The Killer Angels

INTRODUCTION

BRIEF BIOGRAPHY OF MICHAEL SHAARA

Michael Shaara was born to an Italian immigrant and World War I POW father and a mother descended from Revolutionary War patriots. He graduated from Rutgers University in 1951 and served as a paratrooper in the 82nd Airborne Division. A decorated amateur boxer, Shaara also worked as a police officer in St. Petersburg, Florida, before becoming a professor of creative writing at Florida State University. Over the course of his career, he published more than 70 short stories, many of them science fiction, and several novels, including *For Love of the Game*, a story about a baseball legend. He suffered a serious Vespa accident while teaching in Florence, Italy, which left him unconscious for five weeks and dealing with health repercussions for many years. Shaara based *The Killer Angels* on the recollections of generals and ordinary soldiers instead of on scholarly interpretations of the Civil War. He won the Pulitzer Prize for Fiction for *The Killer Angels* in 1975. He died of a heart attack at age 59. After Shaara's death, his son, Jeff Shaara, wrote a prequel to *The Killer Angels*, *Gods and Generals* (1996) as well as a sequel, *The Last Full Measure* (1998).

HISTORICAL CONTEXT

The American Civil War was fought between 1861 and 1865, between eleven secessionist states (the Confederacy) and those states that remained loyal to the United States Constitution (the Union). While various factors contributed to the outbreak of war, it was centrally fought over the seceding states' support for the institution of slavery within their borders. Well over 600,000 people died over the course of the war. Gettysburg was the bloodiest battle of the entire war and has often been regarded as its turning point. At the time Michael Shaara wrote *The Killer Angels*, the Civil Rights movement, which confronted some of the continuing legacies of slavery, was particularly fresh in American minds. Nonetheless, in the century since the Battle of Gettysburg took place, interest in the novel's central characters and issues had never entirely waned in popular consciousness.

RELATED LITERARY WORKS

The Red Badge of Courage (1895), written from the perspective of a Union soldier, is one of the earliest works of Civil War historical fiction. Probably the most popular such book is fellow Pulitzer prize winner *Gone with the Wind* (1936), by Margaret Mitchell, which portrays the devastations of the war from the perspective of one Georgia family. Another acclaimed work of historical fiction from the 1970s is Alex Haley's *Roots*, which traces the experiences of one African-American family from west African origins to life in twentieth century America.

KEY FACTS

- **Full Title:** *The Killer Angels*
- **When Published:** 1974
- **Literary Period:** Modern fiction
- **Genre:** Historical fiction
- **Setting:** Gettysburg, Pennsylvania, United States
- **Climax:** Pickett's Charge, the third and final day of the battle
- **Antagonist:** Both the Confederate and Union armies
- **Point of View:** Alternating third person limited

EXTRA CREDIT

From Novel to Screen. *The Killer Angels* helped inspire Ken Burns' highly regarded PBS miniseries *The Civil War* (1990) and was the source for the screenplay of the 1993 film *Gettysburg*. Together these works stirred renewed popular interest in the Civil War, including Gettysburg tourism, in the 1990s.

Family Connection. Shaara first visited Gettysburg out of interest in his own family history—his great-grandfather, a soldier from Georgia, was wounded in battle there. From his ancestor's letters, Shaara became interested in Robert E. Lee's letters, which finally inspired him to tell Lee's story through fiction.

PLOT SUMMARY

On the last day of June, 1863, Harrison, a Confederate spy, is scouting the position of the Union Army in the vicinity of Gettysburg, Pennsylvania. Reaching the Confederate camp after nightfall, he reports the size and position of the enemy to General James Longstreet and General Robert E. Lee, who are surprised to learn that the enemy is so close. The generals decide to march toward Gettysburg at first light.

The next morning, in the Union camp, Colonel Joshua Chamberlain of the Twentieth Maine regiment is faced with a large group of exhausted soldiers who are refusing to fight. A rhetoric professor by vocation, he contemplates how to convey his ideals to the mutineers. He gives a speech explaining that the Union Army is unique within history; they are fighting to set other men free. Though he says he cannot force these men to fight, all but six join his regiment. Meanwhile, Union cavalryman

John Buford scouts Gettysburg and claims Cemetery Hill, recognizing it as excellent ground for fighting.

That night in camp, Longstreet watches his men play poker with Fremantle, an English observer. George Pickett arrives with his brigade commanders, Garnett, Armistead, and Kemper. Longstreet and Armistead reminisce about Armistead's friendship with Union Major General Winfield Scott Hancock and discuss Longstreet's progressive—though, in Armistead's view, impracticable—views on defensive warfare. Meanwhile, the other officers argue with Fremantle about the causes of the war. They are not fighting because of slavery, they insist; they are fighting for freedom from the rule of a foreign government.

On July 1, Lee wakes up feeling ill and troubled. There has been no word from Confederate scout Jeb Stuart, and Lee does not want any fighting until the army is all together in Gettysburg. As he and Longstreet ride together, they disagree—not for the last time—about the advisability of offensive versus defensive war. Lee believes that they should strike the enemy first and quickly, while Longstreet believes it is better to secure ground of one's choosing and wait to be attacked. They hear artillery booming in the distance. Down the road in Gettysburg, Buford and his men are struggling to hold off some Confederate infantry. General John Reynolds arrives just in time to relieve Buford but is killed soon thereafter, and the Confederates score an early victory. As Chamberlain rides toward Gettysburg, he reflects on his youthful composition, "The Killer **Angels**," a speech on the nature of man.

In camp that night, Longstreet speaks his mind to Fremantle, questioning the value of honor in war and describing the changing nature of tactics. But he soon gives up, finding that Fremantle, like Longstreet's fellow Southern generals, is stuck in the past and considers honor more important than victory. Meanwhile, Lee confers with various generals and decides to attack the following day.

On July 2, while Chamberlain and his men wait to head into battle, Kilrain, his friend and fellow Union soldier, finds an injured black man in the woods. The man is an escaped slave who has been shot. Chamberlain sees to the man's care and is startled and ashamed of his own reluctance to touch a black person. Later, he and Kilrain discuss their differing motives for fighting. Chamberlain believes in intrinsic human equality, while Kilrain is not an idealist; he is fighting to bring down aristocracy.

At Confederate headquarters, Lee lays out his case for attacking the Union position, to which Longstreet cannot agree. Nevertheless, Lee orders Longstreet to attack. As they ride toward the front lines, Lee tries to inspire Longstreet to be bolder in battle and reveals that he may not have long to live. Longstreet is depressed by Lee's failure to understand his motivations. He is further grieved at having to send General Hood into battle, despite a poor position and the likelihood of heavy losses.

Chamberlain's regiment is ordered to occupy a steep wooded hillside called Little Round Top. They are warned never to retreat, as they are the extreme left flank of the Union army. They succeed in holding off the Confederates for a while, but soon take heavy losses and run out of ammunition. Chamberlain has the idea to fix bayonets and take the Rebels at a disadvantage by charging downhill. They successfully overrun the Confederates and defend Little Round Top. However, Kilrain is shot twice and dies the following day.

After the battle, Longstreet is devastated by the grave injury of Hood and the losses of many others. He resolves to speak plainly to Lee; they cannot mount another attack. In Lee's camp, however, there is an atmosphere of celebration. Longstreet is confused and silenced by Lee's confident vision of victory. He later vents his frustration to Fremantle, explaining that there is no great strategy; Confederate victories have been fueled by blind love of Lee, not by sound tactics. If they win tomorrow, he says, it will be a miracle. Longstreet realizes he no longer idealizes Lee as a father figure. Lee, on the other hand, stays up late that night, offers a newly returned Jeb Stuart a mild reprimand for failing to keep him informed, and confirms his own decision to mount a fresh attack the following day.

The next morning, July 3, Longstreet finally manages to speak his mind to Lee, but Lee barely responds. Instead, he insists that the Union line will indeed break under a second attack, and, what's more, he expects Longstreet to lead the charge. The Confederate artillery barrage begins later that morning. The officers have a variety of responses before the battle. George Pickett is overjoyed at the prospect of glorious combat; Dick Garnett resolves to redeem his honor, tarnished by perceived cowardice in previous battle. Armistead grieves the fact that he is about to go into combat against his friend Hancock. But all Longstreet can do is weep about sending men to probable death.

Sure enough, while a scattering of Confederates reaches the top of Cemetery Hill, most of the troops are slaughtered by the entrenched Union soldiers above them. Armistead and Garnett are killed. Pickett loses most of his officers. Longstreet is so horrified by the spectacle that he nearly walks into the field in hopes of being quickly killed. But he is stopped by the sight of Lee riding along the line, taking the blame for the disaster despite the protests of his adoring men. Longstreet does not want to speak to Lee, but when they finally meet, he accepts Lee's humble admission of short-sightedness and promises to do what he can to help him in the future. However, he no longer believes the war can be won and doubts in his heart that he can fully forgive Lee. Together they make plans for the withdrawal of the army, under cover of an approaching **storm**.

That night Chamberlain sits on Cemetery Hill, overlooking the field of fallen soldiers. He is surprised by the beauty he has seen amidst the horror and doesn't understand his own eagerness to return to the fight. Tom, his brother, joins him, and

they discuss the Rebels' courage on behalf of such a terrible cause as slavery. Chamberlain doesn't understand it, but he cannot hate the Confederates, either. He thinks again of "the Killer Angels" and is thankful to have been part of this historic day. Finally, the long-threatened storm breaks, and the rain floods the fields of Gettysburg until the next day, which is the Fourth of July.

CHARACTERS

MAJOR CHARACTERS

James Longstreet – Nicknamed "Pete" by his men, Longstreet is Lieutenant General of the Army of Northern Virginia and Lee's second-in-command. He is haunted by the deaths of his three children from a fever the previous winter, though he never speaks of his grief. He is described as "grim and gambling" in contrast to the pious Lee, with whom he enjoys an unusual friendship. The two have grown very close over the course of the war, though conversation can be difficult because of Longstreet's reticence and Lee's formality. Longstreet even thinks of Lee as a father figure, replacing the God in whom he no longer believes. He is also close to Pickett, Armistead, Garnett, and Kemper, having served with all of them in the Mexican War. He does not share the vocal idealism about the Southern "cause" of many of his men, but he tries to keep his skepticism to himself. He further rejects Southern notions of honor common among the men, seeing Garnett's fixation on redeeming himself as foolish. Longstreet also has a surprising liking for the cheerful Fremantle, and their conversations offer clearer insight into Longstreet's oft-concealed opinions, likely because Fremantle is a neutral outsider. Longstreet is fascinated by tactics and strategy and has a far-reaching outlook on the future of warfare, which creates tension between him and other generals, especially Lee. His clarity of insight does not translate to persuasive ability, however; he is inarticulate and slow to express himself. In addition, his love for Lee is such that, even when angered by Lee's insistence on offensive tactics, he finds it nearly impossible to speak against him, and he remains loyal to the last—though, after the failure of Pickett's Charge, he realizes he will never quite forgive Lee for effectively forcing him to order men to their deaths. Nevertheless, he still pities his friend and promises the help Lee asks of him.

Robert E. Lee – Described as "formal and pious" in contrast to his dear friend Longstreet, Lee is the beloved Commanding General of the Army of Northern Virginia. He is a fatherly, even godlike figure to his men, a "symbol of war." On first appearing in the story, Lee is described by Longstreet as "a beautiful white-haired, white-bearded old man," though haggard and noticeably aging. He has been suffering from heart trouble and believes he does not have much time left, though he keeps his worries to himself until confiding in Longstreet midway through the battle. His men hold him in awe; he creates a hush when he passes. He is a figure of the "old school" of warfare, to whom honor is paramount. As such, Longstreet's theories of defensive warfare hold little appeal for Lee. When Lee made an attempt at defensive trench warfare in a previous battle, the Richmond newspapers mocked him as "The King of Spades"—a humiliation Lee considers to be a stain on his honor. Now, his biggest fear about Gettysburg is having to pull out his troops in a devastating retreat. Believing that courage, faith, and morale are ultimately more important in war than tactics, he seems to interpret Longstreet's favoring of the defensive as excessive caution. He carries an ongoing sense of guilt about invading the United States he once swore to defend. Devoutly Christian, he sees God's intention and providence at work in the circumstances at Gettysburg and in the war more broadly, relying on this instinct in making decisions. After the disaster of Pickett's Charge, however, a broken Lee humbly admits that Longstreet was right and asks his friend to "help [him] to *see*" in the days ahead.

Joshua Lawrence Chamberlain – The primary Union protagonist in the story, 34-year-old Chamberlain is Colonel of the Twentieth Maine regiment. He is not a career soldier; he took a leave of absence from his position as professor of rhetoric at Bowdoin College in order to enlist. He loves his younger brother, Tom, but he takes care to quash any appearance of over-familiarity or favoritism between the two of them. He is described as having "a grave, boyish dignity" as well as the "naïve look of the happy professor." He relies on the assistance and advice of Private Kilrain, whom he loves as a paternal figure. In battle, he functions best on instinct, but he is a naturally contemplative man, his mind always working. An idealist, he holds a visceral belief in human equality—a conviction for which he is willing to kill. Yet, when he meets an escaped black slave in the fields of Pennsylvania, he is appalled to notice his discomfort at touching the man, forcing him to consider the relationship between his ideals and the realities he meets in the world. During the Battle of Little Round Top, Chamberlain discovers his capacity for leadership under pressure, coming up with the idea for a downhill bayonet charge after the regiment runs out of ammunition, and garnering admiration from his superiors for his ingenuity and courage. After the battle, Chamberlain feels pity and even a sense of brotherhood with the fallen Confederates; he cannot hate them, however incompatible their beliefs are with his own.

Buster Kilrain – A former sergeant demoted to private for throwing a bottle at an officer, hard-drinking Kilrain assists Chamberlain in the regiment and has been loyal to him from his first day with the Twentieth Maine. Though he admires Chamberlain's lofty views on human equality, he does not share them. Familiar with discrimination because of his Irish roots, he hates aristocracy and believes the war is being fought to ensure that a good person cannot be enchained by the past, regardless

of descent. Kilrain is shot twice during the Battle of Little Round Top, and later his heart gives out in the hospital.

Tom Chamberlain – Tom is Joshua Chamberlain's younger brother, newly a lieutenant in the regiment and "worshipful" of his older brother. Still boyish and inexperienced, Tom often calls his brother "Lawrence" instead of "Sir." He is quick to do what is asked in battle, even running to fill a gap in the line on Little Round Top, much to his brother's horror. At the end of the book, Tom muses that he cannot understand the Confederates' motives—how can they fight so hard for slavery? While Chamberlain agrees, Tom's youthful innocence serves as a foil to Chamberlain, whose idealism has been somewhat chastened by both the horrors and joys of the past few days.

Harrison – Harrison is a spy for the Confederate Army, hired by Longstreet. The novel begins with Harrison's discovery of the position of the Union Army, which he immediately reports to Longstreet (who is somewhat surprised that Harrison fulfilled his assignment) and Lee (who had never agreed with hiring a spy to begin with, choosing to trust Jeb Stuart instead). Harrison has a background in acting, which he uses to advantage in his spy work, and quotes Shakespeare to calm himself as he rides through a **storm**. Longstreet describes him as a tiny man with a face like a weasel. Apparently loyal to the Southern cause, Harrison behaves fawningly toward Lee and Longstreet, which they ignore, dismissing him after they have finished questioning him about the enemy's numbers and position. Harrison does not appear in the story again, though his report is vindicated on the first day of battle at Gettysburg, when Confederate brigades successfully engage with Union cavalry.

John Buford – A Major General in the Union Army, 37-year-old Buford is "a tall blond sunburned man" who served for years in the Indian wars. He is methodical and patient, though given to moodiness and occasional outbursts that startle his men. He is a Western cavalryman at heart and longs for freedom and open spaces; he is uncomfortable with the culture of the East, especially military hierarchy, and resents the necessity of appealing to superiors. He has an excellent eye for ideal battleground; when he and his brigades arrive in Gettysburg, they scout Cemetery Hill and claim it as a prime Union position—a move with great consequences for the outcome of the battle and thus the war. Despite this vital contribution to the Union effort, however, Buford is pushed aside while visiting headquarters for information, confirming his negative views about Eastern mindsets. Buford has taught his men to fight dismounted, as cavalrymen did out West, instead of through "glorious" charges. In this way, he is a Union counterpart to the visionary Longstreet.

Arthur Lyon Fremantle – A Lieutenant Colonel in the Queen's Coldstream Guards, Fremantle travels with the Confederates to record his observations for England. He is described as a scrawny man who resembles "a popeyed bird," "perpetually astonished," and "not too bright." A cheerful man, Fremantle often solicits the opinions of Longstreet, who finds him amusing and eventually unburdens his doubts about Lee to him. Fremantle sees Southerners as essentially English gentlemen and sympathizes with their attitudes about honor. Like other Englishmen, however, he sees slavery as an "embarrassment" and a hindrance to explicit support of the Confederate cause.

Joseph Bucklin – Bucklin is a battle-scarred fisherman from Bangor, Maine, who serves as spokesman for the mutineers from the Union's Second Maine regiment. He shares the disdain of many enlisted men for inept leadership. He argues that his exhausted men have been ill-treated despite their long history of engagements, and ought to be allowed to go home.

George Pickett – A gentleman who finished last in his class at West Point, Pickett has nevertheless displayed bravery in battle and is eager to distinguish himself further at Gettysburg. From a distance he looks like "a French king, all curls and feathers." A dandyish but laughing figure, he tends to light up a crowd and draw others to himself. He joyfully leads a division, including Armistead, Garnett, and Kemper, into battle on the final day, in the offensive to become known as Pickett's Charge. However, all thirteen of his officers are killed or injured. While Pickett returns unharmed, he is weeping, in shock, and totally demoralized.

Lewis Armistead – Armistead is a Confederate Brigadier General. He served with Longstreet, Pickett, Garnett, and Kemper in the Mexican War and leads a brigade under Pickett at Gettysburg. His peers have nicknamed him "Lothario," or "Lo" for short—a joking reference to his being a scoundrel toward women—but, in actuality, he is a shy widower. He is from an old Virginia family with a long military heritage. A lifelong soldier with a courtly bearing, he does not seem aggressive, but is dependable in battle. Longstreet views him as an honest, dependable man of honor. Like many Confederates, Armistead reveres Lee and sees the Southern "cause" as a sort of holy endeavor. He listens to Longstreet's tactical views and agrees that Longstreet is probably right, but he has little interest in applying them. He is close friends with Winfield Scott Hancock, a Union general, who served with him, Longstreet, and others in Mexico. He is troubled by a vow he has made that God should strike him dead if he ever lifts his hand against Hancock. Twice he expresses a longing to visit Hancock across enemy lines, and Longstreet encourages him, but there is no reunion before Armistead dies in battle during Pickett's Charge. His last words are an apology to Hancock.

Richard Brooke ("Dick") Garnett – Dick Garnett served with Longstreet, Pickett, Armistead, and Kemper in the Mexican War. At the Battle of Kernstown, he withdrew his brigade without orders, earning a reputation for cowardice from an enraged Stonewall Jackson—a stain he cannot erase in the eyes of many other men. Longstreet, however, believes in him and assigns him to lead a brigade under Pickett. He chooses to ride

his horse during Pickett's Charge, knowing it will make him a perfect target. Though he survives longer than expected, he dies during the battle.

Jim Kemper – Kemper is a Confederate Brigadier General. He served with Longstreet, Pickett, Armistead, and Garnett in the Mexican War and leads a brigade under Pickett at Gettysburg. He is known to be stoic, with a political background, having served as speaker of the Virginia House of Representatives. He is suspicious of foreigners and, upon meeting Fremantle, immediately questions him about rumors of English intervention on behalf of the Confederacy. He is a stolid believer in "the Cause," arguing to whomever will listen that the war is being fought for freedom from the rule of a foreign government, and not because of slavery. During Pickett's Charge, he rides his own horse in solidarity with Garnett. He is mortally wounded during the battle.

Thomas J. ("Stonewall") Jackson – Stonewall Jackson is a celebrated Confederate general who does not appear in the story, as he had died in the spring of 1863, but whose memory looms large in Southern consciousness. His influence is especially felt by Garnett, whom Jackson had threatened to court-martial for cowardice and whose reputation has never recovered from the fact, and by Lee, who feels the vacancy of leadership Jackson has left behind. Longstreet remembers him as a colorful character, both a devout Christian and someone who "knew how to hate."

Winfield Scott Hancock – A Union major general, Hancock is also Armistead's close friend, having served with him, Longstreet, and others in the Mexican War. He is a commanding presence and "picture-book soldier." Stalwart in battle, he opposes Meade's desire to withdraw and heroically leads the Union in hanging onto Cemetery Hill during the final Confederate offensive. Though badly injured in battle, he survives, unlike Armistead, with whom he is never reunited.

John Reynolds – Reynolds is a Union Major General, known as an immaculate, elegant solider. He is even offered command of the entire Union Army but declines, with the honor passing to Meade instead. When Buford sends him repeated requests for relief, he gallops into Gettysburg with two corps of soldiers, just in time to help Buford maintain the Union's hold on Cemetery Hill. However, he is wounded in the head and immediately killed while he and Buford are placing troops in the field.

Harry Heth – Heth is a Confederate general, who always appears grave and perplexed. Despite being ordered not to attack, he gets into a significant engagement with Buford's dismounted cavalry on the first day at Gettysburg, having thought it would only be a minor scrap with local militia. Lee sends him back into battle after learning that Early is attacking the northern Union flank; Heth is then injured.

Richard Ewell – Ewell is a Confederate Lieutenant General of such abilities that he has been chosen to succeed a portion of Stonewall Jackson's former command. However, he lost a leg in battle the previous year and never regained his confidence in command. On the first day at Gettysburg, Lee orders him to attack the Union hold on Cemetery Hill if possible. However, Ewell fails to attack, and when Lee confronts him, he is rambling and nervous, deferring to Jubal Early. Lee later realizes that promoting him has been a mistake, as he just isn't dependable in battle.

Jubal Early – A Confederate general, Early is a self-confident, cool-tempered prosecutor by training. He attacks the Union flank on the first day at Gettysburg. He tends to speak for less confident men, like Richard Ewell. He disdains Longstreet's desire for a defensive position and assures Lee that an attack on Cemetery Hill is feasible.

George Gordon Meade – "An angry man with a squeaky voice," the newly installed Commanding General of the Union's Army of the Potomac first appears in the story in the wee hours of the second day of battle. Despite his position, he is not prominent in the story, in contrast to the larger-than-life presence of his Confederate counterpart, Lee. On the eve of the final day, he wants to withdraw, but is voted down by all his corps commanders.

Dred Scott – Dred Scott was an African American man who was born into slavery in Virginia in 1799. In the 1830s, Scott was purchased by an army officer, who took him into the free state of Illinois and the free territory of Wisconsin, where he lived for several years. In Wisconsin, Scott married, and he and his wife, Harriet, ultimately had two daughters. In 1846, now living in Missouri, Scott attempted to purchase freedom for himself and his family, but his former master's widow refused to free them. Scott then filed a legal suit in the St. Louis Circuit Court, on the grounds of an old Missouri law holding that slaves freed through prolonged residence in free states would remain free in Missouri. Despite an early verdict in Scott's favor, the case ended up being appealed in the Missouri Supreme Court and ultimately the United States Supreme Court. Eleven years later, in the 1857 case of Dred Scott vs. Sandford, the Supreme Court ruled 7-2 against Scott, arguing that no person of African descent, whether slave or free, could claim citizenship in the United States, according to the Constitution. Moreover, as "property," a slave did not have standing to sue in federal court. Far from settling questions surrounding slavery, the ruling only inflamed tensions between North and South in the years leading up to the Civil War. Scott and his family gained freedom in 1857 after being deeded to an abolitionist politician, but Scott died a little more than a year later.

The Escaped Slave – An injured black man, an escaped slave, is discovered by Kilrain around the midpoint of the story. He has only been in America for a few weeks and speaks little English. In Gettysburg, he is inexplicably shot by a woman he approaches seeking directions. A Union surgeon treats his

bullet wound, and Chamberlain, ashamed of his initial discomfort with the man, sends him off with food and well-wishes. It is unclear, however, where he will end up; now free, he wants to find a way to his home country.

