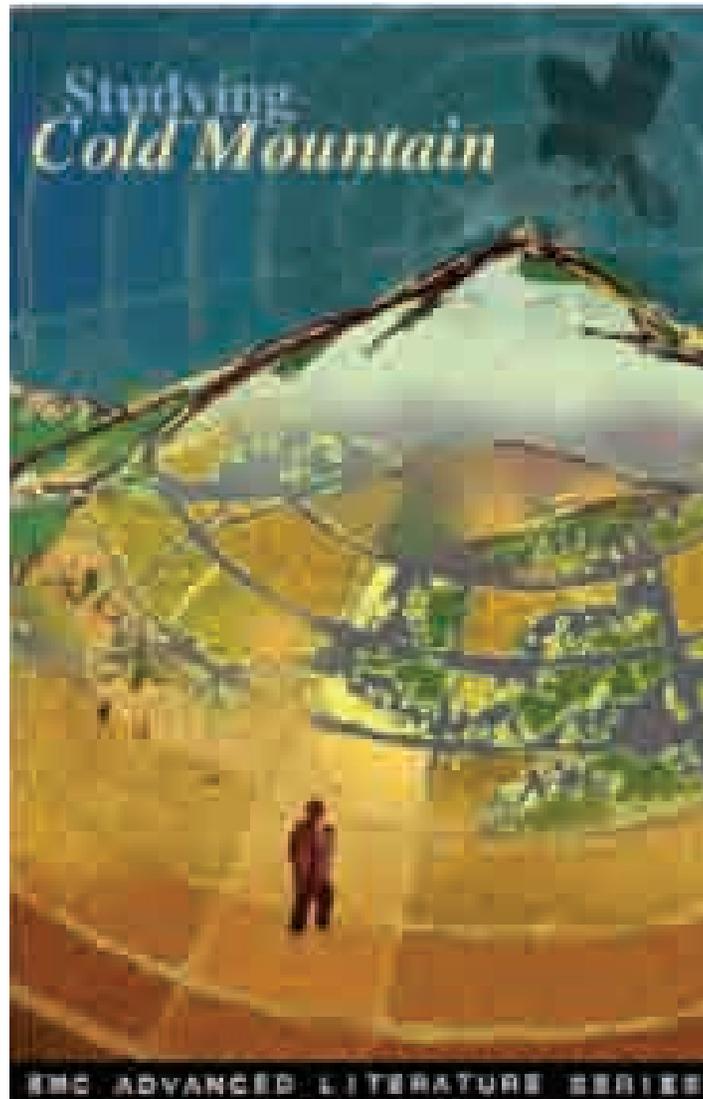


Cold Mountain: An EMC Study Guide



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Credits

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A note on the text

Please note, this is an edited version of the print publication (2005). Copyright restrictions prevent the inclusion of text extracts in the download edition. Page references in the study guide refer to the paperback edition of *Cold Mountain* published by Hodder and Stoughton in 1997. The images on pages 48-51 are from *Cold Mountain* (2003), d. Anthony Minghella. Where necessary activities have been adapted.

References

While researching and writing this study guide we consulted a great many websites. Listed here are those we found most useful as sources of contemporary texts, quotations, images and historical background.

Overview, general comprehensive background information to the American Civil War

<http://civil-war.net>

<http://www.eyewitnesshistory.com>

http://www.americancivilwar.com/kids_zone/causes.htm

<http://www.nps.gov/gett/gettkidz/cause.htm>

www.civilwarhome.com/confederatecause.com

<http://www.civilwarhome.com/warorigin.htm> (Origins of the War)

<http://www.cwc.lsu.edu/cwc/interaspects/psych-motiv.htm> ('Why Civil War Soldiers Fought')

www.civil-war.net/pages/timeline.asp

www.civilwarhome.com/overview.htm

www.civilwarhome.com/statesdivision.htm

http://encarta.msn.com/encyclopedia_761567354/civil_war.html

Songs and letters

<http://civilwarmusic.net>

<http://ngeorgia.com/history/cwletter.html>

<http://spec.lib.vt.edu/cwlove/>

Contemporary texts

www.civil-war.net/pages/gettysburg_address.asp

<http://world-history-blog.blogspot.com/2004/07/travels-of-william-bartram-1739-1834.html>

