

Literature Circle Questions

Use the following questions and activities to get more out of the experience of reading *Bridge to Terabithia* by Katherine Paterson.

1. Why has Jess gotten up early every morning during the summer?
2. What is Jess's favorite teacher, Miss Edmunds, like? How is she different from the other teachers at Lark Creek Elementary?
3. Why does Jess keep his drawing supplies hidden under his mattress? And why doesn't he dare to show his drawings to his father?
4. In the beginning of the story, why doesn't Jess have any friends? Why does he try to avoid Leslie when she first tries to be friendly with him?
5. During the first week of school, Jess begins to change his mind about getting to know Leslie. Why do you think he changes his mind?
6. A couple of months later, Jess comes to feel that "Leslie was more than his friend. She was his other, more exciting self—his way to Terabithia and all the worlds beyond." (Page 46) In your own words, what does this mean?
7. Why do you think kids often make fun of others who are different? Do the students at your school have the same tendency to do this as the students in Jess and Leslie's school do?
8. Imagine that Leslie is a student in your class. How do you think you would respond to her? Would you want to be her friend? Do you think she would be accepted by your classmates? Explain.
9. How is Jess's father different from Leslie's father? Create a pair of columns to compare their personalities, lifestyles, and relationships with their children.
10. Leslie says to Jess, "We need a place...just for us.... It might be a whole secret country, and you and I would be the leaders of it." (Page 39) In your own words, what does Terabithia represent to Jess and Leslie? Why is it so important to them?
11. At the end of the story, Jess uses wood planks to build a solid bridge to Terabithia. Why do you think he does this? Why does he decide to share Terabithia with May Belle? What does this show us about how he is changing?
12. After he learns that May Belle has discovered Terabithia, Jess feels that "his life was as delicate as a dandelion. One little puff from any direction, and it was

- blown to bits.” How does this simile help us understand Jess, his life, and his feelings about Terabithia?
13. When Jess is overwhelmed by his feelings after Leslie’s death, who helps him cope with his loss? How does each of these characters try to help him? Do you think any of them do help Jess to cope with Leslie’s death?
 14. In the past, some people have suggested that this book is inappropriate for children because it describes death, a topic that some children might not be able to handle. In your opinion, is *Bridge to Terabithia* an appropriate book for kids your age? How might reading about Jess’s loss help students who have to face their own loss someday?
 15. What do you like most about Jess and Leslie’s friendship? Does their friendship seem realistic to you? What can we learn from this book about friendship?

Note: These literature circle questions are keyed to Bloom’s Taxonomy as follows: Knowledge: 1-3; Comprehension: 4-6; Application: 7-8; Analysis: 9-11; Synthesis: 12-13; Evaluation: 14-15.

Activities

1. Jess struggles with many fears, especially his fear of swinging over the rain-engorged gully to Terabithia. Write about a time when you had to overcome a fear. What were you afraid of, and how did you face your fear? Did you use any of the same coping mechanisms as Jess? When is it important to overcome your fear, and what is the best way to accomplish this?
2. Imagine that after some time has passed, Jess has decided to write a letter to the Burkes to let them know what their daughter meant to him and how his life has changed since he first met her. What would he say to them? How would he describe his friendship with Leslie and her effect on this life? Write a letter from Jess to the Burkes, imagining how Jess would describe his friendship with Leslie.
3. What does Terabithia look like? Reread the descriptions in the novel and draw a color map of Terabithia based on what you have read. Be sure to include its main features, such as the entrance, the castle, and the pine forest.

Author’s Web Site: www.terabithia.com

Other books by Katherine Paterson

Come Sing, Jimmy Jo
Flip-Flop Girl
The Great Gilly Hopkins
Jacob Have I Loved