excited by the prospect of going into the master's sanctum sanctorum for the first time and is determined to see all there is to see in the short time she will be there.

Thomas Jefferson is in his rooms working on his autobiography, a task that Sally sees as pointless. Sally and Harriet run into Burwell, Jefferson's body servant, on their way in. Burwell offers to take the tray, but Sally refuses. Burwell instead goes off to collect Sally's boys, who are doing more playing than sweeping on the portico.

Harriet is overwhelmed by the sight of the master's rooms when she enters. She sees his telescope, his skylight, the bed and the portholes that look into her mother's secret room, which is not spoken of in the household. Thomas Jefferson is there, writing at his desk. Harriet's mother lays a shawl across his shoulders, and they discuss the snow. Harriet is forgotten for the moment. She continues to look around until Sally tells her she can go.

Thomas Jefferson asks how Harriet has been. Harriet curtseys and answers politely. Jefferson asks about her studies and whether she has been using his library to further her education. Harriet then asks about his autobiography and whether he will put her mother into it. Jefferson smiles sadly and talks about writing as a wonderful pastime. Then, Harriet informs him of the snow on Blue Ridge, and he says he will put that in his Farm Book.

Harriet and Jefferson often share tidbits about the things Jefferson writes in his Farm Book. They discuss it so often that Harriet makes a point of telling him something for the book every time she sees him. Today, Jefferson hands Harriet an empty journal and suggests that she better her writing by using it to record her thoughts.



December 1819 Analysis

Jefferson is painted as a private man here, as suggested by the fact that Harriet is nineteen, has lived in this house all her life and only now is allowed to enter his rooms. This fierce protection of his privacy foreshadows the struggle Harriet will have throughout the novel attempting not only to understand Jefferson but also to discover his true role in her life. Sally's protection of Jefferson, shown when she brings him medicine to protect him from the cold and wraps a shawl around his shoulders, adds to the foreshadowing by closing Sally off as a source of information for her child. The mother is clearly more concerned with Jefferson's needs and wants than the truth her child will eventually seek.

Sally's protection of Jefferson also foreshadows another aspect of the story. While standing in the bedroom, Harriet notices the portholes to a hidden room, which she knows from rumors belongs to her mother. The intimacy displayed by Sally wrapping the shawl around Jefferson also suggests that their relationship is much deeper than simply servant and master. Not only this, but Burwell's acceptance of Sally's orders when he is most likely the more senior servant also paints a picture of Sally's role in Jefferson's life. Finally, the journal itself symbolizes a deeper relationship between Harriet and Jefferson. Most slave owners of this time not only would not educate their slaves, but they would not encourage them to educate themselves. However, it is clear that Jefferson has done both for Harriet.



April 1820

April 1820 Summary

Harriet does not have a chance to write in the journal until four months later. The first thing Harriet writes down is a quick snapshot of her family history. Harriet is the third living child of Sally Hemings, the third daughter after two who died in infancy. Harriet is nineteen, and in two years the master will offer her freedom, something she does not want but that her mother does. Harriet is afraid that after she leaves, everyone will say there never was a Harriet like they say of her older brother Tom. Tom ran away several years ago, and no one except the people on Mulberry Row speaks of him anymore.

This morning, Harriet's mother catches her attempting to escape the house and turns her back. Sally wants Harriet to serve breakfast to Thomas Mann Randolph, who has been visiting Monticello. Today is the Sabbath, and Harriet does not have to work in the weaver's cottage as she does during the week. Harriet agrees because her mother is a good woman, and Harriet is always willing to help although she does have something else she needs to do.

Everyone says Thomas Mann Randolph is crazy, partly because of his long-standing separation from his wife but mostly because of his politics. Thomas Mann Randolph is governor of Virginia, and he believes the slaves should be freed. When Sally tells Harriet this, Harriet is annoyed that her mother is harping on freedom again. Why is Sally always talking about freedom when she had a chance to take it for herself and did not? Sally hands Harriet the food tray and sends her on her way, reminding her to mind her manners around Mr. Randolph.

On the way to the dining room, Harriet runs into Thruston. Thruston is the gardener, a young slave boy that Harriet grew up with. Thruston annoys Harriet because he insists on talking like a field slave when he can speak clear English as good as she does. Thruston asks Harriet to go walking later in the day. Harriet turns him down and tells him she has something important to do. She is not walking with anyone else, like he assumes.

In the tearoom, Harriet serves breakfast to the waiting Mr. Randolph. Randolph has always been polite and kind to Harriet, and today is no different. Harriet watches him eat and thinks of the rumors about him. Harriet does not think he is crazy, though she knows you can never tell. Charles Bankhead, Mr. Randolph's son-in-law, seems like an okay guy, but it turns out he beats his wife. Not only that, but he stabbed Thomas Jefferson Randolph, Jefferson's grandson, when he confronted Bankhead about his sister. Bankhead fled the country after that, rather than stand trial. The charges were eventually dropped, though.

Randolph asks Harriet to sit and talk with him. Harriet does not want to refuse, but she does not know what to say. However, when Randolph begins to speak, it is clear that



Sally sent Harriet in here on purpose so that Randolph could convince her how important it is for her to take her freedom when the time comes. Randolph comments on how his father-in-law has set a trap for himself and how Harriet is just as white and educated as anyone else on the plantation. Randolph then asks her what she considers herself if she does not consider herself a slave. Harriet says that she is just that, Harriet Hemings. Randolph tells her she would be a fool to refuse her freedom.

Randolph goes on to tell Harriet that slavery is wrong, but he does not expect that he will be able to pass his legislation. Randolph expects slavery will be around for a very long time and that Harriet will be better off taking her freedom when it is offered rather than remaining a slave and facing a difficult future when Jefferson dies. Randolph then leaves, and Harriet sits in the dining room remembering a story her mother once told her. Sally said that when the British rode up the mountain, Jefferson was forewarned but chose to stay. He did not only stay, but he simply sat and ate his breakfast as if it were any other morning. Harriet wonders if she would be standing there had Jefferson died that morning. Harriet wants to know if he is her father, and she wants to stay with him, in his home. However, Harriet also knows that Randolph made many good points.

April 1820 Analysis

Harriet is still a child, as indicated by her attempt to escape the house on a nice, spring day. Harriet also sees the world through a child's eyes, and this is a problem for her mother. Sally knows Harriet will be offered her freedom at age twenty-one and is concerned that she will not take it, much as Sally herself did not. Sally does not want this. Sally's attempt to change Harriet's mind by enlisting the help of Thomas Mann Randolph foreshadows a struggle that will continue between mother and child until Harriet makes her final decision.

The mention of Charles Bankhead and his illegal acts also foreshadows several things. First, Bankhead's actions prove that not all is well within the Jefferson family and that even the legitimate child of Jefferson has suffered hardships, as contrasted with the security Harriet and her siblings have enjoyed under Jefferson's roof. Second, the mention of Bankhead now suggests that he may return later in the novel and create a problem for Harriet or someone she cares for. Finally, Bankhead's behavior, contrasted against Randolph's, proves to the reader that despite the rumors of his insanity, Randolph is a man to be trusted.

Randolph's attempt to talk Harriet into taking her freedom foreshadows future events as well. Randolph introduces the notion that Harriet looks just like any white child who has lived at Monticello and that she is also well educated. This foreshadows Randolph's later suggestion to Harriet in regards to her taking her freedom. Randolph also brings up several points that Harriet has not considered before, most importantly what will happen to her when Jefferson dies. This point will be touched on again later in the novel.



April 1820

April 1820 Summary

Harriet records more family history, writing about her grandmother, Elizabeth, who was John Wayles's mistress when she belonged to him. After John Wayles's death, Thomas Jefferson inherited more than a hundred of his slaves, since his wife was John Wayles's daughter. Since John Wayles was both Jefferson's wife's father and Sally Hemings's father, Sally Hemings is Martha Jefferson's half-sister. One of five brothers and sisters, Sally came to Monticello as a toddler with a brother and a sister. Two of her older brothers, Robert and James, were granted freedom by Jefferson, although James later killed himself. Sally's older sister, Thenia, went to James Monroe, a neighbor. Harriet writes all this down so that she can keep track of it for herself.

Beverly, Harriet's older brother who has already passed the age of twenty-one, has refused to take his freedom because he wants Jefferson to send him to the new university he is building. Beverly wants to prove how smart he is by building a hot air balloon and launching it during Jefferson's morning ride. Harriet is supposed to help Beverly get the balloon in the air, but serving Mr. Randolph interrupts her. By the time Harriet gets outside, Jefferson has caught Beverly in the act.

Harriet hears voices as she makes her way to help Beverly. Jefferson and Beverly are talking while Beverly holds the patchwork quilt of silk that is his balloon. Harriet stops beside the washhouse to listen to their conversation. Beverly is asking the master why he cannot go to the university. The master responds by asking if he has not given Beverly everything he could possibly want on his plantation, including a good tutor and access to all his books. Beverly says that he has, but it is no longer enough. Beverly wants a real education.

To change the subject, Jefferson asks Beverly how he intends to fuel his balloon. Beverly surprises him by saying that he is using wine. Beverly has taken a bottle of French claret from Jefferson's wine cellar and is planning to soak a sponge with it and light it to fuel his balloon. Jefferson is impressed, just as Beverly had wanted. However, Jefferson is still steadfast in his denial of Beverly's request.

Beverly again demands to know why the master will not send him to the university. Jefferson tells Beverly a story about his college professor and mentor, George Wythe. Wythe had a son with his mulatto housekeeper and intended to leave the bulk of his estate to the child and the child's mother. A grandnephew that Wythe had taken in did not like this and poisoned Wythe, the child and the mother. At the trial afterward, the grandnephew went free since the only witness, the housekeeper who survived the poisoning, could not testify against him because she was black.

Jefferson goes on to explain to Beverly that this is the way of the world, and you cannot fight everyone. Then, Jefferson urges Beverly to go ahead and launch his balloon while



Jefferson goes on his morning ride. Beverly is angry and does not want to launch the balloon. Harriet goes to him after Jefferson leaves and pretends she knows nothing of what just happened. Beverly tells her that Jefferson has agreed to send him to the university and chastises her for calling Jefferson master rather than father. Then, they launch the balloon together. Beverly is thrilled with the success of his balloon, calling out to everyone how smart he is and how impressed Jefferson will be. Beverly is also happy that Jefferson was surprised by his use of the wine.

April 1820 Analysis

The analysis of the Hemings family as it relates to the Jeffersons underscores the theme of alienation for Harriet. Harriet is very close to the Jefferson family, since her mother is Thomas Jefferson's half-sister-in-law, and yet they are not treated like family. The Hemings are nothing but slaves on Monticello despite the special treatment Sally's children receive. However, despite the irony of their relationships and the discrimination Harriet must suffer, Harriet herself does not seem to be touched by any of it.

Beverly's attempt to impress Jefferson so that he can go to the university seems to fail miserably. The balloon, a symbol of Beverly's dreams, takes off and proves exactly what he wanted it to prove. He already knows, though, that it will not achieve the desired end. However, Beverly leads Harriet and everyone else on the plantation to believe that Jefferson will send him to school. Beverly is a young man full of pride, and although he thinks he knows the truth about his relationship with Jefferson, he still has a lot of growing up to do.

Jefferson's story about his old college professor is a sad illustration that perfectly demonstrates Jefferson's position in regards to Sally Hemings and his children. Jefferson must think about his own family, namely his daughter with his wife, and of his legacy. Jefferson wants to acknowledge Sally's children, but he cannot because of the way society looks on men who have had children with slaves. Jefferson is stuck in a contradiction. He wants to be a good father to Beverly and his siblings, as demonstrated by his providing them a tutor and allowing them their freedom at twenty-one. However, Jefferson does not want anyone to know the truth about the same children, as demonstrated by his refusal to free Sally or to send Beverly to his new university.



