

***American Literature for
Christian Homeschoolers***

**Volume 3:
*In a Hollow of the Hills***

Answer Key to Review Questions

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Week 5, Day 2 – Chapter I

1. Give details of the setting established in Harte's first paragraph.

It is in a dark and windy valley.

2. How many travelers are there? What is distinguished about the voice of one of them? Describe what they see in the darkness.

Three; the third voice is described as "low" and "pleasant." They see a light, which they determine is a window in a house, with a woman's silhouette behind it.

3. Describe the travelers' appearances and characteristics.

The leader (Uncle Dick) is unshaven and probably the oldest; one (Jim Parker) is close-shaven, thin, and energetic; the one with the pleasant voice (Key) is tall, athletic, and the youngest, even though his hair is gray (the latter two are nephews of the leader). All three are good horsemen.

4. What is funny about Collinson's remark to Uncle Dick?

He remarks casually that he thinks what he said about voting for a certain candidate is a wasted vote, as if no time had gone by since their last conversation, when 12 hours had elapsed.

5. What are the three men looking for? Have they been successful? What is their take on the subject?

Silver. They have not. They're tired of looking for it, and they want to give it up.

6. How does Key's questioning Collinson about the existence of a woman in a house in the valley affect Collinson? Why?

He goes into deep thought, because it reminds him of his wife, whom he sent for after he had gone west, never hearing from her again (he was told she died).

7. What do the men hear outside the door? What do they think it is, except for Collinson?

A loud noise like someone traveling by. Collinson explains that it was just gravel and rocks falling.

8. What is the "draft" the men refer to? What does Collinson do with it? What happens to the three travelers?

The "draft" is a note promising to pay for their bill the three men owe Collinson, who rips it in to shreds after they leave. The three men go their separate ways.

Week 5, Day 3 – Chapter II

1. Why does Key want to return to the house he thought he saw in the dark and windy valley?

First, he wants to "discover the mystery" and make sure it wasn't an illusion. Second, he is concerned for the possible residents, since he realizes there is a fire approaching, and that the fire was caused accidentally by his Uncle Dick. Finally, he is romantically interested in the female he thought he saw in the house.

2. Explain the significance of the shoe to Key. Why does its presence suggest an emergency?

It has been worn, it would not have been dropped without the wearer's knowing it, and it had not been there long, so it must have been an emergency.

3. What shocks Key during his search? What questions does Key have about its existence?

The whole woods have been burned to the ground. Even more significantly, there are remains of the house he thought he saw within 100 feet of the group the previous night! Key can't figure out how it remained hidden, because Collinson and Skinner did not know about it, as close as it was to town. And why did its builders try to hide the house? Who lived there, and was the young woman the man's wife or his daughter?

4. What does Key do with some of the ash from the site? What startles him? What does it mean?

He does some testing on the ash's contents, and is surprised at a grayish substance that forms at the bottom of the glass he's using. There is silver in the ash!

5. Describe what Key does to "stake his claim." What does Collinson's presence do to him?

He posts a notice, and digs around more to give evidence that he has "worked" the claim. Collinson shows up, startling him and making him wonder if his discovery was...discovered. Collinson just wanted to catch up with Keys to apologize for what he (Collinson) thought was unfair treatment of the group the previous night, and to go to Skinner's. Key hustles himself and Collinson out of the area so Collinson won't see his claim stake.

6. Sum up the "shoe" conversation between Collinson and Key.

Collinson wants to know if Key picked up a woman's shoe, since he (Collinson) also picked one up. Key makes up a story that a lady friend gave it to him, which angers Collinson, who says that the woman he thought the shoe belonged to was too good to give it to any prospector.

7. What does Key accomplish for himself and for Collinson in town at Skinner's? Why is Key appalled at Collinson's remark about the "draft"?

Key registers the claim for the land, and he extends credit for Collinson. Key is disgusted at Collinson for tearing up the draft, because he thinks he is stupid to do so.

8. Sum up the bystander's warning to Key. How does Key respond?

To watch out for robbers. Key decides to put the silver he finds in shapes that robbers wouldn't be tempted to take.

9. What happens to Key one night in his cabin after his successful company is started? What is Key's reaction to the news?

He is surrounded in his cabin by law officers, who want Jack Riggs, Sydney Jack, French Pete, and One-eyed Charley. Key says there is no one here by that name. The officers say that the place used to be a hideout for the robbers. Keys is reassured that he is safe in his claim, since the robbers will not want to return...but he thinks of the woman's face he saw the first time he saw the cabin.

Week 5, Day 3 – Chapter III

1. Give some reasons why Key's next encounter with Collinson makes him (Key) uncomfortable.

He has to make up a story of how he found the mine after the met on the site of the cabin. Collinson asks if Key is sharing his fortune with Uncle Dick and Jim Parker, which he isn't.

2. Describe the new conversation about the shoe.

Key admits having found it, and Collinson says they're like his wife's, since she had two "straight" feet. Key suggests the woman was taken by force by the road agents, but Collinson disagrees, saying the woman was there of her own free will.

