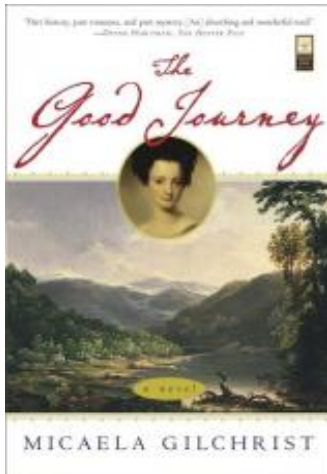


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# The Good Journey: A Novel

by Micaela Gilchrist

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## About the Book

Inspired by actual letters, **The Good Journey** breathes life into history with a richly imagined chronicle of twenty tumultuous years in the marriage of two American pioneers.

Strong-willed Southern belle Mary Bullitt abandons her life of luxury in Louisville, Kentucky, when she marries General Henry Atkinson and accompanies him to his outpost on the Mississippi. Nothing has prepared her for marriage to this attractive older man -- or for the realities of frontier living. Conditions are primitive, Mary knows virtually nothing about her husband, and the threat of attack from Indians is constant. A rough and resourceful general, Henry is engaged in a long and historic clash with a great Native American leader, and his deeply conflicted feelings about Indians mirror those he and his wife have for each other.

In the tradition of Willa Cather and Edna Ferber, Micaela Gilchrist has crafted an exciting novel that is at once a love story and an action-packed depiction of the struggle for the West.

## Discussion Guide

1. In the prologue, Mary finds a note in the General's pocket, written by the General to an anonymous person. Whom do you believe was meant to receive this note?
2. Mary Bullitt and Henry Atkinson were married for sixteen years. In your opinion, was this a happy marriage? Why or why not? In your opinion, would Mary have been better off as an unmarried woman in Louisville? Did she sacrifice too much in this union?
3. The Black Hawk War was a small event in the scope of U.S. history. Given that this scenario with Native Americans seemed to be on instant replay countless times throughout the nineteenth century, is there anything we can learn from the

Battle at Bad Axe?

4. Mary Bullitt publicly defended her husband, General Henry Atkinson, against his adversaries. But privately, she admitted that her husband was a difficult man to know. Even the General's closest friends in St. Louis murmured that he was inscrutable. What did you think of the General?

5. Why did William Clark (as evidenced by his callous treatment of York, a key member of the Corps of Discovery), Mary Bullitt Atkinson and General Henry Atkinson profess sympathy for Native Americans, yet seem utterly unmoved by the plight of enslaved African-Americans?

6. Black Hawk left the Sauk people the night before U.S. troops came upon them at Bad Axe. Should Black Hawk have stayed with the 150 members of his tribe on the river bottom until the end? Or do you believe his leaving in the night was a compassionate act, that he was deflecting vengeance away from the tribe by departing?

7. Do you believe Bright Sun's decision to follow Black Hawk was a wise one? If you had been in her position, what would you have done? Do you believe her decision would have been different if she had known the truth about Black Hawk and General Atkinson's history with Nicomi?

8. Did you feel that Mary's mother, Mrs. Diana Gwathmey Bullitt, was a prudent advisor, or did she misguide her daughter? If you were Mrs. Bullitt, would you have advised Mary to leave the General?

9. What motivated General Henry Atkinson's refusal to divulge secrets from his past to his wife? Do you believe that communication between husband and wife within the bounds of nineteenth-century marriage was much different than it is today?

10. General Henry Atkinson and Mary Bullitt Atkinson had three children, all of whom predeceased their parents. Do you believe that nineteenth-century parents maintained greater emotional distance from their children because of high infant mortality rates?

## Author Bio

Micaela Gilchrist is a lawyer who lives in Evergreen, Colorado, in the Rocky Mountains, with her husband and son. She is writing a sequel to **The Good Journey**.

## Critical Praise

"Meticulously researched and remarkably strong."

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# **The Good Journey: A Novel**

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