John Bell Hood – Hood is a Confederate Major General, forced to attack on the second day of battle from a position where it is impossible to mount cannon and from which every movement is clearly observed by the Union. It is clear that, by attacking from this spot, he will lose easily half of his men; yet Longstreet doesn't go against Lee, telling Hood, with sadness, to attack as ordered. Hood does so under protest. He is badly injured in the battle, and Longstreet lies to him that his casualties weren't so bad and that they succeeded in capturing Devil's Den, all the while knowing that he should never have been ordered to attack. Hood's officers take their anger out on Longstreet because they are reluctant to criticize General Lee.

J. E. B. ("Jeb") Stuart – Stuart is a Lieutenant General with the Confederate Cavalry. A gifted and self-confident soldier but also flashy, he thinks of war as more of a game. His assignment is to keep Lee informed of Union movements, but instead he spends his time joyriding, skirmishing, and capturing enemy wagons, only appearing in Gettysburg on the evening of the second day of battle, to the great detriment of Confederate intelligence. Though Longstreet and others want to see Stuart court-martialed for his negligence, Lee only reprimands him, feeling that a military trial would crush Stuart's spirit, and that he is too valuable to the cause for that.

MINOR CHARACTERS

Colonel Rice – Rice is the Union's commander of the Forty-Fourth New York regiment, who takes over command of the entire brigade after the Battle of Little Round Top. His awe of Chamberlain's charge makes Chamberlain realize that he has achieved something remarkable.

Johnston – Captain Johnston is Lee's engineer, in charge of scouting the Confederate position and leading Longstreet's corps into place on the second day of battle, only to discover—thanks in part to Stuart's absence—that their route takes them within sight of the Union army.

G. Moxley Sorrel – Sorrel is Longstreet's chief of staff. He is an ardent defender of the Southern "Cause."

Ambrose Powell Hill – A. P. Hill is a Confederate Major General. He discounts reports of Union cavalry in Gettysburg, contra Longstreet's spy, Harrison.

Dorsey Pender – His division is assigned to Longstreet on the final day of battle. He is mortally wounded.

Daniel Sickles – Sickles is a Union general who moves his men forward off of Cemetery Hill, stretching the line too thin and allowing the Confederates to flank him This puts Chamberlain's regiment in a difficult position on Little Round Top.

Strong Vincent – Vincent is the Union colonel who orders Chamberlain and the Twentieth Maine not to withdraw from their position on Little Round Top under any conditions. He is mortally wounded in the day's fighting.

George Sykes – Sykes is the Union general who summons Chamberlain on the morning after the battle of Little Round Top, asking to hear his account of the battle and commending his actions, saying that the Army needs more men like him.

T. J. Goree – Goree is a Confederate captain serving under and fiercely loyal to Longstreet him. He keeps an eye on the grieving Longstreet after Pickett's Charge and warns him against getting himself killed.

THEMES

In LitCharts literature guides, each theme gets its own color-coded icon. These icons make it easy to track where the themes occur most prominently throughout the work. If you don't have a color printer, you can still use the icons to track themes in black and white.

HONOR

Throughout *The Killer Angels*, Michael Shaara's historical novel set during the Civil War's Battle of Gettysburg, the notion of honor manifests on personal and cultural levels—especially in the Confederate Army. In Southern culture, so important is maintaining one's honor that an accusation of cowardice compels General Dick Garnett to seek redemption through certain death. Similarly, no matter how wise the arguments of Confederate second-in-command James Longstreet for defensive warfare, General Robert E. Lee is unmoved, because he believes that a man of honor cannot turn his back to his enemy. Shaara critiques this understanding of honor as an inflexible code that defies wisdom and logic, ultimately reaping needless death for those who rigidly adhere to it.

Before the novel begins, Dick Garnett, commander of the Confederacy's Stonewall Brigade, had withdrawn his troops from the First Battle of Kernstown without Stonewall Jackson's orders. Jackson, one of the most revered Confederate generals, had threatened to court martial Garnett, but in May of 1863—less than two months before the novel begins—Jackson died before a court-martial could be carried out. Because Jackson's charge of cowardice can now never be resolved, Garnett is effectively the walking dead; he knows he can only redeem himself by dying bravely in battle, and this inexorable code of honor prevents anyone from talking Garnett out of it.

Longstreet entrusts Garnett with one of Major General George Pickett's brigades, but this is not enough to "redeem" Garnett in his own eyes, or in the eyes of many other Confederates. His

"honor was compromised," Shaara writes, "and he had not recovered from the stain, and in this company there were many men who would never let him recover." Once lost, honor is something that cannot be easily restored, if it can be restored at all; even a gesture of confidence like Longstreet's is not sufficient to cleanse the marks of dishonor.

In conversation with Fremantle, a British observer traveling with Lee's army, Longstreet reiterates that Garnett is "no coward. But his honor is gone [...] So now Garnett will have to die bravely to erase the stain." Longstreet observes that Fremantle regards this as "the only thing for a gentleman to do." As such, Garnett makes the suicidal choice to ride his horse into battle, making himself a prime target. Lewis Armistead, his fellow brigade commander, nearly weeps at this, but cannot dissuade Garnett because "honor [was] at stake [...] he had to prove once and for all his honor, because there was Jackson's charge, never answered, still in the air wherever Garnett moved." Pickett, in turn, refuses to order Garnett not to ride. Garnett rides accordingly and dies as expected.

Honor manifests on less personal, though no less consequential, levels throughout the novel as well. For one thing, it shapes Lee's battle decisions and renders him immoveable in the face of Longstreet's arguments for defensive warfare. Longstreet's forward-looking theories are regarded as an affront to Lee's, and by extension even the army's, sense of honor. Defensive warfare was not widely accepted by military leaders at the time because it advocated digging securely into a position of the army's choosing and waiting to be attacked by the enemy, rather than proactively attacking (going on the offensive). While admitting Longstreet's tactical genius, Armistead warns him, "this ain't the army for it. We aren't bred for the defense. And the Old Man [...] is just plain, well, too *proud*." He brings up the Richmond newspapers' mockery of Lee's previous attempt to dig trenches as a lingering wound for Lee, a "stain on the old honor." Longstreet acknowledges this, reflecting that, nonetheless, "there was danger in [Lee's attitude]; there was even something dangerous in Lee."

Later, Longstreet attempts to explain this foreboding to a bewildered Fremantle. "Honor without intelligence is a disaster," he says with uncharacteristic forthrightness; "honor could lose the war [...] I appreciate honor and bravery and courage [...] But the point of war is not to show how brave you are." He goes on to describe the changing norms of warfare and how much deadlier the offensive has become to little avail; "like all Englishmen, and most Southerners, Fremantle would rather lose the war than his dignity."

Still later, Longstreet is dismayed by Lee's speech to him defending the necessity of going on the offensive, as Lee seems to think that Longstreet is mainly afraid of losing men. On the contrary, Longstreet's "only fear was not of death, was not of the war, was of blind stupid human frailty, of blind proud foolishness that could lose it all."

In his private reflections, Lee is aware that his tactics are tied to his sense of honor. "He had known all along that retreat was simply no longer an alternative, the way a man of honor knows that when he [...] sees the blood of the enemy, a man of honor can no longer turn away. So he would stay. And therefore, he would attack." In making the decision to send his men on the offensive, Lee justifies the move in part because "the men came here ready to die for what they believed in, for their homes and their honor, and although it was often a terrible death it was always an honorable death."

Lee's personal conception of honor is thus tinged with a conscious sense of inevitable tragedy. On the eve of the final engagement, Lee reflects that by breaking his oath to defend the United States, he has acted dishonorably in a certain sense and will suffer the consequences; but in another sense, he could not have acted otherwise, lest he go against home and kin. "There had never been an alternative except to run away," he tells himself, "and he could not do that."

Longstreet's bitter resignation sums up Shaara's argument that to cling too rigidly to honor is folly. Honor is a force unto itself, in Garnett's case "unturnable, ridiculous [...] a festering, unseen wound." Garnett's death demonstrates on a personal scale the deadly potential of honor slavishly upheld. The incomprehension of the dignity-conscious foreigner Fremantle, meanwhile, contrasts with Longstreet's mounting despair as he realizes that, for Lee and most Southerners, preserving honor outweighs the realities of the battlefield. The story's dramatic irony turns on the fact that Lee's conception of honor dooms the Confederates to failure; none of Longstreet's arguments sway Lee, because Lee is committed to a code of behavior that is more important to him than victory, even more important than his own or his men's survival.

OLD WORLD VS. NEW WORLD

Shaara portrays the battle of Gettysburg as a pivotal juncture not only for the Civil War, but for history more broadly. This is done in two major ways throughout the story: first, through characters' competing visions for what American culture is or should become, and second, through Lee's and Longstreet's competing visions for how to conduct the war. Lee's vision is connected to an older, "gentlemanly," honor-driven culture, while Longstreet's is forward-looking and not much concerned with culture at all. Through this theme (and especially through the portrayal of Union victory and Lee's resulting concession to Longstreet), Shaara argues that Gettysburg symbolizes the passing of the Old World and the inevitable birth of the New.

Certain characters, particularly Colonel Joshua Chamberlain with the Union and English observer Fremantle with the Confederacy, see the war as a struggle between two different

visions for America—either as a place for new ideals of freedom to take root, or for Old World aristocratic values to flourish. Descended from persecuted Huguenots (French Protestants), Chamberlain cherishes a belief in America as a place where "a man could stand up free of the past [...] and become what he wished to become." He sees himself as fighting for the dignity of man and against "the horror of old Europe [...] which the South was transplanting to new soil." When faced with a regiment of mutineers, Chamberlain thus appeals to their freedom to *choose* to fight for others' freedom. Throughout history, he explains, people "fight for land, or because a king makes them [...] but we're here for something new." He continues, "this hasn't happened much in the history of the world. We're an army going out to set other men free."

In response to Chamberlain's idealistic words about the divine spark in humanity, Kilrain retorts, "What I'm fighting for is the right to prove I'm a better man than many [...] I don't think race or country matters a damn. What matters is justice." He explains that an emancipated slave may not prove to be a better man than one who fought to free him, but that he, like Chamberlain, believes America should be a country where neither man is enchained by his ancestry.

Other characters see the war as essentially about the preservation of an older way of life. Fremantle, the English observer who is traveling with the Confederate army, views the Southerners as Englishmen and democracy as a failure. In the North, he reflects, "the only aristocracy is the aristocracy of wealth. The Northerner doesn't give a damn for tradition, or breeding, or the Old Country [...] Well, of course, the South is the Old Country [...] They've merely transplanted it. And that's what the war is about." Other Confederate characters are skittish or silent on the subject of slavery but assert that they are fighting for their right to maintain their way of life undisturbed. Arguably, however, these characters' way of life inherently includes slavery and could not be maintained without it.

The clash of old and new is further reflected in Lee's and Longstreet's conflict over defensive warfare. Longstreet tries to explain to Armistead that war has changed and defensive trench warfare is coming into its own. Armistead replies that while this may be a time for defensive war, this is not the army or the general for it. Fremantle is even more uncomprehending when Longstreet explains how advances in weaponry have challenged conventional wisdom about warfare. "But, sir," Fremantle retorts, "there is the example of Solferino. And of course the Charge of the Light Brigade." Longstreet, "who had invented a transverse trench which no one would use," sees that it is no use pressing the matter.

Lee is shocked when Longstreet urges him to disengage the Confederates in order to get between the Union and the route to Washington—i.e., take a defensive position rather than continue on the offensive. He finds it unseemly to retreat in the face of the enemy and reflects that he has already had enough of defensive war after his previous, disastrous effort to defend Richmond. Lee thinks that Longstreet's concern for defense arises from overprotectiveness of his men, and Longstreet realizes that there is no time to convince Lee otherwise; Lee is "a simple man, out of date." On the cusp of final battle, meanwhile, Lee decides that morale must win out over cleverness; "cleverness did not win victories; the bright combinations rarely worked. You won because the men thought they would win, attacked with courage, attacked with faith."

After the Confederate defeat on the last day at Gettysburg, Lee concedes that his backward-looking approach has failed, that Longstreet had been right, and that he needs his friend's vision in order to move forward: "Help us to *see*," he says.

Shaara uses the perspectives of multiple characters to portray a spectrum of attitudes about the war, acknowledging that motivations for fighting were complex—ranging from the idealistic and romantic to the cynical and self-interested. Yet, while showing that these motivations generally defied caricature, he also argues that they are sorted into fundamentally backward or forward-looking attitudes, and that the latter—symbolized by Union victory and Lee's concession of his vision for the war—was finally determinative for America's development as a country.

IDEALISM VS. DISILLUSIONMENT

While many characters in the book are fired by supposedly unshakeable beliefs, Shaara uses two main figures to explore the ways in which the Civil War tested the ideals of belligerents on both sides. Despite Chamberlain's passionate commitment to "freedom" in the abstract, he has never met a slave. And in the process of his own disillusionment, Longstreet realizes that the Confederates' idolizing of Lee has hindered their ability to fight the war effectively. Through these two figures, Shaara demonstrates that ideals alone could not sustain either side, and that, while all ideals are not equal, idealism is inevitably refined and sometimes abandoned when it collides with the realities of war.

Chamberlain gives voice to the loftiest ideals in the book: namely, that all human beings are inherently equal, and that the war is being fought to ensure that slavery and aristocracy cannot maintain a foothold in a country founded on principles of freedom. Yet however noble, his beliefs at times prove detached from earthy realities.

While considering how to deal with a large group of Maine soldiers who are refusing to fight any longer, Chamberlain reflects that his deepest faith is not in God, but in America: "true freedom had begun here and it would spread eventually over all the earth [...] And so it was not even patriotism but a new faith. The Frenchman may fight for France, but the American fights for mankind, for freedom; for the people, not

the land." In his speech to the soldiers, he later goes on to say, "freedom…is not just a word […] It's the idea that we all have value […] I'm not asking you to come join us and fight for dirt. What we're all fighting for, in the end, is each other."

Yet Chamberlain ultimately faces surprising tests of his ideals. When his regiment encounters an injured escaped slave—the first black person most of them have ever seen—Chamberlain is appalled to find himself hesitant to touch the man ("an unmistakable revulsion […] He had not expected this feeling. He had not even known this feeling was there"). Until now, Chamberlain has not been forced to test his lofty ideals on the ground.

Kilrain, a father figure for Chamberlain, forces him to further refine his ideals. Chamberlain has described his anger when talking with Southern supporters of slavery: "I had one of those moments when you feel that if the rest of the world is right, then you yourself have gone mad […] I realized for the first time that if it was necessary to kill them, then I would kill them." Kilrain admires Chamberlain's fierce commitment to his cause, yet tells him, "The strange and marvelous thing about you […] is that you believe in mankind […] whereas when you've got my great experience of the world you will have learned that good men are rare." Chamberlain's love for abstract humanity, Kilrain suggests, will undergo refinement the more he deals with concrete human beings.

On the final day in Gettysburg, as Chamberlain overlooks the carnage of the battle, "it seemed very strange now to think of morality […] or that strange runaway black." He feels "an extraordinary admiration" and "a violent pity" for the Confederates who died, even "an appalling thrill" as he looks forward to inevitable further battles. Not long ago, Chamberlain had felt ready to kill these very men in anger. While his willingness to fight hasn't flagged, and he doesn't abandon the Northern cause, he finds a new respect for his enemies as human beings, not as mere representatives of a cause he hates.

When Tom asks, "How can they fight so hard, them Johnnies, and all for slavery?" Chamberlain is startled by the question; "when the guns began firing he had forgotten [the Cause] completely." Chamberlain agrees with his brother that he cannot understand the Confederates' "political fast-talking" around the issue of slavery, yet he is unable to feel hatred toward them. Even if his commitment to the ideal of freedom hasn't wavered, his understanding of freedom has become both more specific (that is, tied to the plight of the escaped slave) and less couched in morally superior terms. He can't fathom what is in the hearts of his enemies, but the events of battle have shown him that he doesn't entirely understand his own heart and motivations, either.

General Lee, for his part, is the embodiment of Confederate ideals. Longstreet's crisis of conscience regarding Lee, and his ultimate loss of faith in his father figure, thus represents the failure of those ideals. Talking with Longstreet about Southern troops' high spirits, Armistead marvels, "The morale is simply amazing […] They're off on a Holy War. The Crusades must have been a little like this." When a skeptical Longstreet points out that the crusaders never took Jerusalem and that more than morale is needed, Armistead brushes off the objection, lauding Lee's accomplishment. The General's "presence is everywhere. They hush when he passes, like an **angel** of the Lord."

Longstreet is not moved by talk of a "holy war" or of the confederate Cause. As a professional soldier, the "cause" for him is "Victory." Having grown up with many of the soldiers he is now fighting, Longstreet finds the war "a nightmare in which you chose your nightmare side. Once chosen, you put your head down and went on to win." But he admonishes himself to silence such thoughts. He can't yet bring himself to openly question Lee, even to himself.

Though Longstreet has never been as wedded to the Southern cause as his peers, and he even disagreed with Lee about invading the North, he has always ultimately believed in Lee. When Lee, reluctant to act on the intelligence of a paid spy, finally agrees to concentrate the army around Gettysburg, Longstreet takes it as confirmation of Lee's wisdom, thinking, "Trust the old man to move." Having lost his faith in the aftermath of his children's deaths, Longstreet tells himself that "he even had the father, in place of God: old Robert Lee. Rest with that." And it is his longstanding trust in and admiration of Lee that repeatedly silences him when he has opportunities to speak against Lee's plans for offensive attack. On the eve of the final day of battle, the affection, weariness, and "vision of victory" in Lee's eyes destroys Longstreet's defenses, and he cannot summon the angry words that had filled his mind moments earlier.

The night before the last Confederate offensive, Lee tries to embolden Longstreet to total commitment to the Southern cause, whatever the losses may be: "That is the trap. You can hold nothing back when you attack […] And yet, if they all die, a man must ask himself, will it have been worth it?" Longstreet realizes that Lee does not understand his motivations in arguing for defensive warfare. Later, Longstreet can't hold back his disillusionment in an outburst to Fremantle: "The secret of General Lee is that men love him and follow him with faith in him […] God in heaven, there's no strategy to this bloody war. [It's] old Napoleon and a hell of a lot of chivalry." He adds that if the Confederates win, "it will be a bloody miracle."

Shocked by his own words, Longstreet pictures Lee's face and suddenly remembers the day in church when he lost his faith in God, knowing "in that moment that there was no one there, no one to listen." He tells himself to stop thinking, as his doubts are "like heresy." Longstreet tries a final time to dissuade Lee from an offensive, but Lee orders him to attack anyway, which Longstreet does in despair. After the defeat, Longstreet "knew

that he would never forgive the old man, never."

Both Chamberlain and Longstreet have their ideals humanized over the course of the war. Chamberlain faces illiberal tendencies in his own heart when he meets people unlike himself, and Longstreet lets go of the godlike status Lee has occupied in his life. Both realize that, however fervent their loyalties, they must reckon with the failures and contingencies of human nature. It is not accidental on Shaara's part that Chamberlain's ideals, while chastened by experience, appear to survive the testing of the battlefield, while Longstreet's do not; the novel ultimately argues that Chamberlain's view of human equality is an ideal worth continually fighting for, while the ideals embodied by Lee must be laid to rest.

SLAVERY AND FREEDOM

Throughout the book, Shaara portrays a range of motivations for the Civil War, and neither side is monolithic in outlook. Many characters offer their opinions as to "what the war is really about"—such as the desire for freedom from a "foreign" government, defense of "states' rights," and the desire to crush the Southern aristocracy—yet the central conflict inevitably turns around the question of slavery and freedom. While not every character primarily fights for or against slavery, Shaara argues that it is the inescapable moral issue of the war.

The Union's clarity of purpose, as portrayed by Chamberlain, is contrasted with Confederate vagueness and denial regarding slavery. For instance, Confederate officers Sorrel and Kemper are furious when English observer Fremantle explains England's view that slavery is what the war is about; they cannot rest until they attempt to set him straight. Later, Tom Chamberlain is bemused by Confederate prisoners' assertion that they are fighting for some vague "rights," which they don't associate with slavery.

Faced with a crowd of mutineers, Chamberlain asks himself, "How do you force a man to fight—for freedom?" He quickly rejects sentimentalized notions of national pride ("Nobody ever died for apple pie") and appeals instead to the dignity of man, something distinct from a bloody European past and a transplanted Southern aristocracy. Inherent human value must be the motivating factor of the Northerners' cause, not the American land itself.

When Chamberlain's regiment meets the former slave who has been shot, the question of freedom is brought home to him in an even starker way. "What could the black man know of what was happening?" he wonders. "What could this man know of borders and states' rights and the Constitution and Dred Scott? […] And yet he was truly what it was all about. It simplified to that. Seen in the flesh, the cause of the war was brutally clear." Chamberlain realizes that his stirring rhetoric has its place, but it conveys far less than the suffering of this displaced and friendless man.

In the midst of this encounter, Tom describes his conversation with some Rebel prisoners, who claim to be fighting for their rights. On further questioning, one of them says he doesn't know which of his rights have been offended, "but he must have some rights he didn't know nothin' about." The juxtaposition of "freedoms" is jarring, as the newly freed man longs to return home but likely cannot, while the prisoners are willing to die for vaguely defined rights they cannot even articulate.

Ironically, outsiders (Fremantle) and skeptics (Longstreet) are portrayed as having a clearer grasp on the nature of the war than those who argue about "freedom" most vociferously. Longstreet finds one of his men regaling Fremantle about the war: "You must tell [England], and make it plain, that what we are fighting for is our freedom from the rule of what is to us a foreign government […] that's what this war is about," Kemper insists, not slavery. George Pickett offers the analogy of a gentleman's club "sticking their noses into our private lives, and then we up and resigned, and then they tell us we don't have the right to resign." What both men ignore, however, is that the so-called foreign intervention centrally concerns Southern "freedom" to preserve a system that's dependent on human enslavement.

Talking with Longstreet later, Armistead speaks disdainfully of England's refusal to support the Confederacy: "[Fremantle] said the problem was *slavery* […] He says that's what most of Europe thinks the war is all about. Now, what are we supposed to do about that?" Longstreet declines to respond, thinking, "The war was about slavery all right. That was not why [he] fought but that was what the war was about, and there was no point in talking about it, never had been." Once again, Longstreet is more perceptive than his fellow Confederates at to the true nature of the war. While he claims not to be personally invested in the question of slavery, he also finds it obvious that the conflict reduces to this matter, no matter how others try to erect elaborate justifications claiming otherwise.

In a way, both sides' rhetorical debates about freedom and "why we fight" serve to obscure the burning issue of slavery. However, Shaara makes slavery an unavoidable subject in the story. Union soldiers ask questions about it, foreign observers make judgments about it, and a formerly enslaved man literally wanders into the middle of the debate. The Confederate officers' denials about slavery, meanwhile, make the issue all the more conspicuous. With characteristic clear-sightedness, Longstreet acknowledges that the war is about slavery, though he stays reticent on the subject. The book's conclusion from Chamberlain's perspective foreshadows the issue's final resolution, hinting—on the eve of Independence Day—that Gettysburg has sounded a major death knell for slavery and its apologists.

SYMBOLS

Symbols appear in **teal text** throughout the Summary and Analysis sections of this LitChart.

RAIN

Rainstorms frame the action in *The Killer Angels*. Throughout most of the novel, the threat of rain and storm symbolizes impending violence and disaster; yet, by the end of the book, the long-anticipated eruption of a full-fledged storm symbolizes cleansing, healing, and promise. When Harrison first locates the position of the Union army at the beginning of the novel, he sees the soldiers emerging "out of a blue rainstorm in the east," and he rides nervously through a lightning storm as he seeks the safety of the Confederate lines. This association of rain with tension is maintained when, on the first day of battle, a young Union soldier fires the battle's first shots at Confederate skirmishers approaching in the rain. On the eve of the second day of battle, Longstreet, knowing Lee will not be dissuaded from making an unwise attack, "[smells] disaster like distant rain." At dawn on the third and final day of battle—hours before the disastrous climax of Pickett's Charge—Longstreet smells rain once again. Following Pickett's Charge, lightning begins blazing in the distance, the wind carries the smell of rain, and Lee and Longstreet make plans to withdraw under cover of the weather.

