

# I HEARD THE OWL CALL MY NAME

MARGARET CRAVEN

## LIVING LITERATURE SERIES

A PERMA-BOUND PRODUCTION

TEACHER'S GUIDE

GUIDE WRITTEN BY MARY ELLEN SNODGRASS

### SYNOPSIS

During the last eighteen months of his life, twenty-seven-year-old Mark Brian, an Anglican ordinand, serves the isolated inhabitants of a Kwakiutl outpost on the coast of Vancouver Island in British Columbia. The Bishop assigns him the job of ministering to Kingcome as vicar. Unknown to Mark, a doctor reports to the Bishop that Mark will die of a debilitating disease within three years. The Bishop hopes that Mark's association with the Kwakiutls will teach him "what every man must learn in this world."

During his stay, which is set around 1965, Mark learns much about Indian life and backwoods ministry from Caleb, the legendary old clergyman who comes out of retirement to assist him, and from Jim Wallace, a softspoken Indian his own age who has worked a year in a mill town and is eager to return home. Chief among Mark's tasks is piloting the temperamental diesel launch, upon which his mobility and effectiveness depend. He is impressed by the grandeur of the carvings in the village, but stymied by the ramshackle vicarage, which requires immediate attention.

Because Mark shares in the daily joy and suffering of the village, he proves himself worthy of trust. His first challenge greets him on his arrival to Kingcome, where a small drowning victim, called the weesa-bedǫ, awaits burial. The elders of the tribe—Chief Eddy, T. P. Wallace—request that the child lie in the Indian burial ground. They are pleased when Mark speaks comforting lines from Psalm 121 and receives thanks from the child's mother. As he walks back to his lodging, he hears the ancient words of the traditional Indian burial service from the lips of the elders, who continue the rite in their own way.

Mark, whose only close relative is his twin sister, is quickly assimilated into Kingcome's lifestyle. He applies himself to learning the language and observes the village dependence on nature—on clams, candlefish, kelp, wild game, and particularly the swimmer salmon, the mythic fish that feeds the tribe. Tribal lore extends to other aspects of nature, including Whoop-Szo, the noisy mountain; Cedarman, the people's first man-god; Hamatsa, the cannibalistic spirit depicted in tribal dances; and the owl that calls the name of each person who is about to die.

One youngster, Gordon, leaves the village to attend the residential school after his mother's death in childbirth. Mark takes a personal interest in the bookish lad, but realizes that contact with the outside world will cut Gordon off forever from his ancestral heritage. Gordon symbolizes the paradox of the novel—the fact that knowledge from the white world enlightens at the same time that it destroys the Indian's reverence for the past. As Caleb sums up the

situation: "The tribe is going to trade its simplicity for the shiny gadgetry of our complex world, and it will not be so content, because there is one thing it does not anticipate. The outside world will not accept it easily."

A trying incident tests village solidarity. A white man whom Keetah's sister hopes to marry brings whiskey to the village in order to get the Indians drunk and buys for fifty dollars a priceless ceremonial mask. The elder family members, shamed by the tawdry affair, depart in their canoes for a deserted village. Mark grieves for their humiliation, but is unable to halt their self-imposed exile. Later, Mark hears from the Royal Canadian Mounted Police officer that Keetah's sister was abandoned in Vancouver, lived for a short while by prostitution, and died of a drug overdose.

Although the tribe expects Gordon to marry Keetah, Jim predicts that he himself will marry her. In Jim's words, Gordon is the running water; Keetah, the still pool. After Keetah returns from a stay with Gordon in the city, she rejoins the tribe to raise her unborn child in the old way. Jim accepts her and the child as his future family. Mark advises Jim to soften his crusty masculinity and speak kindly to Keetah.

The long winter months and the demands of his ministry take their toll on Mark's failing health. He confides to Marta Stephens, the old woman who befriends and mothers him, that he has heard the owl call his name. She acknowledges his first awareness that he is dying. Marta writes the Bishop that time is running out for Mark. The Bishop offers to recall Mark from Kingcome, but Keetah urges Mark to stay. Her simple words ennoble his situation: ". . . this is your village and we are your family. You are the swimmer who came to us from the great sea. . . ." In gratitude for the gift of peace, he embraces her wordlessly.

Toward the end of his days, time loses its contours. Mark continues his round of duties—delivering mail, helping the sick, counseling, conducting worship services, visiting the elderly and dying. When he arrives too late to assist Calamity Bill, who has broken his hip, Mark promises the old man a special burial. The placement of Calamity's ashes in a woodland setting brings a feeling of accomplishment to Mark and prepares him for his own final test.

The theft of a motor boat sends Mark and Jim out in the launch. Lightning strikes a tree, which initiates a slide that buries the boat. Anxiously, Keetah awaits identification of the one survivor. When Jim returns alive, the whole tribe makes preparations to honor Mark's passing. T. P. leads the tribe in an Indian prayer and Marta sings softly, "Walk straight on, my son. Do not look back. Do not turn your head. You are going to the land of our Lord."

