

# **Across Five Aprils Book Notes**

## **Across Five Aprils by Irene Hunt**

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## Author/Context

Irene Hunt was born to Franklin P. and Sarah Land Hunt on May 18, 1907 in Pontiac, Illinois. The family soon moved to Newton, Illinois, but Franklin died when Hunt was only seven, and the family moved again to be close to Hunt's grandparents. Hunt's childhood was lonely, but she shared a special relationship with her grandfather who told her stories about his childhood during the Civil War. The stories she heard from her grandfather became the basis of the story of Jethro in *Across Five Aprils*.

Hunt graduated from the University of Illinois in Urbana to go onto University of Minnesota, Minneapolis where she earned her M.A. In Illinois public schools, she was a teacher of English and French. Later, she taught psychology at the University of South Dakota, Vermillion, but eventually came back to elementary and junior high school to become a director of language arts in Illinois. After she retired in 1969, Hunt devoted her time to writing. It was at age fifty-seven that she published her first novel.

Hunt once said: "Words have always held a fascination for me, causing me to be teased often as a child when I used them lavishly without having the slightest idea of their meaning. The wish to write pages full of words, to make them tell the stories that I dreamed about, haunted me from childhood on." Hunt also said that during her years as teacher, she found that it was better to teach history through literature. Thus, she wrote books that would help her students better understand history. But her books do not have a specifically intended audience as Hunt once maintained that she writes when she has something to say.

When *Across Five Aprils* was published in 1965, it received much acclaim. Awarded the Newbery Honor Book, the novel was also Hunt's personal favorite among the ones she wrote. A critic maintains: "Brilliant characterization, a telling sense of story, an uncanny ability to balance fact and fiction, and compassionate, graceful writing mark Hunt's small but distinguished body of work." With *Across Five Aprils*, Hunt established herself as one of the greatest historical novelists, proving that she can write for both adult and children audiences. With her faith in "courage, love, and mercy," Hunt wrote her books to emphasize this faith.

### Bibliography

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# Plot Summary

The story begins in April of 1861 in southern Illinois during a morning when Ellen and Matt, and their sons are working on the family farm. There is tension within the family as well as in the community because of the prospect of a war breaking out. Ellen is worried and sad, but the younger boys, Eb and Tom, are overly eager and confident. People are beginning to wonder why the President is so hesitant to declare war. Shad, the local schoolteacher who is in love with Jenny, goes to Newtown to get the latest news from the papers and returns to inform the family that the Confederate army has fired on Fort Sumter.

In late summer, Tom and Eb leave home to fight in the war, and there is news of another Northern defeat. Bill who does not talk much seems troubled about the events surrounding the war. He does not approve of slavery, but he also does not like another form of slavery in the name of industrialism in the North. One day in October, after saying good-bye to Jethro, Bill leaves home to fight for the South.

In 1862, there is a Northern victory in Tennessee, and Ulysses S. Grant becomes a familiar name to those who read the papers. Tom writes a letter home, saying that being a soldier isn't what he has expected it to be. Shad and John prepare to leave to fight, and before Shad leaves, he leaves Jethro his books, instructing his student to learn from the papers and keep up with the events of the war.

One day, Matt sends Jethro on an errand to Newtown which is fifteen miles away. Jethro who is proud to have been entrusted with a man's job drives to town where he makes purchases and exchanges. There he encounters a drunk man named Guy Wortman who is outspokenly disapproving of the Creightons whose son Bill has gone to fight for the Confederate army and Dave Burdow who is generally disliked in the community. The name Burdow is familiar to Jethro because his sister, Mary, was killed in an accident caused by Dave Burdow's son. Jethro also meets Ross Milton who treats him to a dinner at the town restaurant. On his way back home, Jethro is almost killed when Guy Wortman jumps out of the woods to scare his horses, but Dave Burdow saves his life by driving the wagon for him.

The family is frightened and worried after listening to what has happened to Jethro on his way home from Newtown. To make matters worse, Matt has a heart attack, and Jethro must learn to do the farm work and the chores around the house. In April of 1862, there is another Confederate victory as Grant's army is surprised by the rebels, and on the Creighton farm, Jenny and Jethro keep each other company by working the fields together. The family is terrified when one night, a group of ruffians come to warn them of havoc they will wreak. For three weeks, neighbors come to stand watch for the Creightons, but when nothing happens, they begin to think that they have worried uselessly. One night, however, the Creighton barn is set afire and the well is contaminated.



That spring, neighbors and friends come to help the Creightons. After the battles at Shiloh, Dan Lawrence who has been in the war comes to tell the family that Tom has been killed. Tom's death is mourned, and the entire town is in a somber mood because of the war. There is a funny incident, however, at Sam Gardiner's general store. In order to protect his store from a group of looting ruffians, Sam Gardiner stands watch and ends up shooting Guy Wortman in the buttocks. When Ross Milton prints the story in the papers, Guy Wortman is humiliated. When the news of Grant's demotion reaches Jethro, he wonders why the North has incompetent generals while the South has excellent leaders.

Although the spring and the summer of that year have been good for the Union cause, by fall, the situation is looking bad for the North. In September, the Creightons with the help of their neighbors rebuild their barn. There is news that the President has put another man in command replacing the previous general, McClelland. By the end of 1862, people are becoming disillusioned with the endless war and losing faith in their leaders as deserters from the army flock into Illinois. Point Prospect becomes a campground for the deserters of the army. When a man named Hig Phillips is murdered by a group of young deserters in Jasper County, the town is frightened. In early 1863, three men from the Federal Registrars come to the Creighton home, looking for Eb who has deserted the army.

While helping out in John's fields, Jethro hears strange sounds from the woods and finds Eb, thin and hungry, hiding out among the trees. Troubled and unsure about what to do for his deserter cousin, Jethro finally decides to write a letter to President Lincoln to ask for help. The President writes a kind reply to Jethro's letter, informing him that all deserters who report to certain posts will be pardoned and reinstated.

In May, there is news of another Union loss, and Grant is criticized in the papers for being inactive. In Gettysburg, however, the Union army wins a victory. One day, there is a letter from Shad's aunt in Washington DC who writes the Creightons that Shad is in critical condition after having been injured in battle. Jenny goes to Washington to see Shad, and soon, he recovers to marry her.

In June, there is a letter from John who writes about the battle at Chickamauga, and in November, the President makes a speech at Gettysburg which is received with mixed emotions from different people. That winter, there is talk of the end of war, but the end does not come so readily. The President declares a proclamation of amnesty that will pardon any Confederate state that supports the union, but both the North and the South criticize it. In 1864, President Lincoln is reelected despite many doubts, and the North receives some good news of victories in battles. During the winter, John writes a letter, telling the family that he has seen Bill who was held captive. Bill had asked John to tell the family that he was not at Pittsburg Landing where Tom had died-that he had not been the one who killed Tom.

By 1865, the war is nearing its end, and Jethro turns thirteen. His parents worry because he has grown up to be so much like Bill. In the fifth April of the war, there is news that the terms of peace have been signed. The town is in a celebratory mood until

there is news that the President has been assassinated. Jethro lies on Walnut Hill, depressed, but Shad and Jenny return home from Washington, promising to take him with them to the East where he will get a good education.

# Major Characters

**Jethro Creighton:** As Ellen and Matt Creighton's youngest child, Jethro is nine years old when the story begins. Showing 'special talents' as a boy, he becomes the man of the household taking care of the family farm when his brothers go off to war. He is especially close to his older brother Bill and his schoolmaster Shad. A naïve, innocent boy, Jethro gradually matures into a strong, intelligent man.

**Jenny Creighton:** Jenny who is fourteen years old is the daughter of the family. She is in love with Shad, the schoolmaster, but she often feels frustrated because her father who does not think her old enough will not allow her to marry him. When her brothers go off to war, she is left at home with Jethro, and they tend the farm together, keeping each other company.

**Shadrach Yale:** Shad is a college student of physics from Philadelphia who comes to Jasper County to teach at the local school to support himself through school. A tall, precocious man of twenty, Shad is treated like a part of the Creighton family. He is in love with Jenny, but is not given the permission to marry her before he goes off to war. Although he is injured during the war, he eventually recovers to marry Jenny. He is especially affectionate to Jethro, his student, in whom he instills the importance of book learning.

**Ellen Creighton:** Ellen is 'a small, spare woman with large dark eyes and skin as brown and dry as leather.' Once a pretty girl, she is now a weary mother of twelve who has lived through many hardships in life. To her, the most important thing is her family, and she particularly favors her youngest child, Jethro.

**Matthew Creighton:** Matt is the head of the Creighton family. Highly respected in the community, he also serves as director at the local schoolhouse. After he collapses, he becomes weak, unable to do the work on the farm, but neighbors come to help him.

