

Ice-Age Novel

The second book of a trilogy, *The Valley of the Horses*, fictionalizes the beginning of civilization in the Asian area north of the Bering Sea. Like Jean M. Auel's other two books, *The Clan of the Cave Bear* and *The Mammoth Hunters*, this one gets its foundation from archaeological research supporting the evolution of man. In this unusual historical novel, the reader follows Ayla, a child of the Others who has been reared by the Clan of the Cave Bear only to be ejected from the Clan when she violates customs she cannot understand or accept. In exile in the Valley of the Horses, she survives five years alone until she meets Jondalar, a man of the Others. Ayla faces a lonely struggle for survival after her death curse by the Clan. To solve basic survival problems, she must use logic: alone, how can she kill, butcher, and process an animal large enough to feed her through the severe winter; alone, how can she provide clothing, cooking utensils, sleeping skins, and shelter for protection; alone, how can she protect herself from the dangers around her? Her training as a medicine woman and her knowledge of hunting couples with the large brain characteristic of the Others allow her to succeed. Also, as a result of her background, she saves Jondalar's life after a lion mauls him and kills his traveling-companion brother. Jondalar is the first of the Others that Ayla has seen. After Ayla's medicinal powers help Jondalar regain his health, the two of them suffer from their inability to understand each other's customs. Jondalar finally teaches her to speak, however, and they are able to establish a strong bond, sharing their creative ideas to find solutions for both the physical and psychological problems they face as a team.