

# Nighthawkers

## Teacher's Guide

Anthony Tiatorio

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## Introduction

It was the summer of 1828. New Englanders were flooding into western New York; the population was burgeoning and the commerce on the Hudson was booming. Like his father and grandfather before him, Josiah Hamrick's vessels sailed in the coastal trade, as they had since well before the revolution and, while he knew precious little about steamboats, shipping was shipping he told himself. He had discussed this with his own father, Jonathan, now eighty-one, the retired patriarch of the Hamrick family, and was encouraged. Even the old man could see that it was time to seek new directions, to make a new beginning, just as the nation itself was about to do. The west was blossoming before their eyes, as his own son Tom so often said, offering opportunity beyond their dreams. All of this urged him to go and see for himself.

He had been away for nearly a month when the news arrived and Thomas knew instantly that his father would be gone forever. The envelope held the few things that had been recovered, his small notebook and some other papers, a letter, and his pocket watch, smashed and stopped at 3:45.

## Teacher's Guide

The teacher's guide is structured into a twenty-one day time-frame, sequenced to follow a reading of the novel at a rate of one chapter per day. *Nighthawks* should be integrated with the routine textbook supported study of the age of Jackson and the background and causes of the Civil War. It will provide enrichment strategies to integrate values issues seamlessly into the more comprehensive historical treatment. In this strategy, students will be responsible for researching and presenting much of the factual historical information that underpins the novel. They will be divided into twenty individual or small group presentations for this purpose.

### Thinking Skill Strategy: Socratic Seminar Discussion Method

The Socratic Seminar is a time-honored strategy for the encouragement of active student participation; it forces students to think at higher cognitive levels; and it fosters an environment where the student is constantly the focus of attention. The Socratic Method has come to mean a process of creating and discussing questions which are open ended and inquisitive rather than conclusive. The primary components of the Socratic Method are systematic questioning and inductive reasoning. In the Socratic Seminar students, prompted by the teacher's provocative questions or statements, engage one another in thoughtful dialog. The role of the teacher during the discussion is secondary and supportive. It is always the students who have the primary responsibility of analyzing the assigned work. With this strategy, the teacher becomes the facilitator, whose job is to maintain an environment that fosters participation. Students are encouraged to consider different and often conflicting ideas. Individually and as a group they are driven to think deeply and critically about issues.

In the Socratic Seminar the teacher asks a general “opening” question addressing the central concept. As students respond to this question they look to each other for analysis and evaluation of the statements being made. As the students explore the material, responses become longer and more complex. Students begin to challenge their peers. Ideally the teacher leaves the stage, commenting only when it is necessary to provide direction or focus. At the end of the discussion, the teacher asks prepared closings questions that encourage the students to synthesize the various points of the discussion and form a conclusion. Follow up writing samples or reaction papers enhance the process. The Socratic Seminar is an open forum, which fosters both active student involvement and student engagement in higher level thinking. By manipulating the material in a number of thought provoking ways such as researching, generalizing about concepts, applying them to new situations, analyzing their component parts, synthesizing and then evaluating a thesis, the students are actively engaged in all of the levels of thinking according to Bloom’s taxonomy.

The value of active learning cannot be overstated. In addition to keeping the students motivated, active learning strategies produce a number of positive outcomes. The research consistently links strategies where students are actively involved with higher degrees of learning and the higher the level of thought process, the more successfully the student internalizes the ideas. Active participation also gives students ownership of the learning process. In the seminar, the teacher is less of an authority and more of a colleague. The ability to construct meaning from a discussion and to generate thoughtful conclusions independent of an external authority provides a sense of empowerment for the students, a feeling that they have control over their own learning. In addition, active participation in discussion assists in the development of social skills. While students are given the opportunity to articulate their own thoughts and feelings, they are also required to be respectful of the thoughts and feelings of their classmates.