**Bill Creighton:** The second oldest son of the family, Bill is gentle, silent, and thoughtful. Although he is physically strong, he also likes to read and takes interest in book learning. He is considered 'peculiar' in the community where young men like to hunt or wrestle or drink. Later, he leaves home to join the Confederate army.

**Tom Creighton:** Like Jethro and Bill, Tom is blonde and blue-eyed. He is only eighteen years of age, but eager to go to war where he is eventually killed.

**Eb Carron:** Like Tom, Eb who is Matt's nephew is also eighteen years old. He has been a member of the Creighton family since he was orphaned as a child. Eb later returns home after deserting from the army, but is eventually allowed to go back.

**John Creighton:** John is the eldest of the remaining children in the family. He is married to Nancy, and has sons of his own. He and his family live in a cabin that is a



half-mile away from the Creighton home. Although he is more impatient than Bill, he is very close to Bill. The two brothers end up fighting for opposing sides during the war.

**Nancy :** Nancy is John's wife. Originally from Kansas, she is a thin girl who does not speak very much. She is good-hearted, but aloof. John explains that it is because she was raised by relatives who treated her harshly, and remaining reserved is her way of protecting herself. After John goes to war, Nancy spends more time with the Creightons, eventually moving in with the family.

**Mary:** Mary dies during the winter of 1859 in an accident, coming home with her date Rob Nelson from a dance at Hidalgo. On their way home, Mary and Rob meet drunk Travis Burdow who frightens the animals. The wagon is overturned, and Mary is killed.

**Ross Milton:** Ross Milton is the outspoken and confident red-haired editor of the local newspaper who is a friend of the Creightons.

### Minor Characters

**Travis Burdow:** Travis Burdow is the boy who is responsible for the accident that kills Mary. Following Mary and Rob on their way home from the dance, Travis scares the horses and overturns the wagon, killing Mary. After the accident, the townspeople insist on hunting him down to hang him, but they are stopped by Matt Creighton, and Travis' life is spared.

**Dave Burdow:** Dave Burdow is Travis' father. There are rumors that Dave Burdow's father came to Jasper County to escape a mob that had risen as a result of his petty thieving. Thus, the Burdows are generally disliked and shunned. Dave Burdow is 'a sullen, silent man' who generally keeps to himself, but he saves Jethro's life from Guy Wortman and later, helps the Creightons when the family barn is burned.

**Wilse Graham:** Wilse is a cousin of the Creightons who comes to visit from Kentucky.

**Mr. Roscoe:** Mr. Roscoe is the old man who lives south of Rose Hill. Jethro meets him on his way to town, and Mr. Roscoe asks him to bring back a newspaper so he can check whether or not his grandson has been injured or killed in battle at Pea Ridge.

**Sam Gardiner:** Sam Gardiner is the round-faced owner of the general store. There is an incident in which Sam shoots Guy Wortman who is trying to loot his store in the buttocks, making Guy Wortman the laughingstock of the community.

**Guy Wortman:** Guy Wortman is the red-faced man who bullies Jethro at the general store. He disapproves of the fact that Bill has gone off to the South, and holds a grudge against the Creightons. He tries to attack Jethro on his way home from town, but does not succeed. He is also one of the ruffians who attacks Sam Gardiner's general store, but is humiliated when he is shot in the buttocks.





**Ed Turner:** Ed Turner is the neighbor of the Creightons who frequently helps the family during times of need.

**Israel Thomas:** Israel Thomas is another friend and neighbor of the Creightons.

**George Lawrence:** George Lawrence is a neighbor who brings his son Dan to see the Creightons to tell the family that Tom has been killed in battle.

**Dan Lawrence:** Dan comes with his father George to tell the Creightons how Tom was killed in the war.

**Lydia & Lucinda Creighton :** Lydia and Lucinda are the two Creighton girls who have married and gone to Ohio. To Jethro who does not remember them, they are like strangers.

**Benjamin Creighton:** Benjamin is the oldest of the Creighton children, but he has long since gone to California to find gold. The family has never heard from him.

## Objects/Places

**Jasper County, Illinois:** Jasper County in southern Illinois is where the story takes place. During the war, most people in Jasper County support the Northern cause, but there are those who are secretly loyal to the South. When Cousin Wilse comes to visit, he tells the Creightons that people in Jasper County are 'southern folks,' closer to people in Missouri and Kentucky than to people up North in Chicago.

**Newtown:** Newtown which is 15 miles away from the Creighton cabin is the heart of the community where there are stores, offices, restaurants, and a jail. Compared to the quiet Creighton farmhouse, Newton is bustling and crowded. On one occasion, Jethro makes a trip to Newtown to run errands and buy supplies for the family.

**Walnut Hill:** Walnut Hill is where the family has buried the three children who died within a week from disease. Jethro used to go up to the hill to talk to the children as though they were his imaginary friends, but since Mary's death, he stops going.

**Kentucky:** Cousin Wilse Graham comes to visit the Creightons from Kentucky. On their last night together, Shad shows Jethro that the Confederate line begins from Eastern Kentucky.

**Maps:** Before going to the war, Shad teaches Jethro how to read maps, pointing out different dots that represent places and lines that represent rivers. After Shad leaves, Jethro occasionally examines maps to study how the war is progressing after different battles.

**Milton's book on English usage:** When Jethro meets Ross Milton in Newtown, the editor gives the boy a copy of a book he has written about correct English usage, encouraging Jethro to speak correctly. Jethro studies the book from time to time, pushing himself to improving his speaking. Later in the story when he writes Mr. Lincoln a letter asking for help, he consults Milton's book.

**Copperhead:** Some rash ruffians in the community think that the the Creightons are Copperheads because one of their sons, Bill, has gone to fight for the Southern Confederates.

**Family Bible:** Inside the cover of the family bible is where the names and the dates of birth, death, and wedding of every family member are written. When Tom dies, Jenny writes the date of his death, and when Jenny marries Shad, Jethro writes the date of her wedding by her name. The bible is a record of the family's history.

**Point Prospect:** As deserters flock in, Point Prospect becomes a campground for young soldiers who have fled the army. It becomes a dangerous place after the murder of the Hig Phillips.

## Quotes

Quote 1: "A tall powerfully built youth of twenty, with a firm mouth and grave, dark eyes that [give] him the appearance of an older man," Shad is the local schoolmaster from Philadelphia. Chapter 1, pg. 10

Quote 2: "War [means] loud brass music and shining horses ridden by men wearing uniforms finer than any suit in the stores at Newton; it [means] men riding like kings, looking neither to the right nor the left." Chapter 1, pg. 15

Quote 3: "It would be shadowy men from distant parts who [die] for the pages of future history books." Chapter 1, pg. 15

Quote 4: "But this separation, Wilse, it won't do. We're a union; separate, we're jest two weakened, puny pieces, each needin' the other." Chapter 2, pg. 29

Quote 5: "Slavery, I hate. But it is with us, and them that should suffer fer the evil they brought to our shores air long dead. What I want us to answer in this year of 1861 is this, John: does the trouble over slavery come because men's hearts is purer above the Mason-Dixon line? Or does slavery throw a shadder over greed and keep that greed from showin' up quite so bare and ugly?" Chapter 2, pg. 31

Quote 6: "I don't know if anybody ever 'wins' a war, Jeth. I think that the beginnin's of this war has been fanned by hate till it's a blaze now; and a blaze kin destroy him that makes it and him that the fire was set to hurt. There oughtn't to be a war, Jeth; this war ought never to ha'bin." Chapter 3, pg. 41

Quote 7: "I won't fight fer arrogance and big money against the southern farmer. I won't do it." Chapter 3, pg. 45

Quote 8: "You tell Jeth that bein a soljer aint so much." Chapter 4, pg. 50

Quote 9: "The accounts you read in newspapers today will fill the pages of history by the time you're a man." Chapter 4, pg. 62

Quote 10: "There isn't trouble enough in this country for you, is there, Guy? You'd better get out and do your patriotic duty--kick up some more mob violence. That's your forte, you know; get in on any killing you can drum up, so long as your own hide is safe." Chapter 5, pg. 76

Quote 11: "He [is] still too much a child, still insufficiently acquainted with violence, to believe that bodily harm could possibly come to him. Ugly things happened, it was true, but to people who were distant, unknown people--not to someone named Jethro Creighton." Chapter 5, pg. 85

Quote 12: "Now he was to know labor from dawn till sunset; he was to learn what it meant to scan the skies for rain while corn burned in the fields, or to see a heavy

rainstorm lash grain from full, strong wheat stalks, or to know that hay, desperately needed for winter feeding, lay rotting in a wet quagmire of a field." Chapter 6, pg. 92

Quote 13: "A letter is kind of a close thing; it's somebody's words that are writ only fer you. It's like you're bein' unfair to someone you love if you let his words be read by others when he writ'em only fer you." Chapter 6, pg. 101

Quote 14: "Theres trubel fer fokes that stands up fer there reb lovin sons." Chapter 6, pg. 104

