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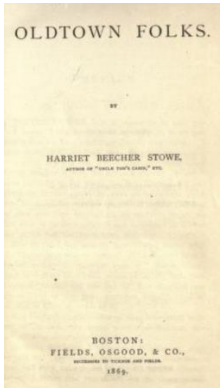
Oldtown Folks (1869)

Harriet Beecher Stowe (1811-1896)

OVERVIEW



Writer Born in Litchfield, Connecticut, to a famous Calvinist preacher and abolitionist, Lyman Beecher, Harriet Beecher was the sixth of eleven children. Her mother would die only five years later, leaving the young girl to be raised by her father's second wife. She received an education at the Hartford Female Seminary (which was, at the time, run by her older sister, Catharine), where she focused on the classics, mathematics, and languages. At the age of 21, she fell headfirst into writing clubs and abolition organizing. From 1832 until she married in 1836, Harriet Beecher Stowe ran the abolitionist circuit, meeting freedmen and free Black northerners, writing for debates, and attending meetings of various writing clubs. When Congress passed the Fugitive Slave Act of 1850, Beecher Stowe felt she had to act. Inspired by a religious vision, she began to compose *Uncle Tom's Cabin*, which would first release in a serialized format in 1851. This novel pushed her into the international spotlight as sales across the Northern US and Britain took off. She would spend most of the rest of her professional life helping to found and edit long-running magazines such as *The Atlantic Monthly* (still in publication to this day as *The Atlantic*) and *Hearth and Home* magazine. She began to experience mental degradation in her final years, likely suffering from some form of dementia. Mark Twain was her neighbor in her later years, and he wrote about her and her dementia in his autobiography, calling her friendly and playful if somewhat strange. Harriet Beecher Stowe died only seventeen days after her eighty-fifth birthday and rests alongside her husband and son in the cemetery at Phillips Academy in Andover, Massachusetts.



Background Beecher Stowe's penultimate novel, *Oldtown Folks,* takes place in a fictional rural Massachusetts town in the years after the American Revolution. It was inspired by Natick, Massachusetts, the place where her husband Calvin Ellis Stowe was born. Beecher Stowe focuses on the locals of the town and their daily life, diving deep into social customs and religious norms of the time to analyze how they were changing in response to industrialization and politics. Relying on her own upbringing in a deeply Calvinist small town and memories borrowed from her husband's childhood as well as folklore and other local beliefs helps to create a surprisingly vivid and realistic vision of rural life in the Northeast after the Revolutionary War. These unvarnished ideals and stories act as a response to the post-Civil War idealizations of post-revolutionary agrarian life, especially in the South. The initial run was 10,000 copies and quickly sold out. Scans of the original two-volume novel are available on the Internet Archive. Because of Beecher Stowe's focus on class distinctions, gender norms, and culture changing over decades, *Oldtown Folks* offers valuable insights for historians, especially those studying Protestant and Calvinist communities in the Northeastern United States. While this novel doesn't enjoy the same widespread recognition as Beecher Stowe's earliest novel, *Uncle Tom's Cabin*, *Oldtown Folks* is a competently written story bursting with intriguing glimpses into the cultural, social, and theological shifts of the time period between the Revolution and the Civil War.

MAIN CHARACTERS

Horace Holyoke -The narrator, a poor young man left fatherless by the Revolution
Harry Percival – Horace's closest friend
Eglantine "Tina" Percival – Harry's sister
Ellery Davenport – An intelligent young man, Jonathan Edward's grandson and husband of Tina

Ester Avery – A close friend of Horace and the others, Harry's wife
Mr. Lothrop – Oldtown's minister
Mrs. Lothrop – Mr. Lothrop's wife, Ellery's cousin
Deacon Badger – Harry's grandfather, a farmer and miller, Horace's surrogate father
Mrs. Badger – Horace's grandmother, a strict Calvinist
Susy Badger Holyoke – Horace's mother's
Miss Mehitable Rossiter – The daughter of the town's former minister, Tina's adoptive mother
Emily Rossiter – Mehitable's half-sister
Sir Harry Percival – Harry and Tina's deadbeat father
Caleb "Old Crab" Smith – A miserly old landowner
Miss Asphyxia Smith – Caleb's sister's
Bill Holyoke – Horace's older brother
Jacob Badger – Horace's uncle, Mr. and Mrs. Badger's son
Sam Lawson – The lazy village handyman
Keziah Badger – The Badger's unmarried daugher
Lois Badger – Keziah's sister, a spinster
Jonathan Rossiter – Master of the academy in Cloudland, Miss Mehitable's half-brother
Mr. Avery – Cloudland's minister, Esther's father

SYNOPSIS

The story begins with Horace Holyoke recounting his childhood in a rural Puritan village called Oldtown round about 1790. He vividly remembers the traditional New England ways while reminiscing about the way men and women acted and events they gathered for. As he retells his childhood, he mentions some figures from around the town and stories, advice, and sermons they gave that stuck with him. The first conflict in the story arises when Sir Harry Percival, an English baronet, flees to England and abandons his children's family. The children, Harry and Tina, were orphaned in the town over and made their way to Oldtown on their own after being placed in oppressive homes. The Badgers happily take them in, but social conflicts arise when English refinement clashes with Calvinist norms. Horace is fast friends with Harry and Tina, however, even though Tina often butts heads with her guardians.

In the second volume, Horace begins to discuss his education at Cloudland Academy. It's here he encounters a more secular environment, and he learns more about classical studies and etiquette than he does religious subjects. After his time at Cloudland, Horace and Harry go to Harvard. Horace finds the discussions on theology in the classroom revealing of upper-class revealing in regard to their moral laxity and superficial engagement with scripture. As the children age, they become romantically entangled. The first to be married is Tina to Ellery Davenport, who is very charismatic but little else. They relocate to England to tend to his business affairs. Harry soon follows with his own wife, Esther, to take over his father's estate. Horace feels without friends because of this. Ellery's declining mental and financial states result in him and Tina returning to the United States. When he is killed in a duel, Tina proposes Horace. For their honeymoon, they return to visit Oldtown and their friends and family there.

PLOT

Oldtown and The Minister – With a short plea for the reader's favor and forgiveness, the story begins. Speaking in first person, our narrator, Horace Holyoke, does not introduce himself, instead plunging headlong into his childhood memories in Oldtown, Massachusetts. He remembers the hills and streams, the tranquil river, the livestock and farm work. He recalls the local church, the sermons and activities there, drinking a cup of warm "flip" at the local taphouse in winter, and the clamor of the men arguing at the general store. He details the early history of the town as a missionary town to the natives who already lived there, using artful language to avoid the brutal reality of their displacement. Then Horace tells us of the reverend, Mr. Lothrop, and his tendency to forsake Calvinist ideals for that of the Arminian school. Horace recalls when he was sent to fetch the reverend as his father was dying, remembering how their servant tried to turn him away at first, then how his wife attempted to send him away with a prayer book before the pious reverend heard what was going on and accompanied Horace home to pray for the dying man.

My Father – Horace begins this chapter by reminding the reader that those rich in coin and material things are often the poorest of the soul. He then moves on to describing his father, who he didn't know very well when he died. He was educated and thrifty, working as a teacher at the academy. Horace's father fell in love with a former student and married her which Horace describes as a "false step." His mother is described as having been "one of those bright, fair, delicate New England girls who remind us the wood anemone, or the fragile wind-flower." Stepping into the past, Horace recalls his father's prolonged illness following being wounded in the Revolutionary War, remembering the flush of his cheeks as he sat in his sickbed. While he didn't get much of a chance to learn about his father, Horace admires him as a scholar and a thinker. In his last days, Horace's father said he was mistaken to marry Horace's mother and that he robbed her of her youth before asking her to burn all his papers upon his death. Horace remembers his father telling him that he doesn't know where he's going when he dies and that, "It ought to be enough for me that God does know."

My Grandmother – Young Horace is sent to fetch his grandparents, the Badgers. Mr. Badger is a well-to-do farmer and miller, and Mrs. Badger is the typical farmer's wife, though very outspoken and stringent about her religious beliefs. Horace stops narrating this story for a moment to discuss his grandfather's friendliness to the natives still living in the scant remaining woodlands and how their lack of thrift and pursuit of happiness reminded him of the behavior of farm dogs, calling them "simple, silly, jolly… rovers." This description backs up the need for his grandmother's rigid behavior. In a series of remembrances and conversations, we see Mrs. Badger's rigid Calvinist beliefs in action. These memories flow into his father's last moments.