### Report Topics

Much of the historical information that the class learns will result from student research and reporting. Students should be assigned individually or in small groups to report on one of the comprehensive topics listed below. Student reports should be strengthened by supporting teacher presentations if possible. These assignments should be made several days before the planned reading of *Nighthawks* and will be delivered at designated points in the story.

1. **Erie Canal.** *The report should stress the significance of the Erie Canal in shaping United States history rather than on the building of the canal itself. Students should go beyond the obvious economic stimulus it provided and explore its more subtle role in promoting democracy and social reform as well.*
2. **Gibbons v Ogden.** *The report should present the facts of the case, the constitutional issues involved, a brief summary of the arguments and the decision. Beyond the abstract conclusion that the case established federal supremacy in matters involving interstate*

commerce, students should understand, from the novel, the enormous impact the decision had on real business practices in the United States and gain a better sense of the importance of key Supreme Court decisions.

3. **Cult of Domesticity (True Womanhood).** *The report should clearly outline the culturally accepted early 19<sup>th</sup> Century characteristics of an ideal woman as one who is pure, pious, submissive and committed to home and hearth. Discussion should extend to the power of societal aggressive moralism in defining and enforcing gender roles today, in the student's own lives and elsewhere in the world.*
4. **Steam Power (Steamboats).** *The report should concentrate on the application of early steam technology to the maritime transportation industry and the impact it had on the growth of the American economy. This should segue into a more general discussion of constantly advancing technology today and its dangers as well as its benefits.*
5. **Second Great Awakening (Charles G. Finney).** *The report should show a relationship between the explosion of evangelical grassroots religion and the rise of Jacksonian democracy, as well as the birth of various sundry reform movements of the same era and stamp. Students should reflect on the place of socio/economic class in American society and consider if class conflict stimulated the Second Great Awakening.*
6. **Tariff of Abominations.** *The report should outline the trend toward protective tariffs in United States history to 1828 and the general arguments for and against the high tariff of 1828, with an eye toward sectionalism and the approaching Civil War. This report segues easily into the debate about free trade and its impact on the American economy today and ties the historical study to an important contemporary issue.*
7. **Corrupt Bargain of 1824.** *The report should outline the results of the election of 1824 and clarify the way the Electoral College system works as well as the mechanisms mandated by the 12<sup>th</sup> Amendment. The notion of "corrupt bargains" in American politics today should be discussed as a follow up to consideration of the charges made by Andrew Jackson in 1824 against Henry Clay and John Quincy Adams.*
8. **Dartmouth College v. Woodward.** *The report should make clear the limitations placed by the Dartmouth decision on the ability of governments to regulate and control corporations. This decision was instrumental in creating a climate of corporate investment and unbridled growth which would mark the rest of the 19<sup>th</sup> Century.*
9. **American System (Henry Clay).** *The report should outline the three seminal parts of the so-called American System, 1. high tariffs, 2. central banking and low interest rates, 3. tax supported investment in internal transportation. Discussion can pursue the question of whether these policies promoted sectionalism and hastened the Civil War.*
10. **Abolitionism (William Lloyd Garrison)** *The report should describe the earliest American sentiments for emancipation and the philosophy of the American Colonization Society and discuss the transition to assimilation for freed slaves, beginning in the late*

1820's and represented until the Civil War by Garrison and his newspaper, the *Liberator*.

