

Weasel

by Cynthia De Felice
Classroom Favorites

Teacher's Guide by Kathy Sammis

A Perma-Bound Production

SYNOPSIS

The story takes place in the state of Ohio, 1839. Eleven-year-old Nathan and nine-year-old Molly Fowler are alone in their cabin on their isolated farm when a strange, speechless man comes knocking on their door. Dressed in animal skins and with the air of a wild creature about him, the mute stranger shows the children a golden locket: Mama's locket, which their father has worn day and night since Mama died. Pa has not returned since he left six days ago to go hunting for a few hours, and the children decide the locket is a sign that Pa needs their help. They follow the beckoning stranger into the night, accompanied by their dogs, Duffy and Win.

Stopping for a rest the next morning, Nathan and Molly share their food with the stranger, who is friendly. But when they catch a glimpse of a man across the river, their companion's face twists with hatred. They have spotted Weasel, a former Indian fighter who now preys on settlers, killing whole families, since all the Shawnee have been driven away. The stranger, named Ezra, shows the children that he has no tongue and confirms that Weasel did this to him.

Ezra takes Nathan and Molly to his home, a rough shelter or *we-gi-wa*, where they find Pa dangerously ill from a wound inflicted when he stepped into a bear trap. Ezra and Molly use Mama's medicine pouch to treat the wound and nurse Pa, while Nathan realizes he must return home to tend to the livestock. Following a map Ezra draws in the dirt, Nathan finds his way back to the farm—where he discovers the horse Job, the mule Crabby, and the piglets gone and the mother pig Miz Tizz and the chickens slaughtered. Weasel has been here, with Pa's gun. As a gesture against the savagery, Nathan buries Miz Tizz and the hens.

In the dark on the way back to Ezra's, Weasel grabs Nathan but shoots himself in the foot as the boy throws Ezra's Shawnee club at him. Nathan comes to in Weasel's cabin, bound hand and foot. A drunken Weasel reveals horrible facts: when his Indian-fighting comrade Ezra began to support the Indians, married a Shawnee woman, and conceived a child with her, Weasel was so disgusted, he cut out Ezra's tongue and killed Ezra's wife and unborn child. Weasel also left Pa to die in the trap after taking Pa's gun. Later, Nathan is able to squirm free and grab the gun when Weasel falls into a drunken sleep. He escapes and rides Job back to Ezra's, where he finds Pa much recovered.

From now on, back home at the farm, Nathan is obsessed with the desire to kill Weasel, in revenge for Ezra and Ezra's wife and baby and for Pa, and for all of Weasel's past

and future victims, and he burns with regret that he did not kill Weasel when he had the chance in the cabin. Pa advises Nathan to put Weasel behind him, not to sink to Weasel's level with revenge and murder, to accept the sadness of life and embrace its good aspects. Pa also tells Nathan and Molly more about Ezra: How the Shawnee were driven away and killed, and the settlers accepted that, and how Pa and Ma were kind when Ezra and his wife refused to be "removed" to Kansas, and how a series of little gifts appeared on their stone wall after that.

Finally, Nathan goes to Weasel's cabin with Pa's gun, determined to kill the vicious killer. Instead, he discovers Weasel's long-dead body. In another gesture of civilization, Nathan and Ezra bury Weasel: he was a savage, but they aren't. Ezra now has some release, and Nathan comes to realize that Pa was right: Nathan may feel a little better, but Weasel's death hasn't made the hurt of what Weasel did go away. As spring unfolds, Nathan finds his bitterness about Weasel softening and his thoughts returning to the crops and learning to play the fiddle. And in response to Molly's suggestion in a letter to him, Ezra decides to go to Kansas to find his wife's kin, leaving behind some final gifts and saying in his parting letter to Molly, "Weezl is small now." Nathan realizes that if Ezra can let go of hating Weasel, he can, too, and that even if Weasel isn't around, life will always have its meanness and sorrow and sadness—but without these, the good parts wouldn't be as sweet.

BIOGRAPHICAL SKETCH

Cynthia De Felice, a former school media specialist, is the author of several picture books, a novel for older children, and a growing number of novels for intermediate readers. She is also the coauthor of a book of French folktales. De Felice is also a professional storyteller, part of a team called the Wild Washerwomen, which has appeared at schools, libraries, workshops and festivals. She and her husband have two children and live in Geneva, New York.

