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**Study Guide**

for

**Across Five  
Aprils**

by Irene Hunt



**Glencoe  
McGraw-Hill**

New York, New York   Columbus, Ohio   Woodland Hills, California   Peoria, Illinois

# Meet Irene Hunt



*I don't want to aim at a special age of reader. I write when I have something to say, and I hope to say it as well and as gracefully as I can.*

—Irene Hunt, quoted in *Publisher's Weekly*

Irene Hunt was born in 1907 in Pontiac, Illinois, but soon moved with her parents to the town of Newton in southern Illinois. The innocence of Hunt's childhood ended abruptly at the age of seven, when her father died. After her father's death, a child said to her, "You aren't going to live here anymore, are you?" On hearing these words, a grief-stricken Irene went off and hid in a closet.

Before long, Hunt and her mother did leave Newton. They went to live with Hunt's maternal grandparents on a farm close by. It was there that Hunt first heard her grandfather's many captivating stories about his life during the Civil War. Of her grandfather, Hunt writes:

*He was a good storyteller, and he gave his listeners a wealth of detail that enabled us to share with him the anxiety and sorrow of the times as well as the moments of happiness in a closely-knit family.*

Many years later, Hunt would draw on the rich legacy of her grandfather's stories to write an award-winning historical novel. This novel would feature a farm boy from

southern Illinois who comes of age during the Civil War—just as Hunt's grandfather had done.

**Persistence Pays Off** Before winning acclaim as a writer, Irene Hunt had a long and successful career in education. Despite the demands of teaching, she found time to work on her writing. Year after year, she sat at the typewriter at her kitchen table creating stories that she hoped would one day be published. Finally, in 1964, she met with success when *Across Five Aprils* was published. The novel was named a Newbery Medal Honor Book in 1965.

Critics praised the novel for its historical accuracy and its engaging story of the Creightons, a southern Illinois farm family caught up in the momentous events of the Civil War years. Hunt did extensive research to ensure the historical accuracy of the novel. Regarding the family story that forms the backbone of the book, she has noted:

*As to the story of the Creightons, there is hardly a page in this book on which a situation has not been suggested by family letters and records and by the stories told by my grandfather.*

Hunt's next novel, *Up a Road Slowly*, was, like *Across Five Aprils*, a coming-of-age story. Based on her own experience, it is the story of a young girl named Julie who lost a parent at the age of seven. It won the Newbery Medal in 1967.

**Later Years** Hunt was not content to rest on her laurels after the success of her first two books. She continued to write books featuring complex, realistic characters who confronted life's challenges. Hunt also spent time pursuing her hobbies and interests—cooking, traveling, and "[reading] beautiful, well-written books and [listening to] beautiful very loud music." After living in Illinois for many years, Hunt moved to Florida in the early 1970s, where she still lives.

# Introducing the Novel

*This is a beautifully written book, filled with bloodshed, hate, and tears, but also with love, loyalty, and compassion, with unforgettable characters, and with ideas and implications that have meaning for young people today.*

—Chicago Tribune

*Across Five Aprils* is the story of the Creightons, a farm family from southern Illinois that struggles to survive the upheaval of the Civil War years. Jethro Creighton, the main character, is nine years old when the story begins, and his sister Jenny is fourteen. The story takes place over the five Aprils of the Civil War: April 1861 through April 1865. The tale is focused, in particular, on Jethro's coming of age—and, to a lesser extent, his sister Jenny's journey into young adulthood.

Through Jethro, readers grasp the impact that the Civil War had on the soldiers who fought it as well as on the people who remained behind to tend to farms and families. Readers also witness the kinds of conflicts that sometimes tore families and communities apart in border states such as Illinois.

The novel's historical accuracy is due to Hunt's meticulous research and attention to detail. The Creightons' tale is based on stories that Hunt's grandfather told about his own experiences during the war, as well as on family letters and records. Hunt noted that her grandfather, like Jethro, was nine years old at the outbreak of the Civil War.

## THE TIME AND PLACE

*Across Five Aprils* begins within days of the bombardment of Fort Sumter, the first armed conflict of the Civil War. At that time, seven Southern states had already seceded, or formally withdrawn, from the Union. They had declared themselves a new nation, the Confederate States of America.

The Confederacy had taken over most of the federal operations in the South. President Lincoln, determined to hold the Union together, warned Southerners that the government would continue to “hold, occupy, and possess” all its property in the secessionist states. Southerners did

not want outsiders doing business on their soil. Tensions escalated.

Fort Sumter, located on a rocky island in the harbor of Charleston, South Carolina, was, at that time, one of only two federal forts still held by federal troops in the South. Supplies were running low, so its commander, Major Robert Anderson, had contacted Lincoln to request more soldiers and provisions. Meanwhile, P. G. T. Beauregard, a general in the new Confederate army, had surrounded the harbor with cannons to prevent federal supply ships from reaching the fort.

The Confederates waited for Major Anderson and his troops to withdraw. Anderson waited for Lincoln's response. Lincoln, not wanting to anger Southerners even more, decided not to send troops—but he did send supply ships with provisions. The Confederates considered even the order to send supply ships an act of war. On April 12, 1861, soon after learning that a fleet was on its way, General Beauregard fired on the fort.