11. **Fugitive Slave Act of 1793.** *The report should include the actual text of the act itself as well as discussion of the protocol used to reclaim runaway slaves and possible ways in which it could be circumvented by individual states and municipalities. This should be done with an eye to comparing it later with the Fugitive Slave Act of 1850.*
12. **Quakers.** *The report should try to summarize the fundamental ways in which Quakerism differs from mainstream Christian religious practice. Some discussion of mysticism, pacifism and gender equality should be included.*
13. **The Cumberland Road.** *The report should concentrate on the first section of the road from Cumberland to Wheeling. Some discussion of the building of the road itself is useful, but its significance both politically as a tax funded internal improvement and economically as a door to the Ohio Valley should be stressed.*
14. **The Underground Railroad (Isaac T. Hopper).** *The report should center on the earliest inception of what would later come to be called the Underground Railroad, its methods and routes and give biographical information about Hopper and general Quaker involvement.*
15. **Nullification (John C. Calhoun).** *The report should seek to explain the constitutional basis for Calhoun's claim that individual states could veto federal government legislation. Students should see this as a sectional issue with implications beyond the tariff, to include slavery.*
16. **William Morgan Affair (Antimasonry).** *The report should outline the Morgan affair and help students comprehend the depth of the anti-Masonic sentiment sweeping the northeast at that time.*
17. **Alessandro Volta (Electrolysis).** *This report will help insure that students understand the nature of Goode's experiment, which will be important at the climax of the story.*
18. **First American Railroads (John Stevens).** *The report should stress the rapidly advancing technology and expanding economy of the age and make clear to students the revolutionary impact of steam power in American history.*
19. **2<sup>nd</sup> Bank of the United States (Wildcat Banking).** *The report should explore the basic arguments for and against the bank, which will help students to better understand Jackson's opposition to it. Stress should be placed on the way sectional interests played into this, as well as the influence of rising egalitarian democracy on views about the bank.*

**20. The Election of 1828.** *The report should not only outline the candidates and the campaign itself, but should also include an analysis of the clearly sectional nature of the outcome and draw some conclusions from it.*

### Daily Schedule

The following schedule should be fitted into the teacher's planning calendar. The guide assumes a traditional school schedule of 50 minute classes. Schools with block or other alternative schedules need to adapt it accordingly. It is not necessary for the days to be contiguous. This strategy is equally effective when spread over a longer study of the history of this period.

Allow ample time for students to prepare reports. *Be sure students understand the importance of their contribution and the need for it to be delivered on schedule.* Reports may extend beyond one day; there is sufficient space in the calendar to accommodate this, but the teacher should be attentive to timing-out the unit as a whole.

- Day 1** Assign: *Nighthawkers*, Chapter 1.
- Day 2** Discuss Chapter 1. Report: Erie Canal. Assign: Chapter 2.
- Day 3** Discuss Chapter 2. Report: Gibbons V. Ogden. Assign: Chapter 3
- Day 4** Discuss Chapter 3. Report: Cult of Domesticity. Assign: Chapter 4.
- Day 5** Discuss Chapter 4. Report: Steam Power. Assign: Chapter 5.
- Day 6** Discuss Chapter 5. Report: Second Great Awakening. Assign: Chapter 6.
- Day 7** Discuss Chapter 6. Report: Tariff of Abominations. Assign: Chapter 7.
- Day 8** Discuss Chapter 7. Report: Corrupt Bargain of 1824. Assign: Chapter 8.
- Day 9** Discuss Chapter 8. Report: Dartmouth College Case. Assign: Chapter 9.
- Day 10** Discuss Chapter 9. Report: American System. Assign: Chapter 10.
- Day 12** Discuss Chapter 10. Report: Abolitionism. Assign: Chapter 11.
- Day 13** Discuss Chapter 11. Report: Fugitive Slave Act. Assign: Chapter 12.
- Day 14** Discuss Chapter 12. Report: Quakers. Assign: Chapter 13.

- Day 15** Discuss Chapter 13. Report: The Cumberland Road. Assign: Chapter 14.
- Day 16** Discuss Chapter 14. Report: Underground Railroad. Assign: Chapter 15.
- Day 17** Discuss Chapter 15. Report: Nullification. Assign: Chapter 16.
- Day 18** Discuss Chapter 16. Report: William Morgan Affair. Assign: Chapter 17.
- Day 19** Discuss Chapter 17. Report: Alessandro Volta. Assign: Chapter 18.
- Day 20** Discuss Chapter 18. Report: First Railroads. Assign: Chapter 19.
- Day 21** Discuss Chapter 19. Report: 2<sup>nd</sup> U.S. Bank. Assign: Chapters 20 and 21.
- Day 22** Discuss the conclusion of the novel. Report: Election of 1828.
- Day 24** Final Assessment.