The Village Do-nothing – The day after his father's death, the village do-nothing Sam Lawson tries to cheer up Horace with the gift of a jackknife. Horace remembers his father's corpse lying in the bed as the family mourned and how the tomb-like qualities of this practice bled into everyday life. Unable to handle this change, young Horace ran out into the nearby orchard to get away from everyone. He begins describing Sam as a friend to all the townsfolk, and while he was lazy, he was always happy to help a boy fix his pocket knife or skate or just gossip. It was Sam who taught Horace to fish. We dive into a conversation about the coming millennium (1800) between Sam and Horace's aunt Lois. Sam says that Jesus' return at the turn of the century is his real reason for avoiding work: why build and preserve something that won't matter in just a few years. As a town gossip, Sam knows everything about everyone. Horace tells us of some humorous moments involving Sam and his loose lips.

The Old Meeting House – This chapter is much longer than the past four, filled with remembrances of aunts and uncles and Calvinism. Horace's family flocked to his home after his father's death, staying long after the funeral to tend to the family in mourning. Their Calvinist beliefs make them hard but helpful, intense but kind, and almost always outspoken. Aunt Lois is a frequent focus, but we also meet Aunt Keziah at this point. Uncle Bill is mentioned in the way he leans on Aunt Lois for money while he's attending college and the way she handles the stress of running the household and juggling odd sewing jobs. During this time, Horace was frightened by church visits, remembering his father's funeral. Lois solves this by telling him to keep his mouth shut so as not to worry his mother. Horace describes the church and its members, including a few native and Black folks from around town. Each adds down-home character to the town in their own way. Social position, Horace notes, was "blurred by thorough handling of democracy" cutting through the old aristocratic "aroma and atmosphere." He introduces the few remaining aristocrats who attended his childhood church, including Miss Mehitable, the sheriff Squire Jones, and Major Broad, the richest landowner in the area. Horace pridefully introduces his grandfather, unofficially called Deacon Badger for his piety. The chapter ends with a remembered church service, including hymns and the actions of the adults around Horace.

Fire-light Tales in my Grandmother's Kitchen – In this chapter, we get to know Horace's grandparents, Mr. and Mrs. Badger, and his aunt and uncle, Bill and Lois. He recalls the charming kitchen his grandparents served meals in, and their paid Black servant, Caesar, would carve toys for the kids or make goofy faces to entertain them. He describes Uncle Bill as a witless buffoon and his Aunt Lois the exact opposite. In a long conversation between his family members at one teatime, we see Lois working hard to start a fire in the parlor and Bill telling her to come sit with their parents by the kitchen fire instead. Talk turns to Miss Mehitable, Horace interrupting the dialogue to speak at length about her dress, quirks,

and reading habits. The dialogue takes over again as Miss Mehitable and the major join the Badgers. They discuss the coming church service, theology, and education. Eventually, Horace stops paying attention to help his grandmother cook, and he speaks about her tasty recipes. Dinner conversation turns to the affairs of the affluent, the badgers often interjecting with religious sentiments when learning about the love interests and friendships of the local wealthy.

Old Crab Smith – A group of travelers staggers toward the hilltop town of Needmore. These are the Percivals, Harry and Tina, with their sickly mother. Harry runs to fetch his ailing mother some water from a brook, and they continue on. The house at the crest of the hill is owned by one Caleb Smith, often called "Old Crab" by the locals for his miserly attitudes. At the back porch of the house, the traveling family meets Old Crab's wife who is his opposite in most ways, and invites them to rest on the porch with her. The family talks of their journey to Boston, a fool's errand on foot. Through a long stretch of exposition, we learn that Tina and Harry's father was a minor English nobleman who abandoned them at the first chance he could. This betrayal affected his wife so much she began wasting away, leading to the illness we see today. Mrs. Smith invites them in so their mother can rest. Before she goes to sleep, Harry's mother makes him promise to take care of Tina and keep his faith in God.

Miss Asphyxia – The next morning, the inhabitants of the Smith house awake to find Mrs. Percival dead in bed. Old Crab thinks of "carting the 'hull lot ever to the poor-house," but his wife quickly changes his mind. They use what little money the dead woman had to pay for a funeral, then the town's attention turns to what will be done with the children. The elegant Miss Asphyxia is smitten with little Tina, but Tina doesn't like how she treats her from the beat. She wants to stay with Harry, but it won't be allowed. He is assigned to stay with the Smiths as Tina is dragged away to Miss Asphyxia's home where she learns to scrub the floors—among many other chores—and etiquette. As the chapter moves on, we see Miss Asphyxia is an impatient and uncaring mistress.

Harry's First Day's Work – Tina's mistreatment by Miss Asphyxia continues, and Harry's by Old Crab Smith begins. Through Old Crab's point of view, we learn about the children's daily lives, that he found Harry sensitive and Tina strong. From first light on the morning after his mother's funeral, Harry was put to work in the fields. While sensitive, Harry put on a brave face and obeyed Old Crab's every order no matter how harsh. Mrs. Smith takes him aside before dinner one night, telling him as he washes his "abraded finger-ends" that he will not be allowed to visit his sister. He begs with her to try and change her husband's mind about this decision, but she refuses, and he goes to bed with a prayer to find his way back to Tina.

Miss Asphyxia's System - Tina goes through a similar struggle at Miss Asphyxia's home. Unlike Harry, however, Tina doesn't keep her emotions quiet: she screams and cries about being separated from her beloved brother. Miss Asphyxia complains about this to her servant, who points out that the girl is likely just lonesome, comparing her sobbing to that of puppies and kittens first separated from their littermates, before suggesting that Tina might be allowed to see her brother every month or so. "I'd jest as soon have the great red dragon in the Revelations a comin' down on my house as a boy!" Miss Asphyxia shouts back. The narrator goes on to say Miss Asphyxia was simply raising Tina as others in the town raised their own children. One day, Tina drops a saucer and lies to Miss Asphyxia, getting her locked in the basement. There, Tina swears to get revenge one day, saying she hates Miss Asphyxia. Later that year, the house servant gives Tina a gift of dried milkweed pods, and Miss Asphyxia—upon discovering them—forces Tina to throw them into the fire. At a church meeting sometime later, Tina and Harry run into one another and hatch a quick plan to escape, though they are just as quickly separated by their guardians.

The Crisis – The longer Tina stays with Miss Asphyxia, the more her hatred for her guardian grows. Her bitterness stretched into religion, so deep was the girl's hate for Miss Asphyxia. In private, she would doubt the existence of God: "After all, how does she know? She never saw him." One day while playing with her makeshift toys—a small collection of interesting rocks, pretty glass, and pieces of broken china—Tina is discovered by Miss Asphyxia, who forces her to throw the objects beyond the fence around the property before promising to beat her for her behavior. Being whipped that evening, Tina lies sobbing in her bed. Miss Asphyxia's kindly servant sneaks her a doughnut in sympathy. Tina is so touched, she doesn't eat the treat but falls asleep holding it like a stuffed animal.

The Lion's Mouth Shut – At Old Crab's property, the old miser looks for Harry, unaware that Miss Asphyxia's servant and his wife had been plotting a meeting between the siblings. Mrs. Smith tries to calm her husband, but a storm roils inside him. They wait for a long time for him to return, and Old Crab meets him on the porch and confronts him. "Let me alone," Harry says when Old Crab grabs him by the ear and starts to drag him inside. In response, Old Crab grabs a cart-whip and threatens the boy. Harry stands unmoved, telling his guardian that God is watching and Old Crab knows his actions are unjust. Frightened by this display, Old Crab flees to town for a drink. Harry tells Mrs. Smith he must flee with Tina, and she lets him go with a basket of bread. On his way to Miss Asphyxia's, he runs into the Smiths' farmhands on the road, and they wish the boy luck on his quest. Harry finds Tina crying in her bed and steals her away. Old Crab, stumbling home drunk, sees the spirit of Tina and Harry's mother.