CRITIC'S CORNER

Weasel, De Felice's first book for intermediate readers, was well received by critics, who were impressed by the way the novel presents difficult moral questions in terms that younger readers can understand and will grapple with. As *Booklist* put it, "[T]he book is ideal for discussion and debate—a fine choice as a novel to teach in a literature-based curriculum, where children can be stimulated to think about moral choices and about some of the unhappy truths

of frontier settlement." *Publisher's Weekly* commented, "[T]he book succeeds in building tension and revealing thought-provoking ideas about human frailties and the struggle to accept unpleasant truths," although *The Horn Book Guide* found that the novel "never successfully conveys the full sense of maleficence implied in the action." *VOYA* praised the book for making "a positive contribution to a world caught up with killing and revenge" and also admired the novel's realism and examination of the treatment of Indians by whites. *School Library Journal* commended the book for its "sparse, vivid language, often poetic."

GENERAL OBJECTIVES

1. To examine the relations between whites, especially representatives and agents of the U.S. government, and Native Americans as the frontier moved westward
2. To discuss the motivations for, possible justifications of, and effects of revenge
3. To consider the sources of hatred and the effect on a person of feeling hatred for someone else
4. To debate whether killing is ever justified, especially in the case of someone who is himself or herself a vicious killer sure to strike again if left alone
5. To analyze the nature of evil and the place it has in the world
6. To gain an understanding of what life was like on the Ohio frontier in the 1830s and 1840s

SPECIFIC OBJECTIVES

1. To understand the effects being an Indian fighter has had on both Weasel and Ezra
2. To note how the Fowler family is partly responsible for Ezra's story and the fate of the Shawnee
3. To learn about the fate of the Shawnee and other Native Americans of the Ohio Territory
4. To examine the moral issues and choices Nathan faces as he struggles with his hatred of Weasel and his desire for revenge
5. To discuss whether Nathan would have been justified in shooting Weasel the night he escaped from Weasel's cabin and whether leaving the vicious killer Weasel alone, as Mr. Fowler advises, is the correct course of action
6. To understand the resolution Nathan arrives at by the novel's end
7. To analyze the appropriateness of Weasel's name

MEANING STUDY

Below are words, phrases, or sentences that have a particular meaning in the novel. Explain each as it relates to the book. Use the page numbers given in parentheses to reread the term in context if you wish.

1. Mama's locket (p. 4)
(A locket is a small case that opens to reveal a space that holds a memento like a photograph or lock of hair, usually made of a precious metal and worn suspended

from a chain around the neck. Ezra shows Mama's locket to Nathan and Molly so the children will know he has come from Pa and they will follow him.)

2. Shawnees (p. 12)
(The Shawnees were the Native Americans who inhabited the central Ohio valley before white settlement drove them away. Ezra dresses and lives like the Shawnee, and his wife was Shawnee.)
3. ...his shirt, leggings, and moccasins were fashioned of buckskin. (p. 12)
Ezra's clothing is made of buckskin, a soft, pliable leather made of the tanned skin of a male deer. He wears leggings—coverings for his legs—and moccasins—soft leather shoes with the sole brought up the sides and stitched to a piece covering the top of the foot.)
4. Andrew Jackson (p. 12)
(Andrew Jackson was president of the United States from 1829-1837; the year is now 1839, and Nathan remembers seeing a picture of Jackson wearing a hat like the one Ezra wears. Nathan thinks the hat makes both men look dignified. Later, when Ezra leaves for Kansas, he gives Nathan the hat the boy had admired.)
5. a weasel (p. 16)
(A weasel is a small, slender, meat-eating mammal, very active, which kills and eats large numbers of mice and rats, plus other small animals and birds. Weasels are mostly reddish brown above with yellowish or white underparts. The Shawnee gave Weasel his name because of his resemblance to the animal in physical appearance and in the way he is a cunning, prolific killer.)
6. ...when a weasel is halfway into its molt (p. 16)
(Some animals shed their outer covering—fur, feathers, horns, etc.—periodically. The northern weasel is one of these, changing from a winter coat of white that blends in with the snow to a summer coat of brown that blends into the summer ground. The old Indian fighter Weasel has hair that looks like a weasel partway into its molt: his hair is mostly brown, but with a big hunk of white in the front.)
7. pewter and horn spoons (p. 21)
(In frontier times, utensils were often carved from animals' horns; others were made of pewter, a dull alloy made with lead.)
8. infusions, or poultices, or soothing ointments (p. 23)
(These are all forms of medical treatment. An infusion is made by steeping, not boiling, a plant product in a liquid to extract its healing properties. A poultice is a soft, heated mass of medicinal material spread on a cloth and applied to a wound or sore. Ointment is a salve applied to soothe and heal the skin. Mama used the materials in her medicine bag to prepare all these types of medical treatments. Molly applies a poultice to Pa's wounded leg.)
9. Indian burial mounds (p. 41)
(Many Native American tribes, especially those east of the Mississippi River and in the Southwest, buried their

dead in mounds ranging from just a few feet high to almost 100 feet above the ground. Nathan has seen many Indian burial mounds in the areas where the Shawnee and others lived before they were driven off. Doesn't this make the Shawnee civilized, rather than savages? Nathan asks.)