Quote 15: "Ain't we in the right? And how does it happen, if we're in the right, that the Lord lets Jeff Davis get men like Lee and Jackson and gives us ones like McClellan and Halleck?" Chapter 7, pg. 118

Quote 16: "I tell you frankly that the contagion of their devotion has not yet gripped me. I do not dislike him...But he is afraid of something--of sending the men who love him to their death--of making an error that will reflect upon the image of himself which he knows to exist in the minds of his men. He does not have the cold approach to killing, the singleness of purpose, the brutal tenacity, that the winner of this war--if there ever is to be one--must have." Chapter 8, pg. 125

Quote 17: "Then a skeleton came out from among the trees. It was the skeleton of a Union soldier, though the uniform it wore was so ragged and filthy it was difficult to identify. The sunken cheeks were covered with a thin scattering of fuzz; the hair was lank and matted. It fell over the skeleton's forehead and down into its eyes." Chapter 9, pg. 134

Quote 18: "If it be a wrong [decision], I have then erred on the side of mercy." Chapter 9, pg. 147

Quote 19: "It was a battle of unbelievable bravery and unbelievable ruthlessness; it was a clash of agonizing errors checkered with moves of brilliant strategy that lasted through three hot July..." Chapter 10, pg. 152

Quote 20: "Lincoln will win. When it comes to the final vote, the country will not admit that its sons have died for nothing." Chapter 11, pg. 168

Quote 21: "It was then that South Carolina knew the lash of a triumphant army drunk with the plundering of Georgia and enraged at the stubborn tenacity of the South in holding onto a cause that was already lost. In South Carolina the vast, undisciplined army could find another excuse for its excesses." Chapter 12, pg. 177

Quote 22: "This is a land lying in destruction, physical and spiritual. If the twisted railroads and the burned cities and the fields covered with the bones of dead men--if that were all, we could soon rise out of the destruction. But the hate that burns in old scars, and the thirst for revenge that has distorted men until they should be in straitjackets rather than in high office--these are the things that may make peace a sorry thing." Chapter 12, pg. 179

Quote 23: "It was the saddest and most cruel April of the five. It had held out an almost unbelievable joy and had then struck out in fury at those whose hands were outstretched." Chapter 12, pg. 184



# Topic Tracking: Death/War

## Chapter 1

Death/War 1: Jethro was born during a year when three Creighton children died within one week from disease. The Creightons have had several deaths in the family.

Death/War 2: Ellen is sad about the prospect of war which Jethro has heard about from his older brothers. Ellen tells him that she's afraid of her children being killed in the war.

Death/War 3: Although Jethro knows that people die in wars, he does not think that the war will affect his family. He thinks that those who die are people who have nothing to do with him.

Death/War 4: Tom and Eb who have strong opinions about the war are eager to go and fight, but President Lincoln is hesitant. When Jethro asks, Ellen tells him that the President has a difficult choice to make about the war.

Death/War 5: The Creightons like everyone else in the community are anxious and worried about the war. The talk of war makes the women sad and the younger boys restless. Bill does not like to talk about it with John, and Jethro notices that the talk of it causes "a troubled preoccupation" within the family.

## Chapter 2

Death/War 6: To Jethro, war had seemed exciting, but now, he is troubled because he realizes that there is more to it than mere excitement.

## Chapter 3

Death/War 7: The story about the battle at Wilson's Creek in Missouri where the Union army was defeated by the Confederates is especially touching to people at Jasper County because it has happened nearby. War becomes "a sorrowful reality."

Death/War 8: One night, Bill tells Jethro that he doesn't think anyone ever wins a war. War destroys both those who start it and those whom it's meant to hurt.

## Chapter 4

Death/War 9: Tom writes his first letter home. He writes to Jethro that "bein a soljer aint so much."

## Chapter 5

Death/War 10: On his way back home from Newtown, Jethro meets Dave Burdow. He is scared by the man, but he is still childishly innocent. He thinks that although things can happen to others, they can't happen to him.



### **Chapter 7**

Death/War 11: Dan Lawrence comes to tell the Creightons that Tom has died in battle. Dan was there when Tom died, and he relates the story of how Tom died.

### **Chapter 8**

Death/War 12: The men tell Jethro that he is lucky to be so young that he does not have to worry about the war, but Jethro is irritated to hear them say that.

### **Chapter 9**

Death/War 13: When a man named Hig Phillips is killed by a group of young deserters from the army, a wave of fear strikes the community.

### **Chapter 12**

Death/War 14: Ed receives a letter from his son who talks about the looting and the burning of houses throughout South Carolina. Ed worries that the war is going to make young soldiers including his own son think that life is cheap.



# Topic Tracking: Family Love

## Chapter 1

Family Love 1: Ellen favors her youngest son, Jethro, whom she thinks shows "special talents."

Family Love 2: Shad is like a part of the Creighton family. He shares a particularly close relationship with Jethro who looks up to him as a role model.

Family Love 3: Nancy is not very openly affectionate with any of the other family members. John explains that it is because she was raised by people who treated her badly, and that withdrawing is her way of protecting herself from getting hurt.

Family Love 4: In the family, Bill and John are especially close, and Ellen is proud of the fact that people in her family are close to one another.

## Chapter 2

Family Love 5: Wilse comes to visit the Creightons from Kentucky. During dinner, Wilse stirs some angry debate about the war, and Ellen stops the conversation to prevent the family from becoming upset with one another.

## Chapter 3

Family Love 6: Bill and John who are very close get into an argument and eventually, end up physically fighting one another. Bad feelings had been building up between them.

## Chapter 4

Family Love 7: The family worries about Tom and Eb who are fighting for Grant's army. Some of the battle details are particularly disturbing that the family does not read them to Ellen.

## Chapter 6

Family Love 8: After the boys have gone to fight, Jethro and Jenny are left at home to do the chores and the farm work. They go out to the fields together and work, keeping each other company. Over the years, Jethro and Jenny become closer, almost forgetting the age difference between them.

Family Love 9: Jethro is angry when Jenny does not show the family her letter from Shad, but eventually reaches out to her to make up.

## Chapter 11



Family Love 10: John writes to the family that he met Bill who was held as prisoner at the camp of the Union army. Bill had asked John to tell the rest of the family that he hadn't been at Pittsburgh Landing-that he hadn't been the one who had killed Tom.

## **Chapter 12**

Family Love 11: Shad and Jenny come back home from Washington DC, and Shad tells Jethro that they will take him to the East where he will be able to receive an education.

# Topic Tracking: Abraham Lincoln

## Chapter 1

Abraham Lincoln 1: Jethro thinks about the time his father was hesitant to go along with the mob who insisted on hanging Travis Burdow. Eventually, Matt had dissuaded the men from killing the boy. He thinks that the President is similar to his father in the way that he is reluctant to support the war.

## Chapter 4

Abraham Lincoln 2: Shad corrects Jethro when he calls the President "Ol'Abe." He wants Jethro to be more respectful by calling him "Mr. Lincoln." Jethro does not mean any disrespect, and thinks about other men who call the President far worse things. Shad tells him that he has faith and confidence in the President despite others' criticisms of him.

## Chapter 9

Abraham Lincoln 3: Troubled by not knowing what to do about Eb who has deserted from the army, Jethro thinks about all the people he can consult. Finally, he decides upon Mr. Lincoln because he believes that the President will be understanding.

Abraham Lincoln 4: Mr. Lincoln writes Jethro a kind reply to his letter. He has decided that all deserters who report to certain places by a certain date will be pardoned and restored to their former posts. He writes that there might be much criticism about the decision he has made, but if he has made a mistake, he has made it on the side of mercy.

## Chapter 11

Abraham Lincoln 5: Although Mr. Lincoln is criticized by some people after his Gettysburg address, Jethro feels love and admiration for the President.

Abraham Lincoln 6: When Mr. Lincoln declares a proclamation of amnesty, he is criticized by both the Northerners and the Southerners. The South criticize him for being tyrannical, and the North criticizes him for being treasonous.

Abraham Lincoln 7: Mr. Lincoln is nominated for reelection for presidency, but the prospect of his winning is doubtful. Ross Milton, however, is confident that President Lincoln will win again.

Abraham Lincoln 8: President Lincoln is reelected, and most of his votes are from soldiers. This comforts the President, but Jethro finds it disappointing that a majority of people from the President's hometown and home state have not voted for him.

## Chapter 12

Abraham Lincoln 9: Many people in Jasper County place their hopes on Mr. Lincoln, and Ross Milton is one of them, hoping that the man will not let peace be a "mockery."

Abraham Lincoln 10: When the President is assassinated, Jethro is deeply saddened. It is the saddest April of the five he has seen during the war.

# Chapter 1

It is an April morning in 1861 in southern Illinois. Ellen Creighton is out with her son Jethro planting potatoes on the family farm. She is a tired, little woman who has given birth to twelve children and endured various hardships in her life. Jethro, the youngest child of the family whom she favors, was born during a year when three of her children died from disease within one week.