April 1820, That Same Day

April 1820, That Same Day Summary

Harriet is very upset about Beverly. She decides to go visit Mammy Ursula, an elderly slave woman who always has a story for anyone who is willing to listen. Mammy is too old to work in the fields, so she spends her days weaving baskets and watching the small children. When Harriet arrives at her cabin, Mammy Ursula is telling a group of children a story about B'rer Rabbit.

Harriet waits until the story is finished, and then she enters the cabin. Harriet tells Mammy Ursula that she is worried about Beverly. She is afraid he will never leave the plantation and take his freedom. Mammy assures Harriet that Beverly will go someday and asks Harriet to have Beverly come see her. Then, Mammy asks about Harriet's own plans to leave. Harriet says that she does not want to go. Mammy tells Harriet that her mother has been working on some clothes for her and that Harriet should go up into Sally's secret room to see them. Harriet is upset at this idea, that her mother is so all-fire ready for her to leave.

Harriet asks Mammy Ursula why, if freedom is so important to Sally, she did not take it when she was in France. Mammy Ursula says that freedom is so important to Sally because she was not smart enough to take it when it was offered. Then, Harriet asks if Jefferson is her father. Mammy says the evidence points that way but that Harriet should ask her mother. Mammy also says that Harriet should take her freedom, if not for herself, then for all the slaves on the plantation who will not get the chance.

April 1820, That Same Day Analysis

Harriet goes to Mammy Ursula because she is upset about Beverly. Mammy is symbolic as a character because she represents the image of slavery as people today understand it, and she represents the black part of Harriet. Mammy is also the storyteller, the one person on the plantation who passes on the African heritage to most of the slaves on Monticello. Mammy is also a very wise person who understands the importance of the future that both Harriet and Beverly have been offered. To Mammy and all the other slaves on Monticello, Harriet and Beverly have been handed the keys to heaven with the symbolic freedom they stand to gain.

Harriet finds it very ironic that her mother once turned down freedom and yet wants it so desperately for her own children. Harriet does not understand why Sally would do that if freedom is so important. Freedom symbolizes alienation for Harriet, one of the themes of the novel. However, Harriet does not realize that the real alienation in her life is her mother's refusal to tell her who her father is and the fact that Harriet is as white as Jefferson's own grandchildren and yet she is still a slave.



April 1820

April 1820 Summary

Harriet has to wait a week before she has the opportunity to go into the master's rooms and search her mother's secret room. In the afternoon while Harriet's mother is on Mulberry Row and when the master has taken Martha and her children calling, Harriet slips into the master's rooms. There is a door at the foot of the master's bed, and Harriet opens it, revealing a staircase. The room above is small and octagonal in shape, with windows that look out on the mountains. Harriet thinks it is like being in a bird's nest.

The room contains a bed, a clothespress, a washbasin and pitcher and a copper bathtub. However, the clothes are what grab Harriet's attention. They are beautiful, the kind of clothes that Martha Randolph and her daughters might wear, finely stitched and made out of the finest fabrics. There are even shoes. Harriet imagines her mother in this room, carefully stitching these clothes for Harriet's departure, and she begins to sob so hard that she quickly falls asleep on the edge of the bed.

When Harriet wakes, Jefferson is standing over her, demanding to know what she is doing in there. Harriet swears that she did not look at any of his things. Jefferson finds this amusing and asks again what she is doing in the room. Harriet says she only came to look at the clothes. Jefferson then wants to know whom she thinks the clothes are for. Harriet mentions one of Jefferson's granddaughters, who is twenty-four and still not engaged.

Jefferson leads Harriet downstairs and asks her to promise that she will not let anyone know that he did not punish her for trespassing in exchange for him not telling her mother what she has done. Harriet readily agrees. Jefferson asks if anyone has been cruel to Harriet and then promises to show Harriet his seed closet someday. This leads them to discuss Thruston. Jefferson wants to know if there is a romance between them. Harriet is repelled by the idea and assures Jefferson, much to his distress, that there is not.

Jefferson reminisces about Harriet's childhood for a moment as well, telling her of a time when she was a small child that she asked her mother to ask God to wait, should he come calling while she was out, so that she could ask him a question. Jefferson wants to know what that question was. Harriet hesitates before she tells him that she wanted to know why God made so many strange shapes, sizes and colors when he made the animals. Jefferson responds by telling her that he often wonders the same thing himself regarding humans and that there are many things he would like to ask God. Then, Jefferson sends Harriet off, telling her to be very careful not to be caught leaving his rooms.

Harriet walks away with Jefferson's final words playing over in her mind. Jefferson asked Harriet to give careful consideration to her future. Harriet believes he meant that



he does not want her to leave Monticello. Harriet is elated by this because Jefferson seemed to speak to her as though she really were his child.

April 1820 Analysis

The clothing Harriet finds is symbolic of her mother pushing her out of the house, as though Sally has made the decision for Harriet already and there will be no discussion. Harriet is not happy with this, still reluctant to leave the only home she has ever known. This not only touches on the theme of freedom, but it also underscores the theme of alienation. Harriet is being pushed out and is facing a life alone without the people she loves, and she is not happy about this. A child wants to know that his or her parents will always be there, no matter what. However, Harriet must choose between leaving her family forever or staying with them forever and giving up the opportunity to be a free woman.

Harriet's discussion with Jefferson is exciting to her because it feels as though Jefferson is finally treating her as one of his children. However, he never says anything that might be taken as an admission of paternity. Jefferson does express concern about her, something he might have done for all his slaves.



The Middle of May 1820

The Middle of May 1820 Summary

Two weeks later, Harriet finally finds a chance to write again. Harriet says that things have been chaotic around Monticello. First, Mr. Bankhead has come back. Mr. Bankhead came to dinner with his wife, his father-in-law, Thomas Mann Randolph, William Thornton and Benjamin Latrobe. When Sally learns that Bankhead will be there, she gives orders to Burwell to keep the brandy from Bankhead.

Harriet is not feeling well, so Sally gives her a homemade concoction to cure her ills and has her sit quietly in the kitchen. Harriet falls asleep. When she wakes, Thruston comes into the kitchen. He sits to eat while Harriet watches and begins to nag her about her decision to take her freedom. Thruston says she should think about what will happen to her when Jefferson dies. When he dies, she will most likely be sold, Thruston says, because Jefferson is in debt. Harriet tells him she cannot be sold because she is free. Thruston finds that amusing.

Thruston then tells Harriet that she is not a child anymore and that if she stays on Monticello the overseer will have her married off. He says that bad things can happen to a single slave who looks like she does. Thruston then tells Harriet about another boy on the plantation, Davie, who has told everyone he is going to marry her. Thruston is jealous because Harriet will not go walking with him, and therefore he assumes Harriet has been walking with Davie. Harriet is appalled at the idea.

Thruston then tells Harriet that he wants to marry her, but he would rather see her take her freedom. He is very concerned about what will happen to Harriet if they are all sold. Harriet is very beautiful, and he believes a white man might have impure intentions toward her. Thruston asks if she understands why her mother wants her to take her freedom so much. Why does Harriet not understand the dangers out there for her? Harriet says that Thruston is a liar and that she will have her freedom no matter what. Thruston says that Harriet is naive and leaves, at her request.

The Middle of May 1820 Analysis

Thruston's discussion with Harriet is foreshadowing of later events. It also brings up a good point that Harriet herself never thought of. Harriet is only a slave, despite the exceptional treatment she has enjoyed at Monticello. What will happen if Jefferson dies? This again underscores the theme of alienation, showing the reader how Harriet has finally realized that she will be alone someday whether she stays on Monticello or whether she leaves.

The suggestion of a marriage for Harriet again is foreshadowing. Harriet is nineteen. Most girls her age in this time period are already engaged, if not married. It will mean trouble on the plantation for the overseer if Harriet does not get married soon. She is



beautiful, and it might cause some of the male slaves to act improperly. The biggest danger, however, are the white men who come to the plantation, something that Thruston is clearly concerned with. Harriet, who has been under the protection of Jefferson all her life, has never had to consider these dangers before. This is ironic. Jefferson has tried to protect Sally Hemings's children. However, real life will be a shock to these children should Jefferson die and leave them to be sold to another plantation where they will not be so protected.



Mid-May 1820, That Same Night

Mid-May 1820, That Same Night Summary

After Thruston leaves, Harriet is upset, so she begins to walk through the house. In the dining room, where the candle has burned low and left it in darkness, Harriet stands looking into the tearoom and thinking of everything Thruston said. While standing there, Harriet realizes that Charles Bankhead is in the parlor doorway.

Bankhead is drunk and angry that Burwell will not let him have brandy. Bankhead walks toward Harriet and asks if she knows where the brandy is. Harriet politely tells him that Burwell has the only key. Bankhead takes a good look at Harriet and decides he does not need brandy. Bankhead comments on how grown up Harriet has become. Before Harriet realizes what is happening, Bankhead pulls Harriet into his arms and begins forcing his kisses on her.

Harriet has never been kissed before, but she knows this is not right. Harriet fights Bankhead, attempting to scream and beat at his shoulders with her fists. Bankhead pulls back and asks what the matter is. Harriet tries to hit him. Bankhead becomes angry and tells her she needs to be put in her place. Bankhead begins to kiss her again, forcing his hands under her clothing and attempting to force her to the floor. Thruston suddenly appears and orders Bankhead off of Harriet.

Bankhead is not going to listen to a slave. He continues until Thruston pulls him off of Harriet. Bankhead goes to the fireplace to get a poker while Thruston checks on Harriet. Before he can use it, however, Burwell comes into the room. Burwell tells Bankhead to put down the poker, but Bankhead promises to kill Thruston with it. Then, Thomas Mann Randolph comes into the room.

Randolph tells Bankhead to drop the poker, and Bankhead becomes angry that Randolph would choose the side of the slaves rather than his. Then, Burwell tells Randolph what has happened. Randolph grabs the poker and knocks Bankhead to the floor with it. He sends Burwell to fetch Sally. Randolph sends Thruston away and apologizes to Harriet, saying he should have killed Bankhead a long time ago for the way he treats his daughter. Randolph reassures Harriet and sends her off to bed.

Sally finds Harriet in bed and tries to console her. Harriet is ashamed and makes her mother promise that she will not tell Jefferson. Harriet is worried now, and Thruston's words come back to her. Harriet is afraid the overseer will marry her off to Davie now that she is damaged. Sally assures her that she will not allow this to happen. Sally then gives Harriet a potion to help her sleep.



Mid-May 1820, That Same Night Analysis

The foreshadowing in the previous chapter has come back to haunt Harriet in the most horrible of ways. Harriet is alone in the dining room with Mr. Bankhead, the man who she describes in previous chapters as a wife beater and attempted murderer, and this foreshadowing is terrifyingly satisfied. Bankhead's reaction to Harriet fulfills Thruston's warnings as well as the hints as to his character. Bankhead is the type of person who would see Harriet as property rather than a person. This episode is a turning point in the theme of freedom. Now Harriet knows how important it is that she be protected somehow, and freedom is the best protection she could achieve for herself. Harriet has led a privileged life compared to other slaves, but now she begins to see what slavery truly means. However, this episode also hints at the dangers of freedom, because a free black woman would be in just as much danger out alone in the world as a slave girl.



May 1820, Two Days Later

May 1820, Two Days Later Summary

Harriet sleeps for a long two days before her mother finally manages to wake her. Sally tells Harriet that she must get up because Randolph has been asking about her. Harriet should dress and thank Mr. Randolph for helping her. Harriet dresses, a changed girl now. Everything seems different to her. Harriet asks Sally if everyone is talking about her. Sally assures her that everyone has better things to discuss.

Sally informs Harriet that she told Jefferson what happened and that Jefferson banished Bankhead from Monticello for the summer. Sally says that Jefferson would have made it forever if not for his granddaughter. Sally also tells Harriet that Jefferson has allowed her the week off and that he wants to see her. However, he does not want to see her today. Today, Harriet is to meet with Mr. Randolph, a meeting Sally has had nothing to do with.

Harriet wants to know if Jefferson is really in debt. Sally tells her it is none of her concern but that the master has been having money troubles. Harriet wants to know if she will be sold should Jefferson die, Sally tells her that she will not. The master has promised her freedom, and she will receive it even if it is through Jefferson's will.