10. privy (p. 56)
(Nathan tells Weasel he has to urinate by saying he has to go to the privy, or outhouse—a small building having a bench with a hole, serving the function of today's toilet, although with no running water. This is Nathan's way of getting untied, at least temporarily. Weasel laughs at the thought he would have anything so fancy as a privy.)
11. hermit (p. 84)
(A hermit is a person who lives alone, removed from society, by choice. The townspeople call Ezra a wild hermit because he lives alone in the woods and avoids all contact with people.)
12. mouth harp (p. 107), banjos (p. 109), fiddle (p. 110)
(These are all musical instruments commonly found among U.S. settlers. Nathan's father has a mouth harp, probably a harmonica or similar wind instrument played by inhaling and exhaling. On the day of the dance and contest, fiddle and banjo players gather in town. A banjo has a drumlike body and a long, fretted neck with strings, strummed by fingers. A fiddle is a violin, a stringed instrument with an unfretted neck, played with a bow. Nathan is entranced by the fiddle playing of Eli Tanner and becomes determined to learn to fiddle.)

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 book.

Literal Level

1. Why did the Shawnee give Weasel that name? In what ways is he like a weasel?
(The Shawnee named him Weasel in their language because of the many ways in which he was like a weasel, especially in the cunning way he hunted them down. Like a weasel, too, he sleeps by day and hunts by night, and he kills not because he's hungry but for the sheer sport of it. People say he can pass through any opening large enough for his head to get through, also just like a weasel. He even physically resembles a weasel: tall and slender and brown-haired, with a big shock of white in the front, like a weasel halfway into its winter/summer molt.)
2. Describe the relationship over the years between Weasel and Ezra.
(First, they were Indian-fighting and -killing comrades. Then Ezra began to see things from the Indian point of view—the Shawnee belonged here with the land; the whites had no right to drive them off. When Ezra married a Shawnee woman and they conceived a child together, Weasel became enraged. He cut out Ezra's tongue so Ezra could no longer speak in support of the Indians and against the whites, and he killed Ezra's wife and the "half-breed animal growing inside her." Since

that time, of course, Ezra has hated Weasel as much as Weasel hates him.)

3. Describe Ezra's relationship with the Fowler family.
(On the day that Ezra and his wife left town to live alone in the woods on Shawnee land, the Fowlers stopped and gave them a ride in their wagon; they were apparently the only whites to treat the couple kindly. Afterwards, gifts mysteriously appeared on the Fowlers' stone wall; the gifts ended at the time Weasel bragged in town about killing an Indian woman. Ezra seemed to have nothing more to do with the Fowlers after that, but when Mama was sick, medicine was left out on the wall; Ezra was still looking out for the Fowlers. When Pa is caught in the bear trap, Ezra finds him and takes him back to his home and tends to his wound; Ezra brings the children there, too, even though he has lived for years as a hermit. Ezra is there to help Nathan bury Weasel's body, and he takes the advice in Molly's letter to go to Kansas and find his wife's kin, leaving behind some final gifts for the Fowler family.)
4. How does Nathan end up in Weasel's cabin? How does he get away?
(On Nathan's way back to Ezra's from the family farm, Weasel intercepts the boy, who hits Weasel with Ezra's Shawnee club, causing the man to shoot himself in the foot. Nathan is knocked out, and when he wakes up, he is tied hand and foot in Weasel's cabin. When Weasel falls into a deeply drunken sleep, Nathan wriggles out of his bonds and grabs the gun away from Weasel. Pointing the gun at his enemy, Nathan threatens to shoot unless Weasel moves away from the door. The man does, and Nathan bolts to Job the horse, leaps on the animal's back, and rides away.)

