

*This guide was prepared using the 1986 Berkeley Pacer edition, © 1964. Other editions may differ.*

#### SYNOPSIS

**Chap. 1:** On a mid-April morning in 1861, nine-year-old Jethro Creighton and his mother Ellen are planting a half acre of potatoes. They stop to bid farewell to Shadrach Yale, a 20-year-old school teacher from Pennsylvania and suitor to Jethro's 14-year-old sister Jenny. Shad works for Matt Creighton as hired farm hand and leaves with a team for Newton, where he plans to purchase newspapers for the isolated family.

Jeth and Ellen resume discussing the imminence and dangers of war. Jeth, immature and romantic, does not appreciate his mother's realism nor her references to his three brothers, who died the year he was born. At noon, they join the others—Bill, John and wife Nancy, cousin Eb, and Jenny—for lunch. After a few hours rest, Ellen and Jeth return to their planting until sundown. On their way to the house, Jeth's cousin, Wilse Graham, pays a surprise visit from Kentucky.

**Chap. 2:** At dinner, Wilse discusses family news, then turns to the impending war, especially variances between North and South. Ellen halts the dismaying table talk; Wilse asks her pardon. After John and Nancy leave with their children, Shad returns with news of the Confederate bombardment and the capture of Sumter, a federal fort. Jeth, weary and emotional, sinks to the ground. Bill carries him to bed.

**Chap. 3:** That summer, news of the battle of Bull Run, Ball's Bluff, and Wilson's Creek quells the gaiety of Illinois citizens. Jeth's brother Tom and Eb enlist in the Union Army. Jeth, disturbed by the war, suffers nightmares. Jeth's favorite brother Bill gets into a fight with John that October. Bill is sympathetic to the South and departs for Wilse's house in Kentucky.

**Chap. 4:** By the winter of 1862, Northern sympathizers are championing General "Unconditional Surrender" Grant. In February, neighbor Ed Turner conveys a letter from Tom telling about combat at forts Henry and Donelson. Ellen is depressed about Tom's news and sends Jeth to spend the night with Shad, who is negotiating to marry Jenny.

At Shad's schoolhouse annex, he and Jeth discuss the recent battles. Shad worries that if he joins the army, Jenny may marry some other man. He entertains Jeth with mimicry and a song on his guitar. While Jeth settles into bed, Shad stays up to write. Jeth promises himself that he will study Shad's books and newspapers.

**Chap. 5:** In March, 1862, coffee is scarce. Without it, Ellen suffers migraine headaches. Jeth relieves her pain by borrowing coffee from Nancy. As sole remaining son, he assumes responsibilities beyond his years, even driving a team and wagon into Newton, fifteen miles away, where he trades and buys farm supplies. Three miles from South Hill, he meets Jake Roscoe, an illiterate old man who requests a

newspaper and asks about Bill. Jake implies disapproval of Bill's fighting for the "Rebs."

Because Bill has sided with the Confederacy, Guy Wortman, the local bully, castigates Jeth. Newspaper editor Ross Milton befriends Jeth, invites him to dinner, and encourages his efforts to gain an education. On his return home, Jeth is alarmed by the sudden appearance of Dave Burdow. Dave means no harm and accompanies Jeth to save him from a violent encounter with Guy, who waits at the bridge to spook Jethro's horses.

**Chap. 6:** The next morning, Matt, pondering how to thank Dave for his kindness, collapses with a heart attack. Jeth is man of the house. He bears the burdens of farming and carries the additional weight of worry for his brothers and father. Neighbors and Jenny help him with the plowing.

That spring, Israel Thomas brings a letter from Shad which Jenny refuses to share in its entirety. For the next few months, serious problems plague the Creightons. Rowdies call them Copperheads or Southern sympathizers, steal their shepherd dog, burn their barn, and foul their well with coal oil. Jeth summons his neighbors with the dinner bell, but the damage cannot be halted.

**Chap. 7:** Neighbors come to aid Matt, who is too ill to fend for his family, and bring a new watchdog. Later, Dan Lawrence reports that Tom died April 6 at the battle of Pittsburg Landing. Ross publishes an open letter to local hecklers reminding them of Matt's losses. Jenny clips the letter and places in the Bible. At Matt's request, she writes in the date of Tom's death. Jasper County gets a brief laugh when Sam Gardiner sets up Guy Wortman, the local ruffian, and shoots him during an act of vandalism to the store. Jethro continues farm work and follows national events in the newspaper.

**Chap. 8:** That autumn, war news remains grim, but the Creighton farm receives a new barn, compliments of neighbors. Dave donates a load of logs. One of Shad's letters details McClellan's leadership; later word describes his impressions of Burnside after the battle of Fredericksburg.

**Chap. 9:** As the war turns uglier, soldiers desert, raiders steal food, and ruffians kill Hig Phillips, a draft dodger. To safeguard Nancy, Ellen invites her to bring the boys and live at the Creighton farm. In February, 1863, federal agents report that Eb has deserted the Union army. The agents search the property and warn that anyone helping Eb will be liable to arrest.

Early in March, while Jeth plows, he hears the call of a wild turkey. Eb, who has returned, reveals his presence. Jeth recounts what has happened to the Creighton family since he left. Fearful of arrest, he guards Eb's secret, but is torn between helping him, remaining loyal to the Union, and protecting his family from danger.

Concealing his quandary, Jeth composes a letter to President Lincoln. Lincoln's reply extends an opportunity for Eb to return to the regiment with only a forfeit of pay as punish-

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ment.

**Chap. 10:** In May 1863, Shad writes that he has lost hope of remaining untouched. Late that summer, Shad lies at a Washington hospital, critically wounded at the battle of Gettysburg. With Matt's permission, Jenny, accompanied by Ross, goes to Washington to attend Shad. Her presence saves him from certain death. As he begins a long recovery, Matt permits the couple to marry.

In December, John writes about Chickamauga. Jethro continues following war news and discusses with his family Lincoln's Gettysburg Address. By March 1864, Shad, at his Aunt Victoria's home, is recovering. Lincoln is reelected, but without the support of southern Illinois. In December John writes that he has been reunited with Bill, who is a Northern prisoner.

**Chap. 11:** The Creightons follow the fall of Atlanta and Sherman's march to the sea. In April 1865, Jeth, at age thirteen, welcomes peace. His joy is dampened by the murder of Abraham Lincoln, whom Jeth has come to admire and love. A train bears the President's body to Springfield for burial. For Jeth, the fifth April of the war years is the cruelest because it held such promise and ended so wretchedly. Shad makes a surprise return. He plans to return to college and to take Jeth with him.

### TIME LINE

- 1830** Ellen and Matt Creighton marry.  
**1832** Benjamin Hardin Creighton is born.  
**1834** Twins Lydia and Lucinda Creighton are born.  
**1837** John Robert Creighton is born.  
**1838** William Taylor Creighton is born.  
**1843** **May 10** Thomas Ward Creighton is born.  
**1849** **Feb. 12** Nathan Hale Creighton is born.  
**1849** Ben Creighton leaves for the gold fields of California.  
**May 3** James Alexander Creighton is born.  
**1850** **Sept. 7** Matthew Colvin Creighton is born.  
**1852** **Jan. 13** Jethro Hallam Creighton is born.  
**July 1** Matthew Colvin Creighton dies of polio.  
**July 3** Nathan Hale Creighton dies of polio.  
**July 4** James Alexander Creighton dies of polio.  
**1859** **Jan. 12** Mary Ellen Creighton dies in a wagon wreck.  
**1860** **Dec. 20** South Carolina secedes from the union by unanimous vote.  
**1861** **Feb. 18** Jefferson Davis is inaugurated as President of the Confederacy.  
**April 12** Fort Sumter is bombarded.  
**Mid-April** Wilse Graham visits the Creightons and discusses the impending war.  
**July 16-21** Confederates defeat Union troops at the First Battle of Bull Run.  
**August** John Creighton and Eb Carron join the Union army.  
**Aug. 10** Union troops are defeated at Wilson's Creek, Missouri.  
**1862** **Feb. 5** Julia Ward Howe publishes "The Battle Hymn of the Republic" in the *Atlantic Monthly*.  
**Feb. 6** Fort Henry, Tennessee, surrenders.  
**Feb. 16** Fort Donelson, Tennessee, is captured.  
**March** Matt Creighton suffers a heart attack.  
**March 7** Confederates are defeated at Pea Ridge, Arkansas.