Topic Tracking: Family Love 1

Topic Tracking: Death/War 1

Mother and son work the fields in silence. Jenny is preparing lunch in the cabin while Matt Creighton and his two sons do the spring plowing. A little later, Shad Yale can be seen driving to Newtown on his wagon. "A tall powerfully built youth of twenty, with a firm mouth and grave, dark eyes that [give] him the appearance of an older man," Shad is the local schoolmaster from Philadelphia. Chapter 1, pg. 10 He came to teach at the school where Matt Creighton is a director in order to support himself through college. It will be his third term this coming fall, and Shad shares a special relationship with the Creightons who has treated him like a member of the family. In Shad, Jethro finds a role model, and in turn, Shad feels affection for his little student who is always eager to learn.

Topic Tracking: Family Love 2

After promising Ellen to bring back the latest newspapers, he tells her not to worry, but Ellen is apprehensive and sad. Although he is sad to see his mother worry, Jethro is not worried about the likelihood of war. He has heard his brother Tom and his cousin Eb talk about it, and he has learned that the fear of war is "a womanly weakness." But Ellen does not feel that way, telling him that she is afraid of losing all of her children.

Topic Tracking: Death/War 2

In order to divert her attention from war, Jethro tells his mother about Copernicus and how he, going against the beliefs of his society, argued that the earth revolved around the sun. But soon enough, Ellen is back to thinking about the war, and Jethro can't do anything to distract her. Recently, he has noticed many adults in the community talking about the election in 1860, tariffs, slave and free states. Many are angry that President Lincoln has not yet declared war. Jethro knows about wars from his lessons at school about the American Revolution. To Jethro, "war [means] loud brass music and shining horses ridden by men wearing uniforms finer than any suit in the stores at Newton; it [means] men riding like kings, looking neither to the right nor the left." Chapter 1, pg. 15 He knows that people die in wars, but Jethro is certain that if Tom and Eb ever go to war, they would return. "It would be shadowy men from distant parts who [die] for the pages of future history books." Chapter 1, pg. 15

Topic Tracking: Death/War 3



For the Creightons, however, death is a serious subject. During the winter of 1859, Mary was killed in an accident. She had gone to a dance at Hidalgo with Rob Nelson where a group of young boys from the south began making a clamor. On their way back, Rob and Mary had encountered Travis Burdow, one of the drunken boys. Travis had fired a pistol over the horses that Rob had been driving, and when the animals were frightened, the wagon was overturned, killing Mary. Because Matthew Creighton was respected by others in the community, the town had been disturbed by the news of the death of his daughter. The Burdow family was not liked because it was said that Travis Burdow's grandfather had come to Jasper County to escape a mob of people who could no longer tolerate his petty thieving. Ever since then, the family had been disliked by others in the town. Dave Burdow, Travis Burdow's father, was a silent man who kept to himself like his children who had been continually insulted by other kids at school. A group of citizens was determined to hunt down Travis and hang him for the crime he had committed, but Matt Creighton had stopped them. Jethro wonders at his father's hesitance then, and thinks that President Lincoln is similar to his father because he is so reluctant to go to war. Jethro prefers "the hard, unyielding attitude" of Tom and Eb during their conversations about war, but Ellen tells him that the president has a choice to make between two difficult ones.

Topic Tracking: Death/War 4

Topic Tracking: President Lincoln 1

At noon, Jethro and Ellen slowly make their way toward their small log cabin. Nancy has come with her young children, and Jenny tells Jethro that she has prepared lettuce for him for "spring eatin'." During the winter, Jethro had wanted some green food in exchange for all the meat that he had eaten. Originally from Kansas, Nancy is John's shy wife. Although she is part of the family, she is aloof. John always tells Ellen to be patient with her. She was raised harshly by relatives, and thus it is not easy for her to be openly affectionate.

Topic Tracking: Family Love 3

Soon, the men come in to eat. Jethro sits with his parents and elder brothers at the table because like them, he too is fieldworker. Besides Jethro, there is Tom who is a "mild-faced lad" of eighteen. Eb Carron is Matt's nephew who has lived with the Creightons since being orphaned as a child. Jethro's favorite, however, is Bill who is generally considered strange in the neighborhood. Indifferent to hunting or wrestling or drinking, Bill who likes to read is thoughtful and gentle. John who is the oldest of the siblings left at home is very close to Bill, and Ellen takes pride in the fact that her family members are close to one another. On the other hand, Jethro is not very close to John whose wife's shyness makes it difficult for him to approach his brother's family.

Topic Tracking: Family Love 4

During dinner, the boys praise Jenny's cooking. When Tom teases Jenny about Shad, Matt quietly warns that Jenny is too young to be thinking about men. Jenny finds it frustrating that ever since her father has talked to Shad, Shad has acted "solemn and

paternal" toward her. When John expresses an interest in reading the papers from town, there is tension among the family members. The talk of war causes mixed emotions among the family members, and it is a topic Bill is unwilling to discuss. There is "a troubled preoccupation" within the family.

Topic Tracking: Death/War 5

Later in the day, Ellen and Jethro go back to the fields to work. As they are taking a break, a wagon approaches, and it is Cousin Wilse Graham, Ellen's nephew from Kentucky who has come to see the Creightons.

## Chapter 2

After the chores and the fieldwork are done, the family gets ready for dinner. At dinner, the Creightons and Cousin Wilse talk about some family matters--a death, weddings, births, happy things as well as tragedies. Gradually, the conversation turns to the war. Matt asks Wilse whether or not Kentucky will secede from the union. Wilse does not know, but he reminds Matt that southern Illinois where the Creightons live is closer to Missouri and Kentucky than it is to Chicago and northern Illinois. Matt admits that most of the people in southern Illinois are from the south like Missouri or Kentucky or Tennessee, but he opposes separation: "But this separation, Wilse, it won't do. We're a union; separate, we're jest two weakened, puny pieces, each needin' the other." Chapter 2, pg. 29

Witse argues that the North has become rich while the South has become poor, and it has grown "arrogant toward the South." Although it is not common for a woman to jump into male conversations about politics, Ellen speaks up, reminding Wilse that there are slaves in the South who are "downtrodden" at which Wilse says that the South just wants to be left alone without any intervention. Tom is beginning to get angry at Wilse's words, and John once again brings up the issue of immorality of slavery. Wilse says that there has been slavery from the very beginning--from the founding of the nation. He also adds that even if slaves were freed, no northern white abolitionists would do anything to help them. The difference in the skin colors would not be forgotten.

For the first time, Bill speaks: "Slavery, I hate. But it is with us, and them that should suffer fer the evil they brought to our shores air long dead. What I want us to answer in this year of 1861 is this, John: does the trouble over slavery come because men's hearts is purer above the Mason-Dixon line? Or does slavery throw a shadder over greed and keep that greed from showin' up quite so bare and ugly?" Chapter 2, pg. 31 Wilse agrees with Bill immediately, saying that men are just as bad now as they were in ancient times, but Matt disagrees. He believes that human nature has become better over the years.

Jethro is silently frustrated. Before, he had been delighted at the thought of war which had given him the same feeling as watching a horse race or watching Shad beat a local bully. Stirring excitement in him, it had seemed to Jethro to give men "feeling of strength and fulfillment." But now, he is confused because he realizes that there is more to war than mere the excitement.

Topic Tracking: Death/War 6

Witse continues by saying that for every evil of slavery, there is an evil of industrialism in the North. The South only wishes to be left alone, but John interrupts him by again denouncing slavery. Bill turns on John by reminding him that they are from the South; they shouldn't have northern abolitionists like William Lloyd Garrison as teachers. When tension fills the air, Ellen stops the conversation, ordering that there will be no more talk of war.

### Topic Tracking: Family Love 5

After dinner, Nancy and John go home with their boys. Jenny and Bill clear up the dishes in the kitchen while the rest of the family is out in the dooryard. Jethro falls asleep beside his father, and the family waits for Shad to return from town.

When Shad comes, he tells the family that the Confederates fired on Fort Sumter on Friday morning. Anderson's men at Fort Sumter had been starving, and the President had announced that provisions would be sent. The Confederates demanded that the fort be surrendered, but when this was refused, they had fired. Anderson had held out with his men before surrendering to a Southern general named Beauregard. People had climbed up on their rooftops to watch the fighting as though they were spectators in a circus. Shad says that it is not war yet because the Congress is not in session to declare it, but the President has asked for volunteers from all the states to join the militia. Matt says slowly that regardless of what the Congress will do, it is war.



## Chapter 3

That summer in southern Illinois, every weekend is like the Fourth of July with speeches and brass music. The story about the battle of Bull Run reaches the town. Congressmen had driven out with their ladies to see the fighting. When the Union troops ran for safety, the spectators and their carriages had blocked the road. Jethro now notices that there is no more confident talk of ending the matter quickly in the community. When stories of Ball's Bluff reach the town, some begin to doubt that the war will end quickly, and others think that the northern factory workers are no match for the healthy outdoor men from the South.