Harriet goes downstairs and finds Randolph on the east portico. Randolph asks after Harriet's health and assures her that Bankhead will not be allowed to hurt her again. Randolph asks Harriet when she will be twenty-one, and she tells him that her birthday will be in May of 1822. Randolph then asks if she knows that she will have to leave the state of Virginia within a year of being granted her freedom, and Harriet says that she did not know that.

Randolph has a plan for Harriet's freedom. He lays it out for Harriet, telling her that the first thing she must do is accept her freedom and tell Jefferson she will take it. Randolph says he will speak to Jefferson himself and suggest that his wife teach Harriet the domestic and gentle arts. Randolph also suggests that Harriet speak to Sally about her brother Tom, who ran away several years ago.

Then, Randolph says that Harriet must become engaged so that the overseer will not make her become engaged to one of the men on the plantation. Randolph tells Harriet that he knows of a man who is interested in her and who would most likely agree to become engaged to her for the sole purpose of protecting her while she remains on Monticello. Randolph will arrange a meeting between Harriet and this man. Harriet watches him speak of these private matters and finds herself filled with a rush of affection for him. Harriet cannot understand why everyone believes him to be crazy.

Randolph then hesitates before dropping a bombshell on Harriet. The man he wishes her to become engaged to is white. Harriet is shocked, and she is not sure how he



could even consider such a match. At this moment, Randolph tells her the biggest part of his plan. He wants Harriet to pass into the white world when she leaves Monticello.

Randolph explains to Harriet that because her great-grandfather and her grandfather were both white and because her father is white, she is whiter than she is black. She will blend well into the white world. Harriet points out that her great-grandmother was full-blooded African. Harriet does not want to turn her back on who she is despite the fact that she is less African than other slaves might be. However, Randolph tells her how dangerous it will be for her out in the world as a free black woman. What happened with Bankhead could happen again, he says, and there might not be anyone to protect her. If she passes into the white world, however, Harriet will have the protection of her prospective husband and the law.

May 1820, Two Days Later Analysis

Sally's promise to her daughter that she will get her freedom should Jefferson die would be empty if one did not know Sally's relationship to Jefferson. The promise she makes alludes to a deeper relationship than slave to master, foreshadowing events later in the novel. This promise also serves to fill Harriet with hope.

Randolph's concern for Harriet is almost father-like, which is ironic since her own father is supposed to be one of the most respected and powerful men of the time. The decision to have Harriet pass into the white world is a turning point in the novel, foreshadowing once again later events. At this juncture, the reader must wonder who this man is who is willing to be engaged to and help a slave who wants to pass into the white world, a very dangerous prospect at the time. The reader is also curious as to how Jefferson and Harriet's brothers will react to the idea. Randolph's mention of Sally having information on Tom that might encourage Harriet in her decision is also foreshadowing.



The Third Week of May 1820

The Third Week of May 1820 Summary

Harriet takes it easy over the next couple of days, staying close to her mother rather than wandering the grounds as she might have done before. Sally tells Harriet one morning while they are overseeing the bleaching of sheets that Jefferson wants to see her. Harriet does not want to go to him, afraid he will look at her differently after what Bankhead did. However, Sally insists.

When Sally sees her daughter crying, she asks if Harriet dislikes Mr. Randolph's suggestion. Harriet is surprised that her mother knows and asks about Tom, remembering what Mr. Randolph said about him. Sally reveals that Tom is passing as white, too. Harriet wants to know if that is why no one ever speaks of Tom, and Sally tells Harriet that there is no news, which is why she does not speak of Tom. Sally got a letter from Tom a few years before saying that he is married and doing well.

Harriet does not want to pass because she feels as though she would be turning her back on everyone she loves. Sally disagrees. She says that as long as Harriet knows who she is on the inside, that is enough. Besides, by passing into the white world, Harriet can use her connections to make things better for the black people. Harriet insists that her mother does not care about her children since she finds it so easy to watch them turn their backs on her and walk away. Sally says it is because she cares so much that she allows her children to take every opportunity they can.

Jefferson is waiting for Harriet in the entrance hall under the seven-day clock. Harriet observes him unaware for a moment, thinking how much she will miss this home and this man. Jefferson turns and asks about her health. Harriet is surprised and grateful that he does not allude to what Bankhead did to her. Jefferson is polite and concerned. Then, he changes the subject to Harriet's leaving. Jefferson tells her how stubborn her mother is and how much Sally wants Harriet to take her freedom. He also tells Harriet that Randolph has come to speak to him about it as well.

Jefferson assures Harriet that her choice to pass into the white world is a good one and that it eases his and her mother's concerns for her. Jefferson outlines the studies she will have to undertake with his daughter's help over the next two years. Jefferson wants her to feel free to use his library, just as Beverly has always done. Then, Jefferson makes her promise that she will not run away like Tom did. Harriet is touched by this request.

Harriet lingers after the conversation is complete. Jefferson asks if she has always felt her life was pleasant here at Monticello, and he tells her that Sally informed him of her concern for her own life should Jefferson die. Jefferson wants to know why this concerns her. Harriet mentions the fact that Jefferson is in debt, and he promises that he will allow her freedom through his will should he pass within the next two years.



Jefferson talks of the injustice of the world and how he does not have the strength to fight another war, although he would like to free all of his slaves. Harriet asks about Tom and wonders aloud if she will disappear from everyone's tongues and memories after she leaves. Jefferson assures her that this will not happen.

The Third Week of May 1820 Analysis

Alienation, as a theme to this novel, is clear in this chapter. Harriet is terribly afraid to leave the plantation because she does not want to leave her mother. Yet Harriet is feeling pushed out by her mother, not only because of the clothing she discovers her mother has made for her, but also because of the fact that Sally has already pushed away one child and does not feel the need to explain her actions. However, Sally finally does explain to her daughter a little of why she has done what she has done and why it is so important to Sally that Harriet go, too.

Jefferson's attitude is different. Jefferson approaches the subject by suggesting that Sally's desires drive him to allow Harriet to leave. Again alienation is a theme here because Harriet wants only that Jefferson acknowledge that he is her father. He fails to do so, despite expressing his reluctance to let her go. Harriet is stuck between a parent who loves her so much that she wants her to leave forever, and another parent who loves her too much to acknowledge, even in private, that he is her father.

There is also foreshadowing in this chapter. Harriet has not made her decision to leave yet, but knowing that her brother is passing has made the decision a little less complex. Harriet does not want to be forgotten, however, and she does not want to turn her back on a whole side of who she is. There is also foreshadowing in the lessons Jefferson has set out for Harriet.



June 1820

June 1820 Summary

Harriet has been busy with her studies, working hard with Martha Randolph, Jefferson's daughter. Martha begins the lessons by telling Harriet she is no longer a child, although she still acts as though she were. Martha complains about the way her father treats Harriet and her family, setting the tone for the next few years. Martha then asks if Harriet will take her freedom, which Harriet immediately answers in the affirmative. Martha wants to know if Harriet will pass, and Harriet hesitates, still not sure herself. Martha obviously disapproves when Harriet says that, yes, she will pass.

Martha announces that living in the white world is not as easy as one might think and insists that Harriet tell her why she is passing. Harriet says it will be safer for her. After what Mr. Bankhead did, it is clear that Harriet is not safe on her own. Martha softens then, cursing Mr. Bankhead and wishing he would drink himself to death. Martha then says that Harriet must do everything as she tells her to do and not as her mother tells her. Martha is not thrilled with this assignment, but she loves her father very much and will do it for him.

June 1820 Analysis

Martha Randolph is clearly not happy with the task her father has given her, and she does not think highly of the Hemings family. Martha is a product of the society Jefferson spoke of before, satisfying some foreshadowing from an earlier chapter in which Jefferson tells Beverly about his college mentor. Martha, as a character, is symbolic of everything that causes Jefferson to hide his true relationship to Sally Hemings and her children.



Early July 1820

Early July 1820 Summary

On a rare day off, Harriet goes outside and finds her brothers in the carpenters' shed. Everyone is out in the fields harvesting the wheat, so Harriet and Eston are able to talk John Hemings into allowing Madison to take a break for a while so that they can go pick raspberries.

The three siblings pick raspberries and then sit under a tree to eat them. Madison asks about Harriet's lessons, which leads to a discussion about Martha. Martha does not like Madison because Jefferson spends so much time making sure he learns to play his fiddle correctly. Madison then asks if Harriet will leave when her turn comes. Harriet says that all the children have to go when their times come. Eston says that Beverly won't go, but Harriet assures them that he will.

Madison asks if Harriet is going to pass. Harriet says that she has no choice because the world is not safe for a free black woman. Madison says it isn't right that they all have to leave and not see each other again. It's the way of the world, Harriet says. Madison wants to know if Jefferson is really their father. Harriet explains that Jefferson loves them, but no one can admit that he is their father because of the way things are in the world. Then, Harriet hugs each of her brothers as Madison tells her not to worry. He will take care of Eston and Sally. Harriet sends them back to their work. Harriet is sad that they are growing, and she will not be around to see them grow anymore.

Harriet walks around the plantation for a while, watching a couple of slave girls chase after one of the young men working in the fields. Harriet wonders how they can be happy knowing that their future is only getting married and having babies. Then, she realizes that there is nothing else for these girls, but Harriet has the whole world at her feet for the taking.

Harriet runs into Beverly, and he immediately attacks her for wanting to pass. Beverly wants to know why Harriet is so willing to turn her back on her entire family and her entire race. Harriet makes the same argument she made before, about how unsafe it is out in the world for a free black woman. Harriet then tells him that she is not turning her back on her people. She is simply embracing the other side of her self. Harriet says that she does not want to be a slave for the rest of her life, to be sold when Jefferson dies to pay his debts like she is only a piece of furniture.

Harriet tells Beverly about the man she will become engaged to, although she still does not know his name. Then, Harriet reminds Beverly how hard it is to be a freed slave. Their own Uncle James killed himself shortly after gaining his freedom. Harriet asks why he killed himself, and Beverly says he has no idea. Harriet thinks it is because being free is hard.



Harriet is very worried about Beverly because he is so angry all the time. She wants to help him and show him what she has slowly learned, that freedom is a gift not to be thrown away. However, Beverly is closed to such talk. Harriet does not want Beverly to hate her for wanting to pass, and the idea that he might takes away her happiness.

Early July 1820 Analysis

Harriet's brothers take on a metaphoric role, in the way they are contrasted in this chapter. Madison and Eston symbolize happiness and understanding, since they are happy for Harriet and promise to take care of their mother. Although Madison and Eston do not understand fully what Harriet is about to do, they understand that is the best decision for her, and they support her. Beverly, on the other hand, symbolizes mistrust and betrayal, as he is angry and makes Harriet explain herself like some sort of criminal on trial. Beverly, too, when compared to Harriet, takes on another metaphoric aspect. Harriet is the child who does not want to leave, but she understands how important this moment is to her and to all who love her. Beverly, though, cannot get past the betrayal that he feels his father has heaped on him and cannot come to terms with the prospect of a good life that waits for him when he leaves Monticello.



October 1820

October 1820 Summary

Harriet receives a letter from Mr. Randolph after several months of wondering. Jefferson gives it to her. In it, Randolph asks after her studies and suggests she show the letter to Martha so that she can give Harriet his address to respond. Harriet does, and Martha makes her respond immediately. Another letter comes quickly, but Mr. Randolph does not want Harriet to show Martha this letter. He talks about Harriet's possible fancy and how he might come see her next summer. Randolph then suggests that when he makes visits to Monticello in the future, they should not be seen together. He tells her to burn the letter, and Harriet does.

June 1821. Harriet has not had a chance to write in her journal because of her studies. Harriet has done well in her studies, and Mr. Randolph and Mr. Jefferson, as well as Sally, have all commented on it. Martha has taught her to do needlework because it is improper for a woman to sit idle or read while she has company. Madison and Eston complain that Harriet no longer has time for them. Thruston makes fun of her for not looking a man in the eye when Harriet speaks to him and for yelling at him in French. However, Harriet knows he is proud of her because she always looks him in the eye.