**April 6-7** General Grant defeats General Johnston at the Battle of Shiloh; Tom Creighton is killed.

**April 25** New Orleans is captured.

**May 10** Vandals burn the Creighton barn and defile the well with coal oil.

**Aug. 30** Lee is victorious at Manassas (the Second Battle of Bull Run).

**Sept. 16** Lee is defeated at Antietam.

**Dec. 31** The battle of Stones River in Murfreesboro, Tennessee.

**1863** **Jan. 1** Abraham Lincoln signs the Emancipation Proclamation,

**February** Eb Carron deserts.

**March 14** Abraham Lincoln replies to Jeth's letter.

**April 28-May 4** Army of Northern Virginia defeats Army of the Potomac at Chancellorsville, Virginia.

**June 3** Union army is defeated at Fredericksburg, Virginia.

**July 1-3** Meade defeats Lee at Gettysburg, Pennsylvania.

**July 4** Grant captures Vicksburg.

**Aug. 14** Jenny Creighton marries Shadrach Yale.

**Sept. 19-20** Rosecrans battles Bragg and Longstreet to a stalemate at Chickamauga, Tennessee.

**Nov. 19** Lincoln dedicates a national cemetery at Gettysburg.

**Nov. 24** The battle of Lookout Mountain, Tennessee.

**Nov. 25** Grant defeats Bragg at Missionary Ridge, Tennessee.

**1864** **February** Confederates open Andersonville Prison.

**March 12** Grant advances to the rank of lieutenant general and becomes chief of the Union army.

**May 4-12** Lee and Grant clash in the Wilderness and Spotsylvania, Virginia.

**June 1** Confederates repulse Union attack at Cold Harbor, Virginia.

**Sept. 2** Union troops occupy Atlanta.

**Nov. 9** General Sherman begins the March To the Sea, which ends Dec. 20.

**1865** **Feb. 17** Sherman burns Columbia, South Carolina.

**April 1** Lee is defeated at Five Forks, Virginia.

**April 2-3** Confederate government leaves Richmond.

**April 9** Lee surrenders to Grant at Appomattox Court House, Virginia.

**April 14** John Wilkes Booth shoots Lincoln.

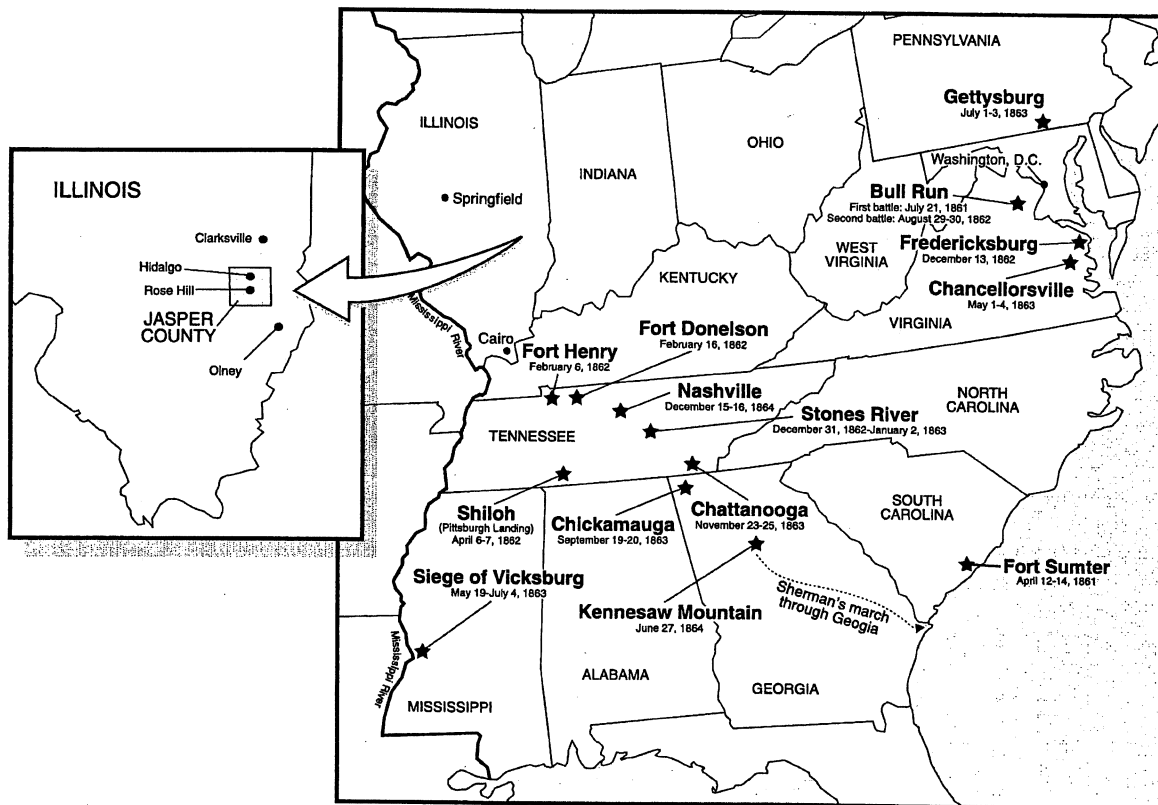
**April 15** Lincoln dies; Andrew Johnson becomes president.

**May 4** Lincoln is buried in Springfield, Illinois.

### BIOGRAPHICAL SKETCH

A native of the rural Midwest near Newton, Illinois, Irene Hunt, daughter of farmer Franklin Pierce and Sarah Land Hunt, was born on May 18, 1907. She enjoyed a close relationship with her father, who listened to her stories. After his death in 1914, she hid in a closet. As a mature writer, she recounted the memory in *Up the Road Slowly*. She and her sister Beulah remained on their grandparents' farm and enjoyed their grandfather's fiddle music, songs, and Bible stories. With his help, Hunt recited poems and scenes from Shakespearean drama.

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In 1939, Hunt completed a bachelor's degree in education and history at the University of Illinois. By 1946, she added a master's degree from the University of Minnesota and did advanced graduate study in psychology. During fifteen years as a teacher in Oak Park, Illinois, she taught elementary French and English. In 1945, she moved on to the psychology department of the University of South Dakota. From there, she migrated to a junior high school in Cicero, Illinois, where she taught history. It was there that she began writing in response to her students' complaint that American history was dull.

Hunt completed thirty years in teaching with a five-year consultancy in language arts, then moved to North Riverside, Illinois. She kept her life private, filling leisure time with books, music, and travel. She retired to St. Petersburg, Florida, and began fulltime writing with *Across Five Aprils*, a fictional account set during the Civil War.

### CRITIC'S CORNER

A believer in excellence, Hunt insists that good fiction should demonstrate all sides of human character, the good with the bad. Reading, she says, should be a lifetime pleasure. Her books are not designed solely for young audiences. As she explained in an article for *The Writer*, she continues to educate children in worthy traits by offering them good reading.

For her sensitive, realistic novels, Hunt has received commendation from the American Library Association Booklist, the University of Chicago Center for Children's Books, the Charles W. Follett Award, an American Notable Book Award, the Dorothy Canfield Fisher Award, a Friends of Literature

Award, the Clara Ingram Judson Memorial Award, the Lewis Carroll Shelf Award, and a steady flow of letters from young fans. Her works have been translated into French, Norwegian, Danish, German, and Italian.