### Introduction

Jonathan Hamrick is now 81 years old and living in Boston. He is the patriarch of the Hamrick family and owner of Hamrick and Son; he is retired from the shipping business. Rachel, his wife, is 80 and still living. His son Josiah is 58 years old and is the active entrepreneur. The business has once again hit hard times after the Panic of 1819 and the subsequent depression in the early 1820's. His grandson, Thomas, is 21 years old. He is educated in both business economics and in the law, which is a family tradition, and manages the investment end of the Hamrick shipping enterprise. He has advised his father to investigate the possibility of investing in steam boats on the Hudson since the ruling in *Gibbons v. Ogden* and the opening of the Erie Canal. Josiah has traveled to the Hudson valley to make observations for himself and to seek investment opportunities.

### Chapter One: Summary

When the story begins, in early June of 1828, Thomas Hamrick receives word that his father Josiah had been killed in a terrible steamboat explosion on the Hudson River. Thomas and his grandfather talk about the accident and how it might have happened. *It is important for students to develop a clear picture of a rapidly industrializing and expanding America.* Thomas talks with his grandmother and we learn more about their personal lives. *A recurring theme in the novel involves the relationships between children and their parents. This, as well as family bonds generally, should be discussed with students.*

They look through Josiah's papers and other effects and discover an unsigned note. The note warns Josiah of danger and seems to predict the disaster, with the implication that his death was not an accident. Thomas and his grandfather discuss



what possible meaning this could have and in so doing they talk about New York state machine politics.

The letter leaves certain tantalizing clues that point toward a Masonic connection in Josiah's death. They briefly discuss freemasonry. *A major theme in the novel concerns conspiracies and corruption in public office. The teacher should pursue this when appropriate and encourage students to relate concepts to events in their own lives. Antimasonry was a major force in western New York at that time and plays a large role in the novel.*

Thomas decides to go to Albany to recover his father's remains and to find out more about the cause of his death. Jonathan agrees that this is the right thing to do and they make a plan to meet in Albany.

### **Report Topic**

Erie Canal

### **Socratic Seminar Question**

Narrowly defined group loyalties are central to the story and reflect the innate human ethical sense. *Students should reflect on their own tendency to judge events from a limited perspective and discuss the problem of frame of reference and how it influences ethical decisions. The teacher should encourage consideration of real problems and events in student's lives that can provide personal examples of this. An effective teaching strategy for Frame of Reference is available at the Teaching Ethics website: [www.ethicsineducation.com](http://www.ethicsineducation.com)*

### **Chapter Two: Summary**

Rachel Hamrick tells her grandson about his mother's death from smallpox. *Rachel laments the fact that she had blindly followed the medical advice of the time, which later proved to be wrong. Students should reflect on the many external authorities influencing their own lives.*

Thomas embarks from Boston to trace his dead father's footsteps. His grandparents discuss the possible involvement of the freemasons in Josiah's death. We learn about the nature of masonry and about the plan to find out what really happened to Josiah.

### **Report Topic**

Gibbons v Ogden

### **Socratic Seminar Question**

Jonathan Hamrick tells Rachel that *"loyalty is the highest virtue."* His wife responds that *"loyalty has its limits. It can't just be blind loyalty."* Students should reflect on this and discuss their opinion of the importance of loyalty in life. Where it comes from and if Hamrick is correct.