The Empty Bird's-Nest – Miss Asphyxia rises early in the morning, commenting that it's a good day to slaughter the hog before calling for her servant. She tells him to wake Tina, and he goes to do as ordered, but he knows that Harry took her the night before. He had even instructed him on which road to take and who to seek out in the next town over: Deacon Badger. Pretending that he can't rouse her, the servant returns to Miss Asphyxia. She barges into the empty room and curses Harry, who she guesses must be responsible. In response, she begins preparing a big breakfast to pay for the services of a local Black man who claims to be an oracle.

The Day in Fairy-Land – As they walk, Tina compares herself and her brother to Hansel and Gretel: "Miss Asphyxia is the old witch. I wish we could have burnt her up in her old oven before we came away!" Harry tells her she shouldn't say such things. Even though they're cold and scared, they celebrate their freedom and the chance to be together again. Tina rushes, anxious to get as far away from Asphyxia and Needmore as possible, but Harry tells her to slow down. They need endurance as much as they need speed. They hide from a passing wagon before continuing. Deep in the woods, they find some wild grapes and help themselves. Tina takes a moment to play in a stream. After, they follow the water as it feeds into a river, and they follow the river onto the aster-filled prairie. They shelter that night with a kindly native woman who gifts them a basket filled with food.

The Old Manor-House – While the last day ended well, the next morning begins with a scare as the woman's irate husband returns home and beats the woman. This day is colder too, and it affects Tina's mood. The little girl slows. Thankfully, they happen upon a large house soon thereafter. No one answers the door. Desperate, Harry breaks in to the old kitchen and lights a fire. Tina wants to claim the house for them, but Harry warns against this. Exploring the house, they find a portrait of a woman and contemplate on it for a while, remembering their mother. They assess the rest of the house, finding a bed to sleep in as the narrator muses about the petty British nobles who left houses like this across the Northeast when they fled back to England. Later, Harry collects some apples and pears from an abandoned orchard behind the house, and the children lie down by the fire to sleep for the night.

Sam Lawson's Discoveries – The narrative returns to Oldtown, where Horace sits with his grandparents and their servant in the kitchen. Mrs. Badger laments the coming slaughter of a calf, born to continue its mother's milk production, but Mr. Badger quips back with some of her favorite Calvinist thought: "that was foreordained and freely predetermined." Sam Lawson interrupts the conversation with his sudden appearance, and he regales them with news from the nearby town of Needmore that the wards of Old Crab and Miss Asphyxia have gone missing. A font of gossip, he tells them what he heard from Old Crab's servant, that the two guardians were treating their wards like slaves and keeping the siblings apart. The occupants of the Badger kitchen discuss putting together a search party in the morning when Sam mentions someone saw smoke coming from the chimney of the old Dench manor in the woods. Horace says he wants to go search the house himself, and—in spite of his aunt's frustration about the implications of taking in yet more wards—his grandmother promises to go with him in the morning.

The Visit to the Haunted House – Horace talks about his older brother, Bill, and how he had been forced to live the life of a farm worker after their father's death. Horace had the luck of being taught to read at an early age and muses about his love of ghost stories. His love of ghost stories led to a belief in spirits and even some mystical powers, and he would discuss these with his mother. He then recalls how his aunt had swore he would become a great liar if his mother didn't become more strict in her mothering.

After a lament for his lost mother, we return to the present, where the cart is being readied for a trip to the Dench manor. The Badgers argue about the time before boarding the newly repaired cart, but they're stopped before they can roll away from the farm, as one of Horace's uncles asks them to run into town for a few things while they're out. Horace asks the adults questions about the Dench manor and its history as they ride through the woods. As they approach the property, Horace has the vision of a woman beckoning them on the path before directing the cart up the path where she stands. True to the gossip, smoke rises from the chimney, and inside they find Harry and Tina.

Tina's Adoption – Back at the Badger home, Miss Mehitable Rossiter sits in the kitchen, discussing what is to be done with the children. Aunt Lois proposes they give Tina and Harry back to their respectable neighbors, but Mrs. Badger has already taken a motherly liking to the new children. In another room, Tina tells the story of their journey to Oldtown while Harry and Horace silently bond in the corner. Miss Mehitable enters the room and introduces herself to Tina, who takes an immediate liking to her. They bond quickly, and Miss Mehitable asks Tina if she'd like to live with her. After making sure Harry can visit and she won't be forced to work her fingers to the bone, Tina agrees excitedly. Aunt Lois reminds Miss Mehitable that a child isn't a plaything; it takes responsibility, and Miss Mehitable responds with a quip about determinism, saying her taking Tina is the girl's destiny. Horace is happy to learn he will always be welcome to visit his sister. With that, Miss Mehitable takes Tina home and introduces her to the property and her servant before putting her to bed.

Miss Mehitable's Letter – As promised in the last sentence of the previous chapter, we are given a long bit of exposition in the form of two letters. The first is from Miss Mehitable to her brother, sending him news of the adoption. She asks for his advice and shares some gossip as well. The second letter is her brother's response. He says he's not sensitive enough to be of much help to her when it comes to dealing with the girl's moods and emotions, but he does have educational advice: "But, whatever you do, don't teach her *French*." He goes into a long discussion of the errors of "ultra-Calvinism" and his recent introduction to "New Divinity." He doesn't know what to think, but he does agree with the idea that traditional Calvinist thought is too harsh. He asks her advice on theology in the final paragraphs of his letter. The narrator interjects here to explain some of the history and theology of New England and connects this to Miss Mehitable adopting Tina.

Miss Asphyxia Goes in Pursuit – A week after their disappearance, Miss Asphyxia finally learns of Tina and Harry's fate. Her servant tells her over dinner, and she's more interested in defending her appearance as a gentlewoman and good hostess. After a moment's thought, she decides to go to Oldtown and collect her ward: Harry can stay, as Old Crab doesn't want him. A day or two later, she arrives in Oldtown. In Mrs. Badger's kitchen, Miss Asphyxia challenges Mrs. Badger to explain how anyone could do better for Tina than her. Mrs. Badger lets her have it, but she couches her insults in a complement: "IF Divine grace could have broken in upon you, and give you a heart to love the child, you might have brought her up, 'cause you are a smart woman, and an honest one." Eventually, after spending some time with Miss Mehitable, Miss Asphyxia gives up, asking only for the return of Tina's clothes, miser that she is. Tina responds by sprinting home and collecting the outfit. After Miss Asphyxia leaves, Tina expresses relief she gets to stay in Oldtown. The women then argue about theology and child rearing.

What is to be Done with the Boy? – The narrator interjects a short comment on the helplessness of children: they are utterly beholden to the whims and fortunes of their guardians. Horace highlights this through a memory from just after his father died when the family argued about his childish desire to be a shoemaker. He then dives into the first few days Harry spent with his family, and the two bond deeply. The adults speak of their futures: both boys will have to be educated soon. "And who's going to pay for it?" quips Aunt Lois. "One way or the other," coos Mrs. Smith. The boys are sent to bed, where they chat before snuffing the candle. Horace is astounded by Harry's great faith in God. The narrator goes on to describe his great young love for Harry and his better traits, telling another story about the boy's piety and faith.

Daily Living in Oldtown – After a quick aside about the intertwined nature of human lives, the narrator begins telling us about the average day in the life of the Badger household after Harry's adoption. Aunt

Lois would wake them every morning, and Horace would wake first, describing his slumber as “cat-like” while Harry always had trouble coming around, often allowing Horace to admire the frost that collected on their blankets on particularly cold nights. They would dress quickly before taking their chilly morning “ablutions” and rushing out to do chores with the household servant. Their life revolves around food, work, and family, and though they are not rich, their life is filled with joy. Tina was doing much better under Miss Mehitable, who was nowhere near as strict and much more sensitive than Miss Asphyxia. In fact, the child seemed to rule the household with her charm. She would avoid chores and bedtime with ease, but Miss Mehitable’s inability to control her leads to the girl going to school before the boys.