### GENERAL OBJECTIVES

1. To discuss the value of family, neighbors, and friends
2. To describe the effects of war on a family
3. To explain how children mature through learning responsibility
4. To acknowledge the importance of self-reliance
5. To apply the themes of loss and self-reliance to the reader's experience
6. To examine the importance of compassion and understanding
7. To account for the hardships of perseverance
8. To list self-defensive and survival techniques
9. To define realism
10. To record how characters cope with change and crisis

### SPECIFIC OBJECTIVES

1. To become familiar with the layout of the Creighton farm
2. To describe how Jethro keeps up with war news
3. To note the attitudes of local people toward Bill's loyalty to the Confederacy
4. To discuss women's roles on the farm
5. To evaluate Jethro's response to federal agents
6. To account for Jeth's admiration for President Lincoln
7. To comprehend background events as they apply to the

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story

8. To analyze the effect of Mary's death on the family
9. To discuss local dangers during wartime
10. To evaluate Matt's response to threats from outsiders
11. To rate Ross Milton and Ed Turner as neighbors
12. To contrast life on the farm before and during the war
13. To note the change in Jeth after Matt's heart attack

### LITERARY TERMS AND APPLICATIONS

For a better understanding of Irene Hunt's fiction, present the following terms and applications:

**aphorism** a short, pithy statement of a basic truth. The novel contains vivid terms, such as Ellen's belief that "one road is as dark and fearsome as the other," Matt's claim that "a man has the right to the dignity of his own fireside," and Wile's comment that Northern abolitionists weep "crocodile tears." Ellen's backwoods English particularizes her statement that "we mustn't give trouble a shape before it throws its shadder." Each instance of aphorism offers some unified view of the truth to clarify the family's complicated situation.

**bildungsroman** literally a "formation novel," which describes the coming-of-age of an untried or naive youth. Jethro is a valuable focus for the historical novel because he represents the next generation's response to a war that his brothers and contemporaries fought. From Jeth's personal battles with local disparagers, his father's illness, and a man-sized job on the farm, he learns that adulthood carries a daunting burden of choices and challenges, none of which is clear cut or simple. By the end of the novel, he has survived the noncombatant's difficulties and learned to value character in family, neighbors, and himself.

**epithet** a word or term that characterizes a person or group, often with disparaging, snide, or abusive intent. For example, neighbors despise the Burdows as "a shiftless lot." Before the Civil War, people were just neighbors or acquaintances. After the hostilities at Sumter, people sum up human traits and character according to loyalties. The selection of names tends to polarize personal feelings, as with the accusatory Reb, secesh, and Copperhead, which create social outcasts of community members who were formerly respected and in good standing. The hardships that such hasty name-calling causes families like the Creightons derive from the difficult decisions people make concerning which side of the conflict reflects their true beliefs and philosophies and which have the best interest of the nation at heart.

### THE IMPORTANCE OF SETTING

The milieu of Irene Hunt's *Across Five Aprils* is the Creighton farm near Hidalgo in Jasper County, Illinois, from April 1861, to April 1865. Set in a bucolic landscape, the story follows the annual chores of planting, harvesting, tending livestock, and maintaining the barn, well, and homestead. Hunt offers an unsentimental list of difficulties, particularly the loss of Matt, labor-intensive chores such as potato planting, death of a watchdog, fatal wagon wreck, and the heavy burden of annual plowing. In one glimpse of hardship, she writes, "Sometimes the wagon wheels sank deep in the mud of a low, wet spot along the road; now and then a wheel passed over a stone or a stump hidden by weeds or tangled vines, and the wagon with its load tilted precariously." In similar fashion, the characters encounter difficult moral terrain as they place themselves along one or the other side of the civil

conflict.

At the perimeter of the story are news releases of the war itself. Hunt provides dispatches and first-person accounts of the battles of Bull Run, Fredericksburg, Gettysburg, Stones River, and Shiloh. Thoughts about the President in Washington and his post-war assassination turn the reader's attention to decision-making on a national level. Jethro, like other Americans, mourns Lincoln's passing and turns his thoughts and prayers to the passage of the funeral train across the rural countryside to Springfield, Illinois, for Lincoln's burial.

The final chapters relieve Jethro of his onerous farm chores with an invitation to accompany Jenny and Shad as Shad returns to college. The promise of a different setting honors Jethro's attention to farming with a suitable reward—an opportunity to develop his mind. As a symbol of the post-war future, Hunt notes that Shad and Jethro "walked together across the bridge that spanned Crooked Creek and through the half-acre south of the cabin," a suggestion of their passage into war and the long months of conflict that followed. As though looking at Jethro's future, Hunt carries him "a little distance up the road, past the hedge of lilacs and under the silver poplars of the dooryard." As he reunites with Jenny, "All the shadows were lifted from the April morning," a benevolent touch that presages his rise to manhood.

### CROSS-CURRICULAR SOURCES

For more information about Irene Hunt, the Civil War, President Abraham Lincoln, and other subjects and issues deriving from the novel, consult these sources:

Stephen Ambrose, *Americans at War*

David Herbert Donald, *Why the North Won the Civil War*

William Dudley, ed., *The Civil War: Opposing Viewpoints*

Phyllis Emert, *Women in the Civil War: Warriors, Patriots,*

*Nurses, and Spies*

Harry T. Hansen, *The Civil War: A History*

Jim Haskins, *Black, Blue and Gray: African Americans in the Civil War*

Herman Hattaway, *Shades of Blue and Gray*

Philip Katcher, *The Civil War Sourcebook*

Jim Murphy, *The Boys War: Confederate and Union Soldiers*

*Talk About the Civil War*

Carl Sandburg, *Abraham Lincoln: The Prairie Years and the War Years*

Also, consult these web sites:

"The American Civil War Homepage,"

<<http://funnelweb.utcc.utk.edu/~hoemann/warweb.html>>

"Antietam Aftermath: The Stern Reality of Want,"

<<http://www.state.me.us/sos/arc/archives/military/civilwar/foggyarn.htm>>

"Civil War Diaries,"

<<http://www.augustana.edu/library/civil.html>>

"Civil War Nurses,"

<<http://www.wayne.esu1.k12.ne.us/civil/morris.html>>

"Discovered Historical Documents Uncover the First Official Missing Persons Investigator, Clara Barton,"

<<http://www.pimall.com/nais/n.barton.html>>

"Kate Cumming,"

<<http://www.glue.umd.edu/~cliswp/Bios/kcbio.html>>

"Mary Edwards Walker,"

<<http://www.northnet.org/stlawrenceaauw/walker.htm>>

"Mary Edwards Walker,"

<<http://www.wayne.esu1.k12.ne.us/civil/mary.html>>

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too well. He realizes that the most fanatic abolitionist has not thought of the future of freed slaves, who will demand full and productive citizenship. His words prophesy the difficulties of segregation that trapped blacks in ghetto poverty, second-rate schools, and sharecropping.)

10. Jethro had learned to accept the whims of fate, schooled as he was in the philosophy of men who work the soil. (Chap. 12, p. 184)  
(Jethro learns that humans have little control over nature. Life is filled with hardship, suffering, and tragedy. No amount of railing against fate can alter the outcome. Farmers are particularly susceptible to this fatalism, since their lives depend on the seemingly capricious whims of nature. Hunt elaborates: "The rains came or they were withheld, the heat ripened the grain or blasted it with a scorching flame, the ears of corn matured in golden beauty or they were infested by worms or blight. One accepted the good or the evil with humility, for life was a mystery, and questions were not for the lowly.")

### COMPREHENSION STUDY

Answer the following questions in your own words. There is not always a right answer. Your judgment is important and you should be ready to defend your answers by referring to passages from the novel.

