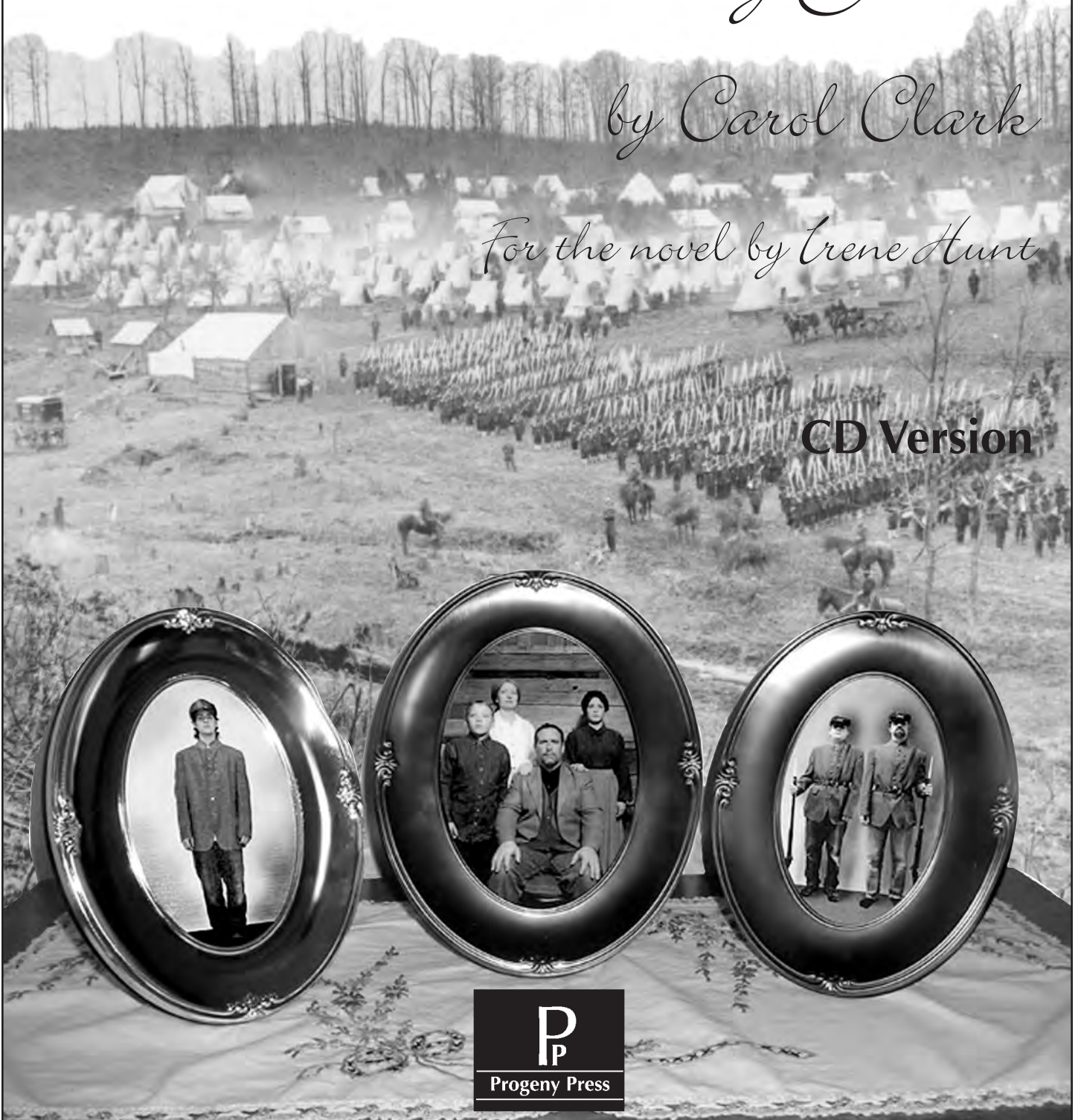


# *Across Five Aprils* *Study Guide*

*by Carol Clark*

*For the novel by Irene Hunt*

**CD Version**



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**Across Five Aprils Study Guide**  
A Progeny Press Study Guide  
by Carol Clark  
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Mrs. Clark earned her B.A. in English education at Bloomfield College and her M.Ed. in elementary and early childhood education at the University of Toledo. She enjoys playing classical music on the piano, reading, writing, and playing with her three grandsons. Mrs. Clark is involved in outreach ministries through her local church, including baking cookies for and writing letters to servicemen in Iraq; making casseroles for the Good Samaritan Center, which services the poor of Toledo; and directing a kids' outreach program in Appalachia on a missions trip with World Servants. In addition to classroom teaching, Mrs. Clark has worked as secretary and editor for some of the most creative engineers in the United States and has edited for two magazines and a technical journal. She has also published interviews and articles in several magazines.