<http://www.nyt.ulib.org>

<http://www.sc.edu.library/spcoll/amlit/frazier/fraz1.html>

The novel

<http://www.salon.com> – search for 'Cold Mountain'

www.bookbrowse.com – search for Charles Frazier

Desertion/Home Guard

<http://civilwarhome.com/desertion.htm>

<http://www.donaldsensing.com/2004/01/confederate-gestapo.html>

http://www.members.tripod.com/battle_bentonville/Articles/north_carolina_home_guard.htm

<http://homefreeuk.com/gazkhan/home-guard.htm>

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Introduction

Studying *Cold Mountain* – an overview

Studying Cold Mountain is a flexible resource which provides support for reading, analysing and writing about the novel. Rather than offering a chapter by chapter route through the novel, the pack provides developed activities on key aspects, for example structure, narrative voice and perspective, and the use of motifs. These before, during and after reading activities draw on a wide range of approaches, including drama, debating games, charting and visual representations. To gain confidence in writing about form, structure and language (AO3), Literature students are encouraged to explore the novel from a linguistic perspective in well-supported ways. Regardless of whether AO5 is explicitly assessed in the final examination, understanding the period and place in which *Cold Mountain* is set is central to an appreciation of the novel and the ways Frazier has used and transformed his material. A wide-ranging selection of contextual materials (historical, social and literary) is provided in 'Further Resources'; throughout the pack there are suggestions for how these materials might be used to enhance students' critical analysis of the novel.

The study guide is organised into seven sections.

– Teaching the Novel

A section intended primarily for teachers, it includes a possible agenda for teaching any modern novel and suggested approaches for the reading of a substantial novel like *Cold Mountain*.

– Before Reading

Student activity sheets on critical responses to the novel, chapter titles, introducing contexts (including visual material) and the period of the American Civil War, all of which are intended both to encourage speculation and introduce key aspects of the narrative.

– During Reading

Student activity sheets on charting the novel, themes, character, narrative voice and perspective, and close language analysis.

– After Reading

Student activities on structure, context and language analysis, with annotated examples for teachers, plus activities considering *Cold Mountain* as a modern novel and in the context of the American novel.

– The Book and the Film

The film of *Cold Mountain* could be seen as either a curse or a blessing! As well as being enjoyable in its own right, it provides an excellent way into thinking about context, themes, motifs and symbolism and, if used carefully, structure and character. However, it is significantly different from the novel and so we suggest it is not shown in its entirety – at least until students are very familiar with the novel. This section includes a summary of the opening scenes from the film and the opening chapters of the novel to support a detailed comparison, plus suggestions for how the film and screengrabs (on pages 48-51) could be used to support students' appreciation of the context and the novel.

– Further Resources

A substantial set of contextual materials including extracts from an interview with Charles Frazier, contemporary letters, songs and quotations, as well as a glossary of American Civil War terms and a brief overview of the period.

– Exam Preparation

A selection of questions of the type set by AQA for 'The Modern Novel' paper.

– Pages for students are marked **S**

– Pages for teachers are marked **T**

Teaching the Novel

An agenda for teaching any modern novel

The following checklist can be used as an agenda for teaching any modern novel. It is not intended to be exclusive; nor is it imagined that all aspects will be equally important to every novel. Activities throughout the pack draw on this agenda, for example:

- ‘Narrative voice and viewpoint’ on page 19
- the activity on page 25 encourages students to experiment with different visual representations as a way of exploring the structure of the novel.
- on page 29 there is detailed work on the analysis of the language of *Cold Mountain*
- ‘*Cold Mountain* – a modern novel’ on page 38 asks students to discuss the extent to which *Cold Mountain* draws on the features and conventions of a traditional novel and the extent to which it fits features often considered peculiarly modern.