### Chapter Three: Summary

We meet Karl Olmstead, an evangelical preacher and operator of a canal boat on the Erie Canal, and learn about him and his family. Karl and his wife, Harriet, talk about their daughter Amanda and we see the ideas of the Cult of True Womanhood presented. *Students should understand this to have been the generally accepted gender relationship of the era. Amanda's resistance to it accurately reflects the sentiments and arguments of the earliest women's rights advocates and abolitionist reformers and much of the dialog in the novel regarding this issue paraphrases and echoes the leading voices of the age.* Amanda talks with her younger brother Samuel and we learn more about their personal lives.

#### Report Topic

Cult of Domesticity (True Womanhood)

#### Socratic Seminar Question

Karl Olmstead says: "religious piety and purity are the woman's strength. Women are not suited to the materialistic struggles of the world; they are by nature passive and submissive. Her role is to preserve her innocence and thereby employ her moral superiority to help men temper their promiscuous passions." This is a classic statement of the beliefs underpinning the Cult of True Womanhood. *Students should reflect on and discuss the notion of gender differences.*

### Chapter Four: Summary

Thomas travels to New York City and meets with the Hamrick Company business agent, Peter Winn. We see the operations of the stock market and we get a picture of the massive economic growth in the city.

He proceeds up the Hudson, to Albany, in a steamboat and we get a sense of the emerging industrial age. Thomas meets Jacob Goode, a scientist studying steamboat explosions, and the two men talk. *The issue of government regulation of private enterprise is instrumental in the novel. To this point in time there were no regulations of any kind. It was the frequency of steamboat explosions that ultimately, in the 1850's, led to the first federal regulation of private enterprise.*

#### Report Topic

Steam Power (Steamboats)

#### Socratic Seminar Question

In referring to the dangerous business practices of the time Thomas asks: "Is there no concern for safety among these people, Mr. Goode?" *Students should consider the conflict between the pursuit of profits and the public interest. What should the role of government*

*be in protecting the safety of the public? There are many contemporary examples of dangerous products and services impacting the lives of students.*

### **Chapter Five: Summary**

Karl Olmstead delivers his evangelical sermon to a small gathering along the canal and we can see the innate human drive for equality at the causal roots of the religious revival sweeping western New York at that time.

Amanda and her mother talk and we sense the frustration of many educated young women of the time and see that same innate sense of equality motivating her.

Karl Olmstead discusses the politics and candidates of the election of 1828 with a friend and the issue of equality is broadened into that sphere.

#### **Report Topic**

Second Great Awakening

### **Socratic Seminar Question**

The quest for equality is a major theme in the novel and reflects the concerns of most Americans at that time. It is the motor driving the rise of Andrew Jackson; it is at the roots of the Second Great Awakening, abolitionism, feminism, and antimasonry. *Students should discuss their concept of equality and what it means to them today.*

### **Chapter Six: Summary**

Thomas discovers considerable pro-slavery sentiment in the Hudson River valley and the topic of emancipation is discussed. He meets a family from South Carolina heading to Saratoga Springs for the summer. At the dinner table there is a spirited discussion of the protective tariff and the economics of slavery. The slave hunter, Nicos Bleeker, comes aboard with captive runaways in chains.

#### **Report Topic**

Tariff of Abominations

### **Socratic Seminar Question**

Freedom is the countervailing pole of the innate human ethical sense. It balances against equality in the endless ethical striving of mankind. In the novel, we see the demand for freedom in the ethical urges of every individual and class of people, reflecting the mood of the times. *Students should discuss their own concept of individual freedom and try to reconcile it with their concept of equality. The two are in many ways contradictory and need to be balanced.*

## Chapter Seven: Summary

Thomas continues up the Hudson to Albany. He sees the issue of slavery more directly and writes about it in his notebook. There is additional discussion of the economic issues swirling around slavery and free labor on the eve of the election of 1828. Thomas arrives at Albany and meets with sheriff Pootman and later with coroner Ryckman, but discovers little about his father's death. He visits the cemetery and meets Amanda Olmstead.