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### BIOGRAPHICAL SKETCH

Margaret Craven, a native of Helena, Montana, lived out the adulthood of her eighty years in San Jose, San Francisco, and Sacramento, California; but her childhood love of the great Northwest fills her writing. The daughter of a distinguished Puget Sound judge, she had two other men in her life—her brother Leslie, twelve years her senior, and a twin brother, Wilson. Family life altered greatly for the Cravens after the judge suffered an accident and stroke and was hospitalized for a long period during the Depression years. Her mother was forced to sell some of his law library in order to be near her disabled husband.

Like her older brother, Margaret put herself through Stanford University and graduated in 1924 with honors and an A. B. degree in history. After her father's death, she and Wilson, a Sacramento attorney, took care of their mother. Margaret abandoned all thought of marriage and devoted her life to writing. Determined to break the stereotyped female role of teacher and become a writer, she worked as secretary to the managing editor of the San Jose *Mercury* before serving as columnist from 1924-1928. From then until her retirement at the age of 79, despite bacterial damage and cataracts in both eyes, Margaret Craven forged her career as a freelance writer.

From 1928-1941, she wrote stories for *The Delineator*, *Ladies Home Journal*, and *Colliers*. From 1941-1962, she provided short fiction for the *Saturday Evening Post*, *McCall's*, *Pictorial Review*, and *Cosmopolitan*. Her masterpiece, *I Heard the Owl Call My Name* was published in 1973; followed by *Walk Gently This Good Earth* (1977), the story of a motherless family; an autobiographical work, *Again Calls the Owl* (1980), about her childhood and career; and a collection of her short stories, *The Home Front* (1981), the year she died.

### CRITIC'S CORNER

Critics praise Margaret Craven's first novel, which *The Christian Science Monitor* calls a "sleeper," for its "delicate, fleeting images and sense of peace." The *New York Times Book Review* comments that the book gives an "epic quality to the fading tribal ways." Other readers laud Craven's ethereal, spare prose. Negative comments are few. Some critics find her characters sentimentalized and the plot too obvious.

While living in San Francisco, Margaret Craven interviewed Gertrude Stein, who gave her useful advice: "A writer must preserve a balance between sensitivity and vitality. Highbrow writers are sensitive but not vital. Commercial writers are vital but not sensitive. Trying to keep this balance is always hard. It is the whole job of living."

Margaret Craven employed Stein's advice after publishing "Indian Outpost," the kernel story which she developed into her first novel. She visited Kingcome, interviewed Anglican priests, and researched background material at the state library. Hardest of her tasks in completing the book, she admits, was the choice to kill the main character. Ernest Willie, one of the Indians who befriended her during her preparation declared, "She has written a masterpiece of our people."

### GENERAL OBJECTIVES

1. To explain the relationship between setting and events
2. To discuss the theme of perseverance under unfavorable circumstances
3. To discuss the Indian attitude toward nature
4. To discuss the importance of humility in interpersonal relationships
5. To discuss the importance of advice from the Bishop, Marta, and Caleb
6. To isolate moments of despair in the narrative and contrast them with periods of triumph and victory
7. To characterize life in the outside world as it affects young Indians
8. To explain the importance of supernatural devices, such as Hamatsa and the owl's call
9. To discuss examples of giving and self-sacrifice

### SPECIFIC OBJECTIVES

1. To account for Jim's change in attitude toward Keetah
2. To consider the significance of individual deaths on Mark's ministry
3. To contrast opinions of the old with those of younger citizens of Kingcome
4. To describe situations in which Mark feels like an outsider
5. To account for the departure of Keetah's family to the deserted village
6. To contrast the varying types of courage demonstrated by the characters
7. To explain the purpose of Calamity as a character
8. To discuss the importance of the passage of the seasons on the story
9. To explain why Mark's decision to remain is appropriate

### MEANING STUDY

Below are words, phrases, or sentences that have a particular meaning in the story. Explain the meaning each has in this novel.

1. On the cliffs before you reach the river, you will see paintings of cattle, sheep, goats and coppers that mark the gifts given in a great tribal potlatch. (Chapter 1)  
(Among the Indian tribes native to the Pacific northwest, the potlatch is a traditional feast lasting several days given by a member who wishes to establish a political position or increase social standing. The high point of the feast is the bestowal of

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great gifts, the worth of which indicates the sincerity of the giver toward status enhancement. Guests are expected to accept the gifts graciously, but must return the gesture by means of favors or support.)

