

The Education of Little Tree

Images and Summary



Jason Wiley

Land 100

Project 1

The Simple Life

Living the 'Simple Life' is something that many people dream about but always get caught up in the hustle and bustle of society. In the 'Education of Little Tree' Forrest Carter tells about a boy named *Little Tree* whom had the chance to live a life living with nature and was able to live without society telling him who he ought to be. Little Tree was a curious boy whom was sent off to live with his grandparents after his parents had died. Throughout the book Little Tree learns from his grandparents about the trade of life and the ways of the Cherokee.

Little Tree

In the first chapter entitled *Little Tree*, after Little Tree's mother died he was raised by his grandparents. While sitting on the bus with his grandparents on the way to his new home, Little Tree experienced racism but didn't know it. The bus driver yelled, "How!" and all the people on the bus laughed. Another sickly looking woman yelled, "Wa...hoo." Again everyone on the bus laughed. Being innocent and naive, Little Tree did not know what any of this meant at the time but will later on the book find out.

As Little Tree, grandpa, and grandma climbed up the mountain to their cabin, 'whispers and sighs began to feather through the trees and everything had come

alive. The hollows of the mountain were welcoming Little Tree.



"They have now sensed him coming
The forest and the wood wind"

The Way

Little tree and his grandpa went hunting. They set up a turkey trap which covered hole with some branches and leaves. The next morning, there were some quails in the tree and Tal-con, the Hawk was looking for prey. He caught a slow one. Little Tree looked sad and grandpa said, "Don't feel sad Little Tree. It is The Way. Tal-con caught the slow so the slow will raise no children who are slow. Tal-con eats a thousand ground rats who eat the eggs of the quail – both the quick and the slow eggs – and so the Tal-con lives by The Way. He

helps the quail... It is The Way... Only take what ye need." A lesson we can all learn.



When grandpa and Little Tree came back to the turkey trap, there were six turkeys in the hole. They only needed three. Grandpa made Little Tree choose which ones to keep. Little Tree chose the smallest and the weakest ones... he chose right.



Shadows on the Cabin Wall

Grandma was the most educated person in the family. At night, grandpa and Little Tree would make a fire in the fireplace and gather around grandma while she read. One evening she read about George Washington and how made a whiskey tax.

Grandpa really got worked up about this, being that it he was a bootlegger.



In order to make a living grandpa and grandma grew corn. During that time corn was selling for only twenty – five cents an dozen. Whiskey, however, can be sold for two dollars a gallon.

Fox and Hounds



Everything, even dogs need to feel needed.

"I Kin Ye, Bonnie Bee"

To most people, the meaning of kin is to be related by blood. This is not the case of the Cherokee. To kin means 'to understand' and 'to love'. One cannot love something if one doesn't understand it. 'Grandpa and grandma had an

understanding, and so they had love. Grandma said the understanding run deeper as the years go by, and she reckoned it would it would get beyond anything that mortal folks could think upon or explain. And so they called it “kin.”

To Know the Past

‘If ye don’t know the past, then ye will not have a future. If you don’t know where ye people had been, then ye don’t know where your people are going.



The government brought Cherokees from mountains and valleys like cattle. They lead them to land that the white man didn’t want. There were wagons for the Cherokee to ride in but the Cherokee refused to ride because they were proud people. At first when they walked through the villages, the white man laughed at them

thinking that they were stupid for not riding. Then the old, very young and the sick started to die. The soldiers let them stop and bury their loved ones. Then people started dying by the hundreds and then the thousands. Then the soldiers let them bury their loved ones only every three days. The live carried them walking through the villages. Now the white men did not laugh, they cried. The *Trail of Tears* was not named so because the Cherokee cried, but the people who watched them go through the villages did.

Eventually they reached the West. Grandpa’s Pa was mountain bred. ‘They did not lust for land, or profit, but loved the freedom of the mountains, as did the Cherokee.

Pine Billy

Pine Billy was an old friend of Grandpa and Grandma’s. He was a good conversation maker always seemed cheery. He was talking about how he was going to make money by turning in a ‘big city criminal’. Pine Billy though being a mountain man and not knowing of the outside world, accused the ‘big city criminal’ of lying because he said he was from Chicago but had Illinois license plates.



The Secret Place

Grandma said there is a body mind and a spirit mind. When you die, only the spirit mind lives. There are dead people who have no spirit mind and only see the bad in things. When they see a tree, they see lumber and profit, not beauty.