## Table of Contents

Study Guide Author .....	3
Peer Review Panel .....	4
Note to Instructor .....	6
Synopsis .....	8
About the Novel's Author .....	9
Background Information .....	10
Ideas for Prereading Activities .....	12
Activities During Reading .....	13
Chapters 1 & 2 .....	14
Chapters 3 & 4 .....	23
Chapters 5 & 6 .....	31
Chapters 7 & 8 .....	39
Chapters 9 & 10 .....	44
Chapters 11 & 12 .....	50
Overview .....	57
Essay and Writing Suggestions .....	60
Additional Resources .....	63
Answer Key .....	65

## Synopsis

Times are uneasy for the Matthew Creighton family as tensions rise between the north and the south as the war between the states approaches. The Creightons and their neighbors in southern Illinois have friends and relatives on both sides of the issues. The younger sons look forward to the gallantry and excitement they believe war will bring, but Matthew and his older sons better understand war's cost. When war breaks out, the Creighton boys head off to fight, expecting a quick and easy victory for the north. But when an older son, Bill, goes off to fight for the south, the Creightons find the war has divided their family and brought dangerous strife between neighbors.

Nine-year-old Jethro Creighton suddenly finds himself the only remaining son in the family, and when his father suffers a heart attack, Jethro becomes the working man of the family. Times are hard and the work endless, but their thoughts always are with their boys in the war. They seem to live from letter to letter and for each newspaper with accounts of the fighting.

With boys on both sides of the war, the Creightons also find themselves the target of whichever troublemakers wish to pick a fight. But they also learn that some neighbors remember old kindnesses, and people still will band together against injustice. Young Jethro discovers that a man's good character can be stronger than a gun and last longer than a war.

## Chapters 7 & 8

### Vocabulary:

Match each vocabulary word with its definition by writing the letter in the blank provided. Some words will not be used.

- |       |   |                 |
|-------|---|-----------------|
| _____ | 1. occurring or coming after                      | a. furrow       |
| _____ | 2. cheap trinket or ornament                      | b. contempt     |
| _____ | 3. lack of ability to perform                     | c. subsequent   |
| _____ | 4. narrow groove made by a plow                   | d. zeal         |
| _____ | 5. adorned or enhanced by ornamentation           | e. dispel       |
| _____ | 6. eager desire; enthusiasm for a person or cause | f. incompetence |
| _____ | 7. to drive off; scatter                          | g. embellished  |
| _____ | 8. to lie hidden, as in ambush                    | h. proprietor   |
| _____ | 9. owner of a business                            | i. bauble       |
| _____ | 10. unrelenting, doesn't give up                  | j. engraved     |
|       |   | k. lurk         |
|       |   | l. tenacious    |

### Questions:

1. What news does Dan Lawrence bring to the Creightons?

*Across Five Aprils Study Guide*

2. While studying the names and dates in the family Bible, Jethro learns new information about himself and his family. Name at least three things he learns.
  - a.
  - b.
  - c.
3. How does the news of Tom's death change Jenny's attitude toward her future?
4. How does Sam Gardiner bring a stop to Guy Wortman's troublemaking? How does the community react to this?
5. How does General Beauregard accomplish a southern "victory" at Corinth? What does General Halleck claim about his occupation of the city?
6. How does Dave Burdow help the Creightons rebuild? How does this kindness change community attitude toward the Burdows?
7. *Connections with History (optional)*: Throughout these two chapters, we learn much about the attitudes of the community toward a number of Civil War generals, both northern and southern. List three or more of the generals, name the significant battles in which they occupied a leadership role, and tell what they



*Across Five Aprils Study Guide*

accomplished or failed to accomplish. (Note: Remember to add flags to your map to show the locations of each of these battles.)

General	Battle	Accomplishments/Failures

8. As the war drags on, how do the attitudes of the soldiers and the nation begin to change regarding the President and government of the Union?
  
9. *Juxtaposition* is the act of placing two things side by side for comparison or contrast. An author uses juxtaposition to underscore the distinctive characteristics of two people, things, happenings, or places. At the end of Chapter 7, what two things does the author juxtapose in the country and the city newspapers? What does this comparison emphasize?

*Across Five Aprils Study Guide*

10. A *metaphor* is an implied or stated comparison of two unlike things, but no comparison word (*like* or *as*) is used. For example, “Sherman’s march was a raging sea of destruction.” In this sentence, Sherman’s march is compared to a raging sea by actually *calling* it a raging sea. Underline the metaphor in each of the following passages, then tell what comparison is being made.

a. Now the cabin had the look of a lonely old man brooding in the summer sunlight.

