

The Yearling Study Guide

The Yearling by Marjorie Kinnan Rawlings

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Overview

The Yearling is a touching, suspenseful, and realistic story about a boy caught between love for his pet and responsibility to his family. The novel follows a year in the life of this playful and sensitive boy—a year filled with adventure and danger, loss and loneliness. The boy's experiences of sorrow, bitterness, and courage speak of what it means to grow up in a harsh environment.

About the Author

Marjorie Kinnan Rawlings was born in Washington, D.C., on August 8, 1896. Her father was an attorney in the U.S. Patent Office, but he also owned a farm in Maryland, where Rawlings gained her first love and understanding of the land. She attended public school, then enrolled at the University of Wisconsin, where she graduated Phi Beta Kappa with a bachelor of arts degree in 1918.

After working for a year as a publicity writer for the Y.W.C.A. National Headquarters in New York City, she married writer Charles A. Rawlings and moved with him to Rochester, New York. She served as an editor of the magazine *Home Sector* and wrote for the *Louisville Courier-Journal* and the *Rochester Journal*. From 1925 to 1927 she produced a syndicated verse column for United Features entitled "Songs of a Housewife."

She also wrote fiction during these years, but was unsuccessful at finding a publisher for her stories.

In 1928, Rawlings purchased a seventy-two-acre orange grove at Cross Creek in north-central Florida. This frontier scrub country and its inhabitants fascinated Rawlings, who had separated from her husband, and prompted her to write "Cracker Chidlings: Real Tales from the Florida Interior," a collection of character sketches that appeared in *Scribner's Magazine* in 1931. Although these colorful sketches aroused criticism that she was giving a bad name to the citizens of the state, Rawlings continued to write about the Florida moonshiners and hunters, portraying their lives with authenticity. Her short story "Gal Young Un" (1932) received an O. Henry Memorial Award in 1933, the same year that her divorce was finalized. Her first novel, *South Moon Under*, was also well received.

Rawlings believed research to be essential to her writing, and would spend weeks living in the backcountry, gathering stories and facts firsthand. *The Yearling*, a story of twelve-year-old Jody Baxter and his pet fawn, Flag, was partially inspired by her visits with an old man who took her bear hunting. This novel, considered the high point of Rawlings's career and an outstanding book for young people, won the Pulitzer Prize for fiction in 1939. The novel also won the Lewis Carroll Shelf Award in 1963.

In 1941, Rawlings moved to St. Augustine, Florida, with her second husband, Norton Sanford Baskin. She completed an autobiographical story collection, *Cross Creek*, and won a second O. Henry Memorial Award in 1945 for her short story "Black Secret."

In 1947 she purchased a summer home in rural New York and used this setting as the background for the final novel published during her lifetime, *The Sojourner*. Rawlings died of a cerebral hemorrhage in St. Augustine on December 14, 1953. She is buried at Antioch Cemetery near Cross Creek. *The Secret River*, a posthumously published novel for young adults, was named a Newbery Honor Book in 1956.

Plot Summary

Jody Baxter is a carefree boy, the only surviving child of Ezra ("Penny") and Ora Baxter. The story opens in April of Jody's twelfth year, in the early 1870's, to find him enjoying the simple life in the lush scrub country of northeast Florida. At every opportunity, Jody leaves his work to dawdle the day away, wanting for only one thing: a pet that will love him and follow him. While his father indulges his childhood urges, his mother remains cool and stern.

A clever old bear has been tormenting farmers in the area, and Penny has promised Jody that the two of them will hunt "Old Slewfoot." When the bear kills a precious brood sow, father and son track the wily thief, only to see him escape. They travel together to their nearest neighbors, the Forresters, where Penny trades a little dog for a more reliable gun and Jody is reunited with his only playmate, Fodder Wing. After a thrilling evening of hunting tales, Penny leaves Jody to spend a rare night with his friend, enjoying the boy's collection of tamed creatures. The night is marked by strange and wonderful revelry as Jody sees how the Forresters live, so differently from his own family.

Life on Baxter Island is hard by contrast, but Jody could be content, if only he had that pet. As the spring turns to summer, Penny teaches Jody to study and appreciate nature. Jody observes playful young animals, knowing he must have a loving pet. On a trading trip to Volusia, father and son visit Penny's lifetime companion, Grandma Hutto. Here Jody experiences another contrasting lifestyle, clean and comfortable, but his heart is still in the snug cabin in the clearing. A conflict arises between the Huttos and the Forresters, and Jody and Penny are drawn into a feud that will simmer on.

Shortly after, tracking their missing hogs, Penny is struck by a rattlesnake. Miraculously a doe appears, and Penny shoots her, cutting out her organs to make a drawing poultice. As Jody runs several miles to the Forresters for help, he spots a tiny, shivering fawn and recalls his need for a pet. He realizes that Penny has just killed the baby's mother.

Amazingly, Penny recovers as Buck Forrester, with Jody's help, kindly takes over much of the work. Jody is allowed to find the little fawn and bring it home. As the hot summer passes, the Baxter fortunes seesaw between hardship and plenty, but Jody has his loving pet. When Fodder Wing dies suddenly, the dead boy's mother assures Jody that her son had named the fawn "Flag," and so it shall be.

In fall a vicious storm pounds the scrub, causing miles of flooding any wildlife not drowned faces starvation, and crops are rotting. Neighbors together survey the damage, and Jody proudly shoots his first bear. Now a plague ravages the wildlife, and the family faces its most serious threat, fighting now for survival. Just as Penny falls ill with fever, Old Slewfoot returns to steal one of their hogs. Flag, moreover, has become more mischievous and a constant source of irritation to Ma.

When early winter frosts find the family around their cozy hearth, Penny recovers his strength and confidence, feeling they will prevail. Then a pack of hungry wolves invades, stealing their calf, and the clearing is no longer the secure fortress Jody imagined it to be. Father and son join with the Forresters to kill off nearly all the remaining wolves, and Jody plays a key and successful role in the hunt.

Close to Christmas, with plans for a Christmas trip to Volusia, Old Slewfoot returns to steal the newborn heifer calf. Penny grimly commits to hunting and killing the bear, Christmas or no, and Jody and Flag accompany him on a three-day journey of bone-chilling cold and deprivation. Penny shoots the bear and the family does end up at the Christmas party in town, as do the Forresters. Tragedy strikes again as Grandma Hutto's house goes up in flames. The Forresters are clearly responsible, but justice will never be served. The cautious friendship between the two neighboring families is irreparably wounded.

A mild, serene January brings father and son ever closer, and even Ma "thaws" a bit. In February, however, Penny's rheumatism strikes and Jody must take on the responsibility for the fields. Now he is constantly badgered by the annoying, sometimes destructive, behavior of Flag. March finds Penny restored to health, returning to the fields to plant. He and Jody work side by side for a happy week, and then Penny suffers a hernia and is bedridden, in constant pain, for the foreseeable future. Jody becomes the man of the house, working to exhaustion. Unfortunately, Flag has become an actual threat to their survival, destroying the corn crop repeatedly. Jody works feverishly to raise a higher fence, but Flag jumps it with ease. Finally, in exquisite anguish, Penny commands his son to tie the deer and shoot it. When Jody is unable to comply, his mother is commanded to do the deed, and she does it poorly, wounding the creature horribly. Jody must kill his pet now in order to put it out of its misery.

After firing the horrific shot, Jody runs from home, hurling epithets of hatred at his parents. He endures three terrifying days and nights in the woods and on the water, bound for Jacksonville and, ultimately, for Boston where the Huttos have relocated. Near starvation and in a faint, he is rescued, fed, and set back on his way home. When his morale sinks to its lowest, feeling as if the world has cast him off, he suddenly thinks of his loving father and knows that his place is in the clearing where he was raised. He returns to a loving and forgiving father who recognizes that Jody has passed through the "yearling" stage and is now a young man.

Chapter 1

Chapter 1 Summary

The book opens on a beautiful April afternoon. Jody is supposed to hoe and weed the corn while his father is away, but he decides to go in search of a bee tree full of honey. Jody leans his hoe against the fence and walks far beyond the rows of corn, moving south through the black jack. Two of their dogs attempt to follow him, but he sends them back home. The family's third dog, Julia, has followed Jody's father into town.

As he walks, Jody muses on his strained relationship with Old Julia. The two of them grew up together, his father has explained, and Julia still remembers how Jody accidentally hurt her while playing roughly in his younger years. He thinks about Grandma Hutto's white dog that can do tricks, and he longs to have an animal of his own that will lick his face and follow him loyally.

At the cool spring, Jody feels alone in a secret world. He remembers that he has always wanted to make himself a flutter-mill from palmetto fronds. With his knife he cuts palm fronds, fashioning the flutter-mill as he has seen Oliver Hutto do. He sinks his creation into the sandy creek bed and the current picks up the palm fronds, one after another, making his flutter-mill turn.

Jody lies down and watches the flutter-mill turn hypnotically, falling asleep in the sun. When he awakens, the sunlight has gone and a fine mist is falling. He hurries up the bank, unsure of the time, when the sun bursts out forming a rainbow. The glory of this fine day fills him, and he begins to whirl around faster and faster until he become dizzy and falls to the ground. When he recovers, he is filled with the joy of a perfect spring day.

Jody knows his mother will have dinner ready, and he feels a pang of guilt for having left her alone with the chores. He finds his father at the woodpile, doing work that Jody should have been doing. He tells his father about his glorious afternoon, and his father acknowledges that it is natural for a young boy to go rambling, and he understands. Jody's mother might not be so understanding, he warns. The family shares a friendly meal and easy conversation. As Jody lights a tallow candle for his mother, his father looks out the window at the full moon and reminds Jody that April has come and it is time to go hunting Old Slewfoot as soon as they see signs the bear is active. Jody teases his mother and is rewarded by a rare laugh. He has trouble falling asleep, so filled with the April day and the promise of a bear hunt.

Chapter 1 Analysis

In this first chapter we are introduced to the Baxter family as well as to their three dogs and the scrub country in which they live. We discover that they survive through honest labor, and their store of food is slim at this point in the year. The relationship among the

three main characters is introduced here. The reader begins to see that Penny Baxter, Jody's father, understands his son while Jody's mother is less willing to bend, more focused on the serious work of putting food on the table and tending to the plants and animals.

A significant portion of the chapter is dedicated to setting the scene, depicting the lush growth of trees and flowers and describing the entire scene as almost intoxicatingly beautiful and serene. Jody acknowledges three of his longings in this chapter, and one of them is fulfilled: He does construct a successful flutter-mill. The other two, to have a loyal pet and to hunt Old Slewfoot, remain on his heart as he falls asleep. The reader is left with the image of a boy surrounded by the wonders of nature and a loving home and filled to the brim with the promise of a new spring.

Chapter 2

Chapter 2 Summary

The next morning Penny, upon awakening, recalls Jody's disobedience yesterday in going to the Glen instead of hoeing the corn. Perhaps he should have "crawled him about it," he thinks, but boyhood is too short, Penny realizes. He muses on his own life as he lies next to his large, sleeping wife. He recalls a boyhood as the son of a stern preacher who expected endless toil from his children. He even remembers how Lem Forrester gave him his nickname: "You're good money a'right, but hit just don't come no smaller, Leetle ol' Penny Baxter."

Penny has lived a life of scrupulous honesty. He chose to live in the scrub country rather than on the river amidst the bickering humans, feeling more at home among the animals than among people. He married in his thirties, cleared this land (bought from the Forresters), and built this cabin. He planned to raise many children here, and he wonders whether he's been cursed. He's buried one dead infant after another. After a period during which there were no more babies, Jody came along, his father recalls, and this last child grew and thrived.

Penny went away to war when Jody was two-years-old, believing he would be gone for a few months. He was gone a total of four years, during which time Jody and his mother had stayed with Grandma Hutto.

Chapter 2 Analysis

The entire chapter is devoted to Penny's reminiscences, as he lies awake in bed, looking at the full moon. It is clear that Penny understands his son's need to be a boy and have a childhood. His wife, on the other hand, had buried five babies before Jody came along, and she seems unable to invest herself in this child. She remains detached and unemotional, as if all her love and efforts had been given out before she finally gave birth to a child who lived. This information helps the reader understand the somewhat strained and cool relationship between Jody and his mother. With a better understanding of Penny, however, the reader now sees that he is predisposed to understand Jody's yearnings and indulge them, as he was unable to do for himself as a child. Now the reader knows the history of the Baxter family as well as their long-standing relationship with the Forresters.

Chapter 3

Chapter 3 Summary

A few hours later, the sun has arisen and Jody awakens on his cornhusk mattress. He washes and grooms himself in front of the small mirror, commenting to his mother that he is terribly ugly. She responds that he looks just like a Baxter and, if he were to develop the habit of working, would turn out like his father. Jody's look in the mirror reveals a slight build, blue eyes, and straw colored hair, which defies his attempts to train it.

Suddenly Jody hears Julia bark and realizes that she and Pa are tracking something. He tears outside, against the warning of his mother, and comes upon his father standing over the carcass of their pregnant brood sow. Old Slewfoot has struck, as Jody can see by the footprints. This was a personal kill, Penny explains, because the bear came into Baxter territory to do the deed. Jody realizes that he and his father are about to hunt Old Slewfoot, and he cannot wait to begin. The bear has been confounding local stockowners for five years. Penny admits that he will have to ask the Forresters for a sow.

Penny points out to Jody that the killer bear has eaten only a mouthful of the pig meat. This means he killed when he really was not hungry, and that is why Penny hates bear. He reminds Jody that animals and people alike should take only what they need.

Jody and Penny drag the dead sow to their back yard and hang the carcass high enough so the dogs cannot touch it. Ma is in a terrible state when she sees that her brood sow has been killed. She is angry at the dogs for failing to defend the livestock, but Pa says there is not a dog alive as smart as this particular bear. Ma is unhappy that Penny plans to ask the Forresters for a sow, not wanting to "be beholden to them rascals." In her fury, Ma Baxter declares that she would like a chance to whup that bear, and Penny says, if that fight were to take place, his money would be on Ma, not on the bear. Jody laughs at the vision of his mother fighting Old Slewfoot and winning, but Ma is only more upset as the chapter ends.

Chapter 3 Analysis

This chapter provides the insightful incident that sets the plot in motion: The serenity of life in the scrub has been broken now that Slewfoot has entered the family's clearing and made a "personal kill" when he was not even hungry. The main characters must respond to this event and make choices about what action they will take.

Each family member reacts to the event characteristically. Jody is sickened by the sight of the dead sow but terribly excited about the prospect of the hunt. Penny is angered by the bear's actions and immediately formulates a plan to deal with them. He will make the most of the partially destroyed pig, using what he can for his family. He will replace

the sow by borrowing from the neighbors and plan his bear hunt for the near future. Ma Baxter reacts emotionally, showing both an attachment to the pig as a living creature and disappointment at the added stress this turn of events will place on their limited food supply. Her fantasy about teaching the bear a lesson by thrashing him personally makes her a slightly comic figure, and her husband and son respond with gentle teasing and good natured laughter, both of which make her angry.

Here the family's relationship to nature is clearly established. They care for their livestock out of respect as well as out of the need for food to survive. They have a healthy respect for the wildlife that surrounds them, but they must keep it in check if they are to prosper. When nature deals them a blow, they each respond according to temperament and level of maturity. Jody's response, however, provides the excitement that draws the reader on to the next chapter.

Chapter 4

Chapter 4 Summary

After breakfast, Penny announces that it is time to hunt the bear. Jody's mother packs her men a lunch, at the last minute dropping into the knapsack the corn pone she had planned to save for herself. Jody goes to the smokehouse for a piece of 'gator tail. He is reminded there is little meat left after the long winter. Penny shoulders his shotgun, gathers the three dogs, and advises Jody to fetch his shoes, as the going will be rough.

Penny explains to Jody that they have allowed the bear time to relax and believe that he is not being pursued. The two observe Slewfoot's tracks and discuss the probability of being afraid when they finally come face to face with the bear. Jody appreciates his father's good sense in planning the hunt as he has, for he gets game ten times more often than the Forresters, who plunge madly into the woods in noisy haste.

Father and son walk on, following Julia, until Penny sees half-eaten fire-plant trees, evidence that the bear has been here a few nights ago. As they track Old Slewfoot, Penny tells Jody of some of his experiences tracking and hunting bear and advises him to kill only when in need of food, unlike the Forresters.

Suddenly Julia yips toward a dense thicket of bay trees. Penny loads his shotgun now and tells Julia to "git him" as they enter the thicket. Jody and his father struggle to keep up with Julia and Rip, the feist having deserted the group long ago. A huge crushed fern, still in the act of springing back, suggests Slewfoot has just passed this way. Soaked with sweat, they follow the bear's tracks.

Julia bays and Penny runs toward the creek as the bear moves in that direction "like a black hurricane." The dogs hold Slewfoot at bay, but Penny's gun misfires twice and then backfires, knocking him down. This gives the bear a chance to grab Julia. In order to save the dog, Penny runs at Slewfoot, poking him with his gun. The bear retreats into Juniper Creek with both dogs clinging to him. The dogs soon drop their hold, but Julia falls to the ground, badly injured. Penny swims the rushing creek to retrieve her. Now he knows he must have a new gun. With a better gun and some time, he will get the bear, he vows.

The father and son walk several miles with their dogs, back to Baxter Island, their clearing in the pines, Julia slung on Penny's back. Ma springs into action to help save Julia. Penny cleans and stitches closed the deep gashes on the dog's body and carries her to Jody's bedroom, determined to stay with her through the night.

Jody feels especially cozy in the clearing that evening as he does his chores. Ma cooks a simple meal, including a little piece of pork from the dead sow. She comments that she would rather be eating bear meat. Penny is silent, tending to Julia, and Jody's need to talk of the hunt goes unsatisfied, as his mother shows no interest in the details. At



night Jody and his father share Jody's bed and Ma stays up to work on the pork sausage that must be made from the dead sow. Father and son talk of the thrill of the hunt and the fearsome sight of the actual encounter with the bear. Penny explains that, as big and mean as a bear is, it is sad to watch one die. He explains the law of nature to Jody: kill or go hungry, assuring his son that wild animals kill because that is their nature. Jody begins to shiver and Penny drapes an arm around him to warm him. Jody drifts off to sleep, waking once to find his father tending to the wounded hound.

Chapter 4 Analysis

The reader now develops a clearer understanding of the Baxter family's relationships to nature and to each other as well as deeper insight into the three main characters. Ora, Jody's mother, demonstrates her devotion to her two men when she sacrifices her one little pleasure, the corn pone, to give them comfort on their journey. She responds efficiently and sensitively to Julia's wounds, but she draws the line at having the injured dog in her bedroom through the night. A glimpse into the smokehouse validates her concern about the meat they will be missing with the loss of the sow. Ora is emerging as a practical, sensible woman who is slow to show affection or joy, but she is kindhearted and loyal.

Penny's superior intellect is on display in this chapter as he conducts his hunt very unlike the Forresters' methods, and this is not lost on Jody. His admiration for his father deepens. Penny also demonstrates his devotion to Julia, swimming the rushing creek to save her, carrying her home through the dense thicket and swamp, and tending to her through the night, even to the point of giving up his own bed and sleeping with his son. In fact, Penny also shows a keen understanding of all three of his dogs, urging Jody to forgive the feist for wandering away before the confrontation with the bear. Penny clearly has a deep understanding of natural creatures and wants to help Jody develop a respectful relationship with them. Jody is beginning to define the line between the safety of Baxter Island and the threat of the wild, but he is confident that he is safe and secure within his family's clearing.

Jody shows some age-appropriate moments of weakness, clutching his dad at the sound of a squirrel, feeling faint at the sight of Julia's blood, and failing to blaze the trail for his father as they trudge home, burdened with the wounded dog. The reader senses an easy, comfortable relationship between father and son, in some contrast to the slightly prickly relationship between Jody and his mother. The final scene, in which father and son share a bed and conversation, provides a tender glimpse of their deeply loving relationship. Jody shivers, more out of fear than from the cold, and his father's willingness to warm him suggests the perfect security of family and home on which Jody relies. It is interesting to note that, while father and son share meaningful conversation and tender love, Ma Baxter is alone in her bed because she did not want her husband keeping her awake to tend the injured hound.

Chapter 5

Chapter 5 Summary

At breakfast the next morning, the family sees that Julia is healing well. Now Penny makes it clear to his wife that he and Jody will be visiting the Forresters to trade the feist for a new gun. Jody is beside himself with excitement, mostly for the chance to see his friend Fodder Wing, but Ma is furious. The men see that Ma has water and split wood for the day, and they mount the horse, sharing a saddle bought from the Forresters. As they ride, Penny points out to his son the signs of early Spanish exploration, including the blazing of the trails they use. Jody, of course, wonders whether the Spaniards fought bears; his father assures him they fought all wild animals as well as the Indians.

Father and son pass through a variety of natural settings, enjoying the birdsong and sweating under the hot sun as the low scrub temporarily closes in on them. At last they enter the tall trees of Forresters Island. Penny dismounts and, to Jody's amazement, picks up the feist. Suddenly a commotion erupts within the Forrester cabin and a pack of dogs bolt out the front door with Ma Forrester flailing at them with her broom. The Forrester boys crowd behind her, shouting enthusiastic welcomes to Penny and Jody.

Now Fodder-wing comes forward, a humped and twisted body that "moved like an ape," using a walking stick. The two boys are thrilled to see each other. Jody is perfectly comfortable with this misshapen body, recalling how his friend, born this way, got his name by trying to "fly" from the roof with wings made of fodder. Jody harbors a secret belief that a person might actually fashion a kite or other mechanism that would allow him to fly. Fodder Wing offers to show Jody his new baby coon, and the two inspect Fodder Wing's growing animal collection. Jody cuddles the soft little coon, and once again the longing for a pet washes over him. Fodder Wing offers Jody his fox squirrel, but Jody replies, "Ma won't let me keep nothin'."