“Showers of balls . . . and shells . . . poured into the fort in one incessant stream, causing great flakes of masonry to fall in all directions,” according to Captain Abner Doubleday, a soldier inside the fort during the attack. On the second day of the attack, one of the major's men came to him to plead for surrender. With rubble and raging flames all around, Major Anderson could not reasonably do anything else. After thirty-four hours of bombardment, but no loss of life on either side, Anderson surrendered. The Confederates hoisted their flag over the fort and fired its guns in a victory salute.

Three days later, President Lincoln asked for seventy-five thousand volunteers to serve in the army for ninety days to help restore order in the South. So many men volunteered that there was not enough equipment to outfit them or enough experienced soldiers on hand to train them.

Meanwhile, in response to Lincoln's call for volunteers to suppress the rebellion in the South, four more states joined the Confederacy. Jefferson Davis, president of the Confederacy,



# Before You Read

## Across Five Aprils Chapters 1–3

### FOCUS ACTIVITY

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Think of a time when you were forced to “take a side” in an argument or another conflict. What did you do? Why?

#### Think-Pair-Share

List some of the factors you might consider when choosing sides in an argument or another conflict. Then share and compare your list with a classmate. Discuss which factors might influence you the most.

#### Setting a Purpose

Read to learn about the difficult choices characters face at the outbreak of the Civil War.

### BACKGROUND

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#### Dialect

Many of the characters in this novel speak a **dialect**—a variety of language used in a particular region or by members of a particular group. Dialects may differ from the standard form of the language in vocabulary, grammar, and pronunciation. Here are two examples of dialect from *Across Five Aprils*:

*It 'mazes me, Jeth, it does fer a fact, the way you kin recollect all the things Shad tells you and how you kin put them from his way of talkin' into mine.*

*It's been days that I've looked for'ard to hevin' a meal with you, and here I've lost myself in talk that gits me worked up and loud of voice.*

Notice how Irene Hunt uses phonetic spellings to represent the characters' pronunciation of certain words. For example, she writes *fer* for *for*, *kin* for *can*, *hevin'* for *having*, and *gits* for *gets*. She uses apostrophes to indicate that they do not pronounce particular letters. For example, she writes *'mazes* for *amazes* and *for'ard* for *forward*. As you read, use context clues to help you understand the dialect. In Standard English, the example sentences above might be written as follows:

*It really amazes me, Jeth, how you can remember all the things that Shad tells you and how you can translate them from his way of speaking into mine.*

*For days, I've looked forward to having a meal with you, and here I've lost myself in talk that gets me upset and makes me loud.*

### VOCABULARY PREVIEW

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**aloof** [ə lōōf'] *adj.* removed or distant either physically or emotionally (p. 12)

**comeuppance** [kum' up' əns] *n.* a deserved penalty or punishment (p. 5)

**desolate** [des' ə lit] *adj.* miserable; forsaken (p. 29)

**hedge** [hej] *v.* avoid giving a direct answer; evade the risk of commitment (p. 20)

**secession** [si sesh' ən] *n.* formal withdrawal from an organization; withdrawal from the Union by the eleven Southern states that formed the Confederacy (p. 9)

**tumult** [tōō' məlt] *n.* mental or emotional agitation (p. 21)

# Active Reading

## *Across Five Aprils* Chapters 1-3

In this section, the author introduces many characters. Pay attention to qualities that help define each character. Summarize your ideas in a few words, and then jot them down in the appropriate spaces in the chart below.

Character	Distinguishing Traits
Jethro	intelligent, sensitive, curious
Ellen	
Matt	
Jenny	
John	
Nancy	
Bill	
Tom	
Eb Carron	
Shadrach Yale	

# Responding

## *Across Five Aprils* Chapters 1–3

### Personal Response

What images from the Creighton farmstead are still in your mind? Identify the scenes, people, and things that you remember the most vividly. Then discuss with a partner what made them so memorable to you.

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### Analyzing Literature

#### Recall and Interpret

1. Briefly describe what you learn in chapter 1 about the Creightons and their way of life. What threatens to disrupt their lives?

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2. Who was Mary Creighton, and what happened to her? What does Matthew's reaction to this tragedy seem to suggest about his character?

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3. Who is the Creightons' dinner guest? What is the main topic of conversation? Why does Ellen finally order the young men to change the subject?

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4. What news does Shad bring back to the family? What appears to be the prevailing reaction to this news? Who appears to be troubled by it? Explain.

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5. Why is it so hard for Bill to go off to war? What does he think his decision will cost him? Explain.

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# Responding

## Across Five Aprils Chapters 1–3

### Analyzing Literature (*continued*)

#### Evaluate and Connect

6. Why might the author have chosen to have a family member from a Southern state visit the Creightons at this time? What could the visit **foreshadow**?

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7. Review your response to the **Focus Activity** on page 16. What factors appear to have influenced Bill the most in his choosing sides in the war? Give reasons for your answer.