Now that the anticipated disaster has occurred (from the Confederate perspective, at least) the symbolism shifts. As Chamberlain sits on Cemetery Hill, overlooking the carnage, the rain begins to fall, washing the day's dirt from his face; he is only able to stare at the fallen bodies illuminated by lightning. As the rain begins to pour in earnest, he feels pity for the fallen Confederates and gratitude for having experienced such a historic turning-point. A fierce storm floods Gettysburg all night, "washing … the white bones of the dead, cleansing the earth … driving the blood deep into the earth, to grow it again with the roots toward Heaven." Even though the rain washes away the signs of suffering, it won't efface the memory of what has happened in Gettysburg; implicitly, the blood spilled will not be wasted, but will "take root" by yielding not only military victory for the present, but greater freedoms in the future.

ANGELS

Though he makes sparing use of the image, Shaara uses angels to symbolize humanity's potential for both transcendence and atrocity. As a schoolboy, Joshua Chamberlain had delivered Hamlet's soliloquy including the line, "What a piece of work is man … in action how like an angel!" In response, Chamberlain's father had joked, "…[I]f he's an angel, he's sure a murderin' angel." Chamberlain had then written an oration titled "Man, the Killer Angel." Though Chamberlain does not elaborate on the content of the oration, his experiences at Gettysburg cover the spectrum of human potential—mercy to mutineers, murderous anger at enemies, bravery at Little Round Top, prejudice and compassion toward an escaped slave—and suggest what it looks like for a human being to be endowed with such vast "angelic" capacities.

While scouting Cemetery Hill, cavalryman John Buford spots a white angel statue in the quiet cemetery overlooking Gettysburg, its "arms uplifted, [with] a stony sadness." The sight brings him an unexplained comfort. After the battle, Chamberlain sits atop Cemetery Hill himself and watches bodies being laid out with care on the field below. Compassionately, he thinks of the deceased as "Killer Angels"—embodying the paradox of such a term himself, as a soldier feeling pity and love toward his enemies.

QUOTES

Note: all page numbers for the quotes below refer to the Ballantine edition of *The Killer Angels* published in 1974.

Monday, June 29, 1863: Chapter 2 Quotes

❝ The faith itself was simple: he believed in the dignity of man. His ancestors were Huguenots, refugees of a chained and bloody Europe. He had learned their stories in the cradle. He had grown up believing in America and the individual and it was a stronger faith than his faith in God.

Related Characters: Joshua Lawrence Chamberlain

Related Themes:

Page Number: 26

Explanation and Analysis

Chamberlain is meditating on his understanding of freedom, in hopes of inspiring the exhausted men from the Second Maine regiment who are refusing to continue fighting. The Huguenots were French Protestants of the Reformed tradition, who endured waves of severe persecution in Catholic France from the sixteenth through eighteenth centuries. By the late 1600s, Huguenots began to increasingly flee to more congenial territories, including the United States; by the late 1700s, Huguenot communities had nearly died out in France. As a descendant of Huguenot refugees, Chamberlain has grown up hearing stories of his ancestors' sufferings and the liberation they found in America. In turn, this heritage has profoundly shaped Chamberlain's view of America and his understanding of its responsibilities, particularly toward the persecuted and

downtrodden. Ironically, for Chamberlain, the religious faith of his forebears has been largely displaced by his belief in the principles of the land that granted them refuge. For the purposes of the novel, in any case, it is Chamberlain's belief in human dignity and the rights of the individual that motivates him to fight in the war—and shapes his dealings with those he encounters in war.

Monday, June 29, 1863: Chapter 3 Quotes

It wasn't the dying. He had seen men die all his life, and death was the luck of the chance, the price you eventually paid. What was worse was the stupidity. The appalling sick stupidity that was so bad you thought sometimes you would go suddenly, violently, completely insane just having to watch it. It was a deadly thing to be thinking on. Job to be done here. And all of it turns on faith.

Related Characters: John Reynolds, John Buford

Related Themes:

Page Number: 43

Explanation and Analysis

Union cavalryman John Buford has scouted the terrain in Gettysburg before the outbreak of battle, discovering Cemetery Hill as the ideal ground from which to fight. He knows the Confederates will converge on Gettysburg by morning, and, until then, there is nothing he can do but send messages to General Reynolds and hope that Reynolds's men arrive in time to support his brigades in the morning. The situation plunges Buford into melancholy, reminding him of past scenarios in his soldiering life when he waited helplessly for backup that never came. He doesn't reveal the details of these experiences, but since Buford spent most of his career in the vast spaces of the Western territories, it's easy to imagine the isolation and scarcity of support he often faced. Wounded himself, he is reconciled to the likelihood of death, but the strain of so much waiting and uncertainty has worn down his psyche. Buford is the embodiment of the tension between distant leadership and the disillusioned soldiers on the ground who must execute the orders of those above them, even when those orders appear questionable—a scenario that plays out multiple times in the book.

Monday, June 29, 1863: Chapter 4 Quotes

War has changed, Lewis. They all expect one smashing victory. Waterloo and all that. But I think that kind of war is over. We have trenches now. And it's a different thing, you know, to ask a man to fight from a trench. Any man can charge briefly in the morning. But to ask a man to fight from a trench, day after day …

Related Characters: James Longstreet (speaker), Lewis Armistead

Related Themes:

Page Number: 58

Explanation and Analysis

General Longstreet is talking with Armistead, one of his commanders, in camp on the eve of the first day of battle. He opines on the changing nature of warfare—something that his peers have been slow to recognize or acknowledge. This blind spot is due, in part, to the persistence of the Battle of Waterloo within living memory. Waterloo, fought in 1815 in what's now Belgium, had brought the Napoleonic Wars to an end, when the British, under the Duke of Wellington, and the Prussians defeated Napoleon Bonaparte and the French. It was the emblematic example of a single, dramatic battle being decisive in war. Longstreet argues, however, that this kind of battle is giving way to grueling, drawn-out trench warfare that will exact a greater psychological toll on soldiers. This is a prescient observation, anticipating the nightmarish trench warfare that became the norm in World War I, a half-century later.

"But the morale is simply amazing. Really is. Never saw anything like it in the old army. They're off on a holy war. The Crusades must have been a little like this. Wish I'd a been there. Seen old Richard and the rest."

Longstreet said, "They never took Jerusalem."

Armistead squinted.

"It takes a bit more than morale," Longstreet said.

"Oh sure." But Longstreet was always gloomy. "Well, anyhow, I've never seen anything like this. The Old Man's accomplishment. Incredible. His presence is everywhere. They hush when he passes, like an angel of the Lord. You ever see anything like it?"

Related Characters: James Longstreet, Lewis Armistead (speaker), Robert E. Lee

Related Themes:

Related Symbols:

Page Number: 59

Explanation and Analysis

Continuing their conversation on the eve of battle, Armistead and Longstreet discuss the Confederate army's morale. Armistead draws a comparison with the Crusades, a series of wars fought by Western European Christian kingdoms, principally in the eleventh through thirteenth centuries, with a variety of religious motivations, such as the reclamation of the Middle Eastern holy lands from Muslim rule. The comparison is rather confusing, given that Southerners typically described the war as a response to the "aggression" of the North in objecting to aspects of their way of life, not as an attempt to reclaim territory they saw as having been usurped. Armistead's point seems to be, rather, that the army has such a reverent regard for General Lee and such a steadfastness on behalf of their cause that they are willing to press on regardless of the circumstances. In either case, Longstreet is skeptical of the supposed parallel, pointing out that mere belief wasn't enough to enable the crusaders to obtain their objective. But this doesn't seem to be the point for Armistead—emphasizing, again, the distinction between the romanticized idealism Shaara portrays in many of the Confederates, compared to the matter-of-fact appraisal of reality typically shown by Longstreet.

Pickett answered obligingly, unconcerned, "Well, Jim Kemper kept needling our English friend about why they didn't come and join in with us, it being in their interest and all, and the Englishman said that it was a very touchy subject, since most Englishmen figured the war was all about, ah, *slavery*, and then old Kemper got a bit outraged and had to explain to him how wrong he was, and Sorrel and some others joined in, but no harm done."

"Damn fool," Kemper said. "He *still* thinks it's about slavery."

Related Characters: Jim Kemper, George Pickett (speaker), G. Moxley Sorrel, Arthur Lyon Fremantle

Related Themes:

Page Number: 62

Explanation and Analysis

An argument erupts in the camp about the nature of the war. As he does several other times in the novel, Shaara uses the presence of Fremantle, the British army observer, to cut to the heart of issues the Confederates wouldn't have typically debated among themselves without the instigation of an outsider. In this case, the issue is the centrality of slavery. In England, there was notable (though hardly universal) sympathy for the Confederacy, based partly on the scarcity of cotton due to Union blockades of Southern ports ("it being in their [economic] interest and all"). However, Englishmen also tended to pride themselves on England's abolitionist heritage, throwing a wrench in their enthusiasm for the Confederate cause—no matter how Southern apologists tried to persuade them that they fought not for slavery, but for independence. Pickett clearly sees the matter as a delicate and rather distasteful one; Kemper's quickness to protest is telling, too. The exchange highlights just how far some Southerners would go to provide an alternative justification for the war, and how contentious the question still was—even being debated on the very brink of battle.

Wednesday, July 1, 1863: Chapter 4 Quotes

Once Chamberlain had a speech memorized from Shakespeare and gave it proudly, the old man listening but not looking, and Chamberlain remembered it still: "What a piece of work is man ... in action how like an angel!" And the old man, grinning, had scratched his head and then said stiffly, "Well, boy, if he's an angel, he's sure a murderin' angel." And Chamberlain had gone on to school to make an oration on the subject: Man, the Killer Angel.

Related Characters: Joshua Lawrence Chamberlain

Related Themes:

Related Symbols:

Page Number: 114

Explanation and Analysis

As Chamberlain rides toward Gettysburg, he daydreams, and his thoughts turn to his boyhood in Maine. The speech he recalls is drawn from Shakespeare's *Hamlet*, Act 2, scene 2: "What a piece of work is man! How noble in reason! How infinite in faculty! In form, in moving, how express and admirable! In action how like an angel! In apprehension how like a god! The beauty of the world! The paragon of animals!" In the speech, Hamlet goes on to ask, "And yet to me, what is this quintessence of dust?" Chamberlain's father

seems to capture the speech's essence with his terse, paradoxical phrase, "murderin' angel"; humanity has the capacity for both the highest good and the basest atrocity. Though Chamberlain's reflections do not elaborate on Hamlet's speech or on the oration he delivered as a schoolboy, this dual capacity of humanity haunts Chamberlain throughout the battle of Gettysburg, challenging his assumptions about his enemies and even about himself. This challenge also apparently forms the heart of Shaara's intention for the book, as it gives it its title.

Wednesday, July 1, 1863: Chapter 5 Quotes

It was Longstreet's curse to see the thing clearly. He was a brilliant man who was slow in speech and slow to move and silent-faced as stone. He had not the power to convince.

Related Characters: Robert E. Lee, James Longstreet

Related Themes:

Page Number: 121

Explanation and Analysis

This quote appears as Longstreet rides toward Confederate headquarters after dark, on the eve of the second day of battle. He is brooding and depressed about the seeming inevitability of Lee's offensive attack the following day—a move he believes will be disastrous. The quote captures the dynamic of Longstreet's and Lee's relationship in microcosm. Longstreet sees what needs to be done, or what should *not* be done, yet he cannot summon the right words to express his insight. He finds himself especially silenced in the presence of his friend and father figure, Lee. But there are connections with other characters, too; Longstreet's foresight mirrors Buford's, and offers a contrast with Chamberlain, who has significant persuasive gifts, yet acts more on instinct than on an ability to "see things clearly."

He had tears in his eyes. Turn away from that. He mastered it. What he had left was the army. The boys were here. He even had the father, in place of God: old Robert Lee. Rest with that, abide with that.

Related Characters: Robert E. Lee, James Longstreet

Related Themes:

Page Number: 121

Explanation and Analysis

Longstreet's "ability to see" extends to seeing things he doesn't want to see. The memory of his children's deaths from fever is never far below the surface of his mind, as here, when his brooding over the war slides easily into thoughts of his personal loss. The war is his distraction from grief. Not only that, but the army, and Lee himself, fill some of the gaping wound of his bereavement and consequent loss of faith in God. The fact that Lee occupies the fatherly role once filled by God raises the stakes of the war even more—Longstreet is deeply invested in Lee's making the right decisions and succeeding. If Lee fails, Longstreet will suffer yet another devastating loss. The fear of such loss no doubt hinders Longstreet even more from speaking his mind when he believes Lee is wrong, though he may not realize this himself.

"Honor," he said. "Honor without intelligence is a disaster. Honor could lose the war."

Fremantle was vaguely shocked.

"Sir?"

"Listen. Let me tell you something. I appreciate honor and bravery and courage. Before God ... but the point of the war is not to show how brave you are and how you can die in a manly fashion, face to the enemy. God knows it's easy to die. Anybody can die."

Related Characters: Arthur Lyon Fremantle, James Longstreet (speaker)

Related Themes:

Page Number: 127

Explanation and Analysis

The appearance of Fremantle serves as a welcome distraction from Longstreet's dark thoughts. As he does elsewhere, the English outsider provides an audience for Longstreet to express his thoughts without consequence. In this case, Longstreet vents his frustration with the Confederate preoccupation with honor, arguing that it is an empty, even dangerous notion in this age of warfare. Men seeking to die for honor are chasing a phantom ideal, because their actions, however brave, might not advance the cause of victory whatsoever and might even hinder it. An "honorable" death for death's sake is wasteful. Like his Southern counterparts, however, Fremantle is so steeped in

an honor-obsessed culture that he proves resistant to hearing the truth.

Thursday, July 2, 1863: Chapter 1 Quotes

"The Northerner doesn't give a damn for tradition, or breeding, or the Old Country. He hates the Old Country … [T]he South *is* the Old Country. They haven't left Europe. They've merely transplanted it. And *that's* what the war is about.

Related Characters: Arthur Lyon Fremantle

Related Themes:

Page Number: 156

Explanation and Analysis

As he accompanies Longstreet's men toward battle, Fremantle reflects on the cultural differences he observes between North and South. Fremantle's character, a bit jocular and clueless, provides a note of comic relief throughout the story. In this chapter, ironically, he manages to land on a truth that Northern characters, such as Chamberlain and Kilrain, have perceived as well—that "old world" values such as ancestry, title, and land have a foothold in the South, which Northerners tend to see as being at odds with the American impulse toward greater equality. While Chamberlain and Kilrain find much of their motive for fighting in these hated Southern characteristics, Fremantle, by contrast, sees the South's affinity with the "Old Country" as a positive thing that will lead to the shedding of embarrassing democratic pretensions, and even to reunion with Britain.

Thursday, July 2, 1863: Chapter 2 Quotes

"He felt a slow deep flow of sympathy. To be alien and alone, among white lords and glittering machines, uprooted by brute force and threat of death from the familiar earth of what he did not even know was Africa, to be shipped in black stinking darkness across an ocean he had not dreamed existed, forced then to work on alien soil, strange beyond belief, by men with guns whose words he could not even comprehend. What could the black man know of what was happening? Chamberlain tried to imagine it. He had seen ignorance, but this was more than that. What could this man know of borders and states' rights and the Constitution and Dred Scott? What did he know of the war? And yet he was truly what it was all about. It simplified to that. Seen in the flesh, the cause of the war was brutally clear.

Related Characters: The Escaped Slave, Joshua Lawrence Chamberlain

Related Themes:

Page Number: 163

Explanation and Analysis

While Chamberlain's men march toward Gettysburg, they stop for a rest, and Kilrain discovers a lost, injured black man, who turns out to be a runaway slave who'd been shot by a Pennsylvania woman. The man's appearance at the midpoint of the novel, as the armies are on the cusp of battle, serves as an inescapable reminder of what the Civil War is truly about. Millions of people like him are still enslaved, yet few of the actual combatants on either side of the war are willing to address this glaring issue directly. This eloquent passage shows Chamberlain coming to terms with the painful irony that, for all his insistence on equality, he has overlooked the tangible human toll of slavery and racism until it was placed directly in his path. It also shows his compassionate instincts, searching for a way, even if limited, to understand the man's experience, much as he has done with the Maine mutineers and as he will do later with Confederate soldiers.

"What I'm fighting for is the right to prove I'm a better man than many. Where have you seen this divine spark in operation, Colonel? Where have you noted this magnificent equality? … There's many a man worse than me, and some better, but I don't think race or country matters a damn. What matters is justice.

Related Characters: Buster Kilrain (speaker), Joshua Lawrence Chamberlain

Related Themes:

Page Number: 170

Explanation and Analysis

After the encounter with the black man and before resuming their march into battle, Chamberlain and Kilrain sit discussing humanity, race, and their reasons for fighting the war. Chamberlain has just remarked that he has always believed in the "divine spark" common to every human being, and that no external differences can outweigh it. Kilrain, however, challenges him to specify where he has seen this "divinity" on actual display. He believes that each person must prove their worthiness in action, and that each

person has the right to do this regardless of any factors in their background. Coming from an Irish background, Kilrain would have faced his share of prejudice and discrimination. For him, the war provides greater opportunity to prove himself than he has readily found elsewhere.

Thursday, July 2, 1863: Chapter 3 Quotes

"They're never quite the enemy, those boys in blue … Swore an oath too," Longstreet said. He shook his head violently. Strange thought to have, at the moment. "I must say, there are times when I'm troubled. But … couldn't fight against home. Not against your own family. And yet … we broke the vow."

Lee said, "Let's not think on this today."

"Yes," Longstreet said. There was a moment of dusty silence. He grumbled to himself: why did you start that? Why talk about that now? Damn fool.

Then Lee said, "There was a higher duty to Virginia. That was the first duty. There was never any doubt about that."

"Guess not," Longstreet said. But we broke the vow.

Lee said, "The issue is in God's hands. We will live with His decision, whichever way it goes."

Related Characters: Robert E. Lee, James Longstreet (speaker)

Related Themes:

Page Number: 181

Explanation and Analysis

Longstreet and Lee have been reminiscing about the Mexican War while marching toward the first full day of battle. The conflict with Mexico occurred from 1846 to 1848, following the American annexation of Texas. Both Confederate and Union generals would have come of age and forged enduring friendships during that war, and they would also have sworn an oath to protect and defend the United States. More than a decade later, this history would have made the decision to support the Confederacy—and take up arms against former brothers-in-arms—all the more wrenching. The decision clearly still haunts both Longstreet and Lee—particularly as they prepare to fight against some of the same men they've known and loved—though they justify it on the grounds of loyalty to home and family.

Thursday, July 2, 1863: Chapter 5 Quotes

Longstreet said, "It wasn't that close." But Lee's eyes were gazing by him at a vision of victory. Longstreet said nothing. He rubbed his mouth. Lee's eyes strange: so dark and soft. Longstreet could say nothing. In the presence of the Commander the right words would not come.

Related Characters: James Longstreet (speaker), Robert E. Lee

Related Themes:

Page Number: 235

Explanation and Analysis

It's the evening after the first attempt to break the Union line, when Hood and many others were killed or taken out of action. Longstreet has lost almost half his men; he is angry and intends to argue once again for occupying a defensive position, rather than mounting a foolish second attack. The exchange is an example of the two men's greatest weaknesses: Lee's failure to see and Longstreet's inability to speak. Lee sees what he wants to see, and Longstreet sees reality, but he can't find the words to contradict his commander and father figure. The combination is disastrous for Southern hopes, leading to an ill-conceived final charge and a Union victory.

"God in Heaven," Longstreet said, and repeated it, "there's no strategy to this bloody war. What it is is old Napoleon and a hell of a lot of chivalry. That's all it is."

Related Characters: James Longstreet (speaker), Arthur Lyon Fremantle

Related Themes:

Page Number: 240

Explanation and Analysis

After talking with Lee, Longstreet comes upon Fremantle, who effusively praises Lee as the world's authority on military tactics. Fresh from his agonizing conversation with Lee, Longstreet soon hears enough, and he ends up venting his frustration to Fremantle—that Lee, in fact, doesn't know what he is doing. Rather, the Confederates have been sustained by nothing but outdated notions of honor and old-style Napoleonic tactics dating to the early 1800s. Almost as soon as he says these words, Longstreet is

horrified; he has tried to suppress the full extent of his disillusionment, even from his own consciousness. Now he faces the final day of battle knowing he no longer has full faith in Lee, but must nevertheless carry out Lee's orders.

> He remembered that day in church when he prayed from the soul and listened and knew in that moment that there was no one there, no one to listen.
>
> Don't think on these things. Keep an orderly mind. This stuff is like heresy.

Related Characters: Robert E. Lee, James Longstreet

Related Themes:

Page Number: 241

Explanation and Analysis

After the deaths of his children, Longstreet had prayed for solace but had come to believe that God was not there. After speaking his mind to Fremantle about the absence of true leadership and strategy in the war, Longstreet feels something similar. In his mind, Lee is no longer a practically infallible figure, leading the army to an assured victory. That means there is truly no "father" on whose steady presence he can rely. But he admonishes himself to stop thinking this way, since he still must function as a general and carry out Lee's orders. He can't do that while distracted by the "heresy" of doubting the commander's competence.

> Longstreet shook his head. That was another thing he did not think about. Armistead said disgustedly, "They think we're fighting to keep the slaves. He says that's what most of Europe thinks the war is all about. Now, what we supposed to do about that?"
>
> Longstreet said nothing. The war was about slavery, all right. That was not why Longstreet fought but that was what the war was about, and there was no point in talking about it, never had been.

Related Characters: Lewis Armistead (speaker), Arthur Lyon Fremantle, James Longstreet

Related Themes:

Page Number: 244

Explanation and Analysis

Longstreet is chatting with Armistead on the eve of the final day of battle. Armistead relates a conversation he's had with Fremantle, the Englishman, as to why England hasn't formally recognized the legitimacy of the Confederacy and intervened in the war on their behalf—a possibility that remained live in Southern minds until the decisive defeat at Gettysburg. Armistead is genuinely disgusted at what he sees as a European misconception regarding Southern motives. Longstreet, with characteristic clear-sightedness, thinks the war is obviously about slavery; *he* might not be motivated by that particular issue, and many of the soldiers don't consider it important to their cause, but there is no point in arguing about it—it's self-evidently what sparked the war, and defense of a culture enabled by slavery is what sustains the war. Their disagreement underscores the pervasive presence of slavery in the antebellum South. Though many Southerners did not own slaves, the institution of slavery was thoroughly embedded in the distinctive history and identity of the South.

Thursday, July 2, 1863: Chapter 6 Quotes

> When Virginia left the Union she bore his home away as surely as if she were a ship setting out to sea, and what was left behind on the shore was not his any more. So it was no cause and no country he fought for, no ideal and no justice. He fought for his people, for the children and the kin, and not even the land, because not even the land was worth the war, but the people were, wrong as they were, insane even as many of them were, they were his own, he belonged with his own. And so he took up arms willfully, knowingly, in perhaps the wrong cause against his own sacred oath and stood now upon alien ground he had once sworn to defend, sworn in honor…

Related Characters: Robert E. Lee

Related Themes:

Page Number: 251

Explanation and Analysis

In this quote, Lee is reflecting on how he has arrived where he is—commanding the Army of Northern Virginia in its invasion of the United States of America. He is sitting alone in the dark, remembering Virginia's secession and being swept into war against his former countrymen, despite being a lifelong soldier who'd sworn to defend the United States. In his mind, bright ideals aren't the issue; neither is his ancestral soil. Indeed, he feels that his homeland of Virginia has been lost to him. Rather, the issue is that he

could not, in the end, oppose his own family and people, even if he believes them to be tragically wrong in their beliefs. This portrayal of Lee as a man of honorable character torn by internal conflict is in keeping with the traditional post-Civil War appraisal of Lee in both the North and South. More recent revisionist historians have tended to view him, however, as less consistent in his character and as more explicitly pro-slavery.