#### Questions 1-5 (Literal Level)

1. What happens to characters who take part in war?  
(Family and kin of the Creightons suffer a variety of mishaps during the Civil War:
  - Bill, Jethro's favorite brother, joins the Confederate army because he believes that the industrial North oppresses the South. He becomes a prisoner of Union troops.
  - John survives the war as a Union soldier. His letters provide eyewitness accounts of battles fought in the West.
  - Tom volunteers for the Union army and dies at the battle of Pittsburg Landing.
  - Eb Carron, Jethro's cousin, enlists in the Union army with the wrong impression of service. The horror and finality of combat drive him to desertion. Lincoln's clemency gives him a chance to redeem himself. Eb returns to his regiment ready to fulfill wartime duty.
  - Shadrach, Jethro's future brother-in-law, enlists in the Army of the Potomac. His articulate letters provide keen observation on the conduct of the war in the East. After Shad is severely wounded at Gettysburg, he spends the rest of the war recuperating in Washington, D. C. His letters bear accounts of the nation's capital during wartime.)
2. Describe Matt as a father.  
(Although Matt loves Jethro, he is a stern taskmaster. A hard worker himself, he demands labor from all his children. He offers no praise because, according to pioneer philosophy, simply doing one's duty does not merit praise. After a heart attack, Matt can no longer work and must assign tasks to Jethro and Jenny, the only children remaining at home. Because of a change in perspective, Matt begins praising Jethro for jobs well done. He considers the boy's wishes, respects his judgment, and allows him a part in decision-making.

The complete change in Matt is obvious to the

Creightons. His transformation occurs because he is dependent on his children rather than being their model and overseer. Instead of being an asset to the farm, he sees himself as a liability. His loss of power as head of the family softens his outlook as he leans on his youngest son.)

3. What effect does Bill's enlistment in the Confederacy have on the Creightons?

(Although Bill's heart is not in war, he decides to join the Rebels and fight for the Confederacy. John and Bill fight over their differences. Jethro weeps at his brother's departure because he loves Bill over all his brothers. No one in the family condemns Bill, even though they disagree with his political stand.

A result of Bill's decision is a series of persecutions that the Creightons suffer from night prowlers. Guy Wortman accuses the family of being Copperheads or Southern sympathizers because they fail to condemn Bill as a traitor to the Union cause. To display his disdain for those who fail to uphold the Union, Wortman tries to scare the horses pulling Jethro's wagon. Later, Wortman and friends burn the Creightons' barn, kill their watchdog, and pollute their well with coal oil, a serious matter for family and livestock.

Fortunately, most community members disapprove of Guy and his night marauders. Editor Ross Milton publishes an open letter in the newspaper that bitterly condemns the undeserved harassment. Sam Gardiner, proprietor of the general store, defends the Creightons, condemns the attacks, and sets a trap for Wortman. After Gardiner fills Wortman's backside with buckshot, the chief tormentor becomes an object of ridicule. The persecutions cease.)

4. How does Ross influence Jethro?

(Ross quickly recognizes Jethro's lively intelligence and love of learning. He encourages the boy to grow intellectually. When he expresses a desire to improve his language, Ross gives him a grammar text he wrote. Gradually, Jethro's Jasper County dialect recedes as standard usage becomes easier for him.

More important to Jethro is Ross's influence in his attitude toward the war. Through frequent discussion with Ross, Jethro learns to interpret the momentous events of the times. Hunt places in Ross's remarks her own advice about the Civil War: "Don't expect peace to be a perfect pearl . . . 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.")

5. How does Jethro mature?

(The central concern of the historical novel is Jethro's maturity. He assumes more responsibility for his family and begins making wise decisions. In his confrontation with Eb, Jethro determines to help the deserter to save himself from capture. Intellectually, Jethro improves his speech and writing, studies without supervision, and begins to understand the complex events of the war.

Although a neighbor believes Jethro should be glad

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"Mil-Hist American Civil War," <<http://kuhttp.cc.ukans.edu/history/milhist/civwar.html>>

*Reminiscences of the Life of a Nurse in Field, Hospital and Camp during the Civil War.*

<[http://www.snymor.edu/pages/library/local\\_hsitory/sites/letters/annie.html](http://www.snymor.edu/pages/library/local_hsitory/sites/letters/annie.html)>

"The United States Civil War Center,"

<<http://www.cwc.lsu.edu/civlink.htm>>

### THEMES AND MOTIFS

A study of the central issues and situations in Irene Hunt's *Across Five Aprils* should include these aspects:

#### Themes

- immaturity
- family responsibility
- loyalty
- choices
- violence
- unity
- survival
- self-knowledge
- loss
- grief

#### Motifs

- coping with divisive issues
- experiencing social issues on a personal level
- taking responsibility for actions
- maintaining an open mind
- comforting and aiding neighbors
- assuming the role of man of the house

### MEANING STUDY

Below are words, phrases, sentences, or thought units that have particular meaning in the novel. Explain each. Chapter headings and page numbers note the context in which each appears.

1. "He's like a man standin' where two roads meet, Jeth," she said finally, "and one road is as dark and fearsome as the other; there ain't a choice between the two, and yet a choice has to be made." (Chap. 1, p. 18)  
*(In backwoods English, Ellen clarifies the terrible dilemma facing the newly-elected president, Abraham Lincoln. A dilemma is a situation in which one is required to choose between alternatives, neither of which is desirable. Lincoln's choice in the early months of 1861 involved allowing the Union to dissolve into two weak nations or fighting a war that pit citizen against citizen.)*
2. Matt Creighton shook his head. "Human nature ain't any better one side of a political line than on the other—we all know that—but human nature, the all-over picture of it, is better than it was a thousand—five hundred—even a hundred years ago. There is an awakenin' inside us of human decency and responsibility." (Chap. 2, p. 31)  
*(Matt believes in a process of human perfectibility over the centuries. People sometimes accept this point of view because they want it to be true, but evidence of recent atrocities deny that humanity has altered at all.)*
3. "The north will fin'ly win, won't it, Bill?"  
"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." (Chap. 3, p. 41)  
*(Bill, the deepest thinker of Jethro's older brothers, hits on an important truth. Bill's brothers and young neighbors seem to think war is a game, like checkers or chess. Bill indicates that games can be won, but war is not a game. The object is to destroy the enemy's capacity to fight. That goal requires the destruction of lives and property. Bill foresees the mass killing that will leave a residue of bitterness with both the vanquished and victorious. Perhaps he senses that the aftermath will create more problems and divisions than existed before.)*
4. Shadrach raised a black eyebrow. "Thou too, Brutus?" he asked, grinning a little sourly. (Chap. 4, p. 55)  
*(Shadrach alludes to Act III, Scene i, line 77 of William Shakespeare's Julius Caesar, in which Caesar acknowledges his friend Brutus's part in a conspiracy that ends in Caesar's assassination from 42 stab wounds. Since Caesar loves Brutus best of all the Romans, Brutus's role in the killing becomes "the unkindest cut of all." Shad creates a rueful joke after Jethro defends his father for saying that his sister is too young to marry Shad. These words are painful for Shad, because he and Jethro are friends.)*
5. Now, the Creightons were one of those families—a Copperhead family whose youngest boy spoke up for a brother who had gone South. (Chap. 5, p. 83)  
*(The term Copperhead applies to a Northerner who sympathizes with the Confederate cause. Some people in the community wrongly accuse all the Creightons of collusion with the South because Bill chooses to fight in the Confederate army.)*
6. "This war is a beast with long claws," he said in a choked voice. (Chap. 5, p. 104)  
*(Matt's descriptive comment takes the form of a metaphor, a form of imagery that makes a comparison between unlikely objects or events. By jolting the reader with an unlikely pairing, Hunt creates a vivid picture of a devastating animal. To the people of Illinois, the war is a monster that reaches out and touches everyone and everything, a beast with long claws and a tongue like a "fiery lash.")*
7. Then in the midst of the pandemonium over Gettysburg another Union victory was announced: Vicksburg had fallen! (Chap. 10, p. 152)  
*(John Milton coined the term "pandemonium" in Paradise Lost from "pan" or "all" and "demon" as a description of unbridled tumult or chaos everywhere. The word embodies the wild celebrations that followed a Union victory at Gettysburg.)*
8. We was like fulish young uns . . . (Chap. 12, p. 177)  
*(Eb, who thought war a glorious adventure, learns that it is not as glamorous as a military parade. He returns to southern Illinois, not in glory, but as a dirty, emaciated deserter sick of combat misery. When Lincoln's order of clemency permits him to rejoin his regiment, he returns with a mature attitude based on duty.)*
9. You watch this thing, Jeth, you watch the abolitionists who have ranted against the South; see if they extend the hand of friendship to the uneducated, unskilled men who will come north looking to them as to a savior. (Chap. 12, pp. 180-181)  
*(The newspaper editor understands human nature only*



## ACROSS FIVE APRILS

he's a minor and "don't hev to pester yoreself with all these troubles that men are sufferin' through these days," Jethro shoulders his share of hard tasks and dismaying decisions. Still, he doesn't grow up totally overnight. His annoyance over Jenny's reluctance to read all of Shad's letters illustrates that he has not yet outgrown childish impulses. Significant to his maturity is his compassion for Lincoln, whose death made it "the saddest and most cruel April of the five.")