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### Literature and Writing

#### Analyzing Character

Review the character chart that you completed in the **Active Reading** on page 17. Then, in a paragraph or two, write an analysis of one of these characters. In your analysis, answer questions such as the following: What are the defining characteristics of this person? What do the character’s words, actions, and relationships with other characters reveal about him or her? Does this character seem true to life? Is this a person with whom readers can identify or sympathize? In your opinion, is this person admirable? Support your ideas and opinions with evidence from the novel.

#### Extending Your Response

##### Literature Groups

In your group, list the issues that Wilse and the Creightons discuss and debate over dinner. What opinions do different characters express about each issue? What facts or reasons do they give to support their viewpoints? How do their differences of opinion help you better understand the conflicts that led to the Civil War? After your group discusses these questions, share and compare your ideas with the members of another group.

##### Science Connection

Jethro explains Copernicus’s revolutionary idea to his mother in such a way as to make it familiar and understandable to her (see pages 5–6). Imagine that you have been asked to explain a simple scientific concept to a group of first-graders. Choose a concept and write a brief story that presents this idea in a way that would be understandable to young children. If you wish, you may personify the objects, animals, or forces of nature involved in what you are explaining—that is, you can give them human qualities.



*Save your work for your portfolio.*

# Before You Read

## *Across Five Aprils* Chapters 4–6

### FOCUS ACTIVITY

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What is the biggest responsibility you have ever been asked to handle?

#### Journal

Write about the thoughts that went through your mind when you were asked to assume an important responsibility. Then write about the experience of actually tackling this responsibility. What did you discover about yourself in the process?

#### Setting a Purpose

Read to find out about the new responsibilities that Jethro must assume.

### BACKGROUND

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#### Did You Know?

An ironclad was a type of warship developed in Europe and the United States in the mid-1800s. It was characterized by iron casemates that protected the hull. On March 8, 1862, off Hampton Roads, Virginia, the Confederate ironclad *Virginia* (formerly the *Merrimack*) destroyed two Northern wooden warships and chased three others ashore. The next day, when the Union ironclad *Monitor* met the *Virginia* at Hampton Roads, ironclad battled ironclad for the first time in naval history. Although neither ship suffered much damage in the four-hour fight, the battle marked a turning point in naval warfare: afterward, wooden warships were replaced with ironclads. Refinements in the years to follow would convert the ironclad into the battleship.

#### The Origin of the Term *Copperhead*

Even in the North, many people were critical of President Lincoln. Abolitionists criticized him for his willingness to tolerate slavery. They felt that the elimination of slavery should be a goal of the war. Some members of Lincoln's own party, who were known as Radical Republicans, opposed the president's position that the primary goal of the war should be to preserve the Union. Within the Democratic Party was a group called the Peace Democrats, who favored ending the war at any cost. They were willing to allow the South to return to the Union, or to let the slave states secede from the Union in peace. Republican journalists compared these Democrats to the poisonous copperhead snake. The name caught on. Some Copperheads openly supported the South; others encouraged Northerners to resist the war.

### VOCABULARY PREVIEW

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**abolitionist** [ab'əlish'ənɪst] *n.* a person in favor of abolishing, or ending, slavery (p. 44)