\_\_\_\_\_ is compared to \_\_\_\_\_

b. If they wished to think of him as an ignorant child, he must not try to change their idea of him, but it was a bitter dose to swallow.

\_\_\_\_\_ is compared to \_\_\_\_\_

**Dig Deeper:**

11. As the Creighton barn is being rebuilt, one of the men says to Jethro, “Be glad you’re a boy, young feller, and don’t hev to pester yourself with all these troubles that men be sufferin’ through these days.” What is Jethro’s response to the comment? What do we learn about his inner character from this response?

12. Read 1 Corinthians 13: 4–5, 11. How does Jethro’s answer connect with this passage of Scripture? How does his response indicate his growth from childhood toward adulthood?

*Across Five Aprils Study Guide*

13. Reread the two letters from Shadrach Yale that the Creightons receive in Chapter 8. What is Shad's opinion of General McClellan? Of General Burnside?
  
14. Read Titus 3:1–2 and Romans 13:1–7. According to these verses, what should our attitude be regarding those in authority over us? Does Shad have this attitude? Why or why not?

**Class Discussion:**

In the first of Shadrach's two letters near the end of Chapter 8, he says of General McClellan, "He does not have the cold approach to killing, the singleness of purpose, the brutal tenacity, that the winner of this war—if there ever is to be one—must have." What does Shadrach mean by this? Do you think a Christian can or should be able to act in such a way, even in war? Use scripture in your discussion as much as possible.

As an alternative to this discussion, you may wish to examine and discuss the life and circumstances of one of the great warrior kings of the Old Testament, King David. How can David's obvious skill and pleasure in being a warrior be reconciled with his being "a man after God's own heart" (1 Samuel 13:13, 14; Acts 13:22)?

## *Across Five Aprils Study Guide*

### *Chapters 1 & 2*

#### *Vocabulary:*

##### *Section 1*

1. Calvinism: The system of beliefs espoused by John Calvin, based largely on the sovereignty of God.
2. abolitionist: A person who wants to do away with slavery.
3. tariff: Taxes imposed on the shipping of imports and exports.
4. secede: To withdraw from a group or union, generally from a unit of government.

##### *Section 2*

5. perplexities: confusions, uncertainties
6. hoisted: lifted upwards
7. strident: having a harsh sound; grating
8. typhoid fever: infectious and often fatal disease, caused by bacteria, resulting in inflamed and ulcerated intestines
9. preoccupation: absorbed, engrossed, thoughts are elsewhere; occupied by something else

#### *Questions:*

1. The time setting of the novel at the beginning is mid-April of 1861; warm, springtime weather. The place is the southern Illinois farm of the Creighton family, consisting of a small cabin, barnlot, half-acre potato field, a large field beyond a creek, and an apple orchard.
2. Copernicus was an astronomer who believed the sun is the center of the solar system—prior to his teachings, it was believed that Earth was the center. Jethro introduces the subject of Copernicus' teachings to distract his mother's thinking about war and the death of her young children. Although Ellen questions whether the teachings are biblical, she is proud of Jethro's understanding of things she knows nothing about and is thankful, momentarily, that he has distracted her from her sadness.
3. Jethro thinks the idea of war is exciting because war means banners and bunting, parades of horses and brass bands. Everyone Jethro knows that has ever been involved in a war has survived, so he is not afraid of family members being killed. Those who have actually died seem merely shadows of men from faraway lands.
4. Mary Creighton went to a dance in Hidalgo with Rob Nelson in 1859. A crowd of ruffians come uninvited to the dance, waving whiskey bottles and shouting insults at the guests. As Rob and Mary leave in their wagon, Travis Burdow followed them on horseback. He fired a pistol over the heads of the horses, which frightened them so that they bolted through a rail fence, overturning the wagon. Mary was crushed beneath the wagon.
5. Jethro's love for Bill stems from Bill's calm and quiet disposition. Bill treats people and animals gently; he values education; he is physically strong and a hard worker. He treats Jethro with both kindness and appreciation for his hard work in the fields.
6. Although John and Bill care for each other deeply and seemed to understand each other well, Jethro is ambivalent toward John. Nancy is very shy, which Jethro interprets as being unfriendly, so it makes him uneasy to be around Nancy and her children. He seldom visits John's cabin, even though it is only half a mile from his own.
7. The Civil War begins with the South firing on Fort Sumter, South Carolina. Anderson's men are starving and President Lincoln informs Governor Pickens that he is sending supplies to the fort. General Beauregard demands that the North surrender the fort. When Anderson refuses, Beauregard fires on the fort.