❝ He could not retreat now. It might be the clever thing to do, but cleverness did not win victories; the bright combinations rarely worked. You won because the men thought they would win, attacked with courage, attacked with faith, and it was the faith more than anything else you had to protect; that was one thing that was in your hands, and so you could not ask them to leave the field to the enemy.

Related Characters: Robert E. Lee

Related Themes:

Page Number: 256

Explanation and Analysis

On the night before the final day of the Battle of Gettysburg, Lee continues to ruminate on his strategic options—should he yield to Longstreet's instincts and retreat, or make one last, desperate charge? In his reasoning, his bias against defensive practices is clear; even if such tactics are reasonable, he thinks, their effectiveness pales against the importance of troop morale. But not only is Lee's code of honor evident, it's also plain that recent experiences in battle have shaped his expectations about what works. After the Confederate victory at the battle of Chancellorsville—a deadly rout for the Union— there was an air of invincibility in the Southern army. Morale was at its peak, and Lee believed that his men could and would do anything, as long as they were effectively led. With these memories fresh in his mind, as well as shining historical precedents like the Battle of Waterloo, Lee's reluctance to withdraw to a defensive position becomes easier to understand.

Friday, July 3, 1863: Chapter 5 Quotes

❝ After a while Lee came. Longstreet did not want to see him. But the old man came in a cluster of men, outlined under that dark and ominous sky, the lightning blazing beyond his head. Men were again holding the bridle of the horse, talking to him, pleading; there was something oddly biblical about it, and yet even here in the dusk of defeat there was something else in the air around him; the man brought strength with his presence: doomed and defeated, he brought nonetheless a certain majesty. And Longstreet, knowing that he would never quite forgive him, stood to meet him.

Related Characters: James Longstreet, Robert E. Lee

Related Themes:

Page Number: 324

Explanation and Analysis

The battle of Gettysburg, with the catastrophic failure of Pickett's Charge, has just ended. Longstreet, heartbroken by the avoidable loss and the deaths of so many, had nearly walked into the midst of the gunfire in his despair. Now, as he watches Lee approach, he is struck by the general's remarkable bearing—despite his failure, he still embodies a prophetic, even Christ-like figure in the eyes of his adoring men. In a way, this quote almost reads as anachronistic. This portrayal of Lee was favored by "Lost Cause" interpretations of the Civil War throughout the twentieth century, which cast Lee as a heroic, chivalrous figure and the Southern cause as a noble one. Throughout the book, Longstreet stands in skeptical contrast to this romanticized view—though even he is repeatedly thrown off guard by it, finding himself flustered and silenced in the overpowering presence of Lee and what he represents.

❝ "You were right. And I was wrong. And now you must help me see what must be done. Help us to *see*. I become ... very tired."

Related Characters: Robert E. Lee (speaker), James Longstreet

Related Themes:

Page Number: 326

Explanation and Analysis

After informing Longstreet of his decision to withdraw the Confederate troops from Gettysburg, Lee makes this

startling admission. Having repeatedly rejected Longstreet's counsel that a defensive stance would do more good than a risky offensive, Lee finally admits that Longstreet has been right all along. Not only that, he admits that he can't see the best way forward and needs his second-in-command's visionary perspective to guide him. Lee's confession of tiredness reads as an implicit passing of the baton of leadership—an admission that, as Longstreet has said many times in the novel, warfare has changed, and new clarity and energy are needed. The iconic cavalry charges of the early nineteenth century are beginning to be supplanted by the drudgery of trench warfare. Still, Lee's humbling comes too late for the Confederates at Gettysburg.

Friday, July 3, 1863: Chapter 6 Quotes

❝ Tom said, "When you ask them prisoners, they never talk about slavery. But, Lawrence, how do you explain that? What else is the war about?"

Chamberlain shook his head.

"If it weren't for the slaves, there'd never have been no war, now would there?"

"No," Chamberlain said.

"Well then, I don't care how much political fast-talking you hear, that's what it's all about and that's what them fellers died for, and I tell you, Lawrence, I don't understand it at all."

Related Characters: Joshua Lawrence Chamberlain, Tom Chamberlain (speaker)

Related Themes:    

Page Number: 329

Explanation and Analysis

The novel closes with a final conversation between Chamberlain and his younger brother as they sit on Cemetery Hill, overlooking the thousands of dead on the field below. Tom can't understand how their Confederate counterparts could throw their lives away for slavery, a cause many of them won't even acknowledge they are fighting for. While Chamberlain agrees with his brother's conclusion that the war is inescapably motivated by slavery, he is noticeably reserved in his reactions—especially compared to his rhetorically stirring, idealistic words at the beginning of the novel. He is wrestling with the fact that his fallen enemies are human beings just like him, even if he cannot fathom what led them into battle. The brothers' exchange is representative of many American's complex attitudes to the Civil War. While on paper, the causes of the war are easy to summarize, even to condemn, it is more challenging to come to terms with the humanity of all those who fought—and the complicated heritage they've passed down to Americans today.

SUMMARY AND ANALYSIS

The color-coded icons under each analysis entry make it easy to track where the themes occur most prominently throughout the work. Each icon corresponds to one of the themes explained in the Themes section of this LitChart.

MONDAY, JUNE 29, 1863: CHAPTER 1: THE SPY

Harrison, a Confederate spy, is overlooking the entire Union Army from a wooded hill in Pennsylvania. He estimates a total of 20,000 men and observes that the Army of the Potomac has never moved so fast. He begins riding north in hopes of reaching the Southern line by nightfall.

Harrison's perspective on the rapidly advancing Northern army opens the story with a sense of tension and impending conflict. The fact that the Union army is moving uncharacteristically fast hints that the coming conflict will be different from past ones.

Harrison realizes he is probably the only person alive who knows the positions of both the Union and Confederate armies, and this fills him with pride. But now he must locate Lee's headquarters in the middle of a **lightning storm**. He asks a farmer about the nearby town and learns that it is Gettysburg, "but the name meant nothing."

The lightning storm brings with it the suggestion of impending violence. As Harrison tries to outrun the threatened rain, he learns by chance that the nearby town is Gettysburg. The fact that this name carries little significance is heavily ironic in light of the events about to unfold.

As he rides, Harrison wonders about the "strange" friendship between "grim and gambling" James Longstreet and "formal and pious" Robert E. Lee. He proceeds cautiously through the dark until he reaches a Southern picket line, where he is placed under guard and sent to Longstreet's headquarters. Tiredly, he observes that the Confederates are "a fat and happy army … telling stories in the dark."

Harrison's perspective provides the outlines of Longstreet's and Lee's relationship, particularly the differences in their personalities, on which much of the story's drama will hang. He further sees the Confederate army as a contented, even naïve lot, setting up an expectation that this happiness will be reversed.

Longstreet is lying awake in his tent, thinking of his dead children. When informed that Harrison has returned, he is surprised that the spy came back at all. Harrison reveals the position of the Union Army, surprising Longstreet further; he hadn't known the Army was within two hundred miles. Longstreet is puzzled that he had heard nothing of Union movement until now.

From the first, Longstreet is presented as a grieving, haunted man. Longstreet's surprise and puzzlement at Harrison's information further heightens a sense that cataclysmic action is soon to unfold.

In light of this intelligence, Longstreet decides to wake General Lee. If Harrison is right that the Union is nearby and moving fast, he realizes, the Confederate Army is in danger. Lee, however, does not believe in spies, having placed his trust in Jeb Stuart. As he prepares to see the General, Longstreet reflects that he had never believed in the invasion of the North but had been overruled by Lee and Confederate president Jefferson Davis.

The contrast between Longstreet and Lee continues to be revealed—in this case, basic differences in strategy and outlook on the waging of war, as Lee distrusts spies and favors aggressive invasion, while Longstreet takes opposite positions. These contrasts create a sense of tension between the two that will erupt at some point, even if their friendship has overridden it so far.

As they go to meet Lee, Harrison tells Longstreet that Joseph Hooker has been replaced by George Meade as commander of the Army of the Potomac. By the time they arrive at Lee's camp, Longstreet is convinced that the spy has been telling the truth about all the intelligence he has shared. Waiting for Lee, Longstreet thinks about the bad news of the defeat in Vicksburg, Mississippi, and reflects that the Confederates must win here, in Pennsylvania, if they are to win the war.

Leadership of the Union Army is in transition, raising questions about the effectiveness of the enemy's actions in the coming conflict. The recent Confederate loss at Vicksburg raises the stakes for the coming battle in Pennsylvania.

Lee emerges from his tent, bareheaded and haggard-looking in the **rain**. He and Longstreet ignore Harrison's obsequious behavior and examine the Union positions he has reported. After questioning the spy further and dismissing him, the generals discuss their next moves. Lee is reluctant to act on the intelligence of a paid spy and to believe that Stuart would have left the army blind.

From his first introduction, Lee conveys a certain frailty, and the rain touches his character with a subtle ominousness. He also reveals a stubbornness about trusting novel measures in war and a loyalty to the men and practices he knows.

Longstreet tells Lee that the army must turn and concentrate its position, so as not to be chopped up by the enemy. He is troubled by the sight of the "indomitable old man weak and hatless in the early morning, something soft in his eyes, pain in his face." Lee agrees that with Meade newly in charge, there may be opportunity to move quickly and cut off the Union from Washington. He decides that the army should concentrate in the direction of Gettysburg, moving at first light. Longstreet is thrilled and thinks, "Trust the old man to move."

The drama of Longstreet's and Lee's relationship is further established. Longstreet, in his foresight, presses for defensive action, troubled by Lee's aged and fragile appearance. Yet his basic confidence in Lee is still unshaken, when Lee agrees with the need to concentrate the army's position.

The two have an awkwardly affectionate parting, as "Lee was ever formal and Longstreet was inarticulate, so they stood for a long time side by side without speaking." The silence is enough for them, and Lee says that he will miss their companionship after the war is over. Longstreet rides back to his camp in the darkness before dawn.

The two generals' communication difficulties are apparent. While their friendship is solid enough to withstand silence, it is not clear how their relationship will be affected by their divergent visions of the great task before them, and their reticence to discuss that divergence. Their companionable silence foreshadows a more fraught silence to come.

MONDAY, JUNE 29, 1863: CHAPTER 2: CHAMBERLAIN

Chamberlain is awakened from a dream about Maine by Buster Kilrain. The former is recovering from sunstroke after an eighty-mile march over four days. Kilrain explains that one hundred and twenty mutineers from the Second Maine regiment are on their way. The men had signed three-year contracts with the expectation of fighting *only* with the Second Maine and, that regiment now being disbanded, are refusing to fight.

When Chamberlain is introduced, he is in an unpromising state, weakened by the rigors of the march. But he is immediately thrust into a difficult situation—dealing with a large group of battle-weary, disillusioned men.

Meade's message authorizes Chamberlain to shoot any man who refuses to fight. Chamberlain marvels at the "crazy" expectation that he deal with one hundred and twenty mutinous men, on top of his own regiment. Still feeling fragile from the long march, he ponders what to do. A year ago, he had been merely a professor of rhetoric at Bowdoin College.

Not for the last time, there is an evident disparity between the expectations of top leadership and those who must actually deal with enlisted soldiers day to day. Moreover, Chamberlain doesn't feel equal to this challenge, coming from a background very different from most of the other officers in the story.

Chamberlain's younger brother, Tom, newly a lieutenant, greets him and asks him why he doesn't ride the horse, as he's looking weak. Chamberlain emerges from the tent and sees the army slowly coming to life. Down the road he glimpses the mutineers approaching camp under guard, a "strange pathetic spectacle." He wonders, "How do you force a man to fight—for freedom?"

Chamberlain's idealism begins to come into focus. He believes that the war is about "freedom," and that no one can be forced to fight for this cause; watching the mutineers being forcibly marched toward him, he finds the very idea to be a contradiction in terms.

The exhausted mutineers collapse on the ground despite yelling and prodding by the guards. The captain, contemptuous, hands the prisoners over to Chamberlain and loudly reminds him that he is welcome to shoot them. Chamberlain dismisses the captain and then the guards with few words.

Chamberlain's reserve and apparent confidence in dismissing the guards contrast with the captain's bombastic attitude. He is willing to step up and assume leadership even while feeling uncertain about how to proceed.

The prisoners look hungry, exhausted, and occasionally hateful. Chamberlain introduces himself as the Colonel of the Twentieth Maine. The first thing he asks the men is, "When did you eat last?" Some of the men explain that their superiors have been starving them in an attempt to break them. Chamberlain promises he will instruct the cook to butcher a steer for them; they have a long way to walk today.

Chamberlain sets the tone for his dealings with the mutineers by attending to their needs first. He makes clear that they will be fed and that they can expect a long journey, quietly signaling that he does not intend to shoot them. Chamberlain displays a thoughtful and strikingly compassionate character, especially in light of the cruel treatment the men have received.

Chamberlain is relieved when the prisoners move toward the food instead of resisting his authority. A spokesman for the prisoners (soon identified as Bucklin) asks to air his grievances, so Chamberlain dismisses Tom and leads the man away to speak in private. Chamberlain welcomes the scarred man to the regiment, relying on the pleasant, courteous manner he has developed for dealing with rebellious students.

Chamberlain is a resourceful man—he draws on the skills he has developed as a professor to placate an aggrieved inferior in these very different surroundings. He is also patient and willing to give a hearing to someone whom others have deemed deserving of summary execution.

The scarred prisoner, a stubborn, watchful man, tells Chamberlain his regiment's story. He talks about his men's long history of engagements and shows Chamberlain a battle scar on his leg. Relaxing, he finally identifies himself as Bucklin, a fisherman from Bangor. Bucklin explains that his men are exhausted and tired of being poorly treated by "lame-brained bastards from West Point." Because of such men, the Union won't win this war, and Bucklin and his men would just as soon go home.

Chamberlain's capacity to make others feel heard and respected comes to the fore. Bucklin's account also shows the degree to which rank-and-file soldiers have been disillusioned by this point in the war; because of mismanagement, they believe victory is beyond reach, and they do not expect fair treatment from those above them.

Chamberlain grants the man's point and excuses himself to speak to a courier. He is instructed to lead his men to the first position in line and move out. He dismisses Bucklin with the promise to consider his words. When Tom comes in, Chamberlain warns him about any appearance of favoritism, and, on Tom's complaint that General Meade has his own son as adjutant, Chamberlain points out, "Generals can do anything. Nothing quite so much like God on earth as a general on a battlefield."

Chamberlain's concern for fairness even extends to his immediate family, wanting to ensure that his younger brother, Tom, speaks to him with professionalism. But he is also not naïve, acknowledging the freedom generals have to do as they please. His words foreshadow the stature Lee commands from his beloved followers.

Chamberlain continues to ponder his next steps, knowing he won't shoot anyone. He would die for the truth, he realizes, yet he finds it too difficult to talk about. "I'll wave no more flags for home," he thinks; "nobody ever died for apple pie."

Chamberlain puts careful thought into his next steps, aiming to persuade rather than simply command. He does not want to speak glibly about his ideals. As much as he loves his native Maine, he also rejects sentimental notions about America, reaching for deeper principles instead.

Continuing to reflect, Chamberlain contemplates his simple belief in the dignity of man, passed down from his persecuted Huguenot ancestors. He further believes in America as a place where "a man could stand up free of the past … and become what he wished to become." The existence of slavery is an affront to these principles, as is the growth of a Southern aristocracy, which Chamberlain is fighting to crush.

Chamberlain is descended from Huguenots, Protestants who endured centuries of persecuted minority status in France. He thus has a stake in America as a place where the past shouldn't determine a person's future. He fights in the war because he believes that slavery and the aristocratic class that perpetuates it undermine the very American founding.

Chamberlain believes that his views constitute no mere patriotism but a new faith, that while "the Frenchman may fight for France … the American fights for mankind, for freedom; for the people, not the land." But he wonders how to convey these ideals to the battle-weary mutineers.

Chamberlain holds that an American doesn't ultimately fight for America, but for humanity. Yet, again showing his sensible and self-aware nature, he knows these principles will be a tough sell for soldiers who have weathered three years of battle.

As the rest of the regiment begins to form, Chamberlain gathers the prisoners around him. He begins his speech softly so that the grumbling prisoners will have to be quiet to hear him. He opens by saying that he won't shoot any man who refuses to fight, but that the regiment could really use them. He explains that the men of this regiment each made a choice to fight, all with a variety of motivations, but that for all of them, "freedom is not just a word."

Chamberlain marshals all of the tools at his disposal as a professor of rhetoric. He then appeals to the men's sense of dignity as soldiers with something still to give, and tries to explain that, while the war might not mean the same thing to all the men of his regiment, freedom does mean something real to all of them.

Chamberlain continues to explain that the Union army is something unique within history. They aren't fighting for loot or land or under compulsion, but to set others free, he tells the prisoners. They fight for the idea that people are of greater value than land; in the end, they fight for each other.

Warming to his theme, Chamberlain widens the scope of his speech. He argues that this army isn't just any army, fighting for its own interests, but is instead a liberating force within history.

Chamberlain concludes by promising to do what he can to ensure fair treatment for the men after the battle. Resting after his speech, "a new vague doubt" troubles his mind, but he isn't sure what he missed saying. Tom brings Chamberlain's horse, and Chamberlain agrees to ride on today's march. As the regiment moves off toward Gettysburg, Tom rides up to tell him that all but six of the mutineers have agreed to join the regiment. Chamberlain feels great joy.

Chamberlain harbors something unresolved in his mind, perhaps vaguely aware that his ideals have not endured much testing. But he finds satisfaction in the fact that his speech has been effective. Meanwhile, he finally agrees to ride his horse, as officers typically do, rather than further exhausting himself on the march.


MONDAY, JUNE 29, 1863: CHAPTER 3: BUFORD

The town of Gettysburg is "a small neat place: white board houses, rail fences … one white church steeple." By noon, the first Rebel infantry is within sight of the town, coming down the mountain ridges to the west. Around the same time, Union cavalry moves toward the town from the south. The soldiers look at each other across the fields. The town's streets are deserted.

The tidy, civilized appearance of Gettysburg belies the destruction that will occur over the next few days. The enemy troops' cautious appraisal of each other, and the town's silence, also contrast with the devastation to come.

Union commander John Buford rides up a hill beyond the town into the cemetery at its top. He overlooks the entire town and counts the Rebel troops coming in. He and one of his brigade commanders, Bill Gamble, wonder at the absence of Rebel cavalry and the appearance of infantry moving alone in enemy country. Not long after, the Rebels begin to withdraw. Buford has been tracking the Confederates for days and concludes that the army has turned toward Gettysburg, not toward Harrisburg as he had first assumed—that's why the main body of the army is already appearing in town.

Buford unknowingly makes a battle-deciding move when he surveys Gettysburg from the vantage point of Cemetery Hill. He also realizes that the Confederates have begun to concentrate their army toward Gettysburg—intelligence that will likewise be decisive.

Buford senses something about to happen. He decides to scout the town. He waves toward the retreating Rebels, since "you never knew what old friend was out there." He knows that Lee's army will converge at Gettysburg by morning, and that Major General Reynolds will not arrive in time to back up Buford's own brigades.

Buford, a perceptive man, senses that the unassuming town of Gettysburg will be a place of great historical consequence. However, for the time being, he doubts that he can hold off the Rebels with the number of men under his command. His wave underscores the fact that the Union and Confederate armies were filled with personal interconnections.

Concerned, Buford sends a patrol to scout the Confederate troops north of Gettysburg and report to him before sundown. He also sends a message to Reynolds stating that he expects the rebels to arrive in force by morning. But Buford knows that there is no guarantee that the message will proceed to General Meade and thence to Washington by morning. A cavalryman at heart, he laments the necessity of "those damned councils" and longs for open spaces.

Buford, not a typical Eastern commander, is used to the open spaces of the Western prairie. As such, he is also unused to being at the mercy of higher command, and resents having to appeal to the Union commanding general in order to ensure backup for his brigades.

Buford sees the advantages of the high ground on the edge of town, but knows he is only a scout and can't give orders. In frustration he tells one of his brigade commanders that Lee, being no fool, will surely occupy those hills. The junior officer is startled by the outburst, and Buford tries to stifle his mood, though he is troubled by his vision: that Lee's army will dig in on the high ground, while Meade belatedly orders the Union army to make a valiant and foolhardy charge.

A far-seeing Union counterpart to the Confederacy's Longstreet, Buford immediately sees the decisive potential of the hill. Ironically, he also foresees a potential outcome of the battle—except he sees the reverse of what will ultimately take place.

Buford has a "brutally clear" vision of Union troops going up the long slope in a foolish yet irreversible attack. His brigade commander watches him warily, thinking that the odd Buford has spent too much time alone on the plains. Buford dismisses him and rides off, wondering if his men could make a stand here when Reynolds is inevitably late. He has taught his men to fight dismounted, the way he had learned out west in the Indian wars, instead of through foolish, "glorious" charges.

Buford's oddities also make him receptive to unusual ideas, such as favoring defensive and dismounted fighting, rather than the traditional charge. While his vision doesn't come to pass, he clearly predicts the risks of going on the attack.

Buford has his men dig into the crest of the ridge just past the seminary on the edge of town. He rides through Gettysburg but avoids talking with civilians; the culture of the east troubles him. He sees a beautiful woman in front of a house but rebuffs a sergeant's teasing encouragement to pursue her, choosing to eat a silent supper in the cemetery instead.

Buford places his men in a defensive position, but isn't interested in the "distractions" the town might afford. He returns to his solitude, drawn back to the cemetery overlook.

Buford remembers past appeals for backup that never came, which further weakened his trust in leadership. He has heard his men quoting his tactical discoveries and knows that they love him for his willingness to abandon outdated war doctrines. He admires the country, but muses to himself that it is too neat and cramped for battle. He notices a **white cemetery angel** and again admires the suitability of the high ground.

Buford's mistrust of leadership is partly grounded on past experiences of being left hanging in battle. He also feels ill at ease in such settled country. He is drawn to the sight of the cemetery angel, however, silently surveying the battleground below. Its peaceful detachment seems to give him comfort.

Buford walks around the cemetery and thinks about his own mortality; he knows he is slowly dying from past war wounds. He feels a sense of loss at the prospect of never traveling in the South again but feels no hatred for the enemy; he is a professional soldier. He is only irritated by "high-bred, feathery, courtly" men who mistreat their perceived inferiors.

The angel prompts thoughts of Buford's own death, which likely isn't far off. As he reflects on his army career, he can't summon hatred for the enemy, but, like many other Northerners, he disdains aristocratic men.

Scouts return, confirming that Lee's army is concentrating in the direction of Gettysburg. Buford sits down to send a message to Reynolds but is momentarily frozen by the memory of holding good ground and waiting for help that never came. He doesn't mind the inevitability of death in war, but he hates "the appalling sick stupidity" he has been forced to watch. He dreads the fact that his job "turns on faith."

Buford hates being put in a position of having to trust his superiors. He has become disillusioned by the deadly mistakes he has been forced to watch and fears that the next day will reveal yet more sickening stupidity.

Buford sends the message to Reynolds and dozes against a gravestone, until Reynolds sends back orders to hold the ground, with a promise to come as early as possible in the morning. Buford instructs his men to watch for the Rebels at first light, then makes his headquarters at the Seminary. He sleeps and dreams of the empty, snow-covered plains of Wyoming.

Buford does all he can to prepare for a Rebel onslaught the following morning. He dreams of returning to wide open country, free of the constrictions of the east and its war.

MONDAY, JUNE 29, 1863: CHAPTER 4: LONGSTREET

In Longstreet's camp, the men are teaching Colonel Fremantle, an English war observer, to play poker. Longstreet sits under a tree nearby, watching and resting. He is bothered by the army's blindness, thanks to Jeb Stuart's failure to return. Longstreet's chief of staff, Sorrel, informs him that union cavalry were sighted in Gettysburg that day, but that General A. P. Hill believes this report must have been mistaken. Lee defers to Hill's judgment, to the chagrin of Longstreet.