1. Narrative voice and point of view

- first person, third person, free indirect style and so on
- perspective, point of view, focaliser
- tone
- address to reader

2. Narrative structure

- cohesion
- beginnings, endings
- shifts, flashbacks
- number of chapters, chapter length
- organisation of themes
- use of motifs
- structural repetitions and patterns

3. The handling of time in novels

- narrative time and chronological time

4. Relationship with the reader

- address to reader
- narrative gaps
- how hard the reader has to work
- scope for alternative readings

5. Language

- the nature of storytelling prose
- the writer’s characteristic prose style, including features such as:
 - sentence structure and length
 - lexis
 - use of abstract concepts or concrete description
 - the balance of dialogue, plot narration, reflection, description and so on.

6. Is it a modern novel or a traditional novel? Does it:

- have disruptions to the sequence of the narrative
- draw attention to the fact that it's constructed
- use a mixture of genres
- introduce ambiguity and uncertainty
- expect the reader to work hard and fill gaps
- focus on the inner life of characters as much as external events
- explore philosophical, scientific or other ideas important in the contemporary world
- introduce different kinds of writing into the text e.g. letters, documents?

7. The period of the writing and the period of the world of the novel

- contemporary context
- contemporary re-working of historical context
- literary context of the writing

8. Genre

- one genre
- several genres
- using generic conventions or challenging generic conventions?

9. Different ways of reading the text

- feminist, psychoanalytic, postcolonial, genre theory and so on
- open to a wide variety of interpretations (see 6)

10. An understanding of this novel in relation to other novels – its place in the wider context of the novel as a form.

***Cold Mountain* – Ten tips for getting it read**

1. Start by thinking about what it is you want students to get out of the reading of a novel and focus the teaching closely on these aspects, for example narrative voice, structure, characterisation and so on (as in the checklist on pages 5-6).
2. Model the reading process for the first two chapters (an Inman chapter and an Ada chapter) to set up expectations and to set the agenda. On the wall put a list of 'things to be aware of' during the reading, for example use of back story, stories within stories, motifs, alternating Inman/Ada structure and so on.
3. Encourage students to use post-it notes to mark questions, key moments, motifs and so on. It's a good idea to give students a focus for their questioning, otherwise the number of questions you end up with can be unmanageable.
4. Put together three or four chapters, as chunks to be read for homework, then choose a class focus for discussion and activities, for example motifs, viewpoint, back story.
5. Set up a charting activity to record key events (for instance using 'Charting the novel' on page 14 to fill in a few key points).
6. Set up groups of two or three, to prepare a presentation on a chapter or pair of chapters read at home. An alternative to this is for the whole class to read the same chapter but with different groups of students asked to focus on particular aspects. In the next lesson the groups are re-arranged to allow students to share what they have discovered.
7. Do quick quizzes/tests to check that everyone has read up to the same point.
8. Ask students to read the whole text in the first few weeks, while doing a more general introduction, work on contexts, pre-reading activities, thinking broadly about the novel as a genre. Use some of the strategies suggested here to support this first independent reading, for example post-its, charts, diaries and so on.
9. Encourage students to keep reading diaries and jottings and write imaginative responses along the way.
10. Provide a summary, or a partial summary to support the reading. See page 45 for an example of how this could be done.

Before Reading

Describing *Cold Mountain*

Printed below are some of the words and phrases used in reviews of Charles Frazier's first novel *Cold Mountain*.

Before reading

- Read through the list, making sure you understand each of the words. (You might need to do a bit of research on a few of these such as 'Odyssean' and 'Whitmanesque'.)
- Group the different descriptions (for example style, theme, genre, reviewer's response and so on).
- Talk about the expectations these words raise (genre, story, tone, length etc.) and any questions they provoke (for example, how can a book be both 'lush' and 'sparse'?).