We Take a Step up in the World – Horace speaks of a great winter storm “when the cider would freeze in the cellar, and the brad in the milk-room would be like blocks of ice.” The following April, Sam Lawson was the first to notice spring on the way, telling Horace and Harry one morning that he’d heard the bluebird sing. He doesn’t get long to jaw before the woman who hired him to chop wood begins urging him to get on with the labor. The boys head into town, where they meet with Lady Lothrop at the church. After the typical niceties, she gives them a lesson on Jesus’ crucifixion, explaining the meanings behind Good Friday and Easter Sunday before inviting all the children to visit Boston on Easter Sunday. Only Aunt Lois is excited to hear about the invitation. The boys are confused by Mrs. Badger musing about a "Whore of Rome,” but they don’t get a straight answer about who she is. The adults begin bickering about religion and politics, but they’re soon distracted by Sam Lawson wandering in. After a long aside about New England’s theological thought, we see Tina being instructed by Miss Mehitable about how to behave on the way to Boston. She is relieved to see her lessons sinking in when Tina impresses Lady Lothrop with her piety.

We Behold Grandeur – It is dusk before the Badgers reach Boston. Lady Lothrop has taken a liking to Tina, greeting the newcomers with the girl on her knee. The boys make a good impression with their bowing and etiquette as well. The young ones are astonished by the remnants of British aristocratic fashion and courtesy among these Tory families, finding their practices strangely solemn and reverential. This idea is swept aside when one guest, Miss Deborah, begins sharing baseless stereotypes about “protestant men” while complaining about the boys going to the college, such as Ellery Davenport, who comes from a long line of ministers yet behaves atheistically. The gossip goes on for a while until his father is announced by the butler. The aristocrats jab at each other about their families having been on different sides of the revolution, but it all seems in good fun. It’s at this dinner that Tina first meets Ellery Davenport and is struck by his charm, an exchange that seems outright predatory in our modern culture. At a prayer meeting that night, an argument breaks out about which church should be prayed to: the English or American one. Ellery quips that the King needs the most prayers of all, as with more “heavenly gifts,” he may have kept his colonies.

Easter Sunday – Easter morning comes, and Horace is chosen to read some Anglican scripture before the congregation. Ellery and some of the other Bostonians gossip about politics and Catholics instead of respecting the service. Again Ellery tries to cozy up to young Tina, who prefers to stay with her brother. She does look at him with great curiosity as the service continues. Horace is surprised to see that Harry is familiar with the prayers and habits of the Anglicans, though they both take a nap through the sermon. After the service, Ellery argues with Miss Deborah about faith, logic, and politics. Religious instruction with Miss Deborah continues after dinner. She makes a comment to Ellery when she realizes what’s going on between him and Tina, asking him not to interrupt her lessons. Afterward, she speaks to him about his future and profession, encouraging him to seek out a position as a minister like his father. He responds in an atheistic tirade that causes a stir. The children are put to bed, but the arguing continues with Horace listening in.

What “Our Folks” Said at Oldtown – The children returned to Oldtown, and everyone wants to know what happened, who they met, and what they learned. The deeply Calvinist folk of the town are confused by the high-living of the Tory Bostonians and their religious practices. Sam is particularly tickled by the idea of reading from a prayer book, poking fun at the “‘Piscopals.” In his grandparents' house, Horace quizzes them about some of the things he learned, his grandmother particularly frustrated with the Episcopalian methods Lady Lothrop and Miss Deborah taught them. Through the experience in Boston, the boys are put at the top of Dr. Lothrop’s list of those needing an education, and he personally tutors

them on Sundays from then on. Horace then tells us of his trips into “fairy-land” continuing and his visions coming back, though he dared not tell anyone else about them. Lessons in Latin blur into Sunday school lessons about the book of Esther. One day, the children discover a portrait of a young woman hidden in Miss Mehitable’s closet and realize it’s the same woman they saw at the Dench manor. Miss Mehitable’s servant tells them the woman was Miss Mehitable’s sister who disappeared and asks them never to bring her or the painting up in front of her mistress.

How we Kept Thanksgiving at Oldtown – The narrator muses for a while about the puritan ideal of virtuosity through sobriety, meaning forsaking public amusement. One would think these ideals run against feasting and celebration, but people will always try to have fun, even the most austere. He talks about cider-making and collecting the harvest, the way the townsfolk would prepare new dress clothes, and the excitement that rippled through the house. The children are tasked with chopping and grinding the spices for the seasonal deserts, and Horace talks about an unusual buzz in the church services before Thanksgiving. Preparations begin the Monday before, starting with pie baking. Horace recalls how the less fortunate would hang around his grandmother’s kitchen where there was always a scrap or a dram of cider freely given. Of course, Sam comes sniffing around with his usual gossip and laziness. The week’s preparation culminates in the cooking of several chickens and turkeys. Hymns and songs are on everyone’s lips as the entire town, it seems, comes together to celebrate at the Badger farm. Dancing among the younger folk breaks out, causing Mrs. Badger to join in as much to embarrass and challenge the Lothrops and their Anglican sensibilites.

The Raid on Oldtown – One of the Black farmhands bursts into the kitchen one day with terrible news. It takes him a while for him to calm down enough to communicate clearly, but he reports that his neighbor’s children were stolen by slavers and taken South. Horace’s grandfather is quick with a plan, saying they should be able to intercept and confront the kidnappers before they make it to the New York state line. Sam agrees to help as well. They head into the village to find more help, and they find it in spades. Quickly, a posse is formed and armed. Some of the folks from Oldtown relive their Revolution days, forming up a corps to march on the border. The narrator takes a long moment to speak on New England’s religious history, of Governor Winthrop, Thomas Dudley, and Cotton Mather. Suddenly, we’re given a quick rundown of Ellery Davenport’s dualities and his fast friendship formed with Miss Mehitable.

My Grandmother’s Blue Book – The narrator asks those who wish to drift through life to skip this next chapter. He then continues on about the prominent post-Revolutionary Protestant belief that the end times would be coming at the turn of the century, something Horace’s grandmother espoused. We’re told about her beliefs, behaviors, and reading habits, the narrator using this as a way to touch on the writings of Rev. Dr. Bellamy of Connecticut. A long musing on humanity and divinity ensues. A similar theological conflict plays out in the Badger family, who argues for a finite view of sin, as no man is infinite. The narrator talks about how the Enlightenment and Revolution had caused schisms in Calvinist belief before reviewing some thinkers and ideals from many examples. This all ends with a short history of Miss Mehitable’s history and how she was raised much like Tina was under a guardian who was not her mother. The chapter ends with more musings on theology and philosophy, now from the French school.

We Begin to be Grown-up People – The narrator muses on the magic of childhood of a moment before talking about what he considers his first moment of lost innocence: experimenting with cursing. He compares himself to Harry, whose “English stock” gives him a more reserved nature with the ability to “keep his own soul as a castle.” The narrator then states that they are now aged eighteen, and Harry is struggling with his family history. Ellery Davenport had found some papers his father left behind as well as some money parceled out to his and Tina’s guardians. Harry feels disinherited and abandoned, and Tina mimics her brother’s mood. The narrative shifts to focus on Tina, who is fifteen and blossoming into quite the young woman. Miss Mehitable still struggles to raise the girl in a strict Calvinist way, and she visits Miss Deborah in Boston frequently. In one instance, Tina rebels against schooling when her teacher decides it is his right to cozy up to the girl as one would a lover. Upon seeking Lady Lothrop’s advice, Tina is home schooled from then on, leaning on the experience of Miss Mehitable’s cousin, though Tina soon has the young man wrapped around her finger. This prompts a discussion about marriage in Tina’s future, causing Miss Mehitable to write yet another letter to her brother begging for his advice.

What Shall We Do With Tina? – The first page or so of this chapter includes the letter Miss Mehitable writes to her brother about Tina's blossoming womanhood and her brother's response, in which he asks her to see Tina and the boys to his home, where they can be instructed on how to properly enter adulthood. When Tina tells Horace and her brother of the issues she's having with men, it makes them feel older and venerable. The narrator muses about the difference between men and women for a moment, wondering how education for girls in particular will change in the coming decades. In her instructions to Tina and keeping her brother's letter in mind, Miss Mehitable tells the Badgers about the offer to educate the boys in Cloudland. Sam Lawson and the others bemoan the loss of Tina and the others, afraid Oldtown will lose its brightest spots to Cloudland and beyond. Miss Mehitable's servant spends far too long preparing a dress for the girl to take with her to Cloudland. Tina thinks it is too much, but the servant insists on adorning the dress richly. The two talk about God and faith for a moment, Tina saying she's come to know God. Horace and Harry prepare to leave as well, stowing their books and clothes in their trunks. Nerves keep Horace awake the night before they leave, and he has a vision of his father.