Late June 1821. This summer is very hot. Harriet tries to stay out of the house as often as possible, except when she is working in the weaver's cottage. However, Martha expects her to play the pianoforte when she has guests as repayment for all she has taught Harriet. There are many guests at Monticello this summer, and Sally is very tired all the time from caring for them. The master is out in the fields most of the day because they are cutting the wheat now. Harriet has gotten word that the gentleman Mr. Randolph told her about is at Monticello.

The second week of July 1821. Harriet meets her proposed fancy. Harriet runs into Mr. Randolph on her way back from delivering tea to some ladies. Randolph tells Harriet that he knows how well she is doing in her studies and suggests that she serve tea to a certain gentleman. Harriet knows it is the gentleman she is to be engaged to. Randolph sends Harriet to the kitchen to get instructions from Sally.

Harriet barely remembers her conversation with Sally. Harriet is nervous about how she should act, and her mother tells her that she should act like herself. Harriet rushes up to the tearoom and finds the gentleman sitting at the table reading a newspaper. Harriet gets the tea service, and the gentleman opens the door for her. She sets the service down and stares at this man as though she has lost all her senses. The gentleman takes her hand and kisses it.

The gentleman talks a reluctant Harriet into sitting at the table and sharing in the tea. The gentleman says that he knows Harriet will leave Monticello within the year and pass into the white world. He says that he has seen her on Monticello many times before and



is distressed by her situation. The gentleman says it is not right how the white gentlemen mix with the slaves, but the children are forced to endure their mother's place in the world. He wants to help Harriet in any way that he can.

Harriet and her gentleman discuss Jefferson. The gentleman is surprised that she calls Jefferson master and expresses how confused Jefferson must be about slavery. The conversation then moves back to the two of them. The gentleman says that he has been interested in helping Harriet since the first time he saw her as a child. However, he never believed an opportunity would present itself until now. The gentleman is quite anxious to become Harriet's fiancy, if that is what she would like. He is concerned about rushing Harriet, however. He does not want Harriet to go from one master to another.

October 1820 Analysis

Harriet is working hard at her lessons, growing and changing every day as foreshadowed in previous chapters. Harriet waits a long time to hear from Randolph, and a part of her is probably afraid that her gentleman has decided he does not want to meet her. However, Randolph finally writes and tells her that her gentleman is coming.

The theme of freedom is represented here through Harriet's gentleman. This gentleman represents everything good about freedom for Harriet. He is good and kind, a man who will protect her to the point of harming himself. This gentleman is freedom personified for Harriet, although ironically he will be, as he implies, another kind of master on whom she must depend, showing that true freedom for a black woman is nearly impossible. As a free black woman, she would be in danger, and as a protected woman passing as white, she still needs the protection of a man.

The theme of alienation has begun to recede here, foreshadowing the events of later chapters. Harriet has finally begun to feel as though she has a place in the world, despite the fact that she will have to leave all she has ever known to live in that place. This is also irony, the idea that in order to fit into the world, Harriet has to give up everything she has ever known, including her very racial identity.



That Same Day

That Same Day Summary

The gentleman wants to know if Harriet feels as though she could teach. His sister is involved with the Washington Orphan Asylum, and she might be able to arrange for Harriet to work there once she leaves Monticello. Harriet is overwhelmed by the talk of Washington City where the gentleman lives and where he expects Harriet to live. The gentleman reassures her that she need not be afraid and that she will be a great teacher. The gentleman also says that she is welcome to live with his sister and her husband if she would like.

The gentleman again admonishes Harriet not to make decisions too quickly. Harriet has already stated that she believes she would like to be engaged to this man, but he does not want her to give up her right to make choices. Then, the gentleman says that she will take the name of the daughter of his college professor. The professor and his wife died six months ago on a ship bound for England. Their daughter died years before of pleurisy. The gentleman says she will take the name of the daughter, Elizabeth Lackland, so that there will be fewer questions about her history. The gentleman, Thomas Mann Randolph and Harriet will be the only ones to know the truth.

Harriet is a little uncomfortable about lying, but the gentleman assures her that it is not exactly lying when it is to protect one's life. The gentleman then tells her about Washington City. He speaks of how beautiful it is and how much she will enjoy living there. Then, he says that he must go. Harriet promises to answer his letters when he writes, and the gentleman finally tells her his name. He is Thad Sandridge. Thad wants Harriet to call him by his first name, and he also wants Harriet to call Thomas Jefferson Mr. Jefferson just once before she leaves the plantation. Thad wants to teach Harriet how to survive. Harriet is simply falling head over heels in love.

That Same Day Analysis

The scheme to help Harriet transfer to the white world foreshadows future chapters. It is a simple scheme, though it requires Harriet to lie about whom she is, a situation she hoped to avoid in such an obvious manner. Jefferson always tells her not to lie, but her gentleman points out that Jefferson lies every day by saying that he hates slavery and yet keeping slaves. This is irony, as is Jefferson's attitude toward Sally and her children. Jefferson wants to tell everyone how he feels about Sally and her children, but he cannot because of the social attitudes toward that sort of situation, although it is his desire to change these attitudes.

Harriet has fallen in love with a man she has only known for a few minutes, an emotion that solidifies her desire to pass into the white world. It is also ironic that it takes a stranger to convince Harriet of what is the right thing to do, when her mother has been

trying to convince her for more than a year. That symbolizes for Harriet the possibilities of freedom, something her mother has been unable to convey. Her love becomes symbolic of a love of freedom and a yearning for life in the world. Harriet still feels alienated from her mother, and it takes a stranger to make her mother's point.



October 1821

October 1821 Summary

Harriet finally begins to realize that she is leaving. Now she is concerned that she will be discovered or that she will not be able to stop being Harriet Hemings. Then, she thinks of Thad, and she knows that she will be okay. Harriet gets a letter from Thad. Jefferson gives it to her and teases her for having a beau. He feels it is a good match, though he seems to be a little offended that no one told him about it sooner. Then, Jefferson gives her his permission in his offhanded sort of way.

November 1821. When Harriet receives letters from Thad, she is confident in her decision, but she continues to doubt her decision while she awaits his replies to her responses. Harriet knows she will miss the plantation a lot. Harriet spends most of her free time walking around the house and grounds, memorizing everything so that she will never forget.

April 1822. Harriet has begun to have bad dreams about those she will leave behind when she goes, especially Mammy Ursula. Martha is pushing Harriet in her studies, though she is very proud of the work they have accomplished. Martha even shows Harriet a letter that Jefferson wrote her shortly after her mother died. Harriet finds herself remembering everything about the plantation, including how many pumpkins it takes to feed nine horses, how much Merino wool will make a yard of cloth and that one sheep requires one-fifth the food of a cow.

October 1821 Analysis

Harriet is becoming very nervous about leaving the plantation now that her time is growing near. Harriet memorizes everything, including the amount of feed for horses. These details serve as a symbol of everything she will no longer need to know and will miss about the plantation. It is also a substitute for the grief she will feel when she is forced to leave her family behind. The letter Martha shows Harriet foreshadows events later in the novel. Martha loves her father dearly, and that is demonstrated by her showing off the letter. This fierce love will cause a problem for Harriet that, again, is foreshadowed by the showing of the letter.



May 15, 1822

May 15, 1822 Summary

Martha and Harriet nearly have a fight. Martha says it is a pity that Harriet's father never cared about her like Jefferson does. Martha says that Harriet's father is Peter Carr, Thomas Jefferson's nephew. This is why Jefferson takes such good care of Sally and her children. Jefferson feels bad for what his nephew did. Harriet handles the news well, but she is not happy about it.

May 17, 1822. Harriet runs into Beverly on the grounds. Harriet is pleased to find Beverly happy for the first time in a long time. Beverly tells her that he has decided to leave a life as a free black man, but he does not know when yet. Beverly has decided to leave in secret and to not tell Jefferson before he goes. Harriet knows that Beverly is only doing this because he is angry. Harriet tries to talk Beverly into telling Jefferson, but she is unsuccessful.

Harriet tells Beverly that Martha said Peter Carr is their father. Beverly says this is not possible because he looked up the dates in which Carr visited. He cannot possibly be Beverly's father. Beverly promises to give the dates to Harriet, and he says that the night she finds the dates under her pillow, she should go to the orchard. That will be the night Beverly leaves.

Harriet goes to her mother to ask about Beverly. Sally is sitting on an overturned barrel in the wine cellar. She is tired from sorting sheets all morning for the summer visitors, and she is now preparing a meal for Francis Eppes and his fiancy, the son of the master's other daughter who died, to celebrate their engagement. Sally talks about the meal as if she is the mistress of the house and as if she will participate.

Sally reminisces about the past, thinking of James her brother and of Tom. Harriet tries to ask Sally about Beverly over and over again, but Sally does not want to talk about it. Harriet becomes angry as Sally talks about Frances going to the university when that is Beverly's dream. Sally says that Beverly is a dreamer and that he cannot have everything he wants. Beverly is too much like James, and that scares Sally. Sally would rather see him leave and try to find some happiness than to stay on Monticello and allow his anger to eat him up. Harriet is upset that her mother does not show any pain when she discusses Beverly leaving. It is as if she does not care. Harriet wants her mother to care when she leaves.

May 15, 1822 Analysis

Beverly has finally decided to take his freedom, as foreshadowed in other chapters. Harriet is surprised by this and saddened that she will not see her brother again. However, Harriet is happy for him as well. Harriet is also pleased that Beverly will be going into the world as a free black man rather than hiding in the white world like she



will be doing, which somewhat ironic. Harriet is upset about her mother's lack of grief for her children. This touches on the theme of alienation. Sally gives the impression that she does not care that her children are leaving her, and Harriet cannot understand this. Harriet once more feels pushed out and forgotten by her mother, the one person who is supposed to love her.



That Same Day, May 17, 1822

That Same Day, May 17, 1822 Summary

After leaving the cellar, Harriet goes to see Mammy Ursula. Mammy is weaving a new basket on her porch when Harriet arrives. Harriet wants to tell Mammy that she is going to pass. First, Harriet tells Mammy about Beverly. Harriet says that she is leaving soon, too. Mammy says that everyone knows because of the lessons she's been working so hard on. Harriet explains that she is going to Washington City, and Mammy replies that Washington City is a good place because it is so big.

Harriet asks Mammy to make her a basket that she can take with her and tells her about the job that she will have teaching. Then, Harriet asks for the recipes to all of Mammy's cures so she can take them with her. Mammy says she will miss Harriet, and then Harriet tells Mammy that her mother does not seem concerned with her leaving. Mammy explains that sometimes people have feelings so deep that they do not know what to do with them. This makes Harriet feel better.

That Same Day, May 17, 1822 Analysis

Mammy is the opposite of Sally, easy with her emotions and sad to see Harriet go, but she explains her feelings in a more understandable fashion. Harriet is worried that no one will remember her once she is gone, but she realizes that Mammy will remember. This helps. The theme of acceptance is touched on here. Harriet feels at home with Mammy, which is a little ironic since Mammy represents everything Harriet will turn her back on when she leaves. However, Harriet is doing what she thinks is best and safest, and she is doing it for all of the women like Mammy who are never able to gain their freedom.



July 13, 1822

July 13, 1822 Summary

Harriet has passed her twenty-first birthday, and she is nervous about her future. On this night, Harriet finds the paper from Beverly. It is clear that Peter Carr cannot be either her or Beverly's father because he simply was not at Monticello when they were conceived. Harriet is happy about this, but she is sad because the appearance of the paper means that Beverly is leaving.