Throughout the summer, Bill who remains quiet goes to the rallies in town, taking Jethro along. The two younger boys, Tom and EB, promise to go to war as soon as they are able, and Shad and John plan to leave by mid-winter. Shad will finish his contract to teach at school, and John will help with the harvest and provide food for the family before going.

After Tom and Eb have gone to war in late summer, there is news of another Northern defeat at Wilson's Creek in Missouri. The Union commander, Nathaniel Lyon, had been killed along with many boys. Because it had happened so close, the war sadly becomes more real to the people of Jasper County.

Topic Tracking: Death/War 7

Jethro listens when men come to talk about these events in the Creightons' yard. Noticing that the name of a young officer, McClellan, is often spoken with respect, he becomes aware of many other names that are mentioned.

Since Tom and Eb have left home, Jethro sleeps in the loft with Bill. One night when he wakes himself with the sounds of his own cries, Bill is there to comfort him. Bill confesses that recently, he hasn't been sleeping well because of thoughts about the war. When Jethro asks whether or not the North will win the war, Bill says: "I don't know if anybody ever 'wins' a war, Jeth. I think that the beginnin's of this war has been fanned by hate till it's a blaze now; and a blaze kin destroy him that makes it and him that the fire was set to hurt. There oughtn't to be a war, Jeth; this war ought never to ha'bin." Chapter 3, pg. 41 Bill tells Jethro that he hates slavery, but he also hates another form of slavery that has people working in factories for small wages. Bill says that it angers him to see their father and John be so sure about which side they will support.

Topic Tracking: Death/War 8

One autumn afternoon in October, Jethro is on Walnut Hill where as a child, he used to find company in the three boys buried there. He had talked to his imaginary friends on the hill, but after Mary died, he had stopped going. During that afternoon in 1961, however, Jethro returns to the hills. Soon, he is joined by Bill who shows bruises and

cuts on his face. He confesses to having had a fight with John. There had been hard feelings building up between them for some time.

Topic Tracking: Family Love 6

Bill tells Jethro that he is leaving to fight for the South. He refuses to fight for "arrogance and big money against the southern farmer." Chapter 3, pg. 45 He does not want to fight, but if he has to, Bill says that he will choose to fight for the South. Jethro chokingly yells after his brother who is leaving to take care of himself.

## Chapter 4

In 1862, there is a first Northern victory in Tennessee, and the name Ulysses S. Grant becomes familiar. When the news of Fort Donelson's fall reaches the town, people begin expressing their joy and admiration for Grant, but Matt doubts that the war will be over soon. Matt picks up the paper and reads a note sent to the Confederate general from Grant who demands unconditional and immediate surrender. The family is worried about Tom and Eb who have gone to fight for Grant's army. The battles are so intensely fought that Matt and Jenny choose not to read some of the details of it to Ellen.

Topic Tracking: Family Love 7

One day, Ed Turner brings the family a letter from Tom. In the letter, Tom writes about the Union soldiers taking Fort Henry and the fight at Donelson. He writes that on the way to Donelson, many of the soldiers threw away their heavy blankets and coats to lighten their loads. When they arrived at Donelson, however, the weather turned cold, and many froze to death in the snow. Tom ends his letter by adding: "bein a soljer aint so much." Chapter 4, pg. 50

Topic Tracking: Death/War 9

After reading the letter, Ellen with a sorrowful look on her face goes out into the pantry, not saying anything. When she comes back, she tells Jethro to go visit Shad at his place and to take him Tom's letter. In anticipation of a visit to Shad, Jethro quickly does his chores. As he is working, Jenny comes to him in tears. She complains that Matt will not let her marry Shad before he leaves for the war. Offering to help him get ready for the trip, Jenny makes Jethro promise her to tell him everything that Shad says.

It is a mile to Shad's dwelling that is by the schoolhouse where he teaches. Shad greets Jethro who has endured the freezing weather to come see him. To Jethro, Shad's dwelling seems cozy and warm. Shad immediately sets out to make dinner, and he asks about Jenny. When Jethro says that she has been crying about not being able to marry him, Shad shows resentment toward Matt for not allowing the two of them to marry. He explains that if it weren't for the war, he wouldn't be in such a rush, but he and John will leave next week. He will go back to Philadelphia, and John will go to Chicago. Shad confesses that he is not eager to be a soldier; it is not something he had planned for his life. When Jethro shows Shad the letter from Tom, Shad calls war "a brutal business."

With a map, Shad shows Jethro the Confederate line that begins from eastern Kentucky. He points out the two rivers that are crossed by the Confederate line, where the Union gunboats are stationed, and the towns that the Confederates have been getting their provisions from as well as the railroad line. From this, Jethro understands that the Union generals attacked the forts that they did in order to cut off supplies. Shad further explains that winning a battle does not guarantee a victory in the war; small battles are only a part of a bigger plan. Their talk turns from that of generals to the President. When Jethro calls him "Ol' Abe," Shad immediately corrects him, telling him it

is "Mr. Lincoln." Jethro hadn't meant any disrespect, but he knows that many people call him things far worse such as "the baboon" or "the ugly, ignorant backwoods Lincoln." Shad says that he can't explain it, but he has faith in Mr. Lincoln.

Topic Tracking: President Lincoln 2

Shad also tells Jethro that Bill acted according to what he believed was right. Although Bill might be criticized by others in the county, Bill was courageous for doing what he thought to be the right thing.

Happy in Shad's company, Jethro tells him that he will remember this night for a long time. Shad tells him that when he comes back from the war, Jenny, Jethro, and he are going to live together. Jethro will go to school in the East and live with them. Shad says that he will leave Jethro all his books so he can read them with Jenny during his absence. Shad also instructs him to read newspapers: "The accounts you read in newspapers today will fill the pages of history by the time you're a man." Chapter 4, pg. 62

After supper, Shad takes his guitar to accompany Jethro who sings a song that his mother brought from Kentucky. Ellen used to say that people in Kentucky thought that the lyrics to the song had been witch-talk to the Devil. Shad does not believe in witches, and he explains that he is angry with people who hurt others based on beliefs that they cannot prove right or wrong. After talking, Jethro turns to the covers of Shad's bed. Flashes of their conversation keep him awake for a few minutes.

## Chapter 5

Ellen is in her bed with a headache; she is in pain because she has not had any coffee. When coffee reached the highest price early in 1862, Ellen, shocked, had vowed to stop drinking it, but now she suffers from not having had her usual dose of it. Unable to see his wife suffering, Matt tells Jethro to go to Nancy to get some. After drinking the hot coffee, Ellen is able to get up from her bed.

Matt calls Jethro to have him go to Newton to do some chores and pick up some goods for the family. Traveling the 15 miles to Newton to buy goods with money is a man's job, and Jethro is proud to have been entrusted with the task. Next morning, Jethro is up early. After loading the wagon and having breakfast, Jethro begins his trip.

On his way, Jethro passes by houses and barns until he meets an old man three miles south of Rose Hill. The man named Roscoe asks Jethro questions about the battle site and the generals who led the fights. He wants Jethro to get him a newspaper from Newton. His grandson, a Union soldier named Jake Roscoe, served during the Pea Ridge battle, and he wants to know what happened to him.

After promising the man, Jethro is back on the road. He reaches Newton a little before noon. Compared to the solitude of his cabin and farm, Newton is bustling with people and shops. The town is built around a square with a jail, feed stores, a harness shop, general stores, a newspaper office, saloons, and a restaurant. Jethro first goes to the mill to bargain with the grain. Later, he goes to Gardiner's general store to exchange the chickens he has brought from home with fabric and thread for Jenny and mittens for himself. He also makes some purchases that the family needs such as sugar and coffee.

In the general store are several men gathered around the fireplace. Ross Milton, the editor of the county paper and the father of Travis Burdow are among the crowd. None of the men pays any attention to Jethro until one of them asks Jethro his name. Another man who is slightly drunk hears that he is Matt Creighton's boy, and sneeringly asks him about Bill who has gone off to the South. The man who is named Wortman speaks scornfully about Bill who might be fighting for the Confederate army until Milton intervenes, reminding him that there are several Creighton boys fighting for the Union army as well. When Jethro speaks up on Bill's behalf, the man becomes angry, but Milton criticizes the man: "There isn't trouble enough in this country for you, is there, Guy? You'd better get out and do your patriotic duty--kick up some more mob violence. That's your forte, you know; get in on any killing you can drum up, so long as your own hide is safe." Chapter 5, pg. 76 The man bitterly leaves the store.

