

Cold mountain



**ASSIGN
BUSTER**

“ I am coming home one way or another, and I do not know how things might stand between us. I first thought to tell in this letter what I have done and seen so that you might judge me before I return. But I decided it would need a page as broad as the blue sky to write that tale, and I have not the will or the energy. 1 This passage sums up the whole story in three sentences, yet only hints at the complexity of Inman’s experiences and situation.

Throughout the story we see the compromises Inman must make to survive.

And as each day progresses the manner by which the various characters interact changes. This poses the question, how does the Civil War affect the social relationships between Southerners In order to answer this question thoroughly, three main components must be looked at; the economic effects of the Civil War for the South, how the Civil War breaks down families, and how the traditional social system changes. In a true deferential society (such as antebellum America) there only can be two social and economic classes, the rich, and the poor.

But once we enter the Civil War this system of wealth and authority breaks down. The ease by which the rich make profits collapses, whether by trade embargoes inhibiting the exportation of goods or investments falling through. With the deterioration of the elite’s wealth, confusion and anarchy rules, usually ending in inflation and devaluation. This is evident in Cold Mountain, Ada’s family wealth, once very generous, is stripped down to one farm consisting of a few acres and a moderate house.

Basically due to the lack of return in investments from Charleston, Ada is financially confined to a farm she does not even know how to run. Beyond

the brake down of income the instability of the Northern and Southern Governments results in paper money losses the bulk of its value, very similar to Russia's Ruble today. With this devaluation, the third dimension means of bartering (use of paper money instead of goods) is lost. Along with this change any luxury item also losses the bulk of its' value. For example, to acquire essential items, Ruby must trade Ada's piano.

During the Antebellum period this piano would have approximately been worth six to eight months worth of food and two significant farming tools, rather once Ruby trades the piano she only gains two to three months of food and one significant farming tool. Though the economic changes put the highest burden upon the rich, America's lower class had virtually nothing to loss but their pride and family. And that is precisely what it did, generally having the most devastating effects upon immigrants. These people relied on a system of survival that has nurtured their people for centuries, farming a small plot of land.

With lots of common land and sparse population, one could plant and harvest just enough crops to feed their family and just enough to trade for other goods they couldn't grow. We now see the horrid economic effects the Civil War had upon all Southerners. This let the way for the next event, the braking up of families. The misconception remains that all southerners owned slaves including immigrants, yet it has been reported that fewer than five percent of their kind owned slaves! Thus the reason for their entrance to the Confederate army was not to protect the South's " peculiar institution.

Rather two elements brought about the enlisting of these men, first, they felt morally obligated that they must protect their country and home and second, all men were expected to enlist, for this war was about rights and as Thomas Jefferson notes, “ not to defend ones rights when called upon is treason. ” After the departure of the men, women had to deal with an entirely new threat. Without the masculine presence, Federal and Confederate troops regularly looted and wreaked these women’s homes, taking food and any other good of value.

Of course in Cold Mountain this is precisely what happen to Sara, left alone after her husband, John leaves to fight for the Confederacy she attempts to maintain their large garden/small farm to run and take care of a new born. A few days after Inman volunteers to help her out, a group of three Federals storm her humble home. After finding nothing of value they inquire about her “ hidden money,” but conclude the truth, she has none. Unhappy with no loot they take her hog.

She replies, “ you take it and your might as well knock both of us in the head, and kill us now, for it will all come out the same, 2 asically saying that the hog is all she has left. As for the men, you basically had two options, you could fight for either side until you won the war, or you could desert. Either way you would be on fatal grounds. Desertion was the chose for main Confederate men, so the Home guards were formed, led by Teague to search for the deserter and usually kill them by firing squad or hanging. This dismal future for men brought about the war song, “ The fear of the grave is removed forever, when I die I’ll live again, my soul will rejoice by the crystal river.

When I die I'll live again, hallelujah I'll live again. 3 Though both sides were at great danger, the major disadvantage went to the Federal Army. Since the North was industrialized the majority of men lived in cities. So once they were sent to South they were not as knowledgeable about the land as the Southerners, generally living in an agricultural society. Several times in Frazier's novel, *Cold Mountain* we see this scenario, the ideal example being Inman's pursuit of the three Federals who stole Sara's hog.

Knowing they all were all city boys, Inman puts no effort in killing the three. Thus we now see the two aspects leading to the destruction of families, the women's general failure to maintain crops and an income and the men's inability to stay alive. With this systematic destruction and lack of parental advisory, the traditional social system changes. The lack of the family stability or lack of family at all sent both Federals and Confederates looking for companionship and advice from other means. The result of this search end with other soldiers for the men.

This generally demoted the values one admired and brought about mass alcoholism and prostitution. In *Cold Mountain*, we see the drinking of Stobrod greatly increase and Inman stumbles upon two whorehouses coming back from the hospital. Though these may seem as isolated examples, research has shown that stress and loss increases alcoholism by up to thirty percent! So it is logical to conclude it was an epidemic during the Civil War. As for the women, the lack of men changes their role in society. Just as WW 2, the women must take over the men's job to support themselves and their community.

This new independence brings the views of women rights and similar ideas to Ruby's following statement, " War or peace, there's not a thing we can't do ourselves. You don't need him. 4 Thus it is now evident how the traditional social system brakes down. In conclusion, we can now attribute the changes in social relationships between Southerners to my three main areas. The economic effects, brake up of families, and ending of the traditional social system all together cause the evident changes. Though these changes temporarily have negative effects upon Southerners, it will eventually lead to women's suffrage and a better union in general.