2. The chief councillor went at once to the nearest radio-telephone and summoned the RCMP, but no one has come yet. (Chapter 1)

*(Legal matters among the Indians of British Columbia, such as the issuance of a death certificate, are administered by the Royal Canadian Mounted Police. These constables, organized in 1873, enforce provincial law, monitor smuggling, and suppress narcotics while encouraging the lawful hunting of wildlife.)*

3. Did she remember that in the old days the Indian mother of the Kwakiutl band who lost a child kicked the small body three times and said to it, "Do not look back." (Chapter 1)

*(The Kwakiutl [Kwä ke oo' t'l] Indians live on Vancouver Island near the coast of British Columbia. Their tribal rites emphasize the potlatch, huge totem poles, other symbolic carvings, and mythical ancestry. They are famous for their artistry in carving red cedar masks. The tribe, relatives of the Nootka Indians of the Wakashan language family, numbered 15,000 in 1700 but has fallen to 2,000 because of epidemics of smallpox.)*

4. But they spoke with respect of the salmon and they called him "swimmer." (Chapter 1)

*(The salmon deserves its Indian name because of its reproductive habits. It remains faithful to the mouth of its native river and returns to spawn where it was hatched. Diligent in its efforts to swim upstream, it prefers large rivers, such as the Sacramento, Columbia, Nashagak, or Yukon and crowds upstream despite obstructions, shallows, currents, and other difficulties.*

*At the headwaters, the fish waits several weeks before approaching the spawning beds. Its body shape alters as its stomach shrinks from lack of food. To maintain strength, the salmon survives on stored energy throughout the July-December season. Unable to return to the sea, the salmon dies near the spawning place, leaving behind 300-400 eggs per pound of body weight.)*

5. "I don't know about you, but I have," and they went on quickly, leaving behind them the widow wolf and Caleb's splendid Victorian we that had served Mark well and that he would not use again. (Chapter 1)

*(To enhance his position in unknown territory and to avoid sounding dictatorial or professorial, Mark resorts to a manipulative linguistic trick—the use of the pronoun we to insinuate himself into the society of Kwakiutls.*

*The maneuver, associated with Queen Victoria, who referred to herself by the plural pronoun as a*

*means of linking her decisions and opinions to the entire British Empire, does not go unnoticed. As Jim develops a friendly, one-to-one relationship with Mark, he indicates that the "royal we" is not appreciated. Quick to respond to genuine warmth, Mark gladly returns to normal speech patterns.)*

6. They were larger than themselves. They belong to the great and small hegiras of the self exiles of this earth, clinging fiercely to a way that is almost gone, as the last leaves fall at last gently and with great pride. (Chapter 2)

*(A hegira [hi jer'ə] is a journey or flight connected with tribal relationships and the sense of belonging. The old people, shamed by Gordon's uncle's sale of the tribal mask, paddle away toward a deserted village. Mark is troubled by the loss of more emigrants and inquires how they will live. Jim replies, "As my people have always lived. They will live on fish, and clams, and seaweed. Later they will pick berries.")*

7. In late March the tribe prepared for the coming of the *ō*lachon, the candlefish, a season so deep in the tradition of the people that all the taboos and superstitions were remembered, and followed. (Chapter 2)

*(The North Pacific smelt, fleshy, trout-shaped fish averaging six or seven inches in length and inhabiting the waters from California to the Bering Sea, are used as foodfish and as a source of oil. Because the Indians dry them, insert a wick in their sides, and use them as rush lights, the fish earned the name candlefish, although Indians prefer their own term, eulachon. Even though the fish are seagoing animals, they return to freshwater streams to spawn and bury their eggs in silt. The current soon carries newly hatched candlefish back to the sea.)*

8. And how did he handle the growing materialism in which so many people feel no need of faith and consider the church almost an anachronism? (Chapter 3)

*(As the Indians are infiltrated by the affluence of white culture, they depart from their traditional ways and beliefs. The church, anchored in the spiritual realm, seems out of touch with the times. This growing separation between behavior and belief systems causes Mark to rethink the needs of his parishioners.*

*In reply to his own rhetorical question, ". . . Mark answered that in an Indian village the challenge was obvious to all, to stay alive men had to depend on each other, and that everyone came to church, even the agnostics and the atheists. They came out of respect for the church itself and for the man who served it, and because there were few settlers in a six thousand-square-mile area who had not been done kindness by the church, its hospital ship, its men, and repaid it.")*

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9. I remember watching the faces of the students as they listened, and I was sure I knew the look on the faces of the first ones who met long ago in some little hidden room in Antioch. (Chapter 3)

*(The professor in Victoria compares the faces of students listening to Caleb with those of the first Christians, who were influenced by Paul and Barnabas. In Acts 11:19, Paul mentions that Stephen [the first Christian martyr] traveled "as far as Phenice and Cyprus, and Antioch, preaching the word to none but unto the Jews alone." In Chapter 13, Paul describes how he and Barnabas speak to Jews at the synagogue in Antioch. As a result, ". . . many of the Jews and religious proselytes followed Paul and Barnabas: who, speaking to them, persuaded them to continue in the grace of God.")*

10. You are the swimmer who came to us from the great sea . . . (Chapter 4)

*(As Mark faces the hard decision of where to spend his last days, Keetah helps him feel welcome and needed in Kingcome. "Stay with us. Marta has told us. We have written the Bishop and asked that he let you remain here to the end, because this is your village and we are your family.")*

*To make her point, she compares Mark to the salmon, which spends the last months of its life in swimming upstream, depleting its physical powers in order to engender the next generation of fish. Mark, too, is a swimmer in that he has forged a path toward this Indian village, made his niche, and prepared the way for future generations.)*