Interpretive Level

5. How has the white people's inhumane treatment of the Shawnee turned back on and harmed these whites?
(Weasel was employed by the U.S. government to clear the Ohio Territory of Indians, and the fact that Weasel's preferred method of Indian removal was killing did not cause white officials or the settlers who came later any qualms. The years of government-supported Indian killing got into Weasel's blood, and when there were no more Shawnee or other Indians in Ohio to kill, Weasel turned to the remaining prey: white settlers.)
6. What negative effects does Nathan's meeting with Weasel have on the boy?
(After his encounter with Weasel when Nathan learns exactly what Weasel did to Ezra, Ezra's wife and unborn child, and his own Pa, Nathan burns with hatred for the first time. He becomes embittered about the cruel fate of Ezra and his family, about Weasel's slaughter of the Fowlers' livestock, about the fate of all of Weasel's victims. Nathan becomes obsessed with his desire for revenge, with a fierce desire to kill Weasel. Joy, innocence, even contentment have left Nathan's life.)
7. What lessons does Nathan learn from his experience with Weasel?
(Nathan learns some very hard lessons: Life can be difficult, full of sorrow and sadness and mean, even cruel, people, but this is balanced off by life's joys and content-

ments, which are the sweeter for the sad parts. He learns that killing or revenge doesn't undo bad things that have been done; killing an evildoer simply drags us down to the bad person's level. The death of an evildoer—by killing or natural causes—doesn't take away the pain caused by that person's crimes; only the passage of time does that, and then only partially. Hatred must be let go of, or a person will have no inner peace. Revenge is not something Nathan must seek; he can wait patiently for events to resolve the situation.)

Critical Level

8. What details does the author provide to establish the story in its historical setting?
(Answers will vary somewhat. Many details of everyday life establish the setting: utensils, farm equipment, methods of transportation, clothing, food, buildings, weapons, and so on. The recent departure of the Shawnee and the recent arrival of white settlers, the presence of two former Indian fighters, the lack of established law and order, and the settlers' attitudes toward the displaced Shawnee set the story in its appropriate decades. Dialogue also sounds appropriate for the era.)
9. Do you think it is realistic that a vicious man like Weasel would not seek revenge on an eleven-year-old boy who had humiliated him?
(Answers will vary. Perhaps Weasel's foot became infected soon after Nathan's escape, so Weasel was unable to exact any revenge.)
10. What is the climax of the novel? What is the purpose of all the chapters after the climax?
(The climax of the novel is Nathan's discovery of Weasel's body and his burial of it. The chapters after the climax relate the ways in which Nathan absorbs his experience and the lessons he has learned from it, how he comes to terms with what has happened and moves on with life after discarding his hatred. These chapters also provide closure for Ezra.)

Creative Level

11. Write more letters between Ezra and Molly.
(Answers will vary.)
12. Write a series of diary entries for Ezra expressing the thoughts and feelings he is unable to speak aloud.
(Answers will vary.)
13. Write a chapter of the book describing how and why Weasel dies. (This will not be written from Nathan's point of view, as the rest of the book is.)
(Answers will vary.)

ACROSS THE CURRICULUM

Science

1. In poster or booklet form, create a fully illustrated field guide to the weasel. (Also Art.)
2. Ezra and Nathan know how to find their way by referring to the North Star. Try doing this yourself to find your way. Then explain how this is done, and why the North Star can be used in this way.
3. Explain why Crabby may be an appropriate name for a mule.

Health

1. Create a booklet about medicinal herbs that can be found in your area; describe and illustrate each plant and tell what its traditional uses in herbal medicine have been. (Also Art.) (Caution: Some plants traditionally used in herbal medicine are now considered to be poisonous; do not create any herbal medicines yourself.)
2. Give a classroom demonstration of the proper methods of giving first aid for a wound like Pa's, and other wounds.
3. Mama died of the fever. What fever might this have been? What diseases were most common on the frontier in the 1830s? What medical help was available?

Language Arts

1. Compose a title for each chapter of the novel. Compare with classmates' titles and vote on class favorites for each chapter.
2. In a small group, compare *Weasel* with other historical fiction and/or coming-of-age novels you have read.

Geography

1. On a map of the United States around frontier times, show where the Native Americans living in and around the Ohio territory were dispersed to.
2. Create a map of the United States in 1839, showing each state and the date it gained statehood, and the status of the remaining territory between the Atlantic and Pacific oceans. (Also Art.)
3. Create a map of the Ohio River, showing its origins and tributaries, major cities and ports along it, and so on.

Mathematics

1. Based on your map of the Ohio River, calculate the river's total length.
2. Based on your map of Native American dispersal, calculate the number of miles each group of peoples were made to move away from their original homelands.
3. Estimate how many miles separate Ezra's home from the Fowler farm, based on how long it takes Ezra, Nathan, and Molly to get to Ezra's from the farm. How much faster would the trip be by horseback?

Social Studies

1. Report orally or in writing on the history of the Shawnee or other Native American people of the Ohio territory, both before and after the arrival of white people in America. Illustrations would enhance the report.
2. Report orally or in writing on the various homesteading laws passed in the United States during the frontier period. Explain what impact these laws had on U.S. history. Include a map or maps showing areas affected by these laws.
3. Write a biography of legendary frontiersman Daniel Boone, or read a biography of Boone and write a book report about it.