Chapter 5 Analysis

Two important insights are added to our growing understanding of the Baxters in this chapter. We learn that Jody's longing for a pet is related to his mother's refusal to let him keep any animal. It is clear that this is a very important desire in Jody. We also witness the warm and friendly relationship between Penny and the Forresters. Having heard from Ma about the Forresters' black hearts, the reader might be surprised by the warm welcome the Baxters are given as they enter the Forrester clearing. The hearty welcome suggests, also, the infrequency of guests and the loneliness of living in the scrub.

Jody's musings about the possibility of a human being someday flying give us further perspective on the time period in which the story takes place. Knowing that it is prior to the advent of human flight in the early twentieth century, and knowing that Penny has

fought four years in a war, and given the living conditions of the two families, the reader can now surmise that the story takes place in the latter half of the nineteenth century.

Chapter 6

Chapter 6 Summary

Jody continues to enjoy the baby coon's gentle and curious personality when, from the shadows, Pa Forrester speaks up to remind the boys that the coon will grow to be less friendly, as is its nature. Ma Forrester enters, followed by her six sons. Penny enters, still cradling the little dog in his arms.

Now Penny begins his careful baiting of the Forresters, holding the dog gently but insisting it is a worthless, sorry dog, good for nothing. He adds the fact that his old gun is also good for nothing, telling of his hunting fiasco yesterday. The Forresters' eyes dance between the feist and their gun collection, and then Penny mentions he has been hunting Old Slewfoot. The boys are hungry for news of the bear, but Ma interrupts to announce the noon meal. The moonshine jug is brought out and passed around among all but Jody. Then the table is covered with hot, steaming food, hunted or gathered from the surrounding land. Jody is wide-eyed at this plentiful feast, and he enjoys the meal as great mounds of food disappear into Forrester bellies. The meal ends with Pa proudly proclaiming that his sons, despite their wild ways, have never cursed him or his wife at the dinner table.

Chapter 6 Analysis

This chapter is a delightful look into the lifestyle of the Forresters, offering a totally new perspective on the family formerly pictured (mostly by Ma Baxter) as wild, brawny, heartless and conniving. The reader witnesses kindness and sharing, earthy wisdom, and simple joy, all amidst a clatter of voices and ample bodies. This is a valuable insight into the Baxters' neighbors.

Perhaps more important, the reader observes Penny's clever baiting of the Forresters, playing on their well-known love of dogs and pride in their gun collection. He immediately positions himself as the underdog with little to offer, disarming them for the eventual deal. Meanwhile, Jody is able to witness the behavior of all of these people and enjoy the pleasure of a more bountiful table than he has seen in a long time. The baby coon, though, has been the focus of his attention.

Chapter 7

Chapter 7 Summary

The noisy meal over, Pa Forrester asks Penny to go on now with the story of Old Slewfoot's latest activity. To Jody's amazement, Ma insists her large sons first clear the table and wash the dishes. Fodder-wing collects scraps for the dogs and his array of pets as Jody watches in disbelief, hoping his father will not pass along to his mother the notion of men-folk helping in the kitchen.

Penny now holds the group enthralled as he relates the story of Slewfoot's trespass onto his property, the killing of the sow, and the excitement of the hunt, told step by step. Jody is proud of his father's skill in making the story itself almost more thrilling than the actual hunt, and he relishes the fact that his slight, short father is the best hunter in this room of giants. The Forresters sit on the edge of their seats, fists tightened, as the story unwinds. Finally Lem insists that the feist must be one terrific dog to fight a bear and come out with "nary mark on him." Lem states his desire to own the feist, but Penny insists it would be a bad bargain as the dog is worthless. Ultimately Lem insists on trading a beautiful English rifle for the little dog, and Penny makes him swear not to be angry later. Jody is awed by his father's ability to outwit another man simply by telling the truth.

After a few more hours of hunting stories, to which Jody has been a rapt listener, Penny shoulders both guns and heads toward his horse. Fodder Wing begs for Jody to spend the night, and Buck promises to bring him home tomorrow. Father and son exchange a few private words about the trade that has taken place, and Penny rides off. Jody almost wants to call him back and leave with him, just to know again the security of his home.

The boys play with Fodder Wing's pets, and Jody helps clean and repair cages and gather eggs. Again he is struck by his desire for a pet of his own, but recalls that his mother will not allow another mouth to feed. The Forrester boys scatter to do their chores in leisurely fashion, and Jody is aware of the great responsibility of managing a clearing such as this, the same size as his father's. He feels a pang of guilt for having left the corn unhoed.

In the evening, the older sons spread the table with dinner's cold leftovers, and every scrap is eaten. Fodder Wing and Jody again feed the dogs. The younger boys lose interest in the talk of horse-trading and retire to a corner to play mumbledeppeg, flipping pocketknives into the floorboards. Jody acknowledges that his mother would not have allowed such on her smooth floors. Jody brings up the subject of the ancient Spaniards, and Fodder Wing claims to see them regularly. He even tells Jody what magnolia tree to look behind to see a Spaniard astride a horse. Jody knows this is one of the many tales Fodder Wing tells that suggest he is crazy, but he longs to believe him. Soon the

Forresters drop into bed without so much as washing their feet, Jody notices, and he shares Fodder Wing's bed.

A ruckus awakens Jody in the middle of the night as the naked Forresters bring in their pack of dogs to search out a "varmint" that's been scratching around Ma's bedpost. Convinced it is too late to go back to sleep, they turn instead to the whiskey jug and the fiddle, guitar and other handy instruments. To the raucous, tuneless music, Ma begins to heat the coffee and fix breakfast. Jody feels that surely his mother would not disapprove of such frolicsome people. Suddenly Lem mentions his sweetheart, Twink, and Jody blurts out that she is actually Oliver Hutto's sweetheart. Lem's threatening glance is forgotten though, as the music carries Jody along. At dawn, a rather scanty breakfast is on the table, as Ma has been distracted by the revelry. The men pull on their only breeches, wash above their beards, and are ready for the day. Buck and Jody mount the stallion and head for the Baxter clearing. As Jody waves goodbye to Buck and enters his own gate, he realizes he has forgotten to look for the Spaniard behind the magnolia.

Chapter 7 Analysis

Several important themes are reinforced in this chapter, the most obvious of which is the strong contrast between the Baxters and the Forresters. By spending the night, Jody has had the opportunity to witness a multitude of differences between his family and this one, and his estimation of the Forresters is only enhanced. He observes their leisurely pace, taking in stride the work to be done, and Jody realizes how hard his father must work to do the jobs of six men. During the late-night jam session, he also gets to see the Forresters at play, enjoying life with wild abandon.

Interestingly, Jody thinks of his mother during the revelry, assuring himself that she could not disapprove of such sheer joy. Jody's mother is the persistent voice in his head that says, *wash your feet, don't make marks on the smooth floor, and don't bring in another mouth to feed*. By contrast, Jody's father, Penny, is a source of growing pride and inspiration for the boy. It is becoming clear that, in both families' homes, the mother lays down the law. However, here on Forrester Island, the law is flexible and administered cheerfully, whereas, in Jody's own home, Ma's rules are tolerated and obeyed with little joy. Jody and Penny obviously love and respect Ma Baxter, but she fails to bring sunshine into their lives.

Again Jody feels a renewed urge to have a pet of his own, revealing that his mother's refusal to allow a pet is based on the need to conserve food, pointing up the difference between the scarcity with which the Baxters live and the plenty of the Forrester household.

Chapter 8

Chapter 8 Summary

Before Jody reaches the cabin, he smells meat cooking, and that can mean only that his father has been hunting. At the smokehouse door Penny reveals that he shot a buck as he rode home yesterday, using his new gun, left loaded by Lem. Jody is frustrated that he has missed out on this hunt. Inside, Ma is busy cooking venison. She and Jody exchange their usual banter with Ma always just on the edge of exasperation.

Pa reports that Julia is on the mend and will be ready to hunt Old Slewfoot in a month. He intends to let the Forresters hunt their way and he'll hunt his way. Now Jody confides to his father that he was scared when the dogs were fighting the bear, and Penny admits that he too was afraid when his gun would not work. Jody admires the buckskin and considers the mixed reactions he always has to wild animals: When the animal is hunted, it's only quarry, but when it dies, it is a sad and sorry sight. Then, when it is cooked, it is merely meat. The skin, for him, always remains the animal, though. Their clearing, now, seems as abundant as the Forresters'.

Jody chops wood, having learned that his father has hoed the corn. Dinner is finally on the table and, as Penny carves the venison ham, Jody blurts out an expression he has heard at the Forresters: "I'm so hungry, my belly thinks my throat is cut." This gives Ma reason to berate the Forresters again, but Jody defends them as light-hearted, friendly people. Ma grumbles and the family sets to eating dinner.

Chapter 8 Analysis

The fortunate shooting of the deer is a new turn of events. It has put meat on the table and offered Jody a sense of plenty similar to what he felt in the Forrester home. Penny's dedication to his family and property is reinforced when we learn that he has also taken on Jody's job of hoeing the corn. Father and son are growing steadily closer, although Jody is tormented by the thought that his dad has hunted without him.

Following the delightful stay at the Forresters, Jody returns to his perennially testy mother. He compliments her on her cooking, which soothes her, but she jumps to the attack on the Forresters as soon as Jody utters his foolish oath. Were it not for Jody's good-natured loyalty to his mother, modeled on his father's behavior, tension between Jody and Ma Baxter would surely be rising.

Chapter 9

Chapter 9 Summary

Dawn breaks on another beautiful spring day, following a light rain. Jody is amazed at all the growing and blooming plants that he had not noticed a few days ago. Could one night away make such a difference? His belly is full now, having eaten well for two days running, and he chops wood at a leisurely pace. Penny has found an albino raccoon in the trap, and father and son marvel at it. Jody cradles the dead animal, wishing he had seen it alive, perhaps kept it for a pet. His mother, however, declares that, no matter how pretty, this is the varmint that has been messing with her hens. Penny arranges for Jody to have the pelt for a knapsack, and Jody is so thrilled that he offers to clean the water troughs. A discussion of water's scarcity ensues, along with the wish for a deep well, if only they could afford the labor. Ma declares that she has been without a well for twenty years.

Jody realizes that the scarcity of water, and the need to haul it from the sinkhole, has been a great burden and worry for his father. He momentarily wonders why his father chose to settle on this arid spot, but soon remembers that the Baxter clearing is simply home. Having eaten little breakfast, Jody takes a few biscuits in his pocket as his father sends him to the sinkhole.

Walking to the sinkhole to clean water troughs, Jody admires a fluffy baby chick and notices all the hoeing that will soon need to be accomplished. He is tempted to detour to the barn for an adventure, but decides to clean the water troughs quickly and have some free time afterward.

Jody considers the 60-foot-deep sinkhole, which makes him think of the end of the world, newly discovered places, and the strange tales told by Fodder Wing. His father has explained limestone sinkholes to him, though, so he understands that this huge hole just sank quietly into the ground one day, even before Penny's earliest remembrance. Now it is lushly plumed with trees of all kinds and palmettos. Having formed in the center of Baxter Island, it is like a "lush green heart" in this arid land.

The water of the sinkhole itself is a stagnant pool formed by the constant seepage of the limestone banks. Only the pigs drink there. Long ago Penny cut a series of troughs into the limestone bank to catch and hold the clean, filtered water before it reached the pool. From the lowest trough, the livestock drink. In the next highest trough, Ora Baxter does her laundry. The highest trough is reserved only for the family's drinking and cooking water.

Jody plunges down the steep embankment, noticing the plentiful plants and animals all around him. He has a sense of aloneness here, but it is not loneliness, and he decides that, when he is grown, he will build his cabin by this pool. He struggles at the hard job of cleaning the series of troughs, using Spanish moss and sand as scouring agents. He

drinks from the top trough, imitating different animals, and plunges his face into the water playfully.

Suddenly his father arrives to check on his progress. They have a pleasant conversation about the need to dig a well, and then Jody has an opportunity to ask his father why he chose this particular place to settle. Penny replies that he just craved peace. As their easy dialog continues, they notice a raccoon watching them, and Penny talks of the varied nature of animals, some bold and some afraid. Jody now speaks his wish aloud: "I wish't I had me somethin' to pet and play with." Penny reminds him that times have been tough and rations scarce and, if his mother says they cannot have a pet that is her decision. They chat about possible pets, and Penny says virtually anything can be tamed except the human tongue.

Chapter 9 Analysis

Jody's experiences in this chapter are in stark contrast to his day and night with the Forresters. The reader discovers, however, that life on Baxter Island, though not as relaxed and "frolicsome" as life on Forrester Island, has its wondrous qualities. The richness of the varied natural resources runs through the chapter, demonstrating a kind of wealth different from the Forresters' but equal in value. Jody sees that, when all is said and done, this is home. As he approaches the sinkhole, the "heart" of their clearing, he knows that his heart is happy here where he can be alone but not lonely. The reader senses that, as hard as it might be to eke out a living here, Baxter Island is, in many ways, the best of all possible homes.

Jody's longing for a pet appears in two places, first when he has the opportunity to admire and cuddle a dead albino raccoon and secondly when he has a chance to voice his desire to his father. The answer, however, is always the same: If your mother feels we cannot feed another mouth, then you cannot have a pet. Jody harbors the desire quietly in his heart.

Chapter 10

Chapter 10 Summary

Some time has passed and Jody is sick in bed now. His mother is treating him for fever, but he secretly believes his belly is in knots due to the vast quantity of half-ripe berries he has consumed. He has not told his mother of the berries, though, because he does not want to endure a purge. Ma is convinced he has either fever or measles. The latter could kill him if the rash fails to break out, so she brings him mullein tea to bring out the rash. Jody feels somewhat guilty for lying in bed, forcing his father to do all the work for the past two days. He realizes that, if the unripe berries, on top of several days of hearty eating of venison, pork sausage and other meat, are truly the cause of the problem, he could have taken a purge and been better by morning.

In a short time the sweat is over and Jody feels fine. He eats a good dinner and is outside to see what his father is up to. It turns out his father suspected the half-ripe berries but said nothing. The two decide to go fishing in the saw-grass swamp where they tracked Old Slewfoot. Penny promises his wife they will not return empty handed.

In their search for a good fishing spot, the two come upon little ponds out in the middle of nowhere and wonder how the fish can survive. Penny understands that their position in the world is not unlike his. They encounter a band of Minorcans hunting gophers, the lowliest of foods, and Penny explains their history and how they were taken advantage of. To Jody, the sight of them is almost like sighting an ancient Spaniard.

At the perfect fishing pond, Jody marvels at his father's expert casting. Moving around the pond, Jody casts badly several times and then makes a perfect cast. He is surprised when his father compliments him, unaware he was being watched. Immediately he hooks and lands a ten-pound bass, and father and son celebrate together. They fish on for a while in friendly competition, but no more big fish bite. Jody catches a small bass, but his father tells him to throw it back, and Jody is reminded not to take anything that cannot be eaten or kept.

Suddenly Penny whistles softly and Jody joins him to hear that "the whoopin' cranes is dancin'." Jody thinks his father must have the eyes of an eagle. They crawl silently through the grass to come very close to sixteen whooping cranes, "magic birds dancing in a mystic marsh." Father and son watch, mesmerized, as the pure white birds perform their mysterious movements against the golden sunset. After an hour, the cranes rise into the sky without warning and fly away. Penny and Jody get up in the dusk, retrieve Jody's bass, and make their way home in silence. Ma has baked bread and is ready to fry fish. Jody cleans the fish while Penny does chores, and the two eat in silence, under the spell of the lovely dance of the whooping cranes.

Chapter 10 Analysis

This is a chapter for deepening the themes already introduced. Father and son share "man" experiences about which Ora will never know and would not appreciate. Penny has quietly done the work of two while Jody has lain in bed, although he has suspected all along that the "sickness" was too many berries. Then the two take great pleasure in fishing together, even in friendly competition, for they are secure in their deep admiration of each other. As they watch the glorious dance of the cranes in a perfect sunset, nature touches them so deeply that they are unable to speak for the rest of the evening. We witness here the depths of reverence for each other and for the wonders of nature.

Chapter 11

Chapter 11 Summary

Jody has seen signs that fawns are being born. Sometimes he sees the tiny footprints of twin fawns, and he wonders whether he might take one for himself and leave one for the mother. He approaches his mother with idea of getting a pet, preferably a fawn rather than a coon or bear, as the latter will get mean or mischievous. His mother will not hear of it, sure the food supply cannot support another being. Penny listens silently to the exchange. The next morning he suggests to Jody that they go hunting for another buck. Maybe they will at least get to see a fawn in the wild. Then he offers Jody his old muzzle-loader.

Penny proposes a trip to Volusia, providing they shoot a buck, trading some parts of the deer for coffee and needles and thread. They could also visit Grandma Hutto while they were in town. Ma balks and suggests that Jody stay behind since it's really just "men-folks liken' to prowl off together." Penny slyly suggests that Ma accompany him on the hunt and leave Jody behind. Jody laughs aloud and Ma gives in, asking just to be left with Grandpa's gun, loaded. Penny, Jody and the hound Julia take off to hunt and go on to Volusia.

When Penny spots deer track, he teaches Jody how to analyze the hoof prints. Bear tracks are also in evidence, and they come across a pair of bear cubs playing in a swinging sapling. Jody begs his dad to help him catch the gentler of the two, but Penny warns him how his mother would react. Jody lingers to watch them, aching for a soft, furry pet. When he catches up to his father, Penny advises him that, if he should ever ask his mother to allow him to keep a cub, he should catch it young enough so it can be tamed. This sounds encouraging to Jody, but Penny reminds him that a bear cub will eat his mother's chickens.

When they run across a multitude of deer tracks, Penny advises Jody to climb a tree and watch silently. He will provide a fawn for Jody to see. In a short time, a tiny fawn stumbles into the clearing beneath the tree and is joined by its mother. Jody has never seen such a young fawn. However, his scent scares them off. When Penny returns, he refuses to track the fawn, as Jody would like, because it is likely scared to death already. Instead, they decide to have their lunch right there where a buck might run across them. At Penny's suggestion, Jody walks to a tall pine and climbs to take a stand, should a buck appear. Soon he gets to take his shot at a buck, but he shoots high, just grazing the deer. Penny finishes him off and is already dressing him when Jody finds them. Again Jody feels the sad sickness at the sight of a dead animal.

Penny balances the carcass on his back and they are off again. He suggests that Jody might want to give the deerskin to Grandma Hutto as a gift, and Jody agrees. Late in the afternoon they reach the St. Johns River where they pay a rafter to ferry them across to the Volusia side, and they go directly to the store. Mr. Boyles will buy the deer, and

Penny begins the skinning process. He explains that one forequarter will go to Grandma Hutto, and he will return tomorrow for the other one in order to take it home.

Jody eyes the wares for sale, but the only thing that interests him is a rusty mouth organ. When Mr. Boyles offers to treat him to a dime's worth of anything, he asks for the mouth organ and gets it. Mr. Boyle praises Jody's manners, and Penny comments that Jody is a true comfort to him, having buried so many babies. Just then Mr. Boyles's niece, Eulalie, enters. Penny has teased Jody about Eulalie's being his sweetheart, and the very sight of her now makes him hate her. He throws a potato at her and hits her shoulder, at which Penny orders him to give up the mouth organ and leave the store. Outside Penny lectures Jody, telling him he can't throw things at every ugly woman he meets. He threatens to tell Grandma Hutto, and Jody begs him not to. Penny gives Jody the deerskin for Grandma, but he doubts whether she would accept a gift from someone who has behaved so badly.

Jody and Grandma are delighted to see each other, and Grandma accepts the gifts of venison and deerskin graciously. She is a true lady who makes a man feel every inch a man. Penny takes the venison to the kitchen and goes to tack the hide to the shed wall as Jody greets the little white dog, Fluff. "Jody felt more at home than when he returned to his own mother." Grandma claims that Ora Baxter is a "woman all Hell couldn't amuse." Grandma suggests Jody take a swim in the river, and she will give him some of Oliver's clean clothes when he is finished. She does not warn him about alligators and other dangers, assuming he has some sense of his own. Jody has quite a challenge with the fast-moving current, though, and is relieved to finally make it to shore at the landing. There his father awaits him; he has been watching Jody.

After their swim, father and son put on old clothes furnished by Grandma Hutto. The subject of education comes up briefly, and Penny states that the teacher he and the Forresters have been boarding has taught Jody very little math. Grandma provides a snack of spice cakes and wine, and then Penny rests and Jody plays with Fluff as Grandma prepares dinner in her cast iron cook stove. Finally they sit at a covered table in the dining room - Grandma is the only person Jody knows who has a separate room for eating. Jody enjoys foods he rarely gets to savor, and Penny is relaxed and at ease here, more so than in his own home.

In the evening Easy Ozell shows up to do the evening chores, and Grandma and Penny go on at length about what a sorry, pitiful (but humble) man he is, although Penny has teased Grandma that Easy is her sweetheart. Easy joins them on the front porch later for conversation, and conversation reveals that he is a "Yankee." Penny and Easy exchange a few reminiscences about the Civil War and Easy takes his leave. Finally Jody is able to broach the subject of Twink Weatherby, stating that Lem Forrester has claimed her for his sweetheart when Jody knows she is Oliver Hutto's girl. Grandma assures him Oliver will take care of Lem when he returns from sea. As Penny and Jody settle into a clean bed in a white room, Jody mentions that he likes the way Grandma lives. Given a choice, though, he would go back to Baxter Island where the wild things are.



Chapter 11 Analysis

Jody is inching toward maturity but, as he does so, his longing for a pet only deepens. In this chapter Penny gives Jody another lesson on nature lore, teaching him the fine points of reading animal tracks. He also gives Jody opportunities to see deer up close and even take a shot at a buck. Having received his father's old hunting gun is surely a step toward manhood and, in this chapter, Jody actually wounds a buck. Can killing his first deer be far behind? Through his close relationship with his father, Jody is learning the ways of men.

He is still a little boy though in many respects, and the potato-throwing incident in the Volusia store is a great example of this immaturity. As he wavers between childhood and adolescence, though, one need is constant: he wants a pet of his own more each day. Now he has seen a very young fawn up close, and he can imagine what it would be like to have one for his own. When he comes upon the twin bear cubs swinging in the tree, he feels a kinship with them and is almost tempted to climb the tree and join them. Now a bear cub seems like a fine pet. Even though Jody's mother has told him, flat out, at the start of the chapter, that he cannot have a pet, his desire is only growing.