#### *Thinking About the Story:*

8. Ellen Creighton cherishes her youngest son Jethro and overlooks behaviors in him for which she would have punished her other children. She feels he is special because he survived the sickness that took three of her other children, and she watches over him with tenderness. She looks up to him for his "book knowledge" and is often amazed at the things he understands at his tender age.
9. As a field worker at the age of 9, Jethro is extended the courtesy of being allowed to eat dinner at the adult table. Coffee is considered "for adults only." When Bill dipped a crust of bread in his coffee and offered it to Jethro, it showed he understood Jethro's movement toward adulthood by taking on the work of planting. Jethro considers the action a favor, but chooses not to draw the attention of the other adults at the table.
10. Wilse Graham is a southerner at heart and defends the South's position on slavery. The South wants the right to live as it sees fit, without interference from the North, he says. He believes England will come to the aid of the South if there is a war, to protect the cotton needed to run the English looms. He also feels northerners will hesitate to welcome the freed, uneducated slaves when the war is over. John questions the right of people to own the souls and bodies of other

## Across Five Aprils Study Guide

human beings. Bill states that he hates slavery and says it is greed that motivates slave owners. Matt Creighton responds that human nature is taking on an attitude of decency and responsibility, which is a change from previous history. Ellen is upset by the talk of war, and wants no more of it at the family dinner table.

11. a. like the soldiers of Herod; child's paralysis is compared to Herod's army
- b. riding like kings; held high like horses with short reins; men riding are compared to kings; foot soldiers (lesser men in perfect lines) are compared to horses with heads reined up high.
- c. pleasant as the sound of a little bell ringing; Jenny's voice is compared to a bell
- d. extending like giant claws; tree roots are compared to claws
- e. looking somewhat like a solemn dwarf; Jethro is compared to a solemn dwarf
- f. like a woman talkin' to a young 'un; Bill's speech to his horse is compared to a woman's speech to a child.

*Idioms:*

12. Taking away someone's enthusiasm.
13. Someone cannot criticize another for a fault they have themselves.
14. A very old saying that means you'd endure terrible hardships for someone else because of your love for them.
15. Saying different things to different people about the same subject.
16. To change ones' mind, to vacillate. Unable to decide what they really want to do.

*Dig Deeper:*

17. The grandfather of Travis Burdow had been accused of stealing a team of horses and had fled to Jasper County to escape prosecution. Because of this, an air of suspicion and dislike has settled on the family, causing his children to be persecuted. His son Dave is sullen and silent and keeps to himself. His children (including Travis) are often the same, but are given to drunkenness, which gives them courage and increases their defiance. The author states that the gunshot fired over the heads of Rob Nelson's horses was "fired at a society that had kicked a boy from childhood on because he bore his grandfather's name."

18. Jethro finds it difficult to accept that Travis Burdow paid no consequences for the actions that led to Mary's death. This reminds him of Lincoln's wavering regarding the declaration of war, and Jethro finds himself angry at both his father's actions and Lincoln's inaction. Jethro wonders if it is the fear of having "blood on people's hands" which motivates both men.

19. Answers will vary. Matthew Creighton's actions are godly in that he was slow to anger and showed compassion to those who had wronged his family. He chose to repay an evil act with one of kindness. He could not quite go so far as to show love for the Burdows, however. As God has not dealt with us as our sins deserve, so Matthew did not deal with Travis Burdow as his sin deserved.

20. Answers will vary. Ezekiel 18 tells us that God will not hold a grudge against a son who lives righteously, despite the sins of his father. Each soul will be judged based on their own guilt or righteousness. Although the community never punished any of the Burdows in a legal sense, they never trusted them and they made them outcasts because of the grandfather's actions.

21. Ellen's religious upbringing taught her to depend on the sovereignty of God, and did not allow her to regret her own fading beauty. She's lived a hard life, losing four of her twelve children. Sickness and poverty taught her that a pretty face is of little value when it comes to survival.

22. Answers will vary. Matthew Creighton's intervention teaches us that he is not afraid to stand up for what he believes is right. He is not vengeful, even in grief. He obviously is well respected by the community and exercises great influence over his neighbors. He is able to persuade them to put aside their revenge and thereby avoid further bloodshed and death.

### Chapters 3 & 4

*Connections to History:*

1. *Jefferson Davis*: President of the Confederate States. Davis served as U.S. Senator from Missouri until that state seceded from the Union in 1861. He left his Senate seat and was elected to command the state's military forces. However, within a few weeks he was elected President of the Confederate States. *Robert E. Lee*: Military general and genius of the South. He was originally approached by Lincoln to lead northern troops, but declined in favor of the southern command. Much of the southern successes were due to Lee's military expertise. *Ulysses S. Grant*: Northern military general. He was sometimes a great disappointment as a military leader, as he proved ineffective and indecisive in several battles. However, he pursued Lee's forces at Richmond and Petersburg for 10 months, finally forcing the surrender