

Shane Notes Chps 5 – 6. Source: Sparknotes.com

Chapter 5

Between chapters 4 and 5 there is a jump in time ahead to the end of the summer. Shane, as a surprise, has just finished clearing an alfalfa field while Joe has been gone. Joe is ecstatic, and Marian tells him that she gave Shane permission to finish it. Shane tells Joe it is an anniversary present, and Joe, remembering his anniversary, gives Marian a kiss. While they are talking, the steers get loose, and Shane goes to round them up.

Bob remembers this as the happiest summer of his life. The only even slightly negative force is Fletcher, who is still pressing to expand his land and take over the homesteaders' farms. Bob reflects that once, Fletcher and his cronies were his heroes. Now, Shane has become his hero. Bob notices that Shane enjoys living at the farm more and more and now makes plans involving his future there. One day Shane sees Bob shooting a makeshift gun and gives him some pointers on how to hold and aim a gun. Shane takes the play gun and twirls it around, demonstrating that he knows guns well. Bob practices with the gun, and he never forgets how well Shane handled it.

Chapter 6

School has started again for Bob, summer is over, and Fletcher is back. Fletcher begins to spread talk around town that he wants all of the land and that all of the farmers must relocate. The homesteaders meet to discuss what they are going to do about Fletcher, and Joe soon emerges as the local leader. They ask Joe what he predicts Fletcher will do and how they should respond. Joe believes that Fletcher will apply pressure relentlessly until they break down and give in. During the conversation Joe makes a comment about what Fletcher did to Morley, his old hired hand. Apparently, after a conversation with Fletcher, Morley regretted the day he was ever hired and left. They all predict that Fletcher will try to drive Shane away, since Shane is the new wild card.

A few weeks later, a metal tong on the pitchfork breaks, and Shane offers to drive it in town to the blacksmith. Joe says he will go too, but Shane says no, and that it is as good a time as any to confront Fletcher. As soon as Shane leaves, Bob sneaks out behind him and joins him in the wagon. Shane says he'll buy Bob a jackknife at the store.

In town, two of Fletcher's men, Chris and a new, unknown man are there. After catching a glimpse of Shane, the new man gets on his horse and says he is leaving town for good. Shane goes into the saloon and takes a seat. After a while Chris speaks to him and gives him a drink of whiskey. After Shane drinks it Chris makes a comment about how he thought farmers only drink soda pop. Shane responds by telling Chris to "tell Fletcher to send a grown-up man next time." Then Shane asks the bartender for a soda pop. Chris looks puzzled and then shouts to the bartender that it smells in the bar, asking Shane if he and Joe are raising pigs. Shane stiffens and gets angry, but after a few minutes he lets it go and leaves. Back at home Bob tells his father what happened and Joe predicts that Fletcher and Chris will become cocky over the confrontation.

Analysis

Chapters 5 and 6 illustrate the main transition in the book. Chapter 5 is when Shane's presence in the Starrett family is fully and completely integrated, and none of them can imagine life without him. Bob calls it the happiest summer of his life because he gets to live with his two heroes, Shane and his father. The problems with Fletcher dissipate over the summer, and Bob is not in school and spends his time watching and helping the two men work the farm. This scene is a wholesome one, a time in which there are few if any problems. All four of them are happy and settle comfortably into the routine. The problem with such a idyllic period of time is that it cannot last, and it doesn't.

Chapter 6 marks the turning of the summer and of the happy stasis in which the Starretts all lived to a colder time. It is now fall, school resumes, and problems escalate with Fletcher and the possibility of Shane leaving. In many ways, Fletcher is a kind of token villain in the book—he is not much of a factor for the first few chapters, but chapter 6 is where his presence and opposition begin to present major difficulties. Shane tries to head this off as best he can and willingly rides into town to replace the broken tine even though he knows it means having a confrontation with Fletcher and/or his men.

It is clear that Fletcher and his men are scared of Shane—in fact, his very presence is enough to drive one of the men away. The feeling of danger surrounding Shane—the same feeling that Joe and Marian noticed instantly—makes everyone wary of him and makes some people afraid of him. Shane does not wield that aura as a power, however. He could use that dominant and frightening presence to pave an easier way for himself and the Starrett's, but he does not assert it. Instead, Shane is reluctant to get into any kind of altercation with Fletcher's

men. Schaefer is commenting here about the definition of a hero and—unlike stereotypical old west figures and gunslingers—represents Shane as a kind of pacifist. Shane is the opposite of the typical cowboy who approaches tense and dangerous situations with barrels blazing. In the scene in the bar, Shane even allows himself to be made fun of without retaliating.

Shane knows that most of the people there, including Chris, expect him to strike back. Perhaps this is one of the reasons he does not—Shane is a person who gains an advantage by being unpredictable and by not acting quite as people might expect. He also refrains from getting into an altercation because it is not yet time, and he does not want to fight if he can at all avoid it. Shane knows that his decision not to fight will eventually escalate the situation, and he remarks to Bob, "Why should a man be smashed because he has courage and does what he's told? Life's a dirty business, Bob." Here he is making a statement about what men value and admire, and he suggests that it took more courage for him to refrain from fighting.