### 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 in the novel.

#### Questions 1-5 Literal Level

1. Describe Mark Brian's arrival at Kingcome.  
*(Standing at the wheel of the launch, Mark takes in the natural beauty of Vancouver Island—"the bald eagles fishing for herring," clouds enshrouding the mountains, and the fir trees that grow above the "straight selvage of wet, dark rock." Jim points out the remains of an old village, suggestive of the future death of the Kwakiutl lifestyle.)*

*As he ponders Jim's responses, Mark gives the majority of his attention to the needs of the boat and the intricacies of the twenty-mile inlet that separate Vancouver Island from the mainland. The weather is rainy as the two push on past landmarks that serve as guideposts in the tricky channel. The first signs of Indian life are on Ghost Island, the ancestral burial ground, where the beach is littered with clam shells.*

*Mark meets some neighbors—the oil agent and his*

*wife, who fill Mark's grocery list and pass on an abandoned, mud-stained cassock. After supper, Mark spots the fin of a killer whale just before passing the float house of Calamity Bill and the rock shaped like a whale. At the government float, they tie up for the night and make plans for their arrival by speed boat and for the delivery of the organ, which they have brought along.*

*On the cliffs are paintings of animals and other "gifts given in a great tribal potlatch" in 1936, nearly thirty years before. The next day, under blue skies, Mark gets his first view of Whoop-Szo, the "little white church of Saint George," and the Indians, who ferry the organ by canoes to the "black sands of Kingcome and up the little path that led past the old vicarage to the church.")*

2. Describe the gifts that Mark receives from the Indians.

*(Kwakiutis, known for their elaborate potlatches, are traditionally generous. Mark frequently finds food on his table, including fresh-baked bread, a pot of soup, and gluckaston, the traditional seaweed and corn dish. His quarters are swept, cleaned, and freshened by burning cedar. Marta Stephens, the grandmotherly woman who befriends Mark, knits a toque "to keep the new vicar's head warm when he camps up the river in the winter." At banquets, she slips Mark dishes of "peas from her garden" because he dislikes mashed turnips.)*

*At most gatherings there is steaming coffee, freely offered with genuine hospitality. From the children there are shy smiles of welcome. Gradually, as Mark becomes one of them, the gifts from the Kwakiutl take on a personal meaning. At first there is camaraderie and friendship. Then, when Mark tells Marta that he has heard the owl call his name, Marta gives Mark spiritual support. Finally, Keetah offers the "gift of peace"—acceptance as a member of the tribe when Mark considers going home to die.)*

3. Describe Mark's duties.

*(Mark performs the usual tasks of a vicar—visiting the old and sick, conducting funerals, counseling, and carrying out worship services. In addition, he must maintain the rickety church and vicarage, at times endangering his welfare by repairing a leaky roof, encouraging a balky generator, and clearing the air from the fuel line of the launch. In addition to delivering mail Mark performs other essential chores, especially assisting the hospital boat on its visits and ferrying patients to the doctor.)*

*At Christmas, Mark and Jim bring gifts to distant villages. Mark carries his portable altar to each waystation and hurries back to conduct midnight service in his own church. Pressed for time, "he washed the soot from his hands, put on his vestments, and returned to the church to check the wine and the chalice, to toll the bell, to light the*

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candles." At this point in his ministry, he achieves a sense of accomplishment. "For the first time he knew them for what they were, the people of his hand and the sheep of his pasture, and he knew how deep was his commitment to them.")

4. Describe the way in which the village shares in a death. (Lying on a blood-soaked bed after delivering her sixth child by breech birth, Gordon's mother knows that she will bleed to death. Her face ashy and her hands already cold, she whispers to Mark, "Help Gordon get an education . . . He will need it." Mark waits for the arrival of the RCMP before preparing the body for burial.

Marta guides Mark in the straightening of the woman's limbs and packing of body openings to prevent seepage. He assists the men in carrying the body to the church, where the women complete the necessary washing and dressing. Others take part—the men in bringing a coffin and digging the grave, the women in preparing food for relatives, and the children by cutting greenery and gathering wild flowers. The older women clean the church. Jim and Peter journey to the residential school to bring Gordon for the funeral, which is a blend of Anglican and Kwakiutl rites.)

5. Explain how the Bishop maneuvers Mrs. Hudson from her sickbed.

(One incident reveals the author's gentle humor. After conducting services and blessing the new vicarage, the Bishop visits Mrs. Hudson, who missed the festivities because of illness. The matriarch is propped up on pillows and breathing in short gasps. The Bishop, surmising that Mrs. Hudson resents the fact that he is staying with Mark rather than with her, says for her benefit, "What a pity Mrs. Hudson will not be able to dance tomorrow after the tribal dinner. No one dances as well as Mrs. Hudson.")

His ruse works. At the community feast, held in the social hall, Mrs. Hudson, dressed in sequined ceremonial blanket, joins in the women's dance. The Bishop comments that he doesn't understand it, but he has observed similar revivals in the past.)