### Questions 6-8 (Interpretive Level)

6. How does Jethro's relationship with women progress? (In the opening chapter, Jethro's camaraderie with Ellen is obviously a mother/son relationship. As Jethro becomes the staff of his parents' old age, the relationship with his mother alters. By the end of the text, he is more man than child and he has lost his closeness to his mother. She is unable to understand the greater picture of the war, but Jethro knows that it will not end the nation's problems.

Jenny, a second female authority figure, is five years older than Jethro. Hunt stresses the bond of affection and mutual respect that develops between them. While Jethro is still a helper in the garden, Jenny is capable of making a noon meal for the family without direction. She loses her precedence after Jethro takes on the job of head of household. As he runs the farm, he and Jenny become equals. When he seems distraught, she scolds him for "smokin' on the sly," but she defers to his position as Matt's replacement.

Before John goes to war, Jethro has little association with the third important female of the Creighton household, John's wife Nancy, a shy and reserved girl. Jethro sympathizes with her separation from John. As breadwinner, he feels responsible for supporting Nancy and her children. She appreciates the kind regard and is pleased that the children look on Jethro as a substitute father.)

7. How does the author present the panorama of the war without shifting the setting from southern Illinois? (Hunt presents the war much as rural folk nationwide actually learned about it. At first, Jethro and his family hear of newspaper accounts and learn people's reactions to the firing on Fort Sumter. After Shad and Jethro's brothers and cousin go to war, Hunt presents first-hand accounts through letters home. These first-person commentaries and Jethro's response to them make the war more real and immediate. Thus, Hunt can depict both the high and low points of combat in the West and East and the effect on those at home.

To flesh out history, Hunt weaves in description of pertinent battles, but does not attempt to encompass the entire war. She concentrates on Jethro's story and gives enough details to undergird her themes of the terrors of war. By completing the novel with a wounded man recuperating in Washington, D. C., and with Lincoln's death, she carries the scope of the novel beyond the battlefield to its nationwide ramifications on human families and communities.)

8. Why is Shad an excellent teacher? (Shad's love of learning is contagious. He delights in Jethro's quick intelligence and lively curiosity, never talks down to him, and encourages him to stretch his mind

through wide and thoughtful reading. Before he leaves for war, he instructs Jethro in how to interpret newspaper accounts of combat and how to follow the war's progress by using maps. To help Jethro continue studying, Shad gives him books and pointers on reading and interpreting them.

Central to Shad's quality as a classroom teacher is his respect for the individual. The school's elderly replacement is a sad contrast who lacks wisdom and kindness. The difference in instruction makes Jethro resentful. Matt tells Ellen, "The man is not only without book-larnin' as I am, but he has a mean and pinched-in mind . . . . The boy is right; he'll larn more by tenfold on his own.")

### Questions 9 and 10 (Critical Level)

9. Why does Eb's desertion perplex Jethro? (Eb's desertion and return to the neighborhood of the Creighton farm presents a dilemma to Jethro. His inner conflict involves loyalty to the Union, which demands that Jethro turn Eb into the authorities, and to family, which requires Jethro to think of Eb like a brother, since he was reared in the Creighton home. Family loyalty demands that Jethro help his kin, but by aiding his cousin, Jethro runs the risk of defying the law by harboring a deserter. The risk is especially serious because the family depends on Jethro for support.

Jethro wisely does not burden his sick father with the decision. The difficulty ends optimistically after Jethro obtains clemency from the President. The matter might have been disastrous if Lincoln had refused to be lenient. Then Eb's presence would have posed too great a risk for the other family members. Another possible conclusion to the quandary might have required Eb to make his own decision, thus sparing Jethro from a burden that is not his.)

10. How do citizens of southern Illinois feel about Sherman's March to the Sea? (As with most political questions, the question of Sherman's scorched earth policy toward the South produces mixed responses. Farmers deplore the wanton destruction of rich farm country. Some condemn the march because it teaches young Union soldiers that burning, looting, and slaughtering defenseless people are noble enterprises.

Others believe that the burning and pillaging are justified since such destruction will weaken the South's will to resist and punish Southerners for rebelling against the Union. One spokesman concludes, "The Rebs fired on their country's flag. They've held on fer all these months and years, and hundreds of thousands of boys hev been lost to save the Union their great-grandfathers established. Don't talk to me of mercy—Billy Sherman is givin' 'em the mercy they deserve." Hardliners cite Andersonville, the notorious Confederate prison, as proof of Southern atrocities.)

### Questions 11 to 14 (Creative Level)

11. Explain in a short speech why an innocent time frame like *Across Five Aprils* is a suitable title for the book. Propose other possibilities.
12. Make a bulletin board display depicting typical dress for Civil War officers and soldiers, Illinois farmers, travelers, and housewives. Include packs, weapons, shoes, hats,

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and other essentials.

13. Lead a panel discussion of the dangers of internal warfare to the patriotism and unity of Americans.
14. Compose a scenario in which John and Bill meet at a prisoner of war camp and Bill stresses that "he was *not* at Pittsburg Landing."

### ACROSS THE CURRICULUM

#### Art

1. Sketch the Creighton farm. Emphasize the potato field, road to Hidalgo, new barn, well, schoolhouse, bell, and Ed Turner's property. Point out the spot where Eb reveals his return to Jeth.
2. Make a sketch of the Union and Confederate flags and uniforms along with arms suited to cavalry or infantry soldiers. Note canteen, ammunition belt, knife, and other accouterments a soldier would need for daily use.
3. Draw a cartoon strip depicting Guy Wortman's humiliation. Conclude with the removal of shot from his backside.

#### Cinema

1. View films set in the Civil War era, for instance *Glory*, *Gone with the Wind*, *Andersonville*, or *Gettysburg*. Note differences in point of view.
2. Propose an original film describing Jethro's counterpart on a Southern farm. Note how the losing side suffers from shortages and invasions during the last six months of conflict.

#### Drama

1. Role-play the arrival of Eb or the Yales to the Creighton farm. Demonstrate Jeth's relief in seeing them safe. Project how townspeople and neighbors will respond to their return.
2. Read aloud events from the Civil War in the words of several characters. Contrast their views with entries from encyclopedias or histories.

#### Economics

1. Determine the cost of arming an infantryman. Separate cost of equipment, uniform, and ammunition from that of food, blankets, and personal supplies.
2. Suggest ways that war raises prices for ordinary goods, especially those that are imported and others that pass through occupied territory.

#### Education

Propose a chapter on the Civil War for a United States history textbook. List the time lines, drawings, photos, maps, biographies, and sidebars you would include along with text.

#### Geography

1. Locate a detailed historical map of the United States. Chart the events that undergird the novel. Include the War of 1812, California Gold Rush, battles of the Civil War, Sherman's march to the sea, Lee's surrender, and Lincoln's assassination and burial.
2. Draw a map of Illinois. Place Jasper County in perspective. Note the position of Hidalgo, Springfield, Rose Hill, Newton, and other place names mentioned in the novel.

#### History and Social Studies

1. Characterize the types of memorials that honor Civil War heroes, for example, sculpture, poetry, hymns, patriotic songs, history trails, historical brochures, museum dis-

plays, flags, banners, reenactments, tableaux, speeches, and history books.