The Journey to Cloudland – Aunt Lois wakes the boys up even earlier than usual. The narrator muses about the difficulty of overland travel in the early days of America and introduces Uncle Jacob, who will take the boys to Cloudland and provide them with food and board during their stay. The trip to Cloudland takes a couple of days, and the narrator takes a chance to praise the natural beauty of New England. While the young men sleep at a friendly household along the way, Uncle Jacob stays awake, worried about raiders or other malcontents attacking in the night. The next night, they find themselves in Cloudland where they meet Mr. Jonathan Rossiter, Miss Mehitable's brother. Here Horace, Harry, and Tina also first meet Ester. The chapter ends with an affectionate letter from Tina to Miss Mehitable.

School-Life in Cloudland – With great nostalgia, the narrator goes about describing the pastoral existence he lived as a student in Cloudland. He notes that both boys and girls went to the same schools, something unique to Massachusetts at the time. His teachers and especially his principal, Miss Titcomb, are much like the Boston Tories they know in manners, though not in dress and religious belief. Here, Horace and Harry receive a liberal education while Tina learns manners, morals, and household skills. Horace speaks about how the teachers in Massachusetts had already mostly foregone corporal punishment in schools. It's clear Horace admired Mr. Rossiter: many stories, sayings, and lessons are delivered with a sort of reverence he's only used when talking about his grandmother's or Harry's faith before. Tina struggles to adapt to the austere fashions of Cloudland, and the narrator tells us several tales of teenage embarrassment. In the last part of the chapter, Esther, Harry, and Horace bond as they read and analyze *Prometheus Bound* for class.

Our Minister in Cloudland – We're introduced to Cloudland's minister, Mr. Avery. The narrator describes his sermons as intellectual and "manly." While still a Calvinist of Mrs. Smith's tradition, he was also much more interested in literature and kindness than simple self-sacrifice and dogmatic tradition. Horace finds his ideals contradictory, though he respects his fervor and desire to save souls. In an exchange between Mr. Avery and Mr. Rossiter, we see what Horace believes to be the core American freedoms in practice, the ability to disagree with one's minister. The idea of free agency Mr. Avery preaches comes less from the Bible or Calvinist thought and more from American idealism. It's clear Horace admired Mr. Avery greatly. The chapter ends with an examination of Harry and Esther's blossoming relationship and Horace discussing his love of learning varied theology.

The Revival of Religion – The narrator begins with a short refresher on the history of religious enthusiasm in New England. He then goes on to describe the beginnings of a proper revival, the asceticism that comes beforehand. During one such period, Mr. Avery has an argument with Harry about his lifelong faith in God. The preacher's disrespect for his natural lack of doubt for God makes Harry so angry that veins bulge on his forehead, but he contains himself, telling Mr. Avery of his mother's death and final words to him. "You are blessed," Mr. Avery says as an apology. "I thank God with all my heart for you." Around the same time, Esther begins to come into religion for the first time. She has always gone to church, but it never meant much to her before. Harry coming into her life changes her, and she realizes his love is God's love made manifest. During the revival, they become incredibly close.

After the Revival – After a short rebuttal for those who mock the idea of revival in the narrator's time, we return to the narrative, watching Tina's love life develop as boys and young men begin to fight over her. The narrator gives Tina much sympathy, telling the reader not to think of her as a flirt, simply young and ignorant of the ways of women and men. After this, we learn that Harry has chosen to become a clergyman studying under Mr. Avery and plans to marry Esther. For a moment, Horace feels like his life is coming to an end, that he is being robbed of his only friend. The narrator then complains about the continued advances of Ellery Davenport toward Tina. In some conversation, Tina makes it clear she is interested in Ellery.

The Minister's Wood-Spell – The narrative jumps forward a year to tell us of the "Wood-spell." In a display of community care, the church calls for each family to provide wood for splitting into firewood for the church and pastor's family. The folk of Cloudland work diligently both splitting wood and preparing for a celebration. During this time, Mr. Avery gives a sermon on agriculture that Horace appreciates, though he didn't share the sentiment at the time. During the celebration, men show off their strength by splitting the hardest of oaks while others gossip, and everyone eats cinnamon-spiced treats. Harry and Esther again make clear their plans to marry, and Tina says she'll live with them as a spinster when Ellery Davenport appears.

Ellery Davenport – Giggling, Tina runs to her room as the ever-boisterous Ellery Davenport greets Harry and Horace. The narrator makes his distaste known through a subtle hope that Esther wouldn't like Ellery. It's also clear that Ellery has only come for Tina. He calls on her, going through a suitor's song and dance. The men of Cloudland are put off by Ellery's typical opposing politics, and they argue about the revolution in France. Again, the narrator wishes he could have proven Ellery was an "evil man," but he had nothing but a gut feeling. One day, Ellery speaks with Harry about returning to England. Harry says he'll stay in America. Those nearby discuss the French Revolution some more.

Last Days in Cloudland – The last days Horace spent at Cloudland are gold-tinted with nostalgia. Tina and Harry had both given themselves to painting. Together, they all make friends and go to plays. Horace finds himself loving the stage. In another performance, a farce they call "Our Folks," Harry, Tina, and Horace adopt the personas of several Black servants from their town to the amusement of the audience. After this, we learn in a drawn-out bit of dialogue that Mr. Rossiter had made an advance toward Tina that she rebuked, and with that, Tina, her brother, and Horace leave town. Mr. Avery leaves them with advice for their coming lives, warning them against anger and frustration, the tools of the Devil.

We Enter College – Harry and Horace enter Cambridge and are even roommates. Tina visited early on before moving to live with their Bostonian friends, as in the custom of the time, her education was finished. Tina often writes letters and even makes visits to Oldtown. It comes up in discussion one day that Horace loves Tina, but he feels unable to compete with Ellery Davenport. Harry says, "Why, Horace, Ellery Davenport is a good deal older than she is, and a married man too." He is shocked at the idea that such a man would abandon his family to pursue a girl, but Horace says stranger things have happened. The French Revolution is on everyone's mind. We hear from Miss Deborah that she believes Ellery "altogether too fine and wise and enlightened" to be pursuing Tina, but her mother disagrees.

Night Talks – Horace and Harry share a heartfelt conversation about faith and logic while walking home one cold night. Harry speaks of his father, saying he's been thinking more of his family home and heritage across the sea. Suddenly, we see a letter from Harry's father telling his son he'd like to make amends. A note along with the letter informs Harry his father is dead.

Spring Vacation at Oldtown – On a vacation from school, Horace and Harry make the trip to Oldtown. Everyone celebrates, teasing them and saying they'll 'kill the fatted calf' in their honor. Of all the people in town happy to see them, none is more so than Sam, who can't help but sing and dance. In a calmer moment, he tells Horace and Harry about his new skills that he's learned and news about the surrounding area. Several properties have changed hands, and Needmore has had a church scandal Sam talks about at length. Horace reminds Harry not to pay too much mind to Sam's gossip. At the end of the chapter, Horace learns that Tina is to marry Ellery Davenport.

What Our Folks Thought About it – The townsfolk of Oldtown have varied reactions to Harry's inheritance of land in England and Tina's impending marriage to Ellery Davenport. The Badgers seem happy for their children, beaming silently by the fire. Miss Mehitable is overjoyed that Tina landed such a prestigious man, but, again, Horace feels jealousy and distaste. Only Aunt Lois shares a similar apprehension for the man, finding his Bostonian charms hollow. Ellery does his best to butter up his in-laws. The discussion turns to Harry and Tina's childhood trek to the town and the reasons they left Needmore in the first place. In his patronizing tone, Ellery invites Sam to join them, interjecting frequently with hollow praise or veiled mockery of the man's political ideas. As usual, the conversation soon turns to religion, and Ellery does his best to avoid the subject, knowing his contrarian games wouldn't make him look anything but foolish in this crowd. Alone with Harry, Horace laments that Tina loves Ellery and not him.

