

The Revenant

Some discussion questions to consider regarding the movie, books, and online information include the following:

1. The author of *Lord Grizzly*, Frederick Manfred, was obsessed with the story of Hugh Glass to the point he would crawl through his backyard in Minnesota with one leg tied up. He would eat grubs and ants as part of his character study for writing the book. He also walked part of the path through South Dakota. He continued his study for ten years. He collected gravel, grasses, sand, and other natural items to further his understanding. Discuss: How far would you go for a character study in order to write a book? How much would you put up with as a spouse of someone going through such an obsession?
2. The movie and the books all differ in their retellings of Hugh Glass. In one book, he has a wife and two children back in Lancaster, PA. He also spends years with Bending Reed, his Native American wife. In the film, he only has his Native American wife and teen son. In another book, no female companion or children are mentioned. They are all historical fiction to some degree. Discuss: Is his family impact the main story? Why would the retellings be so vastly different in this regard? Why do you think none of his family members are included in the story?
3. Initially, Hugh Glass was first confused and then driven to get revenge on the men who left him to die. Crawling for 40 days (according to one source) with major injuries would require motivation. The trip took so long he began healing along the dangerous way. Supposedly, other bears, wolves, and turkey buzzards approached him along the way. He had to eat grubs and ants. All this with no plumbing, no change of clothing, and winter approaching. Discuss: How do you think Glass survived his ordeal? What were his motivations? How did his "travel" compare to travel today? Is the story worthy of a museum and an annual 4-day rendezvous in Lemmon, South Dakota? Would you like to attend?
4. Glass wanted to be a mountain man and not live in the city. His wife (Mabel) in

Lancaster, PA (according to Lord Grizzly) and mother of his two sons would not move west. They would fight and he left. Discuss: Could Glass have ever settled for city life? He didn't continually stay with his Native American wife and would go on long expeditions for beaver pelt. Do you think some people are just born to a certain path and unable to change?

5. **The Revenant** opens with a scene where the mountain men were surprised and many killed. In Lord Grizzly, we learn there was a reason for the attack. The mountain men would "visit" Native American women which caused anger. Would the movie seem different if we had known that right away? Did we ever find that out in the film? Discuss: Why does the film focus mostly on Glass, and his crawling travel? Why doesn't it take a larger view of the time? *Note: Everything we know is historical fiction as Glass was born in 1783.

6. In the historical fiction book, *Lord Grizzly*, Glass alternates between vulgar language and reciting scripture. He finds an old Native American woman who is dying, gives her her last meal, and digs a grave for her with his bare hands (with all his wounds). He gives as best a funeral as he can, complete with prayers. Discuss: Why didn't the film include that scene? Does it change your mind about Glass? Does that fit with the non-denominational service at the end of the four-day rendezvous event?

7. The big theme about the book at the end is forgiveness. Glass forgives Bridger, being able to see his point of view. Fitzgerald has joined the army in two of the retellings, and Glass has to promise not to injure him. He gets \$300 and his prized rifle back. In Lord Grizzly, he does forgive Fitzgerald. In the book, Lord Grizzly, Glass forgives both men. Discuss: Forgiveness as in the story and in general. The thought of revenge kept Glass crawling and making progress, yet he arrives and can find it in himself to forgive. He does not forgive Fitzgerald right away, but he does. How difficult would it be to forgive Fitzgerald as in the film, where his son is killed? How does Glass get even with Fitzgerald in the film?

After either the movie or one of the books, I appreciated civilization more. Either snack during the book or plan a dinner afterward as it makes you feel like you are starving! You might be hungry enough to eat a bear! But probably not.

A short nonfiction account of Hugh Glass is only 17 pages, available on Kindle Unlimited. The [eBook and paperback are available on Amazon.](#)

If there were ever a true story ripe for big-screen treatment, it's that of Hugh Glass, a 19th-century trapper who traveled 1,500 miles through the wilderness. [Time.com](#)

Some True Adventures in the Life of Hugh Glass, a Hunter and Trapper on the Missouri River (1857) is a short nonfiction book with helpful background information that reads like a story. The author of the book is Philip St. George Cooke. When I looked up the author, I learned he had died in 1895. I can't find other information and wonder if someone typed up his military notes for his several books on Amazon.

[Another book to consider](#) is *Lord Grizzly* (by Frederick Manfred, *Buckskin Man Tales*), which is a more complete and longer account. It was written in 1954 by Frederick Manfred. It is recommended on the South Dakota travel site. This book has a higher price tag and is 310 pages in length. It is a grueling experience just to read about Hugh Glass. And, frankly, the book is racist and contains swearing. It was written about seven decades ago, though.

My husband grew up in South Dakota and remembers learning about Hugh Glass in school. Glass was left for dead by other trappers (Fitzgerald and Bridger) after being mauled by a bear, and wanted revenge on those men. In the movie, he has a Native American son who is killed by Fitzgerald. We had to look up the information as we aren't thinking about it very often, which led us to the book on Amazon. We also checked [Wikipedia](#):

He had festering wounds, a broken leg, and deep cuts on his back that exposed his bare ribs. Glass lay mutilated and alone, more than 200 miles (320 km) from the nearest American settlement at Fort Kiowa, on the Missouri River.

You can [follow the actual route](#) he took today if you travel that way. It is approximately from Lemon, SD, to Chamberlain, SD, if you are itching to remember. The towns were built after the events took place. Probably driving by car is the best way to cover the miles today. The annual [Hugh Glass Rendezvous](#) at [Shadehill Recreation Area](#) in late August celebrates the legend.