In this tormented state, Jody returns with his father to the cottage of Grandma Hutto on the banks of the St. Johns River. This is the home where he and his mother lived for four years while his father was away at war, and it is a very special place for him. As he closes his eyes to sleep, though, thinking of Grandma's wonderfully clean and civilized lifestyle, he has to conclude once again that his little cabin in the clearing is the best place to call home. We have now watched Jody experience two lifestyles very different from his family's, and, much as he enjoys each one, his heart always goes home to Baxter Island.

It is good to note that Penny and Easy fought on opposing sides in the American Civil War. This helps us narrow the possible date at which the story takes place. If Jody spent four years at Grandma Hutto's during the Civil War, starting when he was two years old and ending when he was six, and he is now 12, then the story takes place roughly six years after the end of the Civil War or sometime in the early 1870's.

Chapter 12

Chapter 12 Summary

Jody is awakened at daylight to the sound of the steamer stopping at the landing. Oliver has come home from the sea! Jody and Grandma shoot questions at Oliver, who comes home only twice each year. He has brought gifts for everyone, including a wonderful hunting knife for Jody, better than any other in scrub country. When Jody bursts out with the news that Lem Forrester has claimed Twink Weatherby for his own, Oliver just laughs and Jody relaxes.

They all enjoy the splendid breakfast Grandma has just cooked, and Jody takes notice of Oliver's good looks, his deep tan, gray-blue eyes, and red-tinged hair. He considers his own poor features and asks whether Oliver was "borned good-lookin'." The subject turns to courting, and Oliver asks whether Jody has a sweetheart. Penny again mentions Eulalie, teasing, and Jody is in a fury, telling how he hates girls, Eulalie in particular. Jody is grateful for Grandma's support, and he realizes that his dad teases him only in the company of friends, but is otherwise always ready to lend support. When Jody mentions that his Ma "rars" at him and Pa, Grandma suggests that Ora fails to appreciate Penny. It is clear that she has no love for Ora Baxter.

Oliver leaves immediately to visit his girl, Twink, and Jody feels he'll never hear his tales of the sea. Jody is resentful at Oliver's quick leave-taking. Penny is completely relaxed in this cottage, and, much as they would love to stay, the two must head home soon, he says. Suddenly Easy Ozell runs over to say that Oliver has taken a swing at Lem Forrester and now the whole Forrester clan is "killing him." Penny runs to intervene and Jody follows, but his heart is not in defending Oliver, who has left abruptly for a girl instead of staying in the cozy cottage where he belonged.

Oliver is indeed being killed as three Forresters fight him together. Twink, along with the whole town of Volusia, is watching. Jody's mind reels as he tries to determine which party is on the side of justice. Oliver deserves a beating, he thinks, and the Forresters are wonderful friends to him. But three against one? Jody jumps on Lem's back and is roughly shaken off. Then Penny steps in and tries to mediate the fight by getting the men to talk about their dispute. It looks like the effort will be successful, but Oliver and Lem go at each other again, and Penny gets hit in the ribs. Jody runs to his defense, biting Lem's wrist, but he is hurled to the sand and blacks out as the fight continues.

Chapter 12 Analysis

Jody has come face to face with the question of loyalty, and he must determine how he will know who is worthy of his love. When Oliver returns home, it seems that Jody has been reunited with a beloved big brother. Oliver represents all the wonders a young boy could long for: good looks, a happy home with a wonderful mother, adventure and the

tales it spawns, gifts from exotic places... Oliver seems to be everything Jody wants to be, and yet he has the one weakness to which Jody refuses to succumb: a girlfriend. The reader has clearly seen that Jody truly despises girls, and now he watches his hero desert mother and home, after hardly more than an hour in their presence, to chase after a yellow-haired girl.

Until the street fight, Jody's loyalty to Oliver has gone unquestioned. When he blurts out Lem Forrester's claim to have Twink as his girl, he does so out of a feeling of duty. Once he has mentioned the claim to both Grandma and Oliver, he feels he has done what he must as a true friend. As Oliver takes his abrupt leave, though, Jody is infuriated, just as he was when he threw the potato at Eulalie in the store. He is resentful, sure that he will never get his due, and all on account of a girl. He is ready to see Oliver thrashed by the Forresters.

Jody's memories of the Forresters are warm and affectionate. He does not want to lose his best friend, Fodder-wing, and he reflects on the kindnesses of the neighboring family and the whole new way of life they have shown him. His mother's frequent criticism of the Forresters has only made his defense of them fiercer, at least in his own heart. But now they are fighting an unfair fight, and even if he is disappointed in Oliver, he sees him as a victim of inequality. This is a difficult moral battle for a young boy. His mind is tentatively made up when he witnesses the harm the three huge Forresters are inflicting on Oliver, but it is made up firmly when his own father takes a hit. Jody will probably have to further sort out his moral dilemma concerning Oliver and the Forresters, but he will never have to think twice about his loyalty to his father.



Chapter 13

Chapter 13 Summary

Jody awakens in Grandma Hutto's spare bedroom, convinced he has dreamed the fighting. Only when he tries to turn his head does the pain assure him that he has been in a real fight. It is afternoon now, and Grandma and Penny are watching over him. Pa has a black eye and a bandaged wrist, and Jody learns that Oliver has survived and is resting also. When Penny commends Jody for his loyalty to Oliver, Jody recalls that the Forresters are his friends too. Penny announces that this will likely be the end of the relationship, but Jody is already making secret plans to see Fodder Wing again. Oliver has betrayed them, Jody thinks, by giving something of the family to the yellow-haired Twink. Still, he knows he would fight for Oliver again in an unfair fight, just as he longs to fight on behalf of a wild, predatory animal when he sees it in its death throes. Yes, he thinks, it all makes sense now.

Now follows a discussion of whether Jody is able to return home with his father. Penny is happy that Jody wishes to accompany him, and Grandma agrees that his mother will be less worried if she has him in her care. Jody goes to say farewell to Oliver, and the latter, all bruised and beaten, asks the unthinkable of Jody: to deliver a message to Twink Weatherby. Jody adamantly refuses, saying he hates the girl, but then he remembers the fine hunting knife and grudgingly agrees to go.

Father and son go to Boyles's store to get their supplies and borrow the mare that can later find her own way home. Jody whispers to Boyles that he needs to get a message to Twink, but Mr. Boyles says she has left for Sanford. Jody exults. He painstakingly writes a note to Oliver, telling him of the news, as his old love of Oliver begins to rekindle itself. On the ferry ride back across the river, Jody wrestles with his thoughts of Oliver's imperfections, his disappointment in the Forresters, and his conviction that Fodder-wing will not change. The only thing he is sure of is that his father will remain unchangeable.

Chapter 13 Analysis

The turmoil over love and loyalty continues. Jody is headed home now, a wiser and less innocent lad than when he started. How complex his relationships have suddenly become! When he rose from the bed to try to make it home as planned, his father said: "Jody's a man." It seems that he is well on his way now, and the rest of the journey to manhood will probably not be easy. This trip to Volusia has opened his eyes and troubled his heart.

Chapter 14

Chapter 14 Summary

The quail eggs have hatched now, and the scuppernong grapes are "makin'" but not nearly ripe. Jody shares this news excitedly with his father, and talk turns to the hogs that have gone off and not returned per their usual schedule. Penny fears the Forresters have trapped them, and he tells Jody that they will have to track the hogs as soon as he finishes working the peas. Jody is reluctant to face the Forresters again, but his father asserts that they have nothing to fear as they are within their rights. Jody considers letting the hogs go, and having no meat for the winter, rather than face that clan again.

When Ma hears that her two men are going in search of the hogs and might have to face the Forresters again, she is matter-of-fact about the need to retrieve their source of meat: "Who'll git it if you don't?" Jody is uncomfortable with her sense of what his "duty" is, not willing to get mauled for a side of bacon. As he waits for Ma to fix an early supper so they can begin the tracking, he reflects on the abundance of food available in the clearing for all creatures, human, domesticated, and wild. In contrast, the food chain out in the scrub represents constant eat-or-be-eaten behavior. His father keeps the clearing safe and peaceful, Jody notes. He realizes that their clearing is "an island of plenty in a hungry sea."

Penny returns from the field and Jody lends a hand with the horse. He feeds horse and cow and then is called in for a lean meal: only clabber and cornbread, "but there was enough." Then father and son head off over the sun-dried ground, with low-lying clouds overhead, looking for the hogs' tracks and hoping for rain. In the dead of summer, the hogs' natural foods are hard to find, and they must range far in search of it. Suddenly Penny finds a kernel of corn near the track, and he realizes his hogs have been baited. Now they are obliged to follow the tracks and demand the return of their hogs. One quarter-mile beyond, they find the hog trap, sprung but now empty. A wheel track leads toward Forrester Island.

Just as the two head down the wheel track, Penny moves a grapevine aside and is instantly struck by a rattlesnake. The entire scene is unbelievable to Jody, but he watches his father raise his gun and kill the large snake. "He got me," Penny pronounces, and he turns abruptly from the trail and plunges into the scrub, planning a straight path for home. Jody struggles to keep up as they walk on in silence. Suddenly a sound ahead alerts them to the presence of a doe. Jody is astounded that his father stops to take a shot at the deer, having just been bitten by a rattlesnake. However, Penny slashes at the belly of the slain deer and withdraws the liver, pressing it against the snakebite on his arm. He asks Jody to cut him out piece after piece of the doe's heart, which he also presses to the wound until the meat no longer draws the venom. Then he announces he is heading for home. Jody must run to the Forresters and beg them to fetch Doc Wilson. Penny urges him to make his request quickly before they take a shot at him.

As he turns to leave his father, Jody spots a tiny fawn, bewildered, sniffing at the dead doe. The fawn bleats and Jody's heart breaks for him, but Penny urges him on, unsure he can even make it back to the clearing before collapsing. Jody runs for all he is worth, feeling as if he will never get to Forrester Island, and then he is there, unsure of what to do. He calls for Fodder-wing, but the older brothers step out. As soon as he tells his sad tale, crying now, they show sincere interest. Mill Wheel says he will ride for the Doc. Jody thanks him but Mill Wheel says he would do the same for a snake-bit dog. Buck plans to ride in the direction Penny was walking. The Forresters move slowly, as if there is no hope for Penny. Lem chases Jody off with an unkind word for Jody's father.

Now that help is on the way, Jody walks toward home at a calm and steady pace, realizing that his father might be dying. As a brief rain passes over him, he remembers having visited Doc Wilson's home years ago, and he realizes that it is not a question of whether the doctor will be drunk but rather how drunk he will be. He is a good doctor, though, and he might be able to save Penny. As he leaves the Forresters' road, Jody still has four miles ahead of him. He is on a narrow trail, the scrub closing in around him, as thunder sounds and rain falls. He has never before been in this situation alone, without his father. An animal snarls and moves swiftly across the trail, and he realizes that his father's gun, which he carries, is empty of shells. Then a storm blows in very suddenly, drenching him in an instant. His heavy, saturated clothes seem to hold him back, so he strips naked, feeling clean in the rain. In a lightning flash he sees the whiteness of his body, and he feels suddenly defenseless, "naked in an unfriendly world." He feels death stalking through the scrub.

It occurs to Jody that his father might be already dead, and the thought is intolerable. His father cannot die. He runs forward, pleading aloud with the night, "Please..." When he finally reaches the cabin, the two Forrester boys are visiting nonchalantly in front of the fire. Jody enters his father's room and sees his father stir and then vomit, and he is convinced the man will live. Penny opens his eyes, sees Jody naked and wet, and murmurs, "You'll ketch cold," the first words he has spoken. Doc says this is a good sign, and Jody answers that his father is obliged to make it. Ma breaks down and cries as Jody brings a cup of warm milk and helps Doc feed his father. Penny begins to sweat, and they all sit down to wait. The Forrester boys lie down in front of the fire and fall asleep. Soon Doc nods off, and then Ma is sleeping too. Jody takes up the vigil alone, his mind replaying the day's events, and suddenly he remembers the little fawn. It has faced the storm alone in the dark, motherless. The same tragedy that has struck down Jody's father has orphaned the fawn. Jody cries, hating death and feeling pity toward all forms of aloneness.

Chapter 14 Analysis

This chapter provides a turning point in the plot. The characters have been moving steadily in one direction, and now the road takes a sharp twist, changing their lives in an instant. Until now Jody has been filled with feelings of security and plenty, convinced that Baxter Island is a safe home that will always provide for him. A large measure of that security, he now realizes, has been borrowed from his father's calming presence,

and now that presence is threatened. Even early in this very chapter, Jody has observed the abundance of nature. Until now we have never seen Jody afraid in the woods. He has been realistic about the predatory nature of some of the animals in the wild, but always he has been assured that his father will keep the clearing safe for them. The strike of the snake has changed all that.

The relationship between the Baxters and the Forresters has taken several turns up until this point, from "black-hearted" rivals to "frolicsome" friends, from deadly opponents in a fight to pig-thieves, and now, suddenly, to rescuers. The boy that feared these neighbors so recently, even willing to give up his source of meat rather than face them, must now turn to them as the only possible source of assistance.

Jody's relationship with the woods has changed mightily also. For the first time in his life he fears the dark and the storm, and he knows this is because he is alone for the very first time. As he walks naked through the storm down a path filled with danger and terror, he sheds the innocence of youth as surely as he has shed his clothing. He is totally vulnerable now, without clothing, without shelter from the elements, without ammunition in his gun or the amazing knife from Oliver, and without his "compass" - Penny. Even if Penny lives, Jody will never be the same again.

Jody is unable to eat, though hungry. He is unable to visit with the Forrester boys, though lonely. Only one element of his innocent, loving childhood remains now: the frightened fawn in the woods. When all has turned black and hope has all but left him, the fawn appears. He momentarily forgets the trauma of snakebite as the fawn stumbles before him. Then the terror of the dark, stormy woods overcomes him, followed by the terror of his father's condition, and he momentarily forgets the tiny creature. As he keeps his lonely vigil at his father's bedside, though, he remembers the little deer, probably as frightened of the storm and the dark as he was himself, unsheltered in the rain, robbed of his parent, so like Jody himself. Once again, the longing for a pet washes over Jody, but now the pet has a face and a location and a reason to be rescued from the wild.

Chapter 15

Chapter 15 Summary

Jody drifts off to sleep and endures a terrifying dream about confronting a gigantic rattlesnake that strikes at him even as his father lies under the snake's coils, swollen and dead. Then he is alone in a vast, windy place, holding the fawn in his arms. His father is gone, and his heart aches so, he thinks it will break. Then he awakens.

Penny has "made it," the doctor says. Ma cries from relief. When Doc proclaims Jody a man, able to plow and hunt, Ma says he is only a boy who wants to prowl and play, and his father encourages him. He hangs his head, knowing it is true.

Now Pa needs milk and, for the first time, Jody volunteers to do the milking. He is up and at work at the hour his father usually rises, celebrating the morning, so elated he nearly floats. His milking is successful but yields less than Penny can take from the cow. Jody decides to drink none so his father may have it all. As the calf nurses, Jody is reminded of the fawn, exposed now to danger and without milk. Suddenly the joy of having his father alive leaves him cold.

Penny wakes and sips the milk but is exhausted. Doc advises that he must sleep a week, and Ma wonders aloud who will do the work. Jody promises to hoe, and Buck Forrester says he will stay and do the other chores. Ma hates to be beholden, but Buck insists. Doc declares this is the soberest he has awakened in a long time, and Ma scurries to make breakfast for all. As Jody proudly slices their last side of bacon, he tells his mother that Buck is not a Forrester - he's a friend. Then he tells Ma of the dead doe and her newborn fawn. Ma is not interested. She and Jody set the best table they can, and there is enough, if not plenty. Ma waits to eat until she is sure the men have had enough. Jody has never seen her so friendly.

Jody visits his dad's bedside and mentions the fawn they have left motherless and defenseless. Now that he is old enough to do without milk, he reasons, he should find the fawn and bring it to the clearing and raise it, letting the fawn drink the milk he bypasses. His father, impressed with his reasoning, tells him to inform his mother that he may do so. Ma is astounded, but Doc agrees that it is the right thing to do, and Mill Wheel offers to help find the fawn.

Doc says they owe him nothing, but he will take some syrup when their cane is ready. Buck promises to see to it that Penny gets greens and fresh meat. Ma cannot believe her good fortune in having so much help. Then Doc spies Jody's white coonskin knapsack and admires it as a great bag in which to carry his medicines. Without a second thought Jody gives Doc the bag, proud that he finally owns something worth giving away. Doc will think of Jody every time he uses it. Buck helps feed the horses and recognizes how limited the Baxter resources are.



As Mill Wheel and Jody ride out after the fawn, the subject of the recent fight comes up. Jody explains that he and his father had to defend the underdog, and Mill Wheel agrees that it was not a fair fight. Jody's thoughts return to the fawn, but now Mill Wheel asks why Jody and Penny had been walking in this area yesterday. Jody concedes that they were hunting their hogs, and Mill Wheel answers that their hogs will come home tonight. "I had no idye you-all was runnin' so tight," he adds. They mention Fodder-wing, who truly is ill, and Mill Wheel promises to try to arrange a chance for Jody to see him. Suddenly Jody cannot bear to share with Mill Wheel his reunion with the fawn, dead or alive, and he insists on being let off here. Mill Wheel first determines that Jody has his bearings and then he reminds the boy to send for help to the Forresters if things go wrong. He rides off.

In his search, Jody follows the buzzards to the dead doe. He carefully tracks the fawn, and suddenly, there it is in front of him, quivering with fear, making no attempt to rise or run. "It's me," Jody says, and strokes the animal softly until it allows itself to be picked up. He struggles to carry the fawn out of the thicket. Resting momentarily, Jody recalls that his father told him a fawn would follow that which had carried him. Sure enough, the fawn begins toward him, crying. Jody is elated: If it follows him, surely it is his. He manages to get the baby home, sometimes carrying, sometimes leading.

Jody proudly carries his prize to Penny's bedside, and Penny compliments him. When Ma enters, she comments that it is a very young animal and will need milk for a long time. Now Pa lays down the law: This is Jody's pet just as Julia is Penny's dog. The family will raise it and care for it, and there will be no quarreling about it. Jody manages to get the fawn to drink a gourd of milk and makes it a bed of Spanish moss in the shed, discovering in the process a new hen's nest. He proudly carries six extra eggs to his mother. She continues to grumble about lack of food, and Jody asks whether he has skimmed the milk correctly. He cuts wood and brings it in for her, mentioning that Fodder-wing is ailing. Nothing seems to bring praise or sympathy from Ora, but she does concede that she feels lighthearted since Penny has survived.

When Jody shows Buck his fawn, Buck simply warns him that the deer will likely run away. Jody is disappointed in the lack of support from Ma and Buck. At the noon meal, Ma apologizes for the scarce rations, and Buck says he and Jody will hunt squirrels and turkey. Jody takes a plate to his father and feeds him, and Penny asks about the fawn. Then Jody takes his own plate out to the shed and eats beside the fawn. He cannot imagine that he will ever be lonely again.

Chapter 15 Analysis

Out of the dark storm comes the light of new and restored life and renewed hope. Now that Penny has made it through the terrible night, all are convinced that he will survive, and everyone's heart is lighter for it. Jody is finally able to turn his thoughts to the fawn in the woods, something alive and full of promise. At last he has the thing that will follow him and love him, and his second longing is now fulfilled.

This chapter highlights Jody's rite of passage to manhood. He has acted bravely and prudently to save his father, and his reward is permission to keep his newfound pet. He willingly volunteers to hoe, chop wood, milk the cow, help with the plowing, and gather eggs, shouldering his new responsibility. Several people have now stated that he is a man, but it is Jody's mother, Ora Baxter, who never relents, always chiding him as immature and distracted. He carries his father's gun now and helps to nurse his father back to health. In many ways he is becoming a man, but he longs for his mother's approval.

The fawn, of course, represents new life come from death and near-death. Penny and Doc Wilson agree with Jody that, since the doe gave her life to save Penny's, it is only just that the family save the fawn's life. The fact that love is found in the wilderness and coaxed into the Baxter clearing marks another step in Jody's maturing: the ability to distinguish good from bad, to nurture what is good and protect himself from what is bad.

The relationship between the Baxters and the Forresters takes a new turn now too. Finally Ma is forced to confront her prejudices, witnessing firsthand the kindness and generosity of her nearest neighbors. A proud and determined woman, it is hard for her to accept the charity of others, but she basks in the glow of their goodwill. The Forrester boys, who were detached and barely civil last night as they brought Penny in from the scrub, have now seen how hard Penny works to scrape a living from his clearing, and their hearts soften. If there is a new dark cloud hanging over Jody though, it is news that Fodder-wing is ailing and that Lem really does not want the boys together.

Chapter 16

Chapter 16 Summary

All is well in the Baxter clearing now as Penny slowly heals and Buck takes care of the fields and secures game for the family's meat. Even Ma has come to accept Buck and his kindness. The fawn keeps Jody occupied. He is playful and fun, but also a lot of work. Jody is interested, too, in all the work that Buck is doing. One morning Buck shows him the result of "vandals" in the cornfield, promising that the two of them will lie in wait tonight for the foxes that did the deed. He will also teach Jody to rob the bee tree of honey, he promises.

Jody must leave the fawn behind as they approach the bee tree. Near the sinkhole, Buck chops the bee tree down and stuffs smoldering moss into the hole in which the bees have made their hive. Man and boy scramble down into the water, away from the swarming bees. Then they harvest the most massive load of honey Buck has ever seen.