### Questions 6-8 Interpretive Level

6. Contrast the attitudes of the anthropologist and teacher to those of Mark and Caleb.

(The secret of Mark's success with the Kwakiutls is his acceptance of their humanity. Mark refrains from intruding or belittling their traditions and provides kindness and service when he is needed, such as in sending children to the residential school and assisting Gordon in learning the ways of the white community. Like Caleb, Mark learns from the Indians and enriches himself at the same time.

In contrast to these positive contacts are the snobbery of the teacher and anthropologist. The

former, who comes to the island in order to earn hardship pay so that he can continue his study of Greece in the summer, demands to be ferried ashore and establishes a hostile relationship from his first day. The British anthropologist, who never learns how to pronounce the word Kwakiutl, observes the tribe as though they were curious insects that fascinate her. Neither of these characters is named, probably because the author does not wish to dignify their association with the villagers.)

7. What causes unease in the village?

(After Christmas, the villagers stay inside during bad weather, the men playing "La-hell in the social hall long into the night." Mark realizes that a "strange little wind of dissent" disturbs the serenity of the village. In answer to his query, Peter, the old carver, explains that the arrival of students from the outside world always causes unease. He explains that the Kwakiutl are proud of their students, but that they resent the changes in them. Children taught in the white world learn English, forget their own language and myths, and reject the traditional gleena, the fish dip that embellishes their food.

Peter, like Caleb, is aware that the fragile lifestyle of Kingcome will soon end. "When the young leave, the world takes them, and damages them," he explains, predicting that the village, too, will soon die. Mark's experience with Gordon and Keetah's sister proves Peter correct.)

8. How does the experience of the swimmer parallel Mark's last months?

(At the picnic, Mark learns how the salmon leave the ocean, swim upstream into fresh water, lay their eggs, and die from exertion. Keetah responds with tears, saddened by the fish's experience. Mark, quick to interpret the story positively, notes, "The whole life of the swimmer is one of courage and adventure. All of it builds to the climax and the end. When the swimmer dies he has spent himself completely for the end for which he was made, and this is not sadness. It is triumph.")

Significantly, it is Keetah who delivers the same message when Mark most needs to hear it. She speaks for the whole tribe when she invites Mark to stay at Kingcome. Without elaborate explanation, she calls him the "swimmer who came to us from the great sea." Ironically, when Mark meets his death, by accident rather than disease, he is teaching the same lesson to Jim—that he must encourage Keetah and their future family. In the end, he says, "when the village is no more, you too must cross the bridge." As evidence of his effectiveness, Jim repeats Mark's words to Keetah.)

### Questions 9 and 10 Critical Level

9. Why is Mark's death a natural conclusion to the novel?

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*(From the beginning, Margaret Craven points her main character toward an acceptance of death as a culmination of life rather than as a tragedy. On his first night, the smell of death permeates the vicarage. As the story develops, Mark's humane treatment of the dead and dying become focal points in the plot, particularly his kindness toward the mother of the drowned child, Gordon's mother, and Calamity Bill.*

*Because the author begins the story with the doctor's diagnosis, the reader has no doubt that Mark will die. Marta is the first to notice "death reaching out his hand, touching the face gently, even before the owl had called the name." After he hears the owl's call, Mark turns instinctively to the mother figure who has tended him. Marta lifts "her sweet kind face with its network of tiny wrinkles" and answers honestly.*

*Chapter 22 deals with Mark's reaction to impending death. His overriding concern is that he must leave Kingcome. In his thoughts he ponders how he can "return now to that far country he no longer knew, where, while awaiting death, he would be a stranger." The morning after his encounter with the owl, Mark walks slowly over the familiar path, dreading the looks of pity when the villagers learn his fate.*

*The irony of his death is that he dies doing the job that he loved—meeting the needs of Kingcome in an endless variety of ways. His final words to Jim are uplifting in that they encourage him to form a strong marriage to help Keetah bridge the gap that will come when the tribe disintegrates. The flash of lightning that precipitates the slide is like a supernatural hand enveloping Mark back into nature. Like Calamity Bill, Mark takes his place in the natural surroundings and is spared the slow suffering of his disease.)*

10. Why is the owl an appropriate symbol?

*(The owl has long been a symbol of wisdom and death. Because it is a nocturnal hunter, the owl seems to lie in wait even for human beings, startling them with a haunting call. Because the owl is a loner, its use in Indian myth emphasizes the existential theme—that each person faces death alone. The stark, shocking accident that snuffs out Mark's life seems less cruel because the Indians immediately begin their group activities that accompany every death. After Mark's interment, Marta speaks a motherly benediction and Peter sits on the top step of his house and awaits the return of Mark's spirit.*

*Margaret Craven is careful to blend Christian faith with the mythic animism that undergirds Indian lore. Mark, even though he is the spokesman for the Anglican church, internalizes so much of the mythic tradition that when he does hear the owl, he accepts its call as natural.)*

### Questions 11 and 12 Creative Level

11. Create a totem that includes the chief animal symbols

of the story—the owl, raven, bear, eagle, whale, seal, candlefish, clam, and especially the swimmer. Arrange the symbols in meaningful order and use striking colors that tie them to the natural world.

12. Compose a condolence letter to Mark's twin sister. Explain to her the beauty of Mark's service to the people of Kingcome as you comfort her for her loss.