**demotion** [di mō'shən] *n.* a reduction to a lower rank or a grade of lesser importance (p. 68)

**detain** [di tān'] *v.* to delay or hold back (p. 38)

**dissipate** [dis'əpāt'] *v.* to break up and scatter (p. 75)

**forte** [fôrt] *n.* one's strong point (p. 58)

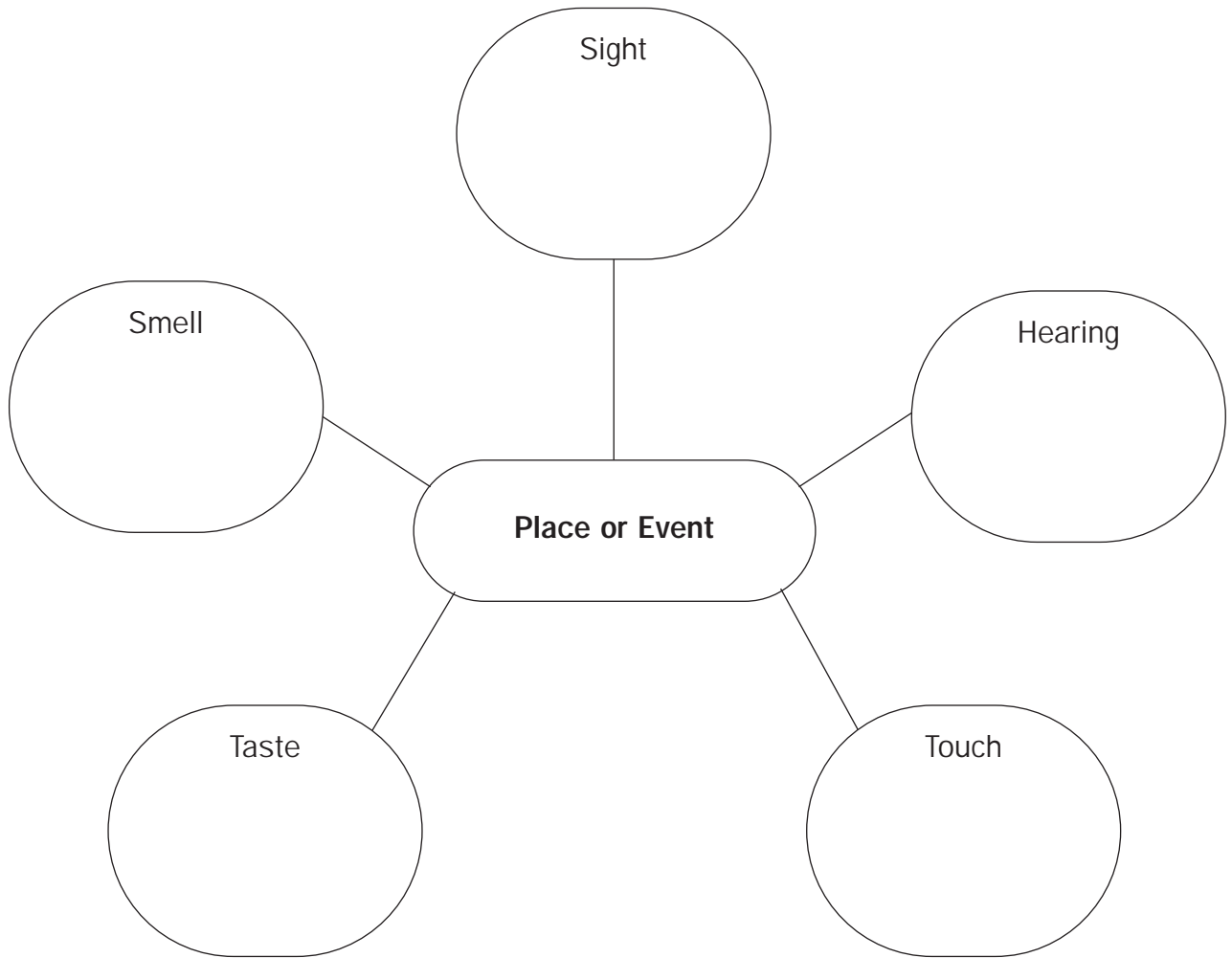
**indistinct** [in'dis tɪŋkt'] *adj.* not sharply outlined (p. 50)

**pompous** [pɒm'pəs] *adj.* self-important or arrogant (p. 45)

# Active Reading

## *Across Five Aprils* Chapters 4–6

To help readers vividly imagine people, places, and events, writers use **sensory details**—descriptions that appeal to one or more of the five senses. As you read the following chapters, choose a place or an event that comes across vividly to you. In the appropriate circle, jot down details that help you imagine this place or event. If a detail appeals to more than one sense, record it in each appropriate circle.



# Responding

## *Across Five Aprils* Chapters 4–6

### Personal Response

What went through your mind as you read about Jethro's encounters with Guy Wortman and Dave Burdow?

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### Analyzing Literature

#### Recall and Interpret

1. Summarize what Tom says in his letter (page 36). Why does Ed Turner remark, "A fam'ly needs to be alone when one of these letters comes"?

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2. Why, do you suppose, does Ellen detain Jeth so long before finally sending him off to Shad's? Describe Jeth's visit with Shad.

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3. What does Ellen try to do without and why? What happens as a result of her decision? What might explain Matt's contradictory instructions?

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4. Describe Jeth's encounters with Guy Wortman. What does Jeth's response to Wortman's question suggest about Jeth's character and his loyalties? Explain.

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5. What are the two major misfortunes that befall the Creightons during the spring of 1862? What impact do these events have on Jeth?

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# Responding

## Across Five Aprils Chapters 4–6

### Analyzing Literature (*continued*)

#### Evaluate and Connect

6. What is the **mood** in the novel as Jethro approaches the Burdow place on his way home from Newton? Give examples of details that evoke to this mood.

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7. Review your response to the **Focus Activity** on page 20. Then compare and contrast the biggest responsibility you've ever tackled to the responsibility Jethro is entrusted with at the age of ten.

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### Literature and Writing

#### Comparison and Contrast

In chapter 6, the narrator says, “If someone had asked Jethro to name a time when he left childhood behind him, he might have named that last week of March in 1862” (page 70). Write a couple of paragraphs in which you compare and contrast the person Jethro was before his trip to Newton with the person he is by the time he discovers the coal oil in the well. Identify the events that force Jethro to leave childhood behind.

### Extending Your Response

#### Literature Groups

In your group, consider the situation that develops after it becomes known that Bill has most likely joined the Confederate Army. Why are certain people are so angry about this? Is their anger justified? Why or why not? How does the expression “guilt by association” apply to the situation in which the Creightons find themselves? What makes the idea of “mob justice” so frightening? Discuss and debate these issues in your group. Have one group member present your group’s conclusions to the class.

#### Performing

With a group of classmates, choose a scene from chapters 4–6 that you would like to dramatize. Assign roles and plan how you will stage the scene. You may wish to create scenery and use props. Some group members may want to design costumes for their characters. Rehearse your scene and present it for the class.



