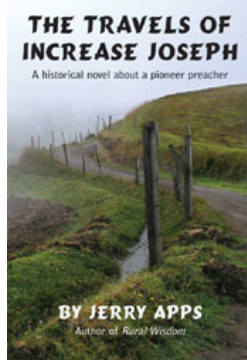


Study Guide

The Travels of Increase Joseph



By
Jerry Apps

Increase Joseph Link, an itinerant preacher, arrives in the wilds of Wisconsin in 1852. A small band of followers who call themselves the Standalone Fellowship come with him. They take up farming near Link Lake, named for their revered spiritual leader.

The Standalone Fellowship almost immediately falls on difficult times. To earn money for the Fellowship, Increase Joseph takes his message of “listening to the land” to nearby towns where he preaches in a round tent and sells a special curative tonic for fifty cents a bottle—two bottles for a dollar.

Increase Joseph’s preaching becomes known throughout the region for its content and especially for his powerful manner of delivery. His spellbinding oratory is based on the mysterious Red Book that Increase Joseph carries with him everywhere and allows no one to see, not even his immediate family. He takes on wheat farmers, lumber barons and those who accept technology without questioning it. He speaks against war and Slavery and the Fellowship becomes a part of the Underground Railroad.

With a cast of characters, real and fictional, the story of Increase Joseph Link is nuanced with philosophy and history—and questions that have as much application today as they did in the late 19th century.

Discussion Questions

1. What is the relationship of Increase Joseph to his followers?
2. What is Increase Joseph's philosophy?
3. Do Increase Joseph's many personal quirks prevent acceptance of his message?
4. What is the role of the Red Book in the story?
5. What is Increase Joseph's philosophy of relationships:
 - Relationship of people to the land,
 - Relationship of people to God,
 - Relationship of people to each other?
6. What is your reaction to the Standalone's philosophy expressed in the following:

We are alone together,
Of God and the land
Yet together we stand
As alone we are too.
Simple yet not
A direction but no.
We stand for the land
May it always be so.

7. How would you compare the Standalone Fellowship to more traditional religions?
8. What is Increase Joseph's environmental ethic?
9. In what way is Increase Joseph's philosophy similar to that of Henry David Thoreau, Ralph Emerson, John Muir and Aldo Leopold?
10. How do Increase Joseph's concerns about technology and progress have application today?