After Wortman leaves, Milton comforts Jethro, offering him to get his team of horses rested and to take him out to dinner at the town restaurant. At dinner, Milton asks Jethro about his interests--books, history, heroes, and newspapers. They also talk about correct speech, and Milton offers to give Jethro a book he has written on correct English usage. Jethro is pleased by the warm atmosphere of the restaurant as well as the good

food. After they leave the restaurant, Milton warns him that Wortman lives near Rose Hill on Jethro's way home and that he must be careful when returning home. After giving Jethro the St. Louis papers to deliver to Mr. Roscoe and the book he has promised, Milton says good-bye.

Jethro is full of thoughts about the day as he drives the horses out of town. He is bothered by what has happened with Guy Wortman earlier that day. There have been murders and attacks on families suspected of supporting the Southern cause in other places. Although Jasper County is supportive of the Northern cause, there are many who secretly support the South. It is after sunset when he reaches the Burdow place which is "full of a sinister threat." He passes the house to begin the two-mile trip through the woods when he sees Dave Burdow standing at the end of the road with his horse. After saying that he would like to ride along, he gets into the wagon. Jethro is frightened by the big, silent man, but he is still childishly innocent: "He [is] still too much a child, still insufficiently acquainted with violence, to believe that bodily harm could possibly come to him. Ugly things happened, it was true, but to people who were distant, unknown people--not to someone named Jethro Creighton." Chapter 5, pg. 85

Topic Tracking: Death/War 10

Seeing Jethro frightened, Burdow assures him that he is not going to hurt him. Telling Jethro that he overheard someone making plans to attack him on his way home, the man takes the reins to drive. When they reach a bridge at the end of the road, a man leaps out and whips the horses to frighten them, but Dave Burdow holds the reins tightly until the danger passes and the horses calm down. Both are silent until they reach Jake Roscoe's cabin. After handing the papers to Mr. Roscoe, Jethro is back on the wagon. Burdow and Jethro drive along until Burdow stops the wagon to ride off on his horse the other way.

On the rest of the journey home, Jethro is tired and frightened. When he reaches home, the family comes out to greet him. Inside, they talk about the purchases and the exchanges Jethro has made, and Jethro tells them parts of what happened during the day, carefully choosing what to tell. Before they all go to sleep, however, Jethro begins telling the story about Guy Wortman and Dave Burdow.



## Chapter 6

Matt and Ellen are worried and frightened after hearing about what Guy Wortman has tried to do. On his way out to consult Ed Turner about the matter, Matt collapses after which he is unable to regain his former vigor.

For Jethro, that March of 1862 is a turning point. During the drive home from Newton, he learns about men and dangers, and after Matt's collapse, he learns to be the man of the family: "Now he was to know labor from dawn till sunset; he was to learn what it meant to scan the skies for rain while corn burned in the fields, or to see a heavy rainstorm lash grain from full, strong wheat stalks, or to know that hay, desperately needed for winter feeding, lay rotting in a wet quagmire of a field." Chapter 6, pg. 92

In April, Jethro is alone on the fields for spring plowing. Passing by to offer help, Ed Turner tells Jethro about a battle that has occurred in Pittsburg Landing where Grant was surprised by the Confederate army. Although the battle eventually resulted in a Union victory, it cost many lives.

One day, Jenny finishes her housework to go out to the field with Jethro. They take turns plowing, keeping each other company by talking. They talk about how General Grant wasn't more careful, letting his men get attacked by the Confederate army at Pittsburg Landing. Jenny admits to having many thoughts these days--about the battles and the boys in the war.

For the next several weeks, Jenny and Jethro go out together to work the field. Sometimes, Ed Turner's children come to help with others from nearby farms, but Jethro likes to work alone with Jenny. They have become closer, and the difference in their ages does not seem much to Jethro.

Topic Tracking: Family Love 8

One day, Israel Thomas brings a letter for Jenny from Shad. Although Shad's letters have usually been addressed to the Creighton family, this time, the letter is a love letter addressed only to Jenny. Jethro is childishly angry when Jenny runs off with it, reading only parts of it to the rest of the family. On the field, Jethro is still irritated with Jenny for not sharing all of the letter, but he feels better as he thinks of a lesson from the book Ross Milton gave him. Later, Nancy brings him some food, and they talk about the war and the boys who are off. Finally, before hesitating a little, Nancy tells Jethro that he must not be angry with Jenny for keeping the letter to herself: "A letter is kind of a close thing; it's somebody's words that are writ only fer you. It's like you're bein' unfair to someone you love if you let his words be read by others when he writ'em only fer you." Chapter 6, pg. 101

At night, Jenny greets Jethro as he comes home from working in the field. She cheerfully offers to unhitch and take care of the horses, but Jethro sulkily refuses. Unable to read the newspaper that night, Jethro goes to bed after eating. When he yells



out from a nightmare, Jenny comes to talk to him. She begins explaining that she didn't let the family read Shad's letter because Matt has always been saying that she is too young to think about getting married. Jethro is still angry, but finally, he reaches out to her, telling her what Nancy told him earlier that day.

#### Topic Tracking: Family Love 9

As Jenny is leaving, there is the sound of horses outside--the sound of two to three horses. Closer to the house, the sound stops, and they can see men on horses. After getting closer to the house, the men yell drunkenly the word Copperheads. After throwing something at the gate, they ride off. What the men have thrown is a symbol used by ruffians in the community to warn of punishment that is to follow. Attached to it is a note: "Theres trubel fer fokes that stands up fer there reb lovin sons." Chapter 6, pg. 104

For the next three weeks, there is always a man with a gun on watch in front of the Creighton house. The neighbor men take turns standing watch. Although most of the community is supportive of Matt, there are some who aren't because Bill has gone off to the South. It is possible that Bill is fighting against their own sons. When nothing happens, however, the men stop coming, and the family begins to think that it has all been an empty threat. The family's shepherd dog disappears, but other than that, nothing happens until one night, the family is awakened by the barn burning up in flames. Although the animals are safe because they had been let out into the pasture during the nights, the barn is destroyed. Later, the well is found to have been contaminated with coal oil.



## Chapter 7

That spring, many friends and neighbors help the Creighton family. Farming equipments are brought for the family. The well is cleaned, and the fieldwork is divided among neighbors to do. To give the family some protection, Ed Turner's son brings a big dog that stands watch in front of the house every night.

There are stories circulating about the battles at Shiloh, and young Dan Lawrence who has been wounded in the war comes back home. George, his father, brings him to the Creightons to tell them that Tom has died. Tom and Dan had both been in the same fight, and after the first day of the battle, reinforcements had started coming in from the Tennessee River. The two of them had been waving at the boats when Tom was suddenly killed, not knowing anything.

Topic Tracking: Death/War 11

Soon, Ross Milton prints a letter in the town newspaper, condemning the men who terrorized the Creighton home. He tells them that Tom, a Creighton boy, has died for the Union cause while they have done nothing in their "patriotic zeal." After Tom's death, his name is written inside the cover of the family bible where dates of birth, marriage, and death are all recorded. The deaths of the three boys who died during the summer Jethro survived as well as the death of Mary are recorded. John and Bill's names are written, and above theirs are two twin girls, Lydia and Lucinda, who have married and gone to Ohio. At the top of the list is Benjamin, the firstborn of the family, who has long since left for California. Jethro teases Jenny that her marriage date will soon be written by her name, but she tells him that recently, she is too scared to make any future plans because of the war.

It is not only the Creighton household that is empty and forlorn. Laughter and recreation are rare in Jasper County, but one day, there is an episode that "[appeals] to the rough humor of the times." After the terrorizing of the Creighton home, Sam Gardiner, the owner of the general store in Newton, speaks out against the men responsible for the act. Worried that they would attack his store, he stands watch at nights to protect his shop, but the ruffians are cautious because Sam is a persistent good marksman. Tired of waiting for the attack, Sam deliberately spreads false news that he will be out of town on business. When the men attack, Sam is ready with his gun, shooting Guy Wortman in the buttock. When Ross Milton publishes the story, the community gets a good laugh, and Wortman is humiliated.

Also included in the papers is the story of a battle. Grant is demoted to assistant commander, and General Halleck leads the group slowly toward Corinth where General Beauregard has withdrawn with his Confederate army. When they finally get there, however, the town is empty and the Confederate soldiers have all been evacuated. The Confederate general had tricked the Union general into thinking that his soldiers were still there. It is an empty victory for the Union army.

Sitting by the kitchen porch, Jethro has many thoughts about the numerous generals whose names he has heard so much. All the Union generals like McClellan, Halleck, and Grant are ineffective and incompetent, each with his own weakness. He thinks to himself: "Ain't we in the right? And how does it happen, if we're in the right, that the Lord lets Jeff Davis get men like Lee and Jackson and gives us ones like McClellan and Halleck?" Chapter 7, pg. 118 This is what everyone including the President is thinking that summer.