*Save your work for your portfolio.*

# Before You Read

## Across Five Aprils Chapters 7–9

### FOCUS ACTIVITY

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What is your definition of a *bully*? What are some effective ways to deal with bullies?

#### Share Ideas

In a small group, brainstorm possible ways to get a person to stop behaving as a bully. Examine your ideas and consider the likely consequences of using them. Then select the three best strategies on your list and share them with the rest of the class.

#### Setting a Purpose

Read to learn how a bully provides some comic relief amid the tragedy of war.

### BACKGROUND

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#### Did You Know?

Many Civil War battles have two names. This is because the Union usually named battles after the nearest body of water, while the Confederacy named them after the nearest settlement. For example, the battle that Northerners called the Battle of Bull Run—after a creek—Southerners called the Battle of Manassas—after a settlement. Keep this fact in mind to avoid getting confused when you are reading about the Civil War or doing your own research about it.

#### Verbal Irony

**Verbal Irony** is the use of words to express something other than, and especially, the opposite of, the literal meaning. A person says one thing but means another. In chapter 7, for example, Ross Milton writes a letter and prints it in his newspaper. It begins as follows: “To the patriots who defiled the well and burned the barn on Matthew Creighton’s farm sometime during the night of May 10, 1862” (page 85). Milton’s use of the word *patriots* is an example of verbal irony. Milton does not consider the men who committed these acts to be patriots—people who love and support their country with enthusiasm—but rather cowards. As you read the letter, look for evidence that Milton is using the word *patriots* ironically. Look for other examples of verbal irony in the letter and in the rest of this section of the novel.

### VOCABULARY PREVIEW

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**compassion** [kəm pəʃən] *n.* concern for another’s distress; pity (p. 115)

**disillusioned** [dɪs’i lōō’ zhənd] *adj.* stripped of hopes or optimistic notions (p. 99)

**hoard** [hōrd] *v.* to keep [something] to oneself (p. 96)

**inept** [i nept’] *adj.* lacking in fitness or aptitude (p. 90)

**interminable** [ɪn tur’mi nə bəl] *adj.* having or seeming to have no end (p. 113)

**lurk** [lurk] *v.* to lie in wait in a place (p. 83)

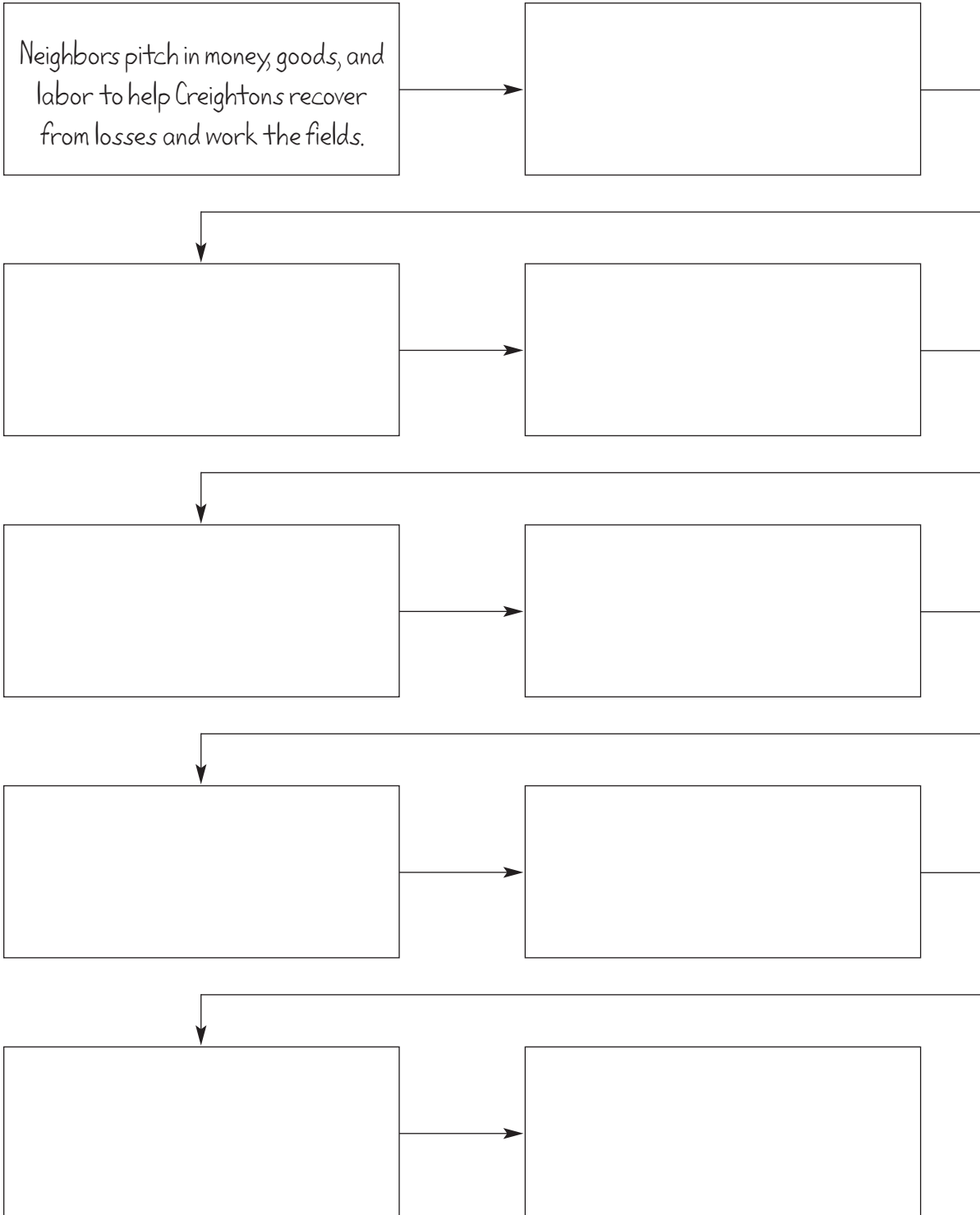
**provoke** [prə vōk’] *v.* to call forth a feeling or an action (p. 103)