Buck reveals that he will soon return to his home out of concern for Fodder-wing and a need for whiskey. He is restless now, anxious to head for home. He tells Jody some tall tales through the evening and even trades stories and jokes with Penny. The topic of fighting is given a good philosophical debate among the three males. Then Buck and Jody are off to the cornfield for their fox hunt. Jody fells the first fox with his muzzle-loader, and Buck hands him Penny's new shotgun. He fells the second fox with it. As the two return to the cabin, they discover Penny and Ora in the doorway and see the dark form of a bear slinking away. He has been attracted by the scent of the fawn, which has remained safe, and the huge amount of honey near the cabin. Buck shoots and kills the bear. The three men dress out the bear and Buck requests a bucket of bear grease for his mother's cooking. Ma generously offers the bear's liver as a tonic for the ailing Fodder-wing.

It is a joyous evening of energized chatter, and even Penny joins in the banter. After everyone has fallen asleep, Jody sneaks to the shed and brings the fawn in to sleep with him on his pallet while Buck sleeps in his bed. If the fawn is discovered in the house, Jody will simply say he is protecting the deer from prowling bears.

Chapter 16 Analysis

This chapter is full of plenty, showing the reader how rich and full Baxter life has become with Buck Forrester in residence. He has been here eight days now, and the crops are in excellent shape. Although he eats like a horse, Ma cannot complain because he keeps her kitchen stocked with meat. She does have a problem with his black beard and hairy chest, though, and still finds him very "black." He delivers a generous bucket of honey from the bee tree and refuses to take any to his family. Ma is softening now, learning to open her mind to people different from herself. And Buck has

made life much easier for all of them. He is restless though, and we can tell that he will be leaving soon.

Shooting the foxes moves Jody up another rung on the ladder to manhood. However, when it is time to take aim at the bear, he hands the gun to Buck and takes charge of the fire pan instead. He is still not grown, and he knows it. Our final look at Jody as the chapter closes depicts him catering to his childish need to have a loving pet near him, regardless of the rules. He is learning and maturing, but he is still not a man. Penny is on the mend, though, and we have reason to believe that, when Buck leaves, Jody will have some guidance from his father as he takes on more responsibility for the work.

Chapter 17

Chapter 17 Summary

Under July's sweltering sun, Jody hoes the endless sea of sweet potatoes, hoping to finish by noon and then go to visit Fodder-wing and get a name for his fawn. The fawn has been a nuisance during the hoeing, having lost its childish innocence and taken on a knowing look and a demanding approach. Still, Jody takes pleasure in working with the fawn nearby. Buck has been gone for two weeks now, and Penny is getting stronger, but still the balance of the labor falls to Jody. The fawn has grown and matured and, although even Ma now tolerates it, the wild animal has caused some problems.

As Jody realizes he will not finish the task before noon and, therefore, will not be allowed the visit to Fodder-wing, Penny approaches with a deal: If Jody will fetch the water from the sinkhole, Penny will finish the hoeing this evening. The fawn follows Jody to the water source and entertains him with his antics. Jody struggles to carry the ox yoke over his shoulders. Halfway home he must stop and pour out some of the water. He finds his parents eating a pot roast of bear, but he still has chores to finish before he can sit down at the table. As they eat, the three speak of bear, revealing that this is bear mating season. Ma cautions Jody about walking to the Forresters' during this time when the male bears are so mean. After Jody fills the woodbox, he and the fawn set off to Forrester Island.

On the road, Jody is suddenly privy to the mating rituals of the bears. He realizes that he has "seen a thing," and this will be something wonderful to share with Fodder Wing. When he approaches the Forrester clearing, though, and calls for his friend, Buck comes out to tell him that Fodder Wing is dead. The Forresters are sitting in numb silence as Jody goes to look at Fodder-wing at rest on the bed. Now he knows what death is: It is silence. Buck comforts Jody, but Jody feels that his presence is painful to the family.

He goes outside to Fodder Wing's pets and finds them uncared-for. One by one, he feeds them. He attempts to play with the animals, but his play is heartless, and the pets only make him ache for his dead friend. He turns to his fawn for comfort, holding the deer to him, wondering whether these other pets fail to delight him because their master is gone or simply because the fawn gives him so much joy.

At Buck's suggestion, Jody re-enters the house to be of service to Ma Forrester, feeling somehow unable to leave although not fully welcome. Mrs. Forrester comments that she has been thinking now about all the babies Ora Baxter has buried, "as many as I got." At the end of a painfully quiet dinner, from which Jody has saved his biscuit and milk for the fawn, he confesses that he has come for Fodder Wing to name his fawn. Ma reveals that Fodder Wing has spoken of Jody and his fawn and has pronounced his name to be Flag. Jody likes the name, and the fawn answers to it immediately.

Now Jody understands that he is expected to sit up with the body through the night and be a part of the burial ritual in the morning. At ten o'clock Penny arrives on horseback, looking for Jody and suspecting that Fodder Wing has passed. The Forrester men pour out their grief on him. It is a shared grief. He feels a healing between himself and Lem, and he speaks of the babies he has buried. Jody is asked to sit alone with his dead friend for a while, and he senses death in the room as he had sensed it in the woods on the night his father was snake-bitten. He brings Flag in with him and falls asleep.

When Jody awakens, it is morning and his father is driving the nails into Fodder Wing's coffin cover. The family carries the pine box to a sunny hammock where Pa has dug the grave, and they each, including Jody, take a turn to throw a clod of dirt on it. Penny, asked to say a prayer, asks the Lord to give Fodder Wing a few wild varmints in heaven to keep him company. Then Penny and Jody mount the horse and ride home.

As they arrive in their clearing, Ma fusses about their overnight stay. Told that Fodder Wing is dead, she simply says it's a pity it wasn't Lem. Penny takes her to task for being so sharp of tongue, having suffered the loss of children herself, and she says it seems that being hard is the only way she can stand it. He strokes her hair and urges her to be a little easier on others.

Chapter 17 Analysis

Surely this is a turning point for Jody, and all events have been preparing him for it. He is working responsibly in the fields without supervision, and he even makes his first attempt at carrying water from the sinkhole, the one job that Penny always had to do because Jody did not yet have the strength. He cannot carry the buckets filled with water, but he carries what he can: almost as much as a man can carry. Even though his parents are already eating dinner when he arrives with the water, he dutifully finishes the chores before sitting down himself. Still, it is his childish wish to play with his friend and get a name for his pet that takes him to the Forresters. Jody continues to move between the worlds of childhood and maturity, but now he has been spending more time doing the work of a man.

The new responsibility and respect has prepared him, as well as anything could, for the shocking loss of his only young friend. This is truly the point at which Jody must face life's hard realities, and no childhood innocence or immature longings can erase the pain of Fodder Wing's death. Jody had almost faced death when his father was bitten by the snake - he has sensed death in the woods. Now, as he enters the room where his friend's body lies, he knows death is present, and he recognizes it in Fodder Wing's silence. He has come face to face with the cold realities that adults must face, and he handles the situation well.

It is interesting to note that the tragedy of Fodder Wing's death brings the Baxters and Forresters ever closer. In her moment of loss, Ma Forrester is thinking of Ora's many losses. And the Forrester men are comfortable sharing their grief with Penny because he too has buried his children. We enjoy quite an insight into Ora's character and the

Ora-Penny relationship at the end of the chapter when Penny reprimands his wife for her sharp tongue. She becomes contrite, and we see Penny reach out to her with affection for the first time. Now the reader has a better understanding of her cold, often heartless nature: This is how she has learned to deal with the losses in her own life.

Chapter 18

Chapter 18 Summary

Now it is August, still sweltering, but not as busy as the previous months. The farm is producing well, and the Baxter hogs have returned home with a new brood sow that is clearly a peace offering from the Forresters. Rations are still not plentiful, but there is hope for an abundant fall after the first frost. Penny and Jody are doing all the chores side by side now. Flag is growing in size and intelligence, still a great source of pleasure for Jody. One late afternoon, near the end of August, Jody and Flag go to the sinkhole to fetch water and Jody actually sees a helmeted rider on a horse, the very Spaniard about which Fodder-wing had told him, and in the very place his friend had specified. After catching his breath and steadying his nerves, Jody investigates only to find the horseman is an illusion of moss and tree limbs. He is flooded with relief, yet disappointed that Fodder Wing's fantasy is now a thing of the past.

Jody and Flag take some moments to rest under a dogwood tree and observe a mother raccoon with her two youngsters. Jody greatly enjoys watching the mother feed and instruct her young. As they finally walk away, he realizes that Fodder-wing is alive in all of nature, that he will never actually be gone from him. Now Jody understands that part of the life force that was Fodder Wing lived outside of his body, in the wild creatures he so loved. Jody tries to explain this to his father after dinner, but he cannot find the right words to express it.

Chapter 18 Analysis

This is a brief glimpse of Jody and Baxter Island as the summer draws to an end. The landscape is filled with the promise of an abundant autumn harvest, and Jody finds peace and understanding in the wild creatures near the sinkhole, finally coming to grips with the loss of his friend.

Jody undergoes another significant transition in this chapter: He learns the truth about the helmeted Spanish rider Fodder Wing claimed to have seen. He clings to the hope that there was another, more spectacular Spaniard, seen only by Fodder Wing, but he is quite ready now to let go of this childish illusion of his boyhood.



Chapter 19

Chapter 19 Summary

In early September, the heat persists, but many of summer's fruits have long since stopped producing, and fall's fruits are not yet ripe. The deer are scavenging for food in the boggy areas, making it difficult to hunt them, and the bears are killing the palmettos in their quest for food. Now the shoats, or baby pigs, are at risk, since the bears are hard pressed to find food, and Penny warns that Flag is at risk also. Jody needs to keep him nearby.

The scarcity of rain is an issue now. Suddenly the animals are all behaving peculiarly, with sea birds flying overhead. Penny predicts very bad weather. Jody looks forward to a storm, recalling how cozily the family waits out the rain in their tiny cabin with syrup candy and tall tales. He even states his wish for a "pure hurricane," but his father warns him never to wish for such violent, damaging weather. On the next day, though, the furious wind and rain catch Jody in the yard, just bringing in the few eggs he could find. He is nearly strangled by the rain, but he and Flag make it into the cabin, drenched. As Jody goes to change his wet clothes, his parents comment on his recent growth and his potential good looks.

As the storm pounds the cabin, Ora and Penny exchange good-natured teasing. Eventually Julia, the hound, is also let in out of the rain. As Penny says, "it's a toad-strangler of a rain." After a generous dinner, at which Ma actually feeds a bit of pudding to Flag with her own hand, Jody gratefully helps clean up the kitchen. Then all three snuggle on the bed as Penny spins a tale for Jody. Ma tells a tale of her own, and Jody finds the ending disappointing, as usual. He sleeps with Flag on his bed and awakens to see his father going out in torrential rain to milk the cow. The downpour continues all day without a lull, and Penny does only the most vital outdoor chores. On this second evening of storm, dinner is not so bountiful and no tales are told. The rains and dark sky continue through the night.

On the third day the wind changes direction, but the rain and wind persist until the yard is flooded. Penny worries now that all his crops will be ruined. That evening Jody goes out to do chores and finds a flooded world. The cow has broken down a barrier and managed to get her calf in with her, and now most of the milk is gone. Vegetation is flattened and the store of hay for the animals is nearly gone. In the pouring rain, the clearing looks foreign, and Jody seeks comfort in the cabin. The rain persists.

On the fifth day of the storm Ma is crying. Jody and Penny harvest a few cowpeas and grab some pickled bear meat from the smokehouse, and dinner is again a feast. On the sixth day, as the storm continues, father and son harvest all the peas. The hay is a total loss. In the evening they shuck the peas and let them dry by the fire through the night. On the seventh day Jody and his father retrieve the corn ears from the sodden ground and bring them into the kitchen also. Jody's job is to turn the corn regularly so it can all

dry from the fire's warmth. That evening Penny brings in a few sweet potatoes for dinner, but they are beginning to rot. The cane is ruined. He predicts that, if the storm does not quit by morning, they might as well lie down and die. The next morning the rain has stopped and the entire family, with the two dogs and the fawn, go out to see what is left of the world. It is not a pretty sight, but it's all the world they have.

Chapter 19 Analysis

In contrast to the abundance and promise of previous chapters, this is a story of both shortage and excess, ultimately spelling hardship of all kinds for the family. From the spectacular potential Nature showed recently, we move to a battered and flooded landscape, crops mostly ruined and animals suffering from lack of adequate feed. While the family begins to weather the storm in a cozy, intimate atmosphere, a week later Ma is crying, the fun has gone out of it, and the rain has stripped all hope of an abundant fall harvest. Penny assumes his usual philosophical manner as he invites his wife out under the clearing sky, declaring that the world is now not much to look at, but it is all they have. Chances are this transition also signals the end of Jody's childhood innocence and fantasies.

Chapter 20

Chapter 20 Summary

Buck and Mill Wheel Forrester ride over to see how the Baxters are faring. It is decided that Penny and Jody will join them to explore the area and determine what to expect in terms of the movement of game and predators. Jody shuts Flag up in the shed and Penny fills his shot-bag and a knapsack in preparation. They will camp for the night if necessary. The brothers mention that Lem has gone to check on Twink and possibly fight with Oliver again.

The men discover that the squirrel population has moved north, and Silver Glen has overflowed, revealing dead animal carcasses and an unbelievable array of snakes of all kinds, some dead and some alive. Low areas are flooded and pine trees are bent from wind and rain. They wade through ankle-deep water to approach Doc Wilson's house. He has left a note saying that he has gone toward the ocean and plans to stay drunk throughout the storm. The men laugh heartily and move on to find more flooding and dead animals at every turn. Wild animals, including bear, deer and lynx are easily spotted and seem unable or unwilling to hide or run. The group fells a buck and six wild cats immediately. The cat meat provides welcome food for the dogs. In the afternoon the men decide to press on and simply camp for the night. They find hungry and dead animals at every turn, and they are happy Fodder-wing does not have to witness this.

After setting up camp, the men come upon a female panther, treed by the dogs and protecting her very young cubs. Buck shoots the mother and the dogs begin to tear her apart as soon as she hits the ground. Jody shouts that he wants the soft, beautiful cubs, but, when Buck shakes them out of the tree, they are also killed by the dogs. Jody witnesses the cubs' ferocity, however, in their final struggle. He cradles them in his arms and says again that he hates to see things dying. Penny will skin them for Jody to make knapsacks from the hides. Jody collects wood for the night's fire, but again he struggles with the flint and steel and his father has to get the fire started. The men cook deer meat and swamp cabbage for their dinner. They cook the hearts and livers of the wild cat and a deer to feed the dogs, but Jody tastes the wild cat's liver and likes it. When they have finished the meal, Penny discovers Mill Wheel has cooked the palm hearts in his panther oil, meant to ease his rheumatism.

They each make themselves a pine bough bed near the fire, and Jody drifts off to sleep reluctantly, so mesmerized by the hunting talk of men. In the middle of the night Penny and Jody awaken to find an alligator prowling around their campsite, attracted by the smell of the cooked meat. They chase him back into the swamp. As the fire blazes anew, Jody thinks he could camp forever under the stars with his father, if only Flag could be here too.

At daybreak they discover that the pond is polluted, and no one has thought to bring water for coffee. They have nothing to drink but Doc Wilson's whiskey, so Penny and



Jody goes thirsty. After a breakfast of venison and bacon, they clean the campsite and head south, nearly overcome by the stench of polluted water. Shortly they find a lake where a marsh should be, and fish jumping where land should be. Dozens of bears are fishing for salt-water mullet! The men can hardly believe it. Each one chooses a bear to shoot, and Jody fells his first bear, a three-hundred-pound male. Buck and Mill Wheel help drag it from the water, and they loan Penny a horse to take the bear home, since he and Jody have both been riding on Caesar. At one point Jody is left quite a way behind and feels uneasy, but then he remembers the dead bear behind his saddle and feels bold and mature. He arrives home victorious and happy to be back to the clearing and Flag.

Chapter 20 Analysis

The Baxters and the Forresters have now reduced life to its lowest terms: Man against the forces of nature. The fight for survival following a storm of unimaginable proportions binds them together in a brotherhood of humanity. The foursome riding out to explore the surrounding landscape in order to consider their prospects for food and safety provides a microcosm of life: all humankind attempting to understand and deal with natural forces beyond its comprehension or control.

The fact that Jody is a part of this group is significant. He has been accepted without hesitation into the circle of hunting men. He shoots his first bear now, a feat much more important than the felling of a deer. The latter provides food for the family, it is true, but by killing a bear, Jody provides both food and safety for his family, two fundamental social needs. He has faced another test in the wilderness, not nearly as frightening as the night his father was snake-bitten nor as emotional as the night he sat up with Fodder-wing's body, but still most important: As a member of the circle of hunters, he is *invited* to participate, and he knows that the others will give support and assistance, should he need them. Jody has performed two other ritual deeds now that, while purely symbolic, contribute emotionally to his stature as a man: He has eaten of the panther's liver and has eaten palm heart fried in panther oil.

Of course the chapter also offers signs that Jody has not reached full manhood. He again struggles to start a fire, the most basic skill in man's confrontation with nature. Additionally, he falls asleep, against his will, as the hunting tales are spun. His wish to have Flag cuddle with him near the camp fire is also a childish longing, but his having left the baby behind as he faces the forces of nature, as all fathers must do, is a huge step toward maturity.

Chapter 21

Chapter 21 Summary

Two weeks later Jody and Penny are doing all they can to salvage something of their crops, but it does not look good. Sweet potatoes are rotting in the ground and the hay is moldy. Penny goes to the newly named "Mullet Prairie" where they saw mullet jumping a few weeks ago, and cuts marsh grass, leaving it to cure. There he and Jody smell the stench of rotting dead fish, but Penny senses that there is something else wrong. It seems that the animals are continuing to die. Two weeks later, in early October, they return for the cured marsh grass. They find a feeble wildcat, dying and unable to protect itself. Returning home, as they reach the sinkhole, they discover a buck deer dying. Now Penny sees that the plague, Black Tongue, has hit the creatures. When they find three more deer carcasses, Jody fears that Flag might contract the disease. Penny has no words of assurance for him.

Flag and the dogs are tied in the yard when they go back for more marsh hay. Jody is full of questions and worry, but Penny has no answers - he's never seen this before. Jody is absorbed by speculation about this plague, and he ponders it while waiting for his father to ride back from the Forresters to tell what the neighbors have observed. Penny's report seems hopeless: no species has been spared. He refuses to discuss it further, since he has no answers; they must just wait and see.

Chapter 21 Analysis

In the struggle between man and nature, nature now exerts a force that can neither be understand or controlled. It seems that humans no longer have the upper hand in scrub territory. The coming winter might be the longest and leanest they have ever known, with their crops ruined and game falling prey to the plague. To make matters worse, for the first time in his life, Jody sees that his father has no answers. Things look very bleak for the Baxters and the Forresters.

Chapter 22

Chapter 22 Summary

By November the family begins to understand the extent of the damage. Deer and all other game usually hunted for their table are extremely scarce. Since the quail have survived and the wild turkeys have not, Penny concludes that the plague has been spread through the polluted swamp waters where the quail do not feed. Predatory animals, deprived of their natural diet, are now more hungry and daring. Penny fences his hogs in on the island, but a bear climbs the fence and steals one away. Penny sees the bear tracks, but it is midnight, and he will not risk a hunt at this hour. In the daylight they see that the track is that of Old Slewfoot. Father and son discuss the possibility of catching the bear when he comes back to the kill tomorrow. Meanwhile, Flag has broken free of his rope and gallops up to join them.

Penny now falls ill with fever and is in bed for three days, forbidding Jody to try to hunt Slewfoot on his own. Finally the family decides to butcher their pigs, although they are not yet fattened, rather than leave them for Old Slewfoot to steal. They work together at the scalding and dressing of the animals, for Penny's strength is again failing him. Every part of the dead hogs is to be used in one way or another. Only the breeding adults are spared to start the cycle over again. They must root for food in the woods, although they will be penned up at night for their safety. But now the smokehouse is full, and the winter does not look so bleak. Dinner is sumptuous this night.

With the cane crop nearly ruined, the Baxters are able to make only a small amount of thin, acidic syrup, but at least they have some sweetening in the house again. The corn has done well, and Jody stays busy turning the mill wheel to grind it into meal. It is a monotonous job and gives him plenty of time for thought. Penny breaks the bad news that there will be no teacher boarding this year. With Fodder Wing's death, the Forresters have no need for a teacher, and Penny will never be able to trap enough animals to support a teacher himself. Jody is unconcerned. His father will teach him some reading and sums, but mostly he will hear many a good tale. Flag joins Jody at the mill wheel and then wanders off. Jody notes that he wanders away for an hour at a time now, and Ma is sure he is going wild. Jody has observed, however, that the fawn is always within earshot of his call.

Flag commits his first serious offense now. He discovers that he can butt the pile of sweet potatoes drying on the back porch and spread them all over the yard. Then he discovers how good they taste, and he goes from one to another, nibbling. Ma drives him away with a broom, but, thinking this is a game, he only returns to butt her. Penny is very stern with Jody; pointing out the damage Flag has done to their already short rations. Jody must pen the deer up.

The next day Jody constructs a pen, using the lot fence as two of the walls. He places Flag in the pen, but the fawn jumps the rails immediately and follows him. Jody breaks



down and cries. Penny comes to his rescue, reasoning that, if they can't keep the fawn in the pen, they will simply build a "pen" to cover the sweet potatoes. Jody is grateful for the flexibility, and this plan solves the problem. Flag can no longer come into the house or the smokehouse, though, as he has grown too large. Still, the young deer is curious and gets into mischief as he explores. Jody must be more careful about shutting doors and seeing to details, a habit, his father says, that will do him no harm.

Chapter 22 Analysis

We witness a new tension in this chapter, as well as a sense of foreboding. Old Slewfoot is back again, thieving, and he, like all the other bear that have survived, will be hungrier than ever. In contrast, the innocent and defenseless fawn is growing more independent and harder to manage. Flag actually appears at the site where Penny and Jody are observing Slewfoot's tracks, and this after he has been securely tied. The penning up of Flag parallels the penning of the hogs, but with two important differences: The hogs are penned for their own protection, and they do not escape, whereas Flag is penned to keep him out of trouble, and he does escape. The more the fawn wanders and prowls, the more likely he is to encounter a hungry wild predator. Even if Jody does not yet see this possibility, the signs are clear to the reader. The fawn is now becoming an annoyance to Jody's parents, a threat to their food supply, and a bit of a problem to Jody himself. All of this occurs against a backdrop of fear, given that Old Slewfoot is back on the prowl in Baxter territory.