While his men relax, Longstreet broods about the army's lack of information and Lee's reluctance to believe the cavalry sighting. His differences with Lee continue to simmer between the surface.

Longstreet broods, instinctively sensing "an odor of trouble." He is briefly diverted when Fremantle approaches him for advice on poker, after which Longstreet muses that the English are "a strange and lacey race." There have long been rumors that England will support the Confederacy, but Longstreet doubts this will happen. Suddenly George Pickett arrives with his brigade commanders, Armistead, Garnett, and Kemper. Longstreet has known these men since they all served together in the Mexican War and reflects that they are "more a family than an army."

The cheerful Fremantle serves throughout the story as a distraction and foil to the pessimistic Longstreet. The arrival of Pickett and his officers constitutes a reunion, emphasizing the familial nature of military service for career soldiers.


Garnett tells Longstreet, with formality, how much he appreciates Longstreet assigning him as a brigade commander under Pickett. Everyone knows that under Stonewall Jackson, Garnett had withdrawn his brigade without orders at Kernstown, and Jackson had accused him of cowardice. With Jackson now dead, "Garnett's honor was compromised, and he had not recovered from the stain, and … there were many men who would never let him recover." Yet Longstreet believes in the man and tells him how fortunate he considers himself that Garnett is available to him.

The arrival of Garnett, disgraced under Jackson and beholden to Longstreet, fully introduces the theme of honor that pervades the novel. Garnett can never fully live down his actions at Kernstown, even when men like Longstreet affirm his fitness for command.

Longstreet and Pickett introduce Pickett's officers to Fremantle. Armistead jokes that the army is called "Lee's Miserables," after the currently popular novel *Les Miserables*. Armistead is jokingly introduced as an elderly "Lothario," though he is actually a shy widower. Garnett is known for being sickly, and Kemper for being a politician (a former member of the Virginia legislature) and suspicious of foreigners. As the crowd begins to become more sentimental and to share drinks, Longstreet withdraws again.

The presence of Fremantle, an outsider, provides an opportunity for the introduction of various personalities in Longstreet's camp.

A little later, Pickett steps aside to speak to Longstreet. He complains that his division had not participated in the battles at Chancellorsville or Fredericksburg and now finds itself dead last in the line of march. Longstreet promises that Pickett's time will come. Armistead then comes up, and Pickett returns to the poker game. As Armistead talks with Longstreet, he mentions his good friend, Winfield Scott Hancock. Hancock, a Union general, is currently marching toward Gettysburg.

The youthful Pickett's impatience for action foreshadows his pivotal role in the final offensive at Gettysburg. Meanwhile, Armistead's nostalgia takes the conversation in a more tragic direction, as the men reflect on the disruption of friendships by war.

Longstreet and Armistead discuss the fact that the war has lasted longer than either of them had imagined it would. Longstreet tells Armistead that he believes the day of the one-battle war is over. "War has changed, Lewis," he tells his friend. "They all expect one smashing victory. Waterloo and all that … We have trenches now … [T]o ask a man to fight from a trench, day after day…"

Longstreet knows that the expectations of modern generals have been created by the dramatic defeat of Napoleon's army at Waterloo in 1815. Yet he understands that warfare is changing, and will increasingly be conducted less through dramatic actions than through long, drawn-out entrenchments—the latter exacting a greater toll on men's morale.

Armistead, however, isn't interested in talking tactics and returns to the subject of Hancock. Longstreet encourages him to see his friend should the opportunity arise—he can simply get a messenger and a flag of truce and pay a visit across enemy lines. Armistead then asks after Longstreet's wife, which brings up painful thoughts of the dead children and the couple's shared grief. Longstreet declines to speak about them, and the two share a companionable silence for a while.

Armistead finds the subject uninteresting, showing how isolated Longstreet is in his forward-looking concerns. Longstreet is a reasonable and caring general, however, and willingly encourages his preoccupied friend to visit Hancock, even though they are enemy combatants. Longstreet's grief over his family's loss is clearly still raw.

Armistead talks about the unprecedented level of morale he sees in the army. "They're off on a Holy War," he claims. "The Crusades must have been a little like this." Longstreet is skeptical, pointing out that the Crusaders never captured Jerusalem. Armistead is dismissive. Lee's presence, he says, "is everywhere … like an **angel** of the Lord. You ever see anything like it?"

Armistead sees Confederate morale and Lee's overpowering presence as confirmation of the rightness and eventual success of their cause. Longstreet, however, finds the historical parallel—like the memory of Waterloo, fundamentally backward-looking—suspect and doesn't see how morale alone is relevant. Lee, meanwhile, is regarded by most of his men as something more than human.

Longstreet shakes his head at Armistead's idealistic talk, as he "did not think much of the Cause. He was a professional: the Cause was Victory." To him, the war has become a nightmare in which one must simply choose one's side and then do one's duty. He has no triumphalist illusions that the Confederates are vastly superior to the Yankees. But he warns himself not to speak his mind.

Longstreet does not share the idealism of so many Southerners. He wants to help his side win; that's all. He knows that sharing his opinions on these matters could erode morale, though, and he chooses to stay silent.

Armistead changes the subject to Longstreet's theories of defensive warfare. He allows that Longstreet is correct in his views, but that the Confederates are simply not the army for defensive war; neither is Lee the general for it, as he is too proud. He reminds Longstreet how hurt Lee was when the Richmond newspapers mocked Lee's defensive efforts in previous battle. For an "old school" man like Lee, this was a "stain on the old honor," which Lee can't wait to remedy by going on the offensive.

Armistead shows that he has listened to Longstreet's views and even finds them persuasive. However, they simply will not work, he feels, with the Confederate Army. Lee has tried defensive measures before and endured mockery for it, which he still hasn't lived down. This seems to be more important, both to Lee and to Armistead, than whether the tactics were effective or not. Honor must be maintained at all costs.

Longstreet knows that Armistead is probably right about Lee, and it worries him. He thinks that "there was danger in [Lee's attitude]; there was even something dangerous in Lee." As their conversation comes to an end, the two find Sorrel and Kemper regaling Fremantle with arguments about "the Cause." Kemper explains, "You must tell [England] … what we are fighting for is our freedom from the rule of what is to us a foreign government … [T]hat's what this war is all about."

Longstreet has a prophetic worry about Lee's intransigence in the matter of defensive warfare. Then he hears two other officers trying to defend the Southern cause—and hence their own honor—to a puzzled foreigner. Sorrel and Kemper can't bear that their stance be misunderstood. The same "honor-bound" stubbornness in the face of argument seems to be a common Confederate affliction. Ironically, too, the desire to preserve an old-style aristocracy must be defended to the country against which America ostensibly rebelled over such matters. But the Confederates portray this as a question of "freedom."

Pickett explains to Longstreet that, according to Fremantle, the English find support of the Confederacy to be a touchy subject, due to the issue of slavery. This enrages Kemper and the other men, who try to explain that the war is not, in fact, about slavery. Pickett suggests that the analogy of a gentlemen's club is apt—that it's as if the South had voluntarily joined a club, resigned when other members stuck their noses into the Southern members' private lives, and then the other members claimed the South did not have the right to resign.

Slavery is clearly not a touchy subject for the English alone, as Kemper's anger shows. Pickett's elaborate analogy demonstrates the lengths to which many Southerners will argue to defend the right to carry on their "private" way of life.

Longstreet stands in silence as the other men agree with one another that the war is really a question of the Constitution. As the men disperse for the night, Longstreet looks at the night sky and muses that, when it comes to the question of defensive vs. offensive warfare, one "might as well argue with stars." As the chapter concludes, it is the following dawn, and a boy on Buford's picket line sees rows of Confederate skirmishers approaching in the **rain**. He fires the first shot of the battle.

Longstreet's silence renders a quiet judgment on the other men's statements—yet he doesn't attempt to dissuade them. Their intractability on this matter is just as strong as their stubbornness on battle strategy. The next morning, rain symbolizes impending violence as the first shots are fired.

WEDNESDAY, JULY 1, 1863: CHAPTER 1: LEE

Lee gets up the next morning in the **rain**, feeling dizzy, "a breathless pain" in his chest. Since the spring, he has felt that he doesn't have much time and must prepare himself for death. A messenger reports that there has been no rumor of Jeb Stuart. He also reports that there has been word of Union cavalry in Gettysburg, but that General A. P. Hill discounts it. Lee reminds the messenger that he doesn't want any fight until the entire army is concentrated. He strongly feels the vacancy left behind by Stonewall Jackson; other than Longstreet, many of the generals are new to command.

The rain's foreboding touches Lee's weakening health, too. His insecurity about his heart is matched by his anxiety in the absence of the recently deceased Jackson. The continued lack of intelligence from Stuart and conflicted reports from Gettysburg lend an air of uncertainty to this first morning of the battle.

The messenger reports troubles involving civilians, such as the requisitioning of food and horses, and Lee sternly reminds him that the men will behave themselves, regardless of past Yankee behavior in the South. While talking with another aide, he reflects that he had once sworn to defend this very ground but dismisses the thought. He adds, "Napoleon once said, 'The logical end to defensive warfare is surrender.'"

Lee is adamant that his men display honor regardless of their circumstances. At the same time, he's troubled by the recollection that by invading the North, he is breaking his oath to defend this very land, a fact he avoids dwelling on. His approving quotation of Napoleon further suggests his preoccupation with outdated tactics.

As the aide leaves, Lee feels "a deeper spasm, like a black stain. I swore to defend. Now I invade." He thinks that he is a soldier, not a theologian. Still feeling guilty, he prays that the war will be over soon.

Lee's gloomy musings seem to cause him deeper pangs. Lee reasons that it isn't his job to ponder these matters, but the question of honor and his obligations to the United States clearly won't go away.

Lee is heartened to see Longstreet and his staff appear, trailed by the foreign observers. After chatting a bit, Lee tells Longstreet that in the coming fight, he wants Longstreet to stay back from the main line, as he is the only veteran commander, and Lee cannot afford to lose him. As they discuss current intelligence, Longstreet suggests again that the Confederates dig in defensively between the Union army and Washington. But Lee argues that Meade is new to command and will move slowly. He thinks that "all the bright theories so rarely worked"; his instinct tells him that they should instead hit the enemy hard and quickly. As they ride forward together in the sun, they hear the sound of distant artillery.

Lee dismisses Longstreet's suggestions of defensive tactics as mere "bright theories" that won't accomplish much on the ground. He is eager to attack at the earliest opportunity. Yet as the generals ride toward Gettysburg, they can hear that fighting has broken out more rapidly than they anticipated.

WEDNESDAY, JULY 1, 1863: CHAPTER 2: BUFORD

Buford sits in the seminary's cupola and watches dawn break. Then he hears the guns of attacking Rebel infantry begin. He sends a message to Reynolds requesting relief. A while later, he hears the Rebel yell, which is swallowed by the sound of answering Union cannon. The assault dies away.

That morning finds Buford still awaiting relief, hearing the infamous scream of attacking Rebels. There is nothing he can do but send for help once again.

Buford talks with a commander, who informs him that, while they have only scrapped with a Rebel division, the entire Rebel army will likely have arrived by afternoon. Buford sends another message to Reynolds and strengthens his line. He knows that these brigades cannot hold off the Confederates for long, and that if the brigades and the high ground are both lost, it will be all his fault. The outcome will all depend on how quickly Reynolds arrives and how quickly Lee moves. Soon, a bigger attack begins.

Buford can't restrain his pessimism as he continues to wait; as he had reflected earlier, the outcome indeed turns on faith.

Just as Buford is beginning to consider withdrawal, he looks to the south and sees Reynolds coming at a gallop, two corps of fresh infantry coming behind him. Reynolds joins Buford in the Seminary cupola, where Buford, relieved and weary, explains the brigades' position. He sees that Reynolds shares his vision for holding the high ground. Reynolds sends messengers to all his commanders and to General Meade to join him with all haste. Buford is surprised to find that he feels relief at the appearance of higher command, rather than his usual resentment.

Reynolds's appearance with his corps comes just in the nick of time, relieving Buford and reinforcing his line at a critical moment. Had Reynolds not arrived when he did, the Union would likely have lost the precious high ground. For once, Buford's faith has been vindicated.

Buford and Reynolds ride out to place the troops. Against the Confederates' 15,000, they can put almost 20,000 in the field within half an hour. Reynolds praises Buford's selection of ground, and Buford feels honored by the high compliment. A short time later, Buford looks for Reynolds and sees his horse bare-backed. When Buford gets there, he finds Reynolds already dead, having been wounded in the head. Buford is grieved at the loss of a good man. The men continue to carry out Reynolds' orders, fighting without a commander.

Buford is further vindicated by Reynolds's approval of his selection of ground. It seems as if things have turned decisively in the Union's favor. Yet Reynolds is quickly killed, undercutting Buford's short-lived optimism.

WEDNESDAY, JULY 1, 1863: CHAPTER 3: LEE

Lee frets and prays as he rides toward Gettysburg, worrying that they will be forced to make a devastating retreat. Setting up headquarters at a house outside of town, Lee begins to work on a withdrawal plan, feeling agitated about the lack of news from Stuart. He waits for news from General Harry Heth, hearing fighting ahead and unsure what Heth has gotten into.

The sounds of fighting immediately spark Lee's insecurities about defensive tactics and the shame of retreat. He is so shaken by the uncertainty of the situation ahead that he can't help planning for a likely withdrawal.


Heth finally rides up to Lee's headquarters looking bewildered and ashamed. He reports that what he'd thought was only a few militia has turned out to be dismounted cavalry, Buford's men. He thought the encounter would be a "minor scrap," but it turned into a significant skirmish. Lee refrains from placing blame or issuing further orders until he has better information about enemy strength. Without Longstreet near, something feels off about the day.

Heth's predicament is due in part to Stuart's failure to report back to Lee; because they didn't know what was ahead, the Confederates stumbled unprepared into a notable conflict. The skirmish adds to Lee's anxiety.


As he rides forward, Lee learns that Generals Early and Rodes have arrived in Gettysburg and begun attacking the northern flank of the Union army. He begins to think that there is a greater plan at work— "it was possible to see Intention in it … He felt a sharpness in the air … it was all happening without him, without one decision; it was all in God's hands." He senses an opportunity and tells Generals Heth and Pender to attack as well.

As Lee learns more, his mood begins to shift. He feels that despite his ignorance, divine providence has been unfolding in a way favorable to the Confederates. He decides to act on this instinct and order a further attack. His faith reinforces his ideals and his sense of honor.


Lee waits in a grove of trees, listening to the chaos of battle in the distance. As he walks forward and moves among the wounded, trying to inspire men with his presence, he worries about the whereabouts of the various generals; perhaps Longstreet is right that command is too loose. He hears that Heth has been injured. Soon, however, men begin to cheer; the enemy has fallen back.

Lee's very presence raises his men's morale. Though he briefly entertains some of Longstreet's concerns about the conduct of battle, the eruption of cheers overrides his momentary doubts.

Lee continues to ride forward, giving silent thanks and trying to control his emotions as cheering soldiers surround him. He sees Union artillery forming on a distant hill and knows that the fight isn't over. He believes that the Confederates must continue the assault and keep the Union troops moving. He sends word that General Ewell should take the hill if possible. He thanks God for Longstreet's spy, Harrison.

Lee's own morale—hence his strategy decisions—is closely tied to the moods and achievements of his men. Seeing initial victory is enough to convince him that total victory is within reach, and that an assault is the best way to keep morale elevated.

Lee is pleased to see Longstreet riding up to join him, and together they savor this initial victory. Lee explains that he has ordered General Ewell to take Cemetery Hill. Longstreet agrees that this will be a good move, enabling the Confederates to get between the Union and Washington. Dug in on high ground, the Confederates will then force the Union to attack *them*. Lee is shocked by the latter point, asking, "You mean you want me to *disengage*?" He argues that the situation has changed; now that they have succeeded in pushing the Union back, they cannot move off in the face of the enemy. Furthermore, he is sure that Meade will not move quickly. He feels "only one urge: to press on and get it done."

Lee's newfound optimism clashes with Longstreet's view of the overall situation. While Longstreet agrees that the outcome of the early engagements has been positive, he thinks the best response is to retreat to ground of their own choosing. This flies in the face of Lee's logic. He sees retreat as dishonorable and antithetical to victory.


Longstreet looks as if he is suppressing his thoughts. Lee urges him to speak. Longstreet says that they should not have attacked here, as Heth had been ordered not to. Tomorrow, they will be outnumbered. Lee waves away this concern. Numbers, he thinks, are meaningless; anyway, the fight was *here*. Longstreet thinks it is more important to fight on ground of one's own choosing.

The difference in the two generals' tactical approaches becomes more apparent. Lee thinks it more important to meet the fight where it finds him, and that numbers are less critical than spirit. Longstreet feels that selection of ground is more important than Lee gives it credit for.

Lee persists in his view that, for now, today's victory is the most important thing. He remarks to himself that docile men don't make good soldiers. He thanks Longstreet for engaging Harrison's services as a spy, but Longstreet doesn't show pleasure at the compliment. Lee feels troubled, remembering the press's mockery of him as "the King of Spades." He is tired of defensive war and worried about what will happen if he becomes unable to lead the army. He waits for General Ewell to attack Cemetery Hill, but no attack begins.

Lee assumes that Longstreet's defensive strategy is motivated by timidity. At the same time, his own strategy is motivated much more by shame over perceived failure, and the desire to vindicate his own sense of honor, than perhaps he admits to himself. He also worries about the possibility of impending death—implicitly doubting that anyone else can lead the army as effectively.

WEDNESDAY, JULY 1, 1863: CHAPTER 4: CHAMBERLAIN

Chamberlain and his men march past glum and silent Maryland crowds. As they cross the Pennsylvania border, they hear more cheers and accept food from farmers. He overhears Tom describing the ways of the Second Maine to some of the new men, such as the brigade's distinctive bugle call. Chamberlain half dozes and reflects on the strange love one develops for army life, despite its rigors. He also remembers the horrors of a sleepless night among dead soldiers at Fredericksburg.

The reception of the army changes noticeably as the army crosses the Mason-Dixon Line. Chamberlain reflects on both the horrors and the joys of his time as a soldier.

Chamberlain's thoughts shift to Maine and to his father, a noble but distant man. He recalls delivering a speech from Shakespeare, including the line, "What a piece of work is man … in action how like an **angel**!" To this his father had replied, "Well, boy, if he's an angel, he's sure a murderin' angel." Chamberlain had gone on to deliver an oration on the subject at school: "Man, the Killer Angel."

In keeping with his reflections on the joys and terrors of war, Chamberlain recalls his youthful reflections on the dual "angelic" potential of humanity: to do great good and also great harm.

Chamberlain tries to stop himself from thinking too much, since he functions best when he falls back on instinct. But he continues dwelling on the subject of home. He thinks that one place is much like another— "truth is it's just all rock and dirt and people are roughly the same." He doesn't consider himself to be patriotic, as he feels at home everywhere, whether in Maine, in the South, or in England.

In battle, Chamberlain functions most effectively on instinct, but the march toward Gettysburg continues to draw out his contemplative side. He is not wedded to any particular place, he finds; he believes that people are basically the same no matter where they live.

One of Chamberlain's sergeants urges him to get back on his horse, since they cannot spare another commanding officer. The regiment marches past dead bodies where Stuart had skirmished with some Union soldiers. The weary men see a haze on the horizon, a sign of fighting in Gettysburg. As the day darkens, they look forward to rest, but are soon ordered forward, hearing news that two corps have been engaged at Gettysburg and that Reynolds has been killed.

The sight of corpses and news of nearby fighting summons Chamberlain back from his musings. He needs to refocus on his responsibility to his men. This refocusing represents a shift in Chamberlain's wartime experience, from primarily contemplative to more active.

Briefly, misinformation spreads down the ranks that McClellan has assumed command of the army, which rouses spirits, since he was the only general the Union men had ever loved. But soon Chamberlain knows that it cannot be true and that Meade, an unknown quantity, will lead them. Chamberlain thinks about the requirements for an officer that Ames, his predecessor, had taught him: "You must care for your men's welfare. You must show physical courage." He reflects that he has cared for the men as best he can, and that tomorrow will reveal his courage. After the men make camp for the night, Chamberlain prays for a true leader.

Chamberlain's reflections on true leadership foreshadow the challenges he will face in the coming days—though he does not fully realize that he might be the leader his men need the most.

WEDNESDAY, JULY 1, 1863: CHAPTER 5: LONGSTREET

Longstreet rides toward headquarters in a depressed mood. He knows that Lee will attack in the morning, "fixed and unturnable, a runaway horse." Longstreet looks toward the Union campfires on Cemetery Hill and "[smells] disaster like distant **rain**." Longstreet's clarity of sight is also his curse. He can see situations clearly, but is slow to speak and not gifted at persuasion.

Longstreet clearly sees the chasm between himself and Lee and believes, in a self-fulfilling prophecy, that Lee is unstoppable. Though he knows a better path, he doesn't believe he has the ability to stop the track that Lee is on.

In his dark mood, Longstreet thinks helplessly of his children's sudden deaths in Richmond the previous winter. Unbeknownst to anyone else, the pain of their loss has driven him out of his mind and shattered his belief in God. With tears in his eyes, he reminds himself that Lee is a father to him, in place of God.

Longstreet is tortured by a grief he can't express. This grief drives him to trust in Lee, silencing his critique of his friend more than he realizes.

Longstreet sees Fremantle approaching and welcomes the Englishman's cheering presence. Fremantle has been enjoying himself, "continually amazed at the combination of raw earth and rough people, white columned houses and traces of English manner" he finds in America. Fremantle talks with Longstreet about the remarkable figure of Lee, who, he has been surprised to discover, is an English gentleman.

Fremantle's temperament is opposite to Longstreet's and provides a welcome distraction. Fremantle's perspective on America, on Southern culture, and on Lee is through the eyes of an English aristocrat.

Longstreet talks about Lee's avoidance of vice and the reverent regard in which he is held by his men. He also talks of Stonewall Jackson's colorful character, describing him as a man who was both "a good Christian" and who "knew how to hate." They discuss various other men in the army, such as Garnett. Longstreet is troubled that Garnett believes his honor is gone and that he "will have to die bravely to erase the stain."

Reverence of personalities is much more characteristic of the Confederates than the Union in the book. Such personalities, like Jackson's, cast a long shadow that a disgraced figure like Garnett can't escape. This is because honor attaches to personalities as well, meaning that when Jackson tars Garnett with dishonor, Garnett has no easy way of vindicating himself.

Longstreet feels depressed when he sees that Fremantle agrees with Garnett. Longstreet sees Garnett's fate as "unturnable, ridiculous." He goes on to tell Fremantle, "Honor without intelligence is a disaster. Honor could lose the war." He tries to explain to the shocked Englishman that honor and bravery have their place before God, but that exhibiting these qualities is not the point of war.

Unburdening himself to the outsider, Longstreet tells Fremantle that naked honor is pointless and doesn't win wars. It must be wedded to intelligent strategy if it is to be effective.

Longstreet continues trying to explain. In the earlier days of war, he tells Fremantle, two sides faced each other in the open, fighting from a distance with bows and arrows, or face to face with swords. But now, though few have yet realized it, a well-hidden soldier with a repeating rifle can kill several men before they can reach him across an open field. But Longstreet breaks off, knowing that Fremantle "would not see."

Even changes in the technology of weaponry are part of the discussion about honor. What looks most "brave" might in fact lead to unnecessary deaths in this new mode of warfare. However, Longstreet perceives that Fremantle isn't open to seeing what he sees.

Longstreet has tried to explain these realities to his own men, but they find his ideas "vaguely shameful." Fremantle, too, is bewildered, protesting, "But, sir, there is the example of Solferino. And of course the Charge of the Light Brigade." Longstreet gives up, knowing that Fremantle, "like all Englishmen … would rather lose the war than his dignity." That night he stays up late in the company of his men, trying to avoid the memory of his dead children's faces.

Fremantle, like Longstreet's own men, continues appealing to precedents from other nineteenth-century wars, like the Italian war of independence and the Crimean War. He sees these as exemplars to be imitated rather than exceptions to a trend. Longstreet gives up, lonely in his minority views as well as in his private grief.