Marriage Preparations – The marriage arrangements begin in earnest as Harry and Horace return to Cambridge, spending a day in Boston along the way. Their Tory friends are all abuzz with excitement for Harry's trip to England and Tina's marriage. As a sort of marriage gift, Ellery purchases and refurbishes Tina and Harry's childhood home. In a conversation with Miss Mehitable, Horace learns that she believes her long-lost sister may be living in Switzerland after a conversation about her with Ellery. Horace, ever doubtful of Ellery, tries to persuade her to proceed with caution: letters can be easily forged. She wants to go to Europe, but Horace speaks of the superiority of New England in every way to Europe. He promises to ask about the letter for her. A bit later, Horace casually presents the unopened letter to Ellery, saying he dropped it earlier. Tina childishly demands to open it. Ellery lets her, saying it's from an old housemaid of his family's who moved to Switzerland. Miss Mehitable is privately embarrassed about her behavior and apologizes to Horace.

Wedding Bells – Tina's wedding comes on June fourteenth. Horace participates as the groomsman, swallowing his jealousy. Their friends and family from Oldtown are in attendance, and Tina is dressed to the nines, everyone saying she looks like royalty. Tina notices Horace's expression and asks him about it. He says, "Five is an uneven number. It leaves [me] out in the cold." She tries to comfort him by sermonizing. The conversation then moves to the wedding, with Tina assuring Horace that she loves and understands Ellery, almost convincing Horace to accept him. The marriage takes place in the old North Church in Boston. During the ceremony, the Badger's strict Calvinist proclivities clash with the Bostonian's more lax and superficial practices. Otherwise, the marriage goes off without a hitch. The folks from Oldtown gossip and argue after the ceremony, some feeling Tina is too young to be married already, but everyone is happy for her.

Wedding After-Talks at Oldtown – Back in Oldtown, the Badgers have plenty to say about the ostentatious nature of the "'Piscopal" wedding. Sam doesn't understand, having found everything beautiful. He and Aunt Lois bicker for a while before news of Harry's move to England comes up. He and Esther are to be married before they leave. After this conversation, Miss Mehitable's servant enters, asking after Mrs. Badger. Something's wrong with Miss Mehitable, and she'll only talk to Mrs. Badger.

Behind the Curtain – In Boston, Ellery feels as though he has captured a rare butterfly by marrying Tina. He shows her off to the city, always near her side and laughing. They prepare for a voyage overseas. Ellery has business engagements to attend to in England. Tina finds Ellery's attention and his proclivity for giving her symbolic jewelry confusing and running counter to her Calvinist upbringing. Late one night, Tina and Ellery go downstairs to meet a woman, and Ellery is shocked to see his angry ex-wife standing there. She berates him for trying to pay her off, shouting, "I would sooner work as a servant!" She leaves with a warning after being berated by Ellery for scaring his new wife: "*The truth* is the best foundation in married life… I do her a favor in telling it." In a short aside, the narrator clears up Ellery's marital history for us, saying the letter from Switzerland was actually about the relocation of his former wife, having been embarrassed by her low breeding.

Tina's Solution – After returning to school, Horace receives a letter from Miss Mehitable, begging for him and Harry to come to Oldtown. There, Sam meets them on the way there with more news, saying Miss Mehitable is very sick and accompanying them back to town. In her home, Miss Mehitable sits with her grim-faced brother. "The thing we feared has come up," she tells Horace. Miss Mehitable holds a series of

letters from Tina detailing Ellery's sham marriage. Suddenly, the front door opens, and Tina comes in, shouting happily to see Miss Mehitable and her friends. Mr. Rossiter, however, shouts that he is disgraced and can never be made pure again. Tina is quick to sermonize right back at him. She reveals that Ellery's letters were not a lie, introducing Miss Mehitable to her long-lost sister. Tina leaves after a short visit. Horace, Harry, and Mr. Rossiter privately wish her the best, though they no longer trust Ellery with her good health after learning how he abandoned his first wife.

What Came of it – Tina and Ellery leave just a week later. Harry and Horace see them off. They wave at the boat until the speck of its sale disappears over the horizon. In Oldtown, Miss Mehitable's condition deteriorates further, and she must move to Boston for her health. Horace house hunts for her and her sister and helps them to move. For several years, Tina seems happy in Europe. Not long after, Mr. Avery finds a new mistress for the parsonage, allowing Esther to leave and marry Harry. Horace speaks at length about feeling completely alone after this point. Tina's luck with Ellery begins to turn, her letters becoming more forlorn.

The Last Chapter – Eight years later, Tina and Ellery return to Boston, where he sets up shop as a lawyer. Not long after, however, he is shot in a duel. Two years later, Tina and Horace marry. Many of the old folks have passed on, but they still remember them while visiting their graves. Some time later, during a vacation, Horace, Harry, Tina, and Esther all meet in Oldtown, where they reminisce about their childhoods. None is more happy to see them than old Sam, who is happy to shower them in gossip from the past decade.

CHARACTER ANALYSIS

Horace Holyoke

Horace serves as our narrator. It's his memories that form the bulk of the story, though he does tell us of events he did not experience. His love for his family and his community show throughout the story.

Curious Horace is quick to ask a question. He wants to know. It doesn't matter if it's literature or theology or politics, Horace wants to learn more. Because of his curiosity, Horace is exposed to many different ideas throughout the narrative, and being able to weigh each idea against each other throughout his life allows him to develop a more resilient faith as opposed to the more dogmatic approaches employed by many other characters. His story is that of predetermination, meaning, as a main character, he actually doesn't do that much. It's predetermined that he will eventually end up happy through the grace of God, and that's exactly what happens. Modern readers often struggle with this aspect, as in our cultural understanding, it is bad writing. In Beecher Stowe's time and context, however, it is a sign of divine grace even if it is a fiction.

Imaginative Horace is prone to visions. Whether this is a true spiritual occurrence or an overactive imagination is left vague, but it happens often. Not just in dreams—though these are frequent—sometimes Horace sees the figures of dead people, such as the woman (perhaps Mrs. Percival), waving him toward the abandoned manor where the children sleep. His imagination never stops, and he frequently regales the reader with tales of his adventures into what he calls "Fairy-Land."

Harry Percival

Harry and his sister Tina are abandoned by their father before their mother dies. After suffering in Needmore, the two escape and make their way to Oldtown. There, Harry moves in with the Badger family and becomes Horace's lifelong friend.

Loyal Harry is incredibly loyal. Even as a young boy, he refuses to betray his duty to his mother and sister. He also keeps his faith in God, trying to do as his mother commanded him in her last words to him and spread that faith to Tina. He and Horace are inseparable, spending the rest of their childhood together. They're never shown to argue, and when they do debate, it's always respectful and informative.

Harry is the ideal best friend in a number of ways, but especially in the traditional Calvinist context, Beecher Stowe is attempting to push through the narrative.

Pious Piety is one of Horace's biggest traits. He is endlessly and endearingly faithful to God as his mother instructed. He claims this is an inborn trait, arguing even with clergy that it's divine grace that leads him instead of a desire to please his mother. When Horace or Tina express doubt, he simply denies that the reason to doubt exists, often bringing his friend and sister closer to God. It's this inborn piety that leads him to train as a clergyman at the end of the novel.

Eglantine "Tina" Percival

Tina is the youngest of the Percival family. She is a young girl when she and Harry are orphaned and abandoned by their father. She grows into an attractive young woman and eventually returns home to marry Horace.

Naïve Tina doesn't grow as much as one would expect through the narrative. She remains very girl-like throughout the decade or so of life we observe. Tina is easily manipulated by Ellery. In spite of her brother's warnings and others' doubt about their age gap and his marital status, she still goes through with the marriage. When it's revealed he abandoned his first wife to marry her, she accepts his apology and explanation, even moving to England with him. She often doesn't make any of her own decisions, relying on older people or her brother to make the correct choice. While the other characters are shown to be clever and resilient because of their upbringing, Tina is an outlier and thematically inconstant with some of the other themes Beecher Stowe wishes to imprint upon her.

Loyal Much like her brother, Tina has a loyal streak. She doesn't want to leave her brother, and their separation is key to them even thinking of running away from Needmore. She relies on her brother for much of her religious belief and faith in others, trusting him first and foremost but also deferring to his trust in others. When she is adopted by Miss Mehitable, she is quickly bonded with the older woman, treating her much like one would their birth mother. She even returns after being married to ensure Miss Mehitable's long-lost sister is reunited when she discovers Ellery's connection to her.

Ellery Davenport

Ellery is a Tory from Boston. His father is a well-known minister, but Ellery is much more of a layabout and swindler, relying on his family's position and his quick tongue to try and get his way with everyone. He has a disposition to be the center of attention.