Chapter 23

Chapter 23 Summary

The first frost comes at the end of November, and now the family spends the quiet evenings sitting together in front of the fire. Flag is allowed in the house in the evening, and he even sleeps in Jody's room. Ma figures this at least keeps the fawn out of trouble. Jody has grown considerably over the past months, and Ma makes a joke about it, which pleases Penny and Jody no end. Penny proclaims that the winter looks to be mild, and they came out better than he had expected in terms of crops and meat. He feels they have fended off starvation.

Just as Penny is about to turn in for the night, the dogs bark and the calf screams, and Penny races for his gun. Three-dozen wolves have invaded the lot. They have killed the heifer calf. The wolves are mangy and gaunt, obviously short of food. Penny sends them off with a couple shots, and then he discovers Julia with her teeth sunk into a wolf's throat. Penny looks at his dead calf and the dead wolf and seems to shrink before Jody's eyes. Jody has found this encounter with a pack of wolves far more frightening than a standoff with a bear or panther. Penny attends to the dogs' wounds and expresses a need for a "snort." He will go tomorrow to the Forresters because he cannot fight this battle alone. As Jody sleeps with Flag on his bed, he realizes that the clearing is no longer the fortress it used to be.

Early in the morning Penny heads to Forrester Island, and Jody is proud to stay home to defend his frightened mother, although he would have liked to ride along. He hurries through his chores, seeming to hear new and frightening noises, and he insists on keeping Flag in the house all day. Jody even turns to his spelling book, studying through the morning, although he does not comprehend the words on the page. He is alert and on edge until his father returns home in time for dinner. Penny shares what he has learned from their neighbors: These are the only wolves that survived the plague, and they are starving, traveling in a pack and attacking farm animals whenever they can. He reveals that he and Jody will not hunt with the Forresters, for the latter wish to poison the wolves and he will not agree to it. Ma is furious with him, insisting his heart is made of butter and his judgment is impaired. Penny will not budge, even when Jody mentions that Flag might become a target of the wolves. A real family quarrel ensues. For the first time, Jody suspects his father is actually wrong. Still, he dislikes his mother verbally attacking his father.

After Jody takes Flag for a run, he gathers hickory nuts, thereby staining his shirt. He reflects that he might be in big trouble for this, but it has become difficult to predict what will get him into trouble. In the evening three Forresters arrive to alert Penny to the poison they have laid, so his dogs will not find it. They have been very careful and clever in their baiting of the wolves. Penny simply says he will keep his dogs tied up for a week. The rest of the evening passes uneventfully, and Jody overhears his father talking to his mother in bed. Penny says that Oliver Hutto and Twink Weatherby have

sneaked off together, and Lem is beyond angry, vowing to kill them both. Jody is furious with Oliver, sure he will tell him off when he next sees him, and anxious for a chance to pull Twink's blonde hair.

Chapter 23 Analysis

Once again, as all becomes peaceful and the family sees a glimmer of hope, tragedy strikes and fear stalks the clearing. The forces of nature are disturbed now, as the balance of the food chain has been upset. The danger is greater and less predictable now. Having established a friendly relationship with the Forresters, Penny turns to them for help without a second thought. However, some discussion reveals that their world view is so different from his that they simply cannot work together. There will be no neighborhood fight, though. Penny can tolerate thinking different from his, and he models this behavior for his son.

There is little happiness for Jody in this chapter. The island of safety that was his home has now been breeched, and the innocent security of childhood is gone forever. Much of his youthful idealism is destroyed in this chapter: He doubts his father's judgment for the first time; he sees wolves cross into the lot and realizes a fear he never knew before; his faith in Oliver has been trampled.

Chapter 24

Chapter 24 Summary

The Forresters' poisoning plan has reduced the wolf pack to about a dozen. When that pack invades the Forrester corral, the family kills another six, but they lose a calf and two dogs in the effort. Penny agrees to help trap and shoot the rest.

One evening Buck comes to the Baxters to ask Penny to join in a hunt for the wolves early the next morning. They have been heard at a nearby watering hole. The plan is to possibly bag some venison or bear meat at the same time, the effects of the plague having now disappeared. Jody will be allowed to go too, and he knows the neighbors value Penny's hunting wisdom.

The entire family rises before daybreak and Jody shares a rare moment of affection with his mother. He ties Flag in the shed and then they eat a hurried breakfast. Ma packs them a lunch, which Penny is sure they won't need, and Jody tells her what a good mother she is. After the two mount Caesar, Ma hands them their guns. Jody has forgotten his coat on this dark, chilly night, but they meet up with the Forresters and set off.

As the sky starts to turn gray, the party arrives at the watering hole, but the wolves are not yet there. Many bears are drinking, along with a buck. Then the wolves approach, and, at Penny's suggestion, Jody is sent to ride behind them and drive them toward the hunters, taking one pot shot when he gets close. He does exactly as told and feels terribly successful. Twelve wolves lie dead, but a few escape. Now the young bears are seen up in trees, and Penny suggests they try to capture them alive and sell them on the coast for a good price. The group easily captures ten young cubs alive and shoots two yearlings for their meat. When Lem insists on tormenting the cubs, Penny demands that he stop, and Lem is ready to fight. His brothers intervene on Penny's behalf, but Lem remains angry.

Buck and Gabby offer to mind the cubs while the rest go to Forrester Island for a wagon. Penny offers that he and Jody might as well leave and do a little hunting on the way home. Lem taunts him, sure he plans to follow the buck they have just seen, but Penny is interested in a 'gator. Three of the Forresters (Buck, Lem and Mill Wheel) will cart the cubs to Jacksonville to trade them. Buck agrees to represent Penny's interests, so they will stop by the Baxter clearing on the way to discuss the details. The two families part ways, Penny telling Jody that Buck is the only one in the litter that was worth raising. He now calls Jody's work "noble," explaining that he had hesitated to praise him in front of the group. Penny and Jody ride on through a beautiful morning in the scrub. Jody is imagining how he will tell Flag all about the hunt, wondering why he can communicate so easily with the deer but can never find the right words to explain his ideas to his father, with whom he loves to talk.



At Juniper Creek Penny kills an 8-foot alligator. They cut off the tail to smoke it for dog food, and Penny takes some fat to make oil for his boots. Looking at the fat alligator, Jody marvels that the birds of the air and the water creatures actually got fat off the flood, but all the land animals suffered or perished. Father and son share the lunch Ma has packed and rest under a magnolia tree. Then they head for home. Julia picks up the trail of a buck and Penny shoots it with an apology to the deer. He cannot believe their good luck today. They throw the buck's body over Caesar, next to the dead bear, and both walk the rest of the way home.

Ma is grateful for the game, and Jody runs excitedly to tell Flag all about his adventure. He enjoys a playful exchange with the young animal but then Penny is calling him to help dress the game. They work at the bear and buck all afternoon, finding themselves nearly too tired to eat an early supper. Jody brings Flag in and falls into bed as his parents draw up the list of what they would like Buck to get for them in trading the cubs.

In the morning the three Forrester brothers arrive with their chaotic bear cargo, and Buck says for the second time how much Fodder-wing would have enjoyed seeing all of this. Buck goes over the list of requested items with the Baxters and the wagon begins to move. Then Lem, spying the deerskin on the smokehouse wall, jumps down, throws Penny against the wall and accuses him of having lied yesterday about what he would be hunting. Penny reminds them of his perfect record for honesty, and Buck asks forgiveness as Lem stalks away. Buck says it is all due to Oliver's stealing Lem's girl, and the wagon rolls on toward Jacksonville.

Penny is disturbed, and Ma confronts him about letting Lem get away with such an accusation. He reasons that he could not have fought the big man, and he surely did not want to shoot him. Ma relents and says Penny did right and he should not worry about it. Jody is mystified by his parents. He too was disappointed that his father let Lem speak to him that way. He finally resolves his confusion by deciding to hate Lem and like Buck.

Chapter 24 Analysis

Here is a wonderful opportunity to view the Baxter and Forrester "styles" in opposition with each other, noting in what areas the two families are united and in what other areas they demonstrate striking contrasts. They have come together out of the common need to protect their stock from wolves. Penny has won a concession now that the poisoning plan has been only partially successful and has actually claimed two of the Forresters' dogs. Now that hunting will be the mode of operation, Penny's wisdom and skills are requested, and this is not lost on an admiring son.

While the men work together well in executing their plan, always there is the tension between Lem and Penny, exposing Lem's tendency to hold grudges, anger easily, and look for an argument. Lem also displays a mean streak when he torments the cubs with a stick. Buck's words and behavior only reinforce for the reader his evenhandedness

and reasonable approach to events. It is significant that Penny trusts him with his share of the bear cub trade.

Jody takes several steps forward in his rite of passage to manhood. He flushes the wolves properly, gaining control of his nerves at the minute all the men are relying on him. He also demonstrates a new understanding of diverse personalities and temperaments, resolving that Buck Forrester is a good man and Lem Forrester a hateful man, meaning that all Forresters are not alike. He is also beginning to recognize a new level in his relationship with his father: the ability to talk man-to-man and the desire to do so often. However, like a child, he runs to Flag to relate his story of the hunt, and he pretends that the fawn is talking back to him. He has done the work of a man, though, both in the scrub while hunting and in the clearing as he helps his father dress the animals they have shot.

The reader's appreciation of the characters' depth and individuality grows in this chapter. We are reminded of Penny's reputation for honesty, related in a much earlier chapter, and we are also able to see Buck's civility in action. Of course we also become convinced now that Lem will prove to be a troublesome, cantankerous neighbor, as we suspected.

Chapter 25

Chapter 25 Summary

The behavior of the native birds now signals the coming of winter. It is December. The Baxters enjoyed a fine trade on their part of the bear cubs, but relations between the two neighboring families are now particularly strained since Lem's attack on Penny. Buck does stop by, though, one day, to report that the wolf problem seems to be resolved, although the bears, particularly Old Slewfoot, continue to steal calves from the Forrester corral. Penny thinks he might be able to catch the old bear in his tricks. He takes the opportunity to mention the deer about which Lem had become so ornery, and Buck's response suggests he actually believes Penny lied about his hunting intentions. Unfriendly terms with the neighbors continue to disturb Penny.

Work is slow now, and Penny declares it will be so until after Christmas. Jody, with ample time to play with Flag, discovers that the babyish spots have disappeared from his coat, although he has no sign of horns yet. The two roam contentedly in the scrub, where Jody finds bright red Cherokee beans and secretly strings his mother a necklace.

With plans for the family to go to the "Christmas doin's" in Volusia, Ma wants some yard goods to set a panel into her wedding dress so it will fit her broadening figure. She wants to go in style. This reminds Penny how little his wife asks, and he vows again to dig her a well near the house one day. Penny and Jody hunt for a few days, hoping to get some skins or meat for Ma to trade on her shopping trip to the city. When Julia refuses to follow the prints that are clearly of a yearling or large fawn, Penny is confused - until Flag emerges from the woods! Penny is humbled that Julia knew "kin folk," and Jody is thrilled that Julia respected Flag as a family member.

Finally they shoot two deer, and Penny returns home for the horse and wagon. Flag is following him when he comes back. Penny shows Jody places where both deer and bear have been feeding on berries, once again displaying his brilliant understanding of nature. That night they feast on the deer's heart and liver. There follows a heated discussion about their plans for the trip to Volusia, Jody wanting to bring Flag to show Grandma Hutto, and Ma determined she will not stay in that house. Jody resignedly ties Flag in the shed and the whole family, in their finest dress, mounts the wagon and sets off. Jody sits alone in the back, pondering his relationship with the beloved Huttos, finally deciding to inquire politely about Oliver's health. Penny has brought the meat and hides to trade, and Ma has brought some culinary treasures for the same purpose, as well as homemade goodies for Grandma Hutto.

On the ferry, Jody tries to strike up a conversation with the ferry boy, but to no avail. He misses Fodder Wing at times like this. The Baxters go to Mr. Boyles' store and confirm the amazing story the Forresters have told of the flood and its consequences. Ma is a hard, proud trader, refusing to substitute black fabric for the brown she desires but cannot find here. Suddenly Ma sends Jody out to look after the horse. He is



dumbfounded until he sees his father wink and knows she is buying him a holiday gift. He lures the ferry boy into a wordless competition, throwing stones at a tree trunk. When Ma is finished with her shopping, she goes on to Grandma Hutto's, but Jody, torn between that lovely cottage and a chance to hear his father talk man-talk, chooses the latter and stays with Penny. With Ma out of sight, Penny now asks for enough black fabric and silk thread for a dress, trading the deerskin for those items instead of cash.

The male talk begins, the men smoking pipes and Jody eating a licorice stick and listening raptly. Jody relives the entire summer as he listens, enjoying it more the second time. Then he is sent to Grandma's, as it is nearly noon. The atmosphere is chilly inside as Ma and Grandma have a verbal sparring match, their conversation as cold as ice. Penny comes in and eases the tension with good-natured joking. During a friendly dinner, it is settled that they will come for Christmas, take Grandma to the party, and spend the night at her place. Suddenly Jody recalls Flag, stating that he will have to stay home, but Grandma immediately invites the fawn too. When he has the chance, Penny takes Grandma aside to discuss Oliver's situation. He warns her about Lem Forrester, but she reminds him that she is made of whalebone and Hell. Jody feels better to hear the conversation, deciding to forgive Oliver.

Chapter 25 Analysis

This chapter offers an insightful glance into the Baxters' life in the winter, so different from the hustle and bustle of summer. Now there is time for the pleasant things in life. Both Penny and Ora are somewhat relaxed, and there are no tests of Jody's manhood in this chapter. This is all about enjoying life for a change. There are some nagging details, however: Buck's apparent mistrust of Penny's honesty; the continued tension between the two families; Flag's escalating independence, which might get him in serious trouble; the unsettled issue concerning Oliver, Twink and Lem.

Some important contrasts appear in this chapter. Jody's attempts to engage the ferry boy in conversation and later in a game stand in stark, silent contrast to the warm, chatty relationship he and Fodder-wing once shared. The other contrast involves the two women. Grandma Hutto is a perfect foil for Ora Baxter, every bit Ora's opposite. As they come together in Grandma's cottage, their striking contrasts are played up vividly.

Chapter 26

Chapter 26 Summary

As Christmas approaches, the mood is festive among the Baxters. Trixie bears a heifer calf, which will replace the one killed by the wolves and also take care of the milking during the trip to Volusia. In addition, Ma bakes the biggest fruitcake Jody has ever seen. Penny presents his wife with the black fabric, to her great delight, and now she sews furiously. Four days before Christmas Buck arrives to say that Old Slewfoot has killed one of their 250-pound hogs, but only after a serious battle. This might be the time to track him, when he is battle-weary. He adds that the Forresters will not be going to the Volusia Christmas party. Jody fashions a pipe for his father as a Christmas gift and decides to make Flag a halter of mistletoe and holly.

In the morning, the calf is gone and Slewfoot's tracks are evident. Now Penny is committed to finding and killing the bear, and he does not intend to stop until he does so. Jody hardly has time to find his shoes and load his gun in time to follow after his father, Flag tagging along. After they discover the carcass of the calf and finally take a rest, Jody realizes that this is not the enjoyable hunt he has come to know, but a hunt of hatred and vengeance, with "no happiness in it." Only Flag remains unwearied.

Finally Penny realizes the bear is returning to feed on the dead calf, so he hurries home and brings the huge, recently oiled bear trap to the vicinity of the kill. Jody is exhausted by this time, but Penny's anger drives him on. They bait the trap, hurry home for a quick supper, and drop into bed. They are up before dawn the next day for a hurried breakfast, and then back on the trail. It is bitterly cold, but they have chosen not to wear the new woolen hunting clothes Ma has made them. Checking the trap, they find it untouched. They return home again, where Penny grimly dresses in his warm clothes and demands from Ma, bacon and all the cooked rations she has, packed for the hunt. He declares that he will not return until the bear is dead; Jody is welcome to accompany him, but it will be hard going.

Ma glances at the new black dress she's made and reminds him that tomorrow is Christmas Eve. It is decided that, should the hunters fail to return in time, Ma is to milk the cow and then take the wagon to Volusia to attend the Christmas party alone. They will meet her there if the hunt has been successful. She will have to return Christmas morning for the milking. Now Jody has to decide which he wants more: to attend the Christmas party with his mother (who would greatly appreciate it) or to hunt Old Slewfoot with his father. He chooses the latter and takes Flag hunting with them.

Even in the chill air, hunting begins to take on some of its glory again. By mid-afternoon Julia comes upon Slewfoot and rousts him from his bed. They are tracking through a swamp now, and the going gets tougher and tougher. As the bear swims Salt Springs Run and clambers out on the other side, they take a few shots, and Penny knows he has nicked him. Julia, however, refuses to enter the creek, so the men resignedly turn



north and follow the creek, Jody wondering what his father has in mind. Weary and discouraged, they come upon a house Penny remembers well. "She" is not home, so they enter through a window, make a fire to cook their food, and sleep on the kitchen floor, intending to be out and on the trail before daybreak. Penny has been silent through all of this, and Jody longs for the man-talk he so enjoys with his father. Finally he breaks his silence to explain that they will travel to the head of the spring where they can cross to the other side. He adds that this home belongs to a widow he courted many years ago, before he met Ora. As they fall asleep, Jody wonders whether his mother has gone to Volusia, and he worries about Flag, who has not been seen all day. He wonders whether his own mother has ever worried about him as he worries about his fawn; he decides she has not.

The hunters oversleep and are awakened in the morning by Nellie Ginright, the homeowner, returning with her nephew. Nellie and Penny have a warm, animated conversation, and she cooks them a fine breakfast. Then she offers them her boat, which is in poor condition, to cross the creek. This means they will not have to walk several miles to the head of the spring. Penny and Jody head out into the freezing cold in great spirits, although there is ice everywhere they look. The boat is indeed in poor condition, and they are soaked and nearly swamped as they reach the far bank. Soon they are back on Old Slewfoot's trail. In just 400 yards, Julia and Rip come upon the bear. The hunters are off on another chase until, at high noon, the bear turns at bay. A serious tussle ensues, and then Penny simply drops the huge bear with one shot. Jody is amazed at how quickly it ends and how easy it all seems now.

After sincere, high-spirited celebration, the men consider how they will move this 500-pound body from the woods. After gutting the animal, they struggle to drag it to the river's edge, but the task is hopeless. They have two options now, Penny says: Walk to Fort Gates for help (offering some of the meat in return) or walk home and return with the wagon. Jody reminds him that it is Christmas Eve and Ma surely has taken the wagon to Volusia. They strike out on foot for Fort Gates, and now Penny warms to the hunting lore and begins to spin his wonderful stories again. Soon the sound of hoofbeats signals the approach of the Forrester clan, drunk and noisy. Their neighbors are delighted to hear that Slewfoot is dead, and they immediately offer to help drag the bear out if they will receive half the meat in return. Penny assures them he had planned to give them half the meat anyway, as Buck had warned him of Slewfoot's latest activity, but the Forresters also plan to crash the party at the Volusia church, and that worries Penny. He accepts their help, hoping they decide against the Volusia trip.

The rowdy bunch quarters the meat and skins the bear, leaving the head and claws intact. The noisy procession reaches the Baxter clearing in the dark, and the Forresters continue to pass the bottle from time to time. They are not interested in supper, but only in heading directly to Volusia. They hang the bear meat in the smokehouse, but Buck clings to the pelt. Jody calls Flag and, to his relief, the fawn finally appears. Having suffered Flag's temporary disappearance on the hunt, Jody now shuts Flag securely in the shed and heads off to Volusia with his father and the drunken neighbors. When they arrive at the church, the brothers dress Buck in the bearskin and he enters the church

door, looking very much like a live bear. Partygoers scatter, and then Penny sees a rifle aimed at Buck and quickly intervenes to save Buck's life.

The cheerful group recovers from the fright Buck has given them, and the party starts up again with Penny the center of male attention. The women press in on Jody, offering him sweets, and he tells the hunting tale to them, accepting one piece of cake after another. Ma reveals that she has found her red berry necklace while cleaning, and she tells Jody what holiday gifts she and Penny have for him back at the house. The drunken Forresters enter the dance rowdily, and Ma and Grandma Hutto finally agree on something - those black devils do not belong here. Then a stranger enters and says he just disembarked from the steamer and was accompanied by a young couple who also stopped here, an Oliver Hutto and a young woman. The Forresters whisper together and suddenly leave, arousing Penny's concern. He hurries his family and Grandma Hutto into the wagon; sure the Forresters have gone to her house to do harm to Oliver. They immediately see that Grandma's house is ablaze, and the hoof prints in the area show a number of riders have been here recently.

Grandma is convinced that Oliver is inside, dead, so Penny sends Jody in the wagon to search for Oliver. He finds Oliver and Twink Weatherby walking down the street and announces that the Forresters have burned Grandma's home. The couple rides back with Jody, Oliver with his revolver at the ready. After mother and son are gratefully reunited, Oliver is ready to chase after the Forrester clan and kill them all. Grandma thinks quickly, though, and announces that the Forresters had nothing to do with the fire. She takes all the blame for herself, saying she was careless with a lamp. Only Penny catches her intention, but he helps the story along, finally soothing Oliver and discouraging him from his suicidal mission. Oliver announces that Twink is now his wife, and he assures his mother he will build her a new house right here. She adamantly refuses, though, insisting she will move immediately to Boston, and so it is decided.

Chapter 26 Analysis

This is the longest chapter in the book, offering up the resolution to the main plot conflicts. Old Slewfoot is killed, the Christmas "doin's" finally takes place, and Oliver has resolved the issue between himself and Lem concerning Twink Weatherby. A chapter that begins with the heady joy of Christmas preparations quickly turns dark when the evil bear steps in once more. Now the hunt takes on a new flavor, and Jody recognizes the difference between the happy, carefree hunting of his childhood (and his imagination) and the determined, fight-to-the-death hunt of anger and vengeance. For a few days he sees a new side of Penny, a man who has been temporarily transformed by events into the hard, silent, heartless hunter on a mission to secure his family's survival. The childish Jody longs for his father's conversation and soft-hearted patronage, but the near-adult Jody bites his lip and joins in the hunt, keeping quiet about the cold and hunger and, especially, about his concern for the fawn who has wandered away. It is clear now that the adult Jody is emerging strongly, called to the fore by circumstances and the wisdom imparted by his father.