The more one understands, the bigger their spirit mind becomes. Having a

secret place is part of understanding the world. Storms, babies born in blood, and pain are all part of spirits fussing about returning back to material form. Little tree will not be left behind because he does understand.



Grandpa's Trade

As I mentioned before, Grandpa makes whiskey for a living. I does this because if he were to sell his corn in whole form. He would not be able to provide for his family.

There are many people who think that the longer whiskey is sat in a barrel, the better it is. Grandpa calls these people "barrel sniffers". He swears anything ridiculous like this had to be thought up by a politician who had the time to let the whiskey set. The politician is too lazy so he makes less whiskey but sells it for more because it tastes like barrels. Whiskey should taste like whiskey; not barrels.



Trading With a Christian

While Little Tree and Grandpa were in town one day bringing their whisky to the crossroads store, there was a man in the street with a calf. The man asked Little Tree how much money he had. The man said that since he had really taken a liking to the calf, being that he was a Christian, he would give the calf to him for the fifty cents even though it was worth a hundred times more.

On the way back to the cabin, the calf died. This is when Little Tree found out that people don't always tell the truth and he learned a lesson in saving money.



At the Crossroads Store

Little Tree and Grandpa went to the Crossroads Store where Little Tree met a little girl who's family were sharecroppers. He felt sorry for her because they were so poor that couldn't even afford shoes. Next time he went to the Crossroads Store he brought the girl a pair of moccasins which Grandma made for her. She accepted them joyfully and for that, her dad whipped her.



A Dangerous Adventure

It was spring time and Grandpa and Little Tree were hand fishing. A rattlesnake crept up to Little Tree and was about to

strike. Grandpa came between the snake and little tree. The snake bit Grandpa on the hand. Little Tree rushed back to the cabin and got Grandma to save Grandpa.



Grandma cut Grandpa's hand open and sucked the poison out. She also cut open a bird and put it on his hand. Grandpa was passed out so they stayed there all night. The next morning, Grandpa awoke and everyone was relieved. Little Tree tried to blame himself but Grandma convinced him that it was no one's fault, not even the snake's. Grandpa told little Tree that he kins him more than anyone in the world.



The Farm in the Clearing

When Grandpa was a young boy he passed by an old farmhouse that appeared to be ran down but the house was occupied. He saw a man trying to plow a field, not with a mule but two people pulling the plow. A Union Soldier sent them a mule and a sergeant planted an orchard for them.

The Soldiers and men were eventually shot by Regulators and the farm was taken over by sharecroppers the next year.



A Night on the Mountain

Two men follow Grandpa and Little Tree from the Crossroads Store up to the cabin. They wanted to go into the whiskey business with Grandpa and said he could make a fortune. They were just two men that just wanted the money for themselves.

Little Tree led them astray and they got lost and slept in poison ivy. The next day Grandma put something on their fish that made them vomit. After that, they did not come back.



Willow John

Willow John was a wise old family friend. Grandma, Grandpa, and Little Tree would meet him at church. He said that he went to Chattanooga once and found that there was no nation. After happened he was a sad man. One day at church, Little Tree Found a gift sitting beside him. It was a gift from Willow John. Indians leave gift for you to find; that way if you find the gift, you deserve it. Little Tree decided he wanted to give a gift back. The next time at church, he put a frog in Willow John's pocket. During the sermon, the preacher was speaking to Willow John accusing him of sin. At that moment the frog spoke for him and

everyone laughed. This really lifted Willow John's Spirit.



Church Going

One day at church people were giving their testimonies. There was one particular woman that got the interest of the whole church. She testified that she was fornicating with Mr. Smith as well as other men.

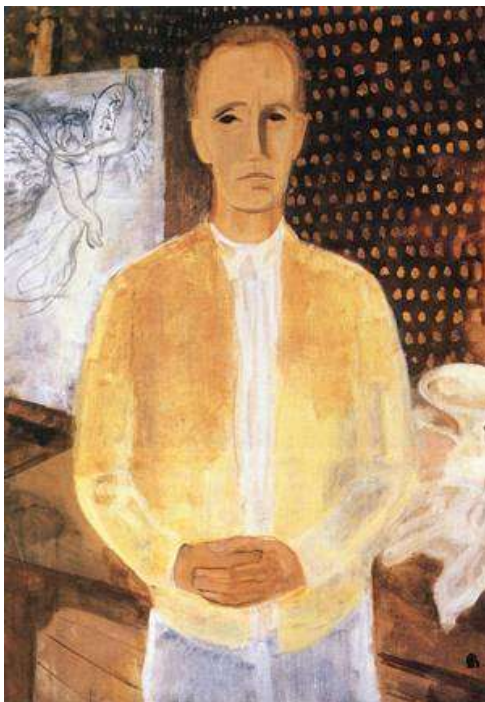
After this, men didn't want to talk to her because they would be seen and people would think that they were having relations. Women gathered all around her telling her that she did the right thing. What the women were really trying to do is pry information out of her to see if any of their husbands were in relations with her.