Contrarian/Complainer Ellery is always quick to disagree. He makes a sort of sport of it, loudly adopting the opposing view of anyone who is getting attention while speaking. This comes from a narcissistic headspace: he desires to be the center of attention, to be perceived as the smartest person in the room. It's something that sets Horace against him early on, as playing devil's advocate at all turns isn't helpful or kind. While others may not notice this or simply overlook it to be polite, Horace becomes fixated on it, always noticing the repeated behavior when put into the same room as Ellery.

Manipulative From his first appearance, Ellery tries to manipulate people. While less so in his social and cultural understanding, we also see him attempt to groom Tina from a young age. She is at most twelve years old when they meet, still small enough to be seated on an old woman's lap, but this doesn't stop the almost middle-aged man from trying to kiss and touch the girl, treating her as a wooing suitor would. He tries to manipulate people into doing what he wants at several points in the story, using Miss Mehitable's long-lost sister as a sort of bargaining chip to get to Tina and telling Tina that he has a sure-fire business plan when actually all he has are debts. Abandoning his first wife to marry a teenage girl, Ellery Davenport is far from the pinnacle of nobility he would have you believe.

Mrs. Badger

Mrs. Badger is the wife of Deacon Badger and the grandmother of Horace. She becomes Harry's surrogate mother as well when Tina is adopted by Miss Mehitable. She is a pious, outspoken, strong, and kind woman.

Traditional At many points, the changes in culture and society are examined by Mrs. Badger. She has a distinct dislike for individualism outside of personal expression. Everyone is entitled to their own beliefs, but she is quick to state when she thinks they are wrong, as is also her right. Mrs. Badger serves as a touchstone for more conservative Calvinist thought as well as pre-Enlightenment social norms and beliefs. Beecher Stowe wants her to be a sort of model for others to follow as Horace does as he comes of age.

Opinionated Mrs. Badger always has an opinion about everything. She's not afraid to share it, either. Whether it's the actions of other people, reactions to gossip, ideals around child-rearing, or religious practice, Mrs. Badger has something to say. Many people give her opinions credence. She represents a traditional yet sensitive take on Calvinism and is held up as an ideal.

Aunt Lois

Daughter of Mr. and Mrs. Badger, Lois is a spinster. She helps her parents, sister, and brother run the farm. Lois is dutiful to her family and pious in her faith.

Strict If Mrs. Badger is the opinionated one in the family, Lois is the stringent one. She is always up at the crack of dawn, waking the house and getting started on chores. It's her knocking and goading that gets sleepy Henry out of bed. She acts as the rulekeeper of the family, often the first to speak out in disappointment or correct the words and deeds of the children. While she is strict—and hard-headed about it—she is also loving. She is only strict because she worries for the souls of those around her, believing that specific behaviors (especially hard work and dedication to one's family) are essential for one to get into heaven.

Pious Aunt Lois has a deep traditional Calvinist faith. She often has a strong word against individualism in all of its forms. It's her dogmatic proclivities that keep Horace and the others on track in the Badger house. She often butts heads with her mother over issues of morality, wanting to take a softer hand with the children or issues of social import, but they are both drawing from deep religious fervor and education, just from different generations. Because of her strict traditional Calvinism, she struggles to accept the Episcopalian and Anglican traditions of those in towns around her, often acting out somewhat rudely when she's forced to endure services that don't meet her expectations or serve her traditions.

Miss Asphyxia

Miss Asphyxia is Old Crab's sister. She is one of the reigning socialites in Needmore. Her cruel treatment of Tina spurs the Percival children to run away.

Vain/Image-conscious Miss Asphyxia is a woman of image. She seeks to preserve her image above all else. This is shown most clearly in the disparity between people's opinion of her (a gentle, intelligent, just woman) and how she treats Tina. Little Tina, who is likely not much older than six, is made to clean the house and do the laundry while also being kept apart from her brother based on Miss Asphyxia's strange misandry. When Tina goes missing, she doesn't care at first. Miss Asphyxia only begins to care when reports come back from Oldtown that Tina is too skinny. She fears this reflects poorly on her image and seeks Tina out to stop her from spreading these 'rumors' of her mistreatment.

Uncaring Miss Asphyxia doesn't care about anything that doesn't impact her image. Even then, she acts with a coldness that is unbecoming a woman seeking to be a surrogate mother. She is cruel to Tina, who is a child mourning her abandonment by her father and the death of her mother, and instead of

being tended to, she is separated from her brother and put to work in Miss Asphyxia's household. When Miss Asphyxia learns of the Percival children arriving in Oldtown, she's more worried about getting Tina's clothes back than making sure the girl is okay: they cost money.

Old Crab Smith

Old Crab is a landowner in Needmore, a village near Oldtown. He is a known miser, unwilling to spend any resource that isn't absolutely needed. He and his sister, Miss Asphyxia, take in Harry and Tina, respectively, after their mother's death in his home.

Miserly/Stingy Old Crab's stingy streak isn't borne out of greed but strict and misguided religious idealism. His idea of self-reliance goes so far that he begrudges an orphan for needing clothes, food, and a bed. He views his ideals as just, but to everyone around him, his cruelty is clear.

Uncaring Much like his sister, Old Crab doesn't care about anyone. He only wants his way and will use force to get it. Instead of trying to care for the orphans who land on his doorstep, he does his best to make their lives a misery. First he splits the children, then he works Harry's fingers to the bone, all while punishing him for being a child and missing his sister. When the news of the Percival children running away to Oldtown reaches him, he simply abandons Henry to whatever fate awaits him, happy to be rid of the child.

Sam Lawson

Sam is a Black man living in Oldtown. He drifts from odd job to odd job, occasionally working as a farmhand for the Badgers. He is a frequent fixture of Mrs. Badger's kitchen, being very fond of the old couple.

Talkative The number one thing Sam is known for is running his mouth. The man can't keep a secret, and he loves to talk to anyone who will listen. When information is needed to advance the plot, it's almost always Sam delivering it as something he heard from a servant in another town or sitting outside the local general store. It adds a charming quality to the man frequently used to add a little levity to the story.

Helper Sam, while described and characterized as lazy, is always around to lend a helping hand or, at the very least, make sure someone else gets the help they need. He's the most accountable message runner in town, frequently being sent by the likes of Miss Mehitable to give people critical news or hurry them home. He also enjoys being with the children, making them toys and entertaining them with his jokes and stories. While he does seem to like avoiding back-breaking labor, he is far from a layabout as Beecher Stowe tries to label him.

Miss Mehitable

Miss Mehitable is the sister of Jonathan Rossiter, who runs the academy in Cloudland. She is the one who takes in Tina when the girl and her brother come to Oldtown. Miss Mehitable harbors an old wound, having lost her sister long ago and never learning what happened to her.

Sensitive As a foil for Miss Asphyxia, Miss Mehitable is incredibly sensitive and caring. She struggles to discipline Tina, but her soft hand is also exactly what the girl needs. She is shown having physical manifestations of her mental health, such as when she learns of Ellery Davenport's plot to forsake his first wife to marry young Tina. She also suffers from not knowing her sister's fate, and it affects her health.

THEMES

Society

Class Class is a frequent subject of analysis in *Oldtown Folks*. We see the many levels of lower, middle, and upper classes throughout the film. The Tories of Boston represent the highest classes we've seen. Their wealth and political clout come from Britain and are portrayed as vain and hollow. The pseudo-gentry that makes up the upper middle class in the colonies is best represented by Miss Asphyxia and Old Crab Smith, siblings who come from a large landholding family. They are more interested in protecting their good name than acting for the good of others. The Badgers and their children represent a fairly typical small-landowning middle class. They have a farm and a small home on the property, but they live a somewhat spartan existence filled with hard labor and little leisure time, which Beecher Stowe portrays as inherently virtuous. The poor are less fleshed out, but we see them all over, from Sam Lawson to the wandering natives who ask for food or cider to the native woman who helps Harry and Tina escape to Oldtown. We see these characters frequently, though we don't explore their lives very deeply. They are portrayed as aimless and worldly but friendly and happy despite their lowly positions socially and economically.