Harriet waits until very late before she slips out of the house to meet Beverly. Beverly is waiting in the orchard, dressed in gentlemen's clothing with one of Jefferson's horses. Harriet is surprised by all this. Beverly says that Sally got him the clothes, and he figured the horse is the least Jefferson owes him. Beverly tells Harriet that Sally got the freedom papers for Beverly. Beverly also wants Harriet to know something about Jefferson. He has seen Jefferson's Farm Books, and Sally, Harriet and the rest of the Hemings are only listed there under the bread lists, the blanket lists and all the other lists that Jefferson keeps for his slaves. Not on one single slip of paper does Jefferson acknowledge what the Hemings are to him, not even Sally. Also, Jefferson has ordered Sally to get rid of any letters he might have written to her in the past.

Harriet takes a little while to realize what Beverly is saying. When she fully understands, it saddens her. Then, Beverly hands Harriet a gunnysack. Inside is the last bottle of French claret that Beverly took from Jefferson's wine cellar. Beverly wants Harriet to have it so that she will have something from Jefferson, even if it was stolen. Beverly hugs Harriet then and tells her to remember what he said about Jefferson when her time to go comes.

Harriet goes back to her room and cries for her brother. Harriet is sad to see him go. However, Harriet knows that Beverly gave her courage in telling her what he did. Now Harriet knows she must go when her time comes and that nothing will stop her now.

July 13, 1822 Analysis

Beverly's revelation that Jefferson will leave nothing written about his relationship to the Hemings children is symbolic of everything Jefferson has denied these children since their birth. Beverly has always been very angry about Jefferson's denial. However, now he shares his anger in a constructive way that gives Harriet the courage to do what must be done. Finally, Harriet is strong and ready to go on, touching on not only on the themes of freedom and alienation, but acceptance as well. Harriet has not gotten the acceptance she has always wanted from Jefferson, but she has learned to accept that he will never acknowledge her. This satisfies her needs, because she has overcome her need for Jefferson's acceptance before she can garner the courage to leave Monticello when her time comes.



The Middle of August 1822

The Middle of August 1822 Summary

Harriet receives a letter from Thad that outlines the journey she will take on the day she goes to join him in Washington City. Harriet will travel to an inn called Gordon's with Jefferson's servant, Mr. Petit. There, Thad will meet her and continue with her on the long journey to Washington City. It is a journey that Jefferson has taken many times and has outlined for them himself.

Another letter from Randolph comes about the same time. In it, Randolph apologizes for not being able to accompany her on her journey and wishes her well in her new life, promising to be available to her should she ever require his assistance.

The last week at Monticello is a whirlwind for Harriet. Sally helps her prepare, packing all her new clothes for her. Jefferson gives Sally fifty dollars for Harriet, which Harriet sees as a gift from her father. Harriet spends her final night with her mother and her brothers. Harriet asks about Jefferson, and Sally says that he is sad about Beverly and that he will be sad to see her go as well. Harriet wants to know why Jefferson has not asked to see her. Sally says he will, in time. He is too sad now. Sally tells Harriet that her leaving is an attack on Jefferson, and Jefferson handles attacks by being silent. This is why he has not said goodbye to her yet.

Sally talks about how important family is and how all she ever wanted was a family, but now that Jefferson is fulfilling his promise to free all her children, she is losing her family little by little. Sally is saddened by this. Then Sally says, much to everyone's surprise, that she left Paris and came back to Monticello because she loved Jefferson and it was what he wanted. Sally says that to live with a man you have to give everything, to him and to his children. In exchange, the man takes care of you, and that is all Sally ever really wanted. This is all Sally says before leaving Harriet to spend a few last moments with her brothers, despite the hope in her children's hearts that she will finally admit the truth of her relationship with Jefferson.

On the previous day, Harriet goes to tell Mammy Ursula that she is going to pass. However, every time she tries to say it, Mammy Ursula interrupts her. Mammy Ursula talks about the past, speaking of the day Jefferson brought his new bride to this house, and warns Harriet to be careful of bad omens before she leaves.

Thruston gives Harriet a phial of seeds when they say their goodbyes. Thruston tells Harriet that she is doing the right thing and that everything will be all right. Thruston says she should plant the seeds when she gets settled to remember him with. Harriet hugs him and promises she will never forget.



The Middle of August 1822 Analysis

Harriet now has her plan completely outlined and is ready to go. Saying goodbye is as hard as she thought it would be. However, as shown with foreshadowing, some truths come into play in these final moments. Sally speaks of Jefferson with great affection, going as far as to say she loves him. This is not an admission of paternity, of course, but it comes as close as anything Harriet will ever get. This also touches on the theme of acceptance because once again Harriet gets an answer, even if it is not the answer she has been looking for. Mammy also reveals to Harriet that she has known all along that Harriet is to pass, without actually saying it. This also touches on acceptance, because now Harriet knows that it is okay to do what she is doing. The African heritage she is leaving behind understands and accepts what she is doing. Thruston's outright acknowledgement also adds to Harriet's growing sense of well being and acceptance.



The Middle of August 1822

The Middle of August 1822 Summary

Harriet is at Gordon's Tavern, where she will await Thad's arrival the next morning. So much has happened this day that she can hardly contain it all. The carriage ride is as easy as it could be, with Mr. Petit telling Harriet stories of when her mother was young and he accompanied her to Paris with young Maria, Jefferson's deceased daughter. When they reach the tavern, they share a supper, and Mr. Petit offers suggestions to Harriet to help her acquaint herself with this new world she has just entered.

When Harriet goes up to bed, a young chambermaid comes with her daughter to help Harriet dress for bed. Harriet has never been dressed for bed by anyone but her own mother and is delighted with the attention. The chambermaid tells Harriet what beautiful hair she has and offers to come the next morning to dress it. Harriet has never worn her hair in any style other than one long braid and is excited at the possibilities.

Harriet remembers leaving the house that morning. Sally wakes her at first light to prepare for the journey. Harriet believes they will have up to an hour to talk, but the master has moved up her departure time. She must rush. Burwell, Thruston, Madison and Eston are waiting in the main hall to say goodbye. Harriet hugs them all, tears on her cheeks, distracted by the thought that someone is missing. Sally takes Harriet aside and tells her that Beverly instructed her to tell Harriet on the morning of her leaving that he has decided to pass into the white world as well. At first, Harriet is disappointed by this news, since she thought her brother was the courageous one, and then she realizes this is what he wants and what will help their mother get through the loss so much easier.

Sally must push Harriet out the door because now that the time has come, Harriet is not sure she can leave her mother. As she leaves, Sally tells Harriet that Beverly wanted to remind her again of a scrap of paper. Sally does not understand the message, but Harriet does. All her courage suddenly comes flooding back. Harriet makes Sally promise that she will not be forgotten and then she turns and sees Jefferson waiting for her with Mr. Petit.

Harriet goes to Jefferson. They speak of her maturity and the trip ahead of her while Harriet assures him she will be okay. Jefferson asks if there is anything Harriet has for him to write in his Farm Books. Harriet replies that he should write that Harriet Hemings left Monticello. This makes Jefferson sad. Jefferson then makes her promise she will always be true to herself and honest to other people. Jefferson assures Harriet that he believes she will be okay out in the white world, despite all the dangerous that lurk there. He is surprised when Harriet responds to his advice by calling him by his name, as she promised Thad she would.



Jefferson escorts Harriet to the carriage and wishes her a safe journey. Harriet turns to wave back to her mother and brothers and to her friends standing just inside the door. Harriet then turns to Jefferson and sees tears in his eyes, even as he smiles his farewell. Harriet's heart stops because she is so surprised and happy to see he cares enough to shed tears for her.

The Middle of August 1822 Analysis

Most of the foreshadowing in this novel comes to satisfaction in this final chapter. Harriet, who is at first afraid of telling Mammy Ursula that she will be passing, finds out that the wise old woman already knows. This greatly helps Harriet, who was filled with guilt at turning her back on her African heritage. However, as Mammy Ursula symbolizes everything about Harriet's African heritage, Mammy's understanding greatly reduces Harriet's guilt as well as touching on the theme of acceptance by making Harriet feel loved and wanted despite her desire to leave the plantation.

Sally's revelation that Beverly chose to pass when he left the plantation greatly grieves Harriet at first. Harriet has always believed Beverly to be the brave person in the family, and Beverly symbolizes all that is good about freedom to her. His decision to pass is almost like giving in. However, Harriet quickly understands Beverly's decision and is happy that now he will be able to go to school, which has always been his desire. All of Beverly's anger, which indicates his feeling of alienation, is finally relieved, and Harriet knows this. Not only does this satisfy foreshadowing, but it also relieves the fear Harriet has for her beloved brother.

Finally, Jefferson's tears at the very end of the novel represent many things. First, his tears prove to Harriet that he cares for her more than if she were simply a slave to him. Second, his tears are almost an admission, when paired with the fifty dollars he gives her, that he is her father. Finally, Harriet has received irrefutable proof that Jefferson does in fact care about her. This not only touches on the theme of freedom, but it also touches on the theme of acceptance because once more Harriet has physical proof of Jefferson's affection for her.



Characters

Harriet Hemings

Harriet Hemings is a fictional character based on the real daughter of Sally Hemings, a slave who lived at Monticello until shortly after Thomas Jefferson's death. In this novel, Harriet Hemings is a nineteen-year-old girl at the beginning of the novel who is to be given her freedom at the age of twenty-one. Harriet is happy at Monticello and does not want to leave. Harriet does not consider herself a slave, only a servant, because of the kind way in which the master of the plantation, Thomas Jefferson, has always treated her, her brothers and her mother. However, Harriet's mother has made it clear that she will be offered her freedom at twenty-one and that she is expected to take it.

After an unfortunate incident in which the master's grandson-in-law attempts to take advantage of Harriet, she realizes that she must do as her mother wishes and take her freedom. However, Harriet is afraid of being alone in the world as a free woman, since a free slave is not allowed to stay in Virginia after being granted freedom. Thomas Mann Randolph, the master's son-in-law and the current governor of Virginia, suggests to Harriet not only that she get married but that she pass into the white world upon acceptance of her freedom. At first, Harriet is unhappy at this suggestion, aware that passing would mean never seeing her family again. However, in light of what happens to her in the safety of Monticello, Harriet is willing to give it a try.

Harriet meets a white man who is in love with her, and her decision to pass is solidified. Harriet begins to study the fine arts and other skills necessary in order to pass as a proper white lady. Harriet continues to have doubts, however, especially when her brother, Beverly, expresses his disapproval. Harriet is afraid she is letting down her race by turning her back on it, and Harriet is also saddened at the idea of leaving Monticello and the man she believes is her father, despite Beverly's insistence that he will never acknowledge them as his children.

Sally Hemings

Sally Hemings is a historical figure who has been fictionalized for the purposes of this novel. Sally is the wardrobe mistress at Thomas Jefferson's Monticello. Sally is a slave who is reportedly the daughter of a slave and her master, John Wayles, the father of Thomas Jefferson's deceased wife. When John Wayles passed away shortly after Jefferson married Martha Wayles, Jefferson and his wife inherited many of John Wayles's slaves, including Sally and her siblings.

In this novel, Sally runs the household at Monticello despite the presence of Jefferson's daughter. Sally gave up her freedom while still a teenager when she came back to the United States from France. Had Sally stayed in France all those years ago, she would have been free since slavery was illegal in France at that time. Despite this, Sally is



fiercely determined that all of her children will receive their freedom upon reaching their twenty-first birthdays. Harriet does not understand her mother's insistence on this point, having given up freedom herself and being faced with the possibility of never seeing her children again. However, Sally is determined, recruiting the help of people such as Thomas Mann Rudolph in order to convince Harriet that she must accept her freedom when her time comes.

Many people believe that Thomas Jefferson is the father of all of Sally Hemings's children, both in the novel and in reality. Throughout the novel, Harriet questions this idea when faced with her brother Beverly's determination that the rumors are true. Sally never tells her children the truth about their paternity, though she does speak of Thomas Jefferson several times throughout the novel not as a master but as one whom she adores.