## Chapter 8

Looking back, Jethro understands that the spring and the summer of that year have been good for the Union cause with the various victories achieved in battles. Studying the map, Jethro thinks to himself that the Union is doing better than Shad had expected. The Union cause along the Mississippi River is advancing until there is news that Bragg and Smith, two Confederate generals, have pushed the Union army out of the Cumberland Gap and up to Kentucky. There is also bad news from the East; Confederate generals, Lee and Stonewall Jackson, have succeeded over McClellan and Pope's Union army. Thus by fall, the situation is looking bad for the North.

In September, neighbors come to help build a new barn for the Creightons. Ross Milton comes with a load of logs as a gift from Dave Burdow to the Creightons. Ross tells Jethro that since the incident with Guy Wortman, people have been reaching out to Dave Burdow. At about noon, the men eat lunch together, and Jethro overhears them talking about a battle that has occurred at Antietam. Ed Turner criticizes General McClellan, saying that he wastes too many soldiers and that he does nothing but strut around in his uniform. Tom Marin from Rose Hill agrees, adding that perhaps the President himself doesn't want to win the war. He hasn't done anything about the slave so far. But Israel Thomas becomes angry, saying that it isn't easy being the president. One of them tells Jethro to be thankful that he is only a boy who doesn't have to worry about the war, but Jethro feels insulted.

Topic Tracking: Death/War 12

A few days later, Shad writes about the battle of Antietam and General McClellan. He writes that many of the soldiers worship General McClellan, but he is not one of them: "I tell you frankly that the contagion of their devotion has not yet gripped me. I do not dislike him...But he is afraid of something--of sending the men who love him to their death--of making an error that will reflect upon the image of himself which he knows to exist in the minds of his men. He does not have the cold approach to killing, the singleness of purpose, the brutal tenacity, that the winner of this war--if there ever is to be one--must have." Chapter 8, pg. 125

When the battle at Antietam is over, it seems very much like the one at Shiloh. It is a Federal victory, but it does not signify the end of the war. That fall, there is news that the President has dismissed General McClelland to put another man named Ambrose Burnside in command.

In December, there is news about a battle at Fredericksburg, a town lying on a river in Virginia. Burnside had sent men up a chain of hills, but they had all been killed by the Confederates at the top until bodies of Union soldiers began piling up. The Creightons think that Shad must have been at this battle, and one day, he writes them that men in the army do not look favorably upon Burnside's stubbornness.

Early in 1863, there is a letter from John who writes to Nancy about what has happened at a place called Stones River. The battle had turned out to be a Federal victory, but there had been too many casualties. People are discouraged by the stories of Fredericksburg and Stones River. The war seems endless, and the people are losing faith in the Northern cause. In late 1862, deserters begin flowing into Illinois.

## Chapter 9

With the flux of deserters, the Point Prospect campground becomes a base for these soldiers, and people are careful not to go near this place. It is said that the soldiers are desperate and armed. Early in 1863, there are minor thefts of food, but in March, there is a murder. A man named Hig Phillips is murdered by a group of young soldiers. Lazy Phillips who was known to favor a comfortable life of good food and bed had supposedly bought someone to go to war for him. Thus, he had not been very popular in the community, but his murder frightens everyone. Nancy shuts down her house and comes to live with the Creightons, and Jenny is careful about leaving home for errands.

Topic Tracking: Death/War 13

One night in February of 1863, three men come from the Federal Registrars. They are looking for Eb who they claim has deserted from the Army of Tennessee. After looking around the house to search for Eb and telling Jethro that they must report to the office when they know of his whereabouts, the men leave.

One spring day, Jethro goes to John's place to work. While working in the field, he hears strange bird calls from the nearby woods. Walking toward the source of noise, he discovers that it is Eb: "Then a skeleton came out from among the trees. It was the skeleton of a Union soldier, though the uniform it wore was so ragged and filthy it was difficult to identify. The sunken cheeks were covered with a thin scattering of fuzz; the hair was lank and matted. It fell over the skeleton's forehead and down into its eyes." Chapter 9, pg. 134 Eb admits to having deserted the army because he could no longer endure the fighting and had felt homesick. He has been at the Point Prospect camp, but the soldiers there are jittery and tense. Eb longingly asks about the rest of the family. Jethro gives him his own food which Eb eats hungrily. When Jethro tells him about the men who came from the Federal Registrars, Eb becomes frightened, saying that he has nowhere to go. He would do anything to go back to fight again, but he has shamed himself by deserting.

Jethro is troubled by the prospect of having to make a decision about Eb. He remembers what the men from the Registrars had said about not turning in deserters. He also remembers Tom and others who died fighting, and thinks that it is unfair to them to harbor a quitter. But having never been in battles himself, he has no idea what soldiers must endure. He can consult his father, but his father would be equally powerless to do anything for Eb.

Jenny notices that Jethro is troubled by something, but he does not tell her about Eb. At night, Jethro thinks of people he could consult. Ross Milton is in Newtown which is too far. Ed Turner has problems of his own with two sons in the army. Suddenly, Jethro has an idea to consult Mr. Lincoln because he thinks that Mr. Lincoln will understandingly look at a problem from different perspectives.

Topic Tracking: President Lincoln 3

Jethro begins writing a letter that night, consulting Ross Milton's book on correct English usage. The next day, Eb seems to be in a better condition. Jethro takes him some food, and the quilt he had given him from Nancy's seems to have given him some comfort. Eb says that he would like to go back to the army, but a deserter cannot return. That noon, Jethro goes to Hidalgo to mail his letter, and everyday, he waits for a reply.

One day, Ed Turner brings a letter from Washington D.C. addressed to Jethro from Mr. Lincoln. In the letter, Mr. Lincoln writes that the problem of desertion in the army has been something that has long troubled him, but he has made a decision regarding the matter. He has decided that all deserters who report at certain locations by April 1 will be pardoned and allowed to return. He writes: "If it be a wrong [decision], I have then erred on the side of mercy." Chapter 9, pg. 147 He ends the letter by praising Jethro's desire to do what is right.

Topic Tracking: President Lincoln 4

## Chapter 10

It is May when there is news of another Union loss at Chancellorsville. Although the Union army had had the advantage of numbers, the Confederate army had had the advantage of a superior general, Robert E. Lee. Joe Hooker had replaced Burnside as Commander of the Army of the Potomac. In the papers, he had seemed like "a dashing, fighting, confident man," but he is defeated by Lee's men. Soon, the papers that had once praised him are criticizing him. After the battle at Chancellorsville, seventeen thousand Union soldiers have either been killed or made prisoners.

Shad writes to the Creightons to tell them about the general disappointment and anger that many men feel toward Hooker. Although he has been lucky enough to survive the last battles, Shad is not optimistic about the future as he tells Jenny that she should be prepared for his death. John writes a more cheerful letter, talking about the President and Eb. He asks about Nancy and his children. Eb writes to Jethro from Mississippi where he is helping to build bridges. Fellow soldiers in the army are giving him a hard time because of his desertion, but he is enduring it well.

In the papers, there is much talk about Grant. The papers criticize Grant for being inactive--hesitating and waiting. There are also vague stories circulating about Grant's drinking problems, and people's attitudes toward him are getting worse. Grant is not removed from his post, however, and George Gordon Meade replaces Hooker in the Army of the Potomac. There is also the important news that Robert E. Lee is penetrating into the North, as far as Pennsylvania. In the North, Lee has become a feared legend. Then, in July, there is news of a battle of a great magnitude in Gettysburg: "It was a battle of unbelievable bravery and unbelievable ruthlessness; it was a clash of agonizing errors checkered with moves of brilliant strategy that lasted through three hot July..." Chapter 10, pg. 152 It ends in a victory for the Union army, but it is not yet enough to win the war. After Gettysburg, however, there is another Union Victory at Vicksburg, and Grant is yet again a hero.

One day, however, a letter arrives from Shad's aunt in Washington who informs the family that Shad's life is in danger. After having been injured at the battle of Gettysburg, he was moved to a hospital in Washington where he calls for Jenny constantly. She asks Matt to allow Jenny to make a trip to Washington to see Shad. After the family reads the letter, Ross Milton who has come to visit suggests that he take Jenny to Washington to see Shad, and everything is arranged for Jenny to leave the following morning.

After Jenny leaves, the family waits for news about Shad's condition. Finally, Ross Milton writes to tell them that Shad is still very sick, but he holds onto his life for Jenny. All through that summer, there are letters from Ross and Jenny. Jenny writes to thank Matt for allowing her to come see Shad, and later, there is a letter asking him to send permission for the two of them to get married. The next letter from Jenny is sent with the name of Mrs. Shadrach Yale, and she writes about her wedding day and about her days in Washington where she goes to the hospital to care for the sick soldiers. She tells

them that Shad is going to get well. With Ross Milton's book, Jethro writes a reply to Jenny, telling her about the family and the crops that year.