2. Re-create by time line, webbing, flow chart, mural, or web site the era of the Civil War as it affects recreation, education, travel, religion, family life, medicine, commerce, and international relations.
3. Summarize in an outline the contributions of John Brown, William Lloyd Garrison, and Charles Sumner to the climate of rebellion and abolitionism.
4. Make a short speech about the importance of Mathew Brady's photography to our understanding of the Civil War.
5. Using characters, dialogue, and events from the novel, compose extended definitions of Copperhead, secesh, abolitionist, and Reb.
6. Lead a debate concerning whether or not Bill deserves honor for his role in the war. Consider all ramifications of his choice before deciding.
7. Launch an internet web site inviting readers to explain the legal aspects of rebellion against the federal government. Account for why Robert E. Lee was proclaimed an outlaw and his land was confiscated. Indicate how that land is used today.
8. Explain the connection between family history and the Creighton family Bible. Discuss the need of frontier folk for sources of data on births, deaths, and marriages.

#### Journalism

1. Write a newspaper account for Ross Milton's paper about Eb's desertion and amnesty. Account for his discomfort among fellow soldiers who did not desert.
2. Write a magazine column or newsletter describing your life on an Illinois farm. Include activities that involve performing household chores, feeding stock, running errands in town, helping neighbors, and relaxing from work.

#### Language Arts

1. Compose individual posters explaining the significance of crucial vocabulary terms from the novel that fit under the following headings: war, history, agriculture, nature, and geography.
2. Select an action-packed paragraph. Underline all action terms. For example: "A man leaped up from the ravine when the wagon was midway across the bridge and, running up beside the team, laid a long whip across the backs of the horses. There was a bad moment as the horses plunged and kicked and as Burdow's horse responded to the fright of the team; seconds later the tethered horse at the roadside broke away and galloped off into the darkness ahead of the wagon."
3. Work with a partner to create a series of analogies based on terms from the novel. For example:  
amnesty : Eb :: permission : Jenny.
4. Read aloud from nonfiction, novels, plays, and stories about war and survival.
5. Make a scroll detailing historic events that permeate the novel. Insert important family occasions, for instance the marriage of Jenny Creighton to Shadrach Yale and the onset of polio that killed three sons.
6. Listen to recorded poems about the Civil War, such as Walt Whitman's "When Lilacs Last in the Dooryard



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Bloomed" and "Oh Captain, My Captain." Compose poetic lines to express your understanding of civil war.

7. Lead a panel discussion of how responsibility changes people. Discuss ways in which Matt, Eb, John, Tom, Shad, Ellen, Jenny, and Jeth respond to heavy demands. Suggest ways in which they cope with the strain that war puts on their home life. Project how Jeth will like leaving the farm and living with the Yales.
8. Compose a letter to Jeth or Ellen in which you ask questions that the book does not answer, such as how Bill died, whether Matt recovers enough to take over farm duties, and how and when Eb returns home. Create a reply giving likely answers to your questions.

### Music

1. Write a report on "The Battle Hymn of the Republic," "Eating Goober Peas," "Aura Lee," "Tenting on the Old Campground," "The Bonnie Blue Flag," "Dixie," Negro spirituals, and other songs popular during the Civil War period. Explain what each meant to American citizens, both southern and northern. Keep a record of your sources.
2. Listen to recorded martial music, such as stirring marches by John Phillip Sousa or Frederick Chopin. Describe to classmates how music captures human feelings about war, self-image, and nationalism.

### Psychology

1. Lead a discussion of how families suffer from political differences, such as their conflicting opinions about war. Use examples from the novel to support your thinking.
2. Write a speech explaining why reconciliation after a terrible tragedy is good for all parties. Use as an example Matt's gratitude to Dave Burdow for rescuing Jeth or President Lincoln's amnesty to deserters and rebels.
3. Compose an extended definition of maturity. Explain how maturity is achieved through small increments of awareness and appreciation, such as Jeth's helping his mother plant potatoes and taking over the plowing after Matt's heart attack. Relate Jeth's maturation to events in your own life when you learned a valuable lesson through fear, loss, frustration, or hard work.

### Science and Health

1. Compose a lecture on the treatment of wounded soldiers during the Civil War. Account for incidents of gangrene, dysentery, typhus, typhoid, camp fever, viral infections, and tuberculosis, especially at Andersonville Prison.
2. Make an oral report on prisons and hospitals during the Civil War. Comment on the importance of volunteer staff. Note the participation of Walt Whitman, Louisa May Alcott, Kate Cumming, Mary Ann Bickerdyke, Clara Barton, Dr. Elizabeth Blackwell, Dorothea Dix, and Lucy Pember Levy Yates.
3. Write a report on the seasonal aspect of farming. Give specific information about Jeth and Jenny's annual chores, such as plowing, hoeing, harvesting, and preserving food for the winter. List the chores necessary to the running of a farm in the 1860s, such as plowing, seeding, hoeing, and harvesting. Break down the chores into those performed by Matt, Ellen, Jethro, Jenny, and other family members and neighbors. Discuss why farmers must make frequent trips into town.

## STUDENT INVOLVEMENT ACTIVITIES

1. Compose a letter to Jeth in which you comment on his courage and wisdom in running the farm while his brothers and cousin were away. Indicate your personal response to the confrontation with hecklers at Gardiner's store and to his handling of Eb's return. Discuss Jeth's empathy for Dave Burdow, Eb, Jenny, Shad, Bill, Tom, John, Nancy, Ellen, and Matt.
2. Make an oral evaluation of the Creighton family. Discuss how work and responsibility are divided and how Jeth assumes greater roles in planting and farm work after Matt's heart attack. Explain the internal strengths that help members overcome adversity, especially after Tom's death.
3. Keep a list of significant adjectives, adverbs, and verbs from the crucial parts of the story. Give antonyms and synonyms of each. If you need help, refer to a thesaurus. For example, "He turned then to Jethro, who stood beside the counter, his body hunched together as if in an effort to make himself as inconspicuous as possible." synonyms: obscure, ill-defined; antonyms: obvious, blatant.
4. Compose a paragraph in which you explain how childhood experiences and a knowledge of history influenced Irene Hunt's writing style. If you need help finding facts, refer to sources mentioned in the bibliography.
5. Contrast Jeth's response to loss with the biographies of other people who have experienced devastating sufferings. Discuss your findings with a small group.
6. Read Stephen Crane's *The Red Badge of Courage*, Jessamyn West's *Except for Me and Thee*, or Michael Shaara's *The Killer Angels*. Explain how the books corroborate Hunt's vision of war's destruction.
7. Listen to recorded reflections on the Civil War or read collections of letters from soldiers and family members. Compose your own letter to the Creighton family and offer them hope.
8. Watch a videotape of *Across Five Aprils* (also known as *Civil War Diary*). Discuss information that the filmed version adds to the original text. Comment on the portrayal of the main characters: Jethro, Jenny, Shadrach, Bill, Ellen, Matt, and Eb.
9. Discuss the role of compassion in the story. Explain why Ed Turner and Ross Milton befriend the Creightons, who become social outcasts after Bill joins the Confederate army.
10. Create a wall chart illustrating how a knowledge of periodic, balanced, and cause and effect sentences strengthens writing skills. Use sentences that pertain to Jeth's life.

## ALTERNATE ASSESSMENT

1. List examples of family teamwork, fear, religious fervor, loyalty, admiration for courage, ingenuity, discipline, disappointment, and bad news in the Creighton family.
2. Compile a list of actions that demonstrate determination to live with honor and dignity, regardless of each character's choice of Union or Confederacy.
3. Compose a scene in which Jethro writes home about his school work.
4. Make a character list and explain the character flaws of

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each, including Eb's desertion, Ellen's narrow-mindedness, Matt's weak heart, and the Burdows' viciousness.