Another day at church there was a man asking to help in prayer with him because his family had lost all of their furniture in a fire. The next Sunday, Grandpa gave him a chair that he made and then showed the man the rest. "You show a feller how to do, it was a lot better than giving him something.

Mr. Wine

Mr. Wine was a forgetful man that fixes clocks and was a home salesman. He would spend the night at the cabin to rest on his way back and forth from town. One day one of his customers ordered a camera. He wanted to show Little Tree how it worked but Grandpa and Grandma were wary about it. Eventually Grandpa took a picture with Little Tree. Mr. Wine wanted a picture with Little Tree as well. Grandpa was trying to take the picture of the two but never found his way around it.



One day Mr. Wine said that he had made a yellow jacket for his grandson but it did not fit him. Little Tree tried it on and it fit just right. I think that Mr. Wine purposefully made the jacket for Little Tree. For Little Tree caught him praying and thanking God for sending him a boy that made him joyful. He taught Little Tree how to be thrifty and he also told him about the candle he lit symbolizing unity with his family.

Mr. Wine shortly after that and left all of his personal belonging to Grandpa, Grandma, Little Tree. Included in this was his candle, telling them that they were family.

Down From the Mountain

One day a man and a woman both in suits came to the cabin and talked about Little Tree's education and upbringing. They said that Grandma and Grandpa were unfit to raise little tree. The told them that they had to sign a paper releasing Little Tree to the state.

Grandma and Grandpa had no choice. Little Tree said that he was not upset and that it would probably be coming back soon. They had three days to spend time together and then they had to bring him into town, giving up his custody. They spent the next three days spending all day together and having fun. On the third day Grandpa brought little tree down from the mountain to the bus station where they met a woman to bring him to an orphanage.

Grandpa and Little Tree said their goodbyes and Little Tree was on his way.



The Dog Star

After Little Tree arrived at the orphanage, he spoke with the Reverend immediately. The Reverend was telling him about how uncivilized and uneducated he was and that this was really big burden on him to take him in.

Little Tree took it light-heartedly. Even so, his teachers separated him from the entire class. The only friend he had at the orphanage was his roommate named Wilburn. Wilburn was much older than most of the boys and he had a clubfoot. He also hated the world.

Wilburn said that whenever he got out of the orphanage he would burn the whole place down he also said that he didn't have any trouble killing anyone either. The only one he liked at the orphanage was Little Tree.

One day in class the teacher held up a picture of some deer and she asked the class what they were doing. Little Tree Replied that they were mating; which they

were and the teacher was too ignorant to realize it.

She took Little Tree to the Reverend. The Reverend made him take off his shirt and beat him with a whip on his back so hard that his pants got soaked full of blood. Yet, Little Tree did not show one sign of pain; for he was Cherokee and Cherokee show pride.



Little Tree looked at the Dog Star every night though knowing his family was looking at the same star.



Home Again

One day after Christmas Little Tree was out on the playground playing with his new toy. He saw his dad on the other side of the fence. He yelled and screamed at him. He finally answered. It was him! He asked his dad if he could walk with him back to the bus stop.



They got to the bus stop and Little Tree finally told him that he wanted to come home. They got on the bus and took off back to the cabin. On their climb back to the cabin they talked and had a great time catching up. The trees and the ground and the birds were all welcoming Little Tree back.

When they got close all of the dogs came wining. When they got back Grandma could not believe it. They hugged and then Little Tree took off to his Secret Place. It welcomed him back.



The Passing Song

One day when Willow John didn't show up to church, Grandpa and Little Tree made the long trip to his house. He was near death. He told them that he wanted to be buried by the tree so his body can feed it. He passed away and they did just that.

Two years later, while hiking the high trail, Grandpa slipped and fell. He died some days or weeks afterward. A year later, Little Tree came back to the home and found Grandma outside sitting with a note in her had. It said that she must go and everyone will wait for him and that next time it will be better.