3. Why did Collinson build a mill with such an "uncertain water supply"? What did the occurrence ten years ago represent to him? How is his feeling confirmed?

It wasn't uncertain before the earthquake came. The earthquake, to Collinson, was a sign that his wife was dead. He later received a letter stating that his wife had died of yellow fever.

4. Whom does Key see on his trip to Skinner's? Why does a man pull up beside him? Sum up the thoughts that go through Key's mind about the mystery of the woman and the man.

The woman from the cabin, in a six-horse coach! The man is apparently checking to see if Key is a robber, because Key follows the coach closely. Key wonders if the man is part of the gang of robbers. He thinks that the woman might be a part of the gang, but possibly not, because at first it looked as if she thought he was a gang member, until reassured with a signal from the other man.

5. What does Key notice about the woman as he studies her at the station?

She is about thirty, is dressed nicely but not richly, seems to have undergone hardship,

6. What do the other passengers at the station share about their experiences with the road agents? How is the young lady referenced by one passenger? Explain Key's thought when her involvement is revealed.

That they feel safe at the station, and that they have ways of passing by without losing their gold (putting it in their boots and in their holster, giving it to women and children, whom the robbers leave alone). The lady is thanked by one man for holding his valuables during one holdup, which makes Key think she is working with the robbers. That is, until she offers to return the satchel to the professional man, which makes Key embarrassed that he doubted her.

7. What does the miner reveal about the road agents?

They're always masked, the "orator," who sounds like a smooth-talking lawyer takes charge—although he's not the leader—and they were thought to have holed up in a cabin (Key's cabin), which was surrounded by the sheriff.

Week 5, Day 4 – Chapter IV

1. What is the "orator" like?

Very well spoken, calm, of average height, clean shaven. He is pleasant, though, while the men rob the passengers.

2. What actions show that the gang has received inside information about the coach's passengers? What does the lawyer suspect Key of, and why?

They know about the miner's gold in his boots, the gold in the lawyer's holster, and the bonds in the woman's satchel. The lawyer suspects Key of being a confederate, since he was not robbed.

3. Why does Key again suspect the woman? How does he determine to follow her? What is strange about her decision to go to San Luis? Who accompanies her?

She could have signaled the robbers by opening the window; she openly accuses Key—as do the other passengers—as being a confederate, thereby deflecting attention from herself. Key decides to take a boat to San Luis, as he overhears her plan to go to San Luis via stage, so he will precede her arrival and can follow her there. Key thinks it strange that she should go to San Luis, because it is not the kind of town a former mountain-girl would go to. The mystery horseman accompanies her.

4. Describe Key's difficulties in spying on the woman in San Luis. What results from his catching up with her as she dismounts from the tram-car?

She catches him once; he thinks he has her bottled up, but she comes back to a hotel he had been sure she was still inside; someone puts fern leaves from the hollow on his pillow. Key follows her, but she "vanishes" in front of a nun's convent.

Week 6, Day 1 – Chapter V

1. Describe the contrast between the morning weather and the evening weather at Collinson's.

It begins calm, but the wind whips up by evening.

2. What do the road agents offer Collinson? How does he respond? Why is there such silence when they realize who he is?

Five hundred dollars for his place; he refuses, saying he built it for his wife, who is dead, so they can't have it. There is silence, because it is revealed that the "orator," whose name is Chivers, has run away with Collinson's wife.

3. Who is the man talking to Chivers? Why does his name sound familiar? What does Chivers reveal about the gang?

Jack Riggs; he was one of the men that the sheriff who surrounded Key's cabin was looking for. Chivers reveals that he is proud their gang is so highly "respected" for its humor and courtesy, and for his high-toned speaking manner. He also reveals that the wife of a Sacramento Union newspaper columnist is one of their confederates.

4. What background info do we find out about Riggs and Chivers?

Chivers is a former judge and going around with Collinson's wife Sadie. He met Riggs and became his partner after Riggs lost money gambling and killed two men in a holdup to retrieve it.

When Jack Riggs was recognized as a crook, he and his sister Alice fled to Chivers's cabin with Sadie Collinson. Sadie saved Riggs's sister on horseback during the great fire, taking her eventually via coach to the convent. Also, Chivers has been going under the name "Barker."

Riggs is worried that Alice will be recognized and linked to him. Chivers says he will leave Sadie, and offers to shake hands with Riggs, but Riggs ignores his hand, and the two eye each other ominously.

5. Sum up the gang's preparations for their stolen goods, and Chivers's conversation with Collinson.

Chivers opens the letters and papers, burning them in the fire, which French Pete says is foolish, because it might draw attention to the house. The gang plans to take the gold out secretly, because no bank in town will take it unless the banker knows the owner, because of the robberies.

Collinson apologize to Chivers for acting too rough, even if his men were robbers. He says he will not reveal the gang upon his word, and wants to provide food for them in his house because of the memory of his wife. Chivers is tongue-tied for a moment because of Collinson's honesty and simple goodness, but regardless, he plans to get rid of Sadie Collinson by putting her in her husband's path.