5. Account for Jethro's sadness over the assassination of President Lincoln.

### OTHER WORKS BY IRENE HUNT

*Lottery Rose* (1987)  
*No Promises in the Wind* (1970)  
*A Trail of Apple Blossoms* (1968)  
*Claws of a Young Century* (1980)  
*The Everlasting Hills* (1985)  
*Up a Road Slowly* (1987)  
*William* (1977)

### RELATED READING

Avi, *The True Confessions of Charlotte Doyle*  
Mariano Azuela, *The Underdogs*  
Patricia Beatty, *Charley Skedaddle and Jayhawker*  
Lois McMaster Bujold, *The Warrior's Apprentice*  
Orson Scott Card, *Ender's Game*  
Winston Churchill, "If Lee Had Not Won the Battle of Gettysburg"  
James Lincoln and Christopher Collier, *My Brother Sam Is Dead and With Every Drop of Blood*  
Stephen Crane, *The Red Badge of Courage*  
Howard Fast, *April Morning*  
David Feintuch, *Midshipman's Hope*  
Esther Forbes, *Johnny Tremain*  
Paula Fox, *Slave Dancer*  
Erik Haugaard, *The Samurai's Tale*  
Esther Hautzig, *The Endless Steppe*  
Robert Heinlein, *Farmer in the Sky, Red Planet, Space Cadet, and Starship Troopers*  
Jeanne Wakatsuki Houston and James Houston, *Farewell to Manzanar*  
Mackinlay Kantor, *Andersonville*  
Harold Keith, *Rifles for Watie*  
Harry Mazer, *The Last Mission*  
Margaret Mitchell, *Gone with the Wind*  
Ward Moore, *Bring the Jubilee*  
Walter Dean Myers, *Fallen Angels*  
Carolyn Reeder, *Shades of Gray*  
Erich Maria Remarque, *All Quiet on the Western Front*  
Michael Shaara, *The Killer Angels*  
William Shakespeare, *Julius Caesar*  
Robert Sherwood, *Abe Lincoln in Illinois*  
Dalton Trumbo, *Johnny Got His Gun*  
Harry Turtledove, *The Guns of the South and How Few Remain*  
Kurt Vonnegut, *Slaughterhouse Five*  
Margaret Walker, *Jubilee*  
Yoko Kawashima Watkins, *So Far from the Bamboo Grove*  
Jessamyn West, *Except for Me and Thee and The Friendly Persuasion*  
Jane Yolen, *The Devil's Arithmetic*

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"Irene Hunt Papers," <<http://avatar.lib.usm.edu/~degrum/findaids/hunt.htm>>

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**ACROSS FIVE APRILS**

**VOCABULARY TEST**

Replace each boldfaced synonym in each of these sentences with the correct word from the list below. Write your answer in the blank provided.

allusion	destruction	inconspicuous	plunged	scorching
aloof	distorted	infested	precariously	stunned
amiable	erred	interminable	relative	sorry
antagonized	fiasco	lapsed	predominant	spiritual
bolstered	humility	lowly	ravine	tangled
clemency	hunched	malice	resentment	taunted
constrained	imminence	niche	ruffian	team
demoralized	immunity	optimism	serenity	tethered
dependency	inclination	perplexity	schooled	veered

1. Nancy was **friendly** \_\_\_\_\_ but **distant** \_\_\_\_\_, to the friendly Creightons.
2. Word of a **disaster** \_\_\_\_\_ at a place in the East called Ball's Bluff came while people were still **shocked** \_\_\_\_\_ by the news from Bull Run.
3. Cries came in the night, wakened him, and then **faded** \_\_\_\_\_, into silence, leaving him in fear and **confusion** \_\_\_\_\_.
4. Jethro was depressed by her **serious** \_\_\_\_\_ mood, but not by the **closeness** \_\_\_\_\_ of war.
5. And so the conversation **shifted** \_\_\_\_\_ again, awkward and **limited** \_\_\_\_\_.
6. A man leaped up from the **ditch** \_\_\_\_\_ when the wagon was midway across the bridge and, running up beside the **group** \_\_\_\_\_, laid a long whip across the backs of the horses.
7. Sometimes the wagon wheels sank deep in the mud of a low, wet spot along the road; now and then a wheel passed over a stone or a stump hidden by weeds or **twisted** \_\_\_\_\_ vines, and the wagon with its load tilted **dangerously** \_\_\_\_\_.
8. The rains came or they were withheld, the heat ripened the grain or blasted it with a **burning** \_\_\_\_\_ flame, the ears of corn matured in golden beauty or they were **sickened** \_\_\_\_\_ by worms or blight.
9. "Don't expect peace to be a perfect pearl . . . This is a land lying in **ruin** \_\_\_\_\_, physical and **emotional** \_\_\_\_\_.
10. There was a bad moment as the horses **dove** \_\_\_\_\_ and kicked and as Burdow's horse responded to the fright of the team; seconds later the **tied** \_\_\_\_\_ horse at the roadside broke away and galloped off into the darkness ahead of the wagon.
11. He turned then to Jethro, who stood beside the counter, his body **slumped** \_\_\_\_\_ together as if in an effort to make himself as **hidden** \_\_\_\_\_ as possible.
12. But the hate that burns in old scars, and the thirst for revenge that has **changed** \_\_\_\_\_ men until they should be in straitjackets rather than in high office—these are the things that may make peace a **bad** \_\_\_\_\_ thing."
13. **Trained** \_\_\_\_\_ to believe that self-indulgence of any kind was morally unacceptable, Ellen was deeply ashamed of her **addiction** \_\_\_\_\_ upon coffee.
14. "I had, however, made a decision **linked** \_\_\_\_\_ to this problem only a few days before receiving your letter. There will be much criticism of that decision, but you will understand when I say if it be a wrong one, I have **failed** \_\_\_\_\_ on the side of mercy.
15. One accepted the good or the evil with **modesty** \_\_\_\_\_, for life was a mystery, and questions were not for the **common** \_\_\_\_\_.

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**COMPREHENSION TEST A**

**Part I: Quotation Completion (30 points)**

Complete each quotation below with a word or phrase from the list that follows. You will have answers left over when you finish.

Abraham Lincoln	Ebenezer Carron	Hig	Matt Creighton	Potomac
Aunt Victoria	Ed Turner	Jenny	Mr. Milton	Sam Gardiner
Bill	Ellen	Johnny	Nancy	Shadrach Yale
Dave Burdow	Grant	Lily Hiles	Newton	Wilse Graham

1. The thing was over quickly with \_\_\_\_\_'s strong hands on the reins.
2. Late in September, men from the nearby communities and from even as far away as Newton came to build a new barn, so that \_\_\_\_\_'s stock might have shelter before the winter snows set in.
3. We are here to inquire if this is the home of \_\_\_\_\_, 17th Illinois Infantry, Army of Tennessee.
4. Yours, very sincerely and respectfully, \_\_\_\_\_
5. Seein' yore Pa ain't here to answer, I wonder if you'd be of a mind to tell us where yore brother \_\_\_\_\_ is these days?
6. Tell Jeth not to beleve that \_\_\_\_\_ is the gratest general in this war.
7. The \_\_\_\_\_ boys are mitey hifalutin, some of em, and they and the Tennessee boys and us pure hated rebs.
8. The little boys are in good health except that \_\_\_\_\_ run a nail in his foot last week but he is all-rite now.
9. \_\_\_\_\_ has a nice big house with a real stove in the kitchen.
10. The envelope carrying Jenny's next letter bore a self-conscious return address in the upper left-hand corner, a return to *Mrs.* \_\_\_\_\_ of Washington, D. C.
11. \_\_\_\_\_ went out and bought the ring for Shad.
12. As so often happened, it was \_\_\_\_\_ who brought the mail out from town.
13. Finally \_\_\_\_\_ grew tired of waiting and taunted his foes by taking on a role of smugness and boasting of his immunity to Wortman's vengeance.
14. In the middle of the afternoon, \_\_\_\_\_ came down to the field with her children and waited for Jethro in the shade of a big oak tree just inside the fencerow.
15. Well, in the name of all that's good—\_\_\_\_\_, whatever brings you up from Kaintuck at this time of year?

**Part II: True/False (20 points)**

Mark the following statements either **T** for true or **F** if any part is false.