Art

1. Draw the map Ezra draws in the dirt for Nathan.

2. Illustrate some interesting or dramatic scenes from the novel.
3. Create portraits of some of the novel's characters, human and/or animal.
4. Illustrate a typical Shawnee we-gi-wa.
5. Stories say that Weasel is part man, part animal. Draw a picture of such a creature.

Music

1. Listen to some fiddle music, or demonstrate some to the class.
2. With classmates, demonstrate some dances that the townspeople would have enjoyed at the fiddle contest/dance, playing appropriate music for the dances.

STUDENT INVOLVEMENT ACTIVITIES

1. Discuss the concept of revenge and its effect on the person seeking or achieving it.
2. Build a model we-gi-wa.
3. Have you ever buried a pet that died? Why did you decide to do this? How did it make you feel? Describe your experience in writing, or talk about it with classmates who have also buried a pet.
4. In your opinion, would Nathan have been justified in shooting Weasel the night he escaped from Weasel's cabin? Discuss/debate this with classmates.
5. Now, discuss how to deal with lawbreakers in a society with no institutions of law and order. Is letting a vicious killer like Weasel alone, as Mr. Fowler advises, the correct course of action?
6. Read *Wounded Knee: An Indian History of the American West*, by Dee Brown, and discuss in class what you have learned.
7. Have a friend draw a map of someplace you are supposed to go to. Memorize the map. Then, using only your memory, try to follow the map. Nathan managed to do this to get back to his farm. Are you successful?
8. Make a collection of Pa's words of wisdom, sprinkled through the novel.

ALTERNATE ASSESSMENT

1. Tell the stories of Weasel's life and Ezra's life as we know them from the novel.
2. Draw up a list of the major characters in the novel, human and animal. Next to each name, describe the character, his or her relationship to Nathan, and his or her role in the novel.
3. Describe the life of Ohio settlers as illustrated in the novel.
4. Write a courtroom scene in which Weasel is on trial for his crimes and his victims, old and new, dead and alive, testify against him. Include some people who testify for Weasel, and Weasel's own testimony in his defense.

OTHER BOOKS BY CYNTHIA DE FELICE

- The Strange Night Writing of Jessamine Colter* (1988)
The Dancing Skeleton (picture book; 1989)
When Grampa Kissed His Elbow (picture book; 1992)
Devil's Bridge (1992)
The Light on Hogback Hill (1993)
Mule Eggs (1994)
Lostman's River (1994)
Three Perfect Peaches: French Folktales (with Mary DeMarsh & Irene Trivas; 1995)

RELATED READING

- Anderson, Joan. *Pioneer Children of Appalachia*.
 Brenner, Barbara. *On the Frontier with Mr. Audubon*.
 Brown, Dee. *Wounded Knee: An Indian History of the American West*. (Adapted for younger readers.)
 Byars, Betsy. *Trouble River*.
 Freedman, Russell. *Indian Chiefs*.
 Harvey, Brett. *Cassie's Journey: Going West in the 1860s*.
 McCall, Edith. *Message from the Mountains*.
 O'Dell, Scott, and Elizabeth Hall. *Thunder Rolling in the Mountains*.
 Speare, Elizabeth. *Sign of the Beaver*.
 Turner, Ann. *Grasshopper Summer*.
 Whelan, Gloria. *Night of the Full Moon*.
 Wisler, G. Clifton. *Jericho's Journey*.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

- Booklist*, May 15, 1990, p. 1795.
The Bulletin of the Center for Children's Books, May 1990, p. 212.
The Horn Book Guide, January-June 1990, p. 244.
Publishers' Weekly, April 27, 1990, p. 62.
School Library Journal, May 1990, p. 104.
VOYA, June 1990, pp. 101-102.

VOCABULARY TEST

Match each underlined word with its meaning listed below. Write the letter of the meaning in the space next to the sentence number.