We see a softer side of Ora Baxter here, making us a bit more sympathetic. We recognize her feminine side, longing to wear the new dress and present her luscious fruitcake in a festive atmosphere. She never speaks a word of her bitter disappointment, though, and readily agrees to the plan Penny quickly formulates to get the bear and celebrate Christmas with the community, even if the family has to split up to do so. It is heartwarming to see that, once the bear is killed and Penny is the center of attention, Jody notices a quiet pride in his mother that makes her "handsome." The reader also is privileged to witness the one moment that Ora and Grandma are in agreement, both focusing their disdain on the Forrester clan. Interestingly, another foil to Ora is added in this chapter: Nellie Ginright. Now we meet the woman Ezra Baxter might have married, and even Jody sees immediately that she is of the same breed as Grandma Hutto, so much warmer and more easy-going than his own mother. It is interesting to note that Penny had asked for Nellie's hand in marriage - and been turned down - before he courted Ora.

Three archetypal themes come to a climax in this chapter. The overriding theme of man vs. nature is summarily resolved now as Penny, using modern technology (or what was considered modern in 1870), ends the bear's life almost effortlessly. Even in death, the huge marauder commands the hunter's respect, yet it is clear who the victors are. The theme of man vs. man, illustrated through the tensions between the Baxters and the Forresters and, as a microcosm, through the tiff between Oliver and Lem over the girl, rears its ugly head again. Now it seems clear to the reader that the age-old struggle will evolve and change, but it will never end. Finally, Jody's rite of passage to manhood is advanced considerably here. Jody makes a stream of mature decisions, although they do not come easily to him: to hunt rather than to party and celebrate; to keep quiet about the cold and weariness; to trust that Flag will be safe and will return; to bolt Flag in the shed and follow the impatient men to Volusia; to recognize in his parents the esteem in which the community holds them. He still makes immature decisions, such as blurting out to Oliver the deed done by the Forresters, agonizing over his fawn when his attention is needed elsewhere, and gorging on sweets at the party. A new emotion surfaces in Jody now, though, and that is his strange feeling that, in some way, Eulalie is "his," if only to throw potatoes at her. He is discovering the inexplicable link to the opposite sex.

Chapter 27

Chapter 27 Summary

Mr. and Mrs. Oliver Hutto and Grandma depart for Boston in the morning. Penny says an emotional goodbye to Grandma and Jody swears to himself that he will now be forever loyal to Oliver. He even finds things to like about Twink. The latter hands him a Christmas gift: a round box for his gunpowder. The Baxter family heads for home now in the wagon, Jody, settling in exhaustion between his parents, filled up with all the good things that have happened to him in the past three days. Penny patiently explains to Ora why it was necessary to turn Oliver off the trail to kill the Forresters, and why no court of law will ever be able to convict them of setting fire to Grandma's house. True to her character, Ma would have "had the law on them baboons" and still insists on calling Twink a "Chippendale." Jody is exceedingly happy to see his safe, secure home.

Chapter 27 Analysis

This brief peek at the Baxters allows the author to "explain" the reasoning behind the behavior at the end of the last chapter. Now the reader realizes that the Forresters will probably continue to nag at the fringes of the community's sensibilities and never be held fully accountable for their behavior. We also realize that, for all the soft womanliness Ora showed in the previous chapter, she is what she is, and we should look for no significant change to her way of thinking. The revelation of this chapter, though, comes at the very end when the Baxter clearing comes into view and Jody is once again wrapped in that warm, emotional blanket of security and gratitude for hearth and home and the knowledge that something loyal and loving awaits him. This is the reward for conquering the threats of nature and working toward resolution of the conflicts among humankind.

Chapter 28

Chapter 28 Summary

During a mild January, the Baxters reflect on the riotous dealings they have had with folks along the river, but those memories recede into the quiet life on Baxter Island. The Forresters never ride by anymore, convincing Penny of their guilt in the house-burning, and he is saddened. Jody now thinks of the Huttos like characters in a fairy tale, beyond his reach. Penny plows in the mild weather and plans to plant by early March, focusing his efforts now on corn. Penny and Jody work to create a ginger bed for Ma, promising her ginger root when next they go to town. The bear are ranging far now, preparing for hibernation, and deer are still scarce since the plague. Bringing in timber and splitting wood is the main task now, and Jody loves to roam with Flag, seeking suitable trees and branches. Father and son work harmoniously to complete the late-winter chores. The meat of Old Slewfoot has been tough and stringy, though his fat has been a wonder. They are happy to eat the last of him.

The family gathers around the hearth in the evening, where Ma quilts. Foxes rarely come near. One night Jody discovers a maimed wolf playing with the family's dogs, and he and Penny watch in wonderment. Penny says it is left from the pack they destroyed. It is old and weathered and will fall prey to a bear or panther in time. They silently agree never to tell Ma about the wolf.

Chapter 28 Analysis

This is a chapter about rhythm: the rhythm of the seasons; the rhythm of planting and harvesting; the rhythm of work such as sawing and quilting; the rhythm of the day and the evening; the rhythm of the hunt and the plenty. The perfect rhythm is interrupted by one strange phenomenon: the wolf and dogs playing together. This is a signal that, when man and nature jump their rhythmic course of give-and-take (the storm and its flood; the ravaging wolves; the poisoning efforts), life will be just slightly out of sync to those who are alert enough to notice it.

It is interesting to note that Old Slewfoot, who in life commanded both respect and bitter hatred, presents a less than delectable spread for their table, although the Baxters are able to delight in the use of his fat. Age made his flesh tough and his fat abundant, and both were made possible by the extreme length of time it took for man to finally conquer him.

Chapter 29

Chapter 29 Summary

Penny is laid up with rheumatism in February, unable to work at all. Ma suggests that Jody do the plowing, but Penny explains that he has not been adequately trained. When she presses him, insisting that he was surely plowing by that age, Penny says that he would rather Jody have a childhood, as he himself did not. Jody does light chores, but mostly he hunts playfully in the woods with Flag, even carrying his father's gun. One day Jody sees Flag on a high ridge, silhouetted against the sky, and realizes how much his fawn has grown. He asks his father if Flag might be a yearling yet and perhaps have horns soon. Penny explains that soon Flag will be in that in-between stage of "yearling," not a fawn, but not yet a buck. He will probably get horns in July. Excited, Jody pesters his mother about whether she likes Flag or hopes he will get horns soon. He takes the time to nuzzle her and tell her how good she smells, but she is not interested in any of this.

Flag is becoming a real nuisance now, with a mind of his own. Today he spills the pan of cowpeas Ma has just shelled and then runs off, jumping the fence. Jody quickly repairs the damage and takes full responsibility, but his mother is unmoved. That night Flag wanders through the cabin while Jody sleeps, finally pressing his wet muzzle against Ma's sleeping face. That is the ultimate insult, and she demands that Flag never come in again. This time Penny backs her up. Jody unhappily turns Flag out in the yard and goes back to sleep. In the morning, Penny discovers that Flag has trampled half the tobacco seedlings. That means there will be no tobacco cash crop this year. Jody is set to repair the damage, and Penny, who remains understanding, says they will not tell Ma. Jody is as frustrated with his father's easy forgiveness as he is with his mother's unreasonable rage.

Chapter 29 Analysis

Flag's development now clearly parallels Jody's. Just as Flag will soon stand between fawn and buck, sometimes acting like one, sometimes like the other, so Jody has been acting in past months: part child, part man. When Penny explains how Flag's behavior will change when he becomes a yearling, we are reminded of all the subtle changes in Jody's behavior. It is clear now that Jody is a "yearling" as much as Flag will ever be. Flag also inspires in Ma and Penny the same responses that Jody inspires. Penny is always understanding and forgiving, and Ma remains stubbornly aloof and angry. Flag's muzzle, so precious to Jody, is only an annoyance to Ma, just as his own loving face next to hers fails to arouse any warm, motherly responses. If the reader had any doubts as to the author's intentions, it is now clear that Rawlings is drawing a perfect parallel between boy and beast. Jody, of course, sees none of this.

Chapter 30

Chapter 30 Summary

It is a cool, sunny morning in March, and Penny fairly glows at breakfast. The day is perfect for planting, and he declares he will plant all day today, tomorrow, and the next day. He assigns Jody the task of setting in the tobacco seedlings, much as he would love to do it himself. Flag has disappeared into the woods, and Jody plants all morning, taking his time. At dinnertime Penny is disappointed that only half the tobacco bed is filled, although all the plants have been set in. Jody offers to help him with the other planting now, and they seed the cornfield together, finishing just after the rain has begun.

Flag bounds in out of the woods, and Jody catches Penny eyeing him in a cold, unpleasant manner, almost like he eyed Slewfoot. Then Penny notes that both Jody and Flag are yearlings now, growing up way too fast. "Hit grieves me," he tells his son. In the rain, Jody lures Flag to the shed and gives him a lecture about behaving well, now that he is a yearling. Supper is a silent affair, and both men drop into bed and immediately to sleep. In the morning Penny is excited to plant cotton. The two work together again, Jody full of questions about this new crop they are planting. When Flag returns, Penny notes how his sharp hooves dig into the soft earth. They do not disturb the seeds, but Penny makes some strange comments on Jody's attachment to the yearling.

All week Penny plants joyously, pushing his aching body to the brink, eager to take advantage of the beautiful weather. One day as he and old Caesar attempt to dislodge an old tree stump, he turns white and collapses to the ground, clutching his groin. Jody helps him onto the horse and leads Caesar to the yard, then helps his father dismount and crawl into the house. Ma is in a tizzy, seeing he has hurt himself, and he drops onto his bed, sure he will recover from the strain in a few minutes.

Chapter 30 Analysis

The reader has seen the parallel growth and development of boy and deer, and now Penny speaks it aloud. And it does not seem to please him, a fact that is not lost on Jody. We are back now almost to the point at which we started the story, just a month shy of April. Again the weather is lovely and the fields offer unbridled hope. Penny is less agile and fit now, having suffered the effects of snakebite and rheumatism. Still, the new life of spring is apparent and the planting is going well. Penny's sudden collapse might signal a steady decline in his health and an imminent need for Jody to assume more manly responsibilities. His comments about Flag's growth and suggestion that Jody might not be so happy with the yearling pretty soon are mysterious to Jody, but the reader can see what is coming, just as Penny can. We will watch now for Flag to wear out his welcome on the Baxter property.

Chapter 31

Chapter 31 Summary

Penny is not recovering, and Ma announces that he is likely "ruptured." He will not allow her to send for Doc Wilson, as he already owes him money. Penny is convinced he will recover, and Jody shares his optimism, having seen his small father bounce back from one injury after another. Now the corn is up, Jody announces, and Penny makes it crystal clear that Jody must keep the yearling out of the cornfield. Jody promises to do so, and boy and deer go off hunting, returning with four delicious squirrels for dinner.

The next morning Jody checks on the corn crop and discovers, to his horror, that something has pulled up and eaten half the shoots. Flag's hoof prints are unmistakable. He delays telling his father, but then the truth must come out. Penny is neither surprised nor angry, but he tells Jody to send his mother into the bedroom and then go out to play. Jody beseeches his father not to tell Ma, but Penny is adamant. "She's got to know," he insists. Jody walks to the sinkhole with Flag but soon returns to hear the verdict. Penny instructs him how to replant the corn with his mother's help. Then he is to take Caesar and the wagon and ride out to some old fencing in the scrub, tear it out and bring it back. He is to build up the fence around the cornfield as high as he can reach, asking his mother for help if he needs it.

Jody is overjoyed that his father has again found a way to allow him to succeed and keep his dream: the yearling. Ma is furious as she helps him shuck dried corn for the planting, but he chooses to politely ignore her. Jody plants feverishly, sure he can finish in the morning. Penny listens to his report, careful not to move and allow the pain to return. His look is vacant and his responses detached. Ma is frigid and silent as stone, but Jody feels good about his accomplishment and sleeps well.

Flag emerges from the woods, where he has apparently spent the night, as Jody works industriously to finish replanting the corn crop. Then Jody hitches up the wagon, commanding the horse with a new authority, and makes his first trip to the scrub to retrieve the old fencing. Flag joins him. The work goes on, day after day, hauling fencing and dumping it, then returning to load the wagon and bring in more fencing. Jody watches fearfully as the corn germinates, afraid the shoots will emerge and tempt Flag before the fence is fortified. His hair hangs in his eyes and he develops dark circles under his eyes, so exhausted is he, rising before dawn each day and working without a break. Penny is still in terrible pain from the rupture in his groin, but it pains him even more to see his son so overworked. He calls Jody to him one evening, warning him that even the yearling is not worth killing himself over. Jody says he is fine and will continue.

Finally, he starts to raise the fence in the most critical place. On the sixth day Ma softens and offers to help him. Together they raise the fence to over six feet in height, and that night Jody discovers the corn shoots breaking through the ground. The next morning he tries to put a hobble on Flag, but the yearling fights until he is about to break

a leg, so Jody removes the rope. The deer runs into the woods and stays there all day. Jody works feverishly to raise the fence height on another side, using every rail he has retrieved. Two more rain showers bring the corn up an inch. Now Jody finds Flag in the cornfield again, eating the new shoots, although not as many this time. He asks Ma for help to finish the fence more quickly, but she points out that Flag has jumped it at the highest point; it is of no use. She is determined, this time, to have her say about the yearling. As Jody watches, Flag clears the very fence he has worked so hard to raise.

Jody knows now that Penny will make him give up the yearling. He can do nothing but throw himself on the bed and wait for the pronouncement. When Penny calls to him, however, he is totally unprepared for what his father instructs him to do: Take the yearling to the woods, tie him up and shoot him.

Chapter 31 Analysis

Jody might be surprised, but the reader is hardly surprised. We have been waiting for the day when Flag would become too big and too uncontrollable to serve as a pet. Still, could the reader have considered for a minute that Jody would be asked to shoot his pet? Surely not!

There are few signs of hope now, in any respect. Penny shows no signs of recovering from his hernia. Ma shows no signs of thawing. Flag is clearly becoming only more and more of a problem. The corn crop has suffered twice, and the tobacco crop is half the expected size. Even a fence more than six feet tall is not tall enough to restrain the deer. Every member of the Baxter family has stretched as far as possible. Jody cannot work any harder; Penny cannot overlook any more infractions; and surely Ma will never again offer the good-natured help she has offered in this chapter. Worse than the night of the snakebite, worse than the death of Fodder Wing, worse than the pain of losing admiration for Oliver, worse than the long hunt for Slewfoot, the pain Jody now faces is unbearable. From the glorious promise of early March we have come to the blackest moment.

Chapter 32

Chapter 32 Summary

Jody and Flag wander into the scrub, Jody insisting that he simply will not shoot the deer. They can beat him, they can kill him, but he will not do it. He imagines fierce arguments with his parents and even a vicious beating, but he vows he will not do the deed. Finally he throws himself on the ground and sobs until he is weak and dizzy. Gradually he formulates a plan. He will ask Buck Forrester to take Flag to Jacksonville and sell him to a park where people come to see the deer. He himself will raise cash crops and save money to visit Flag. Someday he will have a place of his own and get Flag back...

He gets to the Forresters only to find that all the boys have gone to Kentucky, horse-trading. He pours out his problem concisely to Ma and Pa Forrester, but they can think of no way they might keep Flag any better than Jody has done. Then he gets the idea to walk to Jacksonville with Flag, and so he fashions a halter of grapevine and tries to lead the deer. Flag balks, and Jody finally gives up. With nothing in his stomach, having now missed two meals, and exhausted with emotion, he lies down in the road for a rest. Flag snuggles by him and Jody falls asleep. When he awakens, Flag has left, and his tracks show his intention is to go home, so Jody has no choice but to follow him.

Arriving at the clearing after dark, Jody observes his mother sewing by candlelight. She opens the door, having heard Flag's hoofbeats, but Jody secures Flag behind the smokehouse and holds him there until all is quiet and he is sure his mother is asleep. He gets a piece of smoked bear meat from the smokehouse and then makes a bed for himself and Flag in a horse stall.

In the morning Flag has jumped the fence again and destroyed corn and pea plants. Jody has no choice but to face his mother's wrath. She gives him a tongue-lashing and sends him to his father's bedside. Jody says he fully understands the problem and his father's orders, but he just can't shoot the deer. So Ma is given the job, and she tries, but she only wounds Flag in the foreleg. Jody finds him floundering on the ground, and then the yearling runs from him. Penny struggles from his bed, falling to his knee, and begs Jody to finish the job and put the deer out of his misery. Jody snatches the gun and runs after Flag, hurling curses back at his parents. He cannot catch the frightened deer, and Flag falls over and over, finally coming to rest at the sinkhole. Jody mercifully shoots him in the neck. Then he flings himself on the ground and sobs and claws at the earth until he feels nothing and senses nothing.

Chapter 32 Analysis

And now, at last, with his father on his knees, whimpering for help to get back to his bed, Jody finally does what a man must do: Against all reason and with a breaking heart

he kills the creature he loves the most because that is what must be done. After several childish and unrealistic schemes to save the deer, reality intrudes on his life. The yearling actually threatens his family's survival. His crazy schemes will never work. In the end, there was never any choice but the one Penny had demanded. Although Jody shrieks hateful things to his mother for shooting the deer in the leg and wounding it so horribly, the truth is that it has been his indecision and immaturity that has forced her to try to shoot a deer when she simply does not have the skill to do it well. It is Jody's fault that the job has been botched and Flag is suffering. In the end, he is the one to pull the trigger anyway. It is through this tumult of painful events that Jody finally stands on the brink of manhood, as surely as if he had walked through flames to claim his prize. His rite of passage is nearly complete. It is almost April, and he has spent his time as a yearling. Soon he will be a "buck."



Chapter 33

Chapter 33 Summary

Jody never looks back at his dead Flag. He picks himself up and begins to walk, committed to reaching Jacksonville and then, by steamer, to go to Boston where he will join Oliver at sea and forget his treacherous act. He hails a fisherman for a ride down the creek, planning to rescue Nellie Ginright's tattered boat, stuff the holes with pieces of his shirt, and float down to Lake George. He keeps his eyes downcast until they reach the half-sunk boat. The fisherman gives him a piece of paddle and moves on without him.

Jody works to patch the boat and then puts it in the water. He has had nothing to eat in two days except a few bites of meat, and he is weak and lifeless. A circling buzzard reminds him of Flag and he suffers a wave of nausea. Just before sunset he reaches the lake and pulls the boat to dry land. He will wait for a boat; perhaps sleep under an oak tree. No longer struggling to walk or paddle the boat, he falls prey to his torturous thoughts now, repeating to himself, "Flag's dead," and then the deeper cut, "Pa went back on me." If Flag had died any other way, Jody could have run to his father for comfort, but his father ordered the execution, and now he has no source of solace.

The boy is extremely hungry now and tries to eat grass, but he thinks of creatures devouring Flag's carcass and he can only vomit. He feels chilled and thinks a fire would be nice, but he has never learned to start a fire without a tinder horn and his father's help. He longs for his father's presence. He is not afraid; he is simply desolate. Jody awakens in the morning starving and lonely. He has lost his pet and his father. There is nothing to do but get in his canoe and paddle out onto the big lake, looking for a steamer. The waves are bigger here and the wind stronger. He sees no boat, and he has little control over the canoe. In terror he turns the canoe around, heading back for shore and planning to walk to Miss Nellie's to seek help. The current pushes him into an inlet that he mistakes for Salt Springs, but it is a dead end. He has no idea where the mouth of the creek is. He trembles from fear and exertion.

Now Jody knows real hunger. As he paddles along the shoreline, desperately hoping to find the river and go north to Jacksonville, he fantasizes about the food on his mother's table. He finally discovers an abandoned cabin where he mixes flour with water and eats the paste. Exhausted, he makes a bed of roach infested rags and falls asleep. In the morning he resumes his journey, starving and lethargic. Hailing boats to no avail, he finally falls to sobbing and, ultimately, faints. His next sensation is of hands lifting him in the dark, and he hears voices saying, "It's a boy." He is on a small steamer, and a man feeds him cold soup and biscuits. Then he falls dead asleep again.

In the morning he is in Volusia, aboard the mail boat. The men regard his plans to go to Boston as ridiculous and set him into his canoe, telling him to go home. He paddles to the west bank of the river with no place to go now but home. He sees the charred



remains of the Hutto house and feels that the world has discarded him. He wonders whether his parents will even take him in, considering how costly and aggravating his behavior has been. He decides to go to Silver Glen and lie in the cool spring waters rather than go on to Baxter Island. It seems to be April now, and all the birds are mating. Jody feels that he alone is homeless in the world.

He stumbles to the spring and drinks and rests. Later he notices a magnolia blossom and decides that it is April after all, but he is suspended in a timeless place. Something has ended, but nothing has begun. He recalls his visit to this glen one year ago and the lazy day on which he built a flutter-mill. The flood has washed his flutter-mill away, and he starts to build another as if to restore all the things in his life that have vanished. When the flutter-mill is finished, he sinks it into the bed of the creek, as before, and it begins to turn. This time, however, it is only a palm frond flutter-mill - the magic has gone. He crushes it with his foot and throws himself down and sobs. There is no comfort anywhere.

Then he thinks of his father, and there is comfort. Suddenly he has a hunger to see his father and hear his voice, and he starts running for home, sobbing and crying, "Pa, wait for me..." as if his father might no longer be there. But his father is there when he arrives at the cabin after dark. Penny draws him close and takes his hand, and Jody feels tears fall onto his hand. He offers an explanation, but none is necessary. Pa understands perfectly. He offers his son some food, explaining that Ma has taken the wagon to the Forresters, hoping to trade her chicken for seed corn.