### Report Topic

Fugitive Slave Act of 1793

### Socratic Seminar Question

Thomas ponders the thought that everywhere that slavery has been abolished the freedom of the emancipated slaves has been restricted by oppressive laws. In his notebook he writes: "What a cruel irony it is that racial prejudice deepens with freedom. It's a fear I think, a fear of equality." *Ask students to comment on this and if they agree with it and if so why.*

## Chapter Eight: Summary

Jonathan Hamrick meets with the Roxbury masons and we see some of the operations of the Masonic lodge.

Later he discusses the scheme to uncover the cause of his son's death with his friend Rufus Brooks and we learn more about the economic and political climate in upstate New York. The Dartmouth College case is discussed.

Jonathan has a late supper with Rachel and they talk. We get a picture of the old loving couple.

### Report Topic

Dartmouth College v. Woodward

### Socratic Seminar Question

Rachel tells Jonathan that because of its strict code of secrecy and loyalty, Free Masonry creates an atmosphere that encourages dishonesty "But don't you see that the whole structure of masonry makes it easier for men to become corrupt and evil? Masonry must be a magnet for corrupt and evil men." *Ask students if they believe this to be true and if so, why. This question goes to the roots of what one believes to be the innate human ethical nature and can generate valuable discussion.*

## Chapter Nine: Summary

Thomas meets with the newspaper editor, Adrian Quacumbus, and we get a strong sense of the depth of antimasonry sentiment in western New York. Thomas asks about Amanda Olmstead and we learn more about her and her father's evangelism.

Thomas takes the stage to Schenectady to meet the Olmstead boat. He meets Karl Olmstead and the two talk politics.

### Report Topic

American System

### Socratic Seminar Question

Students should reflect on the impact of *cynicism* in society. Quacumbus tells Hamrick that "there's too much money to be made, too much corruption. The special interests will win out over the public good, as usual." *This problem relates well to the concerns of many Americans about the functioning of their government today and students should bring their own perspective to it.*

## Chapter Ten: Summary

Thomas and Amanda go a revival meeting to hear her father speak. Olmstead's evangelism reflects the general rejection of established religions then sweeping western New York, but his fanatical abolitionism shows him to be an extremist in the John Brown mold.

Tom and Amanda discuss the proper role of women in society and we see something of the debate emerging on this subject in the early 19th Century. Later they continue on the canal and we see some routine canal boat activities.

### Report Topic

Abolitionism

### Socratic Seminar Question

Karl Olmstead is a radical abolitionist and seems to have gone beyond reason in his opposition to slavery. In The Inferno, Dante wrote: "The hottest places in Hell are reserved for those who, in time of moral crisis, maintain their neutrality" *To what length would it be acceptable for a person to go to abolish slavery. Students should relate this to ethical struggles impacting their lives to day such as abortion, terrorism and genocide.*

## Chapter Eleven: Summary

Jonathan Hamrick travels to New York City in pursuit of his grandson. He meets with the detective, Frank Salisbury and sees the seamier side of the city before leaving for the trip up the Hudson to Albany.

### Report Topic

Election of 1828

### Socratic Seminar Question

Salisbury justifies his tactics by saying, “it’s tit for tat, that’s all.” *Ask students to judge Salisbury’s methods and his justifications for them. Reciprocity is the natural human ethic weapon in the struggle to achieve equality. Rewarding good with good and punishing bad with bad is innately ingrained in the human ethical makeup. Students should consider what the limits are to this payback strategy and the question of whether the ends ever justify the means.*

## Chapter Twelve: Summary

Thomas talks with Jacob Goode, at the Eagle Tavern, about the causes of steamboat explosions and learns about the professor’s plans. He discovers that the man is frightened by the resentment he is encountering from the locals. Goode points out three men in the bar who he says are after him and he tells Thomas that he is going to lock his door tonight.

Thomas leaves the tavern and is attacked by the thugs. He runs for his life and escapes into the cellar of the Quaker meeting house, where a runaway slave family is hiding. We learn more about the slaves and the Quakers who are helping them. Later Thomas finds Amanda and they plan a way to help the slaves escape.