### STUDENT INVOLVEMENT ACTIVITIES

1. Divide the class into small groups to study Pacific Northwest Indian lore. Note the importance of nature in the creation of totems, myths, masks, and ceremonial dances. Describe the symbiotic relationship between tribe and nature. Discuss how modern influences have altered ancient practices and beliefs.
2. Prepare a dialogue dramatizing the wedding of Keetah and Jim. Include parts of younger and older members of the tribe as well as outsiders, such as Mark's replacement. Compose appropriate vows and prayers for the ceremony.
3. Discuss how the mechanization of the twentieth century affects Kingcome. What inventions prove most useful? What alterations in traditional ways are harmful? Make a list of other modern inventions that might be useful to the Kwakiutls, such as the helicopter, airboat, or chainsaw.
4. Select a character who responds to Mark's example. Explain how that character changes in attitude and behavior from interaction with a humble churchman. Discuss whether Mark's good works will continue to affect the character after Mark is dead.
5. Explain why Mark's death is an appropriate ending to this story. How would the story change if Mark had died in Victoria? Why is his relationship with his sister downplayed? Has he neglected his own family by choosing to remain in Kingcome?
6. Explain the significance of supernatural events or objects in the story, such as the myth of hamatsa and the call of the owl. Discuss how these happenings affect life in Kingcome.
7. Write an essay in which you explain the four chapter headings.
8. Explain how crime affects the life of Kingcome. Discuss ways in which the Indians protect themselves from encroachment by the outside world. Discuss how the outside world protects the Indian village.
9. Compose a first person account of a visit to Kingcome from the point of view of a visiting nurse, doctor, engineer, hunter, fisherman, anthropologist, or teacher. Describe the people, buildings, and events which make the greatest impression on you.

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10. Create suitable epitaphs for the people who die in the course of the story, including the weesa-bedó, Calamity, and Mark. Suggest a suitable monument to Mark's memory.

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### VOCABULARY TEST

Circle a word to complete each of the following quotations.

1. Already the rain had become an element of life like the air Mark breathed, and when it stopped, he missed it somehow, and found himself listening for the drip, drip, drip that seemed now a necessary and comforting (component, selvage, disdain, confabulation, poignancy) of his life.
2. High in the skyways wild geese called (tentatively, inertly, imminently, staunchly, exultantly) on their first early passages back from the south . . . .
3. When he approached and introduced himself, they were most (forged, Anglican, affable, calamitous, acute).
4. When Mark went to call on her and offer any help he could, he was at once (rebuked, accosted, garrulous, unctuous, moored).
5. . . . on his (bilge, glade, platitude, totem, trestle) he carved a wolf as one of the crests of his tribe.
6. Back up. Go forward. Up and down the (straits, amenities, chalice, sustenance, fingerling).
7. Even in the (potlatch, exodus, gunwale, galley, milt), over meals which the young man cooked, Caleb had occasionally dropped what surely could not, yet must be godly counsel.
8. He checked the log, put away the charts, made up the (kelp, abalone, berths, delicacies, agnostic), cleaned the refrigerator, and closed the portholes.
9. Now time had lost its (fronds, committal, futility, canon, contours).
10. Say *please* and when she hands you the cup, say *thank you*. You'll find it most (reasserting, exasperating, oppressive, efficacious, appalled).
11. . . . the quickest way to get the makings of the vicarage to the village was to hire a forestry barge at a (prefabricated, static, ill-kempt, agile, prodigious) thirty dollars a day.
12. Mark closed the eyes, straightened the limbs and packed the (bracken, naiveté, orifices, brailing, hegras) of the body against further seepage.
13. The doctor said to the Bishop, "So you see, my lord, your young (cassock, vicarage, ordinand, matriarch, anachronism) can live no more than three years and doesn't know it."
14. Mark read it twice and had a sudden and (appalling, stolid, billeted, blustery, abashed) vision of hundreds of boards . . . waiting to be carried up the river by canoe.
15. However hard Mark tried to keep up, he was always last, breaking through the underbrush with a frightful clatter, snagged on the devil's club, slipping on the (alders, shale, reminiscence, tenets, gentility).



## I HEARD THE OWL CALL MY NAME

### COMPREHENSION TEST A

#### Part I: Quotation Identification (20 points)

Match each of the following comments with its speaker. Place the letter of your response in the blank provided.

- \_\_\_\_\_ 1. Since I was a girl . . . I have been interested in the culture of the Quackadoodles.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 2. I have often thought that if this lovely and magnificent land belongs to anyone, it is to the birds and the fish.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 3. But how do you wash your hands and face in this little box without getting your clothes wet?
- \_\_\_\_\_ 4. You've dropped yourself overboard in some quiet inlet, too busy living your faith to think of yourself at all.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 5. The bones of our ancestors lie scattered on the ground, and the old totems and the carvings are broken and beyond repair.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 6. Lad, save me. I have peeled spuds up the Johnstone Straits . . . .
- \_\_\_\_\_ 7. I ain't much of a church man, Mark. Guess you might say I'm an agnostic.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 8. The world swallowed me, and I knew I could not stay there because my village is the only place I know myself.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 9. A child is always welcome . . . . When I marry her, her child will be mine.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 10. When I try to put it into words, it comes out one of those unctuous, over-pious platitudes at which Bishops are expected to excel.