Week 6, Day 2 – Chapter VI

1. How and why does Key finagle a visit inside the convent? What does Father Cipriano reveal?

He pretends a relative of his is considering joining, so he can talk to the woman he thinks is the woman from the cabin. Father Cipriano reveals that the woman that Key is looking for (Mrs. Barker) is a friend of the sister of American Mr. Rivers, who is also from the Sierras. Mrs. Barker took Mr. Rivers's sister to the convent and then left by coach in response to a telegram.

2. What kind of look does Rivers's sister give Key as she sees him? What does he realize?

A look of remembrance and pleasure to see him again; Key realizes she is the girl whose profile he saw in the cabin during the fire!

3. What does the letter Key receives say? What is his reaction?

“I heard your voice today for the third time. I want to hear it again. I will come at dusk. Do not go out until then.” He wonders if it is a trick, wonders which woman gave it to him, and doesn’t want her to come to him.

4. Describe “Sister Seraphina” and her story.

It is actually Alice, Mr. Rivers’s sister in Sister Seraphina’s clothes, who sneaked out to meet Key. She recognized Key’s voice at the convent from hearing him at the hollow in the hills, and wanted to meet him. She stayed at the hollow only two days, when Rivers brought her, and she stayed with “Mr. and Mrs. Barker,” so Rivers could keep her away from his robber gang.

She heard Key warn Uncle Dick and Jim Parker about throwing away the match, and told “Mrs. Barker,” who took her away on horseback just in time to escape the fire, dropping Mrs. Barker’s shoes, which she was wearing (and which were too big for her).

5. What is discovered about Alice’s profile at the window? What does she ask to be called?

Key realizes it was not her profile at the window; it was “Mrs. Barker’s.”

Alice wants to be called “Alice Riggs,” because her brother told her to, instead of Alice Rivers. (Riggs was the man arguing with Chivers—who stole Collinson’s wife—at Collinson’s cabin.)

Week 6, Day 3 – Chapter VII

1. What does Chivers do, strangely enough, with Collinson? What precautions does he take anyway? Sum up his conversation with Collinson.

He sets Collinson up as a guard, although not in the most strategic place, above the mill. Chivers sets up his getting rid of Sadie by telling Collinson that she is not dead, as Collinson believed, but doubted. Chivers says he saw her get off a train, describing her. Collinson is momentarily excited, but doesn’t believe it’s Sadie, because he believes she would have come to him. But Chivers says Sadie could have believed Collinson was dead and moved on. He says he is able to get her back to him, as she is staying with a Miss Rivers at the convent.

2. Why doesn’t Collinson leave to find her, even after Chivers tells him he is free to go?

He says he gave his word to guard the house he built in her honor, and he won’t go.

3. Describe Collinson’s meeting and conversation with Sadie.

They are shocked to see each other, Sadie maybe more when Collinson tells her what Chivers has been telling him. He agrees not to tell Chivers Sadie is there, and she is dumbfounded at how gullible Seth is about things. Sadie says that the sheriff is coming for the gang.

4. What happens in the woods that Sadie thinks is the sheriff’s posse? What happens to the gang and Sadie?

An earthquake shakes the land, and Sadie and the gang are killed.

Week 6, Day 4 – Chapter VIII

1. Sum up Sister Seraphina’s news to Key.

Riggs has written the convent, forbidding his sister Alice from associating with “Mrs. Barker” ever again, even though she was the one Riggs sent to be with Alice at the convent; Alice reacted by escaping the convent in one of Sister Seraphina’s robes.

2. Why does Sister Seraphina trust Key to help find Alice? Why is he worried about Alice?

He is a former pupil of Father Cipriano, and she trusts him. Because of what the sister says, he believes Alice will try to find “Mrs. Barker” or her brother, and put herself in danger.

3. Describe the telegram Key receives. What does he fear about Alice? What is he told at Skinner’s when he arrives?

It is from his company’s office and says, “Come at once—important.” Keys fears Alice knows some secret place of her brother’s (Riggs), and will meet him there and put herself into danger. When he asks if a woman has arrived there, Skinner says he’s the second man to ask (although the sheriff asked about “Mrs. Barker”), and that she was a part of the gang, warning the men to flee when the sheriff’s posse ap-proached, before the quake.

4. Describe the news Key receives at the mine from his foreman. What does he discover at Collinson’s? What does he tell Collinson? What does Collinson tell him?

They have been served notice that the property is not theirs; it belongs to Alice Riggs, whose brother deeded it to her. Also, that since Keys is going to Collinson’s, to see if he lost a horse, since one was found wandering around with a lady’s saddle on it.

Key finds Alice trying to help Collinson over the cliff ledge. Key tells Collinson outside of Alice’s hearing that she mustn’t know her brother was an outlaw, but instead she must think that he just went away. Collinson tells Key he dreamed he saw his wife Sadie again (although it wasn’t a dream). When Alice returns, Collinson says that Riggs told him he was going away and for Key to take care of Alice. Collinson then dies.

5. Explain the story’s conclusion.

A memorial is erected to the memory of Collinson and his mill, and Key and Alice are married.