- _____ 1. Then, slowly, he crooked his finger at us and beckoned.
- _____ 2. "If we can heal the festering around the wound, Pa will be well again."
- _____ 3. "Nathan, I can't remember what to do," Molly wailed.
- _____ 4. Ezra still made me think of a wild animal. He was so wary and alert.
- _____ 5. Although I was very tired, I slept fitfully.
- _____ 6. Ezra fell to the ground. He stood up somewhat sheepishly and looked at me.
- _____ 7. The dead bodies of chickens lay strewn about the ground.
- _____ 8. My heart began to beat in a fast, skittery way.
- _____ 9. His hair was brown with a big shock of white in the front.
- _____ 10. Weasel had let off cussing to take a big swallow from a jug that sat next to him on the floor.
- _____ 11. Then he'd clench his teeth so the muscles in his jaw bulged out and commence digging at his ankle again.
- _____ 12. Weasel held the knife in midair and continued speaking, his voice filled with loathing.
- _____ 13. I heard a familiar nicker and saw the faint outline of Job.
- _____ 14. It wasn't too hard to reach down and wrest the gun from Weasel's grasp.
- _____ 15. Weasel could never catch us on the old mule, and from the curses that followed us, I reckoned he knew it.
- _____ 16. For a moment I felt surprised that the river was still flowing along, unaware of my predicament and uncaring.
- _____ 17. "I know it wasn't an easy thing for you to do, getting mixed up with folks again and all...." Pa faltered.
- _____ 18. "Ezra wasn't much of a talker, even then," Pa said, smiling ruefully.
- _____ 19. "Nathan, I hate to see you wasting your time brooding about that no-good excuse for a human being."
- _____ 20. "I knew that when I came out here, so there's no sense in me feeling aggrieved about it now."

- a. thick bushy mass
- b. wept loudly
- c. with embarrassment
- d. with sadness
- e. take by force

- f. whinny
- g. hesitated
- h. figured
- i. not regularly
- j. worrying

- k. distressed
- l. swearing
- m. cautious
- n. skipping
- o. rotting

- p. scattered
- q. signaled
- r. start
- s. dilemma
- t. hatred

COMPREHENSION TEST A

Part I: Matching (20 points)

Read each character description. In the list below, find the character who matches the description. Write the letter of the character in the space next to the description number.

- | | | | | |
|-----------|---------|-----------|---------------|--------|
| a. Nathan | c. Mama | e. Ezra | g. Crabapple | i. Win |
| b. Molly | d. Pa | f. Weasel | h. Eli Tanner | j. Job |

- _____ 1. A nine-year-old girl with bangs and a braid.
- _____ 2. Has long, tangled hair and wears tattered clothing made of animal skins.
- _____ 3. Says he will teach Nathan how to play the fiddle.
- _____ 4. Escapes from Weasel's home along with Nathan.
- _____ 5. A strong man with dark hair and whiskers and dancing brown eyes.
- _____ 6. Has tried to teach Molly what she knows about herbal medicine.
- _____ 7. Is one of Nathan's family's dogs.
- _____ 8. Disappears from Weasel's home and never comes back to the farm.
- _____ 9. An eleven-year-old boy with dreams of revenge.
- _____ 10. Tall and lean, his hair is brown with a big shock of white in the front.

Part II: Multiple Choice (20 points)

Choose an ending to complete each statement correctly. Place the letter of your answer in the blank at the left.

- _____ 1. Pa's affectionate term for Molly is a) honey. b) button nose. c) little one. d) sugarplum.
- _____ 2. The necklace that Ezra gives Molly is made of a) porcupine quills. b) blue glass beads. c) gold. d) eagle feathers.
- _____ 3. To get Nathan and Molly to follow him, Ezra shows them a) Mama's gold locket. b) Pa's gun. c) Weasel's picture. d) Mama's medicine bag.
- _____ 4. Weasel kills a) Mama. b) Ezra's wife. c) Crabapple. d) Pa.
- _____ 5. Nathan returns to the family's farm alone to a) get food. b) find Weasel. c) get Pa's gun. d) take care of the animals.
- _____ 6. The Ohio settlements have no a) law. b) churches. c) towns. d) freedom.
- _____ 7. The farm animals are killed by a) Indians. b) wild animals. c) disease. d) Weasel.
- _____ 8. Win calls Ezra's unborn child a a) future chief. b) blessing. c) half-breed animal. d) unclean spirit.
- _____ 9. With his friend Colin, Nathan used to play a game of Indians fighting a) Kit Carson. b) Davy Crockett. c) Daniel Boone. d) Jim Bowie.
- _____ 10. Which of these was **NOT** a gift from Ezra to Nathan and his family? a) moccasins b) an axe c) a doll d) food

Part III: Fill-In (30 points)

Write one or two words in each blank to make each statement true.