## Chapter 11

In June, there is a letter from John. He writes about the battle at Chickamauga. At Chickamauga, the Union Army of the Cumberland had met Bragg and Longstreet. The outnumbered Union army had been defeated. George Thomas, called "The Rock of Chickamauga," had persisted in holding out with his men until the Confederate general, Bragg, gave up to leave Thomas who returned to Chattanooga free. But Rosecrans, McCook, and Crittenden are all criticized for losing control of their men. After Vicksburg and Gettysburg, the battle at Chickamauga is a setback for the North and hard for people to accept.

John writes a more vivid account of the battle. After the battle, the army nearly starved, and the snipers made it difficult to get any provisions. The soldiers ate all kinds of things to keep themselves alive. Reinforcements came to help them out, but the soldiers from the Army of the Potomac looked down on them. John and his fellow soldiers in the Army of the Cumberland was assigned to the comparatively easier task of attacking the center of the Confederate line which they didn't like, but when the command came for the Cumberland men to take the trenches near Missionary Ridge, they started up the slope of the Ridge until the Confederates gave out. John writes that it was after this that the Confederate line gave out, and despite what the papers say, it is the Army of the Cumberland that did it.

Jethro rewrites John's letter and sends it to Shad and Jenny in Washington. He also shows John's sons how their father and his fellow soldiers climbed the Missionary Ridge to take the center of the Confederate line. In November, the President makes a speech at Gettysburg. People disagree about it. Some admire the President for it while others scorn him, but Jethro loves Mr. Lincoln. He feels angry to hear others criticize him so harshly.

Topic Tracking: President Lincoln 5

That winter, there is much talk of the end of war, but the South stubbornly holds out which people in the North resent. In December, President Lincoln declares a proclamation of amnesty, promising to pardon any Confederates who will support the Union. Under the proclamation, any Confederate state will be allowed to return to the Union if ten percent of its voters rebuilds a Union government within that state. Both the South and the North criticize this. In the South, Lincoln is criticized for being oppressive, and in the North, many criticize his amnesty as an act of treason, believing that it is necessary to execute all of the rebels.

Topic Tracking: President Lincoln 6

After that winter comes the fourth year of the war. Early in the fourth year, General Grant becomes the commander of all armies in the United States. Shad gradually recovers from his wounds in Washington, and he writes to Jethro about seeing the President and General Grant together in the streets of Washington. He writes that the President's face



is gaunt like the faces of those soldiers in the war. Grant is not showy or adorned; rather, he is awkward, but he writes that there have been more than enough charming, well-dressed commanders. Although Grant does not look like a military man, Shad writes that he will be the one to restore the Union.

In 1864, people are busy discussing the presidential election. Even within the Republican Party as well as the Democratic Party, there is opposition against Mr. Lincoln. The floor leader of the House of Representatives, Thad Stevens, with his "no mercy to the South" program, is a vehement opponent. The Democratic party has the advantage in that throughout the nation, people want to end the war. Casualties are now counted by the hundred thousands, and people are generally tired of the war. There is another Union defeat at the Battle of the Wilderness where Lee still holds out. Grant meets Lee several times in battle, but he is not any more successful than his predecessors have been. One thing that is different about Grant, however, is that he is very persistent.

Grant succeeds in eluding Lee's men and moving to the town of Petersburg. People are hopeful that with the siege of Petersburg through which runs the railroads that carry the Confederates their provisions, the war will be over, but Grant is not quite successful at seizing the town. Although Lincoln has already been nominated for reelection, many feel that he will not win this time. Ross Milton disagrees, however, saying: "Lincoln will win. When it comes to the final vote, the country will not admit that its sons have died for nothing." Chapter 11, pg. 168

Topic Tracking: President Lincoln 7

In August of 1864, General McClellan is nominated by the Democratic party for presidency. Shad writes to Jethro that he did not support McClellan at Antietam, but he admires the man for declaring that the North will not accept anything other than the reestablishment of the Union.

Soon, the North receives some good news. In August, a Confederate warship and several forts around Mobile are captured. In September, General Sherman captures the city of Atlanta, Georgia, and there is news of victory from the Shenandoah Valley where a Union general defeats the Confederate General Early. Although weary of war, the North, hopeful for a victory, reelects Lincoln in November. Most of the votes for Lincoln are from soldiers which is comforting to the President. Most of the Northern states also support Mr. Lincoln, but it is disappointing to Jethro that the President's home state and town do not support him.

Topic Tracking: President Lincoln 8

After the election, the Army of Tennessee is missing. In Tennessee, the Army of the Cumberland is ready to fight, and General Hood's Confederate army and the Union soldiers fight at Franklin where Hood is defeated. In December, there is another clash at Nashville, and John writes to tell the family that Hood's army has been driven out of Tennessee down to Alabama and that General Thomas is the greatest general in the

war. He also writes that he had encountered Bill among a crowd of rebel prisoners a few days ago. After telling the captain that it was his brother, John was allowed to talk with Bill. Bill had asked about the family, and John had told him about Tom's death and Eb's desertion as well as Jenny and Shad's marriage. Before parting, Bill had asked John to tell their mother that he had not been at Pittsburg Landing where Tom had died. He had not fired the shot that had killed Tom.

Topic Tracking: Family Love 10

## Chapter 12

The whereabouts of the Army of Tennessee and General Sherman are still unknown, but in December, the army is found as Sherman wires the President that they have captured the city of Savannah. The army had marched through Georgia without meeting much opposition. There are mixed reactions as news of Sherman's march through Georgia reaches the communities. There is news that the soldiers burned houses and barns, taking food. Some frown upon this, saying that it isn't right to hurt our own countrymen who are like brothers. Others talk about places like Andersonville Prison and Camp Douglas in Illinois where prisoners are treated badly. There is word that the Army of Tennessee joined Grant after reaching Savannah: "it was then that South Carolina knew the lash of a triumphant army drunk with the plundering of Georgia and enraged at the stubborn tenacity of the South in holding onto a cause that was already lost. In South Carolina the vast, undisciplined army could find another excuse for its excesses." Chapter 12, pg. 177

Ed brings a letter from his son who has been in South Carolina. He writes about soldiers burning and looting houses, destroying others' belongings. Ed is worried that such experience is going to make his son think that life is cheap. The whole country is supporting such actions, and he is worried that his son will just go along with others.

Topic Tracking: Death/War 14

The papers hint that the war will be over soon because the South is suffering. Eb writes from Tennessee; he thinks that he will be home soon to help with the spring plowing and planting, but the war does not end so quickly as more men die in Virginia.

Jethro turns thirteen in 1865, and he has grown taller over the years. Matt and Ellen notice that he has become increasingly gentle with the family, and they are worried because he is growing more like Bill, the gentlest one in the family, who left them.

At home, Jethro thinks about what Ross Milton said the last time he had come to visit. He had warned that peace would not be perfect: "This is a land lying in destruction, physical and spiritual. If the twisted railroads and the burned cities and the fields covered with the bones of dead men--if that were all, we could soon rise out of the destruction. But the hate that burns in old scars, and the thirst for revenge that has distorted men until they should be in straitjackets rather than in high office--these are the things that may make peace a sorry thing." Chapter 12, pg. 179 Jethro had been disturbed because he had so long wanted peace. Ross Milton had said that he hoped that President Lincoln would make things better so that peace will not be "a mockery."

Topic Tracking: President Lincoln 9

They had also talked about the thirteenth amendment abolishing slavery that was passed by Congress. Jethro was proud of the fact that his state, Illinois, had been the first state to ratify it. Although Jethro was optimistic about the thirteenth amendment,

Ross Milton had said that it was only a small progress. He had said that it was unclear where the former slaves would go and what they would do. People who had been strong supporters of abolition are not so outspoken now that they must help do something about these colored people.

The waiting for the end of war continues, but finally, during the second week of the fifth April of the war, there is news that the terms of peace have been signed at Appomattox Courthouse. The community is in a celebratory mood. Jethro goes to town to spend the night with Ross Milton who takes him out for dinner at the Newtown restaurant. At night, there are fireworks and patriotic band music. Jethro comes home to tell his family about the celebration in town.

One day, however, Nancy brings the news that the President has been killed. Things must go on as usual, but Jethro feels disheartened. The stories surrounding his assassination reach the community. Jethro wishes to go to Springfield where the President has been taken, but he cannot take any time off from work. "It was the saddest and most cruel April of the five. It had held out an almost unbelievable joy and had then struck out in fury at those whose hands were outstretched." Chapter 12, pg. 184

Topic Tracking: President Lincoln 10

Jethro lies on Walnut Hill, angry and sad when someone approaches him. Shad has come back home. Shad is amazed at how Jethro has grown to be like Bill. Shad tells Jethro that Jenny and he had seen the President on the night that he was assassinated; he had looked happy. He can take him to Springfield to see Mr. Lincoln, but he does not think that it will be good for Jethro who might get hurt. Shad says that he will be going back to college to continue his education, and Jenny and he have decided to take Jethro with them. Jethro will come back to his family after getting a good education. Jethro and Shad walk together toward the cabin where Jenny is standing by the gate, waiting.

Topic Tracking: Family Love 11