**tenacious** [tɪ nā’shəs] *adj.* determined; unyielding; persistent (p. 89)

# Active Reading

## *Across Five Aprils* Chapters 7-9

Jotting down events on a diagram such as the one below can help you keep track of the order in which events occur. As you read chapters 7-9, follow the arrows as you note important events in the boxes.



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# Responding

## *Across Five Aprils* Chapters 7–9

### Personal Response

What did you find most surprising or most inspiring about this section of the novel? Explain your choice.

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### Analyzing Literature

#### Recall and Interpret

1. What news does Dan Lawrence bring to the Creightons? How does Jenny's outlook change as a result of this news? What does she seem to realize for the first time?

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2. Describe the incident involving Sam Gardiner and Guy Wortman. What does this incident suggest about methods of dealing with bullies? Compare the approach used by Gardiner and Ross Milton with the strategies your group suggested in the **Focus Activity** on page 24.

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3. According to the narrator, what effect do the battles of Fredericksburg and Stones River have on Union soldiers and their supporters? In your opinion, why do these battles have this effect?

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4. Whom does Jeth find hiding in the woods? What **internal conflict**, or inner struggle, does this discovery create for Jeth? How does he try to resolve this conflict?

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5. What response does Jeth receive to his letter? What does this response suggest about the character of the person who wrote it?

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# Responding

## Across Five Aprils Chapters 7–9

### Analyzing Literature (*continued*)

#### Evaluate and Connect

6. Evaluate Jethro’s decision not to tell his father about the situation with Eb. Did he make the right choice? Why or why not?

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7. What is your opinion of the decision that President Lincoln has made with regard to deserters? Is his decision fair? Give reasons for your answer.

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### Literature and Writing

#### Letter to the President

Chapter 9 ends with President Lincoln’s response to Jethro’s letter. Use this response, as well as other information in the chapter, to try to imagine what Jethro wrote in his letter. Then write your own version of Jethro’s letter to Abraham Lincoln. Before you begin, jot down the main points Jethro wanted to make. Include a description of Eb’s situation as well as a request for the president’s advice. Be sure to use the proper form for a business letter.

### Extending Your Response

#### Literature Groups

How do the Creightons’ friends and neighbors help them recover from the damage inflicted by the vandals? How do they help the family keep the farm running despite Matt’s illness? Answer these questions in your group. Then discuss what might have happened to the Creightons without the support and generosity of people in their community. What resources exist in your own community to help individuals or families facing problems? Explain ways in which today people are more or less willing to help others than they were in the past. After discussing these questions, share your group’s ideas with the entire class.

#### Social Studies Connection

In your local library or on the Internet, do some research to find letters, diary accounts, and photographs from the Civil War era. Try to find materials that help you better understand what the war experience was like for soldiers and for the loved ones they left behind. Then, use your materials to create an “up close and personal” view of the war—or if you wish, of a particular battle. Present the results of your research to your classmates.

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# Before You Read

## *Across Five Aprils* Chapters 10–12

### FOCUS ACTIVITY

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Think of a time when a person said or did something that caused deep hurt to you or to someone you know. Was it possible to forgive the person and forget the incident, or did it damage or even ruin the relationship?

#### Journal

In your journal, explore your ideas about hurtful behavior, forgiveness, and reconciliation. Consider the aftermath of conflicts between individuals or groups when one or both parties are unwilling to forgive and forget.

#### Setting a Purpose

Read to learn whether the end of the war will also mean an end to the conflicts between North and South.

### BACKGROUND

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#### Did You Know?

On September 22, 1862, President Lincoln issued a preliminary proclamation that in its revised form would later become the Emancipation Proclamation. This official public announcement declared that in states that had seceded from the Union, all enslaved persons would be “forever free” unless the states returned to the Union by January 1, 1863. When these states failed to reenter the Union that January, the proclamation went into effect, but it did not actually free all enslaved people. More than eight hundred thousand enslaved people lived in border states that had remained in the Union or in Union-occupied areas. Under the terms of the proclamation, these people were not made “forever free.” By wording this early version of the amendment as he did, Lincoln was able to win the much-needed support of abolitionists and weaken the Confederacy without angering slaveholders in the Union.