During reading

- As you read the novel, choose short quotations which you think illustrate some of the descriptions listed here. Alternatively, find quotations which challenge the way in which the novel has been categorised or described.

After reading

- After reading, try to sum up *Cold Mountain* in only five adjectives. Compare your choices with those of other people in your class and those listed here.

Understated

Heartbreakingly beautiful

Heart-stopping

Lush

Epic

Saga

Sparse and eloquent

Poetic

Whitmanesque

Rare and extraordinary

Richly developed

Moving

Magnetic

Evocative

Thrilling

Ambitious

Timeless

Overlong, uneven

Enthralling

Utterly convincing

Most impressive

Beautiful

Leisurely, literary narrative

Elegantly told

Haunting

Odyssean

Lyrical

Both grand and intimate

Spellbinding

A literary page-turner

Memorable

Exciting

Chapter headings

- Listed below are the titles of the twenty chapters of *Cold Mountain* and the epilogue. Discuss what you can discover about the novel from the titles alone. For instance, can you say anything about:
 - likely themes
 - the genre of the novel
 - its qualities (for example action-packed? philosophical? poetic? romantic? contemporary? historical?)
 - the kind of events that might take place
 - anything else?

1	the shadow of a crow	freewill savages	12
2	the ground beneath her hands	bride bed full of blood	13
3	the color of despair	a satisfied mind	14
4	verbs, all of them tiring	a vow to bear	15
5	like any other thing, a gift	naught and grief	16
6	ashes of roses	black bark in winter	17
7	exile and brute wandering	footsteps in the snow	18
8	source and root	the far side of trouble	19
9	to live like a gamecock	spirits of crows, dancing	20
10	in place of the truth	epilogue. October of 1874	21
11	the doing of it		

Each title is taken from the chapter it heads.

- As you read each chapter, pay attention to the context in which the title appears. Talk about the difference it makes to your interpretation of it and consider why Charles Frazier chose it to head the chapter.

Review extracts

- Read the reviews below and discuss what it is the reviewers liked or disliked about the novel.
- Talk about your expectations of the novel they describe or analyse, using the prompts below:
 - type of novel
 - style
 - plot, setting, characters
 - whether or not you are looking forward to reading it and why.
- Write a paragraph exploring your expectations and predicting what your response to it will be and why.

For a first novelist, in fact for any novelist, Charles Frazier has taken on a daunting task – and has done extraordinarily well by it. In prose filled with grace notes and trenchant asides he has reset much of the *Odyssey* in nineteenth-century America near the end of the Civil War. A Whitmanesque foray into America; into its hugeness, its freshness, its scope and its soul.
James Polk, New York Times Book Review

1

Frazier has Cormac McCarthy's gift for rendering the pitch and tang of regional speech, and for catching some of the true oddity of human nature, but he doesn't yet possess McCarthy's ferocious focus. A promising, but overlong, uneven debut. *Kirkus Reviews*

2

A genuinely romantic saga that attains the status of literature. *Newsweek*

3

[Charles Frazier] shares with the great nineteenth-century novelists a keen observation of a society undergoing change.

Cold Mountain asserts itself as an authentic American *Odyssey* – hugely powerful, majestically lovely, and keenly moving. *Publisher's synopsis of the novel*

4

A rare and extraordinary book, a Civil War novel concerned less with battlefields than with the landscape of the human soul. *San Francisco Chronicle*

5

Setting out with a pistol and a tattered copy of the eighteenth-century naturalist William Bartram's *Travels*, Inman takes leave of a 'country of swill and sullage, sump of the continent,' and heads off into the new sunrise of his life. Along the way he encounters wonders and deadly threats that, while of less mythological weight than the trials of Odysseus, carry mystical overtones that are particularly American.

6

A heightened, thrilling love story...perhaps the most eloquent writing about the awful drudgery and desperation of the Civil War since Thomas Keneally's *Confederates*...A great read. *John Doyle, The Globe and Mail*