### Report Topic

Quakers

### Socratic Seminar Question

*The human proclivity to define ethical responsibility narrowly and then defend that parochial group against outsiders is an ongoing human ethical weakness. Professor Goode is facing the problem encountered by all “outsiders” in that he is not trusted and his motives are suspect. Students should discuss this innate human fear and distrust of strangers.*

### Chapter Thirteen: Summary

Jonathan Hamrick goes to the Albany Masonic lodge and meets with the Albany masons. We see more of the secret Masonic ritual and protocol of the time. They discuss investment opportunities and Jonathan is invited to join a scheme to build a harbor in the Hudson at the terminus of the Erie Canal.

Thomas and Amanda talk about their future and we get a sense of the optimistic mood of the age. The power of causes to motivate people's actions is a big part of the novel. Amanda tells Tom that her father told her that: *"there were things worth dying for... and things worth... killing for."* Ask students to evaluate this claim.

#### Report Topic

The Cumberland Road

#### Socratic Seminar Question

Jonathan Hamrick tells the masons, "It is gratifying to know that one has friends to help and support him." Ask students to think about what friendship means and how important friends are to them. What is expected of a friend? What is true friendship? (*The Ethics Workbook I* has a useful strategy about friendship, based on Aristotle, which can be downloaded at [www.ethicsineducation.com](http://www.ethicsineducation.com))

### Chapter Fourteen: Summary

Thomas and Amanda lead the fugitive slave family from the Quaker meeting house to the canal boat. We learn more about the runaways and their plight. Samuel meets them in the cemetery and leads them to the boat. Luke laments the fact that he is totally uneducated. *The teacher should use the opportunity to discuss the subtle methods used to control the slave population.*

The slave hunter, Bleeker, boards the canal boat and sits on the hatch cover right above the slave family, hiding below. *The author often uses metaphorical imagery.* The narrator says: Only a few inches below him, and separated by the barest of wooden barriers, the babies slept in their mother's arms. Ask students to interpret this image and how it reflects the condition of slaves generally.

#### Report Topic

The Underground Railroad

#### Socratic Seminar Question

*Discuss another example of metaphorical imagery.* As Samuel leads them, in the dark of night, through the wooded path, the narrator says: The marsh was thick with

raspberries that time of year and they were all around them, plump, ripe and ready to eat, but the light from the canal boat Nighthawker he carried was keenly focused and cut too narrow a swath through the sooty shadows for them to be seen. *What does this image suggest about the people and events in the story? Is this true of people generally? How might this impact the efforts to reach peaceful solutions to ethical impasses?*

### Chapter Fifteen: Summary

Thomas and Bleeker leave the canal boat to visit Cohoes Falls. They discuss slavery and we see the standard justifications for it at this point in history.

Later that night Thomas tries to find out what Bleeker is carrying in his bag, but fails.

#### Report Topic

Nullification (John C. Calhoun)

### Socratic Seminar Question

Hamrick thinks to himself: we perhaps more than any other people, seem to have glorified violent resistance to anything perceived to be oppression. It will no doubt be our most telling heritage from a revolution that legitimized taking the law into one's own hands. *Discuss violence in American society. Are Americans more violent than other nations? How has the American national experience promoted this?*

### Chapter Sixteen: Summary

Jonathan takes a room on the outskirts of Albany and begins a letter to Rachel, while he waits for the arrival of the detective, Frank Salisbury. He is interrupted by a visit from Masonic lodge secretary Evert Van Eps and he learns more about the conspiracy which may have resulted in his son's death.