- \_\_\_\_\_ 1. Jeth keeps up with war news by reading the newspapers.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 2. Ellen cures her headaches by drinking strong coffee.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 3. Abraham Lincoln dies before the war ends.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 4. The federal registrar makes fun of Jeth's dialect.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 5. John writes that Bill may have killed Tom at Pittsburg Landing.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 6. Jeth convinces Ellen that Copernicus's ideas do not run counter to the Bible.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 7. Jenny marries Shad without Matt's permission.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 8. Matt's heart attack is a result of ruffians fouling the well with coal oil.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 9. Ross invites Jeth to have dinner with him in Newton.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 10. Jethro's favorite brother is Bill.

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**Part III: Matching (20 points)**

Name the character who is described below. Select answers from the following list.

- |  |                  |
|--|------------------|
| _____ 1. owns the house where Shad recuperates from the war. | A. Copperhead    |
| _____ 2. is the county where the Creightons live.            | B. Dave          |
| _____ 3. goes to Washington, D. C., in Ross's buggy.         | C. Eb            |
| _____ 4. saves Jeth from Guy's vindictiveness.               | D. Guy           |
| _____ 5. wants to return to college.                         | E. Jake          |
| _____ 6. asks Jeth to bring him a newspaper from town.       | F. Jasper        |
| _____ 7. receives a load of buckshot in the backside.        | G. Jenny         |
| _____ 8. dies in a wagon wreck.                              | H. Mary          |
| _____ 9. signals to Jeth with a turkey call.                 | I. Shad          |
| _____ 10. lives in the north but supports the Confederacy.   | J. Aunt Victoria |

**Part IV: Essay (30 points)**

Choose two and answer in complete sentences.

1. Explain why Jeth risks being arrested in order to help Eb.
2. Discuss how Jeth becomes head of the Creighton family.
3. Describe how the Creightons keep up with the war news.
4. Compare Jenny and Jethro in terms of their loyalties to family and friends.
5. Characterize the hardships of war for noncombatants.

**ACROSS FIVE APRILS**

**COMPREHENSION TEST B**

**Part I: Short Answer (30 points)**

Answer the following questions. Then explain its significance to the story.

1. How do the Creightons summon neighbors?
2. What is on Walnut Hill?
3. Which one of Matt's nephews lives with the Creightons?
4. What does Jeth take to town to be sharpened?
5. What does Jeth borrow from Nancy?
6. Who plays the guitar for Jeth?
7. Whose victories do the bells announce in February 1862?
8. What do Ellen and Jeth plant in the garden?
9. Whom does Jeth name as his hero?
10. Who is nervous about Jeth's return past Rose Hill?
11. What does Mrs. Hiles give Jethro in a paper bag?
12. What does Jeth pick up for Jake before leaving town?
13. Who uses crutches?
14. For whom is Jeth named?
15. Who becomes president of the Confederacy?

**Part II: Completion (20 points)**

Complete each of the following statements with a pair of answers from the list below. You may use some answers more than once; you will have answers left over when you finish.

Ben	Copperheads	Ellen	Israel	Matt
coal oil	Dave	federal registrars	Jenny	potatoes
coffee	Eb	Guy	Jeth	Shad

1. \_\_\_\_\_ cures her headaches with \_\_\_\_\_.
2. \_\_\_\_\_ journeys to Washington to marry \_\_\_\_\_.
3. \_\_\_\_\_ come to the Creighton farm in search of \_\_\_\_\_.
4. \_\_\_\_\_ defends Jeth against the treachery of \_\_\_\_\_, who lies in wait along the road.
5. \_\_\_\_\_ heads the Creighton family after \_\_\_\_\_'s heart attack.



## ACROSS FIVE APRILS

### Part III: Multiple Choice (20 points)

Underline the word or phrase which will complete each statement below.

1. Jeth obviously differs with his mother on the (reason for planting potatoes so early, nature of Wilse's visit, romanticism of war, length of time it takes to drive to Hidalgo).
2. Jeth jeopardizes his family by (helping Eb, writing to President Lincoln, summoning Ed Turner, quarreling with Jake).
3. Shad is unable to (marry Jenny in Washington, finish his year at the annex, move back home to Pennsylvania, take Jeth to see Lincoln).
4. Because of local unrest, (Nancy moves in with the Creightons, John writes about battles in Tennessee, Bill sends a comforting message to Ellen, Ross goes to Washington in his buggy).
5. Travis Burdow watches (Bill shoot Tom at Pittsburg Landing, Jeth's wagon pass by Rose Hill, the doctor pick buckshot out of Guy Wortman's backside, Mary and Rob leave the dance).
6. Some of the most devastating actions against civilians occurs during (the Battle of Chickamauga, Sherman's march to the sea, Lincoln's assassination, the assault on Vicksburg).
7. Shad is grateful for (Ellen's superb nursing, Jenny's gift of a gold ring, Jeth's help in building the annex, one of Ross's books).
8. Jenny angers Jeth by (finding out that he smokes, refusing to read Shad's entire letter, taking sides against Bill, referring to their three brothers who died of polio).
9. Matt asks Jenny to (take blankets to Nancy and the boys, help Jethro with the plowing, look for the lost shepherd dog, write Tom's death date in the Bible).
10. Ellen dislikes violence so much that she (withdraws to the pantry, speaks harshly to the federal registrars, accompanies Jeth to Hidalgo, silences Wilse and sends him back to Kentucky).

### Part IV: Essay (30 points)

Choose two and answer in complete sentences.

1. Explain how Ross looks out for Jeth's welfare.
2. Describe the Creighton farm.
3. Discuss Shad's knowledge of the war.
4. Account for Jeth's romantic notions of war.
5. Explain how neighborliness saves the Creightons.

## ANSWER KEY

### VOCABULARY TEST

1. amiable, aloof
2. fiasco, stunned
3. lapsed, perplexity
4. somber, imminence
5. veered, constrained
6. ravine, team
7. tangled, precariously.
8. scorching, infested
9. destruction, spiritual
10. plunged, tethered
11. hunched, inconspicuous
12. distorted, sorry
13. Schooled, dependency
14. relative, erred
15. humility, lowly

### COMPREHENSION TEST A

#### Part I: Quotation Completion (30 points)

- |                    |                   |
|--------------------|-------------------|
| 1. Dave Burdow     | 9. Aunt Victoria  |
| 2. Matt Creighton  | 10. Shadrach Yale |
| 3. Ebenezer Carron | 11. Mr. Milton    |
| 4. Abraham Lincoln | 12. Ed Turner     |
| 5. Bill            | 13. Sam Gardiner  |
| 6. Grant           | 14. Nancy         |
| 7. Potomac         | 15. Wilse Graham  |
| 8. Johnny          |                   |

#### Part II: True/False (20 points)

- |      |       |
|------|-------|
| 1. T | 6. F  |
| 2. T | 7. F  |
| 3. F | 8. F  |
| 4. T | 9. T  |
| 5. F | 10. T |

#### Part III: Matching (20 points)

- |      |       |
|------|-------|
| 1. J | 6. E  |
| 2. F | 7. D  |
| 3. G | 8. H  |
| 4. B | 9. C  |
| 5. I | 10. A |

#### Part IV: Essay (30 points)

Answers will vary.

### COMPREHENSION TEST B

#### Part I: Short Answer (30 points)

- |              |                     |
|--------------|---------------------|
| 1. bell      | 9. Tom Paine        |
| 2. cemetery  | 10. Mr. Milton      |
| 3. Eb        | 11. pie             |
| 4. plowshare | 12. newspaper       |
| 5. coffee    | 13. Mr. Milton      |
| 6. Shad      | 14. doctor          |
| 7. Grant     | 15. Jefferson Davis |
| 8. potatoes  |                     |

#### Part II: Completion (20 points)

1. coffee, Ellen
2. Jenny, Shad
3. federal registrars, Eb
4. Dave, Guy
5. Jeth, Matt

#### Part III: Multiple Choice (20 points)

1. romanticism of war
2. helping Eb
3. take Jeth to see Lincoln
4. Nancy moves in with the Creightons
5. Mary and Rob leave the dance
6. Sherman's march to the sea
7. Ellen's superb nursing
8. refusing to read Shad's entire letter
9. write Tom's death date in the Bible
10. withdraws to the pantry

#### Part IV: Essay (30 points)

Answers will vary.



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