WEDNESDAY, JULY 1, 1863: CHAPTER 6: LEE

Lee rides out of Gettysburg amid joyful, whooping men. He is touched by the "lights in all the starry young eyes … tears for him, for the cause, for the dead of the day." He arrives at headquarters, wondering why Ewell did not attack. He finds Ewell chattering and nervous. Jubal Early is also there; he confidently speaks for Ewell in giving Lee an account of the day. Lee tells Ewell he is disappointed that Ewell did not take Cemetery Hill, and he feels depressed by Ewell's rambling defense and deference to Early.

The joy of the army stands in stark contrast to Longstreet's depression and Lee's own disappointment in his generals. The perception of the rank and file seems to bear relatively little connection to bigger-picture realities.

Early suggests that an attack on the Union's strong point at Cemetery Hill would be costly and inadvisable. Lee mentions Longstreet's proposal to retreat and occupy a defensive position between Meade and Washington; the two generals respond with disdain. Early assures Lee that if Longstreet can be induced to attack the Union flank, then they can capture the hill by sundown the next day.

Lee's other generals share his rejection of Longstreet's defensive tactics. Early and Ewell essentially affirm Lee in what he wants to hear about going on the offensive against the Union.

Missing Stonewall Jackson and giving up on word from Stuart, Lee says that they will have to attack. He leaves his officers and rides off in the dark. He talks with Trimble, an aide of Ewell's who is furious with Ewell's decision not to attack Cemetery Hill. When the man calms down, Lee questions him about Ewell's apparent freeze in battle. He then returns to headquarters, detached from the cheerful uproar around him, and finally sends for Ewell.

Lee himself is haunted by the memory of Jackson and the letdown of Stuart. The weight of leadership weighs heavily on him, and he is not swayed by the celebration of those around him.

Ewell comes to Lee more confident about the necessity of attack and remorseful about his slowness and excessive caution that day. Lee reassures and dismisses him, struggling to understand the caution that comes with battlefield injuries like Ewell's loss of his leg. Lee briefly second-guesses the wisdom of attacking before Stuart's return, but finally falls asleep.

Lee sees Ewell's caution as a weakness and failure, not as a potential asset. He sees attack as the only honorable way forward.

WEDNESDAY, JULY 1, 1863: CHAPTER 7: BUFORD

Around two o'clock in the morning, Buford returns to the cemetery on the hill and watches the rest of the army arrive and prepare to defend the hill. He goes to headquarters in search of orders and listens in amazement as various junior officers argue about who is in charge. He will never get used to the mindset of headquarters. Eventually, a familiar soldier brings him word that General Howard is blaming him for the loss of half his men through inadequate support. Buford is dizzied with anger. Eventually Hancock listens to him, and he is pacified.

Buford is bemused by the self-importance that prevails at headquarters, which bears so little connection to what he experiences on the field. Even more galling, Buford is faulted for losses earlier that day. Everyone is too busy arguing among themselves to recognize that by claiming and holding onto Cemetery Hill, Buford has made a pivotal stand for the Union.

Suddenly, General Meade arrives, an "angry man with a squeaky voice." Buford is pushed into the shadows as officers flock to see and hear the general. Buford slowly rides back to the cemetery and finds that none of his aides have survived the battle. He looks around the cemetery for the familiar white **angel** but cannot find it. Instead, he looks at the sea of Rebel campfires to the west and sadly remembers Reynolds: "Well, John, we held the ground."

In contrast to Lee's solemnity, Meade is portrayed as an unimpressive figure. Buford is pushed further into the shadows and, unremarked, returns to the cemetery, where he can't spot the angel that had comforted him the night before. This seems ominous, as if God has abandoned this place in anticipation of the carnage to come.

THURSDAY, JULY 2, 1863: CHAPTER 1: FREMANTLE

Fremantle struggles awake and joins the other foreign observers for breakfast, reflecting on what a joy it is to be with "the winners." He feels at home among the Southerners, who are so like Englishmen. After sunrise he rides to headquarters and watches the generals consult with one another. He is proud to consider them "our people" and hopes they might someday rejoin the Queen, under whose rule many officers have insisted they would be happier.

Fremantle continues to idealize the South and its culture through the lens of his own aristocratic position—and, accordingly, he assumes that "his" side are the winners. As an observer, he finds the war like more of a game.

Sorrel passes by and encourages Fremantle to stay near Longstreet, as that is where the action will be. Longstreet lets Fremantle ride with him as he and John Bell Hood speculate about the size of the Union force. Fremantle knows "with the certainty of youth and faith" that these men cannot possibly lose; they are "the gentlemen against the rabble."

Fremantle's estimation of the war has little basis in reality. Like Lee, he grounds his assumptions on faith. He assumes that the Confederates will win because they are "gentlemen," not because of their actions in the field.

Fremantle asks Longstreet why his men have not entrenched, as there is nothing to stop the Yankees from attacking. Longstreet and Hood laugh, then Longstreet sobers and tells Fremantle that Meade is not the type to attack, and he has only just arrived and is without his full force. Eventually Fremantle takes his leave of Longstreet and joins the other European observers

Ironically, Fremantle sees entrenchment as a viable option, while most of the Southern generals have rejected it. To them, the idea that the South would entrench or that Meade would make an offensive attack is laughable.

Fremantle thinks about America, the contrast between its vastness and extremes and its cultural affinities with England. He considers democracy to be a failed experiment—"in not much more than a generation they have come back to *class*." He is sure that pretenses to equality will have disappeared within 50 years, along with the embarrassment of slavery.

Fremantle continues to think about America as a kind of second-rate England that is in the process of shedding its absurd notions of equality. Ironically, even with his old-world assumptions, Fremantle finds slavery to be a shameful holdover.

Fremantle further muses that Southerners have the same love of tradition, form, and breeding as Europeans do, but the North does not. This, he thinks, is what the war is *really* about. Northerners do not respect the Old Country and have only the aristocracy of wealth. He wonders if he has stumbled upon a profound theory. He asks a nearby Major if "Longstreet" is an English name. The Major replies that it's actually Dutch. The theory is not without its exceptions, Fremantle decides.

Fremantle thinks that the Northern rabble have an inferior form of aristocracy that doesn't fit culturally with the "old country" mode embraced by the South. Humorously, he decides that Longstreet, with his surprising lack of English roots, is simply an exception to his "novel" idea.

THURSDAY, JULY 2, 1863: CHAPTER 2: CHAMBERLAIN

As Chamberlain walks among his men, he thinks that "all his life he had been a detached man, but … [now] he had joined not only the army but the race, not only the country but mankind." He has found his true calling.

Chamberlain's ideals are still quite elevated, as he finds joy in fighting not only on behalf of his country, but of humanity.

Chamberlain daydreams about his wife and the South she loves: "Strange hot land of courtly manners and sudden violence … a well-bred, well-mannered, highly educated man challenging you to a duel." Just then, Kilrain appears with the news that he has found an injured black man.

As Chamberlain muses on the odd dichotomies one finds in the South, he is abruptly interrupted by the discovery of a man who will challenge his lofty ideals.

The black man is very large, dark-skinned, well-muscled, and raggedly dressed. He has a bullet wound just under his ribs. Chamberlain has not seen many black people before and is "fascinated." He realizes there is nothing inscrutable about the man's face, as he had first thought; the man is simply exhausted. The man speaks almost no English.

At first, Chamberlain mainly sees the black man's differences from himself. He soon recognizes that, despite the communication barrier, it is easy to tell that the man has struggled greatly.

As the black man eats and waits for a doctor, Chamberlain is shocked by his own hesitation to touch him— "a flutter of unmistakable revulsion" he had never suspected was there. He feels ashamed. Looking on, Kilrain says, "And this is what [the war is] all about."

Chamberlain is stunned when, despite his vaunted ideals, he feels uncomfortable touching the ex-slave. These feelings fly in the face of his genuine willingness to fight for the ideal of equality. Kilrain drives the point home when he observes that this particular human being embodies all that Chamberlain has been theorizing about.

Tom arrives, chuckling over his conversation with some Rebel prisoners. When asked about their motives for fighting, the men claimed they weren't fighting for slavery, but for their "rights." Yet they could not specify what "rights" they were defending. Meanwhile, a surgeon has arrived and is examining the black man, who appears more frightened than ever.

Juxtaposed with the suffering man's specific deprivations is the prisoners' inability to name the specific rights for which they are fighting. Shaara presents a heavy irony here.

Chamberlain feels "a slow deep flow of sympathy" for the black man and wonders how much the man understands of what is happening around him. How much could he know "of borders and states' rights and the Constitution and Dred Scott? … And yet he was truly what it was all about." The reason for the war feels "brutally clear" to Chamberlain.

As compassion overcomes Chamberlain's initial discomfort, he realizes that many of the underlying issues of the war—important though they are—can be reduced to the plight of this man. His beliefs are still important, but they must be considered in light of the sufferings of specific people, not as detached ideals.

Chamberlain wishes he had time to think, but they will soon be moving into battle. As the doctor finishes his treatment, he reveals what he was able to learn from the black man. Apparently, the ex-slave had gotten lost and wandered into Gettysburg seeking directions, only to be shot by a woman there. He has only been in the country for a few weeks and wishes to go home. Chamberlain doesn't know what to do. He instructs the doctor to bandage the man well and send him off with food—but which way is "home"? Chamberlain bids the former slave goodbye, feeling foolish and angry.

Sadly, the displaced black man doesn't find easy refuge and understanding in the North, either—only racially fueled mistrust and violence. This further underscores the separation between ideals and on-the-ground realities. Chamberlain is ashamed of his inability to really help the man.

The regiment forms and begins to advance across the Pennsylvania fields through the heat of the day. When they stop to rest, Meade sends back a message which Chamberlain is to read to the troops. The order mentions that any man who fails to do his duty will be punished by instant death. Chamberlain is embarrassed, thinking it a "damn fool order, [the] mind of West Point at work." He does not believe that men can be threatened into this kind of fight; they must be led—by him.

Chamberlain's position hasn't changed from the beginning of the story; he maintains that it is oxymoronic to force any man to fight for freedom, and it is something only a distant hierarchy would think reasonable. The moment calls instead for steadfast leadership.

As they wait, Chamberlain asks Kilrain what he thinks of "Negroes." Kilrain broods and finally says that one cannot judge an entire race of people; one must take people one at a time. He has met some blacks who have earned his respect. Chamberlain says that he has never believed there is any difference between the races. A black man has "the divine spark" in his eye the same as a white man does.

Evidently, Chamberlain is still rattled by the encounter with the black man, prompting him to seek the opinion of his father figure. Yet Chamberlain's underlying belief in equality appears unchanged.

Chamberlain recalls some visitors from the South whom he had met before the war, a minister and a professor. The minister had asserted that "a Negro was not a man," and that Chamberlain would never understand this unless he lived among them. Chamberlain had left the room in anger, unable to understand how someone could enslave another man and then quote the Bible.

Chamberlain's beliefs and those of the Southern visitors couldn't be more starkly different. The minister's beliefs also challenge the idea that mere proximity can overcome prejudice. While Chamberlain's ideas needed to become better grounded in reality, they were still more truthful than those of the minister entrenched in his ugly views.

The professor had apologized to Chamberlain for offending him in his own home, though he could not apologize for his views, as they were honestly held. Finally, he had asked Chamberlain, "My young friend, what if it is you who are wrong?" Chamberlain remembers feeling for the first time that he would be willing to kill for his views, and at the same time to wonder if he was completely right. The man's question still haunts him from time to time.

The encounter with the Southern guests sparked Chamberlain's passion, making him willing to go to war for his beliefs, yet he also has the ability to question himself, even when the questioner is repugnant to him. This points to Chamberlain's humility and, in the long run, to the resilience and durability of his ideals.

They sit in silence for a while. Kilrain finally says that he sees a great difference between them, which he can't help but admire: Chamberlain is an idealist. Kilrain does not believe that there is any such thing as a "divine spark" or intrinsic equality. Rather, he is fighting for "the right to prove I'm a better man than many."

Kilrain makes no pretense to elevated ideals like Chamberlain's—in the end, he is basically fighting for himself, to prove his own superiority. The motivations of Union soldiers, like those of Confederates, were varied and complex.

Kilrain goes on to explain his personal philosophy and motive for fighting: "There's many a man worse than me, and some better, but I don't think race or country matters a damn. What matters is justice … damn all gentlemen." He further believes that the only aristocracy is in the mind, and each person must be judged on an individual basis, never on the basis of one's class or lineage.

Kilrain's philosophy differs from Chamberlain's in that, while he also believes that no person should be enchained by their past, he is ultimately much more individualistic. Whereas Chamberlain fights for humanity at large, Kilrain takes an "every man for himself" approach. The ideal of freedom is individual, not communal.

Kilrain tells Chamberlain that the "strange and beautiful" thing about him is that he actually believes in humanity, whereas when he has gained Kilrain's experience of the world, he will realize that good people are far rarer than he thinks. Chamberlain points out that what black people have suffered in America is terrible. Kilrain agrees but argues that a freed black man is not necessarily superior to many a white man who fought to free him.

Kilrain thinks that believing in "humanity" in the abstract doesn't make sense. Relatively few good people exist who are worth fighting for, he believes; one can only really fight for oneself. Chamberlain, on the other hand, sees human value as inherent.

Kilrain continues to argue that the point of the war is that "we have a country here where the past cannot keep a good man in chains," and that it is the aristocracy he is after—"all that lovely, plumed, stinking chivalry." The two ponder what will become of the country if the Union loses the war. They continue to wait for orders to move. Chamberlain takes comfort in knowing that he is not wrong, that he is fighting for the right side.

Kilrain is angrier about the persistence of class divisions than he is about specific wrongs that have been done. Chamberlain's belief in equality, meanwhile, remains intact, apparently strengthened by this interlude before battle.

THURSDAY, JULY 2, 1863: CHAPTER 3: LONGSTREET

Longstreet is considering the Union position on Cemetery Hill and Culp's Hill when he is summoned by Lee, whom he finds pacing back and forth by the seminary. Lee tells Longstreet that he likes to go into battle with the agreement of his commanders, as far as possible. He further explains that both Ewell and Early disagree with Longstreet's argument for a defensive move, believing it would be bad for morale and dangerous.

Lee hasn't given up trying to win Longstreet to his view and, perhaps more insecure in his decisions than he appears, hopes for the affirmation of his second-in-command. He still holds that troop morale is paramount for success.

Lee looks questioningly at Longstreet, who says nothing, having resigned himself to an offensive attack. Lee reiterates his argument for attack: the enemy will use any delay to reinforce himself; the Confederates cannot support themselves as easily in enemy territory; they must not risk being cut off from home. Longstreet feels impatient, knowing that Lee is waiting for him to agree, but that he cannot. Finally, Lee breaks the silence, telling Longstreet to attack on the right with his First Corps.

Longstreet can't bring himself to fight with Lee. Lee's arguments are beside the point for him; their fundamental views on the conduct of the war are too far apart.

Lee orders Longstreet to attack *en echelon*, taking Cemetery Hill in reverse with the support of Hill, Pender, and Anderson. The objective will be to get to the rear of the Union Army.

Attacking en echelon*—from a French term referring to the rungs of a ladder—means to attack with units lined up in a diagonal formation, with the object of enveloping and overrunning the enemy. The disadvantage of such a formation is that it risks becoming disorganized before reaching its objective.*

The men begin to prepare for battle. Longstreet talks with Lee's engineer, Johnston, explaining that the attack on the Union flank *must* be a surprise, or else the Union will have time to swing their artillery around and slaughter them. Johnston admits that he doesn't know much about the approach, thanks to the lack of intelligence from Stuart. Longstreet encourages him to do his best and broods about Stuart, thinking he ought to be court-martialed. The march begins around noon. Longstreet wonders how much generalship really matters in the long run, compared to smaller factors, like availability of water.

The failure of Stuart is still having ramifications, now limiting the Confederates' ability to achieve surprise. Longstreet is angrier about this fact than Lee is. He continues to instinctively question conventional wisdom about warfare, wondering if the matters traditionally seen as decisive are really as important as they seem.

Lee rides up to join Longstreet on the march. Longstreet gets "the mulish foolish hungry feeling" of anticipating an assault and feels affectionate toward Lee. Memories of the Mexican War flood back to him. For a moment, he pictures them all as a single army again. Despite his better judgment, he tells Lee, "They're never quite the enemy, those boys in blue."

The men have spent their careers fighting battles together, and the sense of camaraderie persists even in the midst of misgivings. Even the Union soldiers don't seem like enemies in light of these memories.

Longstreet goes on to admit that sometimes he feels troubled about breaking his oath to defend the United States. He says, "Couldn't fight against home. Not against your own family. And yet … we broke the vow." Lee cautions, "Let's not think on this today." But a short time later, he says, "There was a higher duty to Virginia … The issue is in God's hands. We will live with His decision." The two agree that they pray it will all be over soon.

Ever brooding, Longstreet can't dodge the reality that he and his fellow Confederates broke their vow to defend the United States. But Lee, despite his initial reluctance to speak of it, feels that loyalty to home and family surpasses duty to nation. It is another instance of competing ideals.

After riding in silence for a while, Lee speaks up in a strange, soft tone of voice. He tells Longstreet that "soldiering has one great trap." While a good soldier must love the army, a good officer must be willing to order the death of the thing he loves. It is a rare lecture from Lee, and Longstreet waits for his point. Lee goes on to say that an officer is never prepared for as many deaths as are required of him. "But … that is the trap," he concludes. "You can hold nothing back when you attack … And yet, if they all die, a man must ask himself, will it have been worth it?"

Lee argues that an officer must be prepared to essentially view his soldiers as dispensable for the sake of the cause—even being willing to order them all to their deaths. Lee apparently never speaks like this usually, startling Longstreet.

Longstreet feels a chill down his spine. He realizes that Lee thinks Longstreet's talk of defense comes from loving his men too much. He realizes there is not enough time to talk Lee out of this notion.

Longstreet realizes that the divergence between himself and Lee is more fundamental than he had thought. Lee completely misunderstands Longstreet's motives for advocating defensive warfare.

Lee then says that he hopes this will be the last battle, since he is not well and may not have long to live. Longstreet is surprised by Lee's uncharacteristic admission. Soon Lee reluctantly takes his leave. As they shake hands, Longstreet notices that "the grip no longer [seemed] quite so firm, the hand no longer quite so large."

Longstreet's disillusionment regarding his father figure continues. Lee's fallibility and mortality are beginning to seem more obvious to Longstreet.

After Lee rides off, Longstreet feels depressed. Soon the army draws to a halt, and Longstreet rides ahead to discover that, as Johnston had predicted, their current road takes them within sight of the Union army. Longstreet takes over scouting, becoming increasingly angry at Stuart as he goes. By the time he finds a new position and begins to place the divisions, it is late afternoon, and what's more, the enemy appears to have moved forward off the ridge. Longstreet doesn't think Lee's plan will ever work, but he wants to get the battle over with. He has never been afraid of death or war, but "of blind stupid human frailty, of blind proud foolishness that could lose it all."

Stuart's failure continues to yield dangerous outcomes for the army, as they nearly give away their position prematurely. By the time a new position is secured, Longstreet feels more pessimistic than ever, but he sees no alternative but to press forward. Though he doesn't attribute blindness, stupidity, and pride directly to Lee, it is obvious who he has in mind.

Some of Hood's scouts report that nothing stands between them and the Union army, and that it will make more sense to move around the ridge and attack from the rear. "Sonny boy," Longstreet tells the messenger in disgust, "I been telling General Lee that same damn thing for two days … and there ain't no point in bringing it up again. Tell [Hood] to attack as ordered."

Hood sees a common-sense alternative to Lee's plan, but Longstreet can do nothing, he thinks, but order Hood to do as Lee says. His bitter resignation makes any other course of action seem out of reach.

Longstreet receives a further report from Hood that the Yankees have uncovered the ridge and are undefended in the rear. However, there is not enough time to reach Lee with the report or to change orders. Longstreet thus tells Hood to attack as ordered. The present ground is not much good for mounting artillery, and Longstreet knows that daylight is running out. He thinks how clear it all is when one studies war, yet how different things are when one is on the battlefield.

The present position is not a good one for attacking; Longstreet, ever attentive to the advantage of choosing one's own ground, sees this clearly. He ruefully acknowledges the difference between theories of war and the reality of the battlefield.

Longstreet finds Hood, who explains that the ground is strewn with large boulders that make it impossible to mount cannons. Furthermore, there are Union guns in the rocks above, and every move his men make is observed. If his men attack as ordered, Hood will lose half of them; the only alternative is to move to the right. Longstreet knows Hood is right, but he thinks that he cannot go against Lee. He reminds Hood that he has been arguing the same thing to Lee all along. They have their orders, and Hood must attack. Longstreet feels an overwhelming sadness and knows the men are going to die.

Longstreet is convinced that Lee wouldn't be receptive to further argument at this point, despite how problematic the ground is. Something—perhaps the vestiges of his own stubborn pride in Lee—keeps Longstreet from trying again to stop the attack. He knows what's about to happen and grieves.

Hood tells Longstreet that he will lead the attack under protest. Longstreet understands, mutely bidding the general goodbye. He has never felt so rattled in war before. Yet, at the same time, he enjoys a certain savage power in holding them all back. Longstreet finally sends Barksdale's Mississippi brigade to attack a battery of Union guns. He follows them into the open, waving his hat and screaming them forward.

Longstreet is filled with mixed emotions in the heat of war. Despite this combination of dread and fierce enjoyment, he sends the first brigade into the field. The point of attacking the enemy en echelon *is to press from various points, leaving the enemy confused as to where to focus his defense. This leads to the enemy bunching up in one place, thus giving the Confederates the ability to break through the enemy's line at a weaker spot (or spots). In the meantime, Longstreet can only hope the Confederates aren't too badly damaged and scattered as they make their way to the Union line.*

THURSDAY, JULY 2, 1863: CHAPTER 4: CHAMBERLAIN

Chamberlain hears the cannon begin. He is instructed to form his regiment. They begin to move forward, Chamberlain learning that the Rebels have attacked the left Union flank. As shells begin to tear into the trees around them, Chamberlain orders Tom to the rear, to lessen the likelihood that both brothers will be killed at once. He relaxes slightly.

Down the road, Chamberlain's regiment hears the Confederate onslaught begin. He moves his younger brother to a more distant spot, foreshadowing a moment later in battle when Tom's safety won't be his primary concern.

Chamberlain learns that General Sickles has left his hill uncovered because he didn't like the ground, allowing the Rebels to move around his flank, and thereby putting the Twentieth Maine in a jam. The men run uphill in the darkness, among woods and boulders. Chamberlain and his men are placed at the top of the slope, surrounded by ridges of rocks. They are now the flank of the army.

Chamberlain's men are in an awkward and vulnerable defensive position, thanks to a general moving off the hillside without orders.

Chamberlain thinks it is a strange place to fight. He watches his regiment form along the ridge in the darkness. Colonel Vincent explains to him that they are the extreme left of the Union line. That means they cannot withdraw under any conditions. If they move, they will be flanked and taken from the rear. They must defend this place to the last.

The Colonel's instructions are ominous. As the extreme edge of the army, the regiment cannot move anywhere without risking disaster to the whole army.

Chamberlain walks among his men, wondering what "to the last" really means. He is unsettled by the darkness and emptiness off to his left. He is not used to fighting without men on all sides of him. In the distance, Sickles is being overrun. Lots of soldiers are headed their way.

Chamberlain is in an unprecedented position and will soon learn the truth about his courage and leadership ability.

Chamberlain checks on the six remaining holdouts from the Second Maine mutineers. He promises that any man who joins the fight now will not face charges. Half of the men join up, while three remain resolute. Chamberlain cannot understand their intransigence and will not spare a soldier to guard them. The battle slowly moves closer as Chamberlain walks along his line. At last he hears the Rebel yell— "a weird sound … a ghost, high and thin."

Even in this tension-filled moment, Chamberlain remembers the mutineers and extends another chance to the stubborn holdouts, showing his concern both for them and for his own men. Soon the Rebel attack is eminent.