Later Detective Salisbury arrives and reports on what he has learned. They speculate about what might be causing the steamboat explosions. *There is an opening to discuss the power of causes to motivate extremist behavior and the tactics of terrorism, which are touched upon in the chapter.*

#### Report Topic

William Morgan Affair

### Socratic Seminar Question

Students should consider the nature and widespread existence of conspiracy theories. There are many historic and contemporary examples that students should be



able to provide spontaneously. *This discussion has the potential to spin into a much more comprehensive project, which can be profitable to pursue in its own right.*

### **Chapter Seventeen: Summary**

Thomas meets for breakfast with Jacob Goode who tells him he received permission to test his steam-boiler explosion theory.

Suddenly a steamboat explodes on the river and the two men run to the scene. We see the destruction and carnage caused by the ruptured boiler. As they work to recover bodies and help the wounded they see Olmstead there and he tells Thomas that it is God's wrath on the slave-owners. Thomas wonders if Olmstead is responsible for the disaster.

#### **Report Topic**

Alessandro Volta (electrolysis)

#### **Socratic Seminar Question**

*Religious extremism and its role in the spread of terrorism is an important issue facing students today and in the future. Students should discuss and speculate about why and how religion can promote intolerance and even terrorism.*

### **Chapter Eighteen: Summary**

Jonathan Hamrick visits the newspaper editor Adrian Quacumbus and tells him about the scheme to build a harbor in the Hudson.

Thomas and Goode return, on the following day, to the scene of the disaster. They see the body of Nicos Bleeker among the dead and become suspicious because he shows no signs of having been killed by the explosion.

Thomas reports his suspicion that Bleeker was murdered to Judge Van Brughe who orders him not to interfere with the coroner's investigation.

Thomas talks to his grandfather and the two make a plan to solve the mystery. *The chapter presents an opportunity to discuss the constitutional balance between federal and state power, which is important to an understanding the state's rights issue as a cause of the Civil War.*

#### **Report Topic**

First American railroads (John Stevens)

#### **Socratic Seminar Question**

Thomas and his grandfather plan a course of action, which is illegal, and they justify it because they believe the authorities to be corrupt. *Students should be asked to*

*think about the difference between ethics and rules. At what point is one justified in disregarding the rules and is there a point at which one is required to disregard the rules.*

### **Chapter Nineteen: Summary**

Thomas thinks about the meaning of life and the new complications that have entered his. He and Amanda talk about happiness and what makes them happy. For Amanda happiness comes from service to others and striving for a better tomorrow. She tells Thomas, “We can be happy, Tom. This is why we always live for the future, expecting better things, striving for greater joy...” *Ask students to compare their concept of happiness with Amanda’s.*

Thomas, Amanda and Samuel make a plan to steal the body of Nicos Bleeker, but before they can begin, Thomas is arrested and taken to the county jail.

Amanda goes to Tom’s grandfather for help. She meets the detective and tells them the plan. They agree to meet her at the cemetery gate at midnight.

#### **Report Topic**

2<sup>nd</sup> Bank of the United States

### **Socratic Seminar Question**

*Political profiteering is a major ethical issue today, as it was in 1828. Jonathan Hamrick asks the detective, “can this country survive, Salisbury, with this kind of unabashed political corruption? What if the people lose faith in the democratic process and no longer trust their elected officials?” Ask students how they would respond to Hamrick’s question.*

### **Chapters Twenty and Twenty-One: Summary**

At midnight, Amanda meets Jonathan and Salisbury at the cemetery gate and the story is resolved in the final two chapters.

#### **Report Topic**

Election of 1828

### **Summary Socratic Seminar Question**

*The final Socratic seminar should be used for free discussion of the novel and the light it sheds on the causes of the Civil War. It is important for students to review the concepts of internal and external authority and how they apply to their own lives. Individuals are constantly bombarded*

*by a barrage of group aggressive moralism seeking to dictate their behavior. Students should be asked to think about and to evaluate this in their own lives. Ethics is about finding a balance between individual freedom and group responsibility. Human beings innately understand the need to live by both sides of this equation and are naturally urged to seek both. Extremes at either end usually result in unethical outcomes. An evaluative essay is recommended.*