

Two-Minute Summary of *The Gates of the Alamo*

This book has three parts.

Part I: The first part introduces Mary Mott, an innkeeper in Refugio; her introverted son Terrell who is 16 years old; Edmond McCrae, a botanist in the employ of the Mexican government who is on his way to Mexico City to confirm his employment. Unfortunately, Santa Anna sends Edmond to Yucatan to study the chiclet trees to see about making gum from the sap. Mary is concerned that her son will be caught up in the rising talk of rebellion. There are incidents of grievous actions by Mexican soldiers that stimulate the urge to rebel.

Part II: Introduction of Edna, a simple-minded girl who is being raised by

fundamentalist uncles. Her sexual behavior with Terrell and three Mexican soldiers creates a divisive relationship for Terrell and his mother, which inspires Terrell to join the rebels. Mary and Edmond are captured by Mexican sympathizers as they try to find Terrell at the Alamo. Terrell's encounters with the rebels he joins inform the reader about the nature of many of the rebels.

Part III: The preparations for the siege of the Alamo are presented from both the rebels' perspective and the Mexican army perspective from the leaders and the foot soldiers. This section debunks many of the myths about the heroes of the Alamo, but does describe effectively the horrors of the siege and savagery of the Mexican military leaders. Mary, Edmond, and Terrell all leave the Alamo before the death blow, but

are separated. The book moves to the battle of San Jacinto.

Two-Minute Summary of *Promised Lands*

The novel hits all of the high notes of the Texas rebellion from Gonzalez, the Alamo, Goliad, the Runaway Scrape, and San Jacinto. The primary characters are the Kenner family—Hugh, Rose, Grandmother, Kate, Toby, and Miles—and a Mexican brother and sister. These characters tie all of the themes of the work and some of these are present in virtually every scene. The most poignant elements in the story are between the father Hugh and his two sons Toby and Miles. The description of the massacre at Goliad is the most detailed and moving part of the novel. The book does identify members of the Mexican army, but

the point of view of the novel is that of the Texans and Tejanos. The novel shows the divisiveness in this population about the impending rebellion.

One-Minute Summary of *The Which Way Tree*

The novel has two plots that intermingle and two primary characters. The hero Benjamin Shreve and his half-sister Samantha who is two years younger and a mulatto are orphans who must make their own way in the world in the middle of the Civil War. The first plot is the testimony via letters written by Benjamin to the grand jury concerning the hanging and subsequent robbery of the victims that he witnessed. The second plot is the obsession by

Samantha to kill the panther that mauled her face and killed her mother.

Two-Minute Summary of *The Color of Lightning*

Britt Johnson and family move from Missouri as a free black family to avoid the horrors of the Civil War and then deals with the aftermath of that war in Texas. Britt establishes a freighting company. His wife and children and a neighbor's wife and child are abducted by the Kiowas. Others are slaughtered. The novel is very graphic in describing the raid and the gang raping of the women. His strong-willed wife and children are made slaves and young warriors. Britt goes alone into the Indian territory to recover his wife and family. He encounters a lone Indian Tissoyo who

ultimately helps him. The novel treats the issues of captured and repatriated settlers clearly. A second thread in the novel is the attempt by a Quaker to manage the Indian bureau and his lack of understanding of a different culture.