- |                |                   |
|----------------|-------------------|
| A. Gordon      | F. anthropologist |
| B. Caleb       | G. T. P.          |
| C. Mark Brian  | H. Keetah         |
| D. Bishop      | I. professor      |
| E. Jim Wallace | J. Calamity Bill  |

#### Part II: Matching (30 points)

Complete each of the following descriptions with a name from the list that follows. Place the letter of your answer in the blank provided at left.

- \_\_\_\_\_ 1. former canon whose work was legendary.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 2. promises not to bang his cup on the table.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 3. breaks a hip and dies of pneumonia.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 4. returns to the village sitting very straight in the canoe.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 5. throws up in the bushes after examining a body.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 6. tells Mark not to expect a thank you in Kwákwała.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 7. drowned while sailing a paper boat in the river.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 8. suffers from seasickness while listening to the raven myth.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 9. regrets making Mark eat mashed turnips.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 10. loses a washing machine in the river.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 11. elder and tribe orator.

### I HEARD THE OWL CALL MY NAME

- \_\_\_\_\_ 12. daughter, wife, and mother of chiefs.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 13. teaches Mark to pronounce the tribe's name.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 14. has a twin sister.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 15. reads books that Mark receives for Christmas.

- |                   |                      |                  |
|-------------------|----------------------|------------------|
| A. Jim Wallace    | F. Constable Pearson | K. T. P. Wallace |
| B. Bishop         | G. weesa-bedó        | L. Gordon        |
| C. anthropologist | H. Mrs. Hudson       | M. Mark Brian    |
| D. Caleb          | I. Chief Eddy        | N. Marta         |
| E. Calamity Bill  | J. Keetah            | O. Sam           |

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

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

- \_\_\_\_\_ 1. The slide on Whoop-Szo is caused by a jet plane breaking the sound barrier.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 2. Mrs. Hudson explains that if Keetah's sister marries a white man, the girl will no longer be an Indian.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 3. Calamity Bill's last request is for his long-johns to be removed before he is buried.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 4. The organ must be left in care of the loggers until spring, when a barge brings it upstream.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 5. The Grouse Dance lasts three hours and requires 26 characters.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 6. Gordon's uncle gets drunk and sells the giant mask for fifty dollars.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 7. The bishop advises Mark to go after the departing old people and encourage them to forget their shame and come back home.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 8. Ellie leaves Kingcome with a white man and dies on the streets of the city after being deserted.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 9. The tribe forbids the taking of photographs of the óolachon fishing.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 10. Mark teaches the orphaned baby seal to swim, then lets him go.

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

- 1. Discuss how Keetah reacts to the scandal surrounding her sister's visit.
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
- 2. Explain Marta's response to the owl calling Mark's name.
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
- 3. Describe the effect of white culture on Indian children who attend school in the city.

**I HEARD THE OWL CALL MY NAME**

**COMPREHENSION TEST B**

**Part I: Identifying Quotations (20 points)**

Name the person who is speaking on line A and the person to whom the line is directed on line B.

\_\_\_\_\_ 1A. Don't be sorry for yourself because you are going to so remote a parish. Be  
\_\_\_\_\_ 1B. sorry for the Indians. You know nothing and they must teach you . . . .

\_\_\_\_\_ 2A. It is the salt water that stung my eyes. I have not cried since I was eight and  
\_\_\_\_\_ 2B. made a mistake in the dance, and my mother scolded me.

\_\_\_\_\_ 3A. Walk straight on, my son. Do not look back. Do not turn your head. You are  
\_\_\_\_\_ 3B. going to the land of our Lord.

\_\_\_\_\_ 4A. You will be lonely, and you will be afraid somethimes. I was lonely, and I was  
\_\_\_\_\_ 4B. afraid when I went to your village.

\_\_\_\_\_ 5A. Under my pillow there's a map of Knight's Inlet. I put a cross on the place  
\_\_\_\_\_ 5B. where I cut trees once.

**Part II: Short Answer (20 points)**

Supply a word or phrase in answer to each of the following questions. Place your response in the blank provided at left.

- \_\_\_\_\_ 1. For whom does the couple from the float store bring an old suit?
- \_\_\_\_\_ 2. Who wants to be the first Kwakiutl to enter a profession?
- \_\_\_\_\_ 3. What is the Kwákwala phrase for "Noisy Mountain"?
- \_\_\_\_\_ 4. What is Peter's profession?
- \_\_\_\_\_ 5. What religious denomination is Mark?
- \_\_\_\_\_ 6. How does the tribe communicate its needs to the outside world?
- \_\_\_\_\_ 7. Of what law-enforcement group is Constable Pearson a member?
- \_\_\_\_\_ 8. What smell fills the vicarage on Mark's first night there, despite open windows and the odor of burning cedar?
- \_\_\_\_\_ 9. Which character dies after delivering her sixth child by breech birth?
- \_\_\_\_\_ 10. Whom does Mark meet for lunch after he takes his examination to handle the boat alone?