1. The U.S. government ordered that the Shawnee Indians be "removed" from Ohio to _____.
2. Nathan buries _____ along with Miz Tizz.
3. _____'s name means "Gives-light-as-she-walks."
4. While Nathan is tied up in the cabin, Weasel drinks _____.
5. People in town call Ezra a wild _____.
6. When he leaves Ohio to go west, Ezra gives Molly a(n) _____.
7. Years ago, Weasel cut off Ezra's _____.
8. Molly leaves a(n) _____ for Ezra at the stone wall.
9. To help heal Pa, Molly gives him _____ to drink.
10. Nathan grabs Pa's _____ away from Weasel.
11. Weasel shoots himself in the _____.
12. Pa is badly injured by a _____.
13. Weasel takes away all of Miz Tizz's _____.
14. Nathan throws Ezra's Shawnee _____ at Weasel.
15. Ezra lives in an Indian structure called a _____.

Part IV: Essay (30 points)

Choose any **three** to answer. Write a paragraph for each.

1. Why does Weasel hate Ezra?
2. How does Molly affect Ezra's life?
3. What does Nathan learn about revenge?
4. How is Pa injured, and how is he saved and made better?

COMPREHENSION TEST B

Part I: Matching (20 points)

Read each character description. In the list below, find the character who matches the description. Write the letter of the character in the space next to the description number.

- | | | | | |
|-----------|---------|-----------|--------------------|----------------|
| a. Nathan | c. Mama | e. Ezra | g. Miz Tizz | i. Duffy |
| b. Molly | d. Pa | f. Weasel | h. Abigail Baldwin | j. Ezra's wife |

- _____ 1. Was killed by Weasel along with her unborn child.
- _____ 2. Nearly dies when his leg is caught in a trap.
- _____ 3. Has died of the fever.
- _____ 4. Weasel kills her and takes away her babies.
- _____ 5. Discovers Weasel's dead body.
- _____ 6. Steals Pa's gun and knife.
- _____ 7. Is one of Nathan's family's dogs.
- _____ 8. Pa spends a lot of time dancing with her.
- _____ 9. Has a locket with her face carved on the front half.
- _____ 10. Brings Pa to his home.

Part II: Multiple Choice (20 points)

Choose an ending to complete each statement correctly. Place the letter of your answer in the space at the left.

- _____ 1. Nathan and his family live in a a) wigwam. b) cabin. c) barn. d) townhouse.
- _____ 2. What do Molly and Ezra use as medicine? a) aspirin b) mystical chants c) herbs
d) mineral water
- _____ 3. The novel is set in the state of a) Ohio. b) Kansas. c) Illinois. d) Indiana.
- _____ 4. Ezra has no a) relatives. b) home. c) memory. d) tongue.
- _____ 5. Pa almost dies from a wound to his a) arm. b) head. c) leg. d) chest.
- _____ 6. Nathan's family's horse is named a) Win. b) Job. c) Miz Tizz. d) Eli.
- _____ 7. Nathan's dreams are haunted by a) Mama. b) Miz Tizz. c) Weasel. d) Job.
- _____ 8. At first, the townspeople treated Weasel like a a) hero. b) murderer. c) crazy man. d) holy man.
- _____ 9. Molly gets in touch with Ezra by a) a visit. b) smoke signals. c) secret code. d) a letter.
- _____ 10. Pa teaches Nathan how to a) fiddle. b) whistle. c) dance. d) read.

Part III: Short Answer (30 points)

Write a one- or two-word answer for each of the following questions.

1. To what Native American people does Ezra's wife belong? _____
2. What legendary frontiersman was captured by Indians near where Nathan's family lives? _____
3. What is the Big Turkey River called by white people? _____
4. What is the name of Nathan's family's mule? _____
5. What does Nathan want to learn to play? _____
6. What item that he is wearing does Ezra take off and give to Molly? _____
7. What did Mama keep inside her gold locket? _____
8. What item of Mama's does Molly bring with her to Ezra's home? _____
9. What is Ezra dressed in? _____
10. Where did Ezra and his wife leave their gifts for Nathan's family? _____
11. What does Ezra give Nathan when he leaves for Kansas? _____
12. What is Nathan's last name? _____
13. What does Ezra use to tell Nathan the way back to the family farm? _____
14. What was Ezra and Weasel's job with the U.S. government? _____
15. What fun event do Nathan, Molly, and Pa attend in town near the end of the novel? _____

Part IV: Essay (30 points)

Choose any **three** to answer. Write a paragraph for each.

1. What advice does Pa give Nathan?
2. What effect did Weasel's government job have on him?
3. Why does Nathan hate Weasel?
4. In what ways has Ezra's life been affected by the Indians of Ohio?