#### Dramatic Irony

**Dramatic irony** is a situation in which the audience is aware of something that a character does not know. For example, most readers of *Across Five Aprils* know that President Lincoln was assassinated in April 1865. Thus, when Ross Milton says that he is counting on Lincoln to help heal the bitterness between North and South, readers know, but Milton cannot know, that this will not be possible. As you read, look for other examples of dramatic irony.

### VOCABULARY PREVIEW

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**bigot** [big'ət] *n.* a person stubbornly devoted to his or her own prejudices and opinions (p. 142)

**complicity** [kəm plis'ə tē] *n.* participation in a wrongful act (p. 127)

**egotism** [ē'gə tiz'əm] *n.* an exaggerated sense of self-importance: conceit (p. 117)

**gracious** [grā'shəs] *adj.* characterized by charm, good taste, and generosity of spirit (p. 139)

**irreparable** [i rep'ər ə bəl] *adj.* not able to be fixed, repaired, or undone (p. 147)

**siege** [sēj] *n.* a military blockade of a city or fortified place to force its inhabitants to surrender (p. 133)

# Active Reading

## Across Five Aprils Chapters 10-12

In this novel, characters write letters that help the reader understand the human dimensions of war. Many of these letters are written by soldiers and include eyewitness accounts of battles. Such letters help the reader imagine what it was like to be on the battlefield and to participate in scenes of mass destruction and death. As you read the letters in chapters 10-12, take notes on what you learn from selected letters, following the model below.

### Letter from Shad (page 117)

Shad has escaped injury in three battles but has seen much suffering. Has become pessimistic about surviving the war. Warns Jenny to prepare for his probable death.

### Letter from

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### Letter from

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### Letter from

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# Responding

## *Across Five Aprils* Chapters 10–12

### Personal Response

What events in this last part of the novel did you find the most memorable or powerful? Give reasons for your choices.

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### Analyzing Literature

#### Recall and Interpret

1. What happens at Gettysburg? After this battle, why do people begin to suspect a conspiracy among the generals?

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2. Why does Jenny go to Washington, D.C.? How does this journey mark an important turning point in her life? Explain.

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3. Describe John's meeting with Bill. What does Bill's request suggest about the cost of following his conscience?

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4. When does word come that the war has finally ended? Why does the narrator say that this April is the "saddest and most cruel" of the five?

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5. What will Jethro do now that the war has ended? How does his decision reflect the Creightons' values?

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# Responding

## Across Five Aprils Chapters 10–12

### Analyzing Literature (*continued*)

#### Evaluate and Connect

6. Do you think that Bill should come home now that the war is over? Give reasons for your answer.

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7. Recall your response to the **Focus Activity** on page 28. In your opinion, why does Ross Milton say, “Don’t expect peace to be a perfect pearl, Jeth”?

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### Literature and Writing

#### Letter of Persuasion

Imagine that you are Shadrach Yale. You are writing to Matt and Ellen to request permission to take Jethro back East with you and Jenny. Your plan is to help Jethro get a good education. List reasons that are likely to convince the Creightons to agree to your plan. Note how your plan is likely to benefit not only Jethro but other members of the Creighton family as well. Anticipate objections that the Creightons may raise and respond to each possible objection in your letter.

### Extending Your Response

#### Literature Groups

If you could go back to the time of the Civil War, which character in the novel would you most like to be? Why? Share your choice and your reasons for it with the other members of your group. Invite group members to give their opinions of your choice. Was the same character chosen by more than one group member? If so, compare the reasons given for choosing that character. Meet with the members of another group to share and compare your choices.

#### Learning for Life

Choose a newsworthy event from this section of the novel—for example, the Battle of Gettysburg, the signing of the peace treaty to end the war, or the assassination of Lincoln. Research the event in your library or on the Internet. Then, write the script for an in-depth news report on this event. You may include accounts provided by eyewitnesses to these events, but these accounts must be historically accurate. Present your news report to the class, or videotape it and play the tape for your classmates. Be prepared to submit copies of your source materials to verify your information.

Emmy E.  
Werner

# *from* Reluctant Witnesses: Children's Voices from the Civil War

## Before You Read

### Focus Question

Recall a time when you were told that you were too young to assume a particular responsibility. How did you react? What were your thoughts and emotions?

### Background

During the Civil War, scores of boys under the age of eighteen served in the Union and Confederate armies. Thousands were musicians or drummers, but many others saw combat. It was not difficult for mature-looking boys to enlist in regular army units, especially if their parents did not oppose their desire to join.

## Responding to the Reading

1. According to Werner, what prompted Northern and Southern boys to enlist? What do these reasons seem to suggest about the boys' views of war?

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2. What jobs were considered "non-fighting positions" in the army? How many boys served in such positions in the Union army? In the Confederate army? What is your opinion of the fact that boys were allowed on the battlefield? Explain.

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3. Describe the job of a drummer boy. What qualities did a boy need to do this job well?