The Rebels don't come in a full charge, but in a lapping wave. A regiment rolls up the hill, out of the dark toward them. The next few minutes are a chaos of noise and smoke, but the initial Rebel attack seems to be repelled. As Chamberlain checks on the dead and injured, he comes upon Kilrain, shot in the armpit. He sends Tom for a surgeon. Chamberlain is shot in the foot as he overlooks the next wave of Rebels but is not felled by the injury.

Chamberlain, Kilrain, and others in the regiment sustain damage in the first wave, but repel the worst of the attack.

Chamberlain sees masses of Rebels coming up the hill, moving from tree to tree. He is blown off the rock once again, but keeps his wits about him, realizing that their position is being flanked. He ponders what to do, searching his memory to come up with the move he wants. He instructs his commanders to "refuse" the line, forming a new line at right angles and creating a swinging door effect. The move helps repel the next charge of Rebels.

Chamberlain is able to come up with an unfamiliar maneuver under fire, showing his remarkable mettle and ingenuity.

The regiment is almost out of ammunition and has lost many men. They are stretched thin, and Chamberlain is briefly horrified when Tom jumps up to plug a hole in the line. Chamberlain feels it would be his responsibility if Tom were killed but cannot think about it now; he knows they will not be able to hold off the Rebels for much longer.

Despite his concern for Tom's welfare, Chamberlain can't keep his brother out of harm's way while commanding the entire regiment. Their situation is becoming dire.

Chamberlain knows that if they pull out, the entire flank will cave in. The burden of responsibility is inexpressible. But suddenly Chamberlain forms an idea. He orders his men to fix bayonets and explains that they will have the advantage of moving downhill. They will charge, swinging to the right, sweeping the oncoming Rebels down the hill.

Chamberlain again concocts an unlikely plan at the last possible moment, this time for a downhill bayonet charge.

The entire Regiment runs screaming down the slope, bayonets in the air. Chamberlain watches as Rebels stop, freeze, and then turn to flee. He stumbles downhill toward an officer, who tries to fire at him but whose gun turns out to be empty. The officer surrenders the moment Chamberlain reaches him. Soon Chamberlain realizes that his men are chasing the Rebels down the valley between the hills, and hundreds of others have been taken prisoner. His desperate downhill charge has worked.

The effect of the charging regiment is so alarming that many Rebels surrender or run, making hand-to-hand combat unnecessary. Chamberlain's quick mind and creative instincts have reversed their fortunes in a matter of minutes.

Chamberlain goes back to check on Kilrain, who has been shot twice. There is a silently emotional moment, "like coming back to your father, having done something fine … and you can see the knowledge in his eyes," Chamberlain thinks. Before falling asleep, Kilrain tells Chamberlain that he has never served under a better man.

Kilrain is in bad shape, but his pride in Chamberlain's victory is obvious.

Chamberlain walks among wounded and dying soldiers, shares a drink with one of his men, and talks with Tom, who has survived the battle unhurt. Colonel Rice, the new commander of the brigade, tells him that the charge "was the damnedest thing I ever saw." He questions Chamberlain about his academic background and wonders how he got the idea to charge. It had seemed logical to Chamberlain, since they were out of ammunition. Now he begins to get the idea that his actions might be considered unusual.

Only in the aftermath of the battle does Chamberlain realize the far-reaching import of his actions. Placed in a nearly impossible position, he was still able to come up with the most effective maneuvers and to lead his men in executing them, thereby doing much to save the Union.

Rice tells Chamberlain that the hill they've defended is called Little Round Top. Promising to resupply them with ammunition, he asks that they occupy nearby Big Round Top. Chamberlain says goodbye to Kilrain, having never known a day in the regiment without him. As he and his men climb Big Round Top, he forgets his wounded foot and feels "an incredible joy … as good as a man can feel."

Despite the exhaustion and sadness of the day, Chamberlain has come into his own as a leader of courage and compassion.

THURSDAY, JULY 2, 1863: CHAPTER 5: LONGSTREET

Longstreet visits Hood in the hospital. Hood has been drugged while the medics work on his badly wounded arm. He tells Longstreet that Longstreet should have let him move to the right. Longstreet can only nod. Hood asks Longstreet if they were successful in capturing Devil's Den; Longstreet lies, telling him they did, and that the casualties weren't bad.

After having ordered Hood into battle despite his better judgment, Longstreet can't bear to tell the injured man how badly the Confederates have lost that day.

Longstreet rejoins his silent staff, thinking of how many have died that day. There is a swelling rage in his chest as he pictures the Union soldiers holding Little Round Top. He talks with one of his captains, Goree, who tells him angrily that Hood's officers are blaming Longstreet for the day's loss. Goree says that no one will blame General Lee, so they are taking their anger out on Longstreet. Longstreet tells him to let it go.

Lee's godlike status among the men is such that no one is willing to directly blame him. Ironically, Longstreet's own attitude toward Lee also keeps him from openly contradicting the general, leading to other generals blaming Longstreet now.

As Longstreet rides toward Lee's headquarters, he tells himself that he must restrain his anger, but that a truthful conversation is needed, since "the Old Man is becoming untouchable." He meets Sorrel, who reports that the Division lost a third of its men, and Hood's losses will approach fifty percent. Longstreet realizes that this adds up to a loss of eight thousand men in two hours. He thinks that Lee must see the facts: there are not enough men left to make another major assault.

The Confederate losses have been truly devastating. Longstreet thinks even Lee will see the truth now and change his tactics. He resolves once more to persuade Lee.

General Pickett makes a dramatic show of his arrival on the field, having not been needed in that day's action. Longstreet is encouraged by the prospect of five thousand fresh men. As he rides toward Lee's headquarters, he notices crowds, singing, and celebration. Then he sees Jeb Stuart. The handsome, well-dressed man is lounging among a crowd of admirers. Longstreet is bewildered when some of the crowd pushes toward him with calls of congratulations.

The sudden appearance of Stuart, after days of uncertainty and near disaster due to his failure to report to Lee, is a dismaying anticlimax. Even more jarring is the celebratory atmosphere, in stark contrast to what Longstreet has just witnessed on the field.

Lee approaches Longstreet and takes his hand. The loving concern in Lee's eyes "flicked all [Longstreet's] defenses aside and penetrated to the lonely man within." When they reach the house, Longstreet sees that Lee is clearly exhausted. Lee tells Longstreet that he had felt the Union line come close to breaking that day. Longstreet tells him, "It wasn't that close." But he sees "a vision of victory" in Lee's eyes and finds he cannot summon the right words in the General's presence.

Lee's fatherly affection and evident fatigue completely disarm Longstreet, who was so angry just moments earlier. At heart, Longstreet longs for Lee's approval as much as any soldier does. Lee clearly has the wrong interpretation of what has occurred in the day's battle, yet Longstreet is silenced by his emotions and idealization of the old man.

Lee continues, "I could see … an open road to Washington." Longstreet feels "an extraordinary confusion." He feels silenced by the man's greatness and does not know how to preach caution to such a face. Longstreet feels a small rage and tells Lee that he lost almost half his strength that day, and that the path to the right is still open. But Lee does not seem to hear him. Overwhelmed by the noise in headquarters, Longstreet moves outside, telling himself he must come back later.

Longstreet is totally flustered by Lee's seeming blindness and misplaced hope. He makes a feeble attempt to make Lee see reason but isn't heard, and he soon gives up.

Outside, Longstreet is stopped by another officer who asks him to intercede for him with Lee, who has refused to sign court-martial papers for Stuart. Stuart had been joyriding in enemy country, capturing enemy wagons and leaving the army blind. Longstreet agrees that a court-martial is necessary and that he will try to speak to Lee, though it will not likely do much good. He rides away, amazed at the air of victory in the camp.

Longstreet isn't alone in his disgust with Stuart, but there is such an air of unreality in the Confederate camp that it seems unlikely Stuart will face just consequences for his actions.

Longstreet is approached by Fremantle, who congratulates him on his "victory." Fremantle praises Lee effusively, sure that all of Europe will soon be turning to him for lessons on military matters and tactics. Longstreet finally hears enough. He tells Fremantle, "The secret of General Lee is that men love him and follow him … That's why we win, mostly … God, man, we don't win because of tricks."

Fremantle, with his odd ability to draw frank speech out of Longstreet, causes Longstreet's pent-up frustrations to burst forth. Longstreet's illusions about Lee are decidedly shattered. He tells the Englishman that the army's strength has been its love and faith in its leader, not the wisdom of its tactics.

Longstreet can't contain his words. "There's no strategy to this bloody war," he tells Fremantle; it's "old Napoleon and a hell of a lot of chivalry." He explains that they are outnumbered and outgunned by the enemy, and that if they win tomorrow, it will be nothing more than "a bloody miracle."

Longstreet refers again to the Confederacy's steadfast belief in the outmoded tactics of the Napoleonic wars. The Union has them at a great tactical disadvantage; there's almost no chance they can win tomorrow.

Fremantle appears shocked by the outburst. Longstreet, too, is alarmed by what he has said, "something long sunken … in the dark of his mind." He pictures Lee's "beautiful face and suddenly it was not the same face." Disturbed, he takes his leave of the Englishman.

Longstreet realizes how long his anger and disillusionment has been simmering beneath the surface. He can no longer pretend to look at Lee in the same way.

Longstreet is reminded of the moment in church when, faced with his children's deaths, he prayed and felt that no one was listening. He tells himself not to think of it anymore and that "this stuff is like heresy." He walks through the camp and thinks about Stonewall Jackson. Men like Jackson and Lee come from another age, he realizes. But he feels ashamed of his thoughts.

It's ambiguous whether Longstreet's "heresy" is doubting Lee or conflating Lee with God—possibly it's both. In any case, he finds himself completely out of step with the man the rest of the army so reveres.

Longstreet sits down under a tree. In the distance, he watches an enthusiastic Pickett telling a hilarious story around a campfire. The only one of Pickett's men who doesn't laugh is Dick Garnett, who stares into the fire. Garnett's gaze reminds him again of Lee, "a simple man, out of date," and the accusing eyes of Hood.

The laughter in the camp contrasts with Longstreet's depression. Garnett's solemnity reminds him once more of the Confederate obsession with honor and with conducting war in outdated ways.

Armistead joins Longstreet, and they discuss the day. Armistead shares his concerns for Dick Garnett, who is sick and can barely walk, but can't stand to be out of the action. Longstreet can't order him out, however. Armistead has tried to tell Garnett that he doesn't have a thing to prove to them.

The drive to vindicate one's honor is so consuming that Garnett can't let it go, despite being so ill he shouldn't go into battle at all.

Armistead brings up Fremantle, the "not too bright" Englishman. He says he asked Fremantle why England won't intervene to help the Confederacy, and Fremantle said the problem was slavery. Armistead is disgusted that Europe thinks the war is about slavery and wonders what they are supposed to do about that. Longstreet says nothing. He thinks to himself that the war certainly is about slavery, though it is not why *he* fights. There is no point in denying the fact and no point in talking about it, either.

As one would expect from Longstreet, he makes no pretense of denying that slavery is at the heart of the war. Armistead, however, genuinely treats it as a misconception that they must clear up—to him, it is just an aspect of Southern culture that outsiders wouldn't understand. Despite his delight in the South's other "Old World" traits, Fremantle sees slavery as a shameful regression—but England also abolished slavery decades before the U.S. did.

They stop talking as they listen to a young man singing a sentimental Irish song. It especially touches Armistead, who remembers playing the same song with Hancock the spring before the men went their separate ways for the war. Armistead remembers telling Hancock, "If I ever lift a hand against you, may God strike me dead." He is troubled to think of breaking his vow tomorrow. He wishes he could go to see his friend.

The war has pulled friendships apart. Inevitably, Armistead's loyalty to the Confederacy means that he will have to break his vow not to raise his hand against Hancock.

Armistead wants Longstreet to join the group around the fire. Longstreet resists, knowing his presence will create awkwardness in the group, but he longs for the company and soon he yields. He can't resist the "monstrous and temporary glittering joy" that soldiers share in between the nightmares of the previous day and those of the coming dawn.

Longstreet finally sets aside the aloofness he has maintained until now. His disillusionment and resignation seem to give him a little more freedom in relating to his men. The company also enables him to flee the burden of his thoughts once again.

THURSDAY, JULY 2, 1863: CHAPTER 6: LEE

Though he is tired and in pain, Lee works late into the night. He muses on the irony that they might gain independence from the Union on July 4th. He wonders if this is a glimpse of God's plan. He goes outside to sit with his horse, Traveler, and consider the options before him: to move away to better ground, or to stay and fight to the end.

On the eve of the final day of battle, Lee still hasn't completely dismissed the possibility of retreating to better ground. He hasn't been totally deaf to Longstreet's pleadings.

Lee flashes back to the night after Virginia's secession, when he decided that he had no choice but to side with the Confederacy. It was not a matter of causes or vows, he felt. He could not lead an army that was to march against his own home and family. Neither could he stand back and do nothing. So finally, "he fought for his people … wrong as they were, insane even as many of them were … And so he took up arms willfully, knowingly, in perhaps the wrong cause against his own sacred oath."

Lee is still conflicted about his adherence to the cause. He believes his people could be gravely wrong, yet his sense of honor compels him to fight on their behalf. He doesn't necessarily hold to the "cause" as fervently as many of his own men do.

Lee tells himself that he has arrived here on alien soil through the hands of God, not through his own choice; there had never been any alternative but to run away, and honor would not allow that. He considers the present situation. To delay or retreat would be bad for morale, he thinks; and they have always been outgunned, winning through pride and tenacity rather than numbers.

Lee is aware that the Confederates are at a strong disadvantage from a tactical perspective—he doesn't doubt Longstreet on this point. He just doesn't believe it should be the determining factor for his strategy. Honor and the protection of his men's faith is more critical to him. All other considerations, no matter how theoretically correct, must give way.

Jeb Stuart walks up, interrupting Lee's thoughts. Lee has asked to see him. At first, he speaks sharply to Stuart about his failure to fulfill his mission of reporting enemy movements. Because of Stuart, the army was forced into battle with inadequate knowledge of enemy size and strength and without knowledge of ground conditions; they have barely escaped catastrophe. After a moment, Stuart dramatically offers his sword in resignation, but Lee turns away in annoyance, telling him he is needed for tomorrow's fight, as Stuart is too good a soldier to be spared.

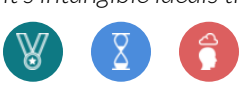
Lee finally confronts Stuart, as Longstreet has hoped. Interestingly, as badly as Stuart has betrayed him, Lee won't accept Stuart's resignation—pragmatic concerns offset the dictates of honor in this instance.

Lee feels affection for Stuart as the chastened man walks away. He knows Longstreet will not approve, but Lee believes that court-martial would have destroyed such a spirited soldier. Then Venable, one of Lee's aides, approaches with news from Ewell's camp. Ewell is uncertain in his actions, deferring too much to Early. This confirms Lee's fear that Ewell cannot command a corps; his appointment was a mistake. Lee realizes he can rely neither on Ewell nor on Hill; only Longstreet is dependable, and Lee will lean on him in tomorrow's attack.

Mistrusting his other officers, Lee will once more put Longstreet in the position of leading an offensive he doesn't believe in.

Lee reviews the facts and makes his decision. He does not think about the men who will die—the men are ready to die for what they believe in, "and although it was often a terrible death it was always an honorable death." Since watching his men get so close to the top of the slope earlier that day, he has known he cannot retreat: "It might be the clever thing to do, but cleverness did not win victories; the bright combinations rarely worked." Courage and faith win battles, and faith must be protected; so, Lee cannot demoralize his men by asking them to retreat. He must stay and attack.

Because Lee believes in the value of an honorable death, he does not trouble himself about the probability that many of his men will be killed. Ultimately, he believes that Longstreet has made the error of excessive cleverness. He might be right on paper, Lee thinks, but it's intangible ideals that will carry the day and bring victory.



Lee believes the Union is softest at the slope, so he will hit that point as hard as possible, with artillery support. He is sure that with Stuart's eagerness for redemption and Pickett's hunger for combat, fresh men can successfully rout the dug-in Yankees, cutting their army in two. He prays and continues to plan, sensing no flaw and feeling "a releasing thrill." He will be able to "end with honor." He sits with Traveler in peace, wondering about death. He falls asleep just as dawn begins to break.

Lee achieves the sense of peace about the battle that Longstreet so sorely lacks. The outcome doesn't matter as much to Lee as the ability to end with honor—his highest ideal—intact. He also clearly has his own death in mind here, along with the fate of the Confederacy.

FRIDAY, JULY 3, 1863: CHAPTER 1: CHAMBERLAIN

Chamberlain sits in a tree overlooking Gettysburg after a sleepless night, hungry and exhausted. Tom brings him coffee, and they chat, Chamberlain missing Kilrain. Tom talks about his fear in battle the day before, and Chamberlain remembers the exultation he felt, the sense of being alive. Tom says he thinks they will win the war, and Chamberlain confirms it, but he is too tired to think of "high and golden" ideals.

In the aftermath of battle, Chamberlain is surprised how jubilant he feels, and how disconnected from the very ideals he had agonized over the day before.

Chamberlain gets down from the tree and hears battle to the north, on the army's opposite flank, as he limps along on his injured foot. He is almost disappointed not to be facing another assault. On the other hand, his regiment is worn down to two hundred weary men, who have nothing to eat. Eventually a sergeant struggles up the steep hill with word that Colonel Rice wants them to fall back and get some rest. As Chamberlain readies his men, he looks around the hill and knows they will never forget the spot. They are being led to a "safe" spot in the middle of the line, where it is said to be very quiet.

Unbeknownst to them, Chamberlain's regiment is about to be led to the most dangerous part of the coming battle.

FRIDAY, JULY 3, 1863: CHAPTER 2: LONGSTREET

Longstreet sits alone in the dawn, smelling **rain**. Lee appears, looking majestic in the mist, a ghostly presence. As they ride together, Longstreet tells Lee that he has scouted the terrain and knows a promising route to the south. But Lee points up the slope; the enemy is *there*, and that's where they will strike. He fixes Longstreet with a stare, and Longstreet draws back timidly.

As before, the smell of rain suggests impending disaster. Everything about Lee's demeanor continues to silence a doubtful Longstreet on the morning of the last day of battle.

Lee explains his plan to split the Union line, with Longstreet leading the charge. Longstreet asks to speak. He tells Lee that his two divisions, Hood and McLaws, lost half their strength the day before. How can they expect to succeed in attacking the same high ground they failed to gain yesterday—with far fewer men and officers? He tells Lee plainly, "It is my considered opinion that a frontal assault here would be a disaster."

Longstreet finally speaks his mind plainly to Lee, despite feeling cowed by him, explaining that his men simply don't have the resources to accomplish what Lee asks.

Longstreet fears hurting Lee, but presses on, asking if he has ever seen a worse position. The line is spread too thin to coordinate an attack against the entrenched Union, and they cannot be as easily reinforced. But Lee insists that the Union line will break. Longstreet sees Lee's weariness and feels a surge of affection, but he also feels a growing despair.

Despite having no logical reason to believe that an attack will work, Lee is convinced that they will be successful in breaching the Union line. Longstreet's love for his exhausted leader has not faded, but he has no hope.

Meade moves earlier than expected, engaging Ewell. Lee and Longstreet move toward the front, met by the soldiers' cheerful morale. At last Lee assigns Pickett's, Heth's, and Pender's divisions to Longstreet and explains the objectives. After massed artillery fire, Longstreet's men will head for a clump of trees in the center of the Union line. Longstreet asks why the attack cannot be given to Hill instead, but Lee is insistent; it must be led by Longstreet.

Morale continues to be hauntingly cheerful, in contrast to Longstreet's expectations for the battle to come. Lee continues to put his trust in Longstreet alone, despite Longstreet's expressed reluctance.

Longstreet struggles to meet Lee's eyes, thinking of him as "more than father of the army, symbol of war." He tells Lee again that he believes the attack will fail, that no fifteen thousand men could ever take that hill. Lee raises a hand angrily, but Longstreet continues inexorably, pointing out that the men will be forced to cover more than a mile's distance under fire of Union artillery. Lee says, "That's enough," and turns away for a moment. Longstreet momentarily thinks Lee might relieve him of leadership but realizes Lee will rely on no one else; it's as if it has all been fated.

Longstreet presses on with his argument, even though Lee seems more like a godlike figure than ever. Lee is angry to be contradicted, but it isn't enough to change his mind; he trusts no one else to carry out his vision.

Lee returns and calmly asks Longstreet if he has any questions, reminding him that everyone has to do his duty. He goes over the battle plan again, confident that because of the strength of his flanks, Meade must have left the center of his line in a weaker state. He radiates confidence in Longstreet, who has little to say. Longstreet rides off with trembling hands, determined that no one will know his doubts. He gives the orders to his officers, including Pickett, who whoops with joy. As they look at the Union line, Longstreet tells his officers, "Gentlemen, the fate of your country rests on this attack."

Lee ultimately demands obedience in spite of doubts, and he trusts Longstreet to fulfill the duty that's expected of him. Indeed, Longstreet muffles his doubts and exhorts his men as best he can, conducting himself as honorably as possible under the circumstances.

Longstreet pictures the charge. The troops will have to walk more than a mile under fire; mathematically, there will not be many left by the time they reach the Union wall. The only hope is that Confederate artillery will break up Union defenses; and with Hancock on the hill, he knows the Yankees will not retreat. He figures they will suffer 50 percent casualties. As a quietness settles over the field, Lee remarks that all is in the hands of God now. Longstreet thinks, "It isn't God that is sending those men up that hill." But he says nothing.

The prospects for the Confederates are truly bleak. Longstreet's thought has a twofold implication: on one hand, it's Lee, not God, who has made the choice to send the men on an ill-fated charge; at the same time, the godlike status that Longstreet had previously attributed to Lee has faded—the general is merely a mortal now, a flawed, short-sighted human being.

Excited, Pickett asks Longstreet how much time they have left. Longstreet hears a morbid overtone in the question but tells him the artillery will fire for an hour. This battle, in fact, will see the greatest concentration of artillery ever fired. Longstreet tiredly walks off by himself and sits with his head in his hands. He wants to resign but he can't abandon Lee or his men, no matter how much he disagrees with Lee's orders. "God help me," he thinks, "I can't even quit."

Ironically, honor—as well as his lingering love for Lee— prevents Longstreet from resigning, an example of the very "honorable" foolishness he has decried earlier in the novel.

FRIDAY, JULY 3, 1863: CHAPTER 3: CHAMBERLAIN

After their lone stand on Little Round Top, Chamberlain and his men are now in the very middle of the army. The lieutenant guiding them to their new position, Pitzer, tells Chamberlain that Meade had nearly ordered the whole army to withdraw that morning, but had been voted down by all the corps commanders, Hancock standing especially firm. Pitzer places Chamberlain's regiment in reserve behind the crest of Cemetery Hill.

Meade makes a striking contrast to Lee in his eagerness to withdraw. Having been pulled off the line, Chamberlain and his men are ironically positioned with a front-row perspective on the final battle.

Chamberlain is hungry and lonely. A messenger comes from General Sykes, requesting Chamberlain's company. The messenger leads him up the crest of the hill, and Chamberlain finds himself in the presence of Hancock, a "picture-book soldier." He perks up and straightens his uniform before passing him. Hancock is surrounded by generals, all of them eating chicken. Still without rations, Chamberlain's mouth waters. When he is introduced to Sykes, the general looks at him appraisingly, notes his civilian background, and asks to hear more about Chamberlain's actions on Little Round Top.

Chamberlain, still recovering from the events of the previous day, is only concerned about getting food and rest. But he has achieved something remarkable, and the higher-ups want to hear about it.

Sykes commends Chamberlain's actions and tells him that the army needs more fighting men like him, whether Regular Army or not. Then he sends him off to get some rest, since nothing is going to happen today. Chamberlain thanks him and asks about rations, which Sykes asks a lieutenant to see to. Then Chamberlain begins limping painfully back to his men, "a picturesque figure," ragged, blood-spattered, without having shaved or changed clothes in a week. He is so tired that he stumbles directly past the mouth of a cannon.