Race While underexplored, race is a part of most scenes throughout *Oldtown folks*. Many of the servants and named poor folks around town are Black. We also see glimpses of native folks around Oldtown, especially around celebration times. While it can sometimes fly under the radar as most of the people in the novel speak in some accent, the main clue we get to people's race is how their accent is portrayed. Characters like Sam and Caesar frequently speak in more broken English considered a racist stereotype today. A few times, Beecher Stowe describes the skin of the characters, focusing on the darkness of Black characters and comparing them to soot or shadow, whereas the white characters are compared to more neutral and positive things like blank paper and snow. White characters are also more likely to have their complexion commented on when it's medically necessary as opposed to off the cuff with Sam or Miss Mehitable's servant. We also see Beecher Stowe enact some historic revisionism when she portrays the town of Oldtown as militantly anti-slavery. The type of genuinely militant Calvinism she projects into the 1790s wouldn't actually arise until the 1830s with America's expansion into the plains and the Burning Kansas conflicts. While we cannot trust her portrayals to be accurate, they do give us a glimpse into post-abolition racial thought from a white Northern perspective.

Work Work is always brought up in every chapter. The idea of the virtuosity of hard work is central to the Calvinist beliefs Beecher Stowe is attempting to lionize in her narrative. Beecher Stowe believes that the progress of the Industrial Revolution has robbed Americans of a purer social structure and a closer bond with God through labor. The folks in Oldtown are focused on ensuring moral continuity, mutual dependence, and resilience within their community as opposed to the individualism and competition wrought by advancing industrial capitalism. She connects education to work in that it should be focused on ensuring resilience, and she believes that traditional Calvinist ideals do this best. To highlight the importance of these traditional ideals, she attempts to connect them to the expansion of early anti-slavery activity in the Northeast.

Religion/Spirituality *Oldtown Folks* has a secret agenda, that is, to denounce the ideas of free agency and moral effort the more lax Arminian Calvinists were attempting to preach throughout the first hundred or so years of American history. In telling this story, Beecher Stowe seeks to position Puritan Calvinism as the central foundational framework shaping New England life in the early 1800s. We see this portrayed most clearly in Mrs. Badger, who embodies the traditional theology in her unyielding precision and adherence to traditional discipline. Through characters like Sam and the Tories from Boston, we see the struggle many Calvanists have in grappling with self-reliance and God's grace. In Horace we're shown some odd homespun spiritualism about ghosts and spirits of the dead. Several times, the dead appear to show Horace the way or reveal a secret. It's not entirely clear if this is an actual religious statement by Beecher Stowe or just a popular plot device of the time added to make the novel more broadly appealing: Americans in the Reconstruction era were crazy for ghost stories. Calvinist critics accuse Beecher Stowe of diluting true traditionalist Calvinism for a moderate audience.

Politics

Colonialism In *Oldtown Folks*, we're shown some of the transition from British colonialism to American colonialism. Beecher Stowe shies away from showing us actual conflict or giving politics more than a passing mention, more often name-dropping founding fathers than actually allowing characters to express outright political views. The scars of the Revolution are everywhere, however. Even in social situations they can be seen, as the Tories from Boston cling to their Anglican practices and symbols of high living. Natives are seen at the fringes of society, appearing mostly in rural areas like Oldtown, where they beg for food and drink. The Iroquois and their allies were the clear rulers of New England only a century beforehand, and one can't help but wonder how they ended up as beggars and drifters, although Beecher Stowe attempts to avoid the topic as much as possible outside of world building.

Revolution The American Revolution is what sparks this narrative. Both Horace and the Percival children are left orphaned by the war and the disease that inevitably follows such a conflict. Here Beecher Stow actually provides some interesting—if fictional—retrospection about the conflict and how war affects children. Horace's father was a soldier wounded in battle fighting for America. He languishes long after the conflict, eventually succumbing to an infection. Horace watches as his father shrivels and dies. His mother passes away soon thereafter. He's lucky enough to have loving grandparents who treat him kindly, if a bit strictly. Harry and Tina are not so lucky when their father abandons the family to take over his ancestral estate in England. The once-rich family now wander the hills seeking shelter, the children's mother wasting away from an unspecified illness. She gets them as far as Needmore before passing away. The townsfolk take the children in but treat them no better than slaves in most regards, causing the Percival children to plot an escape. In this moment, we see an American Revolution in microcosm, as—guided by God's love—Harry leads his daughter to the safety and purity of Oldtown.

Relationship

Caring The idea of caring for one's family is one of the strongest themes in the story. Every sympathetic character in *Oldtown Folks* is a loving member of a family, has had something terrible happen to their family, or both. Horace and the Percival children are orphaned because of the war and its aftereffects, and they end up in the loving Badger home. It's the mistreatment of Old Crab and Miss Asphyxia that causes the Percival children to flee in the first place. While it does run counter to some of the most traditional Calvinist teachings, Beecher Stowe believed deeply in the power of a tender upbringing in creating resilient and morally upstanding people.

Friendship Friendship is a powerful idea in *Oldtown Folks*. It's the power of friendship that holds their community and families together. Our strongest example comes from Harry and Horace. The two are fast friends, having shared similar childhood experiences in losing their family. They become like brothers, living in the same room and sharing the same bed all the way through college. When Harry marries and moves away, Horace is left feeling abandoned and alone. The community of Oldtown is tightly knit, with each person providing something, no matter how small. This collectivism only works when people are friendly and understanding, and we see this in the frequent arguments about religion and social life that arise in the Badger household. Sam Lawson is one of the strongest links in the social chain, though he holds a small social position. He is the one who connects everyone else through his gossip and constant conversation. Even though he has some annoying habits, he is beloved for his ability to make and keep friends.

Life Stages

Childhood Most of the story takes place in Horace's childhood. He is a very young boy when his father passes away from a war wound. Likewise, Horace and Tina are quite young when they're abandoned by their father and watch their mother die trying to get them to a safe place. In this, we see some particularly traumatic childhoods, something we know today to leave a lasting mark on children as they grow into adults. Through the Badgers who act as a loving family for these traumatized children, we see Horace, Harry, and Tina grow into resilient young men and women.

Coming of Age Coming of age is a critical idea in the middle of *Oldtown Folks*. The narrator sets aside several paragraphs to discuss the importance of this life stage, announcing that the children in the story are learning to become adults. We explore Harry and Horace's experiences in education before heading off to college at Cambridge. Tina struggles with the perceptions of girls and women for the time, being sexualized long before she is able to experience the same urges, let alone recognize and accept them. While not explicitly stated in the text, the understanding of sexuality for the time rendered women as implicitly asexual, meaning both in law and in socialization, their sexuality was seen as moot, as sex was about procreation or male pleasure. Because of this societal background radiation, Tina grows into a child-like woman with childish proclivities in romance. She accepts Ellery's marriage proposal because she thinks he's nice and will whisk her away to be a sort of fairy-tale princess. Because of her own discomfort with discussing and portraying sexuality, Beecher Stowe gives us little insight into Harry and Horace's deeper desires, speaking only of surface-level attraction and confessions of a desire to marry someone.

Old age Old age is revered in *Oldtown Folks*. There are few characters put on a higher pedestal than Mrs. Badger. She is a moral beacon for Horace in much the same way as Harry, though for different reasons. Where Harry represents a sort of holy innocence, Mrs. Badger is pious and experienced, or even perhaps in spite of experience. He is always happy to hear her advice and opinions, as they help to guide his decisions and beliefs even into his adulthood. Mr. Badger doesn't get as much attention in the narrative, often gone working the farm, but he too is held up not just by Horace but the community at large as a pious and righteous man, earning him the unofficial title of Deacon. These elderly folk serve to represent what children should strive to become and are the ideal of what Beecher Stowe believes should be the center of any healthy Calvinist community.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. Compare and contrast Beecher Stowe's portrayals of racialized people in *Oldtown Folks* and *Uncle Tom's Cabin*. In what ways does she rely on stereotypes when discussing Black and Native characters?

2. The main focus of *Oldtown Folks* is on the social, cultural, and religious changes that happened in the earliest days of America. Using *Uncle Tom's Cabin* as a social, cultural, and religious touchstone, what changes in American society at large are the main concerns of Beecher Stowe and her characters?

3. In what ways do the Americans reject English notions of aristocracy? In what ways do they perpetuate these ideals?

4. How does life in Oldtown contradict the stringent Calvinist beliefs of its inhabitants? List at least two examples.