When Jody realizes that his father has not recovered, he tells him that, as soon as he gets the work done, he will go for the doctor. Penny just looks at him and says, "You come back different. You ain't a yearlin' anymore." Penny explains to his son the harsh realities of life, telling him that he spared him as long as possible. Then he invites Jody to be a man of the land and take up farming right here in the clearing, perhaps digging a well someday so no woman will have to do her laundry on a seepage hill. Jody agrees and they shake on it. He helps his father to bed and then lies down in his own comfortable bed. He knows he must rise early to milk and chop wood and plow, and he knows Flag will not be there to frolic beside him, but it does not matter. His father will not be by his side to do the heavy work, but he will manage alone.

As he falls asleep, he catches himself listening for Flag. He knows he will never love anyone, not man or woman or his own child, as he loved Flag, and he calls for the yearling one more time. It is the voice of a boy, though, and the boy and the deer are long gone, running side-by-side beyond the sinkhole.

Chapter 33 Analysis

One year has passed, and the "yearling" has grown to be a man. We know now that this is not at all the story of a young fawn but the story of a boy becoming a man. The deer represents all the childish longings in Jody and, of course, these are the things he must give up to reach adulthood. He has killed the deer, as he must, and so killed his

innocence. In his three-day journey to escape his misery, he mourns his lost innocence and suffers with the anguish of a child. In the end, though, the things of a child, like flutter-mills and fawns, no longer own his heart. When he is at his lowest point, the sound he longs to hear is the voice of his father, the man who has guarded his childhood and taught him to be a man.

Characters

Jody Baxter

The actual "yearling" of the novel, Jody is a 12-year-old boy who has never attended school and clings to the peace and security of a simple home carved out of the wilderness. As the only surviving child, he is a great joy to his father. His mother, however, just does not seem to have any tenderness for him. Like his father, Jody is slight of build, with narrow shoulders and narrow hips, and hair the color of straw. Jody is a scrub country boy, coming into adolescence in the early 1870's. His entire world is bounded by the St. John's River, Jacksonville, Florida, and about 20 miles of scrub country southwest of those points.

As the only child, Jody might be expected to toil all day in the fields, alongside his father. He is, however, somewhat indulged, as his father wants to make sure he has a true childhood. Still, as his childhood wanes, and we watch him go through the process of putting childhood behind and taking on the responsibilities and good judgment of manhood. Jody's only regular companions are his parents and the wild creatures he is able to observe. He considers Fodder Wing and Oliver his two friends, but Oliver is already old enough to be away at sea, and Fodder Wing lives four miles from the Baxter clearing. Even his father's dogs are not interested in playing with Jody.

Jody yearns for a loyal pet that will love him and follow after him. Throughout the first half of the novel, he considers various possibilities and makes his wishes known, but his mother is adamant: There is no extra food to feed another creature. One of Jody's greatest joys is to visit Fodder Wing Forrester, a boy his age who has an affinity for nature and whose family allows him to keep any number of wild things as pets. Finally Jody gets his pet, the baby fawn whose mother Penny has killed in order to save himself from snakebite. It seems to Jody and several others that, since the doe gave her life to save Penny, the Baxters ought to rescue the fawn and raise him. Thus begins Jody's adventure with his "yearling."

Besides his pet, Jody's favorite things are "man-things" such as hunting with his father, listening to the men spin yarns, learning about nature, and simply engaging his father in conversation. There is no doubt that Jody's father is his role model and source of inspiration and solace. The deer, though, becomes his object of affection, sleeping with him, romping in the woods with him, and simply being nearby as he works. The deer, named Flag, also presents Jody with some of his most perplexing challenges. Together they mature and grow, and eventually Jody must part with the deer because it is the final shackle that ties him to childhood.



Ezra ("Penny") Baxter

Penny, given his nickname because he is "good money" but extremely small, is Jody's loving father, probably about 54-years-old, slight of build with stooped shoulders. It is said that his size is no bigger than a boy's, but he does the work of several men to keep his clearing safe and productive. The son of a preacher/farmer, Penny was forced to toil his childhood away, and he is committed to allowing his only son to enjoy childhood while he can.

Penny is known throughout the region for his honesty. Preferring the simple life with natural creatures to the complexities of society, he has come 15 miles west of the St. John's River to clear a pine "island" and set up housekeeping. He has chosen his land well and, when already in his thirties, he has married Ora and brought her to the clearing where he built them a modest cabin. Everything in the clearing that has been developed in any way has been worked by Penny's own hands. He takes joy in working his fields from morning to night, hunting game for his family's kitchen and smokehouse, and maintaining a humane and healthy balance between man and nature.

Besides honesty, Penny is best esteemed for his knowledge of the wild things, both plant and animal. He has an amazing ability to track game through the forest, relying on his skills in analyzing and strategizing. His son says proudly that Penny brings in game ten times more often than do the neighbors.

Penny has buried five infants, and he delights in this son, Jody, who has survived. He imparts to Jody all the wisdom and knowledge that he can, balanced with keen understanding and forgiveness. His wife is sometimes a trial to him, sharp of tongue and sour of mood as she often is, but he respects her and longs to make her life less strenuous. Penny maintains the harmony on Baxter Island and in the entire surrounding countryside.

Ora ("Ma") Baxter

A large woman who knows the daily grind of life in the back country, Ora is a no-nonsense, unbending and unforgiving woman who willingly serves the needs of her husband and son, but rarely with a smile or a kind word. She has borne and given to the grave five infants before Jody arrives, and she seems to have invested all her tenderness on those earlier children. When Penny chides her for her sharp tongue, Ora replies that hardness seems to be the way she has learned to bear with troubles.

Ma works from sunup to sundown, as any wife in the scrub country of the 1870's would have done, cooking over an open fire, preserving meat for the winter, tending to the vegetables her husband grows, mending and quilting and doing cross-stitch. She is uncomplaining, having hauled her laundry to the sinkhole in the middle of the clearing for the past twenty years as she waits for her husband to provide the well he has promised. It is her pleasure to cook a special corn pone or cake for the enjoyment of her family, and she keeps a clean and orderly house. Ma values cleanliness, insisting the



Jody wash his feet before going to bed each night and wash his hands before handling food.

Ora knows whom she likes and whom she dislikes, and there is little room for negotiation. She is scandalized by the behavior of Grandma Hutto and determined to find fault in the neighboring family, the Forresters. She shows no mercy when trading at the general store but never flags when there is work to be done. Ma softens on a few rare occasions, showing pride in her husband's accomplishments and helping Jody with a fence-building task at one point. For the most part, though, she is tight-lipped, straight of face, dedicated to her work and committed to the straight and narrow path.

Buck Forrester

One of six dark, strapping sons whose family are the nearest neighbors to the Baxters, Buck is the only one known for level-headedness and civility. He maintains a cordial and mutually helpful relationship with Penny, and the two men occasionally hunt together and cooperate to show a united front against the forces of nature. When Penny falls ill from snakebite, Buck simply moves into the Baxter cabin for a week and takes over all the chores, going beyond the necessities of daily life to prepare the family's land for the months to come. It is Buck that Penny trusts to represent his interests in trading in Jacksonville, and it is Buck who gives Jody a ride on his horse. Although he is given to the family habit of drink, Buck is the only one of the group, according to Penny, who was worth raising.

Lem Forrester

The most cantankerous of the Forrester brood, Lem is a giant of a man, and his behavior matches his intimidating appearance. He looks for a fight at every turn, assumes that people are dishonest, torments helpless animals just for fun, and holds a nasty grudge. Lem is not above committing illegal acts to serve his own purposes. He swaggers and threatens and makes good on his threats, a man to be placated or avoided.

Fodder Wing Forrester

This misshapen boy, about the age of 12, is the youngest of the Forrester clan and the focal point of the family's small measure of tenderness. Although his body is sadly twisted and deformed and his hands appear abnormal, his heart is the purest and sweetest of any in the scrub country. He is cherished by his huge, crude big brothers and his elderly parents. Fodder Wing's greatest gift is with wild animals. They sense his gentle nature and trust his twisted hands, and so he makes them his pets, caring for them loyally. Fodder Wing takes responsibility for feeding the family's hunting dogs along with his pets. Just as his body is twisted, his mind, many say, is also twisted, for he has a vivid imagination and seems to believe the tall and improbable tales he tells.



This is Jody's only playmate, and they see each other rarely. Fodder Wing's untimely passing symbolizes a great loss of innocence and childish fantasy in Jody's life.

Grandma Hutto

Probably around 65-years-old, Grandma is a perfect foil for Ora Baxter. She lives in the city of Volusia, right on the banks of the busy St. Johns. Her house is sparkling clean and filled with white furnishings that would be highly impractical in the scrub. She is the only person Jody knows who has a separate room for eating. More importantly, Grandma has an appreciation for men and, without apology, seeks to please them in her personal appearance, her gracious manner, and her encouragement and appreciation for their sacrifices. Grandma has been a lifelong friend of Penny's, and it is to her house that he took his family when it was time to go off to war. Ora and Jody resided with Grandma for four long years. After the war, neither woman has had a kind word to say to or about the other, yet Penny is more at ease in her home than in his own, and Jody finds in Grandma the warm interest and support he cannot manage to inspire in his own mother.

Oliver Hutto

Grandma's beloved son, Oliver is a strong, dark man of dashing good looks, probably about 20-years -old. He is a devoted son, but he is just as devoted to travel and adventure and women. Oliver works at sea, shipping out of Boston, and he visits his mother only twice each year. The two have a warm, easy relationship. Oliver is always full of stories of the sea and faraway places, and he brings exciting gifts for all. Easy going and quick to laugh, he refuses to take a taunt or a threat seriously. When we meet him, he has been courting Twink Weatherby, a sought-after, attractive young woman who has also captured the heart of the brooding Lem Forrester.

Twink Weatherby

Twink is a pretty blonde from Volusia who becomes the object of a long-standing feud between Oliver Hutto and Lem Forrester. Eventually she becomes Mrs. Oliver Hutto.

Nellie Ginright

Nellie enters the novel in only one scene, but she is important as another foil to Ora Baxter. She is an outgoing, vivacious widow who lives alone on the banks of a backwoods spring, independent and hospitable. We discover that Penny courted Nellie many years ago, before he met Ora. In fact, he had proposed to her and she had turned him down. The two clearly continue to hold each other in high esteem and welcome an opportunity to visit briefly. Jody reflects that Nellie is very much like Grandma Hutto.

Doc Wilson

Doc is a fairly stock character, the typical lonely country doctor who has taken to drink after the loss of his wife but is still in demand as a skilled physician, provided he is sober enough to function. He readily attends to Penny after the snakebite incident, asking only for a little cane syrup for payment. When the flood comes, Doc displays his wit and pragmatism by leaving the area, posting a note stating that he intends to stay drunk for the duration of the storm.

Objects/Places

The Yearling, "Flag"

Jody's pet, the fawn who grows to be a yearling, parallels Jody's own development. Flag is the object of Jody's childish affection and must be slain to allow Jody to put childhood behind him.

The Bear, "Old Slewfoot"

This mighty, 500-pound brute, named "Slewfoot" because he lost a front toe in a trap, represents the persistent and superior forces of nature. He is able to torment the families in the area for many years, and only Penny's calm, analytical hunt, coupled with a deadly weapon, can bring him down. Slewfoot also embodies the dangers of the wild as Jody has come to know them.

The Sink Hole

The family's source of water for all purposes, including drinking, cooking, washing and hydrating the animals, this limestone pond appeared spontaneously even before Penny's recollection. It is situated in the center of the Baxter clearing and is referred to as the "heart." This pond symbolizes nature's nurturing sustenance.

Volusia

A busy town on the banks of the mighty St. Johns, Volusia represents human commerce and community. This is where the refined Grandma Hutto lives, and the location of Boyles' store where the Baxters are able to get the finer things in life such as fabric, needles and threads. Volusia is the destination for the Christmas celebration as well as the site at which Jody is ultimately rescued from his childish run from home and set back on the path to reason.

Baxter Island

The clearing in the middle of the scrub country, where Penny has made a homestead and raises his family, is an oasis of safety and plenty (although not always as plentiful as the Baxters wish), surrounded on all side by hunger and threat.



Forrester Island

Also a clearing in the wilderness, this "island" provides secure space for an alternative sort of human community, peopled by a larger family, site of camaraderie and fellowship, a land of true plenty at a lower cost in human toil.

Grandma Hutto's House

On the banks of the St. Johns, in the bustling city of Volusia, this is the seat of refinement and civility, a place where a man might feel comforted and appreciated in addition to being well fed and well informed.

Boyles' Store

This general trading store in Volusia is a symbol of human commerce. Penny and his family go there infrequently, but it is their connection to civilization, the place where they trade the things of the wild in exchange for the things of comfort.

St. John's River

As is the river in most stories, the St. John's is the artery that connects backwoods northeast Florida to the rest of civilization, the far-away places that people hear about but rarely visit. This is the river that brings Oliver home from sea and takes Grandma Hutto far away to her new home in Boston. Jody finds its waters challenging and threatening when he goes for a swim.

The Smokehouse

The Baxters' smokehouse is the storage place for their winter provisions. Its "health" in terms of abundance is the barometer by which they measure their preparedness to survive.

Albino Coonskin Knapsack

Jody fashions this beautiful white knapsack from the skin of the rare albino raccoon. He never even uses it before Doc Wilson spies it hanging up and admires it. Jody proudly gives it to the doctor as a gift, enjoying his first opportunity to own something worth giving away.



Fences and Pens

On numerous occasions Jody and Penny are forced to build a fence or a pen to keep wild things in or out. The fence is raised higher to keep Flag out of the fields, but it fails. The pen is meant to keep the bear and wolves from the livestock, but it fails. In each case, man attempts to corral nature, and in each case he is unable to do so.

Flutter-Mill

In the first chapter Jody constructs a flutter-mill from palm fronds in imitation of his idol, Oliver Hutto. It gives him great pleasure, its rhythmic movement actually lulling him to sleep. In the final chapter, Jody tries to recapture the magic of childhood by building another flutter-mill, but he calls it a "play dolly" and smashes it. The flutter-mill symbolizes the childhood fantasy that can never be recaptured.

The Spaniard

Although this mounted, helmeted warrior is thought to be a figment of Fodder-wing's vivid imagination, it turns out to be an optical illusion created by moss and branches. As an imaginary figment, it fueled childish longings for adventure. As an actual object, once discovered, it represents mature explanations for unanswered childish questions.

Wolves

The three dozen mangy, starving wolves that survive the flood and the plague continue to bring nature's threats to mankind, reminding the Baxters and Forresters that the wild things claimed this land long before humankind tried to tame it.

The Final Wolf

The last remaining wolf, injured and vulnerable, comes to play with the Baxter dogs. It reminds Jody and the reader of nature's wondrous ability to adapt as well as her vulnerability in the face of mankind and his technology.

Nellie Ginright's Cabin

This little house provides shelter at the simplest level when Penny and Jody are tracking the marauding bear in icy temperatures, but it also provides hospitality in the form of an abundant breakfast and enjoyable conversation. In addition, the little house provides a link to Penny's past and an assurance that he is still, in some ways, the man he was 20 years ago.

The Rattlesnake

Hiding in a grapevine, this creature strikes Penny down when he least expects it, causing a complete reversal of the fortunes of Penny, Jody, Ma and Buck. All behavior changes because of the strike of this snake. One might say the snake represents fate, something no one can control.

Setting

The story of *The Yearling* takes place in the 1870s in the untamed wilds of inland Florida. The Baxter family has settled in a clearing of pines near the "scrub"—a deeply forested stretch of land enclosed by rivers, surrounded by marshes, and inhabited by hundreds of wild animals and birds. Here, isolated from their moonshiner neighbors and the world at large, the family leads a hand-to-mouth existence, fighting against the constant threat of bears, panthers, wolves, rattlesnakes, and inclement weather. Water is scarce and must be carried from a large sinkhole.

Survival depends on hunting, both to provide food and to protect the crops and livestock.

Social Sensitivity

Social Concerns

The relationship of people and animals to one another and to the land is one of the basic themes of *The Yearling*. Issues of loyalty and betrayal, survival, death, and loneliness are raised repeatedly as the characters interact with nature. The central question is whether humanity must necessarily be in conflict with nature, or whether the beauty of nature can be reconciled with the cruelty of life. *The Yearling* shows that life is hard, that suffering and sacrifice are to be expected and accepted, and that the loss of innocence is an inevitable part of growing up.

Social Sensitivity

Readers of *The Yearling* may be offended by Rawlings's portrayal of women. Ma Baxter, for example, is the one member of the family who is consistently cold and severe. Her son considers her insensitive, and her husband scolds her like a child. She is pictured as an overweight and unimaginative complainer, unable to tell a decent story, to appreciate pets, or to shoot properly. Penny, on the other hand, is Ora's male opposite: he is a tender and intelligent optimist who loves animals, tells marvelous stories, understands boys, and is respected for his hunting abilities. Other women in the story receive equally fixed treatment. Jody considers little Eulalie Boyles both a prime target for potato-throwing and, vaguely, a romantic object. Grandma Hutto and Twink Weatherby are admired or despised for their ability to attract men. And women of all types are categorized as "running in breeds."

The Yearling's treatment of a boy's maturation might also be seen as stereotypical. As the book opens, Jody is relaxed and carefree, at one with nature and confident that owning a pet will complete his happiness. By the end of the story he has grown to regard life as hard and lonely, has been thrust into the violent world of the hunt, and has been forced, in the name of survival and maturity, to betray and destroy that which he loves the most. The novel appears to suggest that a boy must kill to be a man, and that a man must base his actions on survival, not on love.

Readers should also be aware of glimpses of racial prejudice in *The Yearling*. If taken as legitimate pictures of the prevailing social attitudes for the region and time, these objectionable images can inform our understanding of the characters' actions and emotions.

Techniques

The Yearling is an excellent example of frontier regional literature. The resilience and earthiness of the characters is vividly captured in a unique pattern of speech that the Florida natives refer to as "cracker" dialect. Because the Florida scrub and its inhabitants are depicted with almost journalistic precision, the reader is absorbed into the reality of the period and the authenticity of Jody's conflict. The straightforward style of the narrative and the well-constructed plot keep this action story moving, but Rawlings has also taken great care to develop the thoughts and personalities of her characters and to show the complex causes of their feelings and behavior. She evokes a spectrum of moods, ranging from the security and peace of the innocent boy at the pool, to the utter despair of the young man who feels abandoned. Rawlings skillfully unifies thoughts, themes, and impressions to present a rich and intricate picture of Jody's world.

Themes

Themes

The Yearling is a touching, suspenseful, and realistic story about a boy caught between love for his pet and responsibility to his family. The novel follows a year in the life of this playful and sensitive boy — a year filled with adventure and danger, loss and loneliness. The boy's experiences of sorrow, bitterness, and courage speak of what it means to grow up in a harsh environment.

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Rite of Passage to Adulthood

The rite of passage is one of the most popular themes in literature because it spans every culture and is an experience embedded in the memory of every living adult. Marjorie Kinnan Rawlings presents the touching story of a young deer that is much more than the tale of a boy and his mischievous pet.

This is essentially a story of Jody Baxter's year as a "yearling" --- as his father explains, the year in which a male deer stands between being a fawn (child) and being a buck (adult). Although the deer, Flag, is the actual yearling in the novel, it is Jody's maturing that we are watching. Deer and boy grow and learn and develop in parallel fashion.

The rite of passage always involves challenges and milestones. Learning to hunt successfully, and eventually being drawn into the circle of hunters, is critical in the development of a young boy in the back woods in mid-nineteenth century America. When Jody carries his father's rifle for the first time; when he shoots his first deer; when he shoots his first bear; when he camps alongside his father and the Forrester boys during the wolf hunt; when he successfully flushes the wolves toward the hunters - each of these is a challenge that Jody faces and overcomes, and each represents another step toward becoming the successful hunter he must become.



Jody must also become a successful farmer. Learning to set in the tobacco seedlings, drop the corn into the holes drilled by his father, turn the mill wheel, milk the cow, work on the fences --- all of these are challenges in that effort. And Jody must learn responsibility. Taking care of his fawn, managing the chores as his father lays ill, shooting squirrels to feed the family, hauling water from the sinkhole, cleaning the water troughs, are all challenges leading to responsibility.

Rites of passage demand more than accomplishment of adult tasks, however. They also demand that the "yearling" sever ties with childhood, giving up comfortable and pleasurable dependencies. Rising before dawn and working until nightfall, giving up his milk so the fawn can be nourished, losing Fodder Wing to death, and, most importantly, shooting the yearling to ensure his family's survival and the deer's peace, are examples of the painful deprivations Jody must endure. In many cultures the path to adulthood also involves rituals that have only symbolic meaning. Eating of the heart of the panther and eating palm heart fried in panther oil are such rituals.

Finally, the rite of passage almost always involves a journey of some type. In this novel there are a series of short journeys, some pleasurable and some painful. The pleasurable ones acquaint Jody with the wider world and open his eyes, but the painful ones try him and test his mettle. Walking home through the woods during the frightening storm, wondering whether his father will survive, is Jody's first "fire walk." This tempers him for the final journey at the end of the novel when, typically, the main character runs away from the comforts and security of home to find himself. Jody runs away a yearling, standing between two worlds. He returns a man.

Man vs. the Forces of Nature

Although Jody finds his heart's desire ("Flag") in the wilderness, the characters in *The Yearling* are locked in an endless battle with nature most of the time. Virtually all the energy Penny expends is directed at one of two purposes: to hold the dangerous wild things at bay or to coax a living from the earth. In fact, the very rhythm of the story is the rising and falling of man's fortunes at the hands of nature. A helpless, lovable fawn springs from nature, but such a find comes once in a lifetime.