Even the generals seem to have little idea of what the Confederates are about to unleash—and to be rather indifferent to Chamberlain's bedraggled state, which is all he can think about. His appearance matches the state of his mind and spirit after the week's events.

When Chamberlain passes the generals again, Meade has joined them. Chamberlain can "feel the massed power … like being near great barrels of gunpowder." A lieutenant approaches him respectfully and asks if he can be of service. Chamberlain swallows his pride and asks for food, and the lieutenant brings him three pieces of chicken, "awful but marvelous." Chamberlain shares most of the chicken when he reaches his camp and then works on wrapping his bleeding foot. He sees Tom approach and thinks about sending Tom to plug the hole in the line, the only jarring memory from yesterday. "Some things a man cannot be asked to do," he thinks; "this whole war is concerned with the killing of brothers." He makes up his mind that Tom will have to be moved elsewhere.

The generals' obliviousness to basic needs, compared to the lieutenant's solicitousness in offering help and Chamberlain's willingness to share food, points to the difference in perspective between higher command and rank and file. Chamberlain extrapolates his regret about Tom to an observation about the entire war. Part of its tragedy lies in the way it pits brothers against one another, even if they aren't literal blood relatives like Chamberlain and Tom.

Tom's expression shows that something is wrong. Tom tells Chamberlain that the hospital is a mess, with amputations being done out in the open. Chamberlain asks him about Kilrain. Tom finally admits that Kilrain has died. Chamberlain's senses come sharply into focus as he absorbs the news. Kilrain died before Tom reached him that morning and had left word to tell Chamberlain goodbye and that he was sorry. His wounds did not kill him; his heart had given out. The brothers sit quietly for a moment. Chamberlain struggles to accept that Kilrain's steady presence is gone forever.

In the midst of Chamberlain's triumph comes the great sorrow of losing his father figure. In the Civil War, hospitalization and other post-battle traumas could often be as deadly as the battlefield itself.

There is the sharp report of a single cannon, then another. Then there is "the long roar as of the whole vast rumbling earth beginning to open." Everyone lies facedown as the air is filled with relentless explosions and smoke. As the Union guns reply, the thunderous noise lulls Chamberlain to sleep. He wakes up once, amazed to see Hancock riding calmly along the crest of the ridge. He listens to the "great orchestra of death" and thinks that he would not have missed this spectacle for anything. Finally, he falls asleep again.

The final Confederate offensive begins. Contrary to the expectation that the center of the Union line would be "quiet" that day, Chamberlain is exposed to the full force of the onslaught. Despite the horror and his own overwhelming sleeplessness, he is awed by the spectacle, as well as Hancock's heroics in continuing to lead his men in the open (though Hancock was later to be badly injured).

FRIDAY, JULY 3, 1863: CHAPTER 4: ARMISTEAD

Armistead watches the assault begin. Longstreet sits motionless on a fence rail, and Pickett yells with joy. Armistead sees Union shells passing overhead and runs back to check on his division. Poorly sheltered, some of the men are killed, but after a while, the onslaught is not so bad. Armistead wishes for a quiet moment before the charge begins. He finds Pickett writing his fiancée, Sallie, a letter and impulsively gives him his ring, to send to Sallie with his compliments. Always sentimental, Pickett says to Armistead, "Isn't it something? Isn't it marvelous? How does a man find words?"

Pickett's boyish attitude shows a romanticized view of warfare—one that is soon to be overturned by the events of battle.

Pickett is profoundly moved; like Stuart, he is a soldier who "looked on war as God's greatest game." Armistead walks away, admiring the solidity of Longstreet's unmoving presence in the distance; it reminds him of his friend Hancock, but he cannot think about that now. As the attack looms, though, he can't help remembering his vow to God and feeling himself powerless in the grip of forces beyond himself. He wishes he had more of Pickett's openness and had shared more of himself during his life. He feels that he is getting too old for soldiering now. He feels proud of Hancock, the best soldier the Union has.

Pickett and Armistead represent contrasting reactions to the drama of war. The naïve Pickett looks on it as a glorious adventure, while Armistead feels the weight of his own possible death and the horror of taking up arms against someone he loves.

Just then, Garnett comes up on his horse. He is still having trouble walking and says he will have to ride into battle. Armistead reminds him that Pickett has ordered that no one must ride; if he does, Garnett will be a perfect target. Garnett grins faintly and repeats that he can't walk. "And cannot stay behind. Honor at stake," thinks Armistead. After Jackson's charge of cowardice, Garnett must prove his honor once and for all. Armistead feels tears coming to his eyes and knows there is nothing he can say. Garnett makes small talk about his soldiers and some Pennsylvania whiskey they found. The two men's eyes never quite meet. Finally, there is an awkward silence, and they shake hands. As Garnett rides away, Armistead prays for protection and justice for his friend.

Garnett exemplifies the Southern attitude toward honor as he prepares to foolishly ride into battle. He believes he doesn't have a choice to act otherwise, and Armistead, sharing that belief, can say nothing to stop him. They can only exchange awkward pleasantries as they wait for the battle to begin.

Armistead does not pray for himself yet, believing it is all in God's hands. He feels a curious sense of detachment and calm, like a dull Sunday afternoon spent waiting for the grownups' blessing to be allowed to run and play. Pickett rides up, unable to hold still, and reviews the orders with him. Pickett reminds him that all soldiers must make the charge on foot. Armistead asks what he will do about Garnett. Pickett says he cannot order Garnett not to ride and feels helpless to intervene, as it's "a matter of honor." Armistead understands, but remarks quietly that he is getting too old for this business. He rides back into the woods and looks at Longstreet, still sitting on the fence, and feels a "bolt of almost stunning affection" for the man.

The strain of waiting is palpable. Once again, Garnett's decision to disobey orders and ride into battle goes unchallenged, as "honor" remains an insurmountable obstacle for all involved. Armistead feels that the burden of the code of honor, as well as the weight of war in general, is becoming too much for him.

Pickett runs up to Longstreet suddenly, carrying a message from the artilleryman that if they are going at all, now is the time, as they have successfully silenced some Yankee artillery. "What do you say, sir?" he asks. Longstreet stands still in the dark of the woods. He says nothing, just stares. Armistead feels "an eerie turning, like a sickness," as he realizes that Longstreet is crying. Tears come to his own eyes as he walks closer, seeing such an unprecedented and unexpected sight. Pickett asks again, and Armistead sees Longstreet take a deep breath, then nod, dropping his head and turning away from Pickett. Pickett lets out a whoop and shakes a clenched fist. He hands Longstreet his letter to Sallie and walks toward Armistead with his face alight, crying tears of joy. He says something about being chosen for the glory of Virginia. He calls for the men to form their brigades.

Armistead is sickened by the strange sight of his friend Longstreet's tears, though Pickett, still joyful, seems oblivious to the general's emotion. Longstreet's grief over sending the men into battle and almost certain death has finally broken through, though it doesn't stop him from giving the order, albeit without conviction.

Armistead summons his brigade to its feet, feeling oddly sleepy. He moves up and down his line, seeing Garnett still on his horse, knowing the man will not last five minutes. Then the orders come. They begin to move through the woods. Armistead silently apologizes to Hancock and commits his own spirit to God. A rabbit breaks from the brush and runs away, causing a man to joke, "[If I was] an ol' hare, I'd run, too." Then the men emerge onto open ground and quietly form their division.

The decisive moment has finally come. The fleeing rabbit breaks the tension slightly, but also signals the terror to come.

Armistead goes over to Garnett one final time, saying, "Dick, for God's sake and mine, get down off that horse." Garnett simply says, "I'll see you at the top." They shake hands. Armistead says that he ought to ride, too. Garnett says that it's against orders. They look at the division and remark what a beautiful sight it is. They say goodbye one last time.

The friends' goodbye is wrenching, as they know they won't both make it to the top of the hill. Even in this last moment of peace, they take pride in the impressive sight of their gathered men.

Remembering Longstreet's tears, Armistead feels an acute depression for the first time. He thinks how desperate their situation is. But he forms his division and, as Pickett raises his sword, bawls the orders as forcefully as he can. The brigade begins to move toward the distant ridge. Armistead can see nothing but the backs of the men in front of him. But then the Northern artillery starts firing again. Armistead realizes they hadn't actually driven off any Yankee guns; the apparent withdrawal was Hancock's doing, to lure them in.

It fully sinks in for Armistead how little hope the Confederates have, especially when it becomes clear that the Union artillery is still in place; its silence had given them a false sense of security. But he leads his men forward anyway.

More and more artillery fires, and gaps begin to open where shells have exploded within the line. Some of Armistead's own men begin to be hit and to die. Cannonballs bounce like bowling balls. Then they come within range of the muskets. They halt to close the gaps and shift the line, and Armistead feels pride and furious love. They start making their way up the rise, the line beginning to break. He sees Kemper riding, because Garnett rode. Kemper rides over to Armistead, pleading for help, but they can barely hear each other. Armistead now sees Union soldiers in the open. He places his hat atop his sword and raises it high, calling for his men to run.

As the brigades move across the open ground, it doesn't take long for the scene to become a nightmare. The Union onslaught has already taken a serious toll on Armistead's men, but he is moved with affection for them and perseveres in leading them. Kemper has also ridden his horse out of solidarity with his friend Garnett.

They come to a road, clogged with the bodies of men. Armistead passes a crying boy, frozen and staring up the ridge. He tries to urge the boy onward, asking "What will you think of yourself tomorrow?" Still the boy doesn't move. Ahead there is more and more confusion, the lines fragmenting as more and more men fall. Kemper is down. Armistead expects to die at any moment but is not hit. As they near the wall, the whole world seems to be dying. Armistead feels a blow in the thigh, but it doesn't hurt, and he can still walk. Then he sees Garnett's bloodied horse, riderless, coming down the ridge.

The crying boy symbolizes what the rest of the men probably feel, but Armistead's words encapsulate the Southern mindset—keep moving so that you won't feel shamed by your lack of honor. The sight of Garnett's horse shows the outcome of such thinking, however.

Armistead looks for Garnett, but there is so much smoke he can't see. The charge comes to a halt; the men are stopping to fire at the Union soldiers now visible on the other side of the wall. They are thirty yards from the wall, "unable to advance, unwilling to run, a deadly paralysis." Armistead realizes they cannot win, yet, instinctively, he raises his sword again and screams for his men, "drawn by the pluck of that great force within, for home, for country."

The Confederates are in an impossible position, but the sense of honor still lives in Armistead, and he continues leading the charge forward.

Armistead reaches the stone wall and sees Union men falling back. He feels incredible joy for a moment. He leaps atop the wall and down the other side. Finally, he is hit in the side, but there is no pain. Wearily he moves toward a cannon and pauses to rest against it. The world is becoming blurry, but he sees that men are beginning to fight hand to hand. A Union officer rides toward him, then he feels a violent blow, followed by peace. He feels the end coming. He looks up and sees the officer, who tells him he had intentionally ridden toward him to knock him down, as Armistead didn't have a chance. He feels ready for death but manages to ask for General Hancock. The officer tells him Hancock has been hit. Armistead manages to send his regrets, asking the officer to tell Hancock how very sorry he is. He feels himself falling quietly into the dark.

Armistead obtains the objective of reaching the top of the ridge and feels triumphant, but the death he'd expected quickly follows. His love for Hancock, and his consciousness of breaking his vow not to fight against his friend, stays with him to the last moment. Their reunion is not to be.

FRIDAY, JULY 3, 1863: CHAPTER 5: LONGSTREET

Longstreet sits on the rail fence, his mind a "bloody vacancy, like a room in which there has been a butchering." He watches the "nightmare" unfold, the lines coming apart, a few men stumbling up the slope before disappearing into smoke. Men begin to retreat, the one erect flag, near the center of the Union line, going down in the smoke. The men stream past Longstreet. One of Pickett's men screams for support, but Longstreet patiently explains that there is no support left to give; all the brigades have gone in. He sees Garnett's horse. He instructs Pickett's men to fall back and sends word for a battery of artillery fire to protect their retreat.

Though he has expected a bloodbath, Longstreet struggles to take in the full horror of the situation as his men fail to capture the hill. As the battered men begin straggling back, he calls for a retreat.

Fremantle, who moments before had been cheering wildly, grasps the reality of the situation and offers Longstreet a flask, which he refuses. He is filled with weariness, helpless rage, and disgust. He thinks that "they had all died for nothing and he had sent them. A man is asked to bear too much." He plans to walk forward into the battle, with the expectation of being killed. But as he stoops to pick up a rifle, he sees Lee.

Fremantle belatedly gets a clue about what is happening. Meanwhile, Longstreet is so filled with despair about the outcome, and his role in bringing it about, that he hopes to enter the fray and die quickly. Only the sight of Lee stops him short.

Lee is riding slowly along the first line of dead men. He sits motionless and talks to the men around him. Longstreet watches, knowing he will never forgive Lee. Tears run down his cheeks. Lee begins to ride toward him. Longstreet hears him saying, "It is all my fault," while the men around him shake their heads and argue with him. Lee tells them that they will rest and try again another day; they must show good order and never let the Yankees see them run.

Longstreet can't forgive his beloved father figure for sending his men into such a hopeless and deadly situation. Yet even as Lee takes responsibility, most of the men around him continue to idealize him, to the point of refusing to see reality. Lee, similarly short-sighted, still thinks another try is possible. He is still concerned that the men conduct themselves honorably, even in retreat.

Some men are crying, even asking Lee to let them attack again. Lee emerges from the crowd and smoke with a "stiff, set look" and empty eyes. He points out to Longstreet in a "soft, feathery" voice that the North appears to be forming for attack in the east. Longstreet can barely hear his voice. Suddenly Pickett appears—hatless, pale, and bloodstained. Longstreet is amazed that he is alive. His face is oddly wrinkled. Lee tells Pickett to re-form his division. Pickett starts to cry, saying in bewilderment, "General Lee, I have no division … Good God, sir, what about my men?" All of Pickett's officers have been killed.

Far from blaming Lee, some want to attempt another charge for his sake. Lee appears to be shaken, but Pickett's appearance is most shocking. Last seen whooping with the excitement of battle, he is now grief-stricken and completely disillusioned.

Longstreet turns away. He tells his gathering staff that he intends to go and meet the Union skirmishers. He cries as he rides down the hill, his horse shying among the dead bodies. Goree rides alongside him, asking for orders, his eyes filled with sorrow and pity in a look that Longstreet knows he will never forget. Longstreet directs fire, waiting for the Union soldiers to come, but they finally pull back without attacking.

Longstreet is too grieved to watch Pickett's pained appeal to Lee and rides off to counter a Northern attack that doesn't materialize. His faithful captain Goree stays by his side, sensing his mood.

Goree tells Longstreet that it is no good trying to get himself killed; the Lord will come for Longstreet in his own time. Longstreet hears a few heartbroken men firing in the distance, unwilling to give up, but finally they, too, fall still. Silence falls over the field with the sunset, and a wordless knowledge passes among them, that it's over. Longstreet turns away as he hears the Union men cheering at the sight of a captured Virginia battle flag.

Goree discourages Longstreet from doing anything suicidal. Longstreet's heartbreak seems to come from what he actually sees happening on the field, not from a misguided sense of needing to uphold honor. The battle finally drifts to a disheartening end; they have decisively lost.

Clouds gather in the west, and as evening advances, they see **lightning** in the distance. Longstreet automatically places his men in a defensive line and then sits by the fire drinking coffee. Sorrel brings the figures from the day: Armistead and Garnett are dead; Kemper is dying. Seven of Pickett's thirteen colonels are dead and six are wounded. Longstreet can listen to no more, sending Sorrel away. But the facts "rise up like shattered fenceposts in the mist." He knows the army can't recover from a day like this, as a doctor knows when he bends over a beloved patient for the last time. He doesn't know what he will do now. He looks at the campfires coming to light "like clusters of carrion fireflies." Nothing, he thinks, has been accomplished.

This time the impending storm signals ultimate disaster for the Confederate army, not just disaster in this battle. The symbol is confirmed by the facts of the battle; much of the leadership has been wiped out within hours. Longstreet can see only pointless suffering and hopelessness as he surveys what remains.

Lee comes along after a while, distant **lightning** blazing beyond his head. Men are still walking alongside him, pleadingly; Longstreet sees "something oddly biblical about it." Even in this air of defeat, Lee conveys strength and majesty to those around him. Longstreet does not want to speak to him, and he knows he will never quite forgive him; nevertheless, he rises to meet the General.

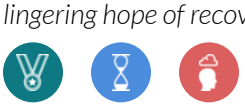
Despite his anger at Lee and the air of doom he brings in his wake, Longstreet is still moved by the general's epic, noble bearing.

Longstreet looks into Lee's stony face and drops his eyes. Lee requests a few moments alone with Longstreet. They sit in silence by the fire as **lightning** flares and the wind picks up. Finally, Lee says, in a husky voice, that they will withdraw tonight, under cover of the approaching weather. Longstreet knows he is expected to say something, but his mind feels vacant. When he looks up, Lee looks vaguely different. Lee finally says, "Peter, I'm going to need your help."

Lee finally does what has seemed impossible throughout the story, deciding to withdraw altogether. He seems completely defeated. The change in Lee's demeanor is matched by the vulnerability and humility of addressing Longstreet by his first name.

Lee sits with his hand over his eyes. He tells Longstreet that he is very tired. Longstreet asks what he can do. Longstreet feels "a shudder of enormous pity." Finally, Lee looks at him and makes a gesture of surrender, shaking his head. Longstreet promises he will take care of the withdrawal that night. "I thought…" Lee begins. Longstreet says, "Never mind." They sit in silence for a while. Lee says that morale is still good, and they will do better another time. Longstreet says, "I don't think so."

Even though he is angry at Lee, Longstreet still loves him and will do whatever he can for him. When Lee begins to try to articulate his miscalculation, Longstreet cuts him off, seemingly still wanting to let his friend save face—and perhaps salvage a vestige of his friend and hero in his own eyes, despite his loss of illusion. Still, he quashes the lingering hope of recovery that Lee apparently clings to.



Longstreet thinks that there has been too much death, and that it is time for reality; he must speak plainly. He tells Lee that he does not think they can win it now. Lee nods, as if it is not really important. Longstreet continues, "I don't know if I can go on leading them. To die. For nothing." Eventually, Lee replies, "They do not die for us … That at least is a blessing."

After so much loss, stating the obvious—that losing the war is likely—no longer seems like an unutterable heresy. Lee takes comfort in the belief that the men have died for something bigger than himself, but this kind of idealism is what has led to so much death in the first place.

Lee continues, "Each man has his own reason to die." If the men will go on, he says, then he will go on—what else can they do? "And does it matter after all who wins?" he asks. "Was that ever really the question? Will God ask that question, in the end?" As Longstreet helps the tired man rise, Lee looks into his eyes and says, "You were right. And I was wrong. And now you must … help us to *see*. I become … very tired."

The difference between Lee's idealism—that winning is less important than faithfulness to ideals—and Longstreet's pragmatism is again made clear. Lee finally acknowledges that he was wrong about Gettysburg, however; he, and the rest of the Confederates, need Longstreet's vision in order to go forward. His acknowledgment of his fault and weakness is a tacit acknowledgement that Longstreet's outlook on the future of war is, after all, correct. He has been disillusioned himself.

A cold, heavy wind, smelling of **rain**, is beginning to blow over the trees. Lee refers to his lecture on the previous day. He explains that he had been trying to warn Longstreet. Unlike their men, he says, they have no Cause; they have only the army. But if a soldier fights only for soldiers, he explains, they cannot ever win—it's only the soldiers who die. With that, Lee mounts his horse and rides off into the dark. Longstreet watches him ride out of sight, then goes out into the field to say goodbye. Then he gives the order to retreat.

Lee's parting words are ambivalent. He seems to be saying that without a higher cause, a general can never truly win. But devotion to a cause, with all its deadly consequences, is just what Longstreet rejects. In any case, the two have finally spoken their minds to one another, though it has come too late for either them or their men.

FRIDAY, JULY 3, 1863: CHAPTER 6: CHAMBERLAIN

At dusk, Chamberlain sits on a rock overlooking the battlefield. It looks like "the gray floor of hell." He marvels at the contrast between the clean, green fields of that morning and the carnage, litter, and smoke he sees now. His mind feels "blasted" as well—he is still in shock from the artillery bombardment. He knows he has been present at one of the great moments of history.

Significantly, the novel ends with the perspective of Chamberlain, as the Union has been victorious here and will ultimately win the war. Chamberlain doesn't feel unmitigated triumph, though, as he looks out on the ugly fallout of the historic battle.

Chamberlain closes his eyes and pictures the battle again, thinking that it was the most beautiful thing he has ever seen. He doesn't understand the presence of "unspeakable beauty" above the fear and horror. He supposes that in the face of tragedy, one feels the doors open to eternity, "the rising across the terrible field of that last enormous, unanswerable question."

Chamberlain tries to come to terms with his mixture of emotions. The presence of beauty amid senseless death doesn't fit into the ethical sense he carried with him into Gettysburg.

Rain begins to fall lightly around Chamberlain, washing the dust and dirt from his face. Soon Tom finds him and sits with him in the darkness. Chamberlain feels immense love for his brother but restrains himself from showing emotion. Tom speaks admiringly of the Rebels' courage that day. "Thing I never will understand," he says. "How can they fight so hard … and all for slavery?"

Rain signals the promise of renewal after the trauma of the day. Tom is also wrestling with what he's witnessed that day. For him, it comes back to the unavoidable question of slavery—how could men give their lives for such a cause?

Chamberlain realizes he had forgotten all about the Cause when the guns began firing. It now seems strange to him to think about "morality, or that minister long ago, or the poor runaway black." As he gazes across the field now, all he can see is outlines of bodies illuminated by **lightning**.

In contrast to his stark views earlier in the story, Chamberlain can hardly summon these ideals as he overlooks so much death. The immediacy of suffering has rattled his certainty.

Tom points out that the Rebel prisoners never talk about slavery. He asks Chamberlain how Chamberlain explains this: "what else is the war about?" Chamberlain just shakes his head. He agrees with Tom that if it weren't for slavery, no war would have been fought. "Well then," Tom concludes, "I don't care how much political fast-talking you hear, that's what it's all about … I don't understand it at all."

Clear-sighted in his own way, young Tom maintains that the events of that week have boiled down to one incomprehensible thing: slavery. Chamberlain doesn't contradict him, but has nothing more to say.

Chamberlain is thinking of Kilrain: "no divine spark." He also thinks, "Animal meat: the Killer **Angels**." He watches as bodies are laid out carefully on the field below. He can feel no hatred toward them—only an extraordinary admiration. He feels almost as if they were his own men, and he feels a visceral pity. Again remembering Kilrain, he says, "They're all equal now … in the sight of God."

Chamberlain is reminded of his youthful oration on the conflicted nature of humanity. He cannot understand the motivations of his enemies, but he sees them as fully human—willing to give their lives away just as he was. Embodying a "killer angel" himself, he feels deep compassion for the very men he was—and is—ready to kill.

Tom gets up, urging his brother to move, too, since there's a big **rain** coming. He asks Chamberlain if he thinks the rebels will attack again. Chamberlain nods, knowing they're not done. He even feels "an appalling thrill." He knows he'll be there until it ends or until he dies, and he is amazed at his own eagerness.

Chamberlain has discovered in himself an eagerness for war that surprises him, something he can't fully reconcile with his own beliefs. Even his own motivations, at bottom, are somewhat mysterious to him.

As the **rain** begins to pour, Chamberlain thanks God for the privilege of having been there that day. He returns to his men. Meanwhile, "the light rain went on falling on the hills above Gettysburg, but it was only the overture to the great storm to come." The storm breaks in earnest over the valley, with monstrous wind, lightning, and flooding rains, "washing … the white bones of the dead, cleansing the earth … driving the blood deep into the earth, to grow it again with the roots toward Heaven." It rains all night. The next day is the Fourth of July.

The intensifying rain foreshadows the battles and ultimate Union victory to come. The rain washes away the marks of the day's suffering, but it can't erase the consequences of the day, which will have healing effects as well as deadly ones. The dawning of Independence Day implies that the sufferings of Gettysburg will eventually yield greater freedoms for all.

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