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4. **Making Connections** If Jethro had not been needed on the farm, do you think he might have wanted to enlist in a nonfighting position at the start of the war? Why or why not?

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## Journal Entry

Imagine that you are a drummer boy in the Union or Confederate army. Record in your journal the events of a typical day and your thoughts and feelings about them.

Walt Whitman

# Come Up from the Fields Father *and* An Army Corps on the March

## Before You Read

### Focus Question

What are some ways in which people react when they receive bad news?

### Background

In December 1862, poet Walt Whitman got off a train near Fredricksburg, Virginia, where he hoped to find his wounded brother, George. There he saw a pile of body parts—limbs amputated from a recent battle. This sight, and others haunted Whitman and inspired him to write many moving war poems.

## Responding to the Readings

1. In the first poem, what has happened to Pete? Explain how his mother reacts to this news.

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2. What is the contrast between the **setting** of the first poem and the news that the letter brings?

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3. What may Whitman’s purpose have been in writing “An Army Corps on the March”? Explain.

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4. **Making Connections** Which incident in *Across Five Aprils* is similar to that described in the first poem? Compare and contrast the ways in which the news is delivered and received in both.

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## Art Connection

Many artists painted pictures of Civil War battles and of people and places that were affected by the war. These artists included Conrad Wise Chapman, Francis Bicknell Carpenter, and Winslow Homer. Find one of their paintings to illustrate either of these Whitman poems. Write a caption linking it to the poem.

Eugene L.  
Meyer

# from The Odyssey of Pvt. Rosetta Wakeman, Union Army

## Before You Read

### Focus Question

Do you think that women should have been allowed to serve as soldiers in the Civil War? Why or why not?

### Background

Some women disguised themselves as men to enlist in the Union and Confederate armies. This article recounts the story of Sarah Rosetta Wakeman, who served as “Private Lyons Wakeman” in the Union army.

## Responding to the Reading

1. Why did National Park Service officials ban Lauren Cook Burgess from playing the role of a soldier in a reenactment of a Civil War battle? What did she do in response?

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2. What family secret did Burgess learn in a letter from Ruth Goodier of Chipley, Florida? Why might the family have still been guarding this secret up until the present time?

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3. What did Wakeman do at the age of nineteen? What do her experiences suggest about the limitations most women faced at that time?

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4. **Making Connections** How do Wakeman’s letters home, as well as those sent by soldiers in *Across Five Aprils*, help you gain a deeper understanding of what it was like to fight in the Civil War?

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## Learning for Life

Imagine that you are Sarah Rosetta Wakeman and that you are writing to President Lincoln to ask that he grant women the right to enlist in the Union army. Use facts and valid reasons to build your case. You may wish to mention that you are already serving in the army, disguised as a man. You also may want to mention that women are already being exposed to the horrors of war in hospitals and war-ravaged areas.

Walter  
Kittridge

# Tenting on the Old Camp Ground

## Before You Read

### Focus Question

Imagine a Civil War campground. What kinds of songs might soldiers sing before or after a battle?

### Background

Civil War soldiers passed the time in the same ways. When not in battle, drills, or serving guard duty, they played checkers, chess, or cards; had races; read books or magazines; wrote letters or diary entries; or sang. A popular song was “Tenting on the Old Camp Ground.”

## Responding to the Reading

1. What do the soldiers wish for in the first verse and the chorus? What do these wishes suggest?

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2. What are the soldiers thinking about in the second verse? How does the **mood** of the second verse seem to differ from that of the first?

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3. What do you learn in the third verse that was not obvious in the first two verses? What shift in **mood** occurs from the second verse to the third?

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4. How does the last chorus differ from the first two? How does the change reveal the reality of war?

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5. **Making Connections** Choose a character from the novel who has gone off to war. Describe the thoughts and images that he might have while listening to this song.

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## Writing Song Lyrics

Write a song that you think might appeal to soldiers camped at the battlefield. Your song should have at least two verses and one chorus. You may wish to set your lyrics to music and perform your song for the class.

Le Ly Hayslip  
(translated  
by the author  
and Helen  
Coutant)

# from *When Heaven and Earth Changed Places*, & Lament of Ben Hai River Nhat Hanh

## Before You Read

### Focus Question

How does it feel to be caught in the middle of two people who have opposing views?

### Background

Le Ly Hayslip wrote the memoir subtitled “A Vietnamese Woman’s Journey from War to Peace” after a return visit to her native Vietnam following a sixteen-year absence. The poem “Lament of Ben Hai River” is from the collection *From Both Sides Now*. It concerns the Vietnam War and its aftermath.

## Responding to the Readings

1. What did the author do before she “was twelve and knew better”? Why didn’t she enjoy this activity?

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2. What political division is marked by the Ben Hai River? Symbolically, what does the river divide?

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3. What is the speaker’s attitude toward the conflict between North and South Vietnam? Explain.

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4. **Making Connections** Cite the similarities between the conflict in the novel and that in these selections.

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### Interdisciplinary Connection: History

Have students research to learn more about the Vietnam War. Students may wish to work in small groups as they gather their information. Encourage them to look for sources in a variety of media.