## I HEARD THE OWL CALL MY NAME

### Part III: Fill-in (30 points)

Supply a word or phrase from the list below to complete each of the following statements. Place your response in the blank provided at left.

- \_\_\_\_\_ 1. First you will see \_\_\_\_\_. It is where the Indians of Gilford village once buried their dead.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 2. When Mark and Jim returned to the village, they brought with them an orphaned baby \_\_\_\_\_ . . . .
- \_\_\_\_\_ 3. When you see \_\_\_\_\_, know it is Indian country. Leave it alone.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 4. When the river went down, a small slide damaged the \_\_\_\_\_ . . . .
- \_\_\_\_\_ 5. My lord, it is your friend, \_\_\_\_\_, who keeps her promise now . . . . It is time you come then.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 6. "\_\_\_\_\_, my friend," he thought, "you have had a funeral finer than a king's. . . ."
- \_\_\_\_\_ 7. And when you build \_\_\_\_\_ a house, let her plan it with you.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 8. In desperation he shot an arrow prayer into the air: "Oh, dear Lord, what am I going to do about this \_\_\_\_\_?"
- \_\_\_\_\_ 9. The Indian name of the village is \_\_\_\_\_ which means "inside place" . . . .
- \_\_\_\_\_ 10. There is no word for thank you in \_\_\_\_\_.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 11. The chief wishes the \_\_\_\_\_ to be buried in the old burial ground just beyond the end of the village, and the box is made, and the grave is dug, and already my people are gathering there.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 12. It is the eldest. He is speaking the ancient \_\_\_\_\_ Kwákwala which the young no longer know.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 13. In one of the best houses of the village \_\_\_\_\_, the matriarch, was pleased that a vicar was again in residence.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 14. In the poorest house \_\_\_\_\_, the unlucky one, considered how best to approach the new vicar for a loan.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 15. The \_\_\_\_\_ had come to the village solely for the isolation pay which would permit him a year in Greece studying the civilization he adored.

abalone	anthropologist	Bishop	British Columbia	Calamity			
Chief Eddy	clam shells	dam	Elizabethan	Ghost Island			
gluckaston	Gordon	Keetah	kelp	Kwákwala	long house	Marta Stephens	
Mrs. Hudson	muskeg	Quee	Sam	seal	squirrel	teacher	vicar
	vicarage		weesa-bedó			Whoop-Szo	

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

1. Describe Mark's duties among the Kwakiutl.
2. Explain why Indian life is tied to nature.
3. Explain why the Bishop chose wisely in sending Mark to Kingcome.

## I HEARD THE OWL CALL MY NAME

### VOCABULARY TEST ANSWER KEY

- |               |                 |
|---------------|-----------------|
| 1. component  | 9. contours     |
| 2. exultantly | 10. efficacious |
| 3. affable    | 11. prodigious  |
| 4. rebuked    | 12. orifices    |
| 5. totem      | 13. ordinand    |
| 6. straits    | 14. appalling   |
| 7. galley     | 15. shale       |
| 8. berths     |                 |

### COMPREHENSION TEST A ANSWER KEY

#### Part I: Quotation Identification (20 points)

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

#### Part II: Matching (30 points)

- |      |       |       |
|------|-------|-------|
| 1. D | 6. B  | 11. K |
| 2. A | 7. G  | 12. N |
| 3. E | 8. C  | 13. I |
| 4. J | 9. H  | 14. M |
| 5. F | 10. O | 15. L |

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

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

#### Part IV: Essay Questions (30 points) Answers will vary.

### COMPREHENSION TEST B ANSWER KEY

#### Part I: Identifying Quotations (20 points)

- |                 |                   |
|-----------------|-------------------|
| 1A. Caleb       | 4A. Mark Brian    |
| 1B. Mark Brian  | 4B. Gordon        |
| 2A. Jim Wallace | 5A. Calamity Bill |
| 2B. Keetah      | 5B. Mark Brian    |
| 3A. Marta       |                   |
| 3B. Mark Brian  |                   |

#### Part II: Short Answer (20 points)

- |                  |                    |
|------------------|--------------------|
| 1. Calamity Bill | 6. radio-telephone |
| 2. Gordon        | 7. RCMP            |
| 3. Whoop-Szo     | 8. death           |
| 4. carver        | 9. Gordon's mother |
| 5. Anglican      | 10. his sister     |

#### Part III: Fill-in (30 points)

- |                   |                 |
|-------------------|-----------------|
| 1. Ghost Island   | 9. Quee         |
| 2. seal           | 10. Kwákwala    |
| 3. clam shells    | 11. weesa-bedó  |
| 4. dam            | 12. Elizabethan |
| 5. Marta Stephens | 13. Mrs. Hudson |
| 6. Calamity       | 14. Sam         |
| 7. Keetah         | 15. teacher     |
| 8. vicarage       |                 |

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

Answers will vary.

**I HEARD THE OWL CALL MY NAME**

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