ANSWER KEY

VOCABULARY TEST

- | | | | |
|------|-------|-------|-------|
| 1. q | 6. c | 11. r | 16. s |
| 2. o | 7. p | 12. t | 17. g |
| 3. b | 8. n | 13. f | 18. d |
| 4. m | 9. a | 14. e | 19. j |
| 5. i | 10. l | 15. h | 20. k |

COMPREHENSION TEST A

Part I: Matching (20 points)

- | | |
|------|-------|
| 1. b | 6. c |
| 2. e | 7. i |
| 3. h | 8. g |
| 4. j | 9. a |
| 5. d | 10. f |

Part II: Multiple Choice (20 points)

- | | |
|------|-------|
| 1. d | 6. a |
| 2. b | 7. d |
| 3. a | 8. c |
| 4. b | 9. c |
| 5. d | 10. b |

Part III: Fill-In (30 points)

- | | |
|---------------------|--------------------------|
| 1. Kansas | 9. (herbal) tea |
| 2. the chickens | 10. gun |
| 3. Ezra's wife | 11. foot/leg/ankle |
| 4. whiskey (liquor) | 12. trap |
| 5. hermit | 13. piglets |
| 6. locket | 14. hunting stick (club) |
| 7. tongue | 15. we-gi-wa |
| 8. letter | |

Part IV: Essay (30 points)

Answers will vary somewhat. Samples follow.

- Weasel cannot stand the fact that Ezra has renounced his former support of killing Indians; it drives Weasel wild to hear Ezra say the Shawnee, not the whites, belong in Ohio and to say he is ashamed of his white blood. Weasel is disgusted when Ezra marries a Shawnee woman, and he thinks of Ezra's unborn child as a "half-breed animal."
- Molly is an engaging child, and she draws Ezra out of his antisocial shell to a certain extent. Most importantly, she writes a letter to Ezra advising him to stop being alone by going to Kansas and finding his wife's relatives. Weasel's death liberates Ezra from his hatred, and Ezra then takes Molly's advice and heads west.
- Nathan learns that revenge brings the person seeking and getting revenge down to the level of the person who caused the injury or committed the crime, and that getting revenge doesn't take away the pain of what happened—peace is achieved by letting go of hate, not by revenge.
- Pa is injured when he steps into a large, cleverly hidden trap set by Weasel. Left by Weasel to die, Pa is saved by Ezra, who takes him to his we-gi-wa, stitches up the wound, and brings the children from the farm. Molly brings Mama's medicine bag with her, and Ezra and Molly find herbs in the bag that stop the wound's festering and drive away Pa's fever.

COMPREHENSION TEST B

Part I: Matching (20 points)

- | | |
|------|-------|
| 1. j | 6. f |
| 2. d | 7. i |
| 3. c | 8. h |
| 4. g | 9. b |
| 5. a | 10. e |

Part II: Multiple Choice (20 points)

- | | |
|------|-------|
| 1. b | 6. b |
| 2. c | 7. c |
| 3. a | 8. a |
| 4. d | 9. d |
| 5. c | 10. b |

Part III: Short Answer (30 points)

- | | |
|-----------------------|----------------------------|
| 1. Shawnee | 9. animal skins (buckskin) |
| 2. Daniel Boone | 10. stone wall |
| 3. Ohio | 11. hat |
| 4. Crabapple (Crabby) | 12. Fowler |
| 5. fiddle | 13. map |
| 6. necklace | 14. Indian fighter |
| 7. hair | 15. dance/fiddle contest |
| 8. medicine bag | |

Part IV: Essay (30 points)

Answers will vary somewhat. Samples follow.

- Pa tells Nathan that killing Weasel wouldn't change anything, except for maybe bringing Nathan closer to being like Weasel. Pa advises Nathan to put Weasel behind him—not to forget the bad things Weasel has done, but to remember the good things about life.
- Being employed as an Indian fighter gave Weasel a taste for killing, especially since government officials apparently were not concerned that Weasel's preferred method of removing Indians was to kill them. Accustomed to killing, Weasel turns to white settlers as prey once all the Indians are gone.
- Nathan hates Weasel for all the pain and suffering Weasel has caused. He hates Weasel for mutilating Ezra, for killing Ezra's wife and unborn child, for leaving Pa to die in the trap, for killing whole families of Indians and white settlers, for slaughtering his family's livestock.
- Contact with the Indians has turned Ezra from an Indian fighter and killer into a supporter of Native Americans and their right to remain on their traditional land. He has found love and family with his Shawnee wife, and he lives and dresses in the Shawnee way. Unfortunately, his support of Indians and his marriage also bring Ezra great tragedy, as they are the motivators for Weasel's cutting out of Ezra's tongue and murder of Ezra's wife and unborn child. Finally, Ezra ends his long years of life as a hermit by going west and seeking his wife's Shawnee kin to live with.



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