Beverly Hemings

Beverly Hemings, again based on an actual historical figure, is a very angry young man in this novel. Beverly wants to go to a university and believes that because Thomas Jefferson is creating a new university, he should be able to send Beverly there. However, Thomas Jefferson outright refuses Beverly's request, stating that he cannot send a slave to his university. Jefferson tells Beverly a story about a professor/mentor of his who was poisoned by his own relative because he chose to will his entire estate to his illegitimate son, whom he had with a mulatto housekeeper.

Beverly has high morals and finds Harriet's choice to pass into the white world a poor decision. Beverly challenges her plans with arguments of his own that Harriet cannot wholly dismiss. Beverly is also obsessed with the idea that Thomas Jefferson is his biological father. Every time someone suggests another person who might possibly be his father, Beverly finds proof that he is not, most notably by researching the dates during which one man visited Monticello to prove to Harriet that he could not have fathered either of the two siblings.

Eventually, Beverly chooses to take his freedom and leave Monticello forever. Harriet goes to say goodbye to him and finds him in gentleman's clothing. Beverly tells Harriet that while he was in the library waiting for his mother to give him his freedom papers, Beverly looked through Jefferson's farm book. No where in the book does it mention himself, his siblings or his mother in any fashion except as a slave who received food and clothing from the Monticello stores. Beverly explains to Harriet that the man who is most likely their father never considered leaving behind a single piece of paper that establishes his relationship to them, except for the relationship of master to slave.

Thomas Jefferson

Thomas Jefferson was one of the original authors of the Declaration of Independence and later became President of the United States. For the purpose of this novel, Jefferson has been fictionalized, though many of the conversations Jefferson has with



Beverly and Harriet are filled with well-researched anecdotes from Jefferson's own writings and other historical facts.

Thomas Jefferson is master of Monticello, where Harriet lives. Harriet is in awe of her master, and she is always quiet and respectful when given the chance to speak to him. Once Harriet mentions something Jefferson might be interested in writing in his farm books. When Jefferson tells Harriet how helpful she has been, Harriet makes it a point to always have something to tell him whenever she has a chance to speak to him. In return for her diligence, Jefferson gives Harriet a diary of her own to write in.

Jefferson is rumored to be Harriet and her siblings' father. Harriet is aware of the rumors and aware of the secret room her mother has in Jefferson's bedroom; however, she does not know what to think of these things. Harriet is not terribly concerned with her biological father's identity until her brother Beverly begins to put ideas into her head. Jefferson never acknowledges his relationship to Harriet except to give her fifty dollars upon her departure and to shed a few tears as she climbs aboard the carriage to leave.

Thomas Mann Randolph

Thomas Mann Randolph is Thomas Jefferson's son-in-law and the governor of Virginia. Many people believe Randolph is crazy because his politics do not always flow with popular opinion. However, Randolph is fictionalized in this novel as a kind man who believes that slaves should be freed. Randolph introduces Harriet to the idea of passing and arranges for her to become betrothed to Mr. Sandridge.

Randolph is married to Martha Jefferson Randolph, and together they have eleven children. Randolph does not spend much time with his wife because she resides at Monticello to take care of her father's home, and Randolph lives on plantation of his own. However, Randolph does visit Monticello often. Randolph is friendly with Sally and conspires with her to help Harriet make the decision to leave Monticello upon her twenty-first birthday.

Martha Jefferson Randolph

Martha Jefferson Randolph is the sole surviving child of Jefferson's marriage to Martha Wayles. Martha and Sally were once close. Sally was Martha and her sister's nursemaid when they were small children, and Martha now runs Monticello for her father because he is a widow and has no one else to do it for him. Martha can be cold and calculating, taking pleasure in humiliating Harriet while she is teaching her the skills she will need to survive as a white woman. Martha tells Harriet that her biological father is a relative of the Jeffersons rather than Thomas Jefferson, as everyone believes. Beverly, though, proves this cannot be.

Martha loves her father and her own children very much. She will do anything to protect the great Thomas Jefferson, going so far as to lie about the possibility of Thomas Jefferson having fathered Sally Hemings's children. Martha is a very proper woman who



received the best possible education as a child and who now shares that knowledge with Harriet, though she is reluctant to do so.

Thruston

Thruston is a slave on Monticello whose main chore is the garden. Thruston is a natural with the plants, often caught singing to them when he thinks no one is around. Harriet and Thruston grew up together on Monticello, and Thruston wants to marry Harriet. He tells her that she should get engaged to someone before the overseer does it for her. Harriet becomes angry with him, although later events prove he is correct in his observations.

Thruston can speak proper English like Harriet, but he chooses to speak like the rest of the slaves. Thruston does not like to put on airs, as he accuses Harriet of doing. He cares about Harriet, however, and is happy for her when he discovers her plans to pass. He figures that if she will not marry him, then Harriet deserves a good life in a different way.

Charles Bankhead

Charles Bankhead is married to Thomas Mann Randolph's daughter Ann. Bankhead is a drunk and a violent man who is known to have beaten his wife. Once when Ann's brother confronts Bankhead about this fact, Bankhead stabs him. Bankhead then flees the country. Upon his return, Bankhead spends the night at Monticello. Shortly after dinner, Bankhead finds Harriet in the tearoom. Bankhead is looking for alcohol, but all the servants have orders not to give him any. Instead, Bankhead attacks Harriet and attempts to rape her. Thruston and another slave come into the room to stop the attack. However, Bankhead does not back off until Thomas Mann Randolph comes into the room himself and ends the attack.

Thad Sandridge

Thad Sandridge is a young architect who has spent time at Monticello studying with Thomas Jefferson. Sandridge believes that slavery is wrong and has taken special notice of Harriet during his many visits. Sandridge expresses his interest to Thomas Mann Randolph, who in turn suggests that Sandridge and Harriet become engaged in order to protect Harriet until she can be granted her freedom and leave Monticello. Upon meeting Sandridge, Harriet falls madly in love and resolves to leave Monticello for the white world.

Madison and Eston Hemings

Madison and Eston Hemings are both the historical and fictional children of Sally Hemings. Both Madison and Eston are accomplished musicians and carpenters. They



will be freed on their twenty-first birthdays like Harriet and Beverly, though their freedom will be granted through Thomas Jefferson's will since he will die several years before their birthdays. In this novel, Madison and Eston are young teens who are very close to their sister, though they are a little put off by her decision to pass as white. However, both boys are happy for Harriet and sad only that they might not ever see her again.



Objects/Places

Monticello

Monticello is the historic plantation home of Thomas Jefferson.

Mulberry Row

Mulberry Row is the lane on Monticello where the slave cabins stand.

The Weaver's Cottage

The weaver's cottage is where Harriet Hemings works while living on Monticello.

Thomas Jefferson's Sanctum Sanctorum

Thomas Jefferson calls his bedroom and the attached rooms his sanctum sanctorum, and no one but Sally Hemings is allowed inside them without explicit invitation.

Dining Room

The dining room is where Harriet serves Thomas Mann Randolph his breakfast and where she is attacked by Charles Bankhead.

Tearoom

The tearoom is where Harriet Hemings meets Thad Sandridge.

Kitchen

The kitchen is where Harriet finds her mother most of the time, running the household and planning meals.

Wine Cellar

The wine cellar is where Harriet finds her mother the day Beverly tells her he plans to leave the plantation.



Library

Thomas Jefferson's library is a prized room at Monticello where Beverly spends the majority of his time educating himself.

Sally's Hidden Room

In Thomas Jefferson's bedroom, there is a room above his bed that Jefferson claims is a place for Sally Hemings to use when she is preparing and repairing his clothing.

Hot Air Balloon

Beverly builds a hot air balloon in order to impress Thomas Jefferson and perhaps persuade him that he should send Beverly to his new university.

Wine

Beverly uses a bottle of Thomas Jefferson's French claret to fuel his hot air balloon.

Expensive Clothing

Harriet discovers that her mother, Sally Hemings, has been making fancy, ladylike clothing for her for when she leaves the plantation to pass into the white world.

Farm Books

Thomas Jefferson keeps many farm books in which he lists the activities of the plantation, including the appearance of animals and plants, the number of slaves and new children born to them, the dates of harvest, budgetary lists and many other things that happen on the plantation. Every time Harriet sees him, she gives him something to list in his farm books.

Scrap of Paper

When Beverly leaves Monticello, he tells Harriet that she and her brothers are not listed on a single scrap of paper among Jefferson's papers except as slaves. Beverly wants Harriet to remember this so that she will not hesitate when it is her time to leave Monticello.

Fifty Dollars

Jefferson gives Harriet fifty dollars upon her departure from Monticello.

Setting

Monticello, renowned home of Thomas Jefferson, is the setting for the novel. The house is a reflection of its owner and designer, filled with curios and exciting inventions such as a dumb-waiter, a polygraph for copying letters, and an extensive library filled with books on a variety of subjects.

Like Harriet, the reader is introduced to the many interests of Jefferson and learns to admire his genius. In fact, it is Jefferson who suggests to Harriet that she keep a diary of all the events around her, from farm reports and observations about the weather to a record of her private feelings and emotions. This diary leads us through the period of 1820 to 1822, faithfully chronicling the seasonal work and community life of the estate. In it Harriet also records important visitors such as members of Jefferson's family—his daughter and her husband, Thomas Mann Randolph, and the disreputable Charles Bank-head, husband of Jefferson's granddaughter Ann. In spite of the opulent home and landholdings, life is not always easy, because Thomas Jefferson has little money, and most of his income has to be spent on the upkeep of his farm.

Social Sensitivity

The issue of slavery is a topic that still evokes strong emotions. Rinaldi has purposely stressed the evils of an institution that has darkened much of American history. To do so, she uses words like "nigra," a term common in Jefferson's time. But the language is essential in order to show the reader contemporary attitudes, that may appear offensive today.

In addition, some readers may be shocked to find such attitudes in one of America's genuine heroes, Thomas Jefferson, the writer of the Declaration of Independence. We like to believe that great men of the past have always been enlightened about social and moral issues. Yet they are products of their time. The Thomas Jefferson whom Harriet knows may not always act with courage and conviction, but that makes him more human, and brings him closer to the reader. And the last sight Harriet has of him are tears in his eyes, a sign that he loved her, and that she will forgive him.

Literary Qualities

The strength of Rinaldi's novel lies in the careful and well researched historical details which give the reader a realistic and interesting glimpse of an important period in American history.

We learn about life on a Virginia plantation, the food, the clothes, the social events. The author never preaches, and the historical elements are presented not as in a textbook, but as an integral part of the story. At an elegant banquet, for instance, to which business associates of Jefferson are invited, Harriet works in the kitchen, helping to prepare an interesting array of foods typical of the period; when she is called to the master's study, she has a chance to observe and note some of Jefferson's inventions.

A feeling for the time is created not only through specific details and descriptions, but also through the style and language of the novel. While Jefferson, Harriet, and her mother speak in a language that is close to modern English, there are phrases and formal turns of speech which remind the reader of the novel's time and place. When Thad, in love with Harriet and eager to help her pass into white society, writes letters to her, they are formal reminders of the style of another age: "I understand Adrian Petit, Mr. Jefferson's faithful servant, will accompany you to Gordon's, where comfortable rooms await you. It is only a country tavern, but the victuals are substantial." And he closes the letter with the old-fashioned phrase: "I remain your humble servant."

Yet not everyone in Harriet's day speaks such formal, educated English.

The servants and farm workers, especially old Mammy Ursula, speak a dialect of black English common for their time and place. It contrasts with the formal speech of the educated house slaves like Harriet and her mother, and it creates a feeling for their difference in status. Harriet herself comments on it when she rebukes Thruston, the young black man who courts her, for speaking like a farm hand. "Now, I must write it plain here that Thruston can speak as well as I or my mama can.

But he won't use it." The issue of speech is not only one of class, but also one of racial identity and pride, as Thruston explains: "Why should I talk like white peoples? Doan wanna talk like white folk, anyway. Ain't nuthin 'bout them I admire." The author uses style and speech very effectively to underscore the feelings and attitudes of her characters.