The Baxter and the Forresters, having chosen to live outside the confines of civilization, create for their families "islands" in the wilderness. As they struggle to till the soil and plant, perennially dependent upon the weather to realize any harvest at all, they must keep a watchful eye on the perimeter, which could be breached at any moment. While working daily to protect their livestock from bear and wolves and to protect their crops from deer and foxes, the settlers watch the skies for signs of the sunshine and rain they so desperately need to grow the plants. Then, just when rain is in short supply and everything is dry, the sky opens up and pours down torrents of rain for eight consecutive days. Now neighbors band together to assess the damage, and they find that it goes far beyond their rotted crops. The polluted floodwaters have spread a plague among all land animals that drink of it, and now the humans find their food source curtailed. The logical effect, of course, is that the predators are hungrier and more brazen than ever,

further threatening the livestock in the clearings. Through most of the novel, nature is clearly in charge, and mankind modifies his daily life to account for the whims of a force he can neither predict nor control.

It is interesting to note that Penny represents the enlightened, sensitive human who tries to work in harmony with nature. He teaches Jody a deep respect for all natural creatures and a sense of conservancy, admonishing him never to catch a fish or kill a deer that he will not use in some constructive way. Penny is also the hunter who holds back and thinks through his strategy, working to outwit the wild animals, and he is the one who brings in the most game. Penny is very good at being the "human" part of the ecosystem, and so he is rewarded by the doe that appears when he needs life saving organs to use as a poultice, the fat alligator when he needs dog food and oil for his boots, and, most important, Old Slewfoot, the elusive master of nature's treachery. The Forresters, by contrast, feel little affinity for nature (Fodder Wing excluded) and fail to make the best use of their human qualities to strike a harmony with her. They are not as successful in hunting and planting as Penny, and therefore must rely on horse-trading and dirty tricks to make their living off the land.

Man vs. Man

This is not the overriding theme of the novel, but it plays an important role, worked out in several subplots: The tension between the Forresters and the Baxters; the feud between Lem and Oliver over Twink Weatherby; the contrast between the city folks and the scrub country folks; and the tension between Ora Baxter and Grandma Hutto.

The most significant of these is the first, the tension between the two neighboring families, because it pervades the entire novel from start to finish. The book opens with hints about the "blackness" of the Forresters and their wild natures. When we finally meet the family, we are taken aback at the warm welcome they give Penny and Jody. For all the criticism Ma Baxter hurls at the Forresters behind their backs, it is refreshing to spend a night in their home and discover that they are a happy lot, finding delight in each other and a fullness of life that is sadly missing in the Baxter clearing. We remember, too, that it is Buck Forrester who manages the Baxter land while Penny lies ill.

Lem and Oliver are simply two very dissimilar characters, as are Ora and Grandma Hutto, so it is logical that they will clash. Lem's ornery and abrasive nature is in direct contrast to Oliver's easy-going, fun-loving temperament. In the same way, Ora's straight-laced, rigid approach to life is the opposite of Grandma Hutto's warm, engaging style. These contrasts allow the characters to act as foils for each other, each bringing out the strong traits in his or her opposite. They also provide true-to-life human conflict. In real life, people are in competition with each other, and they do see situations from strikingly different perspectives.

The contrast between city folks and country folks is actually underplayed. We know that Penny chose to live in the woods because he did not wish to traffic with the contentious

folks living and trading along the river. However, we do not witness any overt signs of malicious behavior or underhandedness. We are aware that the Baxters wish to attend the "Christmas doin's" in Volusia as well prepared and well attired as possible. There is a mild sense of class competition. Penny himself, a most tolerant and accepting man, worries when he hears that the rowdy, hard-drinking Forresters plan to attend the party. The theme of man vs. man contributes to the interesting behavior of the characters even though it is not a central theme as are the rite of passage and man's struggle with natural forces.

Style

Point of View

The story is related to us by an omniscient third-person narrator who is capable of knowing the inner thoughts and emotions of the characters. The focus of the narrator's observation, though, is Jody. Although we are allowed to know what various other characters are doing, it is mostly through Jody's perceptions that their motives and emotions are understood. That is to say, while Jody is not telling the story from his own point of view, the actions and reactions of Penny, Ora, Grandma and others that are relayed to the reader tend to be related through Jody and his fawn. The narrator is objective and reliable, offering a fairly realistic view of believable people who might very well have lived in northeast Florida in the mid-nineteenth century.

Setting

The Yearling is accurately set in northeast Florida in the early 1870's. Although Marjorie Kinnan Rawlings was not a native of the area, she demonstrates a precise grasp of the native flora and fauna and the geography and topography of the area immediately southwest of Jacksonville. The story depicts, quite accurately, the daily life of a family trying to make a living in the scrub country immediately after the Civil War.

The major settings are the scrub or wilderness, the Baxter clearing, and Volusia. In each case, Rawlings depicts with perfect clarity the trees and grasses that grow there, the species of birds and their behavior, the smells and sounds. The scrub is rarely a threatening place. Rather, it seems to be a place of opportunity and adventure. Jody and his father can trek for miles without meeting another human being, and then, suddenly, they might happen upon a band of Minorcans, an ancient people that have inhabited the area for centuries. The wonders of the dancing cranes and frolicking bear cubs, the delightfully cool spring water and albino raccoon, are treats for the readers' senses, described, as they are, in such artistic detail. Jody is at home in the scrub at most times. The exception is the night he walks home alone from the Forresters, stripping naked in the rain, sure that death is moving along the path near him.

The Baxter clearing evolves through times of plenty and times of scarcity as well as times of serenity and times of gripping fear. Still, it is always the place that Jody would choose to feel safe and happy. When he compares his family's "island" to Grandma Hutto's cottage or the rollicking Forrester house with its steaming mounds of food, his heart always goes home to the clearing. The unusual sights and sounds of Volusia and the St. John's River are a fun diversion, but Baxter Island is truly home. With its tidy fields and split rail fence, and a sinkhole in the middle of the clearing to provide water, the clearing is portrayed as an oasis in the middle of an untamed wilderness.

Language and Meaning

The novel is written in simple, elegant prose, based on a vocabulary accessible to most readers and, for the most part, told in straightforward, literal language. In most cases the breathtaking images of lush forest and colorful wildlife are, in and of themselves, so filled with sensory appeal that they come alive with the mere telling. In a single paragraph Rawlings can take the reader to a place of awe-inspiring peace and tranquility, setting the wonders of nature right before the reader's eyes. The descriptive passages usher the reader directly back to the 1870's and the splendor of untamed wildlife and the riotous color of wild flowers in a setting yet untouched by human hands.

The author uses metaphors and similes sparingly and strategically, creating mental images that speak volumes. She refers to Ma Forrester's "grasshopper frame" within her flannel nightgown. Grandma Hutto's garden is "a bright patchwork quilt thrown down inside the pickets." Inside Grandma's cottage, Jody feels "a snugness that covered him like a warm quilt in winter." When Grandma welcomes her son Oliver to her home for a rare visit, "her bright eyes hovered over her son like hungry swallows." After Penny has been bitten by the snake and Jody is running for help, "his legs moved, but his mind and body seemed suspended above them, like an empty box on a pair of cartwheels."

Realistic dialog contributes significantly to the total effect of the novel, and Rawlings has achieved expert mastery over the dialect of the Florida country folk of the era. As in any case of expert dialect, it takes a few pages for the reader to become comfortable with the word choice and pronunciation, but soon the characters' vocabulary and speech patterns become an integral part of the backwoods experience. The reader learns that "mought" means "might" and "iffen" means "if" and "outen" means "out." Although the dialect is fairly universal, each character's speech is appropriately unique. One imagines Ma Baxter speaking her short, judgmental statements with a self-righteous sniff and a toss of her head. All of the Forresters except Fodder-wing speak in short, crude statements, but the deformed little brother weaves long, intricate sentences to match his imaginative stories.

Structure

The novel's structure is as simple and straightforward as it can be. This is the story of two "yearlings," a boy and a deer, and it simply traces their development through one calendar year, from April to April. Each season is considered as a unit and, within the seasons, each month is treated as a separate entity. The planting and tilling give way to summer's growth and hard work. Then fall brings the promise of harvest, interrupted this year with the terrible flood. Winter moves in with the abundance of the smokehouse and a vengeful bear hunt in the chill air. Then it is spring again, and Jody is doing the work of a man while his pet perpetrates the destruction of a rebellious teenager.

The first four chapters cover only 24 hours in April. Chapters 5 through 7 are all devoted to Jody's visit with the Forresters. It is not until we reach chapter 10 that any significant

time has passed, and so it goes as Rawlings pauses to immerse us in the life of the Baxters for a few days in each season and then moves on.

As the novel marches through the calendar, the secondary structure involves the growth and development of boy and deer. Each chapter brings Jody a new challenge, and most of them move him forward on the ladder to manhood or clearly demonstrate the childishness that is still holding him back. The physical growth of the deer, though subtle, is more obvious than Jody's growth, and so it becomes a yardstick by which we measure the passage of time and the inevitable approach of Jody's face-to-face confrontation with the ultimate challenge of maturity.

Quotes

"He would like anything that was his own; that licked his face and followed him as old Julia followed his father." Chapter 1, p. 3

"'Leave him kick up his heels,' he thought, 'and run away. Leave him build his flutter-mills. The day'll come he'll not even care to.'" Chapter 2, p. 21

"'Move close, son. I'll warm you.' He edged closer to his father's bones and sinews. Penny slipped an arm around him and he lay close against the lank thigh. His father was the core of safety. His father swam the swift creek to fetch back his wounded dog. The clearing was safe, and his father fought for it, and for his own." Chapter 4, p. 43-44.

"He was filled with awe that his father had outwitted a Forrester... He had heard of the intricacies of trading, but it had never occurred to him that one man could get the best of another by the simple expedient of telling him the truth." Chapter 7, p. 61

"She drew gallantry from men as the sun drew water. Her pertness enchanted them. Young men went away from her with a feeling of bravado. Old men were enslaved by her silver curls. Something about her was forever female and made all men virile. Her gift infuriated all women. Chapter 11, pgs. 113-114

"A woman has got to love a bad man once or twice in her life to be thankful for a good one." Chapter 12, p. 127.

"It took a few wobbling steps toward him and cried piteously. It was willing to follow him. It belonged to him. It was his own. He was lightheaded with his joy." Chapter 15, p. 171.

"It was good to become old and see the sights and hear the sounds that men saw and heard... That was why he liked to lie flat on his belly on the floor, or on the earth before the campfire, while men talked. They had seen marvels, and the older they were, the more marvels they had seen. He felt himself moving into a mystic company. He had a tale now of his own to tell on winter evenings" Chapter 17, p. 201

"The relief of words washed and cleansed a hurt that had been ingrowing... He was a small staunch rock against which their grief might beat. When they finished and fell quiet, he talked of his own losses. It was a reminder that no man was spared. What all had borne, each could bear. He shared their sorrow, and they became a part of his, and the sharing spread their grief a little, by thinning it." Chapter 17, p. 209

"Jody had eyes only for his own kill. He could not believe that he had done it. Here lay food for the Baxter table for a fortnight, and it was of his providing." Chapter 20, p. 261

"Death seemed to have appeared wholesale out of the air." Chapter 21, p. 267



"He decided that the world was a very peculiar place to live in. Things happened that had no reason and made no sense and did harm, like the bears and the panthers, but without their excuse of hunger. He did not approve." Chapter 21, p. 269

"He looked at her with approval. She was really handsome, he thought, in the black alpaca. Her gray hair was combed smoothly and her cheeks were flushed with her contentment and her pride. The other women addressed her respectfully. It was a great thing, he thought, to be kin to Penny Baxter." Chapter 26, p. 361

"A sense of safety, of well-being came over Jody. Other people had catastrophe, but the clearing was beyond it. The cabin waited for him, and the smokehouse full of good meat, with Old Slewfoot's carcass added to it, and Flag. Above all, Flag." Chapter 27, p.370

"Their avoidance of Penny made their guilt incontrovertible. It saddened him. His hard-won peace lay shattered about him. A stone thrown at some distance, and meant for someone else, had struck him. He was bruised and troubled." Chapter 28, p. 372

"It was a harsh thing, even for a wolf, to be so alone that it must turn to the yard of its enemy for companionship. Jody laid an arm across Flag. He wished Flag could understand that he had been spared desolation in the forest. As for himself, Flag had eased a loneliness that had harassed him in the very heart of his family." Chapter 28, p. 376

"The sound of his father's voice was a necessity. He longed for the sight of his stooped shoulders as he had never, in the sharpest of his hunger, longed for food." Chapter 33, p. 423

"In the beginning of his sleep, he cried out, 'Flag!' It was not his own voice that called. It was a boy's voice. Somewhere beyond the sink hole, past the magnolia, under the live oaks, a boy and a yearling ran side by side, and were gone forever." Chapter 33, p. 428

Adaptations

In 1946 MGM adapted *The Yearling* into a motion picture starring Jane Wyman and Gregory Peck. Twelve-year-old Claude Jarman, Jr., won a special Academy Award as the finest child actor of the year for his portrayal of Jody, both Wyman and Peck were Oscar nominees for their acting, and the film was nominated for Best Picture. The film is sentimental and ironic, but the rustic dialect which seems to flow authentically in the book sounds artificial on the screen. Ma Baxter's character is softened in the film, and the simple wonder and beauty of nature, an integral part of the novel, is overwhelmed by elaborately produced scenes.



Topics for Discussion

1. At the conclusion of chapter 1, Rawlirigs says: "A mark was on [Jody] from the day's delight so that all his life, when April was a thin green and the flavor of rain was on his tongue, an old wound would throb and a nostalgia would fill him for something he could not quite remember." What does she mean? How does this opening statement foreshadow the outcome of the book?
2. Ma and Penny Baxter have very different attitudes toward animals. How do their opinions differ, and why? How is this difference indicative of their contrasting attitudes about life in general?
3. Why are Penny and Jody so attracted to the sinkhole?
4. Why is Jody resentful of Oliver Hutto and the Forresters? Is this a justified bitterness? How does this resentment bear on his concept of a friend's duty?
6. When Fodder-wing dies, the Forresters and Jody are devastated. Why do they take his death so hard? How is Fodder-wing's name symbolic of the loss of the innocence of youth?
7. What role do food, appetite, and hunger play in Jody's outlook on life?
8. Why do you think Ma Baxter dislikes Grandma Hutto? Why is Ma Baxter usually so sharp and bitter?
9. Would it have been easier on Jody if Penny had forbidden him to have a pet deer in the first place, instead of letting him raise Flag and then forcing him to kill the deer? Why or why not? Why does Penny suspect all along that the pet might not work out? How does this affect your opinion of him as a parent?
10. At the beginning of the story Jody builds a flutter mill; at the end of the story he builds another. How does he feel about building and playing with each of these toys? How do Jody's responses reveal the changes that have occurred in his personality?



Essay Topics

Personal integrity is the hallmark of Penny Baxter's character. Discuss the specific consequences of his insistence on honesty and conservancy, speculating on how things might have turned out differently had he compromised his values.

Characters as foils to each other are common in literature. Consider how Grandma Hutto and Nelli Ginright are foils to Ora Baxter, and discuss what this tells us about Jody and Penny's loyalty to "Ma."

Jody's peers in this novel are limited to three: Fodder Wing, Eulalie, and the ferry boy. What does his encounter with each one reveal about his own struggle to grow up? If you might encounter only three peers in the next year, what three types of people would you choose to help you recognize your inner struggles and goals?

Ties to hearth and home are universal. As Jody experiences the comforts of Grandma Hutto's cottage, the revelry at Forrester Island, and the excitement of the Volusia Christmas party, his heart always goes home, even knowing he will be sacrificing some pleasures. What is it about the Baxter clearing that continues to call Jody back?

Jody's pet both parallels the boy's development and contributes to it. Identify the specific behaviors of the fawn that provide challenges for Jody. In each case, how is Flag's development moving on a path parallel to Jody's?

A complex plot offers interesting conflicts that intersect. Consider how man's struggle with nature and the conflict between the Baxters and Forresters rise and fall together, contributing to tension and resolution.

Grandma Hutto is said to make everyman, young or old, feel good about being a man. Exactly what is it about her personality, values and lifestyle that makes her this way?

Jody's wilderness experiences with his father contribute to his growing maturity in many ways. Identify three different experiences the two share in the scrub, outside their clearing, that add to Jody's maturity in three distinct ways.

Ora Baxter rarely smiles or laughs, and most of her comments are negative, judgmental or threatening. She claims that hardness is the way she deals with pain. Do you think Ora developed this temperament as a result of burying five babies, or do you think she had that kind of outlook when Penny married her? Speculate about the type of young girl Ora might have been, writing a creative character sketch of her prior to marriage.

Water plays an important and varied role in the Baxters' lives. Considering the sink hole, Glen springs, Salt Springs Run, Lake George, the flood waters, and the St. Johns River, explore the different roles water plays in man's struggle with nature.

The rite of passage is a universal theme, as relevant today as it has been through the development of literary history, yet the trials and rituals young people face today are far

different from those Jody faces. Draw some parallels between the types of situations Jody faces and those likely to be face by contemporary adolescents.

Ideas for Reports and Papers

1. Trace Jody's feelings and responses to the hunt throughout the year. What events influence his impressions of the various hunting experiences? How would you generalize Jody's overall attitude toward the relationship of beauty and cruelty in life?
2. How does Penny define stealing and cheating? How do his interactions with his neighbors and with animals illustrate his beliefs? How do his attitudes relate to the concept of "the survival of the fittest" and to the American tendency to justify humanity's dominion over nature?
3. Some critics believe that *The Yearling* teaches harmful values by its suggestion that a boy must kill in order to become a man. Do you agree or disagree? Why? Could Jody have done anything other than shoot his pet? How have other books about boys and their pets, such as *Old Yeller*, by Fred Gipson, or *Rascal*, by Sterling North, handled similar situations?
4. Many of the characters in *The Yearling* respond to conflict by running away.

Penny has "run away" from civilization's "intrusion on the individual spirit" and Grandma Hutto decides to move out of town rather than face the Forresters' brutality. Jody instructs Flag to protect himself from wild animals by insisting, "You jest run from everything," and Jody attempts to run away from his anger and sorrow after killing Flag. Compare the reasons used by these characters and others in the book to rationalize walking away from life's problems. Is running away an honorable way to face conflict?

Why or why not? Can it ever be ultimately successful?

5. Rawlings is often categorized as a writer of frontier regional literature.

What does this mean, and how is *The Yearling* an example of this genre? What specific techniques does Rawlings use in *The Yearling* to write in this style? How important are these techniques in relation to the themes of the story—are they necessary or a hindrance?

Literary Precedents

When Maxwell Perkins suggested to Rawlings that she write a "boy's book," he mentioned *Huckleberry Finn* (1884), *Treasure Island* (1883), and *Kim* (1901).

Although the genesis of the book is there, *The Yearling* certainly is a boy's book and a bildungsroman, the most powerful elements in the book come from Rawlings's personal experience and observation. Additionally, this novel shares with some of her other work a vision of the sterling woodsman/farmer harking back to Cooper. Perhaps the most immediate literary precedent was Rawlings's own novel, *South Moon Under* (1933), which also depicts a boy growing up in the Florida scrub, although the fact — and the anguish — of growing up is not the central issue there.

Further Study

Bellman, Samuel I. Marjorie Kinnan Rawlings. Boston: Twayne, 1974. This biography of Rawlings analyzes and evaluates her work.

Bigelow, Gordon E. *Frontier Eden: The Literary Career of Marjorie K. Rawlings*. Gainesville, FL: University of Florida Press, 1966. Includes a literary critique of Rawlings's work, provides an excellent discussion of her use of dialect, and explains Rawlings's conception of the Florida people.

Commire, Anne. *Something about the Author*. Vol. 1. Detroit: Gale Research, 1977. Contains a biographical sketch of Rawlings.

Van Gelden, Robert. "A Talk With Marjorie Kinnan Rawlings." *New York Times Book Review* (November 30, 1941): 2. This interview presents some of Rawlings's own comments and ideas about her work.

Related Titles

Many of Rawlings's other works examine characters, settings, and themes similar to those in *The Yearling*.

South Moon Under describes a family of Florida moonshiners trying to cope with the uncertainties of daily existence in the scrub. *When the Whippoorwill* (1940) is a collection of stories about Florida and its people. It includes two prize-winning stories: "Jacob's Ladder," which tells of a girl living in the marsh with her commonlaw trapper husband, and "Gal Young Un," the story of an unhappy man who marries an older widow for her money, and then asks a younger girlfriend to move in with them. Another book, *Cross Creek* (1942), is a collection of autobiographical sketches about central Florida; it contains interesting background material on how Rawlings's novels and stories were inspired.

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Beacham's Encyclopedia of Popular Fiction

Editor

Kirk H. Beetz, Ph.D.

Cover Design

Amanda Mott

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Library of Congress Cataloging-in-Publication Data Beacham's Encyclopedia of Popular Fiction

Includes bibliographical references and index

Summary: A multi-volume compilation of analytical essays on and study activities for the works of authors of popular fiction. Includes biography data, publishing history, and resources for the author of each analyzed work.

ISBN 0-933833-41-5 (Volumes 1-3, Biography Series)

ISBN 0-933833-42-3 (Volumes 1-8, Analyses Series)

ISBN 0-933833-38-5 (Entire set, 11 volumes)

1. Popular literature—Bio-bibliography. 2. Fiction—19th century—Bio-bibliography. 3. Fiction—20th century—Bio-bibliography. I. Beetz, Kirk H., 1952-

Z6514.P7B43 1996[PN56.P55]809.3—dc20 96-20771 CIP

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Printed in the United States of America First Printing, November 1996

Beacham's Guide to Literature for Young Adults

Editor - Kirk H. Beetz, Ph.D.

Library of Congress

Cataloging-in-Publication Data

Beacham's Guide to Literature for Young Adults

Includes bibliographical references.

Summary: A multi-volume compilation of analytical essays on and study activities for fiction, nonfiction, and biographies written for young adults.

Includes a short biography for the author of each analyzed work.

1. Young adults—Books and reading. 2. Young adult literature—History and criticism. 3. Young adult literature—Bio-bibliography. 4. Biography—Bio-bibliography.
[1. Literature—History and criticism. 2. Literature—Bio-bibliography]

I. Beetz, Kirk H., 1952

Z1037.A1G85 1994 028.1'62 94-18048 ISBN 0-933833-32-6

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Printed in the United States of America First Printing, November 1994