The characters of *Wolf by the Ears* do not only act, dress and speak in keeping with their historical period, they also think like people living in the 1820s. Although Harriet's mother feels strongly about freedom, she is quite aware of her position as a servant, and instills this "proper" attitude in her daughter. "I've already been bold, sir," says a well-bred Harriet to the young man whom she meets for the first time as a guest of the house, "I don't want to be impertinent." She may be as educated and intelligent as he is, but she also knows her place as a servant. And much as Thomas Jefferson loves his daughter and son by his mulatto housekeeper, as a nineteenth-century Virginia



gentleman he cannot conceive the idea of acknowledging them. "I have given you all that I can," are his parting words to her, and when she replies, "I know that, Mr. Jefferson," he is shocked and confused at her refusal to use the title master.



Themes

Alienation

The theme of alienation is mentioned in the notes as a theme the writer herself was fascinated by and wanted to write about. The writer could not have found a better historical figure to write about when writing about alienation. Alienation is the sense of being separated from those around you. Not only is Harriet Hemings separated from those around her because of her role in the plantation household as a slave, but Harriet is also separated from the other slaves because of her pale skin and her preferential treatment from the master. Most of the slaves work hard in the fields, in the carpentry shops, the weaver's cottage or the house itself. However, Harriet is only expected to work a few hours in the weaver's cottage each day, and then she is free to spend the rest of the day studying or playing.

The larger sense of alienation for Harriet comes from the idea of the master as her father. Harriet has never concerned herself with whom her father might be. However, when the subject of freedom comes up, Harriet becomes more and more concerned with the idea. Harriet desperately wants Jefferson to acknowledge her as his child. However, Jefferson steadfastly refuses her this right over and over again. Harriet is confused by his treatment of her and by his insistence on allowing her and her brothers their freedom when they reach age. Why is this man so kind to her, a lowly slave, if he is not her father? Why take the time to speak to her, to give her a diary to write in, if he is not her father? However, if he is her father, why does he not simply say so?

Harriet is also alienated by her mother. Sally desperately wants Harriet to take her freedom when it is offered to her. However, Harriet does not wish to go and does not understand why her mother is in such a hurry to get rid of her when she herself refused her freedom when it was offered. Harriet loves her mother, but the older she becomes, the more she sees the way Sally acts around the house, as if it is her house and she is its mistress. Harriet listens to her mother talk about Jefferson with much affection. However, Sally never acknowledges any relationship that might exist between her and Jefferson. This too confuses Harriet. Harriet wants to know the truth, but to ask her mother outright is to injure the woman more deeply than Harriet can stand to do. It is not until she accepts her fate and sees the tears in Jefferson's eyes that Harriet finally finds her place in the world and accepts who she is, although no one will ever acknowledge the fact out loud.

Freedom

Harriet begins the novel with the idea of freedom being shoved down her throat. Harriet is nineteen when the reader first meets her, two years before Jefferson will grant Harriet her freedom. Harriet does not want her freedom. She wants to remain on Monticello, near her family and her beloved master. However, Sally refuses to let Harriet accept her



slavery so easily and enlists the help of the Virginia governor Thomas Mann Randolph to help convince Harriet.

Harriet loves her family and cannot bear the idea of leaving them. Harriet knows that if she is granted her freedom, she must leave Virginia within a year, which is the law at the time. If Harriet is forced to leave Virginia, she will never see her mother or her brothers again. Harriet cannot bear this idea. Then, Randolph suggests not only that she accept her freedom, but also that she pass into the white world. If Harriet does that, she will definitely never see her family again. Not only that, but Harriet will not even be allowed to acknowledge the black side of her heritage, turning her back on a whole part of her person. Harriet is not sure she is strong enough to do this. However, when she meets the man who wants to marry her, a kind man who will become her new family, Harriet begins to see the wisdom in leaving Monticello.

Acceptance

Acceptance is the one thing Harriet wants from the people around her and the one thing it appears she will never receive. Harriet wants Jefferson to acknowledge that he is her father and that he loves her. However, Jefferson is a very important man and to acknowledge such a thing would tarnish his legacy, something Jefferson does not want. Also, from the anecdote he tells Beverly, it is clear that Jefferson is concerned about how his immediate family members would react to such an acknowledgement. Therefore, Jefferson will never acknowledge the Hemings children as his own. This denial is in part what gives Harriet the courage to go out into the world as a white woman despite her childhood as a slave. However, during the last moments they are together, Harriet sees tears in Jefferson's eyes. These tears are a clue to Harriet that not only does Jefferson care about her, a mere slave, but that perhaps there is something deeper to their relationship that has caused him emotional turmoil at the idea of never seeing her again.

Harriet also craves acceptance from her mother and her brothers. Sally wants only for her children to accept their freedom, and by insisting on this, she alienates them, pushing them away from their mother's love. Beverly also pushes Harriet away, by complaining about Jefferson's refusal to accept them as his own and by lying to her about his decision to pass into the white world himself. These actions cause Harriet to question the place in the world that she has always known and to question the love of people she never had to question before. However, Harriet grows to discover that her family's behavior is for her own good and that they do still love her. Their love has led them to treat her as they do.

Finally, Harriet craves acceptance in herself. She does not know who she is, and she is caught between two worlds, that of the slave and that of the proper white woman. Harriet is born a slave, and she grows up among the children of Mulberry Row. However, Harriet is not forced to work as hard as the other slaves, and she is given an education the other slaves could only imagine. Being born a slave, however, Harriet will never be given the advantages of a white child, such as Martha Randolph's children.



Eventually, though, Harriet is given those opportunities, but in order to receive them, she must disavow everyone and everything that has ever mattered to her. Through this journey, Harriet eventually finds herself and grows to accept herself for the person she has always been in her heart.



Themes/Characters

The main character of the novel is Harriet Hemings; she is also the narrator through whose eyes we view people and events. Harriet, as well as her mother and brother, are technically slaves, but her master treats her and her family well. Recognizing her good mind, he even arranges for Harriet to be tutored and to receive an education that was by no means common at that period in history. Everyone in the household spoils her, and she is happy and content. Why, then, is her mother always talking about freedom, and telling her that one day she must leave and go out into the world?

Harriet's mother, too, is no ordinary slave. She is well educated, knows French, plays the piano, and Jefferson discusses politics and national problems with her. As his housekeeper, she has a position of considerable authority, and many of the other slaves also whisper that she is the mistress of Monticello in more than one way. Yet in spite of her comfortable life and the advantages she enjoys, "Mama" always talks about the possibilities of slavery being abolished.

Harriet's brother Beverly has goals of his own. He wants Jefferson to send him to the University of Virginia to study law. Yet in a confrontation with his master, he is told that that will not be possible. Jefferson, the author of the Declaration of Independence, is afraid of the censure of his peers and feels the time has not yet come for the abolishing of slavery. Embittered, the young man turns away from the man who will never admit to being his father.

The Hemings family are not the only important people among the servants of Monticello. There is old Mammy Ursula, who lives in a small cabin and knows all about healing herbs, as well as superstitious tales about witches and magic. To educated folks like Harriet's mother or Master Jefferson, this is all nonsense, but Harriet recognizes the wisdom and knowledge of her people that the old woman represents. She also tells Harriet what her mother has said earlier—that she should leave the estate and seek her chance in freedom.

Another slave who does not believe in the way of the white folks is Thruston, a young man who is courting Harriet. While he has only a small part in the events of the story, he offers a traditional solution to Harriet. She can marry him, stay on the plantation, and live the secure but fettered life of a plantation slave.

Among the Jefferson family, Thomas Mann Randolph plays a very important role in Harriet's decisions about her future. Although he is Jefferson's son-in-law, he feels very strongly that slavery is evil, and encourages Harriet to leave and make a life of her own. How can she do this? By "passing," pretending that she is white, and therefore free born. For mulatto slaves who often looked more like their white parent than their black ancestors, it was sometimes possible to join white society by pretending to be someone else, and by denying part of their heritage. Fearing that after Jefferson's death Harriet and her family might be sold as slaves, Randolph and Harriet's Mama plot to make her take her chance and "pass" as a white woman.



It is through Randolph, that Harriet meets Thad, a young white man with whom she falls in love, and who becomes instrumental in helping her enter white society. Thad was born in the North and has been educated at Harvard University, and his feelings toward blacks and slavery are different from those typical of Virginia society.

To him, Harriet is simply an attractive girl whom he loves and will eventually marry, once she has left Monticello and become Elizabeth Lackland, a young white woman.

Although he is the center of events, Thomas Jefferson is not a developed character in this story. He is seen from many angles and through many eyes— those of Harriet's mother who loves him but is aware of his weaknesses, Beverly, who worships him until he turns away in anger from a man who refuses to acknowledge him as a son, and most importantly Harriet, who remembers the many kindnesses he has shown to her, but who can never quite forgive him for his lack of moral courage. Her parting words to him on the day she leaves for freedom are "I know that, Mr. Jefferson . . . and I thank you for all you have done for me." By calling him for the first time "Mister" instead of "Master" she asserts her freedom, and breaks the habits and bonds of her old relationship with him.

The major theme of this novel is slavery and its effect on the human spirit. Each of the main characters is touched by it, and each has to deal with it as an ethical and moral problem. For Harriet's mother, slavery is a sacrifice she has made out of love. In spite of her fierce desire for freedom she stays on at Monticello because she loves Thomas Jefferson. Both her children grow up in a society where they are considered property rather than human beings. Of course, there are some white people who find this situation unbearable such as Randolph and Thad, but most accept it as a necessary evil. The man who is most affected by slavery as a moral issue, Jefferson, lacks the courage to oppose it because he fears the attitudes of his peers. He represents the contemporary point of view when he tells Beverly about George Wythe, a Virginia planter who had acknowledged his mulatto son, and as a result had been murdered, while his children and mulatto wife were sold as slaves. The shadow of impending conflicts brought about by the issue of slavery, and leading to civil war, lies heavy on the novel. Harriet Hemings has a brighter future as the wife of a New England attorney, but even her happiness has a price since it is based on the deception that makes her deny her heritage.

Style

Point of View

The point of view of the novel is first person as seen through the journal entries of the fictional Harriet Hemings. The entire novel is told through these journal entries, sometimes giving the reader multiple insights into one particular day and sometimes skipping many weeks and sometimes months in the course of the novel.

The idea behind the novel is to show the complete isolation that the real Harriet Hemings must have felt during the course of her final years at Monticello. This is accomplished quite expertly through the intimacy of the journal entries. By writing the novel this way, the author makes the reader feel as though he or she has stumbled upon the only written proof of Jefferson's other family. Not only this, but it also opens up the emotional world of a very confused young lady and allows the reader see the growth this girl experiences during her struggle for acceptance during these later years at Monticello. Because the novel is in the first person, the reader sees an intimate portrait of this young lady that he or she might not have gotten had the novel been written in any other point of view.

Setting

The setting of the novel is Monticello several years after Jefferson's self-imposed retirement. The novel begins in 1819 and continues through to the year 1822, just four years before the real Thomas Jefferson died. This time period is early in American history and is a time in which slavery was not only accepted but also expected. It is also during this time period that the first rumblings of abolition of slavery are heard.

The political climate has very little to do with Harriet Hemings, the book's heroine, on the surface. However, the novel centers on Harriet's struggle to accept Thomas Jefferson as her father and as a man who will never acknowledge his tie to her. It also revolves around Harriet's decision not only to accept her freedom when it is offered, but also to take that freedom and pass into the white world. Therefore, the political climate of the time has great significance to Harriet in that it keeps her father from acknowledging her and also makes it impossible for Harriet to stay near her family after being given her freedom. The political climate makes it necessary for Harriet to pass as a white woman and creates a situation in which two kind white men take it upon themselves to help her.

Another part of the setting is the plantation of Monticello itself. This is a historic site that still stands today. Monticello was a home that Jefferson designed himself and continued to demolish and rebuild up until the time of his death. Monticello, in this novel, is Harriet's home, the only home she has ever known. Harriet does not want to leave Monticello and cannot bear the thought of never seeing its grounds again or the people who live there. Monticello is almost another character in this novel, a place that holds a

piece of the heroine's heart so large that she is almost unable to overcome her desire to stay in order to move on with her life.

Language and Meaning

The language of the novel is simple and easy to understand. However, there are times when the author uses more formal language that was used in the time period in which the novel is set in order to remind the reader of the setting of the novel. There are other times, particularly in dialogue, when the author uses fragments and slang in order to illustrate the difference in education and culture between the different characters or, in Thruston's case, to show the character's disdain for education.

The author uses both exposition and dialogue throughout the novel despite the fact that the novel is told through journal entries. The dialogue is often short, and many times the dialogue is shortened by exposition with only the most important phrases written out into dialogue, as a journal writer might do. This technique adds to the journal feel without taking away the drama of a novel's structure.

Structure

The novel is separated into many chapters, each headed by a date or phrase relating to the date. Some chapters also contain subchapters, which are also headed by dates. There are also a few letters written into the chapters from the men in Harriet's life who are helping her to plan her escape into freedom.

There is only one plotline in the novel, and it is laid out in a linear fashion. There are very few flashbacks, with the exception of stories that Harriet relates as she remembers stories her mother told her as a child. Most of the events, however, are written in the journal on the same day they happen and are only in the past in the sense that Harriet cannot possibly write down an event as it is actually happening. Due to the fact that Harriet often forgets to write in her journal for several weeks or months, the time passes rather quickly for the reader. The structure of the novel as a journal adds immediacy to the events, allows the reader to identify with the first-person protagonist and also adds a sense of realism to this historical novel.

Included at the beginning of the novel is a note from the author discussing her interest in history and her decision to write a novel about such a controversial subject. Also, the author includes a family history of both the Jefferson family and the Hemings family as it relates to the characters of the novel. At the end of the novel, the writer includes a glossary of terms used within the text that relate to the eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries. For those interested in further reading regarding Thomas Jefferson and Sally Hemings, the author also includes a bibliography at the end of her novel.



Quotes

"And so it was that on a cold day in December, Thomas Jefferson, my master, gave me this journal to write in.

"I, a nigra servant." December 1819, pg. 9

"Leave. They want me to leave like my brother Tom. Let me get it down plain in case anybody reads this book after I get done writing in it. Tom ran off." April 1820, pg. 13

"I wondered if Thruston ever pondered on who his daddy might be. I think not. Notions like that don't worry him like they worry me." April 1820, pg. 21

"Hemings have been on Monticello ever since Mister Wayles died. Of the six children by John Wayles that Grandma Elizabeth brought here, the 'light Hemings' were Mama's brother Peter and sister Critta, who died. The master freed Mama's older brothers Robert and James. Although James went and killed himself a while back. Which shows what this freedom can do to you." April 1820 (2), pg. 35

"I was glad he was running ahead of me. At least he couldn't see the tears coming down my face." April 1820 (2), pg. 51

"It was made of cast iron, and she would take it to the song and preaching meeting later this afternoon. On some plantations, such meetings are forbidden, and such pots are used to capture the sounds of the meeting so white patrollers won't hear them." April 1820, That Same Day, pg. 61

"I am a person in my own right. With feelings. Oh, if I live to be as old as mammy Ursula, I will never forget this conversation with Thomas Jefferson. My heart leaps inside me, thinking on it. He talked with me as if he were truly my father." April 1820 (3), pg. 73

"My body felt bruised. My mind felt betrayed. My skin felt like it wanted to come off." Mid-May 1820, That Same Night, pg. 93

"Oh, Harriet, this freedom is worth everything. There is no sacrifice too great. Knowing that tom is free and out there and making it is the only thing that helps me bear the sorrow of hearing from him just once in all these years." The Third Week of May 1820, pg. 115

"Men, I thought. How different their minds work. They cut everything down to simple and plain without the embroidery or the lacework on the edges." May 15, 1822, May 17, 1822, pg. 185

"Then let me tell you something else, sister. Something Mama told me. There isn't one scrap of paper in that whole library of his. Or anywhere. Not one scrap of paper that



says what Mama is to him. Nothing that connects her to him. Nothing that connects us to him. Except those lists in that Farm Book of his." July 13, 1822, pgs. 212-213

"Oh! I saw them, I saw tears in those blue eyes, though he was smiling. Tears for me! I leaned back in the carriage. My heart seemed to stop. I felt such a mixture of joy and pain that I thought I would die. So he cried for me, then. He was crying even now. O, Lordy, I thought, Lordy. Tears for me.

"I took those tears with me as we drove down the mountain on my way to being free."
The Middle of August 1822, pg. 248



Topics for Discussion

1. Why does Thomas Jefferson give Harriet a diary and ask her to record the events of nature? What does this tell us about his own interests? Are there any other details that Harriet describes about his study which show him as a man of many talents? What are some of his accomplishments and inventions?

2. Harriet's mama has very passionate feelings about freedom. Harriet calls them a sickness. Why? If she feels so strongly about it, why does she not leave Monticello? Could she do so if she wanted? Did she ever have a chance to be free? If so, why did she not take it?

3. What is the relationship between Thruston and Harriet? Does she love him and would she marry him? If not, why not? How does she feel about some of the other black field slaves?

She says, for instance, that her mother does not believe in the superstitions of old Mammy. Does Harriet believe? Is she part of their world?

4. Beverly, Harriet's brother wants to go to the university. Why does Jefferson not help him? And why does Beverly lie to his sister and tell her that the master would be sending him to college?

5. Sally Hemingss had another son, Tom, who "passed white." How does his experience affect Harriet? And what exactly is involved in "passing"?

Does Harriet believe it is a way out of their dilemma? Why does she cry when she hears that Beverly has "passed" and has found a way to go to the university. Shouldn't she be glad for him?

6. What is the significance of the title *Wolf by the Ears*? What does it imply about the possibilities of a solution to the problem of slavery?

7. When Randolph talks to Harriet, he asks her why she wants to leave a place where she is happy. She answers that she would come to hate it if she stayed. Why?

8. The Declaration of Independence which Thomas Jefferson helped draw up speaks of freedom, yet he himself keeps slaves. How do you think he can reconcile this fact with what he has written?

9. What is the significance of Harriet calling Jefferson "mister" rather than "master"? Why does she say, "I broke my bonds"?

10. Thomas Jefferson is one of the heroes of American history. In this novel, his character shows several flaws. In fact his attitude towards slavery in general, and his own slaves in particular, shows a moral weakness.



Do you think it is okay to portray a hero in a negative manner?

11. Rinaldi implies that Harriet and Beverly are Jefferson's children, but this fact is never directly confirmed, not even by their own mother. Do you think Harriet indulges in some wishful thinking? Does she have any evidence for her belief? Is it important?



Essay Topics

Harriet Hemings tells the story of her final years on Monticello through journal entries. Why do you think the author wrote the story in this way? Why does Jefferson give Harriet the journal? Do you think this is a gift of kindness or a sign of his deeper relationship to Harriet? Is it common for a slave, such as Harriet, to know how to read and write or to have such a good education? Why do you think Jefferson gives Harriet this education?

Discuss freedom and its meaning to the slaves of Jefferson's time. Why is freedom so important to Sally Hemings, Thruston and Mammy Ursula in the novel? Why is it not important to Harriet? If freedom is so important to Sally Hemings, why does she not take it when she is in France and could remain free? Is it unfair of Sally to expect Harriet to do what she herself could not do?

Discuss Jefferson's treatment of his slaves in the novel as opposed to his treatment of Sally Hemings and her children. Is there a difference in the way Jefferson treats the Hemings? If so, why does Jefferson treat the Hemings differently, and why does he offer her children freedom but not Sally? Do you think the Virginia law requiring free slaves to leave the state within a year has anything to do with Jefferson's decision not to free Sally Hemings?

Discuss passing. What is passing, and why does Thomas Mann Randolph suggest Harriet do it? Do you think Thomas Mann Randolph is correct in stating that Harriet is more white than black? Do you think the color of her skin gives Harriet the right to pass as a white woman, or do you believe she should have been honest and gone into the world as a freed slave?

Discuss Thomas Jefferson's political stand on slavery. Why does Jefferson say slavery is like holding a wolf by the ears? Could the early economic system of American have survived without the slaves to perform manual labor? Should Jefferson have freed all slaves when he wrote the Declaration of Independence, as he wanted?

Discuss Jefferson's refusal to claim Sally Hemings' children in the novel. If Jefferson believes slavery is wrong, why does he not free Sally Hemings, marry her and take credit for fathering her children? Do you think Jefferson is afraid for himself or his children or both?

Why is Harriet so happy to see tears in Jefferson's eyes when she leaves? Is this emotion a revelation on Jefferson's part? Will Harriet ever see her family again? Why is Harriet upset that Beverly passed into the white world too?

Discuss reality versus fiction in *Wolf by the Ears*. Recent scientific testing has proven that a Jefferson fathered Eston Hemings. How does this affect your reading of this novel?

Ideas for Reports and Papers

1. Thomas Jefferson was not only a president of the United States but also an inventor and amateur scientist. This is also true of another of Jefferson's contemporaries, the statesman Benjamin Franklin, an inventor, printer, writer and scientist. Such a wide range of talents and interests is rarely found in today's prominent people; they are much more likely to be specialists in one field. Why do you think this is the case? Does it have anything to do with the character and status of modern science?
2. Jefferson's slaves were well treated, but this was not the case on other plantations. Write a paper about the life of a plantation slave in the early nineteenth century.
3. Modern journalism and literature often try to show the weaknesses of famous people, rather than treating them as heroes. What do you think underlies this trend? Is it fair to the person in question? What does such an approach accomplish?
4. Harriet is a well-educated young woman of her time, yet in many ways, she is a young girl of the early nineteenth century. How does the education and upbringing of a young lady at that time differ from the schooling and learning of a twentieth century woman?

Further Study

Adams, William Howard. *Jefferson's Monticello*. New York: Abbeville Press, 1983. The author gives an interesting account of Jefferson's famous estate.

Baron, Robert C. *The Garden and Farm Books of Thomas Jefferson*. Golden, CO: Fulcrum, 1987. This is a reprint of Jefferson's notebooks in which he recorded the plant and animal studies and observations he made at Monticello.

Bear, James Jr., and Edwin Morris Bettes, eds. *The Family Letters of Thomas Jefferson*. Charlottesville: Thomas Jefferson Memorial Foundation (University Press of Virginia), 1966.

Brodie, Fawn. "Thomas Jefferson's Unknown Grandchildren: a Study in Historical Silences." In *American Heritage* (October 1976): 28. The author, a professor of history at UCLA, is the person who suggested that Jefferson had children with Sally Hemings, one of his slaves.

Cooper, Ilene. Review. In *Booklist* 87 (1991): 1125. This is a short evaluation of the novel. The author stresses the sensitive nature of the topic of slavery.

Shook, Bruce Ann. Review. In *Bulletin of the Center for Children's Books* 44 (June 1991): 247. The author praises the novel for its candor about an issue seldom faced in children's books.

Sutherland, Zena. Review. In *School Library Journal* 37 (April 1991): 142. A review of the novel which stresses that the characters are well drawn and the situation poignant and meaningful.

Related Titles

According to Rinaldi, her historical novels are her favorites, and she has written several, all dealing with the early history of the United States. She credits her interest in this period to her son's fascination with and participation in historical re-enactments. *Time Enough for Drums* tells the story of a family that survives the War of Independence and the Hessian occupation of Trenton, NJ. The novel is about ordinary people and does not use any famous characters. The same is true of her next work of fiction, *The Last Silk Dress*, whose heroine is a patriotic young Southern girl who discovers that she is the illegitimate daughter of a Yankee. At this time, Rinaldi is working on an ambitious series of historical novels, the *Quilt Trilogy*. The story follows three Massachusetts sisters whose lives take them to different parts of the country shortly after the Civil War.

Before they depart, one journeying to the wilds of the Northwest Territory, another going to sea, and the third traveling west to Ohio, they divide the fabrics they have used to make a family quilt. The first title in this trilogy, *A